

MERSEYSIDE CND

NEWSLETTER

Dec.2003/Jan.2004

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Armageddon on the Horizon?

It came as no surprise to hear the announcement on the World Service during last night that Congress has voted in the \$400,000 million Defence budget. This is the biggest in the history of the USA. Requested by George Bush it is in his words needed to continue the fight against terrorism. As yet we've heard almost no voices raised in opposition, even from Democratic contenders for the presidency, to this drive to develop a vast new arsenal of weapons of mass destruction for use anywhere in the world including space. These include the new so-called 'low yield' nuclear weapons designed for the battlefield, pre-emptive deployment not ruled out, against whichever regime Bush and the right-wing coterie driving him consider a threat to 'American Interests'. So an enemy of the USA no longer has to have nuclear weapons. Any supposed threat might be met with a nuclear response. Deterrence, that old 'MAD' policy of 'mutually assured destruction' is dead and buried. (Not that we approved of that then but somehow it now looks a whole lot safer). US global invincibility is the 'New World Order'.

To make matters worse our government is giving Bush almost unqualified support, our media for the most part turns a blind eye and UK firms are falling over themselves to get their hands on some of that budget. So a subsidiary of Westinghouse which BNFL acquired in 1999 is lobbying the US government hard to win a contract to make parts for the new 'low yield' nuclear weapons. Thus there will be direct British involvement in the production of weapons which will kill and maim thousands and leave a poisonous radioactive legacy. After the heartening demonstrations in Liverpool and London last week - it felt good to be part of a large crowd prepared to say 'this should not be happening. We want a different kind of world' - it's hard nonetheless back home again in the real world to stay upbeat. We must think clearly to find a sane path through the next dangerous years. So after a well earned Christmas break - bring your ideas to our AGM on Saturday Jan. 17th - 2pm

Now More Than Ever, We Need You!

Merseyside CND AGM

Saturday January 17th 2004 1.30 for 2pm

The CASA, Hope St., Liverpool L1

Changes lie ahead for Merseyside CND.

We'd like to hear your views about our campaign priorities in 2004 and how we should adapt to a new home after 18 years at 24 Hardman St. Guest Speaker invited.

MCND: 0151 708 7764

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Mary Cameron, Jan. 6th 1919 –

October 23rd 2003

We're sad to report that Mary, another friend and long-time supporter of CND has died. Among the moving remembrances of Mary's life given by her family and friends at her funeral was the following appreciation by Sam Watts, Chairperson of the Communist Party of Britain (Merseyside Branch), a position which Mary used to hold.

"By the time I had read my copy of 'The Ragged Trousered Philanthropist' 55 years ago which launched me into the Communist Party, Mary had already done it all 20 years before.

Mary joined the YCL (Young Communist League) in her teens, and so started her life dedicated to peace and socialism right up to her illness two years ago.

In 1980 Mary received a certificate from the then Liverpool City Council for her services to them of her 40 years of teaching.

The organisations that Mary belonged to playing an active role in all of them is staggering. In her early life Mary's main occupation was in the NUT (National Union of Teachers) which at the time was a very conservative dominated male union where Mary contributed a major role in the campaign for equal rights and equal wages for women. Not the easiest task for a Communist woman in a male dominated right wing union. Some of the campaigns Mary was active in were, in early life, to save the Rosenbergs from execution on trumped up charges and to get Paul Robeson a passport to travel outside the USA.

In later life: CND, Trade Union CND, Retired Teachers Association, Communities Against Poverty, Citizen's Advice Bureaux, NUT, Cuba Solidarity Justice for Peace, National Assembly of Women. Sometimes she would be going to two or three meetings a day.

Mary loved rambling in the countryside for relaxation and knew many birds and flowers. She had an eye for detail and after giving her a lift to and from meetings Mary would always insist that she paid her share of the petrol costs.

'Your efforts in the struggle

Your quiet unassuming ways

Your strength and skill and courage

We've witnessed all our days.'

Farewell, comrade, farewell."

Sam Watts.

Joe O'Grady:

Another stalwart campaigner for peace, Joe died on October 25th. At his funeral Jan Harper his friend and colleague in Pax Christi quoted the words of Eric Heffer in 'Why I Am A Christian':

'Many people become very self centred, thinking only of themselves and their own lives. But there are others who get involved in their society, in the community, and do worry about what happens to their fellow human beings, to life as a whole, and are concerned about the future of the earth.

