

Desert Voices

The Newsletter of Nevada Desert Experience Vol. 9 No. 3 Winter 1996

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY INTENDS TO PROCEED WITH SUBCRITICAL NUCLEAR TESTS:

3,561 Nuclear Weapons Workers Still at Test Site

by Andrew Lichterman and Jackie Cabasso,
Western States Legal Foundation

1996 has been a memorable year for the movement to abolish nuclear weapons. On September 24, the United States signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Addressing the United Nations General Assembly, President Clinton stated that the signatures of the nuclear weapons states, "along with those of the vast majority of [other] nations, will immediately create an international norm against nuclear testing, even before the treaty formally enters into force."

In July, the International Court of Justice, known popularly as the World Court, had pointed the way towards eventual elimination of nuclear arsenals by ruling that the threat or use of nuclear weapons is generally contrary to international law. Although the Court was unable to "conclude definitively whether the threat

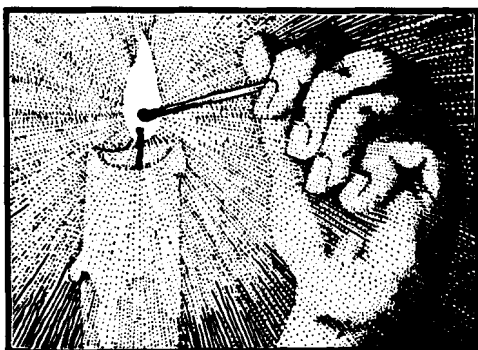
or use of nuclear weapons would be lawful or unlawful in an extreme circumstance of self-defence, in which the very survival of a State would be at stake," the Court did not accept the absence of clear law on this point as justification for the indefinite continuation of nuclear deterrence. Rather, the Court stated that "In the long run, international law, and with it the stability of the international order which it is intended

to govern, are bound to suffer from the continuing difference of views with regard to the legal status of weapons as deadly as nuclear weapons. It is consequently important to put an end to this state of affairs: the long-promised complete nuclear disarmament appears to be the most appropriate means of achieving that result."

And in August, the Canberra
(continued on next page)

LENTEN DESERT EXPERIENCE XVI

*"Will you stay
awake with Me?"*



Beyond the Comprehensive Test
Ban Treaty; A Spiritual and
Strategical Challenge.
March 21-23, 1997
(See Poster Inside)



Over 100 folks gathered at the Nuclear Test Site gates for August Desert Witness 1996. Participants processed single file to the gates carrying a ribbon hand silk-screened with 1,000 cranes made by Joan Monastero. Over 30 people were arrested.

(continued from front page)

Commission, a prestigious panel assembled by the Australian government, concluded that "[n]uclear weapons pose an intolerable threat to all humanity and its habitat," and called on the nuclear weapons states to commit themselves, "unequivocally, to the elimination of all nuclear weapons."

All of these developments can be attributed in large part to the actions of social movements, ranging from the World Court project, itself the creation of a broad-based coalition which worked for years to put the nuclear weapons question on the World Court docket, to the groups who have for decades brought the abolition message to the gates of weapons laboratories and test sites worldwide. It is important that we celebrate these accomplishments, and recognize the key role that millions of us have played together to make them happen. But we must at the same time recognize that the nuclear weapons states still deploy thousands of nuclear weapons, and are continuing to refine both warheads and delivery systems. Taken together with the 1995 extension of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, this year's developments should represent not the end of the

movement for abolition, but the beginning of the end for nuclear weapons. The basic elements for an international regime preventing the further spread of nuclear weapons is in place. Yet, as the Canberra Commission Report noted, "[n]uclear weapons are held by a handful of states which insist that these weapons provide unique security benefits, and yet reserve uniquely to themselves the right to own them. This situation is highly discriminatory and thus unstable; it cannot be sustained. The possession of nuclear weapons by any state is a constant stimulus to other states to acquire them."

