

## After Hiroshima Project

Interviewer: Sarah Woods (SW)  
Interviewee: Sara Medi Jones (SMJ)  
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**[00.00.00]**

*(SW) So do you mind just telling me your name and what your job is?*

*(SMJ) Sara Medi Jones, Campaigns Officer at CND.*

*(SW) And, in your opinion, where are do you think we're at at the moment with Nuclear Weapons?*

*(SMJ) I think... we're possibly at a turning point. I think for many years it's felt like almost a hopeless case and I think the people who I've spoken to in CND have been campaigning for years and years – they always felt like it was this huge goal that they still had to go for even though it seemed out of their reach. But at the moment, with sort of political developments, with obviously for the first time in a very long time the leader of the opposition is against Nuclear Weapons, the largest party in Scotland which hosts the Nuclear Weapons, the SNP, they're winning elections in Scotland... the Liberal Democrats have changed their policy to not being against Nuclear Weapons but to scale it down, even the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee – whose a Conservative – he's saying there's no need for Trident. So I feel there's a political switch in... maybe people aren't opposing it in the same way people in the '80s might have approached it, on purely moral grounds, people are saying what's the point of Nuclear Weapons, what does it say about us, and why do we have them?*

**[00.01.18]**

*(SW) Brilliant and when you say about Scotland 'hosting' Nuclear Weapons can you just explain what you mean...*

*(SMJ) So, Britain's Nuclear Weapons are delivered via submarines and those submarines are based off Faslane in Scotland and that's where the War Heads are stored as well.*

*(SW) So um... when you say it's not just about a moral argument any more, can you just tell me what are the reasons why you think there's a... this turn against Nuclear Weapons?*

*(SMJ) I think we've moved on from the Cold War and it might have taken some people twenty years to realise that. Personally I still wouldn't have supported Nuclear Weapons during the Cold War but you can sort of see, if not understand, where people are coming from – there was one big enemy, there was a policy of 'we're two large blocks in the world and no one wants to kill the other', to wipe out themselves for the other one, so there was this uneasy understanding of we've got one you've got one. But today's threats are completely different. Russia is not going to attack us however much we may disagree or... with Putin in the Press. The threats facing us are terrorism, are climate change, are pandemics, cyber-attacks, and I think there is a real shift in thinking, even among military circles; when the army's been cut, when we don't have enough conventional ships – people are thinking why are we still spending this much money on what's basically a status symbol and it's not addressing any of the real threats we face.*

**[00.02.51]**

*(SW) That's really good. So... and that's something that you've put really succinctly that I don't think people necessarily know – that... to draw all that thinking together. What else do you think the general population perhaps should know about weapons and where we're at that they don't?*

*(SMJ) I think people are always surprised by the cost um... because when I started campaigning for CND the quote that we always said is about £100 billion, and today, which is only a couple of years later, people are saying it's £160/170 billion, and that's not peace campaigners, that's people*

in Parliament and it's just such an extortionate amount of money and I think people, one, don't know that – when you give them the amount they go 'what are you talking about?' but then when you go even further and explain what that amount could pay for instead, because it can be such an abstract sum - £100 billion what does that mean – but what it does mean is 15,000 extra nurses and doctors, or teachers, it means 60,000 new homes every year. So when you sort of say that to people like that that does change a lot of people's minds.

**[00.04.03]**

*(SW) So that's the year-on-year cost?*

(SMJ) Yeah.

*(SW) Every year?*

(SMJ) That's the comparison. So yeah, you would get 15,000 nurses employed every year or 60,000 homes.

*(SW) So that cost on nuclear... it's not a one off cost?*

(SMJ) No it's the big cost is one off. So the submarines are possibly the most expensive component but we do have between two to three billion pounds running costs every year, and that's huge.

*(SW) Wow... So that smaller year-on-year amount would pay for so many teachers and...*

(SMJ) So many teachers and so many houses. It would actually – if we invested it in renewable energy – we'd have enough energy to power the whole of the UK on renewables alone... It's such a huge amount of money that it's hard for people to almost comprehend it until you put it in those terms.

