



# The Right Livelihood Award

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

## David Lange (New Zealand - Aotearoa)†

**Honorary Award (2003)**



*"...for his steadfast work over many years for a world free of nuclear weapons."*

David Lange

David Lange was born in 1942 and practised as a lawyer before being elected to the New Zealand Parliament. He is known as the New Zealand Prime Minister whose government, in 1984, passed legislation that banned nuclear-powered and armed vessels (including aircraft) from New Zealand (NZ) territory, and promoted the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty. The US reacted to this policy against weapons of mass destruction by cancelling all defence exercises, cutting intelligence sharing and demoting NZ from ally to "friend", effectively making the ANZUS security alliance inoperable.

David Lange personally defended the policy and promoted nuclear disarmament nationally and internationally. He spoke extensively around the world, including an address to the Conference on Disarmament and the UN General Assembly. In 1985 he won a debate at the Oxford Union against the US fundamentalist Christian Rev. Jerry Falwell, arguing in the affirmative that 'nuclear weapons are morally indefensible'. This was televised throughout the US along with other interviews for various TV programmes. He became the champion of peace groups around the world and spoke at many peace conferences. He joined Parliamentarians for Global Action delegations to world leaders to discuss key disarmament issues. To their credit, subsequent New Zealand Governments have persevered with the anti-nuclear policy, which remains in place today. Lange told his story about the policy in his book, *Nuclear Free: The New Zealand Way*, published in 1990.

The nuclear-free policy was not a one-off for Lange. Back in 1975 he defended peace activists in the courts, after they were arrested for protesting against the visits of nuclear powered and armed warships entering Auckland. As Prime Minister he also negotiated a settlement with France, brokered by the UN Secretary General, as compensation after the French government admitted that its secret service agents had detonated a bomb which sank the Greenpeace Flagship 'Rainbow Warrior' in Auckland harbour in 1985, killing one person. In 1991 he sent a statement about the importance of 'demonstration as an instrument of international political betterment' to be read at the trial of New Zealander Moana Cole during her trial in the US for action taken against US bombers during the Gulf War. He travelled to Iraq in 1999, negotiated and gained the release of NZ hostages. He was an advocate for the World Court Project and wrote the foreword for the booklet outlining the case. The Project resulted in the qualified judgement of the World Court in 1996 that the threat or use of nuclear weapons is against international law. Lange was emphatic in his support for the NZ

Prime Minister, Helen Clark, when she criticised the US over the Iraq War.

David Lange died in 2005, at the age of 63.

### Quotation

*Our nuclear free status means that we decline to acquiesce in the strategies of nuclear deterrence. We will not turn a blind eye to them, and pretend that the weapons are no longer a threat. We will not in any way tolerate the testing of nuclear weapons, or their manufacture, or their deployment. We cannot by ourselves reduce the number of nuclear weapons in the world, but we are doing what has to be done all over the world if those weapons are one day to be eliminated.*

David Lange

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