

Notes for speech for 25th anniversary of NZ's nuclear free legislation

Maryan Street, Member of Parliament (Labour Party), 31 May 2012

Mihi.

Rangatira ma, ngā mema o te Pāremata nei, ngā manuhiri nei, naumai, haere mai etc.

Tēnā koe Kura - mihinui kia koe o te mihi whakatau.

Your Excellencies, Members of Parliament, visitors to this House, distinguished guests all, greetings.

I remember the lead up to the passing of the NZ Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament and Arms Control Act vividly. While I didn't know anyone who owned a boat at that time, I was well aware of what was happening out on the Waitemata harbour and in the Hauraki Gulf. I was very aware of what was happening on the streets and inside the Labour Party at the time.

Having pledged support for a nuclear-free NZ in our Manifesto, the fourth Labour government moved to enact that promise on coming into office in 1984. Special recognition needs to be given to former Labour MPs Helen Clark, Fran Wilde, Russell Marshall and Jim Anderton, and to Margaret Wilson who was President of the Party at that time, for holding the government to our commitment.

Since then, the diplomatic furore has come and gone. The division of opinion in the community has largely come and gone. The legislation has morphed into an integral part of NZ's identity and it would be a reckless and suicidal government which decided to tamper with the legislation now.

While we are appropriately reflecting on something momentous which happened 20 years ago, it is also appropriate to look forward so that we do not stand still in pursuing not only a nuclear-free country, but a n-free region, hemisphere and world.

In that context, I would like to acknowledge the 1967 Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America. This establishes Latin America as the first military denuclearisation region in the world. It is a binding, legal commitment to keep the territories free from nuclear weapons forever. It makes a real contribution towards preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons as well as providing a powerful catalyst for complete disarmament. I would like to convey my respects to all the ambassadors here today from Latin American embassies and pledge NZ's ongoing cross-party support for combined efforts towards disarmament.

I would also like to pay tribute to all the peace groups throughout NZ who are represented here today. This was always a people's movement, to which political parties responded. Congratulations on your conviction, your tenacity and even your courage which made the words nuclear-free NZ part of our lexicon. It was your efforts and the force of your arguments and protests which got us where we are today. You are still needed internationally.

[Available online at www.icanw.org.nz]