

NOTTINGHAM CND NEWS March - April 2007

(NCND can be contacted at enquiries@nottinghamcnd.co.uk)

The Trident renewal vote has taken place - and, as we are all aware, has gone the wrong way. Sizeable opposition came from honourable MPs. Remember that no major practical step would be taken for several years. Cancellation is definitely still possible. It's important we keep working. Nationally an opinion poll shows that up to 75% of the population are opposed to the renewal and feel that the decision is not a priority and that the government should be concentrating on tackling climate change, crime, the health service, education, poverty etc. The list of priorities is endless!!!!

Faslane 365 March 31st and April 1st.

One of the main activities in which members of Nottingham CND are participating is a weekend blockade of the Faslane Base on March 31st and April 1st. This is part of a year-long campaign involving people from all walks of life opposed to Nuclear Weapons. The purpose of Faslane 365 is to get people to witness and blockade the base where Britain's Nuclear Weapons are deployed and to highlight the very real concerns that face us such as climate change and poverty. It is hoped that we can get at least 100 people to go from Nottingham. This is a real chance to encourage people to involve themselves actively in saying No to Trident Replacement and no to Nuclear Weapons. It's an ideal opportunity to raise why we are going to Faslane in the Local Media and to make the people of Nottingham aware that there are actions we can take to show our opposition to Nuclear Weapons and to make a much safer world. To find out more about Faslane 365 email them on nottingham@faslane365.org or go onto www.faslane365.org/nottingham. If you cannot get to Faslane it would be good if you could show your support by writing a letter to the Evening Post saying that this action is taking place and why.

Vanunu Bike Ride Arriving in Nottingham on 16th April

On 21 April, Mordechai Vanunu will have been held in captivity for 21 years in Israel. 18 of those years he spent in prison for telling the world that Israel was secretly developing nuclear weapons, 12 of which he had to spend in solitary confinement. He was released from prison in April 2004 but is still not allowed to lead a normal unrestricted life. To highlight Vanunu's situation and the fact that Israel's nuclear weapons are still secret and not subject to international inspection a bike ride has been organised from Faslane to the Israeli Embassy in London. It will arrive in London on 21st April, the 3rd anniversary of his release and the yearly date on which his restrictions come up for review. Nottingham CND is working in conjunction with the Palestine Solidarity Campaign to make sure that the riders have a rousing welcome to Nottingham and hopefully there will be plenty of publicity to mark the occasion. If you would like to take part in the ride or could put one of the riders up for the night please let us know. The bike ride will be coming to Nottingham from Sheffield and moving onto Peterborough the next morning. Arrangements for their arrival in Nottingham are still to be finalised. It is planned that they will be met some miles outside the city centre by a large contingent of local cyclist supporters on bikes decorated with flags etc. The whole group will then cycle together to the Market Square where it is planned for other supporters to be there to greet them along with (it is hoped) Alan Simpson and the Lord Mayor. Efforts are being made to interest the media with a view to getting maximum publicity in support of Vanunu and against Britain's Trident Nuclear Weapons. In the evening it is hoped to have a social function at the Sumac Centre for those of the cyclists on the ride who aren't too shattered along with local supporters. Up to date details will be on the Nottingham CND website, or contact me.

Other Important Dates for the Diary

Sunday 25th March: Spring Cuba Fiesta - this is being held at 2 pm at the Chase Neighbourhood Centre, Robin Hood Chase off St. Anns Well Road. It will be a chance to watch the latest Cuba films, dance to Salmagundi Band and listen to and join in with salsa music. Food will be available but you need to bring own drink. Charges are £5 & £3 and proceeds go to the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. It should be a good and enjoyable event.

Saturday May 5th: May Day March and Rally - organised by the Nottingham Refugee Campaign Group, this will take place in the Brewhouse Yard near the castle. We will be having a stall there so I will need volunteers. Also, we do need to support the march and take the banner. The march will be starting at 12.30 from the Brewhouse Yard and returning there..

Sunday May 27th: Green Festival in the Arboretum. Yes, it is coming up to that time of year again. CND will be supporting the event. Unless people are getting really bored with doing the same old tombola again and feel like a change, it will go ahead. However it would be nice to try something different to attract people and make them aware of Trident Nuclear Weapons. Do get your thinking caps on!!

Stall Dates for 2007

I have sent in the application for stalls in the Market Square but am waiting for confirmation. However 24th March has been definitely confirmed and as it is the time of major celebrations formally to open the square it would be really good to get plenty of volunteers to help run it. This will also be the last Saturday to publicise our weekend at Faslane. The stall will be from 11.30am onwards.

I do hope you can support us and don't forget letters around Trident Replacement are very important and would be seen by many people in Nottingham. My phone number is Nottingham [redacted] I look forward to seeing you at one of the events. [redacted] e to come and support the events.

Diane Lunzer (Secretary - Nottingham CND)

Ian Cohen and Meirion Williams lobbied Nick Palmer at his surgery on 23rd February.

We were aware, from the position Nick adopted at our CND No Trident Replacement public debate on 16th November last year, that Nick was not prepared to adopt a unilateral position. This was on the basis that he had publicly committed himself to Britain retaining nuclear weapons at the last general election. He was not prepared to go back on that undertaking to his electorate during the lifetime of this parliament. Having confirmed this, we concentrated on Britain's obligations under the Non Proliferation Treaty to actively pursue multilateral disarmament and pushed him hard on this issue. We pointed out the weakness of the government's case both at home and internationally, putting stronger pressure on Iran and at the same time seeking to push through a decision now to replace our Nuclear Weapons submarines by 2024 with no commitment even to reduce the number of nuclear warheads they would be carrying.

He agreed that we would be in a stronger position to influence other countries and gain their support to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons if we reduced the size of our nuclear arsenal. He was in favour of any new nuclear weapons submarine fleet having the minimum number necessary for one vessel on patrol at all times. He claimed that as far as he understood the position this would require at least 3 submarines and this would represent the reduction of 1 on the current fleet of 4.

When we pushed him further on this, he indicated that IF he was called to speak in a debate, he would argue for any replacement to be the absolute minimum and the least expensive option available. We went on to challenge the need to make a decision now, pointing out that if it was delayed until 2010 there would be new presidents of the USA, Russia and Iran. There was every chance of a very different political climate in which they would be much more receptive to taking genuine decisions to meet their obligations under the NPT. Nick responded by saying that the decision to be taken in the debate was only one in principle. It would be 4 or 5 years before there was any work undertaken of actually building the new submarines and that some could be cancelled. He also went on to say that the decision to replace the Trident Missiles would not be taken for 4 or 5 years from now and he might by then have formed the view that the nuclear warheads should be replaced by conventional ones.

Finally he remarked that by the time of the next election he might well have adopted this position, in which case he would make it clear to the electorate, and it would be up to them to decide if they still wanted him as their MP.

Ian Cohen