



# FARINGDON

## PEACE GROUP

**NEWSLETTER 25 AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2022**

### **A MIGHTY TREE HAS FALLEN**

*A tribute to Bruce Kent*

Right here in our midst.

Like Tony Benn before him Bruce Kent was always right here when he was right here.

And we knew that was true wherever he went.

He knew us, valued us and brought his fierce courageous love to warm us in cold times.

He who unswervingly followed his thoughts and values through to their conclusion, followed his own path knowing often that it meant going against the norm, breaking rules he did not respect, changing what he believed, speaking truth to power.

His clear eyes saw through and beyond and right up close.

He was ready for any conversation with a small child, young person, compatriot. When he was around us we felt safer, surer, braver.

His branches rustled above and around us.

And now he has fallen we know that thanks to him many new seedlings will reach for the light, inspired by him, nurtured by him.

A life well lived.

A man much loved.

Rest in peace.

**Liz Rothschild**

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### **PEACE PLAQUE IN BONN SQUARE**

**SATURDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST at 2pm**

**Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombing remembered.**

**'Not Once, but Twice – Never Again'**

Each August the anniversary of the dropping of the first atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 is commemorated across the world. This year, Hiroshima Day, Saturday 6th August, will be marked with a gathering for reflection and commemoration at the Peace Plaque in Bonn Square, Oxford.

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### **PEACE PARTY IN JULY**

About fifty or so of us met for a shared 'lunch in the garden'. Although we usually put up gazebos to protect us from the sun, we were again glad of them as it poured with rain for most of the afternoon. This must have been the first time for forty years that the 1st Saturday in July had not had brilliant sunshine!

However, it seemed that most people had a great afternoon regardless of the weather. It was lovely to meet up with people we hadn't seen for ages.

As usual, we were entertained by the Cherry Tree players, U3A Ukulele and Recorder groups, Dave Headey, some recitations, and the great Joe Norton and friends.

Our thanks to the United Church for making their car parking available.

*(A large cake tin, and a very nice plate were left behind - let me know if they are yours - Jenny)*

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### **BIG GREEN DAY**

**SATURDAY 1st OCTOBER**

Corn Exchange, Faringdon

Various stalls planned and manned by people interested in environmental issues .

Earth & Faith will have a display promoting greener gardens, and, will be giving out a few free trees. Other ideas/stalls welcome.

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### **BACK TO LAKENHEATH**

CND reports that US nuclear weapons are coming back to "RAF" Lakenheath, so we'll be going back too.

**SATURDAY 17 SEPTEMBER**

This is a shocking decision that must not go unchallenged, so please do everything you can to get as many people there as possible, including arranging transport to Lakenheath.

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## OUR FIRST IN-PERSON MEETING IN TWO YEARS

Faringdon Peace Group held their first in-person meeting for over 2 years on 1st June and welcomed Symon Hill to lead us in thinking about some of the major questions of today in his theme of “Everyday Militarism – on our Streets and in our Schools”. We look around us and ask, How can it be that there are such ferocious wars in Ukraine and in the Yemen today? What are we doing? What can we do?

Symon focused our attention on one aspect of this massive problem and looked at the extent to which the military are given priority access in schools and society at large. When the age for permitted marriage is being raised from 16 to 18, the UK remains the only country in Europe where recruitment into the forces at 16, with a commitment to serve to 22, continues. Following the controversies after the war in Iraq, the tide of military engagement in schools has risen and deliberate policies have been followed to increase the support for “defence”. Sir Richard Dannatt, the army Chief-of-Staff, is said to have argued in 2006 that the biggest single danger to the country was the loss of public support for the army, and governments have taken steps designed to increase this, particularly with a focus on young people.

In addition to the long-standing parades and pageantry, Armed Forces Day has been introduced into the calendar, even though the proposal for it to become a bank holiday has not been implemented. Many events are arranged to encourage even the very young to sample the handling of military hardware on

‘Fun Days’, though lethal weapons are scarcely entertainment in their purpose.