I have no real answer to the question "Why are we here?"

Could I answer that, the mystery of life would cease to be a mystery. What I always keep in mind however are the words of Nikolai Ostrovsky: "Our dearest possession is life. It is given to us but once and we must live it so as to feel no torturing regrets for wasted years, never know the burning shame of a mean and petty past; so live that, dying, we might say: all my life, all my strength were given to the finest cause in all the world – the fight for the Liberation of Humankind", I find that a wonderful statement and if one lives by it, one has truly lived a Christian life".

There were many people at Joe's funeral mass and many tributes paid. The thoughts of all are summed up by the words of Bruce Kent and Valerie: In loving memory of our Joe, faithful, hopeful, determined and a wonderful peace partner. We'll never forget him.

Ministry for Peace / Commission for Peace

Eileen Brown and Maureen Miller have attended meetings in London called by the MP John McDonnell to discuss various aspects of the formation of a Ministry for Peace. What follows is part of their reports to 'Women to Women for Peace' on whose behalf they attended.

Eileen reported that the concept for a Ministry for Peace had first been explored at a meeting in July addressed by Marianne Williamson from the USA. This writer and lecturer was involved in various initiatives in the USA towards the promotion of a Department of Peace aimed at conflict resolution, prevention of violence and the promotion of justice, democracy and human rights. Following that meeting John McDonnell, Labour MP had put forward a Ten Minute Rule Bill (which was heard on October 14th. and duly passed unopposed with cross party support).

About 80 people at the meeting which Eileen attended, discussed and completed questionnaires to obtain as wide a range of views as possible about the formation of a Ministry for Peace under 5 headings: Why had people got involved? What should be its aims and scope? How should it be organised? What contribution could people present make? How should it be promoted and support mobilised for the concept. Some of the points that emerged were: Changing of attitudes both politically and in the general public that in dealing with disputes, war is not inevitable – i.e. change from a Culture of War to a Culture of Peace – this is the UN Decade of Non-Violence. The Ultimate goal is the abolition of war. There should be conflict resolution training at all levels – e.g. as a compulsory part of the National Curriculum. Work with UN and other organisations – e.g. Global Conflict Prevention Pool, Movement for Abolition of War. Divert part of taxes for peaceful purposes and publicise the initiative as widely as possible.

200 people attended the next meeting, far more than was expected. Maureen reported that it started with a reading of a young girl's 'Vision of 2020' by when the dominant aspiration would be personal rather than economic growth and there'd be a new mindset – planetary consciousness with co-operation and dialogue replacing wars. Maureen thought 17 years rather too short a time to reach such a Utopia but perhaps a vision for 50 years ahead.

The next steps in Parliament would be a Green Paper based on the 10 Minute Rule Bill. John McDonnell hopes that the consultation process to prepare the legislation for Parliament next Spring will permeate the debate leading up to the next General Election. The aim is to get all political parties to bring it into their manifestos. He stressed this is not an over idealistic vision – in the long run there is no other way to go.

Discussion then took place in smaller groups under headings such as: networking, fundraising and public relations. Maureen chose the networking group because Women to Women for Peace is based on bridge building. This group was large and diverse in cultures and religions. They suggested a number of networks – churches, temples, mosques, women's groups, business people, peace organisations, local community groups using local press and radio.

It was stressed that this is an opportunity to go outside our usual peace groups and reach a wider audience. To this end the first civil society Commission for Peace was launched at the meeting as set out in the Ten Minute Rule Bill. People are invited to join the Commission by coming to meetings and contributing to the discussion by email. The Commission has a) a Parliamentary focus to produce a bill in 2004 in the spring after a further conference in April and b) a civil society focus – to monitor and report to Parliament and generally facilitate the spreading of ideas regarding conflict prevention and resolution as widely as possible. A number of teams were set up to take the project forward. Diana Basterfield is the convenor of the Steering Group. She can be contacted on 020 7386 7709. The website is: www.ministryforpeace.org.uk where the Bill and Ministry for Peace statement of aims and other information can be found.

