Talk peace in Berlin - volunteers wanted!

The MAW youth committee is looking for two people to join them at the International Peace Bureau World Congress in Berlin from 30 September - 3 October. Transport, accommodation and the congress fee will be covered. The congress, titled Disarm! For a climate of peace - creating an action agenda, is inspired by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon who said: "The world is over-armed and peace is under-funded."
The event will bring together a range of experts and activists from around the globe and will include talks, presentations, roundtables, discussions, workshops, information booths, exhibitions and cultural activities. Contributors include the economist James Gilbrath and the environmental activist Vandana Shiva plus, via video, former Soviet president and Nobel peace prize laureate Mikhail Gorbachev and author Naom Chomsky.

MAW youth committee member Becky Garnault said: This is a fantastic opportunity for any young person who wants to meet some of the leaders of the world peace movement and really get to grips with the issues. "And it's in Berlin, one of the coolest cities in the world. What's not to like?"
If you would like to come please write a short piece or film yourself talking about what you think is the most damaging effect of war or militarism on young people around the world (we will publish some of these on the MAW Youth blog). Please also include a few lines about why we should choose you.
Entries – from UK residents aged 30 years or under should be emailed to: youth@abolishwar.org.uk . The deadline for entries is mid-June.

SUNDAY 15 MAY, 2016
INTERNATIONAL CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS’ DAY

Join us at 12 noon in Tavistock Square, Bloomsbury, London WC1
We gather each year at the Conscientious Objectors’ stone for the annual ceremony in honour of COs past and present.
There will be some short speeches, songs led by Sue Gilmurray, a minute’s silence, and flowers laid at the stone, as we remember the COs of all countries and all times.
The ceremony takes about one hour. Bring your family, friends and a picnic for afterwards. All welcome.

FIRST WORLD WAR PEACE FORUM
Anglican Pacifist Fellowship, Conscience, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Movement for the Abolition of War, Network for Peace, Pax Christi, Peace News, Peace Pledge Union, Quaker Peace and Social Witness, the Right to Refuse to Kill Group, Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom
mail@coproaecc.org.uk
Shameful use of red poppy, say peace veterans

Anyone who thinks the red poppy is a symbol of remembrance that should be preserved in a spirit of respect for those - military or civilian - who lost their lives in the First World War, will be shocked to read a recent report from Veterans for Peace.

My Name is Legion: The British Legion and the Control of Remembrance describes what it calls the "poppy fascism" to which we are increasingly subject. It details the British Legion's commercialisation of the poppy and its use of it as a trademark. More shockingly, it focuses on the Legion's use of the poppy to support government policies which promote the military in the media, sport and education. The Legion even accepts sponsorship from the world's leading arms dealers and arms-related companies: BAE Systems, Lockheed Martin, Thales and Sphinx among others.

And it has a close working relationship with the Ministry of Defence. The result is not to uphold a spirit of "never again" but to legitimise war and glamorise those who make it, and make it possible.

This is a report that should be read by everyone who is concerned that the First World War - and all wars - should be remembered for what they were: barbaric, obscene and tragic: the disastrous failures of politics and politicians.

Martin Aitken

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

Abolishing war forever – it can become a reality

I live a flat in a quiet street in North London. I suppose about 30 people live in similar flats on the same street. We get on with most of our neighbours. If there are disputes about parking or rubbish at least no one has ever pulled out a gun. If there are problems which we can’t sort out in a sensible way between ourselves there are local neighbourhood schemes, solicitors and, as a last resort, the police and the courts. It’s normal.

What is not normal is a world of nearly 200 different states, dominated by a few of the most powerful ones and armed to the teeth with weapons which could bring the world as we know it to an end.

That is why, under the inspiration of Professor Joseph Rotblat, MAW was launched over ten years ago. Rotblat said: ‘War must cease to be an admissible institution. The abolition of war must be our ultimate goal.’

He was actually echoing Clement Attlee, who, in August 1945, just after the first nuclear bombs were dropped, said: ‘This sort of thing [the abolition of war] has in the past been considered a Utopian dream. It has become today the essential condition of the survival of civilisation.’

Little did he know then of the long list of future nuclear weapon accidents which led Robert McNamara, senior United States official throughout the Cold War, to say that we were only saved, not by good judgement but by “good luck”.

MAW supports all those organisations challenging specific aspects of militarism ranging from CND to the Campaign Against the Arms Trade. Our special message is that war itself can be eliminated as a means of solving problems between states. We need a major culture change.

It can’t be done? That’s what they once said about getting votes for women, or abolishing torture and the slave trade. We can move on. Hadrian’s Wall is an ancient monument. Culloden is a tourist attraction. Germany and France will never fight again thanks to European political unity. It is up to us to help to turn the dream of eliminating war into reality. It can be done. Join us:

http://www.abolishwar.org.uk/join.html

Bruce Kent

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 Vanetia 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 □
Members of MAW and friends at a Conference on Resistance to War held in Leeds recently. 
● MAW Youth: the Militarisation of our Society, a Youth Conference, will be held on Saturday, 8 October at SOAS, London and will be of interest to students and young people. See more details in the next Abolish War and on MAW Youth’s Facebook page.

