Youthful protest: war is “a waste of human potential”

Young people full of ideas on how to refresh peace message

A new sub-committee of MAW’s executive council has been set up to help galvanise young people in campaigning for peace. This was agreed by the EC which decided to appoint members of the “committee for youth” and to outline its responsibilities. Founding members will include the four young people who went to an international peace camp in Sarajevo last year with support from MAW. The committee will campaign for MAW in universities, schools and other bodies concerned with young people.

Maddy Ridgeley, one of the new members, said: “It is extremely important to spread the word among students and young people and this is what we want to concentrate on. “We have lots of ideas for ways to get our peers interested in the struggle for peace and we’re determined to get them off the ground.

“There is strong feeling among many young people that war is a waste of human potential and we want to refresh that important message.

“We want to help make sure that energy is channelled into constructive campaigning so that our government is no longer able to order death and destruction when it’s possible to solve conflicts through negotiation.”

MAW chair Tim Devereux said: “This is a very welcome development and will help give us a more energetic voice in national and international debates about war and peace.

“We look forward to supporting our youth committee in all its valuable work ahead.”

General election result: an ever greater need to campaign against war

MAW chairman Tim Devereux and vice-president Bruce Kent have warned that the outcome of the UK general election carries a clear message: the need is greater than ever to campaign against warmongers here and abroad. The new Tory government will feel it has been given the green light to go ahead with the plan to renew the deadly and extremely costly Trident nuclear missile weapons of mass destruction, they said.

And it is likely to be sympathetic to any American request for support in military adventures to maintain its global power.

Mr Devereux called on all people of goodwill to join forces and put pressure on the government to scrap Trident and pursue negotiated settlements to international disputes rather than armed conflict.

“There is a danger that the new government with an overall majority in parliament will feel emboldened in pursuing an aggressive foreign policy in several arenas,” he said.

“We in MAW and our friends in other peace organisations must renew our determination to prevent moves to war when there are peaceful alternatives.”

Mr Kent added: “The new government in Westminster has a golden opportunity to adopt an enlightened approach to international relations and we must persuade them that this would be good for the UK and for the world.

“We call on the government to consider its options and choose peace through negotiated settlements rather than continue the old way of bombs and bullets.”
Diary Dates

● Wed, June 17, 7pm. Musicians for Peace & Disarmament (formerly MANA) - Summer Concert at Hinde Street Methodist Church, 19 Thayer Street, London W1U 2QJ. A programme of wind quintets. Tickets £15 (£10 concs) available from 71 Greenfield Gdns, London NW2 1HU - enclose a cheque payable to MANA and a SAE - or pay on the door. Seats are unreserved.

● Sat, July 11, 11am – 4pm. Drone Campaign Network open conference at Friends House, Euston Road, London. The conference will explore how drones are creating perpetual war.


● December 2015 - International meeting of Governments in Paris on Climate Change with NGO public activity and rally. Important to get over to all the connection between climate change and the militarisation of our planet. Watch this space.


Peace ideas roll out for Durham community park

Peace Action Durham, a group member of MAW, continues to gather ideas for the renovation of our splendid Victorian park and is joining with the Friends of Wharton Park Community Garden to develop plans. The park will soon close temporarily to allow the main structural works to proceed. We had time to plant a community orchard of 15 apple tree saplings and it was generally agreed that community, peace, co-operative effort and planting for the future are closely linked. It was a most enjoyable and heartening experience.

We intend to develop ideas for a peace trail for all ages, linking various aspects of the park, for example, the mock battlements and the Durham Light Infantry memorial (reminders of the sorrows and horrors of war) to the proposed fair trade café, the children’s play areas (emphasising co-operation rather than fighting over the best swings!) a labyrinth, a peace pole, sculptures and a willow shelter for peaceful contemplation. If our creative energy can be sustained, the trail could find itself extending round the town and back again.

Heather Speight

Form of address

If you receive your newsletter by post the address label shows the date to which you are paid up - '2014’, ‘Life’, (for life members), ‘SO’ (if you pay by standing order) or ‘Comp’ (if you get a complimentary copy). If you get an email notification about the newsletter you will have received an email reminder if your subscription is due.

Making the peace message stick

There’s a new way of reminding yourself and others that war is not to be taken lightly.

A striking new MAW sticker says simply: “War is not entertainment”. Put one on your books, phone - or anywhere else you think the message may work or reach a new audience.

The stickers can be ordered from the MAW store at www.abolishwar.org.uk

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 ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………...

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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 [ ]
Glasgow memorial to opponents of WW1

A memorial to those who opposed WW1 has been unveiled on Glasgow Green, backed by Labour, SNP and Green groups.

Its legend says: “In memory of those who opposed World War One in order to challenge the purpose of the war and the waste of lives. “They also campaigned for social and economic justice and against the exploitation of those who lived in the city during the war.”

Elsewhere in Scotland, a petition to Edinburgh Council for a memorial for conscientious objectors has a June deadline.

http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/directory_record/508122/edinburgh_conscientious_objectors_memorial_petition

Manchester conference to take international view

The 2015 Peace History Conference “Peace History: An International Perspective” will take place at the Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester on Saturday, 10 October. It will maintain the First World War focus, following on from the previous successful conferences.

Topics in the morning sessions will cover the Chinese Labour Corps of WW1 and the founding of Women’s International League of Peace and Freedom.

Afternoon sessions will include episodes from CAAT’s website ‘Arming All Sides’ and a session on the history of arms sales fuelling wars of the early twentieth century.

Before the conference on Friday, October 9 there will be an afternoon Peace Walk and in the evening a chance to see ‘Eloquent Protest.’

