Nuclear weapons offer no security

There are no intelligent reasons to justify spending over £100 billion on another generation of nuclear weapons to keep Britain nuclear armed for another 30 years. Not that our nuclear weapons, national vanity symbols only, are even independent. We rely entirely on borrowed United States missiles. Nuclear weapons, which depend on threats of mass murder, do not even add to our security. If nuclear weapons keep us safe, why should they not be for everyone else who can afford them? They actually give us no security against current real threats from suicidal groups like ISIS or indeed against any group without a territory against which to retaliate.

We are supposed to be working “in good faith” not for their renewal but for their global elimination (NPT treaty 1963).

Too little is known about the long list of nuclear weapon accidents which have brought us close to nuclear disaster many times. The late Robert MacNamara, United States diplomat, said that we were saved so far not by good judgement “but by good luck”. Real security - and a peaceful world - come not from arming against one’s neighbour but by working for justice. If we have money to spend let us use it for food, health, education and justice here and abroad.

Dear Editor, I want to save the human race

MAW member Stephen Goldby – who has had letters published in many national publications - is urging MAW members to write to their local papers to oppose Trident. A sample letter could start:

Dear editor,

For the first time in a generation we have one of the major political parties prepared for an open debate on the pros and cons of our Independent Nuclear Deterrent and the Trident programme. The message of the Movement for the Abolition of War is ever more relevant.

The build-up of arms and the stockpiling of nuclear weapons only serve to demonstrate the continuing folly of the human race writ large.

As Stephen says: “The pen is mightier than the sword. I urge members of MAW to write to their constituency MPs, their local newspapers and the national dailies NOW!”

Give your name, address and telephone number, give your personal views and keep it short and to the point. Do not write anonymously.

“MPs and newspapers want the views of individual voters and readers. That is where they get their support.

“Happy writing!”

All out on 27 Feb to tell ’em what we think about Trident renewal!

For the first time in many years the prospect of ditching nuclear weapons of mass destruction is now a real possibility.

Public opinion is largely against spending billions on a new set of Trident missiles, each one capable of murdering millions of innocent people and leaving whole cities a radioactive desert.

Several military leaders have spoken out against relying on Trident for the nation’s security and Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of the opposition in Parliament, is a lifelong opponent of nuclear weapons.

Now is the chance for you to add your voice to the growing clamour against renewing the evil Trident missile system.

A demonstration against Trident renewal has been called for 27 February in London, organised by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament - and backed by MAW among many other groups.

A huge show of public opinion could tilt the balance against renewing Trident. Now is the time to say to the Government loud and clear: “We will not allow you to spend billions on renewing nuclear weapons which would have horrific consequences on a global scale if they were ever used. “We will not stand by while you plan to buy new weapons of mass destruction with our money!”

For information on the demonstration including travel arrangements, see www.cnduk.org/hk
Let me tell you a story…

An exhibition called “A Peace Perspective: Stories and Thoughts from WW1” will take place in Clun, Shropshire this Spring. The touring exhibition has been produced by Hereford Peace Council and includes several panels about how the war affected local families and about conscientious objectors and their treatment, including a panel bringing the subject up-to-date with information about a Herefordshire man who refused to fill in his census form and another who withheld his taxes. Other panels include information about the arms trade then and now, the role of women in WW1, peacemakers today and a list of Shropshire conscientious objectors.

MAW member Sue Dowell will host the exhibition at 9 Church Street, Clun. It will be officially opened by our vice-president Bruce Kent on Saturday, April 23. For more information contact Jenny Maxwell at jennywmcmd@gn.apc.org / 01547 540 748.

● A campaign launched by Afghan Peace Volunteers is called “#Enough!” or “I’Bas” in Afghan. See http://enoughourjourneytosomeile.com/wordpress

MAW helps create a peaceful climate in Paris

Tim Devereux was part of a group that went to Paris on 12 December, taking the MAW banner which reads ‘War Causes Climate Change; Climate Change Causes War’. Here he explains why this message is so apposite.

Governments have largely accepted the link between human behaviour and climate change - and that action needs to be taken. The two-way link between war and climate change is not so well known, but ought to be! For example, as a report in the Independent pointed out: agriculture and forcing an exodus to cities already under strain. http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/climate-change-key-in-syrian-conflict-and-it-will-trigger-more-war-in-future-10081163.html


Looking nearer home and July 2015: Planners, builders and green groups have condemned the government for scrapping plans to make all new UK homes carbon neutral. October 2015: Two leading clean energy firms go bust. Why? The government’s “draconian policy proposals which will essentially eliminate the solar PV market in the UK.”

October 2015: Government backs nuclear power stations rather than invest in renewables.


● MAW’s DVD and book Conflict and Climate Change is very suitable for group use. 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 Vaneta Road, LONDON N4 1EJ

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Please make cheque payable to Movement for the Abolition of War OR Please send me a standing order form
Leeds conference will focus on war objectors

A conference in Leeds will look at Conscientious Objection and Resistance to the First World War. The conference on Saturday, March 19 will run from 11am - 5pm and will take place at Leeds City Museum. It is intended to be a community day looking at resistance to the First World War at a national and local level.

