

## PM: Kansas City, Missouri vs. the Nuclear Industry

By Polly Mann

Some Kansas City residents are opposing plans of Centerpoint Zimmer (CPZ) to build a 1.5 million square foot nuclear plant in their city that would provide 85% of the components of U.S. nuclear weapons at a cost of \$673 million. The federal government will lease the site and plant for 20 years after which CPZ will buy it for \$10. The Kansas City Council will issue \$815 million in bond subsidies from urban blight funds to build the complex.

Opponents have questioned the government's need for building more nuclear weapons as the U.S. already possesses 8,500 nuclear weapons: What of the government's commitment to engage in treaties for nuclear disarmament? How does the new plant fits into the administration's pledge to free the world of nuclear weapons? And, why should they be forced to subsidize the U.S. military-industrial complex with their tax dollars?

The city's peace and disarmament community have stepped into the fray and formed a coalition, Kansas City Peace Planters, which has initiated a petition campaign to place a proposition on the November 8, 2011 election ballot that would reject building a plant for weapons and instead support "green energy" technologies.

In June 2011, the U.S. Council of Mayors voted for a resolution instructing the president to join leaders of other nuclear states in implementing UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon's plan for the elimination of all nuclear weapons by 2020. It includes modernization of nuclear weapons.



Peace Planters join hands in an action opposing a nuclear plant in Kansas City.

Archbishop Francis Chullikatt, the Vatican's ambassador to the U.N., in a speech made in Kansas City in July of 2011 said, "Viewed from a legal, political, security and most of all —moral perspective, there is no justification today for the continued maintenance of nuclear weapons." The Catholic Reporter's comment was that "The U.S. trudges unheedingly down the nuclear path. Now more than ever we need to attend to the messages of the often marginalized peacemakers in our midst." Actually they aren't so marginalized: Nearly 5,000 signed the petition to reject the nuclear weapons plant.

On August 25th the Kansas City Council voted 12 to one to bar the proposition from the ballot. The petitioners then sued to block Council interference. CPZ and its contractor, the Honeywell Corporation, and its rinds secured a court decision to delay action for years. In response, Peace Planters crafted a new petition that would cut off city funding for the plant.

Whatever the outcome, the struggle itself is hopeful—indicating that many Americans are appalled by the prospect of more nuclear weapons.

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