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KINGSTON PEACE NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF KINGSTON PEACE COUNCIL /
CAMPAIGN FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

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The Budget – and Military Spending

CND's view

30 October

There was much anticipation ahead of Labour's first budget in almost 15 years, with the public warned of tough choices in the wake of a £22bn 'black hole' left by their Tory predecessors. When it comes to military spending however, the statement was already a boon for the MoD, with a near £3bn boost trailed ahead of the official announcement. More is promised following next year's Strategic Defence Review.

"There is no more important job for government, than to keep our country safe," claimed Chancellor Rachel Reeves, before announcing an extra £2.9bn in funding for the military. That's on top of the £54.2bn announced by her Tory predecessor, Jeremy Hunt, in this year's Spring budget. While this falls short of the 2.5% of GDP that the government aspires to spend on the military budget, today's figures are a step in that direction. They are also a statement of intent for Labour to continue down the

path of militarism at the expense of public services and the climate emergency.

Reeves also spoke of restoring stability to Britain. The reality is far from that – with a pledge to fund Ukraine's military to the tune of £3bn per year "for as long as it takes." This ensures continued destabilisation in Europe and pushes us closer towards open war between NATO and Russia, risking nuclear war.

Labour is also committed to the runaway spending on replacing UK's Trident nuclear weapons system, which currently costs £12,000 per minute, and in excess of £205bn life time costs. Spending on the new Dreadnought-class submarines has been kept deliberately opaque. However, the National Audit Office predict the replacement of Trident will rise by £99bn over the next decade. Major safety incidents, like the recent fire at the BAE Systems nuclear shipyard in Barrow, raise further questions over who will be footing the bill for any potential damage caused to the

submarines currently under construction.

CND General Secretary Kate Hudson said:

"The military spending announced today has nothing to do with keeping the British public safe and everything to do with marching in lock step with US foreign policy and kowtowing to NATO spending demands. Last week's quiet acquiescence by most MPs to the extension of the Mutual Defence Agreement* is another indicator of this. Next year's Strategic Defence Review is guaranteed to come dripping with even more demands to spend on grandiose white elephants, packaged in the guise of public security. Massive sinkhole projects like a new fleet of nuclear-armed submarines and unfit aircraft carriers will continue to be a drain on public finances with little scrutiny by the media or politicians. It's time to scrap these wasteful and dangerous vanity projects and divert these funds into public good."

* See page 6

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CND AGM and Policy Conference - 2024

This year's AGM and Policy Conference was held online on Saturday 5 October. It commenced with a report on current campaigning, supporting CND's strategic objectives, elimination of British nuclear weapons, and eventual global abolition of all nuclear weapons; a nuclear-free, less militarised and more secure Europe; and the closure of the nuclear power industry. These aims are long-held, but of course every year new dangers and developments necessarily influence how we need to campaign to try and bring these about. At this time of course all is overshadowed by the tragic events in Gaza and also now Lebanon, and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

Elections had already taken place, so Chair (Tom Unterrainer) and three Vice-Chair positions (Sam Mason, Tony Staunton, and Carol Turner) were confirmed, also Directly Elected Council members were announced. New and on-going campaigns were discussed - among these the Lakenheath campaign and Keep Space for Peace week which was approaching. Also the recent

TUC conference in Liverpool was mentioned - there had been good support from many members.

The finance report followed:- income was slightly down but legacies were up (including a large legacy from Pat Arrowsmith who sadly died in September 2023), so overall the position is not too bad. The Autumn fund-raising appeal will concentrate on campaigning against US nuclear weapons returning to Lakenheath 'RAF' base in Suffolk. This concluded the AGM.

The afternoon was devoted to discussing the many resolutions submitted. These were pretty varied but none was very contentious, and all were passed. Also there were three emergency resolutions submitted, on Ukraine, Israel's Military Action in Lebanon and Stop the Rise of Fascism. All were carried, so CND is now committed to work alongside the Stand up to Racism organisation. Discussion on the resolutions is very clearly reported on the CND website <https://cnduk.org/about/cnd-conference/> and I strongly advise our members to read this.

