



FARINGDON

PEACE

GROUP

DECEMBER 2021

Newsletter 19

MONTHLY MEETING

WEDNESDAY 1st DECEMBER
7.30pm on Zoom

Our MP David Johnston has agreed to speak
on COP 26 WHAT NEXT?

OUR TRADITIONAL
WOMEN IN BLACK VIGIL
FOR PEACE IN BETHLEHEM

TUESDAY 14th DECEMBER, 10-11am
in Faringdon Market Place

Please come in black if possible.
Men - please come and help by giving out
leaflets explaining the situation in Palestine in
general, and Bethlehem in particular.

For **GLOBAL JUSTICE NOW**, dealing with
the structural root causes of climate chaos
means changing the rules of the global
economic system. That is:

- i) Changing international trade rules which give
power to corporations and block climate action
- ii) Changing how international aid supports
fossil fuel infrastructure in the global south
- iii) Changing a global debt system which locks
the global south into dependency on rich
countries and prevents them from investing in
climate action
- iv) Demanding a new climate finance deal at
COP26 that aims to provide the global south
with \$400 billion a year in grant-based climate
finance
- v) Holding transnational corporations to
account for undermining human rights and
fuelling climate change

*This was written prior to COP 26.
How much has been achieved?*

EARTH & FAITH GROUP

Making our town and our planet greener
PLANT GIVEAWAY
on Saturday April 2nd 2022

Again we are planting, taking cuttings, and
generally propagating plants so that we have
enough to give away. If you can manage a few
plants too, that would be very nice!
We shall also buy-in some trees to enhance
the tree planting campaign.

Sent by Gill and Trish, members and
supporters of Faringdon Peace Group, now
living in France.

"A distinguished explorer, who spent a couple
of years among the 'natives' of the
Amazon.....attempted a forced march through
the jungle. The party made extraordinary
speed for the first two days, but on the third
morning when it was time to start, the leader
found everyone sitting on their haunches,
looking very solemn and making no
preparations to leave. "They are waiting" the
Chief explained to the explorer, "they cannot
move farther until their souls have caught up
with their bodies."

Were these men acting on a truth we have
forgotten? Is the world in chaos because it has
neglected to wait for its soul?" Ruth Fry 1950.

In this issue
Inequality
Inequality
Inequality

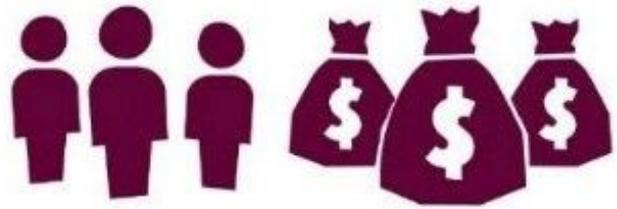
or
Climate Change, Corporate Courts, COP26,
Refugees, Afghanistan, Trident, Bethlehem,
Vaccines, and more

NEARLY HALF
THE WORLD'S POPULATION
(3.4 BILLION PEOPLE)

IS LIVING ON LESS THAN
\$5.50 A DAY



WHILE THERE ARE
MORE BILLIONAIRES THAN
EVER BEFORE (2,208)



THEIR WEALTH INCREASING BY
\$2.5BN A DAY

CORPORATE COURTS

WHAT ARE CORPORATE COURTS?

Corporate courts (more properly known as ISDS) can be written into trade rules. **They enable transnational corporations to sue countries** outside of the national legal system for almost anything they don't like – banning toxic chemicals, introducing a sugary drinks tax, anti-smoking policies, capping water rates – you name it. Either the corporations want payoffs in the millions or even billions, or they use corporate courts as a threat to force governments to back down.

HOW CORPORATE COURTS THREATEN CLIMATE ACTION

Corporate courts have long been used to oppose environmental protections. Now that we are finally seeing more governments around the world begin to take long needed action to tackle the climate crisis, we are seeing more and more corporate court cases challenging those actions.

The Netherlands is being sued by two fossil fuel companies, RWE and Uniper, for phasing out coal power

The US is being sued by a Canadian fossil fuel company, TC Energy, after President Biden cancelled the Keystone tar sands pipeline.

One UK fossil fuel company, Ascent Resources, is suing Slovenia over fracking.

Another UK fossil fuel company, Rockhopper, is suing Italy over a ban on offshore oil drilling close to the coast.

Corporate courts give fossil fuel companies the power to sue governments for taking action on the climate emergency. They are an obstacle to a clean energy transition and to achieving climate justice. We need to take a stand against them.

