

# Mary Woodward

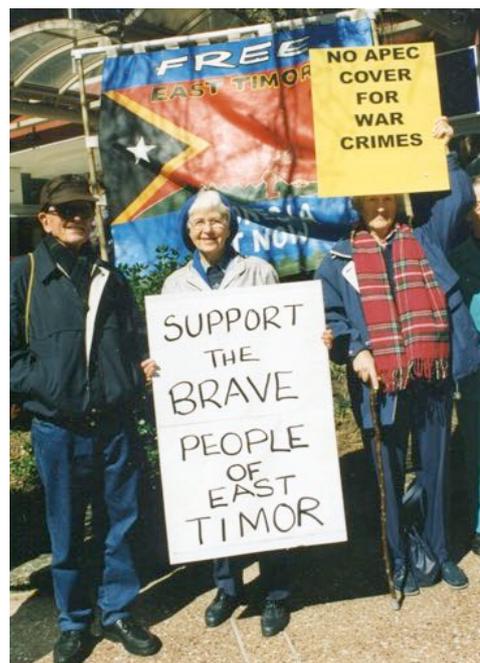
*Edited transcript of an interview by Ruth Greenaway with Mary Woodward, in Auckland, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2003.*

**Well Mary I just thought, as this is part of a project about peace stories, that I might begin the interview by asking you what peace means for you?**

It means a great deal more than just the absence of fighting or war, of course, because I feel there's really very much more attention should be paid to why we don't have peace, than to looking at the end result of violence and war. It fits in very well with my Quaker ideas which I only came to quite late in life. That really if one wants peace one must work for peaceful conditions. One cannot expect people to be peaceful if they are poor and they are oppressed and the only alternative to violence is letting people do all sorts of cruel and nasty things. It's ridiculous. One does have to have peaceful conditions and that is everybody's responsibility.

**How would you say that you became aware of what were the difficult conditions that people were living under that prevented peace from really taking hold?**

I think that from the time I was a child I was aware that there is a great deal of poverty and injustice in NZ, because I lived in the far north at the time of the depression. My father who was a surveyor, a land surveyor was involved in maintaining and establishing a camp for the unemployed. My mother at the same time was rather like a Lady Bountiful and she very often had unemployed people who would just come in out of the road to our house. I'm sure that this was passed on from one person to the next that there was a kind lady who would give you a meal and some money and sit and listen to you. People would come in with a swag and in those days (mid 1930s) some men had no prospects, no hope, no job, no anything. They would just take to the roads and walk and walk and find odd jobs with the farmers and enough for a meal and then move on to the next. My mother took anybody in - fed them a decent meal and sent them away with food in their pack and I think perhaps more important listened to their story. Very often the poor men would just have their heads in their hands and weeping in despair and my mother listening and saying well have another cuppa tea and offering them food. So it was part of my growing up and you can't expect those people to feel peaceful, it's impossible if you live like that and the society is so unjust, why didn't they have a job?



**Mary Woodward at an Auckland Demonstration against APEC, 1999**

My mother had never voted Labour in her life. She was a lady really. She had been bought up in very genteel circumstances but as she said “you can’t have this kind of thing going on” and she very reluctantly voted for “those people” as she called them who couldn’t even talk properly, they dropped their ‘h’s’ and obviously were quite unsuitable to be running the country - but they did have some good ideas. And so I became a convert to the idea that you can’t have a peaceful society unless you have a fair one. Just from listening to what my very conservative and very lady-like mother said in her position.

My father was a very ‘doer’ Scot full of sorts of rebellious ideas and a great deal of blame he felt for the upper classes who ran society to please themselves. I listened to that over and over again. That was real breakfast conversation; it was always that the upper classes were to blame for the state of affairs. So the idea that the state of society had to do with a peaceful society was very early because there were riots in those days, in Auckland by unemployed people. My mother and father both agreed - what do you expect, these people haven’t got a job and what else can they do? You’ve got to give them a decent future or they will feel angry. So that was a domestic situation I think, but it was true in the world as a whole, that if people are unjustly treated and have no decent future in front of them they are going to turn to violence and we can’t be surprised at it.

### **Which part of the far north did you live in?**

We lived in Kaitaia, which is well north and in those days was a very small number of white people there - Pakeha. There I think there were 100 white people in Kaitaia at that time... and there were Maori everywhere. That’s another story. Although the Maori language was very widely spoken, I never tried to learn it. I did Latin and French at school. My father, who was often involved in land discussions in Court for nearly 20 years never learnt a word of Maori. Because he said, it’s a dying language - that was the idea. That was the general opinion amongst uneducated people like my parents. That it would just die out because it was a primitive language.

### **Did you come from a large family?**

No, no, two girls in the family, that’s all. My father was extremely disappointed and ashamed that he had no sons - for which he blamed my mother.

### **What sort of work was your father doing?**

He was a land surveyor and a drainage engineer. He wasn’t an engineer at all but there was a great scheme for diverting water in the north for bringing land under cultivation and he was involved in surveying the new places to set up the new drainage schemes. Quite an interesting lot of work to be doing.

### **So did you do most of your early schooling up north?**

Yes, until I reached high school. I had two years of high school in Kaitaia and then we went to live in Invercargill, so the other end of the country. I was there for a few years and then we went to Napier and then Hastings. So I went to a lot of different schools, moving around the whole time. Eventually came here to Auckland, to

University in 1942. I had already done a year of University while at school extramurally because I didn't think I would go to University.

**Why did you think you wouldn't be able to come?**

Because they couldn't afford it and I would have gone to Teachers College and tried to do a University degree at the same time but I doubted that I would be able to do that. Well my father was a real Scot whose reverence for education was very great and he thought that going to University was the peak of anything one could possibly achieve. Fortunately or unfortunately, my grandmother died (my mother had come from a gentile family with a private income) just before I was due to go to Teachers College which I didn't want to do, and made it possible for me to come to University full time for two years. My extramural university work, where I passed some subjects, meant it only took me two years fulltime to finish a degree. While at Teachers College I did some more University work and then my parents moved to Christchurch, so I was able to stay at home, which makes a big difference to the cost of going along to University. I taught for half the year and I did five papers for the thesis for my degree at the same time. I wasn't all that clever but it wasn't surprising when I look back on it that I got a Third Class degree. I did pass.

**Excellent. Your subject was in... politics, is that right?**

Well no, no it should have been but I had absolutely no idea of where I was going so I did my subject that I just chose. It was the last year of the war, 1945. My university work was done in fits and starts. But I took for my subjects, women's working conditions, from the earliest times right up to the present day. But then, I only did it up until the arbitration act had come out, 1895 or some date like that. I suppose you might say that that gave me some kind of insight into the injustices in society. The terrible conditions that people worked under for example. Women were expected to stand all day, there was no seating and they were not allowed to go to the loo except at stated hours. You imagine, the trials and tribulations must have been pretty awful. And so, the thought of the idea of justice and society stuck with a peaceful and reasonable sort of life, I suppose.

**Would you say that your parents, as you moved around from place to place, became quite involved with what was happening in the community at the time?**

Not at all, they had no involvement whatever. My mother played bridge and had tennis parties - she was a very domesticated person, she did all the preserving and the cooking and the cleaning. She did have a lady who came in to scrub the floors, but apart from that she did absolutely everything. She didn't do anything at all in a public way. Nor did my father.

**Did religion play a part in your family life?**

My father was an extremely angry, anti-religious person and lost absolutely no opportunity for blackguarding religion. He'd been brought up in a very strict Presbyterian family where children were disciplined quite cruelly and they were very poor. Their parents were rabid Presbyterians and gave him the idea that religion was something that he wanted nothing whatever to do with. I did go to Sunday school

and I was extremely religious as a small child in a very peculiar kind of fashion. I was a very devout going to Sunday school. My father made rude remarks about the Church and religion and God, constantly to upset my mother. My mother and father were not very happy together as you can understand. So it wasn't a peaceful society, a peaceful world I lived in at all. There were constant cruel remarks and all that, but nothing towards us as children. My sister and I were really loved and looked after properly and there was absolutely no violence ever towards us or no violence between my parents either, except a constant state of undeclared war. Which I must say influenced me in my growing up relationships. I took a long time to decide on who I'd get married to, because I really didn't want to end up fighting. So there we are.

**Say as a person in your teenage, or your later part of your teenage years, when you started to think about what you might do after school, and before University did you have an idea of that you would like to do anything that was related to peace?**

No, nothing at all. I never ever thought about it. I didn't particularly wanted to teach but that was the only job open to you. It was the only option. If you were very clever, then you would go into lecturing in University and do a PhD. But I wasn't very clever, I was moderately intelligent I suppose, but not a clever child. I ended up with a third class degree. I wasn't very old - only about 19 when I finished my degree, so then I went on and did a Masters.