For more details check out the local CND website www.gmdcnd.org.uk or email gmdcnd@gp.acp.org.

2016 is being called ‘The Year of Conscience’ to mark the centenary of conscription. Looking ahead, there are plans for two peace history conferences in Leeds in 2016.

The first, from 18-20 March will be the ‘Resistance to War’ Conference, being organised by Ingrid Ingrid Sharp, University of Leeds, and Cyril Pearce, University of Leeds and CO Register as part of the University’s ‘Legacies of War’ project. That will have a programme of academic papers and workshops.

Then in October (date tbc) there will be a MAW Peace History conference. A Yorkshire-wide group has started meeting to plan this.

Abolish War

The next edition of Abolish War will be published on August 1 – send your news and views to arrive by July 1 to helenriley@abolishwar.org.uk

A message of hope from peaceful Macedonia

We are bombarded with images of war and many would be excused for believing our task is hopeless. I want to try and give a message of optimism.

There have been many successes in averting outbreaks of war and violence. It seems strange to speak of the former Yugoslavia as an example. But at the same time as chaos and ethnic cleansing broke out in Bosnia in the early 1990s, a concerted peace effort was quietly taking place in Macedonia.

Like Bosnia and Kosovo, in 1994 Macedonia was a divided country, on the verge of a brutal war. But with the hard work of the country’s people, its government and a coalition of European governments and charities, war was averted.

A political system which balanced the demands of the different groups and provided a legitimate way to resolve differences was built. That each group could practice their distinctive cultures as neighbours was guaranteed.

Today children are taught to celebrate their diversity.

We can take two crucial lessons from Macedonia. The first is that even when it seems as though hope is lost, we can stop the outbreak of violence.

The second is that work must continue in the long-term.

Preventing violence is not an easy task. There are often setbacks which test the resolve of those involved. This is why groups such as Peace Action Durham and Abolish War are so important – it is up to us as citizens to remind our politicians that we expect them to take this work seriously and reward those who take on the task of building peace. Peace is possible, but only if we ensure that the most vulnerable individuals and communities across the globe are given a voice.

Ben Challis
Women mark a hundred years of campaigning

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Centennial Conference 27-29 April 2015

More than 1,000 women travelled to The Hague, Holland, in April 1915 to demand an end to the First World War. At the time men held political power across Europe and had initiated and perpetuated the war. These silenced women fiercely opposed the mass violence which engulfed the world. They grouped together and discussed how the situation could be mediated and from this emerged the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom.

This year, on the 100-year anniversary, 900 women gathered at The Hague to mark this momentous occasion and attend a three-day conference on continuing warfare. Unlike previously women from Africa and South America attended and more than 80 countries were represented. Men were also welcome as the demands of WILPF are not single gender issues.

Despite the power and courage of women 100 years ago and the continued peace activism of WILPF, we currently face the worst refugee crisis ever known, in a world where $1 trillion is spent annually on weapons. But despite these depressing figures we left the conference on a wave of optimism thanks to the determination and passion of the hundreds of women and men in attendance.

The conference hosted many inspirational male and female activists who spoke about their work and demonstrated that grassroots organisations and movements can implement real change. The demands are high, but piece by piece values and norms of society can change to produce a world where militarisation and aggression are not default characteristics of state policies. The demands of WILPF that stood out to us were:

- The transformation of hyper-masculine identities that promote aggressive foreign policy and perpetuate the arms trade
- Governments spend taxes on social projects instead of military projects
- That governments reflect the democratic values they so proudly claim to have by representing the views of all citizens
- The end of the use of explosive weapons in civilian areas
- The prohibition of the use of autonomous "killer" robots before they become a reality

It was encouraging to find so many like-minded women and men are calling for the abolition of war. And this is not pure idealism. These women have practical ideas and high profile contacts - they are acting on their words on a daily basis.

We would like to thank MAW for enabling us to attend an event that was not only educational, but which has given us a burst of confidence to continue to pursue the goal of abolishing war.

Conference delegates Maddy Ridgley (top picture) and Hannah Larn

University links with military highlighted

Scientists for Global Responsibility has published an excellent update on military university collaborations in the UK. You can see it online here http://www.sgr.org.uk/resources/military-university-collaborations-uk-update

The article highlights the close and very often unquestioned links between major arms companies, the MoD and universities. Scientists in the group believe that universities should be making a positive contribution to the world not propping up an industry that profits from death and destruction.

If anyone wants to know if their university is in bed with the arms trade you could submit a Freedom of Information request through a website such as whatdotheyknow.com

Your institution is legally obliged to get back to you within 20 working days.

It can be hard to know how to challenge a university’s links to the arms trade. CAAT’s Study War No More page - http://www.studywarnomore.org.uk - has advice and ideas on planning a campaign and you can find out more by emailing universities@caat.org.uk

■ And then there are schools - In partnership with Forces Watch, Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) has released a graphic animation (QPSW) and report (Forces Watch) about how the Government has sent military propaganda to every school in the country.

See it on YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wB9JD6P1RCM

The Elusive Dove – The search for peace during WW1 by Neil Hollander


The only thing wrong with this excellent book is the price but that is the way with American publishers. Get your rich Aunty to buy a copy for your birthday, pool resources and share a copy or persuade your local library that this is a sensible investment.

It is a fascinating piece of history. It is also a tragedy. How did all the influential pre-1914 thinking and effort come to nothing when the drums began to roll? It’s not as if crisis moments had not been navigated safely in those years after the Hague Peace Conference of 1899. Why not in August 1914?

Read this book – we have lessons to learn 100 years on.

Bruce Kent