

Pugwash Speech: How non-nuclear weapons states can advance Nuclear Disarmament.

In New Zealand we have just celebrated twenty years since we passed the New Zealand Nuclear Weapon Free Zone, Disarmament and Arms Control Act on the 8 June 1987. The anniversary was a welcome reminder of what we had accomplished in the face of disapproval of other states.

It was a welcome reminder of the history of both popular and government opposition to nuclear weapons. We had not always been so opposed. In the early 1950's we had snuggled up to the nuclear powers of Britain and the USA although by 1958 Prime Minister Walter Nash, speaking at the United Nations, called for the negotiation of a multilateral treaty to ban nuclear testing and NZ differed from their ANZUS treaty partners in this campaign for such a treaty.

The anniversary was a welcome reminder that we in the South Pacific had been the victims of the testing of the Nuclear weapons states. And the nuclear tests in the South Pacific had made the theory of nuclear weapons into a neighbourhood reality. And perhaps our greatest gesture of opposition was in 1973 when the Government of Norman Kirk ordered a NZ frigate to sail up into the French testing zone. It was a bold move that caught the mood of the people in New Zealand, even more when a Cabinet Minister and other politicians were on the frigate.

In the last election one of the contributing factors to the close defeat of the opposition had been a perception that they would repeal the nuclear free legislation. They have since made clear that they will not repeal this legislation. It is held too dear by the people of New Zealand.

In New Zealand this legislation is supported by the majority of the political parties in Parliament. Only one very small right wing party has expressed doubts about the value of the legislation.

But while this legislation and its anniversary makes us feel good, it does not advance the case for further work on a nuclear free world. In a strange way, it takes it off the NZ agenda. There is a perception that we have won this fight, so let us move on to a new one like climate change or cluster bombs. The trouble is that the fight for a nuclear free world has not been won just because there is such good legislation in New Zealand.

Now I am not denying that such legislation can serve as an example for other countries, and as such should be promoted, as is done so ably by Alyn Ware. And if we did not have such legislation I would be campaigning for it, but in New Zealand, we have to move past this.

In a speech celebrating the anniversary, the current Minister for Disarmament, Hon Phil Goff, said; "...as a small country we can and should show leadership in articulating our values to the world as an independent nation".

My observation is that we have become too wedded to only moving at the same pace as our “likemindeds” and for us that has been the New Agenda Coalition. The likemindeds did not sail their frigates into the testing area. We were on our own as a nation state, but we were surrounded by the boats of individual people and NGO’s from around the world. When I challenge why we are not pursuing the development of a treaty to outlaw nuclear weapons, I am advised that it is the wisdom of our likemindeds that we concentrate on the NPT rather than divert attention and energy to develop a new treaty.

So it is in this cautious framework that I approach the topic of what non nuclear states can do. There are two types of those states. The first are typified by Sweden and Ireland. They have relatively well resourced Ministries of Foreign Affairs. And then there is say Papua New Guinea, Kenya and Ecuador, where the size of the ministries will be comparatively smaller and the call on them very heavy indeed. **The workload in initiating action for disarmament must be taken up by the better resourced states.** But they must continue to work to involve the other less-resourced states. Most of the NAM states want neither an arms race nor nuclear warfare or intimidation. As an aside, it has been interesting to observe the pressure that has gone on small states with limited meeting times** to pass the non-proliferation legislation, under threat that trade may be difficult if there are not high enough security safeguards. Would that such pressure could be made upon those who have not signed the Comprehensive Test ban Treaty.

So a group of non nuclear states must show leadership and commitment to a nuclear weapon free world. I am still attracted to the model of how such a group be formed that has been suggested by Aaron Tovish. It might just break the deadlock that the New Agenda seems paralyzed by, particularly since the new Agenda can no longer deliver the support of the Non Aligned movement that is now so split on issues of nuclear arms.

And within that group either an NGO or one country must take up the ownership to establish such a group. And my hope here is that New Zealand plays a better resourced and deliberate role in this task. New Zealand has worked well and almost effectively in the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva, but there is more to be done.

Another task is to spread the message of the success of legislation that specifically outlaws nuclear weapons within a country’s borders. Part of the opposition that NZ experienced*** came from the fear that such a movement could be catching and could affect the network of bases and airspace and ports throughout the world. It would be interesting for the states who are members of the European Union would begin to consider such legislation.

Non nuclear states can work together to build nuclear weapon free zones. In all the stalemate experienced in disarmament debate, we forget to acknowledge the growth of these zones. Mexico did us all a favour twice within the last twelve months by focusing our eyes on the importance of these zones. We have seen the declaration of the Central Asian NWFZ and I am encouraged to hear that there is talk of a Nordic/Arctic/Canadian zone and , of course, we still have work to do to persuade the needed number of states to build a southern Hemisphere that is nuclear weapons free.

Non nuclear states can begin to assert that nuclear weapons not be stationed on their soil. I can be accused of preaching too idealistic a message here. But the time is particularly ripe as citizens of Central European state are being asked by NWS to host bases or posts which play a part in the detection and deployment of nuclear weapons. The governments may be feeling obliged to grant the wishes of the big nuclear powers, but the citizenry is not. Perhaps such redeployment can be done in stages as the Belgians have shown with their move against the storage, use or development of depleted uranium within conventional weapons within their borders. But they need the support of other neighbours to have the thermonuclear weapons stored at Kleine Brogel airforce base removed.

I have noticed that there is a growing demand that governments divest any savings funds from companies involved in the nuclear weapons industry. I have noticed calls not to invest in Boeing and in the European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company. While I have tried to research the comparative size of any tailored nuclear weapons programme within those companies, I am aware that both those companies are perhaps best known for aeroplane manufacture: the Airbus and the fleet of Boeings that we all fly in. Is it as valid to ban ourselves from flying in the products of those companies? In the ways that companies are structured today, I do not see this tactic as the clearest and most effective tool in our bid to rid the world of nuclear weapons. As well, investment by countries compared with investment by private equity funds must be minimal. I think this becomes a token venture. But I could be wrong in my assumptions and would welcome any comments.

And then there is the issue of educating the next generations. From my observation we seem to have missed the boat with those in their 40's today but the ones younger, at least in New Zealand are beginning to respond. This has been through excellent courses offered at Universities, not all focused on nuclear disarmament, but on different facets of peace making. There is a delicious synergy in terms of global sustainability in disarmament, the environment and development issues. There are some top quality young people coming forward to serve on these issues.

And so I come to the issue that seems to be bedeviling the states of the New Agenda. A focus on CTBT, on promoting the NPT, because with all its faults it does have some of the NWS as signatories, rather than an all out attempt to build a movement for an international treaty to outlaw nuclear weapons. Malaysia and Costa Rica brought this to the NPT prepcom but won little support. I do not believe that it is a question of either NPT or the development of a new Treaty. We can and must work on a number of fronts. We need better co-ordination. The Middle Powers Initiative has been a beacon in this time of stalemate, as have PNND and mayors for Peace and then the campaigns within different countries. I have hopes that this weekend we might draw up a map of the campaigns and the actors and identify the gaps and then seriously begin to target individuals/countries/NGOs to take on some specific responsibilities.

I look forward to the discussion: but it is my strong opinion that non nuclear weapons states have a strong responsibility to their citizens to build a nuclear weapon free world with all the tools possible.