**Incredible.**

And at the same time I broke of an informal kind of an engagement with my first only other serious boyfriend I ever had before Jack. I think I broke it off because he was anxious to get married – Now! I didn't want to, I was extremely fond, but I wanted to do something myself, first. I didn't want to go straight from University to getting married. In those days, getting married meant that you probably had a baby quite soon and then it was domestic life for the rest of time and I didn't want that.

**What other experiences did you want to have?**

I wanted to see what was happening in the rest of the world, and I wanted to have the experience of being independent and leading my own life, without being dependant on my parents for money and board. I just wanted a bit of time to sort things out myself. My boyfriend wanted to get married now. A lot of my friends did go straight from University into marriage and most of those people had children straight away. But, then did their professional thing later. It wasn't the end of the world that they had their children but then at perhaps early middle-age, they then did all sorts of interesting things -did extra training and went on. But I didn't see it like that. I thought that once you got married then you had lots of children and that was that. There was no tradition or possibility of a married woman actually working. It wasn't the right thing to do, it was considered that you were neglecting your children, and if the marriage broke, well I could hear my mother saying, "Well what did you expect, leaving the poor man", I was there to take care of him. It was the sort of thing that once you got married that was it.

**Right. So the work you did after University, was that teaching?**

Yes, I taught in a small country town in Rangiora and enjoyed it very much. I got involved in community things, like I took the children tramping. In those days there was no sort of counsellor in the school. But the children would come, they were teenagers and they would talk about all sorts of things, because I wasn't much older than they were. I was only 21 or 22 yrs and some of them were 17yrs. I took them tramping, five or six or even ten older children. We'd camp out and sit around the fire and talk...I had a very interesting time. I wouldn't have wanted to miss that three or four years for anything. Then finally when I got married to Jack aged 25 in 1949. He was going overseas and I'd already planned to go overseas and we joined up. Of course you got married in those days. There wasn't any possibly of having a travelling companion unless you were married. So he was quite enthusiastic about that idea too. We went off to Canada for three years.

### **What was life like for you when the Second World War broke out?**

I was still at school of course, high school, in 1939. I only later realised that what had happened to my mother must have been that her real sweetheart was killed in the war. Because she didn't get married until she was 33yrs. That's quite old for a woman of her generation. She was 35 I think when I was born and 37yrs or 38 when my sister was born. Now that's late for people of my mother's generation. My mother had come from the gentry class. The tradition was that women didn't work, and she was brought up in a big house in Frankton Junction with a lot of other women and I think as she had no job. My father gave her the opportunity to get away. This example that I had of my mother was, that getting married wasn't much good unless you were really happy and really fulfilled and you should wait a bit. I wasn't particularly interested in peace, though I wanted a more just world. I was worried about unemployment because I had seen that and throughout the Depression. My father was HR to the unemployment workers camp, where the men were digging drains to drain the Awanui swamps up north. Under the most dreadful conditions, they had thigh boots and shovels. No mechanised bulldozers and things had come on the scene yet. My father knew that on a Saturday they all used to use the coppers and make home brew and he thought they needed to have a bit of fun. He just didn't ever do anything about it. I think my mother felt like that too, because she took these unemployed people in off the street and fed them and looked after them. So if you think about the peace and the social justice thing - I don't think my parents had any idea about peace activists, except the idea that they were totally unrealistic and silly. My father had been to the war and he was a returned service man. So he had this strong thing, well you've got to fight for it, if you want decent things to happen. You've got to be prepared to put your life on the line. So they weren't at all sympathetic about that, but they were concerned about a decent social system, because they were right in the middle of it. Conditions in the unemployed camps were absolutely awful and these poor fellows, all single men. Imagine the life, they couldn't have had any girlfriends or whatever, had any opportunity for marriage, because in those days if you got married you had to be prepared to have a family. So, social justice wasn't necessarily connected with peace but it was seen as absolutely essential if you wanted to have any kind of a stable society. So I suppose that idea was very strong in my mind from the time I was a child.

### **It was like a pre-determined condition for peace?**

Yes, all the time. It was all around me.

**When you were describing you years of teaching and when you took the students out tramping, do you feel that you developed a sense of adventure, that you had quite an adventurous spirit?**

I didn't think of it like that, no because going tramping is not completely daring. But it does involve being able to sleep on a sleeping bag on the floor and not worry about it. I think maybe my Scots upbringing had something to do with that- you didn't complain. If you were uncomfortable or tired or hungry, we got no consideration as children if we were scared for example. If something is wrong, well look at what you are doing yourself and do something about it.

**Side Two Tape One.**

**Mary could you tell me when you first began to be interested in the Quakers?**

I wasn't interested in Quakerism until quite late really and the only way that I came to be concerned with Friends was that Jack and worked in a work camp in Europe on our way home from our travels. We didn't go there because we wanted to be part of the peace movement or anything like that; it never came into our heads. We wanted somewhere where we could be in Europe for a time and not have to pay. The Quaker work camps after the war, were in places that had been devastated by the War and there were different groups that would get together young people over the three months of the University holiday time and we would work to restore, knocked down buildings or to put things right. I'm not sure if the project that we worked on for two months in Italy was particularly useful; but it did give us an introduction to Quakers. We began the day with Quaker meeting and problems were dealt with in the Quaker fashion, by sitting thoughtfully and carefully. When we came back to NZ I was not at all religious. I still thought religion was a pack of rubbish. But I was asked to go to Quakers and tell them about our work and they seemed quite sensible people, so I kept going, very reluctantly, because I was very anti-religious at that time. Then after years and years, it just became part of my life. I think that, the basic thing about the Quakers is not their peace stand; that grows out of their basic principle which is that 'there is that of God in everybody'. Given the opportunity, that will come out. It is up to us to make a world in which that aspect of people has got the space to move, instead of allowing conditions to come about in which quite understandably people feel angry and they see no other way of getting out of their situations except by being unpeaceful. So it all hangs together, for me.

**When you talk of peace and link that into there is God within everyone, what does that mean for you in terms of those who are the oppressors and the instigators of violence and war?**

I don't see any way except by resisting, however one can, those people, but also trying to do something about the conditions that makes people like that. Why are they like that? What sort of society, what sort of a world have they grown up in that they feel that violence and oppression is inevitable and good? If we talk about the current situation, how is it that a large country should see that getting heaps of material goods as being the highest thing they can aim at? How did it get to be like that? So that Quakers in America do try to build from inside a different kind of vision of society and that's the way that Friends are supposed to, it's an ideal; we wouldn't all measure

up. But the idea is that if you want peace you've got to make it possible to be peaceful and you've got to create the sort of conditions in which people can be peaceful. Otherwise, it's all just a beautiful idea, that doesn't go anywhere.

**So when you came back to NZ, what sorts of things were the Quakers from NZ, doing outside of their meetings?**

I have absolutely no idea, I was still extremely non-religious, because I had been extremely religious as a child and when I got to be about 15yrs I was confirmed and I began asking questions and nobody could answer them so I decided that whole thing was a load of rubbish. I had absolutely nothing to do with any kind of religious things, until after I had been to the Quaker work camp when I was in my middle-late 20s. Then they seemed to be people who connected peace with having peaceful conditions. If you want peace you've got to work for conditions in which people can be peaceful. A hungry man will fight for bread, if not for him, for his children. It makes it impossible if you don't first allow people to live decently and then to work for a peaceful world. That's a world wide thing. Do you want to know about the attitudes when we did the CND thing in Christchurch?



**Mary Woodward with Quaker friend Katherine Knight**

**Could you just explain how you became involved, and how did the CND become established?**

It's very clear in my mind, as soon as I had enough money to get the New Statesman, a British magazine, I subscribed to it and I got that rather than clothes, or trips to the pictures or anything like that. I just found it so interesting. Bertrand Russell published in the New Statesman a very good article about the peaceful world that we wanted and the difficulties with the bomb. That seemed absolutely sensible to me. After the nuclear bomb went off there was a meeting at the University of Canterbury just when I was finishing as a student.

