



ABINGDON PEACE GROUP

Newsletter

December 2020

Advertisement

SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE

Did you know that 50 countries have now signed up to the PROHIBITION of nuclear weapons?

This will be ratified by the United Nations in January 2021. Celebrate with us in Abingdon Market Place between 11 and 12 on 23rd January 2021.

Bring your own paper cup.

Pass this message on.

NEXT MEETING, on zoom:

Tuesday, 15th December 2020 at 8pm

Come to our Christmas party

This year most of our meetings have had to be online. We can perhaps allow ourselves a tiny bit of pride that we only lost one meeting, namely in March, and beginning with April resumed 'normally'. Thus everyone with access to a 'device' (dread word) – unfortunately not everyone – has been able to continue active membership of the peace movement.

Our December get-together will also be online and we will do our best to celebrate the season and our continuing activities. We'll drink a toast or two, eat some snacks, chat, and have some readings. Bring yours, be it a poem or a chunk of prose, to the meeting and present it – no need to notify us in advance.

And of course there will be a quiz or two to grapple with.

Joining the meeting: Either use the link below or look out for a message with the link on December 15. If you don't receive it and would like to take part, simply email us using abingdonpeace@gmail.com

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/91315134101?pwd=RmxHLzBQaXlHYjFSRm5nREVzYjdSdz09>

Meeting ID: 913 1513 4101 Passcode: 015836

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Spotted by the redoubtable Oxford CND nukewatchers on November 26: part of a nuclear warhead convoy on the A34 in the Oxford area. Essential travel, obviously. Which is why we must compel the UK to sign up to the TPNW – under it this would be in contravention of international law. Happy Christmas.

Our November meeting: Rebecca Johnson on "the TPNW – What next"

Rebecca has been a campaigner for peace for over thirty years. The word indefatigable could have been coined for her, given her continuing commitment to the anti-nuclear weapons cause. She was a famous 'Greenham woman', moving on to found the Acronym Institute for Disarmament which acquired UN status, on the basis of which she was part of all the debates, at all levels, leading to the passing of the TPNW, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Following ratification of the treaty by fifty states, it comes into force on 22 January 2021.

In her talk Rebecca gave an account of her work, that of ICAN (the Nobel prize-winning International Campaign against Nuclear Weapons) and the all-important processes the campaigners had adopted. The presentation she made was in a very informal style, accompanied by informative slides.

This report does not go into detail because the talk was recorded and is now available for the world to see (and they should) on You Tube. We urge you to visit:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f_7m3jy79yM (for the talk); and
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EoY7pNqfJPs> (for the ensuing q&a).

When you do, you will hear much of the detail of the treaty and of the challenges we now face. The treaty is a most important stage on the way to nuclear disarmament, but does it does not mark the achievement of that necessary aim. Rebecca discusses what we must do and comes up with some suggestions, but makes clear that we have a lot of hard thinking and campaigning to do. However, she does indicate some historical grounds for optimism that we should take to heart.

One final observation. Rebecca is nothing if not a political realist. She knows the realities, from dealing with the police at Greenham Common to high diplomatic policies. But note the following quotation from her talk:

[We should] "not apologise for actually recognising that love and caring and human security and environmental security and respect have to be at the centre of all our political work, our thought and our action on peace. The peace is not an end thing – it is something we build and keep building. Just like in fact disarmament is always something that we have to achieve but then we have to go on making sure they are not bringing the next deadly, horrible hi-tech, you know, engines of annihilation".
 (Mike Bloom)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WVyWc0qdfuY>

Setsuko Thurlow animation

During her talk Rebecca referred to the very moving and dignified eye-witness account of the bombing of Hiroshima given at the United Nations by Setsuko Thurlow, another campaigner for nuclear disarmament. A beautiful animation of under 3 minutes has been made to accompany some of it:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WVyWc0qdfuY>

Cameroon update

The conflict and violence outlined in our September meeting continue. There was a massacre at a secondary school in Kumba on 24th October which provoked international protest. Lord Alton, who has been very active in urging the British Government to take an active role in finding a peaceful resolution, said after the massacre "The need for a ceasefire and a negotiated constitutional settlement has never been greater. As a former colonial power in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon, the UK must actively push Yaounde (ie the government of Cameroon) to engage in inclusive talks to end this insecurity."

Thankyou to all Peace Group members who have been in touch with either their MP or the Catholic Bishop of Portsmouth whose diocese is twinned with that of Bamenda in Cameroon. Please check the website cameroonpeacejustice.ca for updates and please keep up the encouragement and lobbying. There will be a further update in next month's newsletter. (Anne Dodd)

Fabian Hamilton MP talks on "Peace-building in the post-Covid World" to MAW

Fabian Hamilton MP is the Shadow Minister for Peace and Disarmament and gave this year's MAW Annual Remembrance Lecture on 7th October 2020. He was appointed to his role with, unsurprisingly, no-one to shadow, in 2016 by Jeremy Corbyn and reports that on his becoming party leader Keir Starmer said he wanted him to continue the work - "Keir called me and made clear how peacebuilding was a huge part of his long-term vision for the Labour Party and how Britain behaves on the international stage. As part of Labour's Shadow Foreign Office team, I work closely with Shadow Foreign Secretary, Lisa Nandy, and I lead on issues relating to arms control and the non-proliferation of nuclear and conventional weapons".