Three such events have been arranged in Oxfordshire this year. A programme of extending the number of combined cadet forces into state schools, after the Davis Report in 2009, to reach 500 by 2020, was funded at a cost of £50 million. Phase 3 of the programme is an ambition to grow cadet numbers to 60,000 by April 2024. Former soldiers — “Commando Joe’s” in uniform — have been encouraged to work in schools to assist with those pupils who have found schooling difficult by applying a ‘military ethos’. A scheme for the accelerated conversion of soldiers into teachers was attempted but achieved little take-up.

The quite recent concept of a Military Covenant has been given widespread publicity and, though those affected by their military service should be given full support, the concept also has had the effect of broadening support for the military and for arms expenditure. Councils have been encouraged to sign up to the Military Covenant and many have done so. The armed forces are given a high profile in careers events and offer sponsorship to other events as a form of publicity.

This promotion of militarism and of military service as glamorous raises serious questions about what can be done to prevent the onset of wars and the waste of scarce resources, when greater co-operation in the world today is so urgently needed.

*Report by John Cottis*

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Good to see that these European countries are continuing to support Palestinian civil society organisations and have refused to follow Israel’s lead in designating them as terrorist organisations. Sad that the UK is not among them.

### JOINT STATEMENT

By the Foreign Ministries of Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden

On October 22 2021, Israel designated six Palestinian civil society organisations as terrorist organisations. Accusations of terrorism or links to terrorist groups must always be treated with the utmost seriousness. The designations needed therefore to be assessed carefully and extensively. No substantial information was received from Israel that would justify reviewing our policy towards the six Palestinian NGOs on the basis of the Israeli decision to designate these NGOs as ‘terrorist organizations’. Should evidence be made available to the contrary, we would act accordingly. In the absence of such evidence, we will continue our cooperation and strong support for the civil society in the oPT. A free and strong civil society is indispensable for promoting democratic values and for the two-state solution.

## “FAMILY FUN” AT FAIRFORD

Campaigners from Oxford CND, Abingdon Peace Group, Kidlington Peace Group (Collectively from Oxfordshire Peace Campaign, OPC) and XR Swindon gathered today near Lechlade, Glos. on one of the roads leading to RIAT 2022. Attached is a photo of one of the campaigners – more to follow.

They displayed banners illustrating the true nature of the base, which now hosts USAF U2 intelligence gathering planes flying out daily near Eastern Europe. The base also hosts regular ‘forward mission’ training visits by nuclear-capable USAF bombers, such as B52s, B1s, and B2 Stealth bombers.

Many punters were travelling by heading for the large camping areas surrounding USAF Fairford where the event, the largest international air tattoo in the world, takes place over the next few days. These pictures were taken on 14th July, the ‘trade’ day when potential buyers and important potential buyers visit before the main RIAT.



## Support Our Work - Join Stop the War



For the last two decades, Stop the War has opposed wars, sanctions and military interventions. We have tirelessly campaigned against the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, against the bombardment of Libya and Syria, against British involvement in the Saudi-led war in Yemen.

We campaign against the Russian invasion of Ukraine, but also against NATO's expansion and demands for much higher military spending in its member states.

Despite the recent attacks on Stop the War for our positions, we will continue to organise and campaign against wars, imperialism and NATO's militarism.

as seen on Facebook



# UNITED NATIONS TREATY ON THE PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

## Faringdon declares support for the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

At the Town Meeting on 18th May, after some discussion, members stood to uphold a commitment to be behind the Treaty.

### What does this mean for Faringdon?

A new Treaty entered into force in January 2021 which will outlaw nuclear weapons across much of the globe.

The UK's Trident is a relatively small part of a massive global problem that needs to be dealt with. For many years we have argued that nuclear weapons must be banned in the same way that chemical and biological weapons have been banned – or more recently cluster munitions and landmines have been outlawed.

The requirement for nuclear disarmament has been enshrined in international law since 1970, in the form of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The NPT commits its signatories – including the UK – to take steps to disarm if they have nuclear weapons and not to acquire them if they don't. While the non-nuclear states have kept their side of the bargain, all the nuclear powers still have their weapons and are even upgrading or modernising their arsenals.

