



Deadline for Disarmament

12th to 30th April 2004

Last year, in the lead-up to the Really Big Blockade at Faslane, people all over the UK, and some in Europe, took part in a nuclear crime reporting event called "*Blow the Whistle*". They made a formal complaint about Trident to their local police station (or the British embassy if overseas) and generated lots of local publicity.

This year, from 12th to 30th April, the focus will be Britain's failure to abide by its commitment to the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the contact will be with Members of the Westminster Parliament (and again British embassies abroad). We will ask the MPs and embassies to pass on our demand for NPT compliance and our commitment to continue our own programme of direct disarmament if no British government timetable of compliance is forthcoming. We will also ask the MPs for their own personal response.

This is a Trident Ploughshares campaign but is not just for Trident Ploughshares affinity groups. We hope that other groups (local CNDs, peace groups etc) will take part and thus give their moral support to direct disarmament.

Why the NPT and Why Now?

The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), under the auspices of the United Nations, began in 1970 with the aim of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, promoting cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and furthering the goal of achieving complete and universal nuclear disarmament. A total of 188 countries have signed up, including five of the nuclear weapon states – the US, UK, France, Russia and China. The three other nuclear states, Israel, Pakistan and India, have not signed. By signing up, countries which do not have nuclear weapons are making a promise not to obtain them and those who do a promise to get rid of them. Of course, from signed-up governments which have nuclear weapons, we hear rather more about the need to stop the spread of weapons than we do about the need for complete and universal disarmament. The contribution of these states so far to general disarmament has been in the reduction of numbers of missiles and warheads, and while these have been significant, especially reductions by Russia and the US, they have left untouched their ability to deliver nuclear strikes of terrifying scale.

The determination to cling to nuclear weapons by these five states undermines the rationale for restraint among the others and prompts an obvious question. Why are nukes essential to the security of the five but not to others?

At the last review in New York in 2000 Britain again promised that it would eliminate its nuclear arsenal. In stark contradiction, Britain's statements on defence policy still say that we need to keep our nuclear weapons. The Trident system is still actively deployed round the clock, with at least one submarine on constant patrol, ready to fire a missile with 30 minutes' warning. Further, very little public notice is taken of the fact that last year Geoff Hoon threatened to use Trident in Iraq. Meanwhile British scientists are collaborating with their US counterparts in the design of new nuclear weapons and the nuclear weapons factory at Aldermaston is about to undergo a huge expansion.

It has to be said that British officials behind the scenes often exert a constructive influence in working towards agreements at NPT conferences. The political situation is far from hopeless and we ought to play our part in ensuring that those within the system who are making a genuine effort are supported by the pressure we can exert, in the lead-up to the next Review Conference in 2005. A preliminary round of meetings, called the Prep Com, takes place from 26th April to 8th May this year.

Contacting MPs and Embassies

The idea is that we meet with the MPs or embassy officials and directly explain our demands. It will be much more effective if we do this as groups –it will have more impact on the MPs/officials and gives a better platform for publicity - but there will still be great value in doing it as an individual. Most MPs will go along with meeting a delegation publicly and if they are resistant then capital can be made of that and the letter can be formally handed over in their absence.

- Arrange a time and place to meet (and let us know so we can put it on the website)
- Adapt the letter and print copies for everyone
- Plan a march through the town/village to the MP's surgery
- Consider a creative stunt (a globe with nuke stockpiles represented by missiles/ "Tony Blair" tearing up the NPT treaty/a cardboard mushroom cloud for each of the UK's 200 warheads etc)
- Consider inviting local councilors, church leaders, community leaders, trade unions etc to join the march
- Make banners and placards, bring drums and other instruments
- Prime the local press and radio stations (see sample press release)
- Take good photos of your own for the media and the website

Resources

Letter for MPs (Also version to British embassies/consulates)

You can customise this letter to suit your own situation. For instance, it might be appropriate to beef up the reference to Aldermaston if your group will be involved in the Easter march or the July camp, or to mention nuclear weapon convoys if you are on or near the routes they follow. If your group is a Trident Ploughshares affinity group you might want to spell out more clearly in the last paragraph what disarmament action you will be taking in the future

A5 Leaflet

Again this could be customised to suit your situation.

Template for press release

This gives the basic framework for a communication that advises press of the event. TP will launch the campaign with a press release in the second week in April.

All the resources are available electronically from www.tridentploughshares.org and from John McTague (johnsotheraddress@hotmail.com)

Feedback

To make this an effective campaign we need to have quick feedback from groups who have taken part. Photos especially welcome! We will put these on the website and refer to them in press releases.

Send material to John McTague, johnsotheraddress@hotmail.com Prospect House 46 Terry Road Low Moor Bradford W. Yorks BD12 0LL 07763 674957