The conclusion from our discussions was that there would never be any more war, because this was just too too terrible and too devastating and we would have to realise that war was out and we had to find other ways. But you see it didn't turn out like that. The problem of having alliances that would lead to the use of the bomb seemed absolutely dreadful. So I wrote a booklet (on SEATO – South East Asian Treaty Organisation) together with other people in Christchurch. It was other people more than me, I don't know how my name got on it really, but that kind of labelled me immediately. It just seemed that alliances like that were going to involve us in the use of well, the bomb was the ultimate thing, if you were going to do things peacefully that was what it was going to end up with. Yet it was so devastating, I don't think that people now understand how devastating the effect of the Hiroshima bomb was on our thoughts. That we had meeting after meeting that said this means the end of war, we simply cannot do this. All these innocent people, women and children... a hundred thousand innocent people, dead, one hundred thousand wounded, no body getting

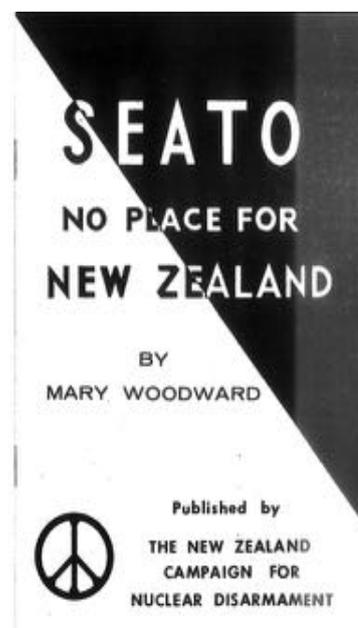
away. The old traditions of war, well I know European cities had been bombed. But it just seemed so, so dreadful; the sense of shock was huge. But we underestimated human cruelty I think and the capacity for the desire for power, when really it doesn't seem to matter anymore. It's absolutely horrifying. I think my interest in peace started from there. I hadn't thought particularly about it until the bomb was used. It was just that this won't do, this means that totally peaceful and innocent people are going to be wiped out most horribly and you can't do that. It will never happen again, it's just so dreadful. Of course it didn't turn out like that did it?

**So in terms of compiling information to put together the booklet, the SEATO alliance or treaties - how did you go about making sure that your information was accurate and gaining information to put in there?**

Well I had done a history degree and had learnt something about research and quoting your sources, so I used those skills.

**But where were you obtaining your information from?**

I went to the library and looked it up the newspapers and books and I think it was properly researched and annotated and everything. I didn't think of it as being a particularly threatening thing to the authorities, but it was regarded as being pretty left wing I think.



**What was the response, from people in authority and in particular politicians?**

Well, I think the response wasn't so much what the politicians said. After we formed CND we went up to Wellington several times and spoke to select committees about different pieces of legislation. Their responses were all recorded in government records. I went with Graeme Miller who was a political studies lecturer and a good solid church person. I was just beginning to be interested in Quakers. But the thing that struck us was when we talked to the parliamentarians, how little they knew. Because peace stuff is not very popular and you have to push very far before you realise that you couldn't argue with the politicians, because they didn't know a thing. The people who did know were their advisors, the various technical people, about treaties and politics. We ended up arguing with them about the implications of what was being done.

**Do you think they felt threatened by your stance?**

I think they were surprised, not threatened because we knew what we were talking about. They thought we just had a lot of airy fairy ideas about peace and that really all they had to do was to quote a few facts and we'd give in. But, Graeme was a political studies lecturer and I had a history degree and we did know what we were talking about. The interesting thing was later on we heard quite a bit of our submissions repeated in parliamentary debates. Graeme rang me one day and said 'how did you like your speech?' It was still going on, so I turned it on and somebody or other in parliament had just picked up the material I had produced and they were

using it. So well, that's good. Because then that goes into the record...and somebody had at least heard it.

### **How did you distribute this little booklet?**

We sent it to every organisation we could think of and in those days people used to ask us to go and speak to them and we'd take this booklet along with the other stuff - to all kinds of organisations. One of the interesting things was there was a lot of fear about communism. Elsie Locke being on the committee meant that CND became much more suspect than it would otherwise have been because people would take fright at the notion of a Communist, or the wife of a communist, which is what it amounted to. Of course I had never read "*Landfall*" or too much. Elsie had written a very thoughtful article about her getting out of the Communist party.

### **What was it called?**

"*Looking for answers*" I think. It explains why she had joined the Communist party to start with. Lots and lots of idealistic people did because the conditions were so dreadful. The fact that when she was ill and her back for two years, she had time to think -she thought her way out of the Party. But Jack her husband, never had that time. He was too busy dressing the kids and putting dinner on the table and doing the washing and things like that. He never really had time to think about that pattern. If you imagine lots of people grown up in patterns, often in a church situation where they never think their way out of it, because it's comfortable, all their friends belong and everyone thinks the same thing and I imagine being a member of the Communist Party is the same. Even more so because you're all a bit of a group of weirdos and you have to stick together. I don't think Jack ever realised what a huge gap there was between what Elsie had thought her way into and what he believed. It was just like those religious people who never imagine anybody has ever seen the truth and that's it.

### **Do you think within the Peace movement within that time there was more anti-Communist feeling or more acceptance of being aligned to communist thought?**

Well I wouldn't say it was anti- Communist. But it was very clearly non-Communist.

### **Right, but there wasn't too much friction about peoples' political allegiances?**

Well, I think that there was a concern in that people who were communist obviously were not 100% espousing the Peace movement. They couldn't be, Communism isn't a Peace movement and it doesn't mind about using violence if necessary. Of course at that time there was a good deal of stuff just coming out about some of the terrible things that had happened in the USSR and Elsie for example said well that was not what she understood by the Communist point of view. That they were breaking all the rules, once they really had gotten into power. They weren't real proper true believers anymore, they were a political party like anybody else. And so that's how she lost her great feeling of commitment to that. She never lost her commitment to the principles of Communism, but the way that it was carried out was just the opposite of what one would expect. But of course that put a label on anybody who said they were a communist and people quite understandably in a way took fright and said but

what does this mean, labour camps and torture and all sorts of things, which were happening in the Soviet Union. Just like with any power group, once they get in if it's difficult, they aren't so keen on having people who want to change it. Poor Elsie had to sit and write up page after page after page of Jack's enlightenment -that the Communist Party had been on the wrong track all the time. Elsie said "If only he had thought of those 20 years ago, what a difference it would have made to our lives."

**Just in talking about Elsie, I'm quite interested in who were the people around you at that time? When the CND started, who were some of the other people that were involved?**

We had some really marvellous people on our first committee. It was, I think a committee of all the talents. We had, Reverend Alan Brash, who was a very enlightened person and Keith Thompson, who was a Quaker and a really very nice, thoughtful person. Peter Alpers, who was a lawyer. Those were the three that I remember. It was a very interesting and hard working and capable Committee that we had. But Elsie and I did most of the day to day work. Elsie helped me because I didn't know my way around the political thing at all. I'd never been involved in anything like this. My family's reaction was absolute horror. I mean my mother said to my father "there's never been anything like this in our family before, whatever is wrong with her?" I mean to be marching on the street and taking an anti-government view. They never tried to stop me, but they were just surprised that I should have gotten involved in anything like that.

**Just thinking about you and Elsie working together - did you work from home during that time?**

Yes, we both did and we really did work together very harmoniously and enjoyed doing it. Sometimes when we had to prepare stuff for the papers...we prepared press releases and the Press in Christchurch was very good about taking what we prepared. Little articles, little statements. But when there was something that we really needed to work together on, Elsie would get on her bike and bring her typewriter to my place, or I still had two children at home and my sister didn't live very far away. She had absolutely no sympathy with the political side of things, and she was a very good Anglican but she and I helped one another a lot with our kids. So, if I had to go down and be with Elsie to type out something or other, well then I would take the kids around to my sister and she would look after them. Then you had to get the stuff for the Press Association, you had to get it to the Christchurch Press by a certain time. I can remember sitting with our two typewriters going madly about French tests and getting something done and then I peddled off to the Press to get there before midnight. So I had to run up the stairs and hand this in at about half past eleven so they had a press statement ready to go in the paper the next day. I don't know whether they would even take it now you see. Conditions were very good and they used to put it on the Press Association wire and it would go all around NZ. The other thing was that we used to peddle our bikes around Christchurch at midnight without any worry at all. None of us had a car...It's a different world, really, wasn't it?

**So were you having a lot of time responding to things, or did you also feel that you were also initiating?**

No I think we initiated things more. If I'm thinking about what the CND people did for me was they provided me with household help twice a week. So I never did a tap of housework. After I did the breakfast dishes, got the children off to school, the baby asleep, the middle one off to play centre and about that time it would be 10 o'clock and then I would sit down and we did have an overseas student who lived with us because he couldn't find anywhere else to go. There was a bit of prejudice in those days and so he lived with us. My husband, and the University is only just around the corner, and so they used to come home for lunch at 12 o'clock and so I had two hours that I could work like mad, and so I did it in that space of time. Well what did I do? I think that we built up connections all through NZ. We prepared articles for the paper. We responded to whatever was in the paper. One of the first jobs that I had to do was to do my press cuttings every morning, and I had to do the day before paper, because the family was still reading it. You cut it out and stick it in the right place in books. I mean we didn't have access to the stuff that one has nowadays. Katie (Dewes) has all my clippings of course. I had half a dozen different ones on different aspects so that when I wrote to the parliamentarians and something like that I could quote from the book. We did quite a lot of keeping tags on what was said in parliament and responding to it. We sent a lot of information to parliamentarians. We prepared, Elsie and me, a sort of fact thing, we sent to every parliamentarian. Largely what we did was to try and influence people and we wrote to all the different organisations around the city, sending them information and material and offering them speakers.

