Letter from the Chair

We have always known that wars have been fought to keep governments in office, but it appears now that the retention of Britain’s nuclear arsenal is serving a similar function. Labour wants to be seen as strong on defence otherwise the Conservatives would exploit the position. It is using the simple cliché of an uncertain future, which could be applied to any area of public policy and rushing its Trident-replacement proposal through parliament without careful analysis of the strategic environment followed by a proper debate. The process could take place over the next two years because most experts seem to believe that a final decision does not have to be taken now.

The left of centre position of the anti-nuclear lobby and the peace movement in general is certainly a problem here. It underlines the importance of creating coalitions with wider civil society interests in environmental and poverty issues, both of which are closely linked to war. There is also need for more international advocacy to bring pressure to bear on the defence policies of national governments.

Shirley Williams emphasised both of these points in our Remembrance Day lecture at the Imperial War Museum (see pages 6-7). They also underlie MAW’s policy of developing international links through its work with the International Peace Bureau in Geneva, particularly our involvement with the bureau’s Disarmament for Development project (see the article on IPB’s triennial conference on page 9). And then on a smaller scale, some of you will be aware that MAW had a presence at the ‘Stop climate chaos’ demonstration in November (see page 10) and intends to work more closely with environment groups.

I contributed a chapter entitled ‘The bomb is not a holy weapon of peace’ to the book *Britain’s bomb - what next?* (edited by Brian Wicker and Hugh Beech) which was launched at the International Institute of Strategic Studies in November.

The situation in the Middle East continues to deteriorate. But at last the Iraq Study Group has spoken truth to power within the US establishment. Its damning indictment includes the statement that ‘The slide towards chaos could trigger the collapse of Iraq’s government and a humanitarian catastrophe’. Let us hope that the associated bad publicity will lead to a real change in US policy. Thanks to all our members who continue to lobby on these issues. (See comment on p 5)

On more general house-keeping issues, it is good to report that our membership continues to grow steadily and that we now have a specialist operation for distributing campaign materials carried out by Sally Reynolds in Abingdon. The executive committee has decided that it would be appropriate now to apply for Charity Status and the application for this is now being prepared.

Members of MAW continue to be involved in a wide range of talks and events around the country, some organised by local MAW groups. We would like to encourage the establishment of such groups. A second series of meetings is being organised in Northern Ireland and we would like to do the same in Scotland during 2007.

Our project work continues. Information on sites for our Peace Map of Great Britain is gradually being collected. The next stage is to set up website pages where the information can be displayed as the project progresses. Planning is also underway to produce a second CD following *Sing the music of healing* which has been a major success. This second one, with the provisional title ‘Consequences’ will focus on how war affects people – the victims, the soldiers, their wives and families and so on; and the environment.

May I draw your attention particularly to the conference ‘Peace History: encouragement and warnings’ which is being held jointly with IPB at the Imperial War Museum on 13/14th April. We also have a cultural evening related to human rights in Peru at St Ethelburga’s Bishopsgate on 12 March (see p 11).

MAW continues to work as a member of the Peace Education Network. A curriculum document entitled *Education for peace: a guide* was published during the year and the annual conference for teachers and educationalists entitled ‘Human rights: a path to peace’ will be held in Birmingham in March (see www.peaceeducation.org.uk).

Thank you to our officers, members of the executive who have facilitated our work and to all those who have helped MAW during 2006.

Tony Kempster
Over 60 people committed to peace attended the 2006 Peace Day at the end of September, on the theme ‘War Does Not Work’. It was held at the Sustainability Centre near Petersfield, and was organised by the South East Hants Peace Council. There were three speakers, all worth hearing.

The day started with Martin Bell, one of MAW’s vice-presidents, who spoke of his long experience of reporting from war zones, and of the many reasons why he feels war does not work - if indeed it ever did. One point he made was that the government was using war as a ‘policy option’, and that because present politicians have no military experience, they do not have the reluctance to go to war that comes with that experience. I found that I was asking myself - what of the next generation whose experience is fighting war games on computers?

He was followed by Jo Wilding, a founder of Circus2Iraq. You may have seen the film Letter to the Prime Minister about her journey to Iraq and her experiences there. While coping with some of the horrors she saw, and helping to make traumatised children laugh, she wrote letters on her web log. I remember reading some of them during the time she was there, and being touched, enthralled and dismayed by what she had to say. She has now published a book, Don’t Shoot the Clowns, based on her blog (details below). After her talk she answered questions and signed and sold copies of her book. In fact, people were queuing up and she sold all that she had brought with her.

After lunch the speaker was Harry Holmes, a local peace activist, writer and much loved member of the Peace Council. His talk was devoted to looking at how we need to be more honest in our language and thinking, so that we can help ourselves and others to be more aware of the dangers of living in a militaristic society.

The day finished with the audience breaking up into small groups. Each group was given a typical scenario that people would face when campaigning, and asked to debate the best way to deal with it. For example - imagine that you are collecting signatures for an anti-Trident petition. What would you say to the person who says that nuclear weapons are a deterrent and keep us safe? A valuable exercise!

Both Martin and Harry have kindly written a short piece encapsulating their talks. Now read on: -

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**War Does Not Work**

Let us take it as a starting point that man is an aggressive animal. He shares the planet with creatures who are in every respect less destructive than he is. Wars have always been with us. The further assumption is that they always will be.

This is the point where we have to cry “Enough”. We have reached a state of affairs where for our own survival, and that of our planet, we cannot afford a future like our past.

We face new forces, of global warming and nuclear proliferation, which threaten our future as never before. I suggest there is a further danger, perhaps less obvious and unperceived, but just as far-reaching in its implications: this is that, for those who govern us, war has become not a last desperate resort when all else has failed, but a policy option to be plucked off the shelf like any other. We have seen this most recently and appallingly in the war in Iraq. It didn’t have to be fought, at least at the time it was and on the grounds advanced for it, which proved to be shamefully false.