In this context, it is important to consider what the CTB will, and will not, do. The agreement comes 30 — if not 40 — years too late to meet historical expectations that it will halt the modernization and development of nuclear weapons and lead to the deterioration and decay of existing arsenals. On the contrary, the final text, which bans underground nuclear explosions but carefully avoids defining a nuclear test, preserves the dichotomy between nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states and sidesteps any direct linkage to nuclear disarmament. The CTB will ban large nuclear explosions. It will not, how-

ever, end the development of nuclear weapons by the United States, and perhaps by other nuclear powers as well. Contrary to global expectations for the CTB, the United States is planning to beef up its already vast laboratory-based infrastructure to ensure its nuclear weapons superiority well into the 21st century by preserving the capacity to maintain, test, modify, design and produce nuclear weapons. In the future, nuclear weapons design will be advanced through computer simulations coupled with archived data from more than 1000 past tests and new diagnostic information obtained from above-ground laboratory experiments and "zero yield" underground tests. A retooled U.S. nuclear weapons design and manufacturing complex, if built as planned, will be capable of turning out 150 weapons or more a year.

Over the next decade, the U.S. is planning to spend approximately \$40 billion for nuclear weapons programs under its "Stockpile Stewardship and Management" (SS&M) Program. According to the Department of Energy, "Stockpile Stewardship comprises the activities associated with research, design, development, and testing of nuclear weapons, and the as-

(continued on next page)

AMERICAN BEAUTY

by John P. McAndrew

*O Rose, thou art sick.
The invisible worm
That flies in the night,
In the howling storm,*

*Has found out thy bed
of crimson joy,
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.*

*-Wm. Blake
The Sick Rose*

My crimson hybrid perpetual
unfolding: we are both
as sick as our secrets.

Beauty, it's hard to believe
the infidelities, although
relations have been strained

since TV. I've struggled
daily to recover, as if
from anesthesia.

Should I believe
in pictures or words,
the light or the sound,

or nothing at all?
(Witnesses were told
to avert their eyes.)

In '45, Oppenheimer named
the first one "Trinity".
Later, repentant,

he confessed to TIME,
"The physicists have known sin."
You shunned him then and
now.

You, on your barstool
talking tactics, ballistics,
set up rounds for the house

and stumble home, armed
with stockpiled alibis.
The Trinity Test worked.

Once more the mortals
played God, creating
great dome-capped temples

radioactive in the clouds.
American Beauty,
your light unfolds.

Come to believe it.
Don't turn away.
Take the first step.

See it; admit it.
It's killing me.
This is my body.



PLEASE UNFOLD, POSTER INSIDE

(continued from previous page)

assessment and certification of their safety and reliability.... National security policies in the post-Cold War world require that all the historical capabilities of the weapons laboratories, industrial plants, and NTS [Nevada Test Site] be maintained." Although the military may be unwilling to deploy designs based on new concepts without underground testing, it appears likely that some modifications of existing designs to serve new military missions can be done with simulation technologies alone. In addition, President Clinton has conditioned U.S. acceptance of the CTBT on a set of "safeguards," including not only the conduct of a "Science Based" Stockpile Stewardship program and maintenance of modern laboratory facilities but the readiness to resume underground nuclear testing. These "safeguards" included a statement that "if the President of the United States is informed by the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Energy (DOE) — advised by the Nuclear Weapons Council, the Directors of DOE's nuclear weapons laboratories and the Commander of the U.S. Strategic Command — that a high level of confidence in the safety and reliability of a nuclear weapon type which the two Secretaries consider to be critical to our nuclear deterrent could no longer be certified the President, in consultation with Congress, would be prepared to withdraw from the CTBT under the standard 'supreme national interests' clause in order to conduct whatever testing might be required."

These "safeguards" also require continued maintenance of the Nevada Test Site (NTS) in a state of readiness. In this connection the Department of Energy plans to conduct "subcritical" tests at the NTS. Although lacking a significant nuclear yield, such tests would both provide information for the simulation-based nuclear weapons research effort and exercise DOE's capacity to perform underground nuclear tests. These tests, originally scheduled to begin in June 1996, were quietly postponed during the closing phases of the CTBT negotiations. The recently issued Nevada Test Site Environmental Impact Statement indicates that the DOE intends to proceed with subcritical tests. Taken together, the Stockpile Stewardship and management program and the maintenance of the Nevada Test Site will give the United States the capability to design, test, produce, and deploy nuclear weapons well into the next century. Current U.S. efforts not only to maintain but to modernize its nuclear weapons complex are pre-

cisely the kind of actions which, in the Canberra Commission's words, provide "a constant stimulus to other states" to acquire nuclear weapons. And maintenance of a facility for full-scale testing of nuclear weapons, a manifestation of the intent to retain the capacity to design and deploy new nuclear weapons, remains one of the most threatening, and hence destabilizing, elements of U.S. nuclear weapons policy.

