

## **Why Dr. Priscilla Elworthy Was Selected for the 20th Niwano Peace Prize**

The Niwano Peace Foundation (Nichiko Niwano, president; Kinjiro Niwano, chairman) has decided to award the 20th Niwano Peace Prize to Dr. Priscilla Elworthy (59), head of the Oxford Research Group (ORG). The ORG is a non-governmental organization in the United Kingdom that studies nuclear issues and is well-known as an authority on nuclear disarmament and peace strategies. Basing its decision upon the recommendations of some 1,000 knowledgeable people from 125 countries around the world, a committee of 7—comprised of representatives of various faiths, including Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam—deliberated in a spirit of strict fairness before coming to their decision.

The ORG is an organization that conducts research in pursuit of the aim of greater security throughout the world by means of nuclear disarmament and the regulation and reduction of weapons exports. One of the particular characteristics of the ORG is the adherence of Dr. Elworthy and many of its members to the pacifist beliefs of the Religious Society of Friends. During the past twenty years, they have concentrated on building up a body of research on how decisions about nuclear weapons are made, and who makes those decisions. Research and recommendations directed toward the resolution of disputes through non-violent means carried out by the ORG and its founder, Dr. Elworthy, have provided a calm and objective approach to scientists and people in governments and non-governmental organizations around the world, and at the same time have had a tremendous impact on international negotiations for disarmament. For a private research institution to be able to bring to bear an incisive influence on how a nation forms its nuclear policy is a testament to its

intellectual prowess as well as its persistence, and the ORG has been praised widely for bringing great hope and courage to people all over the world.

Dr. Elworthy has a varied and colorful background. After graduating from Trinity College, Dublin, she took part in relief activities at a refugee camp in northern Africa. Later, she served as coordinator for an organization working on malnutrition in South Africa, and helped establish the first non-discriminating public theater in that country. She also worked as a representative of the Minority Rights Group in France, and from 1979 to 1980 acted as a consultant to UNESCO on women's issues. She also researched and wrote a report published by UNESCO for the United Nations Conference on Women.

A major turning point for Dr. Elworthy was in 1982, when she attended the Second Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Disarmament. In New York's Central Park, one million people were demonstrating for nuclear disarmament. However, back in the UN building, the disarmament agenda was dragging along slowly, if at all. The voices of the thousands demonstrating for disarmament were not reaching the conference rooms in any form. Dr. Elworthy has described her feelings at that moment:

“Bridging that gap, the gap between the demonstrators and those who made the decisions, I thought, would be an essential step in making progress towards disarmament.

“I had the idea of groups of citizens talking to decision-makers—not waving banners outside their offices, not shouting violent opposition, but sitting down and discussing the issues quietly and soberly from a background of real knowledge.”

From that moment, Dr. Elworthy started to steadily gather information.

Her first focus was on “Who are the decision-makers?” She realized that the information was readily available from research libraries and elsewhere. And so the “Oxford Research Group” was brought to life, at first in Dr. Elworthy’s home. With increased staff and funding, in four years it succeeded in documenting analyses of decision-making processes about nuclear weapons in all the nations that possessed or were developing these weapons, as well as a list of decision-makers and their backgrounds.

We tend to assume that such decisions are made by parliamentarians and elected assemblies. However, the results of these surveys showed that in reality, the important decisions about nuclear weapons are, in most cases, made by a limited number of experts, cabinet ministers, and bureaucrats, without sufficient information being provided to parliamentarians and elected assemblies. Thus was revealed a flimsy, brittle decision-making process, and the “human element” that forms the background to problems connected with nuclear weapons was brought to light.

Moving forward on the basis of these results, the next step for the ORG was to aim for realistic talks with “people holding key positions in the decision-making process.” They aimed not only at clarifying the issue through research, but also at solving problems through dialogue. They started by contacting various NGOs (non-governmental organizations), providing them with information and suggestions for meeting and talking with specific decision-makers. This approach met with widespread approval, and eventually was developed through 70 groups. Dr. Elworthy herself held face-to-face talks with bureaucrats from defense departments and foreign ministries, as well as military planners, weapons planners, strategists, and politicians. It can be said that Dr. Elworthy’s preeminent personality was the factor that facilitated the

progress of such talks, which took place moreover in a variety of religious contexts. Without confrontation, and giving due consideration to each participant's position while establishing trust, participants inched forward toward ways to prevent nuclear proliferation and eliminate nuclear weapons.

The problem-solving method of the ORG is always “non-violent communication,” and is based on dialogue. The goal is to foster a sense of trust between one person and another, and work toward security based on trust. In 1992, when the problems of the weapons trade drew public attention, the ORG contacted 50 of the highest-level people around the world who were planning weapons deals and exports, as well as those who supplied the trade, and listened to what they had to say. In order to be able to recommend strategies aimed at resolving these problems, the ORG sponsored a conference of weapons traders and experts. It published the proceedings of the conference, and was praised highly for its concrete and realistic approach. The American representative to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe said, “The information is extremely valuable to me . . . the way it is put together makes it so much more usable than any similar report I have ever seen—and I have so many.”

In this way, the ORG has organized and held international and domestic conferences, seminars, and workshops on security issues and the problems of nuclear proliferation that have targeted scientists, NGOs, and people connected with the governments of more than 17 nations, and provided them with an opportunity to discuss these problems on a global scale. It has also published a large number of books and papers presenting research results, and has received commissions for research and other activities from a wide variety of governmental and non-governmental organizations, including the United Nations University, the European Parliament, and the International Physicians

for the Prevention of Nuclear War.

The ORG has recently started a project called “Peace Direct” that supports groups working toward solutions through nonviolent means on the front lines of actual disputes. By providing information and materials for training in non-violence, organizing training sessions and educating teachers in non-violence, offering material support, and helping mobilize the media, the ORG works as a “back-up group” for the “front-line action group.” It thus strives for an integrated collaboration with the front-line groups, with a view to establishing a system in which ordinary citizens can participate in a variety of ways.

Dr. Elworthy also adheres to Quaker religious beliefs. It is safe to say that the various activities of the ORG reflect the main ethical criteria of Quaker religious beliefs— “simplicity,” “fairness,” “cooperation in society,” and “peace (non-violence).” With the faith that we are all children of God and have “the Light within,” which serves as a foundation for philanthropy, the ORG has created and developed through sincere and realistic efforts a new approach to disarmament that is all-encompassing and non-confrontational.

In Dr. Elworthy’s own words, “When faced with a large system composed of many individuals, which is producing results you may want to change or influence, it is simply not true or realistic to believe that there is nothing that one individual can do. With a small number of allies, the effects of the decision of one individual can spread dramatically throughout the whole system, and thereby change the decisions it produces.”

When we think of the practice of nuclear inspection and the fundamental contradiction immanent in nuclear power, Dr. Elworthy’s words about working toward the elimination of nuclear weapons resound strongly in

the innermost hearts of modern people like ourselves. How strong a force nonviolence has proved to be at times. The activities of Dr. Elworthy and the Oxford Research Group can be seen as an attempt to bring about a major shift in the values of modern people who even now cling to the concept of “power.” In awarding the 20th Niwano Peace Prize to Dr. Elworthy, the Niwano Peace Foundation wishes to express its deepest respect for her dedication to the goal of peace. We commend Dr. Elworthy’s significant achievements and pray that many others will be inspired to follow in her footsteps.