It was a war of choice – just as the Great War of 1914-18 was a war of choice.

What has happened, I believe, is that we have lost the sense of the horror and pity of war that the dreadful experiences of the survivors of the Great War injected, in a sense, into the national bloodstream. The work of the war poets – nearly all of them, like Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, junior officers in infantry battalions of the line – put that feeling into words and carried it through to future generations. It was further reinforced by the bloodshed of the Second World War, in which civilians were targeted on an unprecedented scale; and it is worth remembering that, terrible as those casualties were, we inflicted more than we suffered. Even Winston Churchill recoiled in the end against the aerial bombing of German cities.

But now the last of the old soldiers is fading away. To have fought in the Second World War you have to be well in your eighties, or beyond. A serious consequence of the passing of the veterans of Burma, North Africa and Normandy is that, with those old men and their store or memories, our sense of the reality of war is also fading away. This enables our politicians to reach for it so readily – even to relish it, as an exciting means of settling differences while bestriding the world stage.

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**The Abolition of War**

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**Don’t Shoot the Clowns**

Taking a circus to the children of Iraq

Jo Wilding

Adapted from Jo Wilding’s blog, this is her account of living with Iraqi people during the war and its aftermath. As an independent observer, Jo witnessed and recorded some of the worst atrocities committed against ordinary people. Out of the trauma grew the circus, putting light and hope back into people’s lives.

“This is the first time since the war that I have seen children laugh this way, from their insides.”

£8.99 from New Internationalist

shop.newint.org/uk

(Also available - Letter to the Prime Minister DVD, Year Zero Films)

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The commitment of our forces to this fight was done with a casualness and swagger that are the special province of those who have never had to execute these missions – or bury the results.

Lt General Gregory Newbold
I think it significant that not a single minister or junior minister in the present Government has worn the Queen’s uniform or known armed conflict at first hand. Less than most of us, they have not yet learned the futility of war. If they had they would have stayed out of Iraq.

The book that I would recommend to them as required reading is not by any pacifist or peace activist, but by a general. General Sir Rupert Smith, the most experienced army commander of his generation, has written a book, The Utility of Force, in which he argues that war as we have known it – industrial war, in which military formations fight each other to some conclusion – no longer exists, and no longer delivers the outcomes that the politicians expect of it. Instead, we have what he calls ‘war among the people’ which takes many forms but in which the weapons of shock and awe are not only unpersuasive, but counterproductive.

Rudyard Kipling, hardly a man to shrink from imperial adventures, wrote of the Boer War that “it taught us no end of a lesson”.

The war in Iraq has done the same. The lesson is that warfare doesn’t work. We have to learn it – fast.

**Can We Abolish War?**

It may well be that the paramount aim of our species, from the dawn of its history, has been the search for the superior weapon. Certainly it has been our most consistent endeavour. As a result, we now possess what is probably the ultimate destructive device – the nuclear machine of mass slaughter.

Can we, even now, renounce such inhuman weaponry and (going further) abolish war?

I believe our best hope of doing so is by going direct to the heart of the problem: that is, the historically embedded militarism in human society.

The roots go uncomfortably deep. Our own head of state and her family, so often in uniform, are closely and regularly connected with the military. Armed force is the visible symbol of our national identity.

How can we best challenge the assumption that militarism is somehow natural and acceptable? We can begin by calling things by their true names.

Let us say, for example, that we do not have a Ministry of ‘Defence’. We have, instead, a Ministry for Overseas Warfare. Let us question why a missile system – ready to exterminate millions in a blinding flash – is officially graced with the romantic name of Trident.

Let us, on Remembrance Day, change the way in which we mourn our war dead. Along with Bunyan’s traditional poem, let us hear the realistic words of the war poets, recalling for us the horror and pity of man killing his brother in Wilfred Owen’s haunting phrase: “I am the enemy you killed, my friend.”

Let us talk sense about terror. All organised violence generates terror. Yes, the suicide bomber, taking innocent lives with his own, is an instrument of terror. But so is the trained professional pilot raining cluster bombs on those below. We are all terrorists now. And the supreme manifestation of terror remains aggressive war.

Finally, what can we say to, or about, our Armed Forces? In the Commons they are invariably spoken of as our brave and dedicated servicemen. Brave they may well be; but they are also, sadly, tragic victims; victims willing or otherwise, of benighted politicians and an archaic political system.

An old pagan prayer asked “May I keep tame that which rages within. May I win no victory that harms me or my opponent.” In diverse lovely forms this golden message has echoed down the warring centuries. We must heed it now. It may be our last opportunity.

Harry Holmes

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**Some of the People All of the Time**

**Alastair Mackie**

Alastair Mackie was an Air Commodore and H-bomber pilot, twice decorated in war, and twice again in peace. He left his RAF career early because he disagreed with British and NATO policy - in particular with what he describes as “Britain’s idiotic nuclear so-called deterrent”. He studied law and among other roles became Director General of the Health Education Council. This autobiography is full of WW2 and the Cold War memories, with a huge array of characters and anecdotes. Alistair is currently a Vice-President of CND. As Bruce Kent says: *We, in CND, had no idea of what we were getting when the small man wearing a bowler hat, riding his bicycle effortlessly through London traffic, turned up at the door. We soon found out. Witty, droll, and with a wonderful way with words, Alastair could run rings of logic around the Heseltines of this world and often did so in the letters page of The Times. His war record is remarkable. He somehow survived all those close encounters with enemy fighters, flack and bad weather in places as various as North Africa, Normandy and Arnhem. He even became, post war, a Vulcan bomber pilot as part of the so-called deterrent force which is where his doubts began. For CND, and the world in general, a wonderful thing that they did.*

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Following on from Harry Holmes’ comment ‘We can begin by calling things by their true names’, I found this passage in the World Court Project newsletter: -

Judge Weeramantry (former judge of the International Court of Justice) pointed out that the very language of traditional law is inadequate to encompass the enormity of nuclear weapons. “It would be a paradox if international law, a system intended to promote world peace and order, should have a place within it for an entity that can cause total destruction of the world system....” He condemns the “disembodied language of military operations and the polite language of diplomacy. They conceal the horror of nuclear war, diverting attention to intellectual concepts such as self-defence, reprisals, and proportionate damage, which can have little relevance to a situation of total destruction.”