**[00.04.53]**

*(SW) Wow. So just to be really clear, when you're saying so many homes and so many... the amounts of homes and things, that's on the smaller amount? The year-on-year...*

(SMJ) Right.

*(SW) ...cost rather than the big...*

(SMJ) There's various things um... It's sort of... so the running costs would pay for the 15,000 teachers, all that, but then I think the homes would be from the £100 billion sort of cost, so I can send you the full details if that's easier...

*(SW) Well that would be great, yeah yeah yeah.*

(SMJ) I'll send that to you when I get back in. I've got a full list.

**[00.05.30]**

*(SW) That would be fantastic, that's really useful, I can really see where that would go. That would be lovely. So you wouldn't mind if I take what you've said but slot in the figures...*

(SMJ) ...to make it accurately correct, yeah.

*(SW) Brilliant, ok. And.. so what... as a campaigner now, what are your hopes when you look ahead, what do you think... were do you think you could get to perhaps in your campaigning life?*

(SMJ) Well I think it's not quite as straight forward as I think... realistically you have to accept that we're not going to win a very imminent vote in Parliament. So there is going to be a vote, possibly

in the next few weeks, definitely in the next few months, there will be a vote on whether we go ahead with the brand new Nuclear Weapons system, and the majority of the figures in Parliament, unless something dramatic happens, it's... we have to accept that it doesn't look like we would win that vote. But I think what comes into play then is the legitimacy argument, for example 57 of Scotland's 59 MPs are going to vote against it and that's where, as I said previously, the Nuclear Weapons are based. Public opinion – the military figures are questioning it more and more and costs are spiralling out of control as well... there's a new announcement all the time about how much money needs to be invested. So I don't think that it's the... I don't feel like it would be the end of the road as a vote would be a good way of engaging public opinion, of highlighting the issue even further, but I think that's not the a carte blanche for David Cameron and the government... I think there's still... it's such a huge issue and there are such legitimacy questions around it, I don't think it's going to go away.

**[00.07.14]**

*(SW) And can you see a time where Nuclear Weapons are a thing of the past for this country?*

(SMJ) Yes, definitely. I mean 150 countries have signed, not countries, not NGOs, 150 countries have signed... a statement I guess saying they want to get rid of all the Nuclear Weapons in the world. That's the normal. There's nine countries in the world that have Nuclear Weapons, there's 180 that don't, and I just think that it does make sense and we will see a time when we're one of those rational countries that don't have them.

**[00.07.46]**

*(SW) And do you think we're locked... is it partly about being locked into a sense of ourself as a... of 'Great' Britain?*

(SMJ) Definitely! That's one of the main reasons I am against Nuclear Weapons, not just because of them in isolation, but what it says about us as a country. And I think, to go back in history, sort of losing the empire and thinking we were this great power sort of running the world, I think people want to cling on to some sense of that. Even though we've lost the official status and they want to be seen as one of the big players in the world and to have the status that this weapon of mass destruction brings. But I just reject that... I just, in a country that so many people rely on food banks, I think that says more about our status than we have this useless weapon. So it's about a wider sort of picture of how we see ourselves and how we run ourselves as a country.

**[00.08.40]**

*(SW) And if you were to sort of try and sell... or just imagine... what would be our identity then? If we let go of ourselves as a great world power – what is our new identity?*

(SMJ) I mean we could still play a positive influence in the world but not through having weapons. Through peacekeeping – contributing to UN peacekeeping meetings – through guaranteeing aid to countries, through accepting refugees, through accepting people who are fleeing war torn countries. That's the kind of thing we should be doing, as well as educating our citizens – making sure people are warm, making sure people are fed – I think that's a much more sensible way forward than what we're doing at the moment.