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THE ATOMIC WEAPONS ESTABLISHMENT AT ALDERMASTON WILL REMAIN UNDER ENHANCED SCRUTINY FOR ANOTHER YEAR

The 'ageing facilities and infrastructure' at Berkshire's nuclear weapons factory are in dire need of improvement - but bosses insist there remains no risk to public safety.

The nuclear watchdog, the Office for Nuclear Responsibility, has just published its report into safety at both Aldermaston and Burghfield. The plants build and maintain the UK's nuclear missile deterrent, Trident.

Eight people were injured at AWE Aldermaston in separate incidents in the last year, three at AWE Burghfield.

Michael Finnerty, ONR's operating facilities director, said: "We are maintaining our enabling approach to ensure that further safety improvements necessary at Aldermaston are delivered in a timely fashion and that the safety improvements demonstrated at Burghfield continue to be sustained.

"However, we will continue to hold these sites to account should they fall short of the expected standards."

The report says Aldermaston has made some progress, but significant improvement will need to be delivered in key areas, with consideration for a move to routine attention not thought likely before the end of 2022 at the earliest.

Paul Rees, AWE's director of environment, safety and health, said: "There's more work to be done to meet these projections, but the progress we've made to date, particularly at Burghfield, demonstrates our strong commitment to sustained and improved safety performance. We will continue to work closely with the ONR to achieve these standards."

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CLIMATE NOT TRIDENT

AS TENS OF THOUSANDS gather in Glasgow for COP26, never has there been a more powerful and more urgent demand for action to deal with the climate catastrophe. While some politicians are still just rearranging the deckchairs outside the coalmine, protesters from diverse communities across the globe are telling it like it really is. Lives and livelihoods washed away, homes and crops destroyed by fire; mass migration, resource shortages, environmental degradation, species' extinction.

There can be no bigger challenge. For us there is no clearer response than that every penny of the £205 billion that the UK government is spending on replacing Trident is money that should be spent on combating this climate emergency.

Going forward, the costs of the climate emergency will be monumental. Extreme weather will become a more regular occurrence with the government having to spend vast amounts on rebuilding. There are already up to 40 million people worldwide who have been forced to leave their homes and seek refuge elsewhere as a result of climate change and further inaction will see this number, and the resulting pressure on those states still habitable, increase.

As climate change leads to increased competition between states over dwindling resources, such as land, clean water and food, the threat of conflict and even nuclear war is increased.

WAR AND ITS EFFECT ON CLIMATE

In the face of the climate crisis, true leadership has been shown by young people and grassroots activists all around the world.

Stop the War has been campaigning alongside environmental groups to highlight the fact that we can't tackle the climate crisis without cutting military activity. We will continue to highlight the link between war and climate change in our campaigns and demand that military greenhouse gas emissions are included in the future climate summit agreements.

The US military is the single largest polluting agency in the world.

Simply put, we must end wars if we want to end warming.

Studies indicate that a regionalised nuclear conflict could devastate our eco-system causing mass starvation affecting millions of people. Trident uses massive energy and resources in research, production, operation, dismantling and eventual waste storage, never mind the environmental catastrophe that would be created if it was ever deployed.

This is in addition to the environmental devastation wreaked by decades of uranium mining, nuclear testing and nuclear waste dumping. The £205 billion saved by cancelling Trident replacement could help fund Britain's transition to carbon neutrality by 2050, or sooner. The government could use the money to embark on an ambitious Green New Deal plan, enabling a state-led rapid response to the threat of climate change and creating a generation of jobs in renewable industries, insulating our homes, upgrading public transport and restoring green spaces. Part of that money would allow the government to help retrain the highly skilled engineers and technicians currently working on Britain's nuclear weapons system, ensuring their skills can be used to guarantee the future of our planet. It would also allow Britain to set an example to nuclear armed states across the world, demonstrating how the vast resources freed up by divestment from nuclear weapons can be used in the fight against climate change, helping ensure a future free from the dual existential threats of climate catastrophe and nuclear extinction.

"There's a story about Lady Astor, the Conservative MP from the 1930s, giving a lecture tour in the less prosperous regions preaching about the value of thrift and enterprise in straitened times. She gave an example of a detailed recipe for fish head soup.

Chap in attendance puts his hand up. He asks, "Pardon me, Lady Astor. While we're eating the fish heads, who's eating the rest of the fish?"