The World We Want: A New Agenda for Peace and Justice CND Conference, SOAS University of London, Saturday 12 October

This was a meeting open to all, not just CND members. There were very many interesting speakers across a wide range of organisations and groups. At the first plenary session, after an introduction by Kate Hudson, the first speaker was Andrew Feinstein, author of *Shadow World* and a former ANC MP in South Africa. He spoke passionately about our abject Government on the issue of arms sales to Israel. This is largely about money - he mentioned a recent *Financial Times* article reporting that arms companies are enjoying a £52bn bonanza. He warned we are offered permanent austerity or perpetual war. If USA, Britain and Germany stopped these arms sales, Israel would stop their onslaught in days. He advocated starting direct action and re-instating tax protests, quoting Nelson Mandela "It is only impossible until we do it".

The next speaker, Professor Paul Rogers from Bradford University spoke of his latest book *The Insecurity Trap* in which he talks of an integrated crisis - massive profits for arms companies due to the Ukraine war and Israel's murderous actions, nuclear weapons / Trident / aircraft carriers / fighter jets, all of which contribute massively to the climate crisis which is happening NOW. He

stressed that decarbonisation of industry and domestic usage would be cheap and easy compared to scaling down these military emissions.

Jeremy Corbyn spoke on this also, quoting another book he has co-edited very recently with Paul Rogers and Rhona Michie - *The Monstrous Anger of the Guns*. You can find a short u-tube video at [youtube.com/watch?v=hkNKbkBfpYc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hkNKbkBfpYc) Again, it is a huge condemnation of the waste of resources on armaments when climate change is a huge looming threat.

The last speaker in this session was Asad Rehman from *War on Want* who spoke passionately about how the terrible effects of this massive waste of resources impacts on the global south, not only concerning the money that could be used to feed, house, clothe and educate the populations but also the frighteningly slow progress on climate issues. "Why do billionaires generally not worry about the urgency of this? - it is all to do with making more money", he said.

At a short question and answer session a young man in the audience asked "Why is the occupation of Ukraine a terrible crime, but the occupation of

Palestine for 78 years is acceptable?" - a fitting end to this session, I thought.

I attended one of the workshops, "Peace and Planet: inextricably linked", concentrating on the links between the ever-worsening climate situation and the ever-increasing wastage of the world's resources on better and better ways of killing each other. CND's Sara Medi-Jones explained how at the end of the Ottoman Empire the development of fossil-fuel extraction led to rapid expansion in its use for the growing development of sophisticated weapons systems. When the USA realised in about 2000 the coming climate instability, they quickly worked out how to use this to their advantage, to extract and sell more oil, and maintain their global hold over other Middle East producers such as Iran.

Another speaker was Denis Fernando of *Friends of the Earth*. He spoke of more disruption coming each year, as more and more people are exposed to conflict over usage of land and usable land is damaged through drought and/or flooding. He criticised far-right climate deniers, especially here in Britain, who also tend to support right-wing moves to shut down protests and are generally supportive of the military. We need to work together to link all these issues in people's understanding of the situation. Also, environmentalists should understand the link between reliance on nuclear power as a so-called green

alternative, and the importance of it for weapons usage. It is also crucial to build support within the TUC and with workers in weapons production and in nuclear power.

The closing plenary session was entitled "The World we want to see". Nick Dearden from *Global Justice Now*, Lindsey German from *Stop the War*, Louise Regan from *Palestine Solidarity Campaign*, and other speakers all stressed how crucial it is that we work together on all of these issues as they are inextricably linked. Nick advocates the continuing street protests as essential to keep the issues of Climate and Palestine in people's minds. Louise reminded us that, though rarely mentioned, Israel is a nuclear power. As the election approaches, all US politicians are over a barrel over Israel and are showing great disrespect for the UN and the International Court of Justice, and the UK tags along behind as usual. Lindsey German pointed out that all wars now are genocidal - the days are long gone when it was mostly military personnel who were killed. Finally Roger Mackenzie (CND Vice-President) stressed how important it is to work together with diverse groups and to build more diversity within CND. The huge Gaza marches have shown us how this is possible - we must continue to support one another and all racism must be totally unacceptable.

