When Beatrice Fihn, director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, accepted the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize, she said, “Those who say a future without nuclear weapons is impossible need to get out of the way of those who are making it a reality.”

At *Stop the New Nuclear Arms Race*, an international conference sponsored by OREPA, The Nuclear Resister, and Nukewatch, you can meet some of those people. Not the ones getting out of the way—the ones making it real.

WORKSHOPS

Seth Shelden, ICAN’s liaison to the United Nations, will be there, explaining the effect the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is already having, even before it enters into force. Ardeth Platte and Carol Gilbert will join Seth to tell how they are using the Ban Treaty to spark conversations with military officers, base commanders, and public officials around the world.

Susi Snyder, director of PAX, The Netherlands, will lead a workshop, complete with remarkable success stories, about the Don’t Bank on the Bomb campaign and its focus on pressuring corporations and financial institutions to withdraw support for nuclear weapons activities.

Alicia Sanders-Sakre, from ICAN in Geneva, Switzerland, will speak about campus connections to the bomb and will share a report on the various universities and colleges in the US who have a hand in weapons production.

Jackie Cabasso, Mayors for Peace Coordinator in the United States, will describe campaigns to get local government and other political powers to support the Ban Treaty; K A Garlick, coordinator of an effort in Fremantle, Australia, will explain how their campaign got a major city on board.

Susan Crane from the Redwood City Catholic Worker in California, and Marion Küpker, director of the Büchel ist Überall campaign in Germany, will lead a workshop on resistance efforts.

The point of the conference is threefold:

- To learn what tools are available and hear how they are being used effectively;
- To meet colleagues from around the world who are working on nuclear disarmament;
- To provide opportunities for collaborative work with our global allies.

THE TIMING

Coronavirus fears aside, and we hope they will be sidelined by the end of May, the timing of the conference could not be better.
Even as the forces for nuclear disarmament are rallying around the Ban Treaty and its promise of a world free of nuclear weapons, the nuclear powers are doubling down on their bombs and missiles, increasing funding for exotic new weapons and walking away from arms control treaties.

This year marks 75 years since the Bomb was first used; the Trinity test in New Mexico and the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, devastating as they were, were only harbingers of far greater threats to come.

With the passage of time, fewer and fewer first-hand witnesses to the power of the Bomb survive to tell us their stories. One of them, Hideko Tamura, will join the Stop the New Nuclear Arms Race conference via Skype to convey the clear and unequivocal message of the hibakusha, “Never again!”

This simple and powerful demand is at the heart of the new abolition movement growing around the world. Efforts to understand the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons only underscore the compelling nature of the hibakusha’s call. If humanity is to survive, we must listen to them and respond with urgency.

This year also marks fifty years since the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) entered into force. Unless postponed due to coronavirus fears, in April, nations of the world will convene at the United Nations to review that Treaty and to confront the reality that fifty years have passed since the nuclear weapons states promised to pursue in good faith complete nuclear disarmament at an early date.

You can draw a direct line from the failure of those states to keep their promise to the passage of the Ban Treaty by OREPA’s web site; you can also register for the conference there. Since the Treaty entered into force on April 24, 2020, some 122 non-nuclear armed states have signed up to ban nuclear weapons.

When the Ban Treaty achieves fifty ratifications (it has 35 to date), it will officially enter into force. At that time, despite their disavowal of the Treaty, nuclear weapons states will come under increased pressure to hear and accommodate the consensus of the rest of the world.

Much of that pressure will come from us, the citizens living in nuclear weapons states, or countries like Germany and The Netherlands that have US nuclear weapons deployed on their soil, or countries like Australia that continue to mine uranium, and countries that are under the “security umbrella” of nuclear weapons states.

COME TO MARYVILLE

The purpose of the conference in this pivotal year, when media will be more inclined to examine nuclear weapons issues, is to focus on the future and to redouble our efforts to create the world we want to raise our children and grandchildren in—a world free of nuclear weapons.

Information about Stop the New Nuclear Arms Race is available on OREPA’s web site; you can also register for the conference there. Space is limited, and registration closes on April 24, so don’t delay. OREPA, Nukewatch and The Nuclear Resister have worked hard to keep costs at a bare minimum, and some scholarships are available for Next Generation (under 30) activists.

In addition to the workshops described above, we will celebrate forty years of Nukewatch, the Nuclear Resister, and the Plowshares movement. John Schuchardt, participant in the first Plowshares action at King of Prussia, PA, will help us celebrate.

And on Monday morning, May 25, we will go to Oak Ridge for a march and a nonviolent demonstration at the gates of the Y-12 Nuclear Weapons Complex, where the US currently produces thermonuclear cores for nuclear warheads—and where the $6.5 billion Uranium Processing Facility bomb plant that will manufacture nuclear weapons components for decades to come is being built.