**I'm quite interested to know did you have contact with people overseas.**

Yes, the British CND was hugely useful and good for morale. I don't think there was anybody else.

**So it was mainly with England?**

England, yes. I don't think there was anything in Australia, comparable.

**So, you're sharing information and supporting one another with how to initiate the things that you wanted to do.**

Well we just had lists of all the organisations around Christchurch and in Canterbury, we offered a speaker and we sent them material regularly about what was happening and so on. Elsie didn't get on so well. In fact, the Women's Institute for example, were very keen on having a speaker, until I offered Elsie's name. Then suddenly they froze. My sister, was a good Anglican and she the young wives. Beth said "Oh well I'm not surprised" that Elsie was offered as a speaker and the group froze up and didn't want us after all. Beth said "Yes we have a list of people we're told just to be wary about." Of course people like that wouldn't know a thing about Elsie having left the Party. She was still married to a Communist wasn't she?

**Side One Tape Two**

**Could you tell me a little bit about maybe some of the ways in which CND people supported one another, when maybe there were difficulties that arose, or challenging times?**

I think we just kept in very close touch with one another - particularly with Elsie. If any particular big issue came up we would talk about it. Or, make a time in the evening when we'd got the children in bed and make up a press statement, and then that would be sent all around NZ to other groups. They weren't always all that keen to follow our example but we were the NZ Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, so the Press Association was quite good on taking our little articles. We had a regular newsletter. The local groups, they each had their own particular kind of flavour. Dunedin was fairly conservative but very efficient. Nelson had Sonja Davies, Wellington was always a problem because they were far more, and they had a cutting left wing approach to things, which we weren't all that keen on. We thought that was more likely to alienate people than anything else, and the left wing approach wasn't the main point of what we were doing. Whereas for the people in Wellington it was and that did lead to friction sometimes.

**So when times like that happened, were things resolved, or did you find a way to allow each person to do what they needed to do?**

Well we had to have a common approach for the whole organisation so I think that sometimes the Wellington people just went ahead and said it anyway for themselves. Sometimes that didn't have a very good result for the group, because we were all involved in that. One of the difficulties was that Wellington had quite a number of Communist people in it and they didn't particularly care about us, because they were so sure that their point of view was the right one. So naturally it's like very religious people they think that they wipe you out because you know you haven't got the right idea. So, it was a problem, it wasn't a problem in Christchurch or Dunedin.

**What was your approach to running the campaign or to lobbying, what did you feel was important?**

The most important thing was to get your facts right and to marshall them properly because we felt that the facts were so absolutely obvious. Arthur Prior, who was a young political studies lecturer, put this into my mind at the very beginning. Very soon after the bomb went off, Arthur gave a talk on the implications of the atomic bomb. I can remember peddling home with John Pocock, who was in the same class with me and we just agreed just can't do this. Nowadays it seems to me that you can do anything. Tell lies, bust up a whole country, anything.

**Within your work with CND, did you as a group comment on power structures, say within NZ for example?**

No we didn't... We didn't look at that at all I wouldn't think.

**You made a comment on the SEATO alliance and then you went on to make a comment about the alliance with ANZUS, and so did you feel you were being really quite outspoken as a group in terms of commenting on NZ's approach to international affairs?**

Yes and we didn't regret it, but we did know that as a result of our stand about SEATO and ANZUS we were very suspect as an organisation because in those days the Communist threat was such a bogey and to threaten the power structure like that,

allied you with other people who were going to destabilise these things. So, the label 'communist' was a very good way of dismissing anything you said. Because you don't listen to people who are communist, they obviously are just trying to twist you around. It was unfair, but it was completely understandable and the only way you could deal with that, if you could manage to get to talk to people was to be as reasonable and as careful with your facts as you possibly could be and not to be distracted by any kind of anti-commie kind of comments that might be made. They were quite immaterial.

**Was it important for you when you were being a representative of the CND to avoid the use of labels?**

Well no, I didn't pay any attention to avoiding using labels; all that we wanted to do was to put the rational facts of the matter and the point of view in front of people. These weapons are too dangerous to us and we must not have an organisation that depends on them. Because they are not only immoral, they are useless things, they spread over a far too wide an area, you're not going to be able to concentrate on what you want to do even if I wasn't a pacifist in those days. Even if you want to achieve something by force, then this is going to mess things up completely; because you're going to involve innocent people and a much wider target than you really need to and you're going to affect the future in a way which is really a distraction from what you really want to do. So, it wasn't a sensible thing to do really. I didn't have in those days any kind of strong thing about pacifism, I wasn't a pacifist. Because you see just after the war, the war against Hitler, you couldn't expect an ordinary kid growing up in those days to say we mustn't use force, because what were we expecting people to do? Just be marched off to the concentration camps, without saying boo! And for us to say oh well, that's too bad. You see it was not a time to form the ideas that are behind, I think the only way that one can possibly, morally or sensibly support a non-violent point of view is to work for a non-violent society. The right way to deal with it, is not to say 'oh being violent is very wicked and you mustn't do it', but to create the situation in which you don't have to violent in order to lead a decent life and get justice for yourself and more importantly your children. So that, as afar as I'm concerned, political action or any sort of action, church action, anything you like to work for a decent society, is the real peace work. Saying oh tut tut, you mustn't use violence is really too far down the line. Like telling a kid that's been whacked and all that, not to be a naughty little boy is stupid, that he will be if he is being treated cruelly, he'll be like that.

**What was it like in getting to know Alan Brash and where he was coming from?**

Well, Alan was a big influence on me, because if I'd remarked on the fact that I was very religious as a young person and I came to see that a great number of the people that I had been with didn't know anything about what they were telling me, when I went to be confirmed. I began asking questions and I wasn't taken seriously. But Alan was different, he had a huge influence on me because he had thought it through and he could answer you sensibly when you asked him questions. It was Alan's influence as well as other Quakers that made me ready to go to Meeting.

**What attributes do you think that he had that he was able to contribute in a positive way to the CND?**

Well he was very thoughtful; he also gave us access in the proper way to religious people to put it in a way so that they could see the point. And of course his own standing was important to us. I do remember his saying; someone had put pressure on him saying, "You really shouldn't be mixed up with that lot". Alan saying 'oh no, it's the right point of view and that's what I'm sticking to'. I remember him saying the same thing about Elsie that the fact that Elsie was on our committee, well to people who wanted to think like that; it gave them a good lever for saying "Look it's just a Commie outfit" I remember Alan saying to me "Oh no, we stick with Elsie, she's got the right idea" – a very valuable person to have. It was just a pity that Jack (Locke) didn't see the light.

**Was it important for you to take time to have for yourself, to be quiet and to reflect on what was happening?**

No, I don't think I did have time to do that, I had four children to look after and Jack (Woodward) was busy at work and in those days he just used to go back to work in the evening and I did the dishes and the kids and all that. We had an overseas student who lived with us, who was a sort of a charge as well.

**What was the time period when you were in the CND?**

Oh, from the minute that it started? We went back to the mid 50s, from 1956, or 57 I think. There was a meeting in the Friends meeting house and old John Johnson chaired that and that was the start of CND. Well it wasn't called that, it was called something else. We've got it in the book.

**It was against, nuclear warfare...?**

Yes something like that. It started off with quite a small little meeting and Elsie wasn't even there, she was out of Christchurch at the time, and old John Johnson took the lead and I became extremely friendly with John, who had been a pacifist all his life. He went to the war, this old man, he'd gone to the First World War and he'd become a pacifist as a result of what he saw in France. He went in the first division to France and it was absolutely terrible what happened. He became a pacifist as a result of his experience...but John was a Friend really and I started going to Quakers largely because of him. I went to visit him every week because he was old and he was a very grumpy and people couldn't get on with him but he knew a lot about poetry and he read the same sorts of things that I did and he was a really dear friend to me. John talked to me about how he had become to be a pacifist and why he thought it was important and why CND was particularly important. I couldn't become a complete pacifist at that time and I didn't for a long time but I did think that war was just ridiculous as a way of achieving anything. That using nuclear weapons was just too dangerous and we had to use our heads and stop it.

**So I think it was the Campaign against Nuclear Warfare first, and when did it did it became the campaign for nuclear disarmament?**

I don't know, probably at one of our meetings in Wellington, we began having meetings with Alex Stafford and others in Wellington. Made the NZ Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, it might have been when we took that name.