I love language (it is one of the reasons I volunteered to edit this newsletter) and I dislike the way we misuse language so that it hides the truth rather than illuminating it. For instance, a common term is ‘defensive weapon’. In truth, there is no such thing. A shield is what you use to defend yourself with. A weapon is by its nature made to attack, to wound or to kill. That is its purpose. And can one ever truly fight a defensive ‘war’? Only perhaps, if you are fighting on your own soil. One step over the border and you become an aggressor.

What do you think? Do you have pet hates when it comes to military language? Can you suggest alternative expressions that would help people think again about weapons and war?  

*Editor*
The Faslane365 campaign is going well. Groups of campaigners are arriving one after the other to do a 2-day blockade of the base. Because of the risk of arrest, the organisers are insisting that all those taking part do a 1-day training. In the second week of October the protest band Seize The Day went with about 80 supporters, and managed to close the base for 2 hours. The next day there was an increased police presence, and about 30 arrests. John Burbidge from the Somerset Campaign Against Trident Renewal (SCATR), who was on his first visit to Faslane, was impressed with the size and organisation of the Peace Camp there, with caravans available for accommodation. He also reported that the local law schools seemed keen to gain experience by helping with legal support for those arrested, and that the local police seemed happy to engage in political conversations. A truly empowering experience (including the arrest), he said, and not to be missed!

TAUNTON At the other end of the country, Taunton Peace Group (part of SCATR) organized a very noticeable action by the Market House in Taunton. The banner which was 13 metres long, took some holding on a fine and windy day, but with an active group, supported by other SCATR members, there were enough to parade the banner, give out leaflets and hold a stall for signing petitions. Reaction from the public was very positive with many people engaging in conversation, and the event received good coverage in the local press. The banner has already been booked for campaign events in two other towns in the West Country.

KENDAL Derek Longmire writes: The Kendal group of peacemakers, some of whom are MAW members, came together on the eve of Halloween. Most of us were precluded from the Halloween shift at Faslane the next day. We made up for that by holding a vigil in Kendal market place. We were well supplied with leaflets and other literature including the latest MAW newsletter. Most of the passers-by paused to have a chat and few were hostile. Young people always appeared interested which was encouraging and gave our group the impetus to get into schools with the message. The words 'Trident' and 'Faslane' had never been heard by some people and it was as if we were speaking in a foreign language. We gave out 300 cards asking our MP for his commitment to oppose any decision to replace Trident. We all felt that this had been a very worthwhile gathering, the first we hope of more to come!

Finally - back to SCOTLAND. The Long Walk for Peace, from Faslane to the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh, took place in September. It started with about 60 people and doubled in numbers by the end. The Moderator of the Church of Scotland took part and the Archbishop of Edinburgh made several appearances. All the churches in Scotland have come out against the renewal of Trident, as has the Scottish TUC, preferring to see the money spent on more worthwhile projects. There is a Scottish Parliamentary election in the spring, and the Trident issue could influence the result in some constituencies. Walkers were given a warm welcome by passing cars and in church halls (with supper thrown in). The walk passed through Blackridge, which is a ‘Handgun Free’ village. It became this after the dreadful shooting incident in Dunblane.
Carne Ross the Independent Diplomat

For those of us who have campaigned on behalf of the Iraqis, “sanctions” are a dirty word. And as Carne Ross had much to do with implementing the infamous ‘Food for Oil’ programme, his name too is not popular with some. So it was with interest that I listened to the talk he gave at MAW’s AGM. How, I wondered, do you get from sanctions to forming Independent Diplomat? What makes you leave the back rooms of the UN to make waves instead?

All Carne Ross ever wanted was to be a diplomat, but after years of international diplomacy he resigned because he felt he could no longer bend the truth on behalf of his country.

You enter diplomatic service, you sign the Official Secrets Act. From then on, secrecy rules. Even the evidence Carne gave to the Butler Inquiry on the intelligence behind the invasion of Iraq is still ‘secret’. Just a few days before he spoke to us, he had given this evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee. Within 24 hours he had been threatened with prosecution under the Official Secrets Act.

After some time in the Diplomatic Corps he joined the British Mission to the UN. For 4½ years he covered the Middle East particularly Iraq, which is where the sanctions come in. No one, least of all Carne, denies that the sanctions were highly damaging to the people of Iraq. He and his colleagues argued for years that the sanctions should be precisely targeted at Saddam and his regime instead of being used so bluntly; politicians were ‘sympathetic’ to the arguments, but nothing was done. Too many other interests meant that they stayed in place, unaltered.

This issue and the invasion of Iraq finally led to his resignation. He saw at first hand the manipulation of diplomacy and intelligence in the efforts of the US and the UK to gain legality for the invasion of Iraq. There’s nothing, he said, less reliable than ‘intelligence’ to tell you what is really going on. Committees deciding policy in Iraq would consist of members who had never been to Iraq, did not speak Arabic, were not familiar with Middle Eastern culture, yet still believed they could control the situation. This point Carne emphasised several times – the fact that governments, politicians and diplomats believe they understand what is happening in the world.

They also believe that because they know what is going on they can control events. We the general public want to believe they are in control so that we can ‘leave it to them’ while we get on with our lives. In fact non-state forces (you can include in these such disparate things as non-state terrorism and climate change) are far more important in determining events. It follows that states constantly make errors in their attempts to control events, because of their failure to understand. We also are a non-state force. Government is not in charge of ‘foreign policy’– we are through our own actions – where we go, what we buy are all foreign policy decisions.