This is in itself noteworthy. Your editor cannot recall any similar appointment in the Labour Party since Harold Wilson appointed trade union leader Frank Cousins a minister with a disarmament brief in his 1964 government. (It didn't end very well). It's clearly not an easy job. While Labour policy is pro-independent nuclear deterrent and most of the parliamentary party clearly supports that position, Fabian is likely to be under pressure, and quite rightly, from the peace movement to bang the drum for anti-militarism. (His talk makes clear that he intends to do that). The media will no doubt largely ignore him with a will until it suits their book to make trouble.

The talk covered a very wide range of issues that would and should concern every member of the peace movement. For example, he discusses non-nuclear issues and conflicts all over the world, not just the obvious, if extremely important ones, such as the UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia that enable the war against Yemen to be pursued.

"Our weapons are our responsibility and it's time for a common sense approach to arms sales – an approach that puts British values at the heart of a truly ethical foreign policy" - a refreshing comment when 'British values' are the sort of thing that people like Michael Gove like to invoke vacuously in support of an altogether different world-view.

So I do urge you to listen to, or read, Fabian Hamilton's speech. You may, like me, find that you learn all sorts of things that you didn't know - or weren't very clear about. (Mike Bloom)

You can hear the talk, the q&a and read the transcript using the following link:
<http://www.abolishwar.org.uk/rem2020.html>

War in Nagorno-Karabakh

The fighting over the disputed enclave in the Southern Caucasus appears to have concluded recently with an 'agreement' more or less imposed by Russia, the major power broker in the region. The Turkish state had also meddled, supporting one of the two contestants for control of the enclave in order, it is said by some, to limit Russia's power and influence. For what it is worth, Azerbaijan seems to have achieved some of its war aims, while Armenia – and in particular the Armenians in the enclave – have fared rather badly, with the promise of Russian troops 'keeping the peace' over the next few years. Peace and justice do not seem to be around the corner, alas. We mourn the thousands who have lost their lives in all this.

Miscellaneous Links:

House of Lords debate on nuclear weapons

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2020-11-25/debates/C82D5D15-28A3-4A06-BD9C-610B3F01C74A/NuclearWeapons?fbclid=IwAR0ajuyK4aLVryoKFR8Yiwho4H8Q0KfZlisuiCiG-1r2DJnPZakkOt-xCDc>

Keeping the Empire Running: Britain's Global Military Footprint, by *Dr. Binoy Kampmark*, former *commonwealth Scholar at Selwyn College, Cambridge*, now lecturing at *RMIT University, Melbourne*.
<https://www.globalresearch.ca/britain-global-military-footprint/5730392>

Disturbing news from the Peace Pledge Union (PPU) on Labour's defence policy:
<https://www.ppu.org.uk/news/labour-party-groups-event-encourages-armed-forces-break-rules>

The hidden military implications of 'building back' with civil nuclear - and the industrial and environmental opportunities of alternative trajectories. Presentation by Dr Phil Johnstone, Sussex University, at the SGR conference, Transition Now.

<https://www.sgr.org.uk/resources/hidden-military-implications-building-back-civil-nuclear>

FutureWars – The impact of new technologies (from Spokesman Books, The Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation). <https://www.spokesmanbooks.com/Spokesman/PDF/141FutureWar.pdf>

COVID-19 disaster is not natural – it was created by UK government ideology by Paul Rogers. "COVID-19 was a natural *hazard* not a natural *disaster* "

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/opendemocracyuk/covid-19-disaster-is-not-natural-it-was-created-by-uk-government-ideology/>

Diary

Thu Dec 3: Red Metropolis: Socialism and The Government of London, with Owen Hatherley. A polemical history of municipal socialism in London and an argument for turning this capitalist capital red again. London is conventionally seen as merely a combination of the financial centre in the City and the centre of governmental power in Westminster, a uniquely capitalist capital city. This book is about the third London a - social democratic twentieth-century metropolis, a pioneer in council housing, public enterprise, socialist design, radical local democracy and multiculturalism. Housmans Bookshop (020 7837 4473)

<https://housmans.com/event/red-metropolis-socialism-and-the-government-of-london...>

Fri Dec 4: Peace is not just for Xmas, 7pm - 9pm, Zoom, an evening of talks on the future of Trident and nuclear weapons with five speakers including Jane Tallents - Scotland and Trident; Dr. Michelle Bentley - Challenging Deterrence: The Nuclear Weapons Taboo; Peter Burt - What's inside AWE Aldermaston?; and Rachel Western - Keeping it Simple - or Not. Followed by open discussion. To register, go to: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAoduqqTMrHdCXAbwXs2MJwJYeL_MiKXPN?_x_zm_rtaid=tNqvuffuS4OnBkGUFm5mbw.1606665446060.33b39b7a07c20104a546bf2785b80c30&_x_zm_rhtaid=798

Thu Dec 10: Human Rights Day, marking the anniversary of the UN General Assembly's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. <http://www.un.org/en/events/humanrightsday/>

Sat Dec 12: Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp – Margaret: 01865 248357

Fri Jan 1: World Day of Prayer for Peace, especially in the Catholic tradition.(countrywide) <http://www.paxchristi.org.uk/events.HTML>

Sun Jan 17: Peace Sunday <http://www.paxchristi.org.uk>

Sat Jan 23: Abingdon Market Place between 11 am and 12 noon on 23rd January 2021. Celebrate the coming into force of the TPNW (see box above).

Wed Jan 27: Holocaust Memorial Day <http://www.hmd.org.uk/>

Comments, corrections, contributions etc to this newsletter are very welcome.

Abingdon Peace Group meets on the third Tuesday of each month except August. At present our meetings are taking place online. All who are interested in peace and campaigning for it are welcome to take part. The Group has no party political affiliations.

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