**[00.09.21]**

*(SW) Thank you, that's lovely. Um... would you mind just saying something about the new system... people have said bits and bobs and I haven't really looked into it deeply, but I know that there's this huge amount of money that we possibly might be investing now in nuclear...*

(SMJ) Yeah so Britain's current Nuclear Weapons system is called Trident and what it is is warheads on missiles on submarines. There's four submarines, one of which patrols the oceans somewhere we don't know at all times. So that is Britain's Nuclear Weapons system. The reason that this debate is happening now – that we need a new system – is that the submarines were initially due to come out of service in 2028; that's when it's technically safe for them to still be patrolling. So the submarines are so complicated and take so long to build that technically they

should be built already. The vote was meant to be in 2010, but as part of the Coalition Government agreement the Liberal Democrats said while we're in power we don't want that vote, so they delayed it. So that's why it's happening now, and the Government has promised a vote before it gives the final authorisation for those submarines. And because the submarines is basically the main chunk of the cost, that's why this vast amount of money is involved. So the warheads... the missiles we actually hire from the US, so we don't own the missiles, we rent them, from the US pool and we pay a fee to them every year for their upkeep. The war heads are fine for another ten/twenty years after the submarines go out of service but that will be another debate in ten years – do we buy new war heads? So that is the facts, yeah.

**[00.11.08]**

*(SW) So you could say that all that money that we've invested in the submarines in everything so far... what good do you think it's done us?*

*(SMJ) I would say none at all... I mean I don't think there's been an occasion where those Nuclear Weapons have kept us safe, where having a war head patrolling the Atlantic Ocean God knows where... I don't think that's ever kept us safe... [laughs] personally.*

**[00.11.37]**

*(SW) OK. Um... so... why... what...*

*(SMJ) Sorry do you need more information? On the system itself?*

*(SW) No I think that's enough. Obviously as you're talking I'm sort of computing and thinking... I'm sort of rewriting everything. I think that's enough, when I get the transcript back if there are bits and bobs it might be then easier for me to say here's this chunk and mark a few little bits and say can you just tell me a wee bit more...*

*(SMJ) Yeah of course.*

*(SW) ...But I think it's probably enough. It's just, you know, this could be a massive long play that could last three hours and we'll just have to... it's something I think I'll try to write more about because I don't think many people engage with it.*

*(SMJ) No.*

*(SW) Um... so for you, why have you chosen to give your sort of working life, your time, and energy to this?*

*(SMJ) I think... no I'd want to live in a country that has proper priorities, or what I would think of as proper priorities. I get sad when you hear of families that have to go to a food bank even though they're working full time, when the statistics for how many elderly people die in the winter because they can't afford heating, the people who leave school unable to read or write because there's not enough investment in their primary education... that's not the kind of country I want to live in. And I think the whole idea of Nuclear Weapons isn't separate from that – it comes down to priorities and the kind of country we live in and... recently the whole issue about the Government not accepting anywhere near enough refugees – I mean what does that say about us that we've got plenty of money to invest in bombs but not enough to say in these horrible devastating situations, why can we not provide them a home. So for me all these issues have always been linked. And it's just one of the issues, you've got to realise that somewhere, you've got to sort of pick your issue and... it's a very important part of it.*

**[00.13.55]**

*(SW) Brilliant. Bruce... when I was talking to him the other day, you know looking at his life and the energy that he's put into his life and obviously not... you know some of the campaigners said we thought we'd have Nuclear sorted in a couple of years in the early days, so I sort of asked him about that and he said you just keep putting it in a stream, you just keep putting it in and you don't*

*know what effect your actions are having, but... you know, you just keep working forward. Is that how it works for you?*

(SMJ) Yeah because you just never know what's going to happen. I mean the obvious – the Berlin Wall – that just came to people on the streets, campaigners even, out of nowhere. And you just never know when circumstances are going to change. And I think 2015 was – and 2014 before it – were quite interesting years. Not relevant to the Nuclear thing at all but I'm also a member of Plaid Cymru the Welsh Nationalist Party, and I... in an ideal world would want independence for Wales and I have done a lot of work with the SNP. And two, three, four years ago we never would have thought there would even be a referendum in Scotland and I've got a lot of friends in Catalonia and the Basque Country and Flanders who are going through a very similar thing and it's all happened in the last five years. [00.15.15] We've gone from sort of fringe parties where people would have gone "independence? What the hell are you talking about?" to, it looks like it might happen in Catalonia, it looks like it might happen in Scotland. So I think I've already got that experience, you know, it's nothing to do with this or sort of a huge abstract political issue that people think is never gonna happen to sort of almost becoming a reality when it feels over night. So I think as a campaigner that's just what you do, you sort of think "it has to happen one day!" but you don't know when so you just keep going and one day there will be that straw that breaks the camel's back and pushes it over and hopefully I'll be around for it.