What is wrong with the UN? Undemocratic, unaccountable, those who sit in the General Assembly represent their governments rather than the people. What is wrong with the diplomacy?

- What used to be domestic is now internationally arbitrated by elite committees with no accountability.
- Policy making is concentrated in powerful centres. Decisions are taken by people who are separate from the reality of the area under discussion – c.e. no one dealing with Iraq was familiar with Iraq.
- The ability of ordinary people to affect policy is nil, and there is no feedback from the society affected by the policy.

The thinking of the small elites that make policies is very old-fashioned. Academic, diplomatic, governmental thinking likes to simplify reality, whereas it is far more complicated. For instance Britain will be talked of as a single entity – how often have we heard our politicians say “The British people want ….” or “The British people think …. “, when in reality there are millions of British people all with their own differing views? The same is true of Iraq. Nor can you think of Sunnis, Shias or Kurds as single monolithic entities. They are made up of people and people are complicated.

What do you do when you have resigned from a career that you love? It was his wife who helped him to realise that you can do freelance diplomacy. His years at the UN helped him to see the fault in the system. Invariably the one group absent from Security Council meetings are people from the country under discussion. The Council had discussions on Kosovo every 3 months. Every country sitting on the Council could pronounce on Kosovo yet the elected government of Kosovo was not allowed to speak. They were marginalised.

Carne founded Independent Diplomat, the world’s first non-profit diplomacy group, to enable these marginalised groups to be heard. Almost immediately he found just how many groups, including the governments of quite large countries, feel marginalised by the present system. With so much interest Independent Diplomat is growing. Supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, it is currently working on three projects in Kosovo, Somaliland and Western Sahara. It is a much-needed organisation.

So, although the sanctions are a genuine blot on the UN’s reputation, by the end of this fascinating talk my only question was – What took you so long to cross the line?  

Since writing this, the evidence Carne had given to the Butler Inquiry has been made public. In it he states that there was no evidence that Iraq intended any attack against its neighbours, the US or the UK or indeed that it had the capability. In the run-up to the invasion colleagues in the FCO and MoD told him there was no new evidence of a threat. What had changed was the government's determination to present available evidence in a different light. He discussed this with David Kelly in late 2002, who agreed that the Number 10 WMD dossier was overstated. He also addressed the problem of the ‘legality’ of the invasion. The very fact that the UK sought (and failed to get) a second UN resolution authorising military action demonstrates that our government knew it would be illegal.

One question here – will the BBC now apologise to Andrew Milligan for making him a scapegoat? Dr Kelly’s family are also due an apology from the government.

Today Iraq is a broken country fighting a civil war, with millions displaced or fled, and hundreds of thousands dead. Commentators around the Middle East are appalled at the shamefully conducted execution of Saddam on the holiest day of the Islamic year, a day devoted to total forgiveness and reconciliation. Our leaders say Saddam has ‘been brought to account’. It is time they too faced a reckoning.

Please contact the editor if you want a copy of Carne’s evidence to the Butler Inquiry.
Leafleting at the Albert Hall

‘Remembrance with Responsibility’ was the title of a simple A5 leaflet offered to those attending the Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall on Saturday November 11th.

Following the MAW AGM on that day, five of us travelled to South Kensington where we placed ourselves around the outside of the Hall for two hours before the Festival started, handing the leaflets to passers-by, many of whom were Festival-goers. You will see from the text that great care was taken to phrase our message respectfully and sensitively. This paid off, as we were aware of no negative feedback or confrontation - and very few people refused a leaflet when offered.

Why not try offering these leaflets at a suitable venue or event in your own locality, next year at the time of Remembrance? The subtle, simple and inclusive wording may act as an effective ‘bridge’ ensuring our message reaches otherwise mistrusting or hostile individuals.

One Legion member took my leaflet, read it before hurrying off to the Festival queue, and actually said, “Well, it’s hard to argue with that!” A very worthwhile activity, and one I hope we may repeat next year…

Christine Titmus

The text of the leaflet is as follows:

**REMEMBRANCE with RESPONSIBILITY**

We should remember them.

Their sacrifice has given us time to act.

We must not waste it.

Do you believe:

- enough is being done to address the causes of war
- the alternatives to war are being taken seriously enough
- our children will have a future if we continue to use war to settle disputes
- humanity can survive in a world where nuclear arms proliferate
- if not, come and join us to work for a world without war:

**THE BEST WAY TO HONOUR THEIR MEMORY**

Movement for the Abolition of War

On November 11 MAW placed the following advert in the Daily Telegraph:

**REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY**

The best way to honour those who have died in war is to work to prevent wars in the future. Suggestions for action from the Movement for the Abolition of War.

www.abolishwar.org.uk

MEMBERS !!! Please make use of these texts next year in your local press and on the street.

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**MAW’s 7th Remembrance Day Lecture**

Baroness Shirley Williams gave this year’s lecture at the Imperial War Museum. Addressing the question: ‘An end to war?’ with her usual clarity, she considered the changing nature of war and the dangers it poses today.

As an introduction, Sue Gilmurray sang two of her songs. The first, entitled ‘Faslane’, contrasts the scenery of Gare Loch with what goes on there. ‘Vera’, the second song was about Shirley’s mother (Vera Brittain) and based on her life and her writings; ‘Wherever she went, and whatever it cost her, she would call for an end to the battlefield’, the song relates.

Shirley began with some reflections about her mother. As a young woman Vera was an unreflective patriot, looking back on a heroic time when wars were fought in distant theatres with little effect at home. The period of the First World War closed that gap to some degree because Vera went to the front as a nurse. Coming home she found it hard to find out how little was known about the obscenity of warfare.

During that war, the Geneva Conventions were largely upheld. At its outset, the Second World War followed the old rules. The German military then began to deliberately attack civilians with the objective of destroying moral. The Geneva Conventions slowly yielded place to a more total and brutal concept of war. This spread from the German panzers to the allied retaliation and reached a peak in the saturation bombing of German cities.

