

2010 Haas Peace Award

Nuclear Futures Conference

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Cora Weiss, former President and current UN representative, IPB

Thank you. The International Peace Bureau is honored to be among the three recipients of the Haas award for its role in helping to mobilize public opinion to support the World Court case on the illegality of the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons. Together with doctors and health workers, IPPNW, and lawyers, IALANA, we helped to mobilize public opinion and brought endless numbers of boxes of petitions, stating that nuclear weapons shocked the public conscience. The Japanese IPB members mobilized the greatest number of signatures, and also the largest number of people who accompanied them, including Hibakusha, survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In all, 3.6 million *Declarations of Public Conscience* in 36 languages were brought to the gates of the Court, piled high, protected by Hibakusha, as witness to the deliberations inside. The Petitions were officially received by the registrar of the Court who drew the attention of the judges to them.

These three organizations, two of which are Nobel Peace laureates, were the core group that came together with the World Federalist Movement in 1999 to organize the Hague Appeal for Peace. The World Court Project led directly to the creation of the Hague Appeal for Peace which sponsored the world's largest peace conference in May, 1999 under the banners of Time to Abolish War and Peace is a Human Right.

The International Peace Bureau received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1910. 13 of its officers over the years have been named Nobel peace laureates. Today it is a coalition of 320 member organizations from 70 countries, and is dedicated to working for a world without war. Its current campaign is for sustainable disarmament for sustainable development, and the abolition of nuclear weapons is at the top of the disarmament list.

In a message from Colin Archer, Secretary General of the IPB in Geneva, he recalls:

“The atmosphere in the Court during the oral hearings was highly charged, since there were many representatives of civil society present, as well as government spokespersons, some from the nuclear states. Everyone realized that this was a truly historic case and that a lot hung on the outcome...

“The fun bit for me was turning up at the gates with a van full of boxes of Declarations* that had been collected by hundreds of volunteers all around the world. The idea was to make them available to the judges, together with a box of literature showing the strength and extent of the worldwide anti-nuclear movement as evidence of the power of the public conscience. This aspect of our work was referred to especially in the Dissenting Opinion of Judge Weeramantry. We were so delighted that the Registrar welcomed us in, boxes and all - it felt like he really appreciated that the general public were, for once, actually taking an interest in - and hoping to influence - the arcane proceedings taking place inside the hallowed walls of the Peace Palace.”

Mobilizing public opinion is basic to the success of organized civil society. We are as important as the invention of the nation state. Our job is to monitor governments, to be the guarantors of democracy, to have a vision of the future and to come up with creative ideas to make that vision a reality.

So I'd like to remind you of another success story of civil society which has a lot to do with Philadelphia. In 1961, Dagmar Wilson, an artist, mother and wife of a British consular official, became alarmed about the fallout effects from atmospheric nuclear testing. She called some of her women friends together, they called others and Women Strike for Peace was born. Many of you knew Ethel Taylor. Ethel became the leader of WSP and was a stalwart determined advocate for a nuclear free world. Initially, we, mostly young mothers, quickly understood that the radiation from atmospheric nuclear testing would be carried by winds and rain and fall on the grass, cows ate the grass, and as it was long before canned baby milk, we gave our babies cow's milk. After the Tooth Fairy did her thing with our babies teeth, we sent them to a scientist at Washington University medical school in St Louis who examined them for the presence of Strontium

90...it showed up, and we women started showing up at the offices of newspaper editors all over the country teaching them how to spell Strontium, and discussing the effects of atmospheric testing.

Fast Forward. In Oct 1963, we stood in front of the White House fence as witness while Pres Kennedy signed the half ban treaty, outlawing the testing of nuclear weapons from the sky. Jerome Weisner, Kennedy's science adviser noticed us, and the President, acknowledging the role we had played in educating and mobilizing public opinion, sent Jackie out to give us coffee and donuts. We ate donuts in those days.

The fence of the Peace Palace and the fence of the White House have not kept out the efforts of mere mortal citizens to affect change. Those fences have gotten higher, and civil society has become more attached to our computers. Nonetheless, there are substitutes for oil but there is no substitute for organized civil society and public opinion. The lessons learned from the World Court Project and the early efforts of women and others, is that we need to continue to dream and to envision our world free of nuclear weapons, not "in some century", but yes, in our life time and the life time of our children and grandchildren. We need to be bold, well informed, and determined to make this little Earth safe for them.

Goethe once said, "Boldness has genius, power and magic in it." Let's not let fences stop our demand for a nuclear free world without war.

But it was Eleanor Roosevelt whose words continue to fuel our motivation: "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."