The rich world has tried to divert attention from its failure to tackle a climate crisis which they created

All fossil fuels need phasing out as soon as possible to deal with climate change – indeed, working out a plan to keep fossil fuels in the ground should be the main aim of COP. Yet the agreement drafted by the UK presidency made no mention of phasing out oil and gas, only coal. This failure to confront the fossil fuel industry and expose only those countries still dependent on coal was divisive and caused the final argument that overshadowed the signing of the deal.

Of course, the world needs to phase out coal as quickly as possible everywhere, but the transition away from fossil fuels needs to be a just one and that means giving the finance for countries in the global south to make that transition, as well as recognising the differing starting points of different countries in terms of historical emissions (the UK, for example, has 18 times the historical emissions per person of India). The deflection tactics employed over this one line of the agreement are the story of the whole COP process in miniature.

The rich world has once again failed to pay up for the consequences of its historic emissions.

It was 1992 when rich industrialised countries originally pledged to cut their emissions first and fastest, and pay money to the global south to help it transition to clean energy without sacrificing its people. Yet for more than two decades they have been trying to wriggle out of this, delaying action on cutting emissions and not paying up on climate finance, so that western fossil fuel corporations can continue profiting. The pledge to meet the flawed and inadequate \$100 billion per year target by 2023 is thin gruel for communities on the frontline of climate change. An increased climate finance target post-2025 and a new fund to compensate countries for the irreversible 'loss and damage'

caused by climate change were the two main global south demands at COP26. Yet there was no new target on climate finance, and while the Glasgow agreement acknowledges the concept of loss and damage for the first time, it stops there. Given what the rich world has spent dealing with Covid-19, or indeed what a small handful of countries spend on their carbon-intensive militaries, the demands of island and coastal communities for adequate finance is perfectly reasonable, but as their communities are drowning – the rich world has simply averted its eyes.

The climate justice movement has changed politics since Paris. Now we need to force countries like our own to act.

The climate justice movement that came out in force in Glasgow and around the world has begun to dominate the debate on climate change. We contributed to that through dozens of media appearances, through our activists who were out in force on the streets of Glasgow, and through the people's summit we organised with our allies in the COP26 Coalition. We put forward the arguments that you can't tackle climate change without a radical transformation of the global economy or without paying reparations to those facing the worst impacts of a crisis they did nothing to create. But while world leaders paid lip service to the need for big change, their final hollowed-out agreement shows that they didn't really listen. That's not surprising. After all, we're confronting some very powerful vested interests and, although the clock is ticking, the big change we need will not happen overnight. The growth of the climate justice movement in recent months and years is incredible. It is the future, and in the years ahead we will continue to build it, ensuring not only that the next climate conferences make better decisions, but that we also transform a trade system which is protecting the climate criminals, and a financial system which continues to funnel billions of pounds to the polluters.

MINI QUIZ FOR CHRISTMAS

1. On **Christmas Day** in which year during WW1 were there a number of truces along the Western Front, in some cases resulting in playing football?
2. Which explorer sailed along the south-eastern coast of South Africa on **Christmas Day** 1497 and sighted the land which he named in commemoration of the nativity?
3. Which King was crowned at Westminster Abbey on **Christmas Day**

Answers

1. 1914
2. Vasco da Gama
3. William the Conqueror

AFGHANISTAN from Stop the War

Recently we published an open letter demanding the British government and its allies do everything in their power to end the escalating famine in Afghanistan caused by decades of war and climate chaos. Here is an excerpt from the letter...

"A drought caused by climate change and war has reduced the Afghan harvest by almost half. War damage to agriculture and infrastructure has played a major part in leading to famine. Following the humiliating defeat of the occupation, Western governments have cut aid, effectively imposing economic sanctions on the Afghan people who have already suffered over forty years of war. Afghan assets abroad have been frozen.

Unless the sanctions are immediately lifted millions of innocent people, many of them children will die in famine.

We demand that the British government and its allies, who conducted the war for 20 years, now do everything in their power to end this famine. We ask the anti-war, trade union and climate change movements, and citizens everywhere to mobilise across the world to stop the famine in Afghanistan and demand Western governments immediately lift sanctions and restore aid."

Please write to your MP or go to the Stop the War website and sign the letter

IF you have food in your fridge, clothes on your body, a roof over your head, and a place to sleep, you're richer than 75% of the entire world.

IF you have money in your wallet, and can go anywhere you want, you are among 18% of the world's most wealthy people.

IF you are alive today and healthy, you are more blessed than the millions of people who will not survive this week and die.