Vera Brittain heard about the bombing in 1943 from Bishop Bell of Chichester and wrote a pamphlet, *Seed of chaos*, denouncing it. It was a terrible moral bridge for her to cross because its publication involved the destruction of her public and social status. Hardest was her repudiation by friends, for which she found comfort in the Christian gospel.

There was a golden period after the Second World War, characterised by the Marshall Plan and attempts to put the needs of the world above the needs of individual states. But this period did not last long. It ended with the Berlin blockade and the Russian take over of the governments of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

Then came the Vietnam War. This was the first war where a poor and non-technical equipped people defeated the most technically advanced state in the world. This brought the realisation that the value of military power is limited and increasingly secondary to the battle for hearts and minds. Shirley said that it is astonishing that our Prime Minister seems unable to see any link between the destruction in Iraq and people turning to terrorism. Several months ago she had been in Lebanon and seen members of Hamas, standing in the embers of houses destroyed by Israel, recruiting militants.

But, she said, it is not all bad news. We must establish the rule of law in the world, and here there have been two important steps forward. The first is the International Criminal Court, albeit just a hesitant step towards justice. The second step forward was the decision by the Law Lords that Pinochet, and by implication others of state were not immune from responsibility.

But the gradual disintegration of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty has been a step backwards. The law of the treaty has helped to some extent in reducing nuclear proliferation but must now be reconstructed to deal with current challenges. On the issue of Trident, Shirley said she had set herself certain tasks which include finding out how far the nuclear disarmament by the UK could lead to a more general reduction in such weapons. She said she was very concerned by the likelihood that there will not be a proper debate on Trident but simply a White Paper.

A second challenge is the problem of resource wars which are beginning to rage around the world. So ‘making poverty history’ is a major factor in the reduction of conflict. A third issue is global warming which goes beyond the boundaries of the nation state. The scale of this environmental problem may at last give human beings a sense of their common good.
Shirley Williams then went on to take questions and speak to people in the audience for nearly an hour. Questions were wide ranging from personal conflict; the UN and the abolition of nuclear weapons; the role of the Liberal Democrats in this and other debates; the importance of diplomacy in international relations; the constitution of the UN Security Council; and the role of civil society in dealing with challenges such as climate change.

I found it a pleasure to chair the event because both the lecture and quality of discussion around it were exceptionally high. I think all of us there will have taken something of value from the afternoon.

Tony Kempster

In Penzance on the evening of Remembrance Day the Quakers, inspired by the work of MAW, organised a public meeting with the title ‘Remembrance Day - Another Perspective’. Chaired by Andrew George MP, nine speakers shared their beliefs with a large audience. The article which follows appeared in the Comment Column of the Cornishman on November 16th.

The last Last Post

“What is the best way to honour the victims of war?” That was the question set on the evening of Remembrance Day by a public meeting sponsored by the Quakers in St. John’s hall, Penzance, under the chairmanship of Andrew George MP.

It’s good to see that there’s still a sizeable audience for an open public debate on such matters. We have Question Time on TV and Any Questions on the radio, but little chance - except in the pub- to meet and talk with strangers. It’s easy to fill St. John’s Hall to discuss the hospital or other local issues, but no one who was there on Saturday was under the illusion that their thoughts would have any effect on the greater scheme of things. Or perhaps they would. As a children’s banner at the front of the stage put it ‘Peace Begins With Me’.

I went home afterwards and watched what, by contrast to the sober and thoughtful assembly in Penzance, looked like the worst way to honour the victims of war. The Albert Hall Festival of Remembrance concentrates only on the Fallen, those who were lost on active service.

In WW1 when the action happened far away and men and boys were plucked out of their families to be thrown at machine guns this was quite appropriate. In WW2, when Britain itself was besieged, our reliance on our armed services is something no one alive then will ever forget (although for those who died in their workplaces, in their homes and in their beds there is still no memorial).

Our gratitude remains beyond question. But today, when the victims of war are so often the victims of our own armies sent abroad in our names to create mayhem and misery, it is a sick spectacle indeed to see them march into the Albert Hall and expect the sympathy earned by those who came before them.

No doubt they joined the services for genuinely patriotic reasons but they take the shilling willingly, knowing that they must do whatever they are told, however atrocious. The fanfares sound, the bright uniforms swagger, the drums beat, the old, old tricks are played to recreate the myth that warfare is somehow glorious, instead of the sordid inhuman depersonalising brutal bloody business we all know it to be. I didn’t hear that back in St. John’s Hall.

Instead the consensus we reached was that war was usually a dirty trick, not an expression of the wishes of humanity but most often played against their will.

Defense of the realm may be a price nations have to pay, but foreign adventures fought for gain, greed or to impress our allies cannot shelter under that label. Our acts of remembrance commemorate only those who practice arms and who, with their families, suffer the awful consequences. But what about those they themselves killed, wounded, made homeless, incarcerated, or worse, the families they scattered, the fear they carried with them, the devastating effect of their intrusion? Why do we commemorate them? Because of the recent political circus in America nearly everyone in power is now prepared to say that the war in Iraq was a mistake, just as most people in this country said it would be. So what do we say now to the hundreds of thousands of non-combatants whose lives we have taken and shattered? Sorry?

I didn’t hear ‘Sorry’ at the Festival of Remembrance. I heard a passage from the bible, oddly teaching that the greatest human aspiration is love. I heard the broken hearts of the bereaved and the courage of British troops surviving their injuries. I saw appealing folk like nurses and little children paraded to heighten the sentiment. I saw the Union Jack fluttering and I was filled with nausea.

Write to me if you like, be as angry as you wish, but don’t claim I am sneering at our brave ‘boys and girls’, decry the good work of the British Legion, or belittling the sacrifice of those who fought to keep this country free. I’m not. What I am saying is that it is not enough any more.

What can we do to honour the victims of war?