**Ok, another publication that has your name on the front is “The bomb, a NZ view”. Would you like to talk a little bit about how that came together?**

Yes, we adapted that from some other publication. It was from an American one and really I plagiarised that particular thing because all I did, I think, was to change the first chapter and to put in a map of NZ instead of Canada or wherever it was. Jack drew that for me, of how the bomb would affect NZ. The facts were all the same, whatever country it was. We just used NZ conditions. We don't really think the bomb was going to drop on NZ but it makes it more understandable if you use distances from outside Christchurch or Auckland, instead of from London or Los Angeles. It just makes you see more clearly.

**I'm quite interested, because that gave some quite graphic images and real challenging things for people to think about. I'm sure that New Zealanders had never thought that a bomb would be dropped on their country. What were people saying, just in the general public?**

Well we did a lot of public speaking in those days -we paid particular care to be accurate, not to overemphasise, never to exaggerate, always to be able to quote our sources. Also to become very well informed ourselves. We had Jim McCahon who was a nuclear physicist who was our scientific person, we had Alan Brash as our morals person, and we had a chap from the trade union movement, who kept us in touch with trade union affairs. So we swapped ideas, like that and always tried to send the right sort of person to talk to a particular kind of group.

**People in the organisations who you were sending the information to, did they respond or were they quite shocked at what the reality of nuclear bomb was?**

They weren't shocked, they were interested to know. We had a film that we used to show them. That was a bit of a shock horror thing, sometimes people used to cry.

**Because it just got me thinking about how just how ever present the build up nuclear arms would have been. I was wondering were New Zealanders thinking oh my gosh we need to build a fall out shelter in the back of our property, what's going to happen to our community? Were people thinking like that?**

Some people did and some people still do, but on the whole I think that we took for granted that nobody is going to really bother with NZ. We're too small and remote. So the only thing that could make us a target was our membership of organisations, like SEATO or whatever it might be. We don't need to belong to those. But that was seen as being a lack of democracy I think, that we were just giving our moral support to people. But one very important thing that we did do was to go and lobby parliamentarians quite regularly.

**Can you recall any incidences that happened?**

No, it will all be in the records. It was all taken down verbatim. It's in the parliamentary records of the different things that we talked about such as the effects of these things and how necessary were they and what was the use of them, because

they were so horrific and the result was worse than the problem. It was really usually the officials that used to challenge us, the parliamentarians didn't really. It was quite interesting the records of the debates that discussed what we talked about. The parliamentarians were pretty good really. Whether they changed policy or not, well because of course policy really didn't have so much to do with that, did it, it was high policy of tagging along then with the British mostly, the British and the French. One thing that we did do was to call on all the Embassies.

**Did you have to announce that you were coming?**

Oh we had to write to them and arrange a time and everything. I went up and went round all of them and I was having my fourth child at the time and I had to wear a smock you know. The French man told me "Madam", he said "in your condition you should be at home, thinking about your baby." I said "I am, I want this child to grow into a world where she's not going to die from radioactivity or something" and he looked very shocked. He didn't even ask me to sit down, the Frenchman. It was quite interesting really. I went to the English place where the chap was extremely correct and got me to sit down and you know talked to me but never got involved in the slightest. And the American embassy the bloke took a look at me and sat me down with a foot stool and bought me a cup of coffee. I had the most terrible difficulty in getting him to talk about politics. Because he would say "Are you comfortable? Are you not too tired? What are you going to do today?" You know, he was being very kind, Unclely kind of a character, like Americans can be but they don't get down to the issue you know and then they get all upset. But anyhow I did manage to get him down to it. The Russian embassy was the funniest one of all in a way because at that time the anti-Russian feeling was so strong and so much prejudice. The taxi driver took me in and said "do you want me to wait outside, I had better get you out of there." "Oh don't be stupid" I replied. The Russian ambassador wouldn't even listen to me. When I said about how bad the bomb was and one shouldn't have and one shouldn't use it and he said "We must defend ourselves, Madam". Then he gave me a great picture of the horrors of the second world war and how this was never going to happen again. Where their armaments were stationed, or where their defence were going to be and how there was no use in talking to them about the bomb, the West had the bomb and were obviously ready to use it. This was in the days where there was this great divide. "What do you expect us to do Madam?" he said. "Do we just wait to be bombed? Of course we must have a bomb of our own". It was quite reasonable what he was saying...

**To be prepared? Did you get the feeling that he felt the nuclear war was inevitable?**

Hmm. Yes he did, because he thought the West was so wicked. They would stop at nothing, so they had to have...much different than what is happening now. People feel one side is so wicked that they must have anything to respond.

**Side Two Tape Two**

**Mary could you tell me about the nuclear testing at Christmas Island and this was particularly visible from NZ on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July, in 1962.**

Yes, well it was a terrifying thing to see, the night sky light up in this fashion and this explosion had taken place so far away. We used to think well, NZ is sort of safe, we're not in the middle of it, but that did make you begin to think, we're not so far away. It wasn't really as if we were being selfish about things, although I suppose it was to some extent. But our concern was with world affairs, really, and what the bomb meant for the world as a whole and the prospects for the future.

### **What did it look like?**

Well the whole sky was a bright glow all over the whole of the sky.

### **People from all through-out NZ could see it?**

Yes, everybody could see it. We did use that in our discussions and our advertising, not our propaganda. Just to say, but look this is not really very far away and if a bomb used for testing has this degree of power, imagine how dreadful to think of it being used. I think that the idea of civilians being involved in the destruction and damage of war was something that was pretty new although of course during the First World War, open cities shouldn't be attacked because that was ordinary people. During the Spanish Civil War one of the terrible things was that, open cities were attacked and civilians were involved and that was regarded as very wrong, whoever did it. There was still that sort of feeling, that civilians shouldn't be involved, that it was armies against one another that fought like that. This Second World War was the time that the whole population was involved and the use of the bomb was dreadful from that point of view. It just couldn't possibly be right. This series of lectures by Arthur Prior, began to make us as students all think. But the thing that frightens me that seems to be a fact of life is that something that at one time is unthinkable becomes accepted if it's convenient. Or the circumstances are fudges, so that people think oh it's alright after all. I think that this is what has happened in the present conflict over Iraq. That by dint of a lie, weapons of mass destruction, which the people doing the planning knew was a lie - they must have known. It was a complete, load of nonsense and you don't have to be very bright to think that if somebody has weapons of mass destruction and a big army is attacking their country, what would you expect to do? Wouldn't anybody sue them? I mean I can't see how this piece of logic could possibly have escaped anybody so that this argument could be accepted as a kind of reason. Except I think that most people really can't be bothered. That life's alright for them so why should they put their hand up and get into trouble. You see I mean we did get into trouble over CND and this is something perhaps that you haven't asked the question but I would like to tell you about it. Because I think it's important. That belonging to an organisation that steps outside the ordinary line a bit has very great implications for the people who move into it. That's taken for granted by people for whom, this is what they've always done, and this is a way of life and all that sort of thing. But it is a very big decision for people to make who haven't previously been involved. I know that Jack for example, who really just hasn't lived in that kind of field, has been associated with my activities; not to his advantage. That people look a bit sideways at this chap, because Jack supported me, but he's never been involved in any of those things. He's been a professional person doing a decent job and managing things very well. That it what puts people off doing it. When we were making up our petitions about the bombing, the French testing....

### **Was this the “No Bombs South of the Line”?**

Yes, ‘No Bombs South of the Line’ petition, we had a desperate letter from a lady who said that she had signed our petition but her husband had a commission in the local volunteers – an army thing. And he said he’d lose his commission, if this went ahead ...so would we please score her name off and wipe it out on the other side as well. Now, people are influenced by that sort of thing. It only amazes me that we don’t have more dictatorships and wicked things happening because people are so easily scared. One of the incidents that shocked me at the time and has changed my ideas quite a lot was during the time of the Mi Lie massacre that happened during the Vietnam war, then Quakers initiated a march up the main street of Adelaide, and we took candles to light and stand quietly and put this in place and then to stop and to think about the people who had been involved at Mi Lie. I had a young new professor to dinner the night before we did this, and he was a good Presbyterian, a nice young man. So I said to him, “Oh well you know this is just the sort of thing you should come to. We’re going to meet for a quiet sort of time at the Quaker meeting house and then we’re going to march up the main street of Adelaide and light our candles and name the victims and name the people and talk a bit about it.’ This young man he put his knife and fork down, and said “You know I have a very responsible job.” Well, Jack was a professor too, so what? “I have to be reliable and I have to be seen to be reliable. What happens if word comes across my desk from the Department of Supply?” That’s Defence. “I couldn’t possibly come.”

### **He was too terrified that he would lose his job?**

Well he just didn’t want to be involved. He wasn’t actually terrified, he just wanted to remain respectable. He didn’t want to be seen as being involved in anything that was a bit suspect. Even if you were complaining about innocent people being killed at Mi Lie. That’s just too bad, but if you complain about that, where’s the next step going to be?

