

## 1. INITIATIVE FOR PEACE

Last year Christchurch declared itself a Peace City. This step followed naturally from the city's tradition of supporting the nuclear-free movement. It is also in line with the international Mayors for Peace movement, of which I am a member.

Mayors for Peace embraces 535 cities across six regions of the world. Recently, Mayors for Peace held a forum in Leeds, UK, to consider how local authorities can build a culture of peace and citizenship in troubled areas of the world, and build community cohesion within their own areas. The forum received presentations from expert speakers providing direct experience of developing peace initiatives in the troubled community areas of Northern Ireland, Cyprus, Western Sahara and the Middle East, and about conflict resolution in British cities.

Councillor Michael McGowan, of Leeds City Council, the Chairman of the Forum, made the following statement:

*"At this critical time with the possibility of war, here in Leeds we are continuing initiatives working for peace. The consensus of the forum is that by using the collective power of the United Nations the crisis in Iraq can be resolved peacefully. The work of local authority organisations such as Mayors for Peace, and the desire which cities such as Hiroshima and Nagasaki have shown in seeking peace and reconciliation are models which others can follow."*

The Mayors for Peace Forum issued a press release urging the United States and Britain to use the United Nations for peace, not war. They made an appeal to President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair to pull back from the brink of war and seek a peaceful solution to the crisis with Iraq.

Last week I attended a Seattle Sister City function which was addressed by Councillor Richard Conlin, of the Seattle City Council. He said that the Seattle City Council was strongly opposed to his country's threatened invasion of Iraq and had appealed to the President to draw back from war. I was interested to learn that our Sister City in the US had taken this stance. It is in line with the views expressed in the media by local government people in Britain in early January. These people were embarrassed by the policy of the Blair government, which does not have majority support on this issue. I was relieved to return to New Zealand, where our Government has consistently said that the current evidence from the United Nations weapons inspectors does not justify an attack on Iraq and that any decisions on Iraq should be made by the United Nations.

Here in Christchurch many people, collectively and individually, have expressed their horror at the prospect of a war which will threaten innocent lives, as wars always do. I believe that it is appropriate for the City Council to take a stance on this issue in line with the views of the great majority of our people.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the Council write to the United States Ambassador and the British High Commissioner asking them to convey to President Bush and Prime Minister Blair, respectively, the view of the Council that the dispute with Iraq should be resolved peacefully through the United Nations.
  2. That the Council write to the Prime Minister informing her of the above resolution and supporting the Government's policy of opposition to unilateral action on Iraq.
  3. That cities in the Mayors for Peace movement be informed of the above resolutions.