

Nottingham CND Newsletter Aug - Sep 2008

Diary Dates

- Wednesday August 6th:
12.30 to 1pm: Hiroshima Day vigil outside the Council House.
- Saturday August 9th:
2pm: Nagasaki Day commemoration of the dropping of the bomb.
- 7pm: Event at the Sumac Centre, Gladstone St
- Saturday August 23rd Stall outside the Council House from 11.30am
- Saturday September 13th Stall

Provisional dates

(to be confirmed in the next newsletter along with a date for the AGM)

- Friday October 8th Stall
- Tuesday November 4th Stall
- Saturday November 9th Social
- Tuesday December 2nd Stall



Surrounding the base: Aldermaston demo, March 24

Nottingham CND Events so far this year

Aldermaston Event on March 24th

This event was to mark CND's 50th Anniversary by returning to the Atomic Weapons Establishment near Aldermaston to surround the base and to give a loud and clear message to the government that CND is still here and is still needed and we will continue to keep on campaigning against nuclear weapons until we have seen total abolition and disarmament both in this country and in the world. Nottingham CND shared a coach with the Leicester group. It was great to have the coach with both CND members and fellow supporters, many of whom we had not met before but hopefully will join us again in other activities. We also filled two minibuses from Leicester.

The day went well despite the weather, which was very cold and also wet at times. Nottingham CND took placards to put on, which we had used earlier in the year with the CND symbol and '50 years for peace' written underneath. One or two of us put on Robin Hood tabards and hats, which were used for Faslane 365 last April. CND attracted over 5000 people from all over the country - we managed to surround the base and make ourselves noticed. It was very emotional to see everybody together in unity saying 'the bomb stops here'. The day for me was worthwhile as I felt I was not alone in wanting rid of these evil weapons of mass destruction which have no place in the 21st Century.

May Day

This year May Day was organized by the Refugee Forum and took place in the Brewhouse Yard. We made sure our banner was on the march around Nottingham and we had a good turnout for our stall. The weather was very good and it was well worth the effort.

Nottingham Green Festival

The Green Festival took place at the end of May. The day started off dry, but yet again, it ended up wet. Despite the weather, the day went well and thanks to all the supporters who came and helped, our CND stall and tombola, which this year was the only one, was a big success. I am always quite amazed and pleased how many people will turn up to the Green Festival, even in the rain, and I am really glad that we still have dedicated people like Jeremy and John who put a lot of time and effort into running the festival and making sure everything goes well.

The War Game

The Broadway cinema had a showing of the War Game film a few weeks ago, and it was really good that we were allowed to have a stall before and during the film. We attracted quite a number of interested people and felt that it was well worth the effort. Thank you to everyone who came and helped.

Diane Lunzer, Secretary

Text of letter to East Midlands MPs

We are concerned about government moves to encourage the building of more nuclear power stations.

This been indicated in a recent speech of the Prime Minister (28th May 2008), by the Anglo-French nuclear entente, and by the recent Bill to change planning procedures. We share concerns about energy security and the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions, but this growing (and irreversible) commitment to nuclear is damaging in three main ways.

It risks fuelling the proliferation of nuclear weapons, through international trade in fissile materials and nuclear technologies. This is paradoxical given the government recent commitment to make Britain a 'laboratory' for nuclear disarmament, and its belief, mistaken in our view, that replacing the Trident nuclear weapons system will make us safer.

It threatens health and safety at home by weakening public accountability, encouraging the cutting of costs in a basically uneconomic business and by failing to take account of scientific developments concerning radiation and health. We are especially concerned about the accumulation of nuclear waste, the easing of the planning processes and the fact that the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, the frontline of our safety, is inadequately rewarded and currently under-strength.

It involves widespread disruption to human life by increasing the demand for uranium. Uranium mining involves the wasteful use and pollution of water supplies in drought-prone areas, the displacement of indigenous populations, and heightened civil and international conflict over a scarce resource.

We also append an account of the situation in Niger, an impoverished republic in N.E Africa, torn apart by uranium mining for both nuclear fuel and nuclear weapons. Alternatives are available to an open-minded government that values public safety and anticipates international perils. The means to tackle climate change are diverse and growing, as the government now acknowledges.

We note that on 30th May 2008 the government undertook to allow MPs to debate the expansion of nuclear power. We hope you will quiz government on the safety and security aspects of its nuclear policies and may consider voting against nuclear expansion, if you are not satisfied.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Johnson
Tom Cuthbert

For East Midlands Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

Appendix: Niger in the Light of the Anglo-French Nuclear Agreement

The French Connection

Among the present bidders to build and operate nuclear reactors in the UK are E-on (Powergen), British Gas through Centrica, and RWE (the German company which owns N-Power) and the state owned public company EDF (Electricite de France), EDF hopes to build reactors based on designs by the other French state-owned conglomerate Areva which controls the engineering and mining concerns of nuclear energy supplied to France's 78 reactors and its nuclear arsenal. The French nuclear complex depends heavily on uranium mining in the French ex-colony of Niger. Indeed President Sarkozy was quoted on Australian Radio ABC National as saying "Niger is an important country for us since it is the main producer of military uranium hence the presence of Areva there."