### **Did you really feel that people thought what you were doing was quite disrespectful and disobedient?**

Oh yes, quite something to look at. Well we knew because when we assembled for our very first march there were blokes in their rain coats and their felt hats standing around writing in their books and every time we ever met, anywhere, there was somebody noting what we’d been doing. I mean and this is in NZ.

### **Would they have been secret intelligence people from NZ or elsewhere, do you think?**

Well we didn’t know of course. But they were obviously people who were there to notice who was around. After our very first march, in Christchurch, I didn’t mention it to Jack, who was just a young lecturer, it wasn’t his thing it was my thing. But I think as I said to you Jack’s engineering class came out and like all engineers they just sat on the fence and as we came along Worcester Street, laughed at us and said “*Go back to Russia.*” And Jack came out, after he had put his books and gown away and came up to us and stood beside me and looked at these blokes and said “come on.” But they didn’t. But they stopped jeering. But the next day Jack’s professor asked

him in for an interview and said *“Oh you know, you’re an able young man. I just think you know that you shouldn’t have anything to do with them. It doesn’t do any good, you know.”* He meant it very kindly. You see the lack of “reputation” in inverted commas that such activities could bring were very real and what you could achieve was a bit questionable. What do you achieve, if anything? Well it’s quite something to think, well you sort of are throwing away something where you can do some good and I’ve known other people too, who’ve got quite important positions who have asked to come and speak or to take part and they’ve said *“You know I think I’ll really do more good in whatever, I’m in, already by suggesting..”* not in an underhand way at all but by being able to put forward a point of view that people will listen to, rather than getting involved in organisations that are a bit suspect. And you have to remember that the communist threat was very real at that time. The Communists weren’t any great thing that you would want to be associated with. I mean they were cruel; they were all sorts of things. So, it wasn’t a good thing for your reputation to be called a commie.

**Did you have many times yourself where you were in a public space where you felt a bit unsafe or anything like that?**

Oh, no, no. One was never unsafe in the sense of any physical threat. It was more that in a career, you might be just considered, maybe not as reliable as you ought to be. It was more of an overall sort of thing. Maybe you couldn’t be relied upon to take the line down the middle like you should. You might have some funny ideas.

**Did you worry at all about what people thought, or were you quite open?**

Well I was quite open about it and when Jack was spoken to about coming and talking on these marches I said “well you don’t have to come you know.” “Oh” he said “don’t be stupid, I’m not going to be told by a man in a felt hat what I ought to do.” I can’t understand how anybody can be bothered worrying about it, if you think it’s right. And if you think that in a place like NZ, we’re not going to be put in prison and tortured, we’re not going to have our house raided. We might not get the next step up in the job, that we would like to get, or something like that. It doesn’t make me wonder in the least that dictatorships and bad things happen and people are too scared, or unable to do anything about it. It’s like they say, for evil to triumph, you only need good people to stay silent. That’s what happens. They are silent for all kinds of reasons. In communist countries or other places, they have a real fear that they will be tortured, murdered, or put in jail or something. But in democracies, there are other ways of influencing people.

**Would you like to tell me how you organised the petition “No Bombs South of the Line”?**

A lot of care and thought had to go into that. Elsie was an extremely good organiser. She was really quite important in doing that. Well, it was a sort of very straight forward practical thing really. To get the names of every organisation in the country and to compose a covering letter of some sort that set out the main points of why we wanted to put this petition forward and why we thought it was a good idea to take it to our parliament. It gave us a jumping off point to talk about things. Also it gave us a reason to try to get speaking time at every organisation in the country and we could

get lists of different groups. I think that all the women's groups in Christchurch and in the different towns all the service organisations, every group you could think of we wrote to setting out what we were doing and how we would like to come and explain this petition and they would pass it around. And some places wouldn't have anything to do with it because Elsie had been a Communist, and she was married to a Communist.

**So how long did it take to actually circulate the petition and to get signatures?**

We didn't rush it – it took about a year. We circulated it and got as many numbers as we could. Then, we sent the petition forward and asked for a hearing and then they had a special committee set up. Graeme Miller and I went to give evidence to that select committee which had two or three MPs who had a special interest or concern about foreign affairs. They said they were surprised that we could answer their questions. Well why would you ever produce a petition if you couldn't support it with facts and figures? But you know it was an interesting experience, it really was quite good fun.

**So the petition - its focus was on a nuclear free Southern hemisphere?**

Yes, nuclear free southern hemisphere. The main thing was that there was testing in the southern hemisphere and we wanted to stop that. Well that was considered as being a bit defeatist and you know they had to test the stuff somewhere.

**The petition - in Elsie's book she talks of it being quite something, that that effort was quite amazing because it was the largest petition since the women's suffrage movement.**

Yes, it did.

**Were you quite surprised by that?**

Well, yes I suppose we were but we had a lot of people who took it around. Like in Nelson, the people there went around in their van with a big notice on the outside and went into all the villages and things like that. We just went around and had a good group in Dunedin who were very respectable lot and I think the Christchurch committee was varied and had all kinds of interesting people on it. I think it was a remarkable peace group because the Peace Council and the peace movement had really been so oriented to the left, and it got in the end not to be taken seriously. The Peace Council was just seen as a communist front. A lot of the things that were done seemed to be a bit soft on the Russians. And a bit tough on the Americans and the English, so in a way you could see that the Russians were really feeling under threat, after all, and no wonder they wanted the bomb to protect themselves and the others had got it anyway.

**Do you feel that the CND, while opposing the bomb and the use of nuclear weapons, was also offering to NZ a sportive way to move forward in terms of NZ's place in the world and in international relations?**

Well yes, we did see that NZ could be a leader about this. We were small, we weren't a threat to anybody and we weren't under any threat ourselves. We were in a very good position to take the lead in international fora and to speak up. We thought that it could make NZ quite influential and be good for our prestige.

**I'm just thinking about the turn of events in terms of the nuclear free issue, so it began as quite a focus on a large area of the southern hemisphere which then later on obviously as things changed and NZ became a nuclear free country in 1984. But at that time in the 60s, was there talk amongst people about where this petition or this campaign could eventually lead to for NZ in terms of being nuclear free?**

Yes well we did think that that was right but we really wanted NZ to be an influence for the whole lot. We didn't just think about nuclear free NZ. Although that was a good start but our aim I think was more at that time was on the three big powers that had the bomb and to put the case that it mustn't ever be used and that we must develop a more peaceful approach to problems so that we didn't have to get into that position. We didn't think of NZ in particular because it seemed so unlikely that NZ would ever be under any threat.

**Did CND's interests extend beyond the nuclear issue to other issues to do just with war and round that time, was the Vietnam war, did you have interests in that?**

Yes well of course we did argue about that...I left NZ at the beginning of 1966 just as the Vietnam War was starting. When we went to Australia I did join the anti-Vietnam War group and it was a great big issue in Australia because of our troops and we had very big marches. There was the issue of the use of fire and all the terrible things that happened.



We worked in Australia from 1966 until 1971. Then we went to Papua New Guinea for 5 or six years. We still go back.

**Woodward on the steps of Parliament, Canberra, 1969**

**Would you like to say what the work was in PNG?**

Jack was working in the electrical and mechanical engineering department of the University of Technology. I taught general studies. We took students from village schools. It was just the beginning of the Institute of Technology, which became the University of Technology, to give local student's practical skills and to get them to be able to be engineers and architects and people like that. My job was teaching English as a second language and general studies, which just discussed the issues of development as a whole and of course was right there in front of us. As we were trampers, that took us into the villages a good deal and the fact that everybody is very Christian in PNG. I used to take my students into the villages, two nights a week to discuss development issues. They were supposed to be learning English, but of course

we ended up talking most of the time. I talked to the women and the students talked to the young men about development issues. We tried to help, we took in sewing machines for the women and we raised money.

### **Tape Three Side One.**

#### **You were saying that one of the approaches to peace was...**

I think that the most important thing about working for peace is trying to create conditions in which peace is possible. That I don't think it is sensible if people live under terrible confrontation, where they are hungry, they have no work, they don't have any education, they have no future for their children. I mean it just is unrealistic to expect peace. That although the disorder may be quite ruthless and not at all a help in achieving what people want, but I think people just do feel angry and disturbed and if you're uncomfortable and you're hungry, you feel cross. This is with individuals as much as anything else. And with whole groups of people, how can you expect people to be peaceful when their conditions are so dreadful. If we think about Iraq, it's quite unrealistic for anybody to think that those people are going to be peaceful when they haven't got schools and decent water supplies, they haven't got decency hospitals or anything. They are living in the most dreadful fashion, what is the future for their children? It's all mixed up together.