Downgrade rather than puff up the value of nationalism was one suggestion in Penzance. Amalgamate in larger and larger international groups on the lines of the EC was another. Reform our institutions so that wars cannot be declared against the will of the people. Promote travel and exchanges between peoples so that they cannot demonise each other. Perhaps the best was the simplest - teach children to read. Teach them to be curious, to question what they hear, so that they do not become the blind tools of political or religious hatred.

The Albert Hall ceremony ended in a noisy celebration of the trade of war. At S. John’s Hall, being a Quaker occasion, we finished as we began with a period of silence. We left knowing the answer to our question.

The best way to honour the victims of war is by having no more of them.

Mike Sagar-Fenton

And from a piece written for Remembrance Week by one of our members:

War, what is it good for?

This is a question worth asking, particularly as we approach Remembrance Day.

When thinking about the good that war has achieved many would refer to the defeat of Hitler and Nazism in 1945. However, what about other conflicts? Most right-thinking people yearn for war to be replaced by peace, yet there is often an underlying assumption that most wars are necessary, or the only means we have for resolving conflict. The facts dispute this.....

Wars are not about co-operation and negotiation, but about enmity, the use of superior force, arrogance, destruction and killing. Wars often have little to do with politics. Can anyone remember the politics behind World War One? John Keegan, the military historian, has said: ‘Politics played no part in the conduct of the First World War worth mentioning’. An astonishing claim!

If we truly hope for a better future for our children and grandchildren we need to do something about this. Joining an organisation like the Movement for the Abolition of War or CND may be a start.

Campaigning for peace may just be the best way to honour those whose lives we will commemorate this weekend.

Rev. Keith Griffin
It is the province of knowledge to speak, and it is the privilege of wisdom to listen.

Oliver Wendell Holmes
Friday 13 and Saturday 14 April 2007

PEACE HISTORY:
encouragement & warnings

A two-day non-residential conference
at the Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London SE1

organised by the
International Peace Bureau and
Movement for the Abolition of War
in association with the
Imperial War Museum

This conference aims to bring to the general public aspects of peace-building history which have been overlooked or even forgotten. Yet it is on the foundations laid by those who preceded us that we now struggle for a world of respect for law and non-violent conflict resolution.

The focus will be on 19th and 20th century examples of practical peacemaking. The speakers, from different countries, are all experts in their own field. There will be plenty of opportunity for general discussion.

Speakers:

Verdiana Grossi - University of Geneva
Joseph Farley - Manhattan College, New York
Kate Hudson - London South Bank University
Guido Grunewald - War Resisters International

Peter van den Dungen - University of Bradford
Shireen Shah - Bradford Peace Museum
Terry Chapman - Imperial war Museum
Clive Barratt - Bradford Peace Museum

Film: A Force More Powerful - Danish Resistance to Nazi Occupation

For registration and further details visit www.abolishwar.org.uk or write to:
MAW History Conference, 11 Venetia Road, London N4 1EJ

Fee for both days: £30 (Concession £25) Fee for one day: £25 (Concession £20)

The Triennial Gathering of the International Peace Bureau in Helsinki, September 2006

MAW works closely with the International Peace Bureau (IPB), which it views as its main link to the international peace movement. (IPB is a Nobel-laureate (1910) organisation with 265 members in some 60 countries. Over the years 13 of IPB’s officers have been recipients of the Nobel Prize and its present Honorary President, Jayantha Dhanapala was a candidate this year for the post of Secretary General of the UN.)

Bruce Kent and Tony Kempster both attended the organisation’s triennial where Tony was elected a Vice-president. Tomas Magnusson of the Swedish Peace Council was elected President taking over from Cora Weiss after a very successful six years in office.

Besides the formal business proceedings of the assembly and the council, a conference was held to discuss the Middle East crisis, militarisation and other topics. The discussion as usual benefited from the wide range of experience and international perspectives among those present. An important subject was IPB’s main project entitled ‘Disarmament for development’. This aims to stimulate all parts of the world to oppose the wrong priorities of states (and private companies) who invest in militarism rather than development; and to build North South partnerships between campaigners and peace workers in conflict zones. The conference explored the challenges ahead and the civil society responses already underway. MAW hopes to play a significant part in this project with other IPB member organisations particularly those in Britain and Ireland. IPB attends the annual Nobel Peace Laureates’ summits. A 100-page report on IPB’s contribution to this unique global network was launched at the triennial by Jonathan Granoff, IPB’s delegate at the summits. (Report available from IPB on request.)

A highlight of the triennial was the annual ceremony of IPB’s Macbride Peace Prize 2006 which was awarded to the Mayors for Peace Campaign (www.mayorsforpeace.org) founded and led by the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Further details of the discussions from the triennial are available on www.ipb.org.

I believe the idea you can fight your way to peace is absurd. There is no way to peace. Peace is the way. Westerners think peace is an absence of war. But in Rastafarian terms, we use peace like a verb - it’s a doing word.

Benjamin Zephaniah
WAR AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Let’s make some connections. Military spending uses up money and resources that the world desperately needs. This creates poverty in other areas. War causes environmental damage, which causes poverty and refugees. Trade injustice causes poverty and economic migration. Scarce resources cause wars over water and land, creating more environmental damage, poverty and more migration of desperate people. Anti-war campaigners must necessarily support campaigns that try to deal with these things. We don’t need to join every organisation, but we must be prepared to turn out in support of each other.

On 4th November, with about 15-20,000 others, I went on the Climate Action/I Count march and rally. In Trafalgar Square I met up with Bruce Kent, Tony Kempter and the MAW banner. Apart from MAW (there on its own initiative) and War on Want, there was an absence of banners from major organisations apart from the environmental groups. Where were all those NGOs who were part of Make Poverty History? How many peace groups had been invited? Where were the unions? Whatever organisations you support or are a member of, write to the Chair or Committee; point out the connections; point out that many of their members campaign on different fronts and would like to do it under their banner; ask that the organisation itself gets actively involved - for all our sakes. Copy the letter to the local and national press. We need to pull together on this one. All of the problems that humanity has created for this earth can be seen as one problem, and that problem can be solved by all of us acting as one.