CND reports by Rosemary Addington

The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHN) **Conference, Saturday 19 October**

This year's conference was held at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church. There were many inspiring speakers, who encouraged us not to despair and to redouble our efforts to pressure the UK Government to change course. This will not be easy - as was pointed out, the UK Government has not had an independent foreign policy since the Second World War, but we must persist in contacting our MPs, as it is currently 'up to its neck in the slaughter, genocide and war crimes being committed there'.

Jeff Halper referred to his latest book in which he emphasizes the framing of the Palestinian 'conflict' as an anti-colonial struggle against the Zionist settler colonialism and Judaization of the country, which has been taking place since 1948 - supported and legitimised wholeheartedly by the Global North and Global Organisations. Why should there be negotiations? - the whole Israeli

project is illegal. 'Resistance' is described as terrorism. The US 'normalisation' project - for the Middle East - must be challenged. ICJ rulings should be enforced - one democratic state is the only solution. We were encouraged to continue with Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) actions, in spite of the UK Government's attempts to make this illegal.

Although Israel has pretty much succeeded in its project Jeff encouraged us to continue to mobilise and resist - recent marches, campus occupations etc. around the world show clearly that the world's population, in the main, is not supportive of Israel.

It was also pointed out that many Jewish people were very anti-Zionist - often not very religious - and that many had left Israel recently for Europe/USA.

Carol Clisby

Scientists for Global Responsibility (SGR) Annual Conference

Wednesday 16 October

The SGR Annual Conference, a brilliant exposition of the prospects for avoiding climate catastrophe, featured an on-line vote to assess opinions and attitudes before and after the talks. We had only a few seconds to tick the right boxes but the outcome seemed to me to be a good reflection of the spirit of the conference and of global realities. The questions and the changes, before and after, can be summarised in three lines:

- Deep concern – ongoing,
- Priorities for action – not much changed but confirming wise choices,
- Hope for success – slightly improved.

What was brilliant? New, creative ways to see the problems, with a clear assessment of the technical solutions and proposals at the human societal level to help us (all of humanity) to make the profound changes and developments that will save us. And unsurprisingly, in that climate and conflict issues are so closely related, much of it proposed in ways that peace activists can directly relate to.

1. Carbon Bombs

- Prof Peter Newell, *Sussex University*

Fossil fuel projects with the potential for loading our atmosphere with more than one Gigaton of CO₂ are termed “carbon bombs”. They can have destructive effects, over the long term, comparable with weapons of mass destruction. There are more than 400 such projects still possible, which together would more than double the remaining carbon budget for a 1.5°C global temperature rise.

What to do? How to disarm the carbon bombs? Peter Newell explained the need for a new treaty, alongside the Paris Agreement, to keep the carbon underground. This will be comparable with the NPT, in having different classes of parties involved. In this case the Fossil Fuel Five (UK, US, Canada, Norway, Australia) would have to accept ‘stranded assets’; and poorer countries would not be able to make their contribution without debt cancellation. Obviously a transition fund is required.

2. End the social license of overconsumption

- Dr Veronica Wignall, *Adfree Cities*

Why do we accept the glorification of climate irresponsibility? Why are we encouraged to indulge in SUVs and cruise ships? Veronica

Wignall proposed tobacco-style bans on such advertising and sponsorships. With encouragement from the UN some progress is being made, through both national and local action. Progressive cities, like Edinburgh and Sheffield, are involved. This is “prosocial values orientation”!

3. Military Carbon Emissions

- Dr Stuart Parkinson, *SGR*

Military activity contributes 5% of total carbon emissions! For KPC that’s yet another reason to promote disarmament and peace.

Stuart Parkinson outlined necessary actions. Surprisingly to some, the military really care about the problem – use of low carbon weapons and transport etc is promoted in some quarters. [Maybe this is not surprising. Is it greenwashing, like BAE saying there is less depleted uranium in their weapons?] But still it is obvious that to avoid climate catastrophe we must prevent armed conflict. Peace negotiations and disarmament treaties must be viewed in this light along with all their other benefits.