THE CONFERENCE AND THE VIRUS

For now, we are monitoring developments with COVID-19.

The outlook for the end of May will be clearer by mid-April. With the luxury of time, we are taking a wait-and-see attitude. As we reach a decision point, we will consider travel restrictions, the resilience of the virus, the success (or not) of containment efforts, and additional information about risks.

In the end, health and safety will be our primary guiding factors. We will post further updates on the conference web page and facebook.

We can’t spell OREPA without U

Okay, technically, we can. Let that be a lesson about borrowing someone else’s fundraising slogan.

What we can’t do, though, is continue our work without your help. We depend on donations from our supporters to do this work—whether it’s paying to print and mail the newsletter, fund the UPF lawsuit, or help underwrite the International Conference—we can’t do it without resources.

Gifts to OREPA are tax deductible. Please use the envelope included with the newsletter—or, if you prefer, you can give on-line at orepa.org.
Sometimes, when it comes to nuclear weapons, talk really is cheap. For instance, in the budget request submitted to Congress in February, the National Nuclear Security Administration says “Weapons dismantlement and Disposition is a critical element of NNSA’s integrated effort to transform the enterprise and the stockpile.”

Dig into the budget numbers, and you’ll see just how critical dismantling old nuclear warheads is. Here’s what you’ll find: the NNSA is proposing an 11% cut in dismantlement activities for next year, to a total of $50 million. That is three tenths of one percent of the entire NNSA budget—and one tenth of one percent of the Department of Energy’s budget.

Other times, talk is very, very expensive. Contrast the cut in funding for dismantlement activities with the budget’s commitment to building more bombs. The FY2021 budget requests a 25% increase for “weapons activities,” from $12.4 billion last year to $15.6 billion this year. What for? To complete “life extension” modifications on old warheads and bombs and to design new warheads.

And to build new bomb plants—three quarters of a billion dollars for the Uranium Processing Facility bomb plant in Oak Ridge, and twice that much for two plutonium pit manufacturing facilities, one in Los Alamos and one at Savannah River.

Tucked into the budget numbers are plans for a new nuclear warhead, the W93, with a budget request of $53 million. Consider that “start-up” money for a new Trident submarine missile warhead. Asked about the warhead in budget hearings, Admiral Charles Richard, head of the US Strategic Command, would not give the committee a straight answer. How could he? Since 2003, Congress has prohibited the production of new nuclear weapons without a specific request from the Secretary of Energy and an authorization by Congress.

Budgets reveal priorities. The budget the President has sent to Congress makes clear that cleaning up the legacy of contamination spread across the nuclear weapons complex, seeping into groundwater at multiple sites, in abandoned buildings that pose “an ever-increasing risk to workers and the public” according to a DOE Inspector General’s report, is not a priority.

Money for cleaning up contamination and protecting the public will be slashed by 20% ($1.3 billion less than last year) if the President’s budget is passed by Congress.

Oak Ridge is one of the more egregious examples of talk not matching action. Here’s how the budget request describes the situation: “Oak Ridge was placed on the National Priorities List (Superfund) in 1989. “The Oak Ridge Office of Environmental Management manages scope within three portfolios tied to sites located within the Oak Ridge Reservation. One-half million people live within a thirty mile radius of the Oak Ridge Reservation. These three site locations are surrounded by surface waters and/or groundwater. The local
cleanup program conducts extensive sampling and modeling to understand and track conditions, and it performs remediation projects and implements control measures to prevent the transport of contaminants off-site from past federal operations.”

That kind of information might seem like a compelling argument for decisive action to protect the public and restore the environment. It’s not—at least not to the Department of Energy. The cleanup budget in Oak Ridge will be cut by 40%, or $250 million.

It’s not because Oak Ridge has been cleaned up in the 30 years it has been on the Superfund list. It hasn’t. Mercury contamination, first revealed in 1983, still plagues the local waterways; the FY21 budget includes funding for a mercury treatment facility that should have been built 30 years ago.

It hasn’t been built though, because that was not a priority. So every rainfall washes mercury into the creek and carries it off the reservation into recreational areas.

Just as the top three most dangerous “Excess High Risk” facilities in the entire nuclear weapons complex have not been remediated—because they are at Y-12, inside the secure zone, and building bombs is a higher priority than protecting workers and the public. The money to clean up Y-12’s Building 9201-5, NNSA’s highest risk facility, is not in the FY21 budget.

Congressional committees are holding hearings about the budget request this month. You may be used to hearing that Presidents’ budgets are “Dead on Arrival” in Congress. That is not the case with nuclear weapons. Invariably, Congress gives the president what is asked for; often they increase the amounts. That’s in part because the appropriations committees are stacked with members from bomb plant districts.