#### **So when you think of like, the impact of change, say for example through all this campaign work that you've done with CND and you want to look at the impact that that has had and thinking about it at the time, what impact would this have to maintain a good condition where peace can prosper how do you then know that you've made a difference?**

I don't think one can ever be sure of making a difference and I don't think that it's sensible to measure whether or not one should do something by whether it really will make a difference. I think that if one feels very strongly about something, that this is right, then it's important to do something about it and what will happen in the future, we really do not know. You see, John Woolman in very early Quaker times went about talking about peace and about freeing the slaves and things like that. Now that's in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. He died without seeing any of those things happen but he started up something that was an inspiration or gave the idea to people later on and I think in working for peace, or any major social change one can't work so that you see a result now, or even in our life time. We have to work because we think it's right, we have to think about it and consider how we do it. That influences the way that people get their point across. But you can't work thinking that we'll see a change before we die. Or that it will come quickly, you don't know. It might, but the only way in which is that you can be quite sure that nothing will happen is to do nothing. Then you can be sure.

#### **Were there any examples of when things did happen quickly, that took you by surprise?**

Well I think that the idea of a nuclear free NZ took us by surprise, that it actually was a serious issue and it did come about, well that's good. But there are other things in which one can feel extremely disappointed, like the mess that's developed in Iraq

that's so completely unnecessary with people. The thing that is the most depressing of all is that we have such huge resources for putting things right and for helping and instead we're putting billions into making sure that things will go wrong. The real source of evil is the notion of power. People like to feel that they've got it for whatever reason. And it can lead people to disregard everything else. Well we see it in a very basic way in politics of course, that people will take a point, and a party will take a point of view that will get them into power. What they are going to do once they get there is another matter.

**Do you think though that involvement within peace work allows people the chance to educate them and to share ideas about self empowerment, rather than taking, as an alternative as another means to taking power?**

I hadn't thought about that at all really, but it probably is true that if one sees peaceful ways of doing things then that does give one a greater sense of power, not exactly power, capacity - an open way of being useful something like that. Power is a nasty word to me because very few people I think can withstand the temptations or the possibly of straying into some self regarding thing, it's the same between men and women or between parents and children and things like that. If we look at the issue of who has the power then that can really be a terrible temptation. I think that's what Brave New World ends up by saying, that if you have the power to do something then you will want to do it. Do you know about the legend of the ring where they throw the ring into the chaos into the end? You know the Lord of the Rings?

**Yes.**

Gollum throws, or he jumps, or he's pushed, he falls into the chasm, hanging onto the ring...because that's the really terrible thing, if you have the power, it seems to me that you almost misuse it. The best thing is not to have that power, to have it balanced up all the time with sort of other interests and other concerns and checks on what you can do. That's the only way to have it. I think this is something that we need to try and get across to our young people or to everybody that if you aren't part of the solution you're part of the problem. The thing that I feel is so important about Friends is that everybody has the power to do something or other within their own area. That's all we're called on to do. You can't expect to see everything change because you jump in and make a big fuss. But, to hold to a point of view and to try to do what you can within your own area, that's the only way that you can do anything for peace or for a proper society.

**Do you think that by having a feeling that you need to do something and a knowing of what needs to be done and what's the right thing to be done, that you then need to work at a common vision?**

Yes, if you can. I don't know if one is ever really absolutely certain that this is what is the right thing to do at all. We're still all searching our way through the world. But we're still looking and everybody will come to a slightly different conclusion and they'll have a different set of circumstances and they'll have to do the best that they can. And plenty of times one will be disappointed or make a terrible mistake, oneself, which is the hardest thing of all to cope with. Or someone that you trust will make a dreadful mistake or act badly so that the notion of the devil or the presence of evil or

whatever you would like to call it, is always there. We have to do our best to hang onto the good things that are there as well. Well, just do your best, in your own circumstances and that's why it's so important that the sort of thing that you're doing is really vital to get it all recorded somewhere so that other people can see what's happened. That's the most encouraging thing of getting old is to see that there are other people still working hard.

**You're quite happy in terms of sharing the stories of what it's been like for you. Do you feel that that's a worthwhile thing to do?**

Well I'm amazed that anybody's interested to tell you the honest truth. Yes, I'm sure that it could be useful and I think that when we began doing the CND thing it was very useful to have people like Muriel and John Morrison and old John Johnson. Different people will be able to speak to different people. Old John Johnson was my mentor. I used to bundle the current baby into the car and go off once a week and have a good talk and that formed my ideas a good deal, listening to what John had said. He was a gut level pacifist. I was a nuclear pacifist but I couldn't be a total pacifist, I'm not sure that I am, I would like to be now but I'm not sure that I am. But, everybody's got to start somewhere and it was the nuclear bomb that one thought nothing ever can justify this. You know, when somebody says...that anybody could do this to anybody for anything was just too, too terrible. And one can say absolutely the same thing about what's happening in Iraq, you can't believe that a big powerful nation can be so cruel and so stupid. Stirring the whole thing around with a stick. It's not a sensible way to do things. Why do people think that violence is going to solve a thing? It doesn't.

**When you say that there are a half dozen other ways that you could work at making change there, do you think that there is sufficient happening today in terms of campaigns for peace and peace work?**

Well people can only do as much as they are able to in the circumstances, can't they? There are a lot of good people around - a lot of good young people who are really working very hard. One just has to keep on writing to Parliament, writing to anybody else that will listen, having meetings, we don't know whether those things will do any good but we can be quite sure that if you don't do anything it's all going to go to custard isn't it? It's well on the way to doing that any way. People in America must feel even more despairing, but we do know that there is quite a sizeable number of people in Congress and the American public who don't like what's happening. Bush got there by deceit and by all kinds of illegal means and well, it makes you despair. But one mustn't despair, because that suggests that there is nothing we can do and that evil will triumph and that's the greatest of all. I feel particularly encouraged when there are young people like yourself who are seeing that this is important and ready to get on with it and to do something. That's all that matters really. I mean John Woolman when he travelled, interviewing people and telling them they couldn't keep slaves, he just met with laughter. He never saw any success for what he did in the south, it took hundreds of years before anything happened and he was long dead. But he did something in his time, he did what he could. And it's not just up to the individual, because you're surrounded by a particular set of social circumstances and political circumstances that you can't alter with a push. So you have work where you can. But I think that groups like Friends and other good peace people are very

important to hang on there. You don't know, you just can't tell, what is going to be the future. Some word you say or somebody that sees you or some leaflet you hand out. If you don't do it you can be quite sure nothing will happen. If you do it, well something might.

**When you returned to NZ from PNG, did you then continue to be involved with anything that was happening in the peace movement then?**

Oh, well I had moved right out of it really of course because I had been away all those years. I haven't really joined in formally in any peace thing since. I really think that I'm 79, I've done those sorts of things and I'm pretty bossy. I mean most of us who have firm points of view are. I really need the young people with their ideas to come along, there's no use saying well we used to do, whatever it is. That can be very counter-productive, Yet, you get into a mould of working in a particular way of doing things and in a particular way and I don't know if it's just giving oneself an easy way out but I just think at this stage, I've done what I can and I just go to the marches and send some money and things like that and a bit of moral support. That's really all one needs to do. People don't want you saying but in 1972 we did something or rather. That's very trite, it's not 1972, and it's 2003. So leave people who are in that. Things did change.

**How was it for you when Elsie passed away?**

Oh, well Elsie, by the age she had got to was tired. It was time for her to move on. It was sad for us, because we loved her and it was always inspiring to go and see her, but Elsie was failing, she had bad milk in the fridge and her books were in a muddle and all sorts of things. From the point of view of her children and her friends we loved her and we liked to go and see her and sit and talk to her, but she had got to the end of active involvement in things and I don't think she liked that. Whenever I went to Christchurch to visit my sister I would go and see Elsie and ten years, or more ago that was good, because she was still active and involved and we talked a lot but as Elsie got older, into her 80s, she was in a muddle. She lent her name to all kinds of things and sometimes she wrote a very good letter. So she could do all that, but I think you know, when you get to be, like I am on the edge of real old age, you could see that the natural thing is that your life comes to an end and certainly a natural thing is that your usefulness in particular groups comes to an end. There are new circumstances new people, new ways of doing things. I think that it's a good thing for older people to be there to support people and to send money. But, not to have any power, or have any part in how it's organised or what you do, I think that times change and that young people know about how they change and can organise it much more effectively than older ones. Sometimes one is just a blimmin nuisance. I suppose Muriel and John Morrison were wonderful supporters in Christchurch. There were other Quakers too or other peace people who were really very good. I think I've got to that stage now, which is quite a relief really.