4. Which technologies are most effective in the transition away from fossil fuels?

- Prof Mark Z Jacobson, *Stanford University*

No need, with that precise title, to explain what this presentation gives us. Given at breakneck speed and loaded with acronyms (e.g. WWS - *Wind Water Solar* juxtaposed with BAU - *Business As Usual*) we heard a comprehensive survey of what we urgently need to know and do. In fact the urgency, relative to the application timescale, is the deciding factor in some cases – nuclear is just too late. Whereas, for example, the use of firebricks, yes actual bricks, albeit at 2000°C with special heat exchangers, is a practical large-scale energy storage medium already coming into use to complement WWS. And overall the message is that transition in the right timescale is just about possible!

To get hold of all this information, and the right sense of urgency, go to <https://www.sgr.org.uk/events/defusing-carbon-bombs-how-do-we-stop-remaining-dangerous-fossil-fuels-being-burned>. The four good presentations will remain a useful resource, even for those who saw them first in real time.

Martin Birdseye

United Nations International Day of Peace

The International Day of Peace ('Peace Day') is observed around the world on 21 September each year.

KPC always holds a special stall on the Saturday nearest to Peace Day, but this year we were able to commemorate it on the actual day. Many passers-by accepted our invitation to write a message of peace on a paper dove provided by us and to hang it on the tree (a higher-than-usual proportion of adults, but also many children). In total there were about 70 doves.



The tree stood on display in the church for two weeks afterwards, by kind permission of Joe the Vicar, with some leaflets and a few more doves ready to be written on.

School visits

Around the time of Peace Day we make visits to local schools. This year Maggie and Mary carried out **two Peace Day assemblies** – in Lovelace Primary School, Chessington and St John's Primary School, Kingston, explaining the importance of the United Nations as part of their presentation.

US-UK nuclear sharing treaty to be indefinitely extended

This article is based on a report by the Nuclear Information Service (NIS), an independent, not-for-profit research organisation that investigates the UK nuclear weapons programme: <https://www.nuclearinfo.org/article/us-uk-nuclear-sharing-treaty-to-be-indefinitely-extended/>

The treaty that governs nuclear sharing between the US and UK is due to be indefinitely extended. Previously the treaty, known as the **Mutual Defence Agreement (MDA)**, has only been extended for 10 years at a time.

In July, the US and UK published a plan to remove all expiry dates from the treaty which governs their nuclear sharing arrangements.

Under the 2010 Constitutional Reform and Governance Act, the Government has to notify Parliament of any treaty which is planned to be ratified, and there is a window of 21 sitting days within which Parliament can pass a resolution blocking ratification until the government has justified its position. (There is a separate process in the US for Congress to agree the changes.)

The MDA amendments were published on 26th July, just before the summer recess, and the window for a resolution lasted until 23rd October. An Early Day Motion, tabled on 2nd September, called for a Parliamentary debate on the amendment, but the deadline for MPs to submit opposition to its renewal expired on 23 October with no debate in Parliament.

CND says 'For a major change to such a significant treaty to go through on the nod constitutes a shameful attack on democracy and transparency. This railroading is all the more shocking because the government has proposed to remove the 10 year renewal clause from the MDA, making the treaty permanent.'

The MDA was first signed in 1958 and allows for the exchange of information, nuclear materials and components of nuclear weapons and submarine reactors between the two states. The exchange of nuclear materials and weapon components under *Article III bis* has always been time limited under previous versions of the treaty, with extensions being negotiated by the two states every time it was due to expire.

The MDA marked the end of a period where the UK, having cooperatively developed the first nuclear weapons as a partner in the Manhattan project, was denied access to US knowledge and resources and decided to launch its own weapons programme. The sharing arrangement was controversial at the time, particularly in the US Congress. Consequently *Article III bis* was agreed after the main treaty and included a sunset clause.

The MDA provided the foundation for, and has sustained, the UK's submarine reactor development. All nuclear warheads developed by the UK since the MDA was signed have drawn on US design work, and since the 1980s UK warhead development has very closely followed US designs. Further information on the MDA can be found in a briefing published by NIS in October.

