

The New Nuclear Danger

Interview

By [Dr. Helen Caldicott](#)

Global Research, March 12, 2011

The Share Guide 12 March 2011

Theme: [Environment](#), [Militarization and WMD](#)

Helen Caldicott will be in Montreal on the 18th of March.

You are cordially invited to attend her Public lecture organized by Global Research and the Montreal antiwar collective Échec à la Guerre

Centre Saint Pierre 7.00 pm.

[For details on the conference click here](#)

An Interview with Helen Caldicott, M.D.
Author of The New Nuclear Danger

By Dennis Hughes, Share Guide Publisher

The Share Guide: Tell us how you first became aware of the nuclear weapons problem and nuclear power?

Dr. Helen Caldicott: I first became aware of the threat of nuclear war when I read Neville Shute's book *On The Beach* when I was 15 years old and living in Melbourne, where the book was set. The book was about an accidental nuclear war that triggers the end of human life. This scenario branded my soul. When I grew up, I led the movement in Australia against the French atmospheric tests in the Pacific and Australian uranium mining. Later I came to the United States as a member of the faculty of the Harvard Medical School specializing in Cystic Fibrosis in the mid 1970s, and founded Physicians for Social Responsibility—which was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985 for educating the public about the medical effects of nuclear war. I have written several books on the subject.

The Share Guide: Can you give a brief overview of your most recent book, *The New Nuclear Danger*, and why you wrote it at this time?

Dr. Caldicott: This book describes the internal, corporate related dynamics of the Bush administration, and the reason it is totally focused upon war, is violating all the international nuclear arms control treaties, and is now prepared in a cavalier way to use nuclear weapons on any non-nuclear nation it so chooses. This is antithetical to the nuclear policies of any previous U.S. administration. The nuclear weapons labs are also engaged in a new Manhattan project: a huge nuclear buildup, which includes designing, testing and building new nuclear weapons. In addition, the Bush administration is engaged in a massive, five-layered Star Wars project which will never work, and which will trigger a new nuclear arms

race with Russia and China. This is costing four times as much money as the U.S. is currently spending on the State Department, and could trigger a nuclear war. The danger is new because the hydrogen bombs of Russia and America are still on hair trigger alert as they were in the 1980s, but everybody thinks the nuclear threat of global annihilation has been resolved because the cold war ended. In fact, because of the public's ignorance, the nuclear threat is much greater than before.

The Share Guide: In a recent talk you gave, you mentioned the Heritage Foundation. Please explain what they have to do with the energy policies of President Bush and his administration.

Dr. Caldicott: The Heritage Foundation and other Washington, DC based so called "think tanks" are omnipresent right-wing advertising agencies for corporations such as Lockheed Martin and other military corporations and oil companies. The Heritage Foundation has either peopled the Bush administration with employees of corporations or with their own specially trained fellows. They are determining the policies of this administration, much as they determined those of the Reagan years. The Cheney energy policy was determined after consultation with oil and energy companies—with absolutely no input from knowledgeable academics or environmental groups who are deeply concerned about the rapid progress of global warming and its devastating ecological and economic consequences.

The Share Guide: What specifically are the negative effects of nuclear power, and aren't there adequate renewable sources of energy that we could use instead?

Dr. Caldicott: Nuclear power, apart from nuclear war, is the greatest medical threat posed to life on this planet. In fact, 95% of the total nuclear waste in the United States has been generated by nuclear power plants. Nuclear waste will last for 500,000 years, and there is no safe means to prevent these radioactive elements from entering and concentrating in the food chain. These elements, which are tasteless, odorless and invisible, are highly carcinogenic and mutagenic. Over time, they will induce epidemics of cancer and leukemia. This is particularly true for children, who are 10 to 20 times more radiosensitive than adults, and are therefore much more susceptible to cancer. The nuclear waste will also induce epidemics of genetic diseases and congenital abnormalities in humans (as well as in animals and plants) for the rest of time. This is rather like a process of random compulsory genetic engineering. Because of the quantity of fossil fuel used to mine, separate and enrich uranium, and to build the massive reactor, a nuclear power plant has to operate for 18 years before one net calorie of energy is realized! And the CO₂ produced from the fossil fuel adds significantly to global warming. Uranium enrichment also produces 88% of the CFC gases emitted from the U.S., a potent global warming gas and a significant ozone depleter in the upper atmosphere. The production and release of CFCs has been internationally banned in the Montreal Protocol, but the U.S. nuclear industry openly flouts this international treaty. So nuclear power causes global warming, ozone depletion, epidemics of malignancy and the destruction of the delicate process of evolution. Of course there are alternatives. Solar power is ubiquitous but almost untapped because of the political power of the oil companies. There is also enough wind west of the Mississippi to provide the whole of the U.S. with energy. It's worth noting that Europeans use half as much energy as Americans, but have the same standard of living because they practice pragmatic conservation.