The International Court of Justice in its opinion noted that the laws of warfare have long banned use of weapons which cause un-

necessary suffering and which, due to their indiscriminate effect, by their nature are likely to cause great harm to civilian populations. In addition to international agreements, noted the court, these principles are "derived from established custom, from the principles of humanity, and from the dictates of public conscience." It is up to all of us to continue our work to create a climate of "public conscience" in which the threat, use, or possession of nuclear weapons, in any circumstances, will be unacceptable.

HENRI NOUWEN REMEMBERED

by Stevi Carroll

Henri Nouwen. I had no idea who Henri was, or what he did, or what kind of person he was. I just knew that many of the people who knew he was coming to Las Vegas and the Test Site were quite thrilled to have the chance to spend time with this person.

My first impression of Henri was of someone who appeared monochromatic, not in a boring, dried up sort of way, but rather in the sense of the Chinese or Japanese monochromatic paintings that invoke a state of serenity that begins within and radiates outward from the soul.

Just by chance, I had the opportunity to ride from Las Vegas to the Test Site with Henri one morning. Dawn still hid below the horizon as we piled into the car for the journey. Four or five of us filled the car. The conversation was soft; those of us who had been to the Test Site many times answered questions when we were able. A chill that sometimes accompanies the realities of nuclear weapons testing and the magnitude of those

weapons seeped into the car. Henri offered to lead us in prayer. As sunlight began to bathe the desert floor, Henri summoned the spirit of the Creator to travel with us, to steer our paths toward peace, to be with those who saw the necessity of nuclear weapons, to hold us all and to guide our hearts to compassion and understanding. The chill subsided.

A few weeks after Henri left Las Vegas, a package arrived at my house. Inside I found a couple of books authored or co-authored by Henri; they are inscribed, "For Stevi, in friendship. Henri." I was merely one traveling companion among the many people he must have met in a year, and yet, he took the time to remember me. One of the books is titled *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*. When Henri died, National Public Radio eulogized his life with the hallmark of compassion. What a good idea for Christians; what a good idea for all people. I feel greatly enriched to have met Henri, even if so briefly.

1997 Calendar for Nevada Desert Experience Events
Lenten Desert Experience XVI: Open poster inside this newsletter
August Desert Witness 1997: The Unholy Trinity, Livermore, the Nevada Test Site & Los Alamos Lab, August 8-10, 1997
Catholic Worker Gathering celebrating Dorothy Day's 100th Birthday, November 7 - 9, 1997, Las Vegas, NV.

1997 Calendar for other Las Vegas Events
Healing Global Wounds: March 27 - 31, 1997, phone (408) 338-0147
Action for Nuclear Abolition's Nonviolent Direct Action Camp to Shut Down the Test Site: April 1 - 5, 1997, (702) 796-3835

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These mannequins depicting a "typical American family" were placed in a shelter before a nuclear weapons test during the 1950's to assess the possible impacts of nuclear detonation on civilian populations.

Violence Unveiled Tapes Available

Over 200 supporters gathered in Oakland in June to hear Richard Rohr, ofm and Gil Bailie present a retreat sponsored by Nevada Desert Experience and Pace e Bene entitled: "Violence Unveiled: The Gospel at work in our World". A four cassette set of the retreat is available for \$25 (including postage) from Nevada Desert Experience, 1500 34th Ave, Oakland, CA 94601.

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LENTEN DESERT

*Will you
stay awake
with me?*

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BEYOND THE COMPREHENSIVE

A Spiritual & Str

The Comprehensive Test Ban is a significant first step in the work towards the elimination of all nuclear weapons. However, the United States will still spend \$40 billion over the next ten years on the testing, research and development of new nuclear weapons. 3,561 nuclear-weapons-related employees still work at the Nevada Test Site, prepared for presidential orders to resume testing. The U. S. Department of Energy intends to proceed with the "sub-critical" underground nuclear weapons tests at the Nevada Test Site, possibly in 1997. And, Lawrence Livermore Labs is building a football-field sized computer