Under the proposed amendment, all references to the expiry date would be deleted from *Article III bis*, meaning that sharing under the article would continue indefinitely. Under text which is intended to remain unchanged, the treaty as a whole will remain in force until both states agree to terminate it. The exception to this is information sharing, which either state can end unilaterally at certain times if they give one year's notice.

Another change puts the sharing of submarine reactors, including parts and fuel, on a reciprocal footing. Previously the treaty only allowed for the US to sell these items to the UK, rather than the other way around. This change would allow parts produced for the UK's fourth-generation submarine reactor design, currently referred to as 'Nuclear Propulsion Plant – X', to also be used in US submarine reactors.

Most of the other changes in the proposed amendment are described as 'updating terminology' and changing obsolete language in the Government's explanatory memorandum. These include adding more detail on information classification levels, updates to the definitions and replacing the article dealing with intellectual property. Changes to the final article of the MDA rule out using any dispute settlement mechanisms if any disagreement arises between the two states and allows them to agree supplementary 'implementing instruments'.

Barclays sell shares in Elbit Systems

Breaking news, as reported by Middle East Eye, 31 October www.middleeasteye.net/

Barclays has sold all of its shareholdings in Israel's largest weapons company, Elbit Systems Ltd (ESLT).

According to Palestine Action, a British activist group that has been protesting against the bank's investments in Israel, Barclays has until recently owned over 16,000 shares in Elbit Systems. "The latest US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) filings record an immediate total sale of Barclays' Elbit Systems shares, abruptly sold just when our campaign hit them hardest," Palestine Action said.

Palestine Action has undertaken 54 protest actions across the UK against Barclays over the past 12 months, including smashing windows of the bank's branches and spraying them in red paint. The group said its actions sought to raise the costs associated with dealing with Elbit, which it said was a major contributor in genocidal acts against Palestinians in Gaza since Israel's war on the enclave began last October.

"We will remain committed and focused to the task at hand and target any and all institutions and businesses which enable Israel's biggest weapons firm to maintain their genocidal operations. That means, if Barclays does reinvest into Elbit Systems in the future, Palestine Action will come knocking again."

In May, several Palestinian solidarity organisations published a report saying that Barclays had £2bn of investments in companies involved in supplying arms to Israel.

(www.middleeasteye.net/news/uk-israel-gaza-barclays-arms-trade)

The list of firms in which the financial giant is reported to have interests includes General Dynamics, a US arms firm that produces components for warplanes. Other firms include BAE Systems and Raytheon.

In response to the report, Barclays said it provides services to American, British and European companies "that supply defence products to NATO and its allies"..

Lobby of Parliament, Wednesday 27 November, 2-5pm

The British government continues to provide support for Israel, even as it intensifies its eradication of the Palestinian population in the besieged Gaza Strip, and its escalating violence in the West Bank and Lebanon. The situation could not be more urgent – Palestinian people remaining in the north of Gaza are facing an existential threat as Israel continues to intensify its massacres with impunity. Israel has now passed legislation

Anyone can join the lobby - you just need to be available on the day. Register at <https://palestinecampaign.eaction.online/Novemberlobby-2724>

outlawing UNRWA in an attempt to prevent the delivery of life saving aid into Gaza.

Too few MPs are speaking out. We must increase our pressure on those who remain silent. Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) is organising a lobby of parliament on Wednesday 27th November. Join them to demand your MP takes action by calling on the government to impose a full arms embargo and sanctions on Israel immediately.

Julian Assange: a political prisoner

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), comprising members from 46 national parliaments across Europe, has passed a resolution recognising Julian Assange as a political prisoner.

Julian spoke publicly for the first time since his release in June from the UK's Belmarsh prison: "I am free today after years of incarceration because I pleaded guilty to journalism. I eventually chose freedom over unrealisable justice. Justice for me is now precluded, as the US government insisted on writing into its plea agreement that I cannot file a case at the European Court of Human Rights or

even the Freedom of Information Act request over what it did to me as a result of its extradition request," Julian said, sharing his testimony to PACE.

PACE's resolution expresses deep concern that Julian's unprecedented conviction under the US Espionage Act affects all journalists and publishers. The pursuit of justice for Julian is not just about one individual—it is a critical fight for media freedom and the public's right to know.

