



The Right Livelihood Award

for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people

Rosalie Bertell (Canada)

Joint Award with Alice Stewart (1986)



"...for raising public awareness about the destruction of the biosphere and human gene pool, especially by low-level radiation."

Photo: Wolfgang Schmidt

Rosalie Bertell was born in 1929 and received her doctorate in Biometrics in 1966 at the Catholic University of America. She has been working in the field of environmental health since 1970.

Bertell has been involved in the founding of several organisations: the Ministry of Concern for Public Health in Buffalo, New York, in 1978; the International Institute of Concern for Public Health (IICPH) in Toronto, Canada, 1984; the International Commission of Health Professionals, Geneva, 1985; the International Associates for Community Health in Orkney, Scotland, 1986, and the International Physicians for Humanitarian Medicine, on which she serves as a member of the Board of Regents, in Geneva, 2000.

Bertell served as President for the IICPH until retiring in 1996, and she has been a member of a religious congregation, the Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart, since 1958, prior to which she was also for six years a member of a contemplative Carmelite monastery. Bertell is also editor-in-chief of *International Perspectives in Public Health*, and author of *No Immediate Danger: Prognosis for a Radioactive Earth* (1985), *Handbook for estimating health effects from exposure to ionizing radiation* (1986), and *Planet Earth: The latest weapon of war* (2000).

From 1969 to 1978 Bertell was senior cancer research scientist at Roswell Park Cancer Institute. She has served as a consultant to the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the US Environmental Protection Agency, and to Health Canada. Other appointments have included being a member of the Science Advisory Board of the US-Canada International Joint Commission on the Great Lakes from 1990 until 1994, and as Co-Chair of the Working Group on Ecosystem Health. From 1994 to 1998 she was appointed to the IJC Nuclear Task Force for all US and Canadian shared waterways. She has participated in joint research with the Japanese Association of Scientists, the Institute for Energy and Environment in Germany, the people of Rongelap Atoll in the Republic of the Marshall Islands,

the Consumers Association of Penang, Malaysia, and the Centre for Industrial Safety and Environmental Concerns in Quilan, India. These undertakings were for the benefit of victims of military, industrial and technological pollution.

Bertell has served three times as a judge on tribunals organised by the Permanent People's Tribunal. She led the investigation research by the International Medical Commission-Bhopal and organised the International Medical Commission-Chernobyl in Vienna in April 1996. She is the recipient of nine honorary doctorates and numerous awards.

In 1996, Bertell undertook to help the people of the Philippines who were trying to deal with toxic waste left behind by the US Navy and Air Force on military bases that they had abandoned. The US accepted no legal obligation to clean up this waste because it had not been specified in the original contract in the 1940s.

Most recently, she has been working with the gulf war veteran's illness, and published a journal article which veterans are able to use in their attempt to obtain recognition and compensation for their combat injuries.

Bertell's broad knowledge of the fields of environmental and occupational health has been enriched by extensive worldwide travel. She has begun a programme of medical assistance to the people of the Marshall Islands, as well as in Bhopal, India. She works by preference on behalf of indigenous peoples and citizen groups most severely affected by militarism and pollution.

Rosalie Bertell is now retired and living in Yardlet, Pennsylvania, where she stays active to the extent possible.

Quotation

"Our work seeks to focus attention on the necessity of developing security for the global village, meeting its need for clean air, water, food and a healthy habitat, as well as fostering clarity of vision on cooperation and development."

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