If your Senator or Representative serves on the Armed Services Committee, or the Energy and Water Appropriations subcommittees, they will be making decisions on funding as the hearing process unfolds. At least one Representative has declared the weapons budget increase likely to be the “most contentious budget issue” before Congress.

Other members will not pay much attention to this until it is time to vote on the budget. Now is the time to contact them and let them know what your priorities are.

**BUDGET FACTS**

*The National Nuclear Security Administration is seeking a massive 20% increase in its FY2021 budget—to a total of almost $20 billion. Most of the increase is targeted for new bomb plants and nuclear weapons production.*

**NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

Proposed increase: 25%
Total NW request: $15.6 billion
What for:
- $750,000,000 for UPF bomb plant in Oak Ridge
- $1.5 billion for two plutonium pit bomb plants—upgrading a small facility in Los Alamos to produce 30 pits/year, and converting an abandoned project at Savannah River to produce 50 pits/year.
- $53 million for a new nuclear warhead, the W93, which would be deployed on Trident sub missiles.
- Funding for the W87-1 warhead (also a new design warhead) increases nearly 500% to $541 million.

**CLEANUP**

Proposed cut: 20%
Total Cleanup request: $6 billion
Facts:
- Oak Ridge is a Superfund site (since 1989)
- 1/2 million people live within a thirty mile radius of the OR Reservation
- The top three “excess High Risk facilities” in the nuclear weapons complex are at Y-12 in Oak Ridge. DOE’s Inspector General says these facilities present an “ever increasing risk to workers and the public.”
- The proposed budget would cut cleanup finds in Oak Ridge by 40%—$250,000,000.

**DISMANTLEMENT**

Proposed cut: 11%
Total Dismantlement request: $50 million (with an M)
- The budget request says: “Weapons dismantlement and Disposition is a critical element of NNSA’s integrated effort to transform the enterprise and the stockpile.”
- $50 million represents 3/10ths of 1 percent (.003) of the NNSA budget.
- The US has a many year backlog of retired warheads and bombs awaiting dismantlement.
- Funding for this “critical element” has remained static or decreased yearly for nearly a decade.
Gandhi said, “Nonviolence, when it becomes active, travels with extraordinary velocity, and then it becomes a miracle.”

That’s the way it is with peacemaking—you never know. You start out with the intention of just doing one good thing, and before you know it, you’re surprised to find you’re part of something amazing.

Several years ago, when Gloria Mencer agreed to be one of the local hosts of an international peacemaker sponsored by the Presbyterian Church, she found herself hosting Alla Soroka from the Ukraine. She heard Alla’s stories of working for peace against great odds in the Ukraine. And something in those stories, and in Alla’s life, began to whisper to Gloria.

Most of us, by the time we’re middle-aged, have learned to tune out those whispers, those little bits of conscience that are trying to nudge us out of our comfort zone, suggesting we try to do a little more, a little better. We know those voices can get us into all kinds of trouble. We forget they can also get us into miracles.

In Gloria’s case, she didn’t shush her inner voice. She listened. She heard a voice challenging her to be a peacemaker, too, right here where she lived.

That’s how a woman who used to work at the Y-12 Nuclear Weapons Complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, became the driving force behind an Overture presented to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, USA, titled: *On Seeking God’s Peace Through Nuclear Disarmament in the 21st Century*. It had been fifteen years since the Presbyterians had taken up the issue of nuclear weapons.

The process of getting an overture to the whole church is complicated; there were a number of barriers. Undaunted, Gloria and the Peacemaking committee of East Tennessee Presbytery took them on, one at a time, until, in the summer of 2018, the Presbyterian Church, USA, adopted that overture calling on the United States to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

What began as a small voice in one person was suddenly amplified by the voices of 1.3 million Presbyterians—some might call it a miracle—and even now the full extent of its impact has not yet been measured.

On February 29, at the Church of the Savior (UCC) in Knoxville, OREPA gathered with members of the community to celebrate Gloria Mencer with the 2020 Peacemaker Award.

OREPA coordinator Ralph Hutchison noted the event celebrated not just one peacemaker, but peacemaking, active, moving, believing, hoping, creating. Gloria personifies this, and her drive to make peace drew others to the vision, energized a committee, and made it happen.

As much as the Peacemaker Award is about celebrating the accomplishments of one person, it is also about looking forward to the miracles to come—to the day when the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons enters into force, and the nuclear weapons states, one by one, are compelled by their citizens to comply.

On that day, children will awaken to the dawn of a new age, one not overshadowed by the threat of a mushroom cloud. It is clear, seventy-five years into the nuclear age, that our salvation will not come from decisive action from our leaders—it will come from us or it will not come at all.

When she accepted the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017, Beatrice Fihn of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons noted that some people believe a world without nuclear weapons is impossible. “Those people,” said one of the key architects of the campaign that resulted in the Nuclear Ban Treaty, “need to get out of the way of those who are making it happen.”