Conflict in Niger: Pastorage versus Uranium

For 40 years the uranium which supplies France's reactors has been mined by Areva at two locations near the town of Arlit in the north of the county. For thirteen years there has been a largely unreported conflict between the Tuareg-led MNJ (Movement for Nigerian Justice) and the Niger Government's FAN (Forces des Armes Niger). As a state the Niger Republic has a troubled record only holding elections in 1993, 33 years after achieving independence from France. The former president Ibrahim Bare Maunassara came to power in a military coup on 21/1/96, but was assassinated by his own guard on 3/1/99. Elections in 2004 saw the defeat of appointed president Issoufou by Mamadou Tandja on 20/1/2004 after Maunassara had negotiated large loans from the IMF increasing Niger's debt to \$1.44 billion in 1999. The suppression of elections by the military did nothing to stop strikes and riots by government employees and soldiers and the country descended into chaos and famine in 2005 which resulted in international appeals for food relief to which Areva contributed just 2 planeloads, 0.005% of its income for that year.

The Tuareg protest that their land (particularly the Tamesna, some 400 square miles of pasture used to breed their camel herds) is being parceled up and sold off to the rest of the world for uranium mining which has polluted the water table and spread dust from uranium processing into the desert. From February 2007 this conflict has boiled over into all out war between the Niger Government, mining interests and the MNJ. The forces of Colonel now President Tandja seem intent on driving the indigenous Tuareg out of their homelands in the north of Niger with a series of arrests, killings and a complete clampdown on reporting. Francis Bergeron arrived in France in October 2007 after a period of imprisonment for trying to file stories sympathetic to the plight of the Tuareg. He immediately held a series of press conferences since when the oppression of the Tuareg has increased, with accusations made of the land mining of routes customarily used by the Tuareg by Government forces. The FAN has in turn suffered a series of defeats at the hands of the MNJ, losing some 50 troops in 2007. The Tuareg have occupied a stronghold in the mountain region of the Massif de l'Air and refugees from the conflict are arriving in neighbouring Chad, Mali and Algeria on a scale approaching the crisis in Darfur.

International Rivalry over Uranium

Uranium deposits in Niger, like oil in the Middle East, is a potential focus for international rivalry and conflict. US Special Forces are already in the Sahara Region, with a budget of \$500 million, training Algerian and Malian military forces in counter insurgency measures. Their concern seems to be that in a region with a strong Islamic tradition Al Qa'ida will attempt to smuggle uranium out of Niger for use in attacks on the West. The Tuareg strongly deny any connection with Al Qa'ida and are desperate to alert the international community to the plight of their people under sustained oppression from the Niger Government. Both Russia and China have interests in purchasing uranium from Niger and over 600 prospecting companies are registered with the Ministry of Mines and Energy who grant mineral and mining rights. Realties bwyween some companies and the Niger government have deyeriorated: the complaint of the Niger Government is that the return from Areva's mining to Niger itself is paltry.

British Complicity and the Alternatives

In a recent report the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee outlined 9 strategic priorities including promoting sustainable development and poverty reduction underpinned by human rights, democracy, good governance and protection of the environment and supporting the UK economy and business through an open and expanding global economy, science, innovation and secure energy supplies.

We suggest that in the case of Niger these aims, as the government currently pursues them, are in severe conflict. This does not need to be the case. Complicity in war and environmental pollution is a predictable (if unpredicted) consequence of the Prime Minister's nuclear ambitions. Disinvestment in uranium based technologies - civil and military - would remove the incentive to compete for scarce resources in lands like Niger, while environmentally sound measures would remove dependence on a non-renewable resource whose extraction will soon rival oil in its contentiousness and instability. These issues need to be raised publicly. One way to do this would be to support a debate on Niger which could follow an EDM which parliamentary colleagues are currently devising.

(Research By Tom Cuthbert and Mary Bruce)

Trident's future mired by Fogbank mystery - by Rob Edwards

An article from New Scientist 8 March 2008

PLANS by the US and UK governments to prolong the life of Trident nuclear weapons have hit a serious snag because of a dangerous and mysterious ingredient codenamed Fogbank. As a result, politicians are likely to come under pressure to fund the design of new warheads instead.

Both countries want to refurbish the ageing W76 warheads at the tip of Trident missiles, to make them safer and more reliable. But now their programmes face delays due to manufacturing problems at the Y-12 National Security Complex at Oak Ridge in Tennessee. A new \$50 million plant built to replace a facility that had been demolished has run into teething troubles, suggests a series of hints from the US National Nuclear

Security Administration (NNSA) which runs Y-12. In a bid to the US Congress for 2009 funding last month, the NNSA said that the plant's operators faced 'a major technical challenge with the production of a critical material' for extending the life of the W76 warhead. It didn't spell out the exact nature of the difficulties. However, early last year Thomas D'Agostino, the NNSA's administrator, told a congressional committee that the problematic substance is named Fogbank. The NNSA was spending 'a lot of money' trying to make this 'very complicated material' at Y-12, he said 'and we are not out of the woods yet'.

