MAW sets out latest thinking on combat stress

Psychological problems suffered by many military combatants will be the first topic to be explored in a new series of booklets offered by the Movement for the Abolition of War. The booklet on “combat stress” traces the condition back to the American civil war when fighters endured sustained bombardment by heavy weaponry for the first time.

Expert Dr Colin Kelcey then updates readers on current research on the subject and describes the causes and symptoms of the condition. The booklet, to be published in the spring, says: “Acknowledgment from within the military itself of the chasm between the warrior ideal and the realities of warfare is a first step towards placing the problem where it belongs - in and with all of us in whose name wars are fought.”

The booklet describes combat stress - formally known as peri-traumatic dissociation or PTD - as a “stress-induced, abrupt and transient disruption of the normal integration of conscious and psychological functioning”. It describes how combat stress can cause distressing physical reactions which include paralysis, deafness, stuttering, violent shaking, blindness and a change in personality in which the victim may become cruel, fearless or childlike.

Mental effects include feelings of terror, horror, helplessness, physiological hyper-arousal, dissociation, damage to necessary or deeply-held beliefs, shame and guilt.

The condition can lead to the much longer-term post-traumatic stress disorder. MAW committee member Sue Dowell is the creative force behind the booklet which she says will be “offered in the hope that the more we know of the those who fight in wars and the costs incurred by them, the more unviable war will appear as a solution to the problems besetting the world today”.

She added: “The relationship between the peace movement and charities who work for the well-being of those serving in the armed forces and veterans has traditionally been uneasy.

“But we hope that by paying closer attention to some of the horrific psychological damage caused by combat, we can strengthen the argument that war should be avoided at all costs in favour of dialogue and negotiated settlement - a sentiment we know is shared by many senior military people.”

Other topics being considered for further booklets include the law surrounding conflict, war and the environment, the economics of military combat and the ethics of war. MAW members are also welcome to suggest subjects.
Diary Dates

● Saturday, February 28, Friends House, London. ‘Engaging Faiths on the Nuclear Issue’ - a day-long event organised by Quaker Peace & Social Witness and Religions for Peace to help other churches and faiths better understand the nuclear issue and to raise it as a faith issue among local congregations and communities. There will be workshops on working in different faith communities as well as plenary speakers from different faiths and those with specific nuclear expertise. More details from Tim Wallis, timw@quaker.org.uk, tel 020 7663 1067.

● Saturday, March 7, London. Climate Change March. Assemble by 12 noon at Lincoln’s Inn Fields for a march to Parliament Square, arriving around 3pm. MAW will be represented to make clear that there is a close link between this issue and global militarism.

● Saturday, March 14, the Guildhall, High Street, Guildford, GU1 3AA. ‘The power of your plate - peace, climate change and a vegan diet.’ Free admission.

● Saturday, April 4, Glasgow, ‘Bairns not Bombs.’ Assemble 10.30am for a rally in George Square at 12 noon. Send a strong message that Scotland will not accept Trident any longer.

● Monday, April 13, Big Blockade, Faslane Nuclear Weapons Base www.scraptid.org

● Saturday, April 18, London. Veterans for Peace AGM, 10am - 5pm, Friends Meeting House, Euston. Open to everyone, ex-service or not. Entry is free. Workshops will include Conscientious Objection, Peace Education and Ending War. More information from veteransforpeace@gmail.com

● Saturday, May 2, Portsmouth (P013HQ). Women in Black Vigil - one of a regular series which take place in towns and cities around the UK. For more details, see www.womeninblack.org

New PR guide will help publicise our activities

MAW has produced a free guide to getting local publicity for peace events and activities. The guide can be be used by people to get their message into local newspapers and local radio as a way of recruiting members and publicising their work.

The Why Media Matters pack explains why it is important the peace message is heard and gives ways to improve the chances of getting all-important newspaper coverage which may, in turn, interest people in our work.

The pack includes top tips for approaching the press and a guide to understanding how the local press works. We will add a further resource - on Taking good photographs - soon.