Studies have shown that nuclear war would result in mass starvation due to the impact on agricultural production and profound climate change. As Scientists for Global Responsibility pointed out in 2013, 'the firepower of just one Trident nuclear submarine could not only devastate 48 cities and cause tens of millions of direct casualties, but also cause a global cooling lasting several years and of a magnitude not seen since the last Ice Age.'

For a more comprehensive outline, please see the CND website. <https://cnduk.org>

On 7 December 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted the Pledge in the form of Resolution 70/48. Of the 168 nations that cast a vote, 139 (83%) were in favour. The United Kingdom voted against and over a hundred countries voted in favour of the final report.

Those opposed included the UK, the USA, France, Israel and Russia. North Korea voted in favour of the ban conference. The other nuclear states (India, Pakistan and China) abstained. The adopted resolution proposed two negotiating conferences over 20 days at the UN in New York to conclude a new international Treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons.

The Treaty is a significant pointer towards changing international attitudes to nuclear weapons. Previous Treaties prohibiting chemical and biological weapons helped to stigmatise them in the minds of the public. We are now seeing this happen with nuclear weapons.

Given that the UK parliament has voted to give the £205 billion project to replace Trident the green light, it is unlikely that the Prime Minister will be signing the Treaty any time soon. We must do all we can to put this Treaty right at the top of the political agenda for the UK to be the first nuclear weapon state to ratify the Treaty.

Towns and cities around the world are becoming Nuclear Ban Communities as they sign up to support the TPNW. Large cities including Washington D.C., Paris, Berlin, Oxford and Manchester have all adopted motions declaring their support. Other towns and cities in the UK to join the campaign include Edinburgh, Norwich and Renfrewshire.

Now, with a strong voice in favour, Faringdon.

## EXTRACTS FROM OUR MP's RECENT NEWSLETTERS

"It was a privilege to visit the 1st Military Working Dogs Regiment as part of the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme I am taking part in. The Regiment prepares dogs to 'protect and detect' - training them to do everything from deter people from causing harm to detecting explosive material - as well as maintaining veterinary capabilities to treat military animals. As ever, lovely to be around dogs! "

### *Encouraging news*

"Several constituents have written to me recently explaining that they want to make their home greener, but the cost of heat pumps, in particular, is too high. I raised this with the Energy Minister who agreed with the point I made and explained that the Government is working to make heat pumps cheaper. Grants of up to £6000 are currently available".

## HIROSHIMA & NAGASAKI ANNIVERSARIES

At the beginning of August we'll mark the 77th anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.



CND would like to receive short video clips (10-30 secs long) about any events you do to mark this occasion that you may be involved with.

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"I have a student in my class that keeps hitting other kids with a hammer over and over. I can't get anything done and the other kids are hurt and they hate it!"  
"Have you tried taking the hammer away from that student?"  
"No, no, it's not the hammer's fault. Everyone knows that kids have the right to have hammers! I want to buy a bunch of hammers and give them to all the other students, and then no one will ever have problems with hammers again!"  
More hammers will definitely fix everything for sure.

## ALWAYS A MAGIC MONEY TREE FOR WAR

The next Prime Minister will be either Liz Truss or Rishi Sunak. With cutting taxes and defence spending high on the priority list for Tory members, the cost of living crisis and desperate state of our public services are being ignored. The only area that will clearly see investment is the military, and the funds will be massive.

If Foreign Secretary Liz Truss is the victor military spending will skyrocket and Britain's hawkish stand - be it towards Russia or China - will become ever more belligerent. Truss has committed to increase military spending to 3% of GDP by 2030, higher than Johnson's 2.5% promise, and an enormous hike on the current 2.1%. She will push for a more assertive G7 as an "economic NATO" to "defend" the "free world" from the growing influence of China.

The arguably more cautious Sunak has declined to set "arbitrary targets" on military spending, but he is clear that NATO's target - for member states to spend 2.0% of GDP on defence - is a "floor and not a ceiling" and has given his support to increasing Britain's defence budget to 2.5% of GDP "over time".

Whoever secures the Tory leadership, the military hawks will be the main winners. Opposition to the war party will need to be louder than ever in the coming months.

*And finally,* a quote from Desmond Tutu

"If you want peace, you don't talk to your friends. You talk to your enemies".