Maureen concluded that the greatest enemies are apathy and cynicism but we have the example of other countries in Europe who have gone ahead. Women to Women will be represented at the next meeting. Eileen said she felt privileged to have played a small part in this exciting venture which might – just might – save the world. She quoted Frances Hodgson Burnett: "*At first people refuse to believe that a strange new thing can be done. Then they begin to hope it can be done. Then they see it can be done. Then it is done and all the world wonders why it was not done centuries ago*".

Depleted Uranium: IDUST President Visits Liverpool

Dr. Dan Bishop, a retired US chemist and president of the Board of Directors for IDUST, the International Depleted Uranium Study Team, an international organisation of researchers, activists and scientists dedicated to creating a world-wide ban on the use of radioactive materials, including uranium and depleted uranium, in military weapons, spoke to a small group of people at The CASA on 4/11/03.

The meeting started with a 60 minute video entitled 'The Invisible War: Depleted Uranium and the Politics of Radiation', an award winning documentary by Martin Meissonier. The film explained in great depth and detail the effects of Depleted Uranium (DU) on soldiers and civilians. It also exposed the lies and mis-truths issued by the Foreign Office and the US, who have not accepted that DU causes any of the ill effects which sufferers and campaigners claim. It also dispelled the statement printed in the Summer Newsletter of the Campaign Against Depleted Uranium (CADU) 'The United States has said it has no plans to remove the debris left over from the depleted uranium weapons it is using in Iraq. *It says no clean-up is needed because research shows that DU has no long-term effects*'.

As the video showed and Dan Bishop explained the used DU shells which are lying around since being fired against tanks in the first Gulf War in 1991 initially give off Alpha Rays which are harmless but after a couple of weeks they corrode and give off Beta Rays which penetrate the skin and finally Gamma Rays which penetrate the body. Children pick up these shells or are exposed to the radioactive and chemically toxic waste material produced during the uranium enrichment process. In the first Gulf War about 320 tons of DU were used. In 2003 2000 tons was launched against Iraq, a massive increase. DU was used in direct bombing of Iraq which is a crime against humanity, subjecting civilians to massive radiation levels, which makes a mockery of US and UK claims that their actions were against Saddam and his Ba'athist regime. DU has a life span of 3 billion years.

Over 25% of US troops since 1991 have suffered or are suffering from Gulf War Syndrome, which is being fought in the law-courts. British troops who are suffering from the effects of DU are

having a much more difficult time bringing their cases to court.

IDUST have recently met with representatives of anti-landmine groups, who successfully campaigned for the Treaty to outlaw the use and manufacture of landmines, to exchange ideas with them. They are setting up an e-mail tree and early in 2004 will be emailing right across the USA, Europe and Britain with a campaign strategy to highlight the dangers of DU, to call for a ban on its use and for a clean-up.

It is imperative that as many organisations as possible obtain this video and show the public what is being done in our name and counter-balance the lies and distortions of the US and British governments. Gerry Poole (M/side CND). Despite the very disappointing turnout to this meeting we are hoping to build a campaign on Merseyside against DU. Already one person present has written to her MP, Maria Eagle, drawing her attention to some of the facts above. It's fair to guess that most MPs will have little knowledge of the extent of the use of DU in weapons unless they happen to have a Gulf War veteran in their constituency who has approached them for help – even then they probably accept at face value the government's claims that DU is not the cause of ill health. We need people to write to their MPs to inform them about DU and ask them to support a halt to its manufacture and use while further studies are carried out. There's a list of suggested questions and a copy of Ursula's letter to Maria Eagle in the MCND Office.

We've just learned about the plight of Nibby David, a worker in the aerospace industry who became so ill that he has had to give up his job. Subsequently it has been discovered that he is riddled with DU – presumably picked up from his work place. He is fighting for compensation and needs funds to bring over expert witnesses to help him win his case. He has been made an honorary Gulf War Veteran on the basis that he is suffering from the same uranium poisoning as the veterans. Their numbers are bound to increase as a result of increased manufacture, testing and use of DU. Contributions can be sent to: Nibby David DU Support Fund, PO Box 98, Greenleaf Bookshop, Bristol BS1 5BB.
nddusupportfund@burntmail.com

Donations in Memory of Mary Cameron

We'd like to thank everyone who kindly sent us money after Mary's funeral. Especial thanks to her family for thinking of our campaign, along with Mary's other love – the Morning Star. So far we've received £250 and we'll be considering whether we might put it to a particular use in Mary's memory.