Fairs and fetes help spread the word
Spring is here and around the country plans are afoot for fairs and fetes. How about booking a stall at your local event to promote peace and oppose war? Never done it before? Don’t have any likeminded helpers? Call Hilary on 020 8898 4850, or email evans298@btinternet.com to see if we can sort out these or any other difficulties. We can supply literature and other goods. We may be able to find other MAW members in your area who are willing to help, or even supply a peripatetic experienced MAW stallholder. Anything’s possible - just get in touch!

Hear a survivor’s story
A Noiseless Flash - a rare chance to hear first hand the testimony of Hiroshima survivor Setsuko Thurlow - will take place at Friends House, 173-175 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ on Thursday, May 12 at 6pm (no charge).
Setsuko was a 13-year-old student on August 6, 1945, working for the military in Hiroshima to decode secret messages. At 8:15am that morning she recalls being given a pep-talk by an Army General when a bluish white flash filled the room, and she remembers the sensation of floating in the air.

Elephant in the room at climate conference
Carbon emissions from military activity: definitely off-limits for discussion at the Paris Climate Conference last December. Figures for these vast quantities of greenhouse gases are difficult to obtain and are often shrouded in secrecy. At the 1997 UN Climate talks in Kyoto, the US won exemptions for the military from any required disclosure and reduction in such emissions; other nations took advantage of these exemptions. Emissions from global military activity include - on a colossal scale:
- Ore extraction, and manufacture of equipment and weaponry
- Trials and training
- Fuel and explosive use in combat, and resulting fires
- Extensive rebuilding of devastated infrastructure.

One estimate put forward that military activity could be responsible for up to 10% of global carbon emissions seems not too fantastic. Why are these emissions not included in climate negotiations? “The atmosphere counts the cost of carbon from the military, therefore we must as well”, Stephen Kretzmann, Director of Oil Change International, told the Guardian. Under the Paris agreement, countries won’t get automatic exemption from consideration of military emissions – but they will not be obliged to cut them either. One tiny step in the right direction … or business as usual?

Prince Charles and Charlotte Church are not alone in pointing out that climate change leads to instability and war. This though is the other half of the vicious circle: war, its preparations and aftermath lead to climate change.

True support for the climate agreement involves promoting the ideals of the UN, exposing those sections of big business which relish “opportunities” resulting from insecurity and conflict, and demanding much more serious funding for and commitment to non-military security and non-violent conflict prevention and resolution.
The pain of war: time is not such a great healer

Our Youth Committee has set up a blog and is looking for contributors. Here is one of the first entries:

We rarely see the effects of war at our centre: occasional faces covered up where scars or disfigurement cause others to shudder. Sometimes wheelchair users struggle over the threshold but the reality is that the asylum seekers who make it out of the war zones are fit health young men. Most scars are hidden. Wounds from a torturer glimpsed in the changing room of Monday’s football session, testicles wired up to an electrical current leave of Monday’s football session, testicles.

People reconstruct their lives with possessions, piles and piles of clothes, old kettles, broken crockery. I’ve visited the rooms of asylum seekers stacked high to the ceiling with bric-a-brac, jumpers, old shoes, coats, hats - anything and everything - to cover up the sorrow and the pain, to distract from the awful past, constructing a new life with bits and pieces.

Of the thousands of asylum seekers using our centre, many will carry this unseen burden for the rest of their lives, each year hoping the pain will lessen. Mulling over the death of my own father in a recent conversation, I naïvely said time heals, and got a reply I wasn’t expecting. The sense of betrayal, hurt and loss for my colleague was almost as agonising and present as when it took place 20 years ago. There was no reconciling what had been done. I asked one of our volunteers how he could remain so upbeat. He’s been waiting for a decision on his case for eight years. With a tear in his eye he said: “If I don’t laugh I cry.”

War lingers, and we all feel it.

The article can be found here: https://abolishwarnow.wordpress.com/2016/02/15/scarsofwar/

LETTER

Please support my book

Thanks to all who have expressed interest in Echo Hall, my novel about three generations of women who experience love, loss and conflict during the 1991 Gulf War, WW2 and WW1. The project is doing well so far, but there is still a long way to go. If you would like to see a novel bringing questions of war and peace to a mainstream audience published, I’d appreciate your support.

There are several ways you can help. You can support the book: https://unbound.co.uk/books/echo-hall .

If you are unable to support it financially, you can share it on social media. I tweet as @aroomofmyown1 and am on Facebook as Virginia Moffatt. For those who are interested in twitter fiction, I’m conducting an experiment with three of my 1911 characters tweeting about their lives, politics and whether there will be a war - https://unbound.co.uk/books/echo-hallupdates/experiments-in-twitter

Virginia Moffatt

1932 disarmament colour poster on offer

Copies of an historic A3 colour poster advertising the 1932 World Disarmament Conference of 1932 are available. Send three 2nd class stamps to this address: 11 Venetia Road London N4 1EJ.

Diary date: London event

Comrades In Conscience will be performed on May 25 (7.30pm) at Conway Hall, London, WC1R 4RL - an evening commemorating Britain’s WW1 COs with drama, songs and talks. Speakers include Cyril Pearce, Lois Bibbings, and Ben Copsey from the PPU.

www.conwayhall.org.uk/event/comrades-in-conscience

Tel: 0207 405 1818.