

# The nuclear end may be nigh

**I**F you're sick of the words "nuclear disarmament" and sceptical that those who possess nuclear weapons will ever give them up, take heart from the efforts of former Hamiltonian Alyn Ware.

He's now into his fourth year working on the issue at the United Nations in New York.

Ware, who trained as a kindergarten teacher before working fulltime in the peace movement here, was home recently for a holiday.

At the United Nations, his job is that of a contact person between nongovernmental organisations and Government delegations, and his salary is paid by the United States branch of the International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms.

He speaks with an unstoppable enthusiasm pitted with facts and excellent reasons.

"It's like running a marathon," he says. "You can't give up at the 21-mile mark when the end is in sight. If we stop now, we won't make it. This last part is the most important."

His goal is an international convention to abolish nuclear weapons.

It's obvious his perspective is different from that of the lay person for whom reports of last year's Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty conference appear shrouded in depressing obfuscation.

With 173 signatories, the treaty has the widest membership of any arms control agreement and is seen as having effectively limited the spread of nuclear weapons. But little appears to have changed since it came into force in 1970.

So what's this about yet another nuclear weapons treaty?

Ware says pressure is mounting for the negotiation of a new treaty to eliminate these weapons, similar to the treaties which ban biological and chemical weapons. Nukes, he says, are the third in the triumvirate, and they have to go, too.

He describes an "abolition network" that links hundreds of nongovernmental organisations whose members meet their country's delegates to the United Nations, reminding them that such organisations represent a sizeable body of opinion.

## The international condemnation of France for its latest nuclear tests may suggest the time is right for another stab at a treaty to abolish nuclear weapons. PAT BASKETT talks to a New Zealander at the cutting-edge of disarmament action in New York.

It was lost, for a variety of political reasons including the failure to reach agreement on establishing an international control mechanism.

Then there's the progress that's being made towards a decision by the World Court, which was asked for an opinion by the World Health Organisation and the United Nations General Assembly on the legality of the use of and the threat of nuclear weapons. Written submissions have been received and hearings took place last November. The Attorney-General, Paul East, presented New Zealand's case for having nuclear arms declared illegal.

Ware expects the court's decision to be announced in March or April. Whichever way it goes, he describes it as a "win-win" situation, although a clear-cut decision of illegality would speed up the process of abolition.

"The court could do a range of things. For example, they could say that the use of nuclear weapons is illegal but the threat isn't, or they could say that they are illegal as weapons of mass destruction, which would undermine the concept of deterrence.

"That would leave open the question of mini-nukes, but these don't, as yet, exist."

**A**NOTHER possibility is that a court might consider that international law has not yet reached the stage where nuclear weapons can be ruled illegal.

"Even if they say that, it would still have a political impact because

it would show the need for a new treaty."

Ware is also encouraged by the Australian Government's recent establishment of the Canberra Commission for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

Its prestigious members include last year's Nobel Peace Prize winner, scientist Joseph Rotblat, American General Charles Horner and former French Prime Minister Michel Rocard. The commission's brief is to

report to the United Nations. Ware describes it as operating in parallel to the World Court.

But are Ware, Rotblat and others who now even include Prime Minister Bolger, chasing an elusive will-o'-the-wisp? What are the chances that nuclear weapons will be eliminated?

It's true that neither treaties nor court decisions will do away with the knowledge of how to make fissile material, but they could set up international monitoring agencies which would make its acquisition more difficult, especially for terrorists.

They would also destroy the attractive veneer of such weapons, the belief that, if you have them, people will look at you.

Ware cites the case of North Korea, which hinted that it was beginning to produce a bomb.

"The US jumped to attention and said they would help Korea in their

nuclear power industry in return for their agreement not to develop nuclear weapons.

"They also agreed to reduce military exercises there, and they promised not to use nukes against them in the event of war."

As long as nuclear weapons remain legitimate, they can be perceived as a viable tool for terrorists. Changing their status won't mean that you remove the potential for their use, but, Ware maintains, that potential will be so much less.

If he's a realist about what getting rid of these nasties means in fact, then what does he say about the time it might take?

Ware gives a shrug and looks serious.

"Oh, I think we'll get a convention set in place before the end of my lifetime."

That could mean another 50 years.



Alyn Ware ... you can't give up when the end is in sight. HERALD PICTURE / ROSS-WHITE

• **T**HE time could be right for another treaty, for a number of reasons — but don't hold your breath. Fifty years elapsed between the time the United States signed the Geneva Protocol which forbade the use of chemical weapons in 1925 and its eventual ratification of it. Perhaps some heart can be taken from the fact that January 24 marked another 50-year milestone: the first United Nations resolution calling for a ban on nuclear weapons was presented — by United States delegates — on January 24, 1946, almost immediately after the organisation was set up.