**Did you find Christchurch was quite hub of activity for peace work?**

Well I didn't think for peace work you see because I hadn't ever been involved in the peace movement or anything. I was really opposing the bomb because it was absolutely terrible. You see, I was still at University when the bomb was first

dropped and as I said I had heard Arthur Prior say that this is the end of war, because this is so terrible. do remember coming away from one film, with somebody it might have been Jim McCahon or somebody and holding my hand and saying "How can people do this to anybody for anything?" How can they? You see this is one of the terrible things about the stage that I'm at, we think that good will overcome evil if we work hard. The old biblical stories about the devil and that is just a personification of a state of mind or a state of being. But it is true there are bad, wrong harmful influences in all of us. In some cases, one can say that the circumstances of our upbringing are very important. I think the way that children are brought up; I belong to the parents centre and helped to talk to people about making childbirth an exciting event, instead of a ghastly thing to be afraid of. The ways of dealing with children, not that you give in as they put it, but you treat them as responsible reasonable little creatures that you look after kindly and establish that pattern. We're all working for peace all the way through in absolutely everything we do. Maybe not our children, but on committees and anything like I think the Quaker way of trying to listen and take into account what other people are saying even if you think it's absolutely crazy, is the only way to do it. It can be very tedious and very demanding and you don't always manage. We don't always succeed. We're human beings, we do the wrong thing, we get fed up, we get angry, we get disappointed and you know we throw the baby out with the bath water some of the time. But we have to keep on trying. The sort of thing that you're doing is going to be terribly important, I think. The idea of history is important if it's not recorded, where does it go to? You see, my father used to always say "The working class has no history; it's the Generals and the Lords and the important people who are recorded." Well of course historians now have changed that and there is a different attitude towards history, but it's quite true. You'd think that the history of human beings is battles and kings and dukes and that sort of stuff, but what happened to the ordinary people? Well, it's very important to think isn't it?

**Do you think in NZ that we've come to a stage where we do listen to a wider range of people's stories?**

I think we do, I think NZ is a much more open and hopeful society than many other places, I think much more so than Australia. Australia is very tough. They are very much pushed by big business and by the arms people who've got all kinds of horrible places in Australia. NZ is a very fortunate little country. We're lucky to be so little, we don't matter all that much. But I'm not a complete supporter of the Labour Party. I left it ages ago when I thought it was going down the wrong track, but I do really think that Helen Clark is a great asset for us and for the world, if she would just hang on there and keep on speaking up. She's doing absolute marvels I think, under the circumstances, you know. So we're very fortunate, that we've got people like that. We've got a lot of idiots as well. I think that at the moment one of the things that we can do for peace is to support our Prime Minister. Tell her, "Keep on Helen, keep on saying it, for heavens sake! Don't give in."

**Side Two Tape Three**

Well one of the issues that Elsie and I always found interesting was the question about the relationship between the proportion of men and women doing different things. We couldn't see that it mattered in the slightest. Because we both spoke up and there were men on the committee, true more men than women, but so what? We didn't really think that that was the issue. I think, of course we belonged to the wrong

generation, that we're not particularly women's lib people because neither of us felt constricted or prevented from doing what we wanted to do by the role that was given to us. I think that we looked more at social changes that had affected women's place, like scientific things like the pill, which of course liberated women enormously and sort of extended the notion of sex to being pleasurable for everybody instead of my god, you know you could have a baby in nine months, who could be having fun thinking about that? You know, that scientific advances are all mixed up with social and moral advances. I think it's the same about the peace movement that the whole social development of our society, it's all inter-related. If we think about the Quaker attitude towards human beings, is so absolutely basic to me that it fits into everything. It all comes back to the thing that there is something important in everybody. And everybody should be equally important and regarded and given their place. Not that everybody is equally able or equally situated to do something or other or anything like that. We all have something different that we can contribute. But we should be concentrating on giving everybody an opportunity to do as well as they can. That's the basis I think, the main thing about Quaker thought that I feel is very important, is that there is that of God in everyone. That makes one a socialist as far as organising society is concerned, because we should have a society where everybody has the opportunity to do the very best they can. The whole thing all sticks together with this notion, you could call it socialist or Quaker or anything but just the fact that every single human being all around the world ought to have, must have the opportunity to develop fully because otherwise we'll have war. That's what's happening in the Middle East, you can't take away everything from a country and expect people to be peaceful and say how nice to have you. I hate you. And you can't expect Arabs and Jewish people to get on happily together if the Jewish people are trying to pinch the land that they shouldn't or the Palestinians are trying to prevent the Jews from establishing a decent society as a refuge, you know the idea that you can't have peace with out justice is absolute true. How one gets justice is the problem? I really think it's the problem that will decide the survival of human beings as a species. Because we do have the capacity to wipe ourselves out. I don't rule that out as a possibility looking at what's happening. But, the only thing one can do is to work away as you're doing with your recording and the sort of work that people like John Minto is doing stirring around and organising meetings and organising marches, we just don't know what effect that will have but we do know what effect it will be if we don't do it. It just opens the gate for all these time servers and hopeless people, quite apart from the maniacs with power and money and stuff. They're the top of the whole heap but they're allowed to do what they do because people don't pay enough attention.

**Just one other thing, back to your point about opportunities for women, I was just interested to ask you when in the 1950s that you and Elsie first became involved with the Campaign Against Nuclear Warfare then, what were your women friends saying and what were their comments and responses?**

I didn't think anything in particular about women, I think that there was whatever, sideways looks might have got were far more about the issue that we need to the bomb in order to deter the Communists; they were political issues not personal ones at all. I didn't think that there was any particular issue about men or women being involved in these things, because Elsie and I were very outspoken and if anybody needed protection it would be the men I should think because we were ready to talk

about anything and Elsie was very able at writing things up and I learnt quite fast and you know we had all the skills really and the self confidence that was needed.

**Well maybe another side to the question, is did you have any women friends who would have liked to be doing what you were doing but felt that they didn't have time or the chance to?**

Oh I do think that a lot of people felt that they wouldn't have time, and I do think that the sort of aura of the importance of parenthood meant that people did feel crucial that you should be at home minding your children. You shouldn't be out doing all this stuff. It's alright when they're grown up; you'll have a chance to do that. But your place now, I was told a number of times by people that I should be at home looking after my children, that who knows how they'd grow up when their mother was doing all these stupid things. Which of course is quite stupid because I took the kids to marches and they watched and they've all grown up with those ideas. I mean they could just have easily decided that it was a load of old rubbish and they would join the National Party. But somehow they didn't, because it was discussed around the dinner table and they heard us talking about things and I think it made life interesting for them. I can remember Matthew went on some march or other and there was a pack of University students in Adelaide who were picketing parliament and Matt was about 10 at the time and he said "Oh gee Mum I can't wait to go to Uni." So he could be part of the picket. It was fun, you know. But I don't think it was mindless fun because the conversation around the dinner table would be to naturally argue about these things and to talk and the kids took it all in and they didn't have to do anything at all if they didn't want to, but oh no, I just don't think that it was ever seen; certainly not for Elsie or me as men versus women. It was ideas that counted. Women could be just as ferocious and horrible about going to war as the men could be and in fact, sometimes the men were pushed to it by the attitude of the women. This white feather thing, if you don't feel like going to war and fighting you're not a proper man, are you? Well that was the First World War where the women gave out white feathers to the fellas that didn't go to war. Or pacifists or anything like that. A white feather, means you're a coward.

**You were saying then that women were quite strong on getting the men to fight?**

Well the First World War, the white feather thing was big. I don't think during the Second World War. But there was a tradition of the women handing out white feathers. You know thinking the fellows ought to be off there fighting. Well, you know it was pretty awful for women whose husbands or lovers had been killed in the war to watch other chaps all walking around saying they were conscientious objectors. I mean you can understand it, it's not very noble but it's quite understandable.

**Well Mary just in terms of winding up, would you have any final thoughts or reflections maybe particular on your time working for the CND.**

I think that it was a wonderful opportunity for me. I didn't go out to work. People would say to me, did you work when the children were growing up and I would say "Yes I did, but I didn't go out to work and I didn't have paid employment." That's

the important thing. But I worked very hard and in a way because I had a lady to do the housework that was all I needed to enable me to do all that. It involved me with lots of interesting people, all around the world. It involved me in reading a great deal that I might never have come across otherwise. It was a wonderful opportunity that I was given and so I am very pleased that that happened. That was a wonderful reward that I had so that that time when I was home with the children was a period of huge involvement with overseas people, local people and people from one end of NZ to the other. Something that's still useful to me because of the contacts that I've got now. That's something to remember for young people that the things that you do aren't just for now, that they will stay with you for the rest of your life and make it a lot more interesting. So, I am so glad that there are young people still with this concern for peace because there is a long way to go yet and that's wonderful. There is some hope as long as there's somebody, energetic and young and thoughtful who's still prepared to give the time and the energy to give to it. So you're the one to say thank you to.

**Thank you very much Mary. It's been wonderful.**

**END.**