

People's Movements, Citizen Diplomacy and a Hope for the Future

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For years the abolition movement has looked at disarmament in isolation, but that is like the physician who treats high blood pressure symptomatically without looking at the underlying cause. A good physician looks at the broader picture. So if we want to live up to our responsibilities we have to look at security policies in a broader context.

From July 25th - 30th 2004 the Social Forum for the Americas took place in Quito in Ecuador. Farmers, workers, students, activists, intellectuals, religious leaders and Nobel Prize Laureates discussed the challenges we are facing in the fight for global survival and sustainable development. The topics that dominated the agenda was the economical liberalism introduced by the World Bank, IMF and the WTO as well as the global militarization spearheaded by the US. Both policies with horrendous consequences of poverty, hunger, disease and loss of human life, which is in stark contrast to the official purpose of social development and democratization.

The continued reliance on nuclear weapons as a part of security policies of nuclear weapon states and NATO is closely linked to the economical world order. Military might and security policies are the continuation of economical interests as Helen Caldicott writes in her book "the New Nuclear Danger". She describes how the American plans for a missile defence can be explained to a high degree by the close relations between the Bush Administration and some of the largest weapons producers in the world. She describes how the need for a market for the weapons industry in the 20th century has contributed to the many internal conflicts we have witnessed, especially in the Third World.

We will never meet our goals of peace and global disarmament if we do not acknowledge the close links between economy, super power politics and security policies and we must not lose sight of our ultimate goals of health and survival for all. We will never succeed if we do not acknowledge that health and sustainable development go hand in hand. We will never succeed as long as nuclear weapons exist, but the fight against weapons of mass annihilation will remain utopia as long as super power politics and economical interests are allowed to set the international agenda.

Our fight for global disarmament will for always be linked to the quest for peace, survival and sustainable development with respect for human rights, education and health care for all. To reach any and all of the above a radical change in the thinking that dominates political processes today is needed. Instead of basing our actions on a Machiavellian fear we must believe in each other and the value of

every single human being. As Dr. Hans Levander has pointed out, at a conference on alternatives to nuclear policies in Moscow, the old security dogma must be exchanged for a new one that builds on confidence, cooperation, responsibility, citizen diplomacy and sustainable long-term investment in life.

The Abolition movement has for years lost members, prestige and funding. We are very far from what we were during the Cold War when organisations like International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Our reactions have been incomprehensive wonder and complaints. What is happening? Why are students not interested in disarmament? Why are we constantly losing members? Why can't we get any money? Why this and why that!

It is about time that we grow up and mature with the time and the new century. The anti-war movement in the US is growing as the war in Iraq continues. Michael Moore's movie, "Fahrenheit 911" is a blockbuster and has collected more than 130 million dollars in just a month. The MEDACT report "Continuing Collateral Damage" about the humanitarian costs of the Iraq War is used by the UN and can be found on international websites used by thousands of humanitarian NGOs from all over the world. The Nuclear Weapons Inheritance Project with its focus on education and empowerment of students has grown enormously in just 3 years and we are now cooperating with several other peace and student NGO's. - And 10.000 people met in Quito in July to discuss possibilities for the future and build international networks working together for a better world. There are plenty of opportunities! The future is calling for a change.

It would be irresponsible and in conflict with basic principles of humanity to remain at home comfortably crying because of the risk of the NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty) falling apart in 2005!

The abolition movement must create a common vision for a peaceful and nuclear weapon free world. We must acknowledge and incorporate in our programs that we will never succeed in the abolition cause as long as economical neo-liberalism and unilateral militarization of the world continues. The fight for survival of the next generation must be fought on many different fields. We must work across organisations, geographical divisions and generations and return to our roots as socially responsible citizens who educate and inform the public as well as the decision-makers. The interest is there and the understanding is dawning. People's movements are being created and the general population is starting to question the reality of today. If we understand the need to integrate the struggle for a nuclear weapon free world with the struggle against the other enormous challenges facing humanity today we will also see the abolition movement come to life again. The potential is there. All that is needed is that we accept the challenge, formulate a common campaign integrating all our concerns and acknowledge that although we are different and have different perspectives on the world it must not prevent us from respecting each other in a joint struggle

for a better future!

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