*(SW) Yeah, that's the thing isn't it? I've met, I've worked with a number of older people recently in different fields, who sort of, have kept at it some people like Bruce Kent and [inaudible] and obviously some people are still working, there's one woman in particular whose work is in nutrition around, sort of, poverty and inequality and stuff was saying "I've done this all my life and I'm still saying the same thing". So, um, yeah, it's interesting isn't it? How can you maintain that drive and hope?*

(SMJ) And I also believe we just never know what would have happened otherwise without this movement, without CND, without campaigners would we have got more nuclear weapons? Would testing still be, testing has been banned and I think that is the pressure from campaigners. Would we have the test of nuclear bombs causing damage and health issues in other parts of the world? Would a bomb have maybe gone off because people would be less aware of the devastating consequences or of the risk of tension? So, I think, maybe, I'm still lucky enough to be the same as Bruce, quite sanguine and, you know, you have to think that at some point the, sort of, movement and campaigning has made a difference.

*(SW) And talking about the, the, the sort of Test Ban Treaty that's an area that I've been researching into but still remain a little bit cloudy about y'know, how, so sort of going back to the original Test Ban Treaty, there were a few weren't there? Um, some people have sort of said "oh well it", it took the heat out of, in that in that once that people kind of thought "that's it, we're sorted" you know, the idea that was it effective as people thought it was in the first place and I don't know what your, I don't know if you could sort of outline, as you see it, the history of it and the effect it had.*

(SMJ) I don't know how much more detailed knowledge I have about the history of it but I do think it's important. When you look at the Marshall Islands where they did test bombs and the stories, I've met some of those people from there and you know the stories of how much it affected their lives and their families then of course I'm glad there's a test ban treaty, you know, it's not stopped any- yes it's stopped something, it's stopped radiation from getting into the air. Um, I don't think it's stopped progress in other ways, that's just... I think there's a temptation for the people maybe in charge to go "oh we've done something" but it definitely doesn't stop campaigners.

*(SW) So when, up until what point were the tests still happenings?*

(SMJ) I wouldn't want to say, no. I don't think I know the exact date, no.

*(SW) It would be, I guess that's something the hazy area in terms of the facts. So I'll have another*

*look but, um, I don't know if you... is it stuff, is it, would you have any research on that?*

(SMJ) Yeah, maybe! I'll have a look in the office for you this afternoon. Yeah, no no no, I'll have a look. I'll look at the facts and figures of the 100 billion and the test ban stuff.

*(SW) OK, so just onto the last couple of questions now. Um, I don't know how much you know about, um, we were doing this mapping thing last night and looking at the damage that a modern nuclear bomb, if it was dropped, would cause compared to Hiroshima but also even before that. Is that something that you would know about or not?*

SMJ: Not massively, I mean we know that every bomb that the UK has, so it has, 215 nuclear bombs in its arsenal and each one of those has, is eight times the kilotons of the bomb on Hiroshima so a crude estimate, I mean we do use it, is it would cause eight times the damage of Hiroshima but obviously that does depend on where it lands and the weather conditions at the time. But yeah, each one of Britain's bombs is eight times the amount of kilotons detonated on Hiroshima, yeah. I know. But there are the reports, have you seen the one of where if the bomb was dropped, um, I'll find the link for you, it's somewhere, um, and it, it actually sort of shows what would happen. I think it's based on Moscow. But I'll send it to you.