OREPA was delighted to celebrate one of those people making it happen, Gloria Mencer, with the Peacemaker Award.
Doomsday Clock reset: 100 seconds to midnight

Every year since 1948, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists has assessed the risk of nuclear annihilation and, more recently, other existential threats to humankind. The panel of experts uses the Doomsday Clock to communicate the level of risk.

Last year, the hands of the clock were moved to 2 1/2 minutes to midnight, as close as it had ever been since the Clock was established.

On January 23, 2020, the Bulletin announced the hands of the clock would be reset at 100 seconds to midnight.

In a statement at the press event for the clock reveal, the Bulletin noted the assessment not only took into account the threat level of nuclear weapons and climate change, compounded by “cyber-enabled information warfare,” but also the fact that “world leaders have allowed the international political infrastructure for managing them to erode.”

The Bulletin’s statement said: “In the nuclear realm, national leaders have ended or undermined several major arms control treaties and negotiations during the last year, creating an environment conducive to a renewed nuclear arms race, to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and to lowered barriers to nuclear war. Political conflicts regarding nuclear programs in Iran and North Korea remain unresolved and are, if anything, worsening. US-Russia cooperation on arms control and disarmament is all but nonexistent.”

The Bulletin’s dire forecast was released two weeks before the Trump Administration made public its intention to boost spending on nuclear weapons by 25%.

GAO REPORTS: Y-12 modernization will break $6.5 billion UPF cap

Anyone who’s ever been around a construction site knows they are smelly places. Cutting rebar, mixing and pouring concrete, dust stirred up by truck traffic, lubricants and glues—all contribute to the essence in the air. But at the Uranium Processing Facility construction site, you might get a whiff of something else. The smoky odor is not from the construction per se, it’s from the books that are being cooked.

When NNSA set out to modernize enriched uranium operations (including production of nuclear weapons secondaries) at the Y-12 National Security Complex in 2005, the cost estimate for the project topped out at $1.5 billion.

Nine years later, cost estimates had ballooned to nearly $20 billion, a number that seemed untenable even to the bring-home-the-bacon public servants in Washington, DC, most notably Tennessee Senator Lamar Alexander who chairs the appropriations subcommittee that covers NNSA’s budget.

How to fit a $20 billion dollar project into a $1.5 billion budget? They couldn’t, even after they cut out the gratuitous profiteering that accompanies DOE construction projects. The best they could do was $6.5 billion.

How did they get there?

Well, they didn’t. But they tried. First, they cut back the scale of the work. Instead of replacing all the enriched uranium operations, they decided just to replace the bomb building part. So the UPF became a bomb plant, plain and simple.

Second, they decided the public could shoulder a little health and safety risk—they decided to continue to use unsafe (by their admission), decaying facilities for 20-30 more years without bringing them up to code. They called their new plan “risk acceptance.”

Then, when OREPA sued and won, they decided they would do some upgrading of the old buildings—but they would slide that money into an account that would not be on the UPF books.

On March 11, the Government Accountability Office released a report on the UPF plan that describes the result. GAO’s summary says they were dependent on NNSA’s assertions and reports. NNSA says the UPF is on time and on budget. GAO does not dispute them.

But, GAO notes, on budget (within the $6.5 billion cap) no longer covers the entire modernization program at Y-12. Work on the other enriched uranium facilities (still being determined at this time) will cost “more than $850 million,” according to NNSA. And another nearly $200 million (bringing the off-the-books total to more than a billion dollars) will come from other parts of NNSA’s budget.

In addition, estimates for some of the exotic technology under development for the UPF are not included in the numbers because contracts have not yet been let. In one case, NNSA says in a footnote that a project listed at $85 million, is likely to cost about 30% more ($105 million).

The GAO report offers more clarity about the cost of the next generation of nuclear weapons than we had before, but it does not answer questions that only Congress can answer—when will Congress stop throwing good money at bad bombs and start funding cleanup, dismantlement, nonproliferation, and other programs that actually increase our safety and security?

The GAO report is available at: https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-20-293.

Lawsuit update: NNSA set to release new SA

OREPA awaits a ruling from federal court on our Motion to Enforce in which we asked the Judge to back up her ruling that NNSA is in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act.

Meanwhile, NNSA has indicated to our lawyer that they will release a new Supplement Analysis (SA) addressing seismic issues as required by the court. The SA is a document that analyzes whether or not a new Environmental Impact Statement should be prepared.

NNSA is not required to provide a public comment period for an SA, but we expect a 30-day comment period. A public hearing is unlikely.

We are also hoping to raise funds to engage an expert who can provide an assessment of the adequacy of NNSA’s seismic analysis. That expertise was crucial to our initial court victory.