Both the NNSA and the UK Ministry of Defence declined to speak to New Scientist about the function of Fogbank. However, D'Agostino provided a few clues in his evidence to Congress: he said it involved a solvent cleaning agent that was 'extremely flammable' and 'explosive'. The problem involved 'dealing with toxic materials - hazardous to our workforce - but it's required'. Nuclear weapons experts speculate that the substance is associated with a foam that fills the space between the fission and fusion sections of the W76 bomb. According to one former nuclear weapons engineer in the UK, X-rays from this initial explosion could turn this foam into super-heated plasma, which could help compress and then ignite the fusion fuel. Other sources suggest it somehow helps to even out the way the force from the fission explosion compresses the fusion fuel. Hans Kristensen, a nuclear expert from the Federation of American Scientists in Washington DC, says that the problems at Y-12 could have 'serious implications' for the US and UK Trident programmes. If the problems can't be solved, he predicts government nuclear scientists would argue that developing a replacement warhead had become a 'national emergency'. John Ainslie, who has been researching Fogbank for the Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in Glasgow, is concerned that officials at the US Department of Energy will use Fogbank's problems as an excuse to build new nuclear weapons. 'Replacing Fogbank with an alternative material won't make nuclear weapons cheap or safe,' he says. *(end of quoted article)*.

NOTE (Jeremy Jago): Could a clue to the mystery lie in the references to a 'solvent cleaning agent' described as 'extremely flammable', 'explosive', 'toxic' and 'hazardous'? Similar claims in non-nuclear trades are very often linked to the necessary replacement of CFCs. The only replacements of comparable solvent power are invariably toxic liquids liable to go bang. Now largely phased out because of their role in atmospheric damage, CFCs were, conversely, non-toxic and non-flammable. The party-trick of their inventor, Thomas Midgely, was exhaling a lungful over a candle to put it out. The inertness is due to chemical stability, allowing them to rise unaltered to great altitudes, and only there do they break down, thinning the earth's protective ozone layer.

Future Events in Nottingham

Hiroshima Day and Nagasaki Day Events

On August 6th we will be commemorating Hiroshima Day with a vigil outside the Council House at 12.30. As it is the 50th year since CND was formed we are planning to make placards to wear with 'Remember Hiroshima, Remember Nagasaki' written at the top, with our CND symbol and '50 years for peace' written underneath. Do try to turn up. At 2.45pm we are planning to catch the Red Arrow on Parliament Street into Derby in

order to catch the Skylink Kinch Bus to Raynesway. At Raynesway we will be joining Trident Ploughshares to catch the workers leaving the Raynesway plant at 4pm to remind them of the horrors and effects that one nuclear bomb caused when it was dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6th and 9th 1945. Raynesway is where the nuclear fuel that drives the engines of the nuclear submarines is produced. Do try your best to come and mention it to anybody you know.

Peace Circle Event

On August 9th at 2.00pm we hope to form a Peace Circle outside the Council House to commemorate Nagasaki day. This we hope will be as successful as the one we did to remind people that CND has been around for 50 years. Do try your best to come down and participate. We hope to use the same placards we will be using on August 6th.

In the evening we will be holding an event to reflect on Hiroshima and Nagasaki outside The Sumac Centre from 7pm onwards, weather permitting, so do come along and if you would like to sing, read a poem or anything that you think would be appropriated, then please do so. Do tell as many people as possible.

50th Anniversary Social in Nottingham

We are hoping this will take place on November 8th so we can link it in with the white poppies. We have organized this year to give the money donated from the white poppies to the destitution fund at the Refugee Forum, so felt it would be appropriate to link this in with a 50th Anniversary social event - so please put this date in your diaries. The event will possibly take place at St Johns Church Hall at Watcombe Circus. We are hoping to get the Clarion Choir as well as a group to play. We also need to get people from Nottingham CND and any other local artists to perform. This is your chance to shine. Let us make this an evening to remember.

50 years of CND

Nottingham CND marked the 50th anniversary of the march from London to Aldermaston and the founding of CND in 1958 with an event in the Square on March 9th. We formed a large circle and, with black tape, made the CND symbol. Also we all had placards on our backs with the CND symbol and the words '50 YEARS FOR PEACE'.

It was impressive at ground level but the Evening Post reporter took a ride on the Big Wheel that was then in the Square and got a pigeon's eye view of us. Her photograph made the top of page 2 in the Post the next day.

At the same time that we were demonstrating for peace, a group of students had a demonstration against the torture and incarceration of suspects without trial at Guantanamo Bay.

It was a very visible and disturbing demonstration which deserved greater publicity.

Margaret Tuck