*(SW) OK, so we've sort of talked about it but this is a slightly different question, um, and also thinks about our audiences and cast members. For you, how important is it that we as individuals take action on this sort of issue rather than thinking "oh well, someone else will sort it out."*

(SMJ) What I've found with this issue is that people just don't know about it – they've got some vague recollection of nuclear weapons from films or from history books but so many people don't really grasp that we still have them and the potential damage they could cause and also the money that we spend on them. So, CND goes to festivals like Glastonbury as part of our campaigning just to speak to new audiences and what I'm always fascinated and encouraged by is that as soon as you talk to people about it they do get angry about it and they do think that it's unacceptable. So it's, I think it's a challenge for us as campaigners just to get the information across and I think that's the best thing people can do because, from my opinion, the more you know about it, generally, the more against it you are as an Average Joe on the street so I think it is important that we talk about it and do it myself. Not to be too much of a bore at the pub but when people sort of get around to it, and hardly anyone after a chat will say "oh no, I think it's good that we have them" so I think that's what people should be doing, just sort of being informed about it and, sort of, realising that we still have them.

*(SW) And do you think there's something in, I can't remember if it was Jim Radford or somebody else that said when they were trundling round the road on lorries they were more in people's consciousness, they, sort of, slipped under the water and in submarines they, sort of, went out of people's....*

(SMJ) Yeah, well, um, well there's still- do you know about nuclear convoys? So the warheads are stored up in Scotland but they're serviced down in Reading so every, I don't know, 5/6 weeks they're transported, nuclear bombs are transported on our roads and they, they get police escorts but it's not very safe, I've seen the pictures, and it's maybe 2 or 3 police vans, 2 motorbike riders, maybe a military van and an ambulance but, you know, they're ripe for attack or accident. So, there's a group called Nuke Watchers who do fantastic work and they, sort of, know the route, there's various routes you can take from Reading to Scotland and there's people who live along the routes and there's a phone number and if you see this convoy you notify everyone else and so the people there they take pictures and as part of security that you never publicise it on the spot or you don't Tweet "nuclear convoy going through Oxford", er, Oxford's one of the main cities in goes through by the way, um, but they take pictures and then they campaign on this. There was one last weekend, like, quite a big convoy and people took photos so that's a very useful, I feel cynical to say 'useful', very useful campaigning tool because again it brings it into people's lives, it's like "oh were you in Oxford on Saturday? Well, OK, with your kids, those nuclear bombs were metres away from you." And, not to be too, sort of, scary but terrorist attacks do happen and people know these

convoys do take place and you just never know who could overpower them. Or there could be an accident, there could be a head on collision with, I don't know, an oil van or something.

*(SW) So then, they've got the nuclear warheads in them?*

(SMJ) Yep. So the actual nuclear bombs are just travelling along Britain's roads. But, again, people only know about that if you live on the routes. The Nuke Watch group, they do do fantastic work trying to spread the knowledge that this happens and I think that a lot of nuclear campaigners are going to do a lot more work on these convoys in the next few months. I think there's been a, sort of, decision taken by people campaigning in this area that this is something we need to highlight more.

*(SW) And, um, the- this woman I was talking to yesterday, Takako, she, um, there's a particular picture that she has which is from the Hiroshima Museum, you might have seen it, uh, um, some survivors in it, I don't know how long they survived for, quite badly burnt on a cloth. And there's a young girl, sort of, sitting at the back on the image, and um, she was, sort of, saying, you know, "sometimes I look at her and I think, well, I'm going this for her" even though she's so far back in time, you know, it's not about Hiroshima, it's about looking at her and asking "do we want this?" You know, "is this what we want?", you know, this girl, doesn't know where her mother is, and it sort of what we want? And it's a very, you know, just a very human way of looking at it. And I was wondering if there's anything for you that, you know, drives a particular question or that you return to in your mind?*

(SMJ) This makes me sound less human but no I don't think there is, I think like I've said, I always just get back to that question of 'what kind of country do I want to live in? Do I wanna be a part of?' And it's about that really.

*(SW) Yes, and that's very similar. Brilliant, that's it, that's everything.*