Mark Whitehead, MAW executive committee member and convener of our communications sub-committee said: “One of the most significant powers the media has is that of being able to provide information. “This presents great opportunities to get more people thinking positively about peace once they have heard or read news coverage of what we are doing and saying.

“Media coverage is free, unlike some advertising. But to earn it, we need to keep in touch with journalists, offering them well-written news and being willing to speak to them.”

MAW is currently undertaking a recruitment drive, part of which is to offer increased resources for members around the country to put to good use. The new PR pack can be found and downloaded online at www.abolishwar.org.uk/resources.html Let us know what you think and what PR plans you have for the spring and summer.

● Take a look at other resources on offer on the MAW website – book reviews, briefings and campaigning materials - all useful for anyone planning an activity or event in this important election year.

Hereford display brings WW1 issues up to date

Hereford Peace Council put on an exhibition linking the First World War with issues of peace and war today. The exhibition was displayed in Knighton, Powys, in February and will be shown in Clun later.

Anyone interested should contact Jenny Maxwell at jennywmcd@gn.apc.org for more information.

Concord’s A-Z of peace movies

Concord Media, a long established educational charity, is pleased to offer most of its programmes and films to rent or buy via Vimeo-on-Demand. The rental price is only 10%, or even less, of the sale price. This means that you can pick a 48-hour period during which you can watch films in a wide range of categories from anthropology to women’s issues.

If the film you want to view is not yet available, email Concord and they will endeavour to make it available.

Take a look at the website concordmedia.org.uk to see the wide range of available programmes.
Addressing you!
MAW members and affiliated groups: unless you are a life member, or joined after March 2014, your membership subscription for 2015 was due in November 2014. Complete the form on this page or download the forms from our website at www.abolishwar.org.uk/join.htm.
If you received this newsletter by post the label on the envelope shows your membership status as the date to which you are paid up – eg 2014, or ‘Life’, for life members, ’SO’ if you pay by standing order or ‘Comp’ if you receive a complimentary copy. If you receive email notification about the newsletter you will have received a reminder if your subscription is due. If you would like to receive the newsletters by email contact gill.hurle@abolishwar.org.uk

Let’s fly a kite
Saturday, March 21, is Fly Kites not Drones at RAF Waddington and various locations. Celebrate Newroz - the Afghan New Year by acting in solidarity with children in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Gaza, Iraq, Syria, Somalia and Yemen who fear blue skies because of drones. There will be a kite flying demo at RAF Waddington from 1pm - 3pm - or arrange one wherever you live.

The Movement for the Abolition of War – join us, or renew your membership
We 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. Working through education and dialogue, nationally and locally, we have the tools, skills and laws that we need, but we also need you - ordinary people can help us realise our goal, the abolition of war.
To join MAW or renew your membership, complete this form or download the membership and standing order forms from our website at http://www.abolishwar.org.uk/join.html. Send the completed form (and cheque if applicable) to: Movement for the Abolition of War, 11 Venetia Road, LONDON N4 1EJ

Membership application / renewal

Name .................................................................
Address ..............................................................
................................................................. Postcode .................................
Tel no. ............................................................... Email ............................................................

Type of membership (please tick):
Life £100  Individual £15  Unwaged £5
Household (2 or more at same address) £20  Group or organisation £25
I enclose:  Membership £ ..........  Donation £ ..........
Total £ ..........

Please make cheque payable to Movement for the Abolition of War OR Please send me a standing order form

Words and pictures can convey peace message
The recently formed youth sub-committee of MAW is holding two competitions to enable young people to give us their views on abolishing war and the meaning of peace.
A photographic and an essay competition are now open for entries with a £100 prize for the winner in each category. The categories are:
1 Write an essay answering the following question: WHAT CAN BE DONE TO ABOLISH WAR? (Maximum 1,500 words).
2 Take an original photograph which interprets the question: WHAT DOES PEACE MEAN TO YOU? (Include a 50-word statement to explain how the photo is linked to the theme).
In both categories entrants must be 25 years or younger. As well as the cash prize, the winners plus two runners-up will receive one-year free membership to the Movement for the Abolition of War. Competition entries should be sent to info@abolishwar.org with a deadline of April 30. For terms and conditions see www.abolishwar.org.uk

Election questions
MAW has come up with key questions for candidates in May’s General Election. The questions can be seen at www.abolishwar.org.uk
Send them to your candidates and tell us - and your friends - what they say.