Claire Mooney: Singer/Songwriter

We all much enjoyed Claire's singing at our 'Peace One Day' Concert in Vale Park on Sept. 21st. She will be appearing at the View 2 Gallery, 23 Mathew St. L2 on December 11th at 8pm. Tickets: £4 in advance from Red Records, PO Box 44, M21 9FE (Cheques to Red Records) or £5 on the door on the night. A great night out.



Make Your Voice Heard!

Don't take things lying down. Write to your MP, the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, the Minister of Defence to let them know that you object to the continuing occupation of Iraq. Ask them how many Iraqi civilians have been killed since the end of the war and how many are being held in custody without charge. Ask them about the use of depleted uranium and cluster bombs against Iraq and if they are aware of the harm that can be done to ordinary people especially children coming into contact with their remains. If they voted for the war ask them if they still believe it was justified now that it's obvious that there are and never were any significant stocks of weapons of mass destruction. Do they really believe that the war has made the world safer from terrorist attacks against Western targets? If so why was it necessary to spend £5,000,000 protecting George Bush during his recent visit? Address for MPs: The House of Commons, London SW1A 1AA. Tel. 020 7219 3000. e: eaglea@parliament.uk www.parliament.uk
We have lots of other addresses in the Office and ideas and questions you could base letters on.

Make Music – Not War!

What is the connection between the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and the Arms Trade?

The answer is BAE Systems, one of the biggest arms companies in the world whose sponsorship Liverpool Philharmonic has accepted.

Merseyside Against the Arms Trade (See P 7) has produced a leaflet for concert goers to fill in to register and let the Phil know that some people object to a major arms company backing their local concert hall.

BAE is a global arms producer, many of whose weapons are exported abroad to fuel wars and conflicts. Recent customers include countries like Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and Turkey with a long history of human rights violations.

MAAT has long been campaigning against the evil effects of the arms trade. They want to challenge the myth that Arms Companies with their sponsorship of schools, universities and concert halls actually care about people. In fact all they care about are profits.

For a copy of the leaflet or to help with the campaign ✉ Jan Harper 0151 263 5623 or MCND Office: 0151 708 7764.

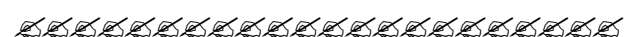
Prisoners for Peace Day December 1st

Focuses in 2003 on the young movement of conscientious objectors in South Korea. Although conscientious objection is young in terms of a movement, the history of imprisonment of COs – of Jehovah's Witnesses – goes back a long while. More than 10,000 Jehovah's Witnesses have been imprisoned in the last 50 years for their conscientious objection, mostly to 3 years imprisonment, and until recently often several times. Although the situation has improved, and sentences are now shorter, there are still more than 750 Jehovah's Witnesses in prison in South Korea.

War Resisters International in the current issue of 'The Broken Rifle' focuses on their fate and on the younger political struggle of the South Korean CO's movement. It is evident that this movement needs support to change the attitude towards militarism on the highly militarised Korean peninsula.

For names and addresses contact: WRI, 5 Caledonian Rd., London N1 9DX 020 7278 4040 e: info@wri-irg.org

See also December Issue of Peace News.



Mordechai Vanunu

Is due to be released from prison in Israel after serving the full 18 years he was sentenced to in 1986 on April 22nd 2004.

. people might be interested in buying a copy. Cost no more than £13. Let Syd know in the MCND Office: 0151 708 7764

We have just heard that The People's Centre at 24 Hardman St may be closing down in March 2004. We've been there since 1986 and are devastated that it may close leaving 10-12

organisations and groups homeless and many long-time employees jobless.

“Ministry for Peace”

MP John McDonnell will be putting a ‘10 Minute Rule’ Bill before the House of Commons on Oct. 14th at 12.30pm

which aims to promote the establishment of a “Ministry for Peace” within Parliament or some other such body to promote the resolution of conflict through creating alternative approaches to conflict. Readers will remember Congressman, Dennis Kucinich’s efforts to promote a similar