Supporters of Assange are campaigning for President Biden to grant him a pardon - see <https://www.action.assangecampaign.org.au/>

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Disclaimer: The views
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Subs and newsletter

Is your membership subscription overdue? See the code at the top of the address label on this newsletter – the year followed by the month when your membership expires, eg 202407 means your sub was due at the end of July 2024. Or, if you pay by standing order, please check that you are paying the correct amount. See panel above for rates and Treasurer's address (cheques to Kingston Peace Council/CND). If you would like to receive your copy of Kingston Peace News by email, please contact Gill at gill@gillhurlle.plus.com

Dates for your Diary

Sats 2&16 Nov and 7&21 Dec 11am-1pm or 2pm KPC stall in Kingston Market Place. If you are able to help, please contact Angie on 020 8399 5537 or angecooper47@hotmail.com On 2 Nov we shall be handing out white poppies.

Sat 2 Nov National Demonstration at RAF Lakenheath in opposition to US nuclear weapons returning to the UK. London CND have organised a coach, departing from Victoria Embankment outside Embankment Underground Station at 10am, travelling to RAF Lakenheath, where they will join the CND demo. Tickets £29.96 (£13.70 unwaged) from <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1047880758557>

The main event will start at 12 noon outside the main gate with speakers including Melissa Parke, ICAN's Executive Director. We'll also be (unofficially!) declaring Lakenheath a nuclear-free zone!

Sat 2 Nov National Demonstration for Palestine. Meet at 12noon to march from Whitehall to the US Embassy to demand an immediate arms embargo, sanctions on Israel, and an end to Britain's historic and ongoing complicity in Israel's genocide.

Sun 10 Nov 12-1pm National Alternative Remembrance Ceremony, Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9EX (in front of the memorial stone for conscientious objectors). There will be two minutes' silence and white poppy wreaths will be laid on the memorial in memory of all victims of war. Organised by Peace Pledge Union.

Sun 10 Nov 3pm Imagining Peace: Taking inspiration from the 1923-24 Welsh Women's Peace Petition, Movement for the Abolition of War's 2024 Remembrance Lecture, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, WC1H 9BD - just a few minutes' walk from Tavistock Square (see previous item). Speaker: Mererid Hopwood, Vice President of MAW and Professor of Welsh and Celtic Studies, University of Aberystwyth. Book (free) at www.abolishwar.net/mererid-hopwood Preceded at 2pm by MAW's AGM.

Tues 12 Nov and 10 Dec 8pm KPC/CND meeting via Zoom. For joining instructions contact Gill, gill@gillhurlle.plus.com

Thur 14 Nov 7.30pm Concert for Peace, St James's Church Piccadilly, W1J 9LL, organised by Musicians for Peace and Disarmament. Tickets from £20. For details and to book, see www.mpdconcerts.org

Sun 17 Nov 12noon-5pm Stop the Drive to War, an anti-war convention in response to the horrors of Israel's aggression in the Middle East, the appalling conflict in Ukraine and the terrifying risk of spreading war, at The Atrium, 124 - 126 Cheshire Street, London, E2 6EJ. Including workshops and speakers: Jeremy Corbyn, Fran Heathcote, Mohammed Kozbar, Michael Rosen, Lindsey German, Peter Osborne, Ghassan Abu Sittah, Maryam Eslamadoust, Taj Ali and many more. Organised by Stop the War. Book at: <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/stophthewarcoalition/1435508>

Wed 27 Nov 7pm Stop the War's Xmas Fundraiser, Seven Dials Club, 40 Earlham Street, London WC2H 9LH. An evening of entertainment to bring in the festive season, with Alexei Sayle, Steve Parry, Don Biswas, Khalid Abdalla, Salena Godden, Adam Beattie and others. Ticket price includes finger food and an entry to the prize draw raffle. Book at: <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/stophthewarcoalition/1441891>

Until end of Nov BFI South Bank has a John Pilger season 'Hidden Truths: John Pilger and the Power of Documentary'. See <https://whatson.bfi.org.uk/Online/default.asp>