The Share Guide: Most people are psychically numbed by the nuclear problem. How can we

deal with our feelings of fear, complacency, anger, depression, etc, and take constructive action?

Dr. Caldicott: The only effective way I have found to deal with peoples' fears is through a process of responsible education. That is why I wrote *The New Nuclear Danger*, and that is why I travel the world talking to large numbers of people about these facts. As a physician, I am obliged to practice global preventive medicine, and my experience has validated the admonition of Thomas Jefferson when he said "An informed democracy will behave in a responsible fashion."

The Share Guide: I have heard the environmental effects of nuclear war referred to as "collateral damage," but nuclear winter could in fact end life on earth as we know it. What actions can we as responsible citizens take in the face of the new nuclear danger? What can we say to people who are in denial of the problem?

Dr. Caldicott: This is the ultimate spiritual and religious issue ever to face the human race. For what is our responsibility to God to preserve the creation and evolution? We are the curators of possibly the only life in the universe and our responsibility is enormous. We must therefore dedicate every waking and sleeping moment to the preservation of creation. But first, action must be preceded by education. We are all physicians to a planet that is in the intensive care unit. *The New Nuclear Danger* is now the *Grays Anatomy* for a new breed of global physicians. Learn it and you will become ultimately powerful and equipped with the necessary knowledge that will drive our new crusade for global preservation.

The Share Guide: You have said "We are the rudder that can steer the whole ship." But our tax dollars are being stolen by the corporate robber barons, currently at the level of 400 billion dollars annually. What can we do to change this?

Dr. Caldicott: 400 billion dollars is almost half a trillion dollars, and if one spent \$1,000 a minute since Jesus was born, one would have just spent one trillion dollars. Therefore, the amount of money being stolen from the American people by this corporate administration for death, mayhem and destruction is enough to solve ALL the problems in U.S. society—plus feed, clothe, educate and house all the children of the planet, reverse global warming, save all the threatened species, save the tropical rain forests and save the Earth. So the money is there, but the will is not. We must remove the men in charge of the world! For the health of the planet and all of us, we must replace them with wise prophetic men and women who will implement life-giving and life-preserving policies. Millions of people in the United States were involved in the anti-nuclear movement of the 1980s. They watched *The Day After* with dread. Now the people need to be reawakened to the impending threat of nuclear war, and like the tiny trim tab rudder built into the large rudder of a ship, as it turns and they move, the whole ship of state will turn towards life and not death.

The Share Guide: What is your opinion of the Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Repository? And what do you think we should do with nuclear waste?

Dr. Caldicott: Yucca Mountain stands on 30 earthquake faults. It is a very unstable area and will not prevent the disbursement of lethal radioactive elements to the environment. Nuclear waste should be retained in the cooling pools of the nuclear reactors, meaning that all nuclear power plants would then have to close because their cooling pools are full. This also means that there would be no more electricity generated from nuclear power. As the spent fuel rods cool, they can then be stored in above ground casks until the brilliant

American scientists who are currently so hard at work designing new nuclear weapons are redeployed, inventing ingenious and currently unthought of ways to store their radioactive garbage safely for the next 500,000 years.

The Share Guide: Discuss the attitude in Japan and other nations toward nuclear weapons and nuclear power, as compared to the attitude here in America.

Dr. Caldicott: The Japanese politicians and corporations are pretty keen about nuclear power, even though Japan is the only country ever to have experienced the horrors of a nuclear holocaust. The Japanese are forbidden in their constitution from developing their own nuclear weapons. However, because they maintain huge stockpiles of reprocessed plutonium, they could within several weeks if they so decided build their own nuclear weapons. The Japanese people, on the other hand, are very allergic to anything nuclear, particularly after they experienced several very dangerous nuclear accidents in the last several years in their own nuclear facilities.

The Share Guide: You mentioned earlier that you founded Physicians for Social Responsibility. What are the goals of this organization?

Dr. Caldicott: Physicians for Social Responsibility was founded in 1978, to teach the American people about the medical effects of nuclear power and nuclear war. I, along with my colleagues, recruited 23,000 physicians during the 1980s to join this massive educational campaign. We were very successful in these efforts, and the organization still continues to this day.

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