Let’s join the Global Wave: The Global Wave will involve a simple public action in cities around the world in a timed fashion over 24-hours just before the 2015 NPT Review Conference in New York - April 26-27. Starting at one point on the globe and then proceeding through each time zone every hour, humanity will “Wave Goodbye to Nuclear Weapons” through symbolic Wave events. www.globalwave2015.org/.

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Bruce updates Irish meeting on Trident  

AFRI - Action from Ireland - is a small Irish NGO which, to use a pugilist’s phrase, punches above its weight. Over the years it has fought apartheid in South Africa, oil exploitation in Nigeria, exploitative food production and world militarism. It has also been part of the campaign to stop Shannon Airport being used as a military staging post.

I gladly agreed to attend a discussion day in early February at a new conference centre in Kildare built by enterprising Sisters.

The theme of the event was “Occupy

Bruce Kent, vice-president, MAW

Digging for peace to make Durham garden  

Following the Centenary Remembrance Events in November, the local paper in Durham posed the question: “How should we honour our war dead?” A local peace group is beginning to answer the question.

The large Victorian park in Durham is being refurbished and developed - work has already started, as the photo shows - offering a great opportunity to create a Peace Garden within the historic community space, a garden dedicated to the thousands of local Durham light infantrymen who suffered and died in WW1 and also to the countless victims of ALL wars, past and present.

MAW and Peace Action Durham committee member Heather Speight says: “We are hoping to create a permanent memorial, symbolising a commitment to tolerance and cooperation, and to resolving conflicts without violence, from the personal to the global and perhaps starting close to home with Peace Action Durham and our local British Legion!

We intend to involve all ages in designing and planning the garden and then helping to care for it.

“Ideas for what to put in our garden are coming in thick and fast - suggestions for plants, shrubs, information panels with peaceful quotations, sculptures, a shelter, willow arches, a mandala, a labyrinth, a tree of hope and more.

“We plan to introduce perma-cultural methods of gardening - mutually supportive, self-balancing and living in harmony - an excellent model for non-violent co-existence and a founding principle of MAW.

“We hope it will provide a tranquil space where people of all ages can recharge their batteries and be better equipped to aim for a more peaceful world.”

Poetic review of the First World War

Anna Cheetham of Leicester CND sent us the poem below. MAW vice-president Bruce Kent says: “I found this very moving, having seen clips of soldiers struggling down the trenches, bodies on their back so many times.”

By Anna Cheetham

Here it is again.

Each time there is the wire, men moving over it, then the trench - men running and one looks up, his eyes looking but not seeing are full of exhaustion, black despair.

On his back his comrade. Oh how many times he runs along that trench carrying his comrade. Here he comes again - locked in the time loop entrenched in his misery, carrying his comrade. Here he comes again carrying his comrade. Here he comes again carrying his comrade. His eyes meet ours but do not see. Here he comes again - carrying his comrade. Can’t we set him free?

Harry Patch song

The Polly Bolton song If I had my way, based on the words of Harry Patch and part of MAW’s ‘Songs for Peace’ project, is now ready to listen to - and learn!

MAW member Sue Gilmurray has led the project and says: “We produced 14 songs for 2014 and now we are adding one a year.”

Listen to and download the new song from Soundcloud at soundcloud.com/songsfor2014-2018/if-i-had-my-way

Abolish War

The next edition of Abolish War will be published on May 15 – send your news and views to helenriley@abolishwar.org.uk