Lenten Des

Friday, March 21

Friday, March 21

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EXPERIENCE XVI



ILLUSTRATION BY DAN UNDERHILL FROM A POLARIS FOR THE SPIRIT: TOWARD IDEOLOGICAL RECONCILIATION IN A NUCLEAR AGE BY CARL CASEBOLT

NSIVE TEST BAN TREATY:

ategical Challenge

Experience XVI Weekend

4 p.m.) - March 23 (1 p.m.), Join Ched Myers, Susan English Fetcho and David Fetcho. Schedule: and Saturday March 22 (St. James Catholic Church, 821 N. H St.): Through prayer, reflection and strengthen the spiritual and strategical tools needed to "stay awake" to continue the campaign te. Sunday morning March 23 (8 a.m.) there will be a send-off for the Holy Week Walkers at the energy headquarters, then we will pilgrimage to the Nevada Test Site for a Palm Sunday service ril disobedience action. Ched Myers is a theologian and author of the books *Binding the Strong* *Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*, and *Who Will Roll Away the Stone: Discipleship Queries for First World* English Fetcho is a choreographer and performer of dance and mime and a musician. David composer and lay theologian. Together with participants the three will use creative methods of reflect upon the scriptural imperative; "Will you Stay Awake with Me?" and its relevance for transformation.

Experiential Week-long Retreats

which will be able to simulate nuclear weapons tests. Thousands of nuclear weapons still wait in missile silos and submarines, ready to be launched.

When nuclear testing went from above ground to below ground in the 1960's the peace community fell asleep and protests ended for twenty years at the Nevada Test Site. At this critical moment in Nuclear Weapons history...

Will you stay awake with me?



February 9 - 15 (in
Nevada Desert Ex
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Holy Week W

March 23 - 28. Join
ters in Las Vegas

Individual Re

All other unsched
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individual retreats

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Wednesday, Feb. 7
Nevada Test Site

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March 23, 9:30 a.m.
Test Site

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Nuclear Sta

March 28, 2:00 p.m.
Test Site

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March 30, Sunris
Test Site



NEVADA DESERT EXPERIENCE, P.O. Box 4487, Las Vegas, NV 89108

cludes Ash Wednesday service) or March 24 - 30 (includes Holy Week services)
erience, Pace e Bene and the Las Vegas Catholic Worker present an experiential retreat in Las
vada Nuclear Test Site. Through prayer, reflection, sharing and action, participants will explore
ches to the violence of nuclear proliferation, poverty and consumerism. Food and accommoda-
ed.

lk

Brother David Buer, ofm on a week long pilgrimage from the Department of Energy headquar-
the Nevada Test Site. Meals and accommodations will be provided.

reats

led days of Lent are open for individual retreats in Las Vegas and at the Nevada Test Site. Please
make arrangements. There will be a small hermitage available at the Nevada Test Site for

nesday Service

2, 9:30 a.m., Mercury Exit,

nday Service

a., Mercury Exit, Nevada

od Friday

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a., Mercury Exit, Nevada

er Service

e, Mercury Exit, Nevada

call for details



Clip and mail to Nevada Desert Experience, Box 4487, Las Vegas, NV 89127

Name _____

Phone _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

___ Enclosed is my registration payment of \$40 for Lenten Desert Experi-
ence XVI (\$30 if before March 1), (Housing: ___ sleeping bag space, ___ hous-
ing with Las Vegas supporter, ___ send me hotel information) Meals will be
provided.

___ Enclosed is my registration payment of \$175 (\$150 if before January 7)
for the Weeklong Experiential Retreat (___ Feb. 9 - 15 or ___ March 24 - 30)

___ Please send more information on the Holy Week Walk

___ I would like to sponsor Brother David Buer at _____ per mile
(65 miles)

___ I am interested in an Individual Retreat on these dates: _____

___ Special Diet or other needs: _____

Radiation Concerns: Discussion about radiation exposure at the Nevada
Test Site is ongoing, but it is generally agreed that unless there has been a
recent (within 72 hours) detonation of an underground nuclear weapon,
the danger to your health is minute. The U. S. has maintained a morato-
rium on underground tests since October 1992, but an underground "zero-
yield" nuclear test is scheduled after environmental studies are completed.
Small children and pregnant women are not advised to go to the Test Site.
Further information is available.

127, Phone: (702) 646-4814, Fax: (702) 631-5538, E-mail: nde@igc.apc.org.