Speakers include Cyril Pearce, Julian Putkowski, Lois Bibbings and Martin Crick on conscientious objectors and Nick Hiley and Chloe Mason on the prosecution of Alice Wheeldon. As well as speakers there will be talks, films, displays and stalls by local history and peace groups researching resistance to the first World War in their areas, including Leeds, Richmond, Grassington, Haringey, Stoke, Watford, Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Lancashire.

The organisers are still appealing for groups who are researching local history to get in touch - email resistancetowar@leeds.ac.uk to book a stall.

And to register for the conference see http://www.leeds.ac.uk/arts/hompage/523/conference_resistance_to_war_1914-1924

Song is something to Billy Bragg about...

MAW member Sue Gilmurray has secured permission to use Billy Bragg’s song Between the wars - in a version updated and arranged for a choir - as MAW’s 16th peace song in a series which started in 2014.

The original song was from the viewpoint of a working man, but Sue has tweaked it to suit a mixed choir. She says: “As well as calling for peace it calls for social justice and ‘sweet moderation’. It will sound good as a choral song - quite anthemic.”

The final lines of the song are: Call up the craftsmen, bring in the draughtsmen, build us a path from cradle to grave, and we’ll give our consent to any government that does not deny us all a living wage.

Go, find the young men, never to fight again, bring out the banners from the days gone by.

Sweet moderation, heart of this nation, desert us not: we are between the wars.

You can see the rest of the lyrics at http://www.abolishwar.org.uk/uploads/1/6/6/2/16622106/between_the_wars_newsatb_pdf

Day of action against military spending

MAW is once again supporting GDAMS - the Global Campaign on Military Spending - which, this year, falls on Monday, April 18. MAW members are encouraged to join or set up local events highlighting the cost to us all of excessive military spending.

As GDAMS says: “For too long we have lived with the myth that high military spending maintains peace, creates jobs and combats terrorism. This myth is promoted by governments and by multinational arms companies which benefit from the global arms trade politically and economically.

“It prevents the money being spent on tackling real challenges such as relieving poverty, improving health, and protecting the environment.”

GDAMS calls for military spending to be shifted towards social and environmental needs which should take priority over aircraft carriers, long range strike aircraft, armed drones, weapons exports and weapons of mass destruction.

Take a look at the website here http://demilitarize.org.uk/ - and let us know what you are planning.
Come sing a song of courage and conscience

Two musical evenings showing historic opposition to war have been organised to mark 100 years since the start of conscription. One of the organisers, Valerie Flessati of the Haringey First World War Peace Forum, said: “We want to give people the opportunity to discover the stories of those who were courageous enough to resist the First World War’s recruitment campaigns and conscription.”

The evening will help answer the question of who opposed the war 100 years ago and why did they do it? What kind of politics, patriotism and faith did they have?

Clive Barrett, Chair of the Peace Museum, Bradford, will offer an illustrated presentation on the conscientious objectors of the First World War - including some local stories - interspersed with examples of the music that inspired them. Everyone is welcome to attend and sing along to songs of courage and conscience, with the help of a choir led by MAW member Sue Gilmurray.

“Oh What a Lovely War-Resistance” will take place on Monday, February 29, at 7pm at St Augustine’s Church, Mattison Road, London N4 1BG (London Catholic Worker).

It will then move to the Hinde Street Methodist Church, London W1U 2QJ on Tuesday, March 1 at 7pm.

Entry is by donations at the door towards expenses.

The evenings have been organised by the Haringey First World War Peace Forum, Hinde Street Methodist Church, the Methodist Peace Fellowship, the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship and Pax Christi.


Parliament to consider taxes for peace bill

The Military Service Act came into force 100 years ago - bringing compulsory military service and allowing for possible exemption for “men who conscientiously object to combatant service”.

A century on, we are forced into supporting military activity through the taxation system - financial conscription. Thanks to the campaigning organisation Conscience: Taxes for peace, not war, the Taxes for Peace Bill 2016 will go before Parliament. This aims to allow those who have a moral, ethical or religious objection to war the right to re-direct that portion of their income tax (about 6%) at present destined for military use to go instead to a fund designated for non-military security and non-violent conflict prevention work. See www.conscienceonline.org.uk/register-yourself-as-a-conscientious-objector/.

Conscience is asking supporters to state why they object to paying for war, for inclusion in a volume of personal testimony in support of the Bill.

There will be a reception to launch the Bill on Wednesday, March 2 from 7-9pm in the Attlee Suite, Portcullis House, Westminster. Let Conscience know if you plan to attend at http://www.conscienceonline.org.uk/contact-us/ or telephone 020 3515 9132.

Durham park plans

The major renovation of Durham’s Victorian Park is coming on well, reports MAW vice-chair Heather Speight.

Some peace related proposals from Peace Action Durham - with which Heather is also involved - are still being considered. A site visit is planned to discuss possible sites for a contemplation space, a Labyrinth and an area for co-operative games.

If you were unable to come to the MAW Remembrance Day lecture "Future Wars and How to Prevent Them", you can see a video of Professor Paul Rogers’ talk on the home page of the MAW website – www.abolishwar.org.uk

The next edition of Abolish War will be published on May 2 - send your news and views to helenriley@abolishwar.org.uk

Abolish War is published by the Movement for the Abolition of War, 11 Venetia Road, London N4 1EJ.