IF you can actually read and understand this message, you are more fortunate than the 3 billion people in the world who are blind, deaf or illiterate.

Life is not about complaining.

Life is about thousands of other reasons to be grateful and happy.

MIGRANTS

This week at least 27 men, women and children died at sea trying to reach the UK. 27 people with hopes and dreams for the future. 27 people who simply wanted what we take for granted – safety.

No one should ever have to risk their life to find safety. But hostile policies mean most refugees have no choice but to take dangerous journeys to find safety in the UK.

This government's anti-refugee bill is getting closer to passing by the day. If passed, this bill will attack refugees who come by boat, putting them at risk of arrest and imprisonment. It would do nothing to protect human life at our borders.

This tragedy is a stark reminder of why we must take it on. Here's how.

The best way we can get through to MPs is face to face. If hundreds of us meet our MPs, especially while this is at the top of the news, we can show them that public opinion is against this attack on refugees – and we can shift their views, but, failing that, an email might help. See **Freedom from Torture** website.

DEADLINE for the January edition is
21st December.

jennyridd@yahoo.co.uk



From Tim Bierly, the Pharma Campaigner, Global Justice Now

Yesterday, a Spanish research centre committed to share its Covid-19 test technology with the WHO (1). Remarkably, this is the first time any company or institution has put Covid-19 tech on an open license, giving manufacturers the world over access to the information needed to produce it. The Spanish government has laid down a huge marker by taking this step, and it's come at a highly significant moment.

Next week, Geneva hosts the highest decision-making body of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Ministerial conference. On the one hand, it's another chance for rich countries to wheel out their suited negotiators to argue over the 'correct' balance between saving people's lives and preserving arcane global trade rules. On the other, it also represents a deadline rich countries set themselves for making progress on an intellectual property (IP) waiver on Covid-19 vaccines, treatments and tests.

There have recently been calls for a suspension of Covid-19 patents during the pandemic by writing to the UK government and the permanent representative of the UK to the World Trade Organisation. As we approach a crucial moment in this campaign, will you join us again in sending a new message to these targets to push it to the top of their inbox ahead of the Ministerial meeting this week?

Next week's meeting could only be a rich-country deadline. Talks over the suspension of patents on vital Covid-19 technology have been strung out over a year since India and South Africa first proposed it. Factories across the world could have been able to start producing vaccines and other Covid-19 drugs in that time. And the more countries like the UK and EU governments drag out these talks, the more people will die of Covid-19. It's time to grasp the urgency of the situation.

But reports coming from WTO negotiations suggest that a version of an intellectual property waiver – possibly a diluted one – may be offered in exchange for trade liberalisation that would massively damage southern economies. It's hard to put into words quite how obscene this is.

People's lives are not a bargaining chip. Support for the waiver must be complete and unconditional.

Strong political pressure is needed at this moment. As the UK continues to block progress on the waiver, we have to show the government how untenable its current position is. How an intellectual property waiver must be the first priority. We have to make clear the stakes. Which is more important: human lives, or trade laws built to serve western dominance?

How did we get here?

Rich countries said donations would help solve vaccine inequity. They didn't. Still only 5% of people in low-income countries (2) are fully-jabbed. Each day, 6 times more booster jabs are rolled out than first jabs. Perhaps most shockingly, last week we found out that the UK binned 600,000 doses it had allowed to expire (3). And the British government continues to ply its wilfully ignorant line that intellectual property rules are not blocking manufacturing. Again, we ask them – if this is the case, then why do 130 countries want to suspend them?

Next week we'll be in Geneva, working with civil society activists from the world over to make sure negotiators feel the heat. To cut through the rich country's media spin. To support each other.

Our movement is strong and we can win this with your help.

Help ensure Covid-19 vaccines are available to everyone, everywhere

It's vitally important that Covid-19 vaccine patents are suspended during the pandemic, and for big pharma to share their know-how globally, as the best way of ensuring there are enough vaccines for everyone everywhere.

- (1) Spanish researchers share Covid antibody test tech in 'huge precedent for vaccine manufacturers, City AM, 23 November 2021
- (2) Covid-19 public data, GitHub
- (3) 'An absolute scandal': UK threw away 600,000 vaccine doses after they passed expiry date, *The Independent*, 15 November 2021

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"Capitalism sells itself as the height of Reason. But there is nothing rational about an economic model that systematically undermines the web of life on which humanity itself depends".

Naomi Klein, author and anthropologist

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