



Are These Our Neighbours?

People not sure about the use of Nuclear Weapons

They shall beat their swords into ploughshares

Isaiah 2:4. Repeated in Micah 4:3 and Joel 3:10

Background

Scientific advancement has occurred beyond most people's imaginations and beliefs in the last 150 years. In the mid 1800s the stagecoach was traveling alongside the steam engine. Some sailing ships could still outpace the early steamships.

Despite wars occurring, often for empire building either to control land and peoples for the economic benefit of the "mother" country, little public attention was paid to weaponry.

Throughout the first part of the 1900s two developments occurred, firstly in the production of more reliable and more destructive weapons and vehicles such as battleships, tanks, airplanes, bombs and guns. Secondly, laboratory science was developing new theories in physics and chemistry, which had possibilities for warfare.

In terms of the criteria for a "just war" (see backgrounder under that title) nuclear warfare produces indiscriminate death and destruction among civilian populations.

Problems

These arose because there was insufficient awareness in the minds of the scientists about the possible war uses of their discoveries.

In addition, a competition for national survival existed whereby governments, particularly their military leaders, believed that if their country did not adopt scientific inventions and discoveries, their rivals would. This competition and belief continues today.

All this is background to the first use of atomic weapons in the bombing of Hiroshima and then Nagasaki by American aircraft in 1945. This was done to force the Japanese surrender and to avoid continued loss of life by the Americans and their allies in a prolonged war which would cause military casualties.

Developing Problems

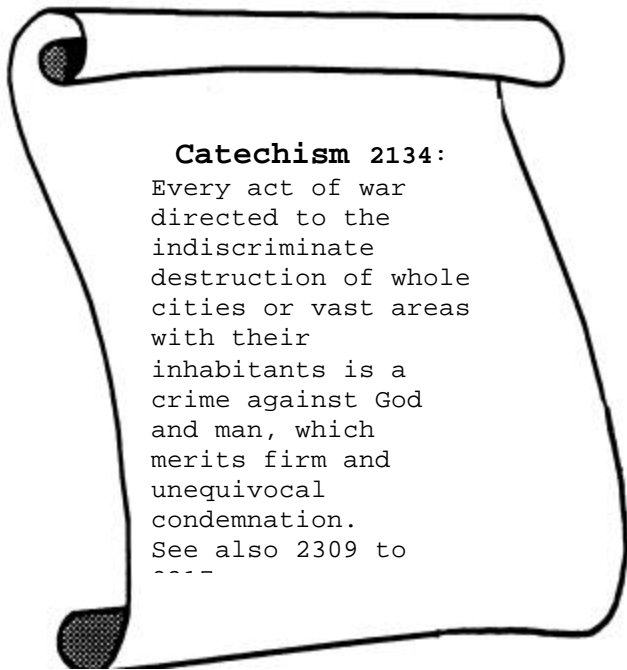
1. People say that there are peaceful uses of uranium such as in the supply for nuclear reactors in energy production, which is said to be more environmentally friendly than some other fuels (See backgrounder on nuclear energy). Fuel in a reactor if exposed to long periods of a process known as neutron irradiation can be used to produce uranium for use in nuclear weaponry.
2. Depleted uranium has been used in recent wars such as in Bosnia and the Gulf to enhance the penetrating and destructive ability of bullets and shells of non nuclear weapons. Uranium can then find its way into the atmosphere, soil, crops and livestock, eventually into humans causing cancer as well as grotesque birth defects.

Definitions:

Weaponry: the means used to defend or to enforce a way of life.

Nuclear: "relating to atomic energy"
This definition is found in dictionaries printed from 1950 on. Nowadays we extend nuclear weaponry to include hydrogen bombs and all such methods of mass destruction





Nuclear Weapons cannot be justified and deserve condemnation: grave consequences lie ahead if the world is ruled by militarism of nuclear arms.

Pope John Paul II

References

The later Social Encyclicals are strong in the reference to this issue. The Catechism quote comes from *Gaudium et Spes* 1962. Similar references are found in *Pacem in Terris* 1963, *Justice in the World* 1971, *Redemptoris Hominis* 1979 and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* 1987.

Project Ploughshares, a Canadian organization, produces a quarterly journal, *The Monitor*.

Ever since the dropping of the first atomic bombs, there have been groups, mainly in the developed world which have used different methods to protest atomic bombs and their use. Their histories and biographies are readily available in book form.

Other groups such as Physicians for Global Survival produce regular information sheets.

Speaker Resource

Local membership of Project Ploughshares.

Local membership of Veterans against Nuclear Warfare.

Canadian Defense Department personnel.

Canadian Peacemakers (mainly Mennonite but extends to other faith groups).

Discussion Questions

1. What is meant by a just war?
2. What is meant by "the end justifies the means?"
3. Would there ever be circumstances under which you would sanction a nuclear attack or response?
4. Which countries are considered to be nuclear powers and why are some called "rogue nations"?
5. What is meant by deterrence?
6. Give examples of the difference in the effects between conventional warfare tactics and nuclear weaponry.
7. Does the existence of biological weapons of mass destruction affect your thinking on this subject?

Suggested Actions

1. Join or form a local Project Ploughshares.
2. Become informed about the ways of influencing policy through non violence.
3. Invite or contact those in authority about employment in the defense industries with a view to finding alternative employment opportunities. Sask. Catholic Uranium Workers Assoc.
4. Join the local association of the Inter Church Uranium Committee Educational Cooperative, of Saskatoon.