Scientists say that climate change is now the biggest threat that this earth is facing. It is something we need to tackle with some urgency, yet still we spend our money and resources on war. In Trafalgar Square a very energetic Rory King (son of our membership secretary Bernadette and our webmaster Mike) gave out 500 leaflets to the crowd. The leaflet said:

Don’t forget the military ....
The Military are also part of the global warming crisis.
The cost of tackling climate change is about half the $1 trillion dollars spent each year on the world’s military.

About a quarter of the world’s jet fuel is used annually by its armed forces.
The US Department of Defence is the largest oil consuming government body both in the United States and the world.

“The world’s armed forces are the single largest polluters on earth.”
Ruth S eradicate - World Military & Social Expenditure

“Among the dangers facing the environment the possibility of nuclear war or military conflict ... involving weapons of mass destruction is undoubtedly the greatest.” The Brundtland Report: Our Common Future

Not for the squeamish:
Goats killed by MoD scientist in tests on submarines. British military scientists routinely subject goats to severe pain and fatal injury as part of their research on navy submarines. Adam Ingram, the armed forces minister, confirmed in Parliament that live goats were placed in chambers which were then depressurised to simulate an emergency aboard a submarine. Depressurisation has a range of effects on the goats, including suddenly rupturing their lungs. ...MoD scientists use goats because, they say, their reactions are similar to those of humans. Mr Ingram said the MoD’s “duty of care to submariners … justifies continued investigation into improvements in escape and rescue procedures ... and experiments on large animals.”

From the Scotsman, 4 Nov. 2006

Need I go on? Except to say that animal rights people are also having to campaign against war.

Don’t forget the military ....
The Military are also part of the global warming crisis.
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About a quarter of the world’s jet fuel is used annually by its armed forces.
The US Department of Defence is the largest oil consuming government body both in the United States and the world.

“The world’s armed forces are the single largest polluters on earth.”
Ruth Siward - World Military & Social Expenditure

“Among the dangers facing the environment the possibility of nuclear war or military conflict ... involving weapons of mass destruction is undoubtedly the greatest.” The Brundtland Report: Our Common Future

MANA Concert for Peace
Fitzwilliam String Quartet
Beethoven, Sibelius, Shostakovitch
Saturday 10 February 7.30 pm
S Cyprian’s Church Glentworth St. NW1
Guest Speaker
Louise Richards (War on Want)
Tickets 020 8455 1030

MANA TO BUY

BOOKLETS
The Hague Appeal ’99. 50 Steps on the Way to the Abolition of War £1.50
The Final Surrender -Time to Abolish war. Quotations from around the world. 50p
A World Without War - Professor Rotblat’s Imperial War Museum speech, 2002 30p
A Peace Trail Through London - places associated with peace-making , by Valerie Flessati 50p
The Life of Bertha von Suttner - the first woman to win the Nobel Peace prize £2.00

POSTCARDS
‘I dream of giving birth to a child who will ask - ‘Mother, what was war?’ 15p
Girl with flower facing soldiers with bayonets 15p
MAW’s banner in full colour “War=Poverty=War” 15p
‘Multiply Peace’ - each letter caries a peace message 15p

A4 CARD
The Preamble to the UN Charter 15p

DVD(14 mins)
War No More - with teacher’s booklet (Still some videos available £8*) £10.00
MAW CD
Sing the Music of Healing £8.00
BOOKS
War No More (paperback) Rotblat/Hinde £11.00
Warfare or Welfare - Colin Archer IPB Sec. General £5.00

BADGES Metal Red with a ‘No Entry’ sign across War Large (2”) 40p Small (1”) 15p

MAW PUBLICITY
Information leaflets and A3 posters Free

POSTAGE
Please add 20% to the total cost of order. Postage is free for orders of £20 and over

CHEQUES
Please make payable to MAW

Please send order to: MAW ORDERS, 1 Thesiger Rd. Abingdon Oxon OX14 2DY
Peace & Politics are Linked – Fact

Members of Wimbledon Disarmament Coalition/CND very much welcomed Merton Council’s decision to take part in London’s Week of Peace.

We assumed that organisations such as ours, which promotes justice, equality and respect in all its activities, would be invited to take part. But this was not to be.

Our proposal to show the film provided by MAW, War No More, whose footage included comments from such diverse personalities as Martin Bell, Archbishop Tutu and Jon Snow, was deemed political and was rejected.

It seems strange indeed that the organisers could not include the participation of what is probably the longest standing peace organisation in the area.

I joined Wimbledon CND in 1958 and have been actively involved in work for peace ever since.

Wimbledon Disarmament Coalition/CND was formed in the early 80s. Since then it has organised countless activities for the abolition of nuclear weapons and wars. These have included our annual commemorations of Hiroshima and the Fete of the Earth, a monthly peace table and since 9/11, our co-operation with the Quakers and UNA in the weekly Peace Vigil in St. Mark’s Place, Wimbledon. We are sure that many of the people targeted in the Week of Peace would welcome the kind of work that we do.

Political? It is difficult to imagine any action which could contribute to a more cohesive and just society which is not political. Surely to be political is to be involved in society, to make it more cohesive, secure, generous and equal. This has nothing to do with party politics but simply with the life of the community in which we are proud to be dynamically involved.

Maisie Carter
Wimbledon Disarmament Coalition/CND
info@wdc-cnd.org.uk

MAW and Libraries
I am not surprised that Michael Snellgrove’s MAW DVD was dumped by Cambridge Central Library (Abolish War No. 6). Not because I don’t think much of libraries, I do; but because of the huge amounts of publications, DVDs, CDs etc. libraries have to contend with. Huntingdon (Cambs.) Library makes over a quarter of a million loans a year – and is a much smaller library than Cambridge Central. One DVD doesn’t stand much of a chance.

