

TRIDENT RENEWAL – THE MOST IMPORTANT VOTE OF THE YEAR

Nigel Day, a life-long anti –nuclear campaigner and old friend of the Faringdon Peace Group, made a very good case for the Trident replacement vote in parliament being the most important vote of the year when he spoke to the group in June. He covered the legality and morality of the possession and use of nuclear weapons, security and safety issues and the ever rising costs of the renewal programme.

At present we have 4 nuclear submarines based at Faslane, west of Glasgow, with one on patrol at all times. Operational warheads are stored at Coulport nearby. Components for the nuclear warheads are made at AWE Aldermaston and are assembled at AWE Burghfield before being taken by armed military convoys on public roads up to Coulport. Depleted warheads or those needing maintenance are brought back. There have been 70 safety lapses in 5 ½ years.

In 1996, the International Court of Justice ruled that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be against international law. Trident renewal would also breach the terms of the Non-Proliferation Treaty which the UK has signed up to. Morally, the use of nuclear weapons is indefensible: Their impact would be indiscriminate with vast numbers of casualties and massive environmental destruction. Nuclear weapons are strategically irrelevant in the face of the realistic threats we face today such as terrorism, cyber attacks and natural hazards.

Because of the number of jobs involved in the industry, Trades Unions are divided over the issue. But skills could be redeployed to other useful areas including dismantling stockpiles of weapons.

The total cost of replacing Trident has recently been estimated, using actual government figures, as beyond £205 billion. How can this be justified in these days of government cuts to essential services?

Many former military and political leaders have spoken out against Trident, saying it is useless, irrelevant and not even independent as many components are made in the USA. Even Tony Blair, a great supporter of replacing Trident in 2007 has admitted its only purpose is to give Britain status.

Nigel finished on a hopeful note - The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons is supporting the UN Humanitarian pledge, which so far has the backing of 138 nations, to work for a nuclear free world. The UK and other nuclear weapons states have not yet pledged their support, so campaigning by CND and other groups is far from over!

Bruce Kent, former chair of CND will be opening the Grand Peace Fete at Coleshill on Saturday 2nd July from 2 – 5pm. Nigel will be on the Oxford CND stall. Do come along for a wonderful afternoon.

Faringdon Peace Group's next meeting will be on July 6th when we will be showing the official 1916 film 'The Battle of the Somme', followed by discussion. All welcome.

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