Perhaps a better way to publicise MAW and its aims is by doing what I do at Huntingdon.

I’ve had MAW literature on display at Huntingdon Library for about 3 years, at no charge; and MAW’s free leaflets do get taken. They go slowly, but people take them. This year I also had a display in the entrance foyer during the week leading up to the UN Day of Peace on 21st September, which made the ‘work for peace’ message stand out more.

Libraries can be useful mechanisms for disseminating peace messages – if you go about it in an appropriate way. If you have a spare MAW DVD or similar, give it to your friends, relatives or schools, not libraries.

Brian Heale

This is good idea. Get a supply of our literature and approach your library. And we always have spare copies of the newsletter available for display or on stalls.

12 March 2007 A evening with music and craft work organised by MAW in collaboration with the Peru Support Group to remember those who suffered during the 1980s-1990s war in Peru. Roberta Bacic will discuss the findings of the recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission through the eyes of the Ayacucho people.

6 pm at St Ethelburga’s Centre for Peace and Reconciliation
Bishopsgate, London EC2N 4AG. Phone MAW for details

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£25 Group/organisation £100 Life membership

Please make cheque payable to MAW and send to
Movement for the Abolition of War, 11 Venetia Rd., LONDON N4 1EJ

WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN MAW!

Our aim: to create a world where war is no longer seen as a way to solve a problem; where it has ceased to be an option; where conflict resolution means resolution, not more conflict. We have the tools, the skills and the laws that we need. We also need you. We work through education and dialogue, both nationally and in our own local communities; ordinary people taking action to realise our goal -

THE ABOLITION OF WAR.
Farewell to Arms?

In November The Bradford Peace Museum launched a new exhibition in the Armouries, Leeds, entitled ‘Farewell to Arms’. It sets out the many ways that countries can and are meeting the challenge of demilitarisation. The work of peacemakers is celebrated and success stories such as the ban on biological weapons and international arms controls are highlighted. Special mention is made of the work of Professor Sir Joseph Rotblat, MAW’s founding president and his Nobel Medal is displayed.

Visitors will also see short films on arms conversion and some of the artefacts produced. One film shows the conversion of a cavalry sword donated to the museum by our chair, Tony Kempster. This sword dated 1892 and which was used by Tony’s grandfather in the Warwickshire Yeomanry, has been transformed by a blacksmith into the opening ‘F’ of the exhibition’ title. A photograph of the sword as carried by the grandfather is also shown in the exhibition.

Events Diary

10 February LONDON ‘Guns and Global Warming; War, Peace and the Environment’. Network for Peace Annual General Meeting. Special guest speaker: Dr Stuart Parkinson of Scientists for Global Responsibility. 2 – 3pm AGM, 3- 5pm speaker and discussion. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London.

10 February GLASGOW Stop The War Scottish Conference Speakers include: Kate Hudson chair of CND, Craig Murray, Yvonne Ridley (Islam Channel), Anas Altikriti (BNI), Walter Wolfgang (Labour Party NEC), Jeremy Corbyn MP, Lindsey German (Stop the War Coalition), Mozzam Begg (ex-Guantanamo prisoner), Rose Gentle (Military Families Against the War), Pauline McNeill MSP, Sandra White SNP MSP, Mike Brider (T&G regional sec), Kenny Ross (FBU Scottish sec), Dr Azzam Tamimi (IIPT), John McDonnell MP 10am - 5pm, Sir Charles Wilson Building, Gibson Street, Glasgow University For More info contact: Tel: 078 661 769 60

10 March BIRMINGHAM Peace Education Network Conference "Human Rights: a Path to Peace". 10.30am - 4.30pm Priory Rooms, Bull Street Friends Meeting House, Birmingham B4 6AF Teachers, trainee-teachers, students, youth workers and curriculum planners are particularly welcome. The conference will provide practical ideas, support and inspiration for anyone interested in teaching human rights as a way to promote peace at school, in communities and globally. The conference fee of £25 (£10 for students/unwaged) includes lunch and refreshment. A limited number of free places are available for students and trainee teachers. Enquiries/booking please contact 01384 234 113 or wmqpep@peacemakers.freeserve.co.uk

12 March LONDON MAW/Peru Support Group evening - see advert on page 11

15 March LONDON 5th Ruth Stein Kraus-Cohen Lecture, Brunei Theatre, School of Oriental Studies, Thornhaugh Street, 6.30pm. Speaker: James Crawford, Whewell Professor of International Law. For details contact info@unawestminster.org.uk or 0207 385 6738

7-21 April FASLANE - EDINBURGH – LONDON 2nd Vanunu Freedom Ride. On 21st April 2007, Mordechai Vanunu will have been held captive in Israel for 21 years. Contact: London Region CND, Tel: 0845 4581965 or www.vanunufreedomride.org.uk

13 – 14 April LONDON Peace History Conference - See advert on page 9

21 April LONDON Musicians Against Nuclear Arms Concert for Peace. With the Galliard Trio. Rosslyn Hill Chapel, Hampstead, NW3. Contact MANA Administration, 71 Greenfield Gardens, London NW2 1HU.

24 May LONDON 4th Conference to mark the International Day of UN Peacekeepers, Royal United Services Institute, Whitehall. Start 10 am. Lunch included. Associated wreath-laying ceremony will be held at the Cenotaph, Whitehall, 1 pm. For details contact 0207 385 6738 or info@unawestminster.org.uk


MAW NEWS PLEASE!

You want to read about events that are not all London-based. We want to hear from members around the country, and we want your actions to inspire others. So if you have organised events/actions, or are planning some, and would like to have them reported in the newsletter, then send the details to the editor: - Lesley Docksey, 1 Court Farm Cottages, Buckland Newton, Dorset DT2 7BT E-mail: Lesley.Docksey@abolishwar.org.uk