



FARINGDON PEACE GROUP

MAY 2021

Newsletter 14

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Wednesday 5th May at 7.30pm

Speaker Richard Seaford - Emeritus Professor of Ancient Greek - University of Exeter

'PALESTINE: FROM THE HEBREW BIBLE TO THE PRESENT'

It sounds a bit dry & academic - but this is likely to be a really fascinating talk.

He says: "My theme is this. People campaigning for the Palestinians often do not realise how powerful the idea still is that the Jewish settlers in Palestine are merely returning to the land that once belonged to their ancestors. I will show how this is a myth."

You should have been sent the Link, but in the unlikely event that you have not, email Sjoerd and

Wednesday 2nd June at 7.30pm

John Cooper, Director, Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) 'Christmas Island, nuclear tests and Britain's responsibility'.

Where? In the comfort of your own home.
Zoom links will be sent

CONSCIENCE – TAXES FOR PEACE NOT WAR

Have you come across "Conscience"? - the campaigning group supporting the right for conscientious objection to compulsory military service and also seeking to establish the right to direct part of one's taxes to efforts for peace rather than preparation for war.

At a time when the government is planning to *increase* the UK stockpile of nuclear warheads, perhaps it might be a campaign to take a look at. A current project is to develop a peace education pack – for adults.

<http://www.conscienceonline.org.uk>

John Cottis

70th Anniversary of the The Refugee Council

WHY DO REFUGEES COME TO THE UK?

There's a lot of misinformation right now about refugees and people seeking asylum, and so we want to help you get the facts about why people claim asylum in our country.

The first thing to know, is that actually, most refugees don't come to the UK!

Most travel to the nearest country rather than travel further away, with the hope they can return home safely.

Of the small percentage who do travel further to the UK, there are a few main reasons why.

Some people seeking asylum have family in the UK, and are desperate to reunite with them. Restrictive family reunion rules mean that they're blocked from making the journey safely, and often resort to dangerous journeys, such as crossing the Channel in small boats.

Many people seeking asylum want to come to the UK because they can speak English, and feel that this will help them find work and integrate into society.

We also know that people see the UK as a country that respects human rights and where people from all cultures can feel comfortable.

CND WORKSHOP

Are you aware of the online workshop CND is organising for groups on Wednesday, May 5th 7pm-8pm? We will discuss ideas for how groups can work with the press and it will also be an opportunity to exchange ideas on national press work as well. We shall be joined by Morning Star editor, Ben Chacko, who will speak from the perspective of what journalists are looking for. A good opportunity to share ideas. Registration essential, see here:

<https://cnduk.org/events/workshop-for-cnd-groups-getting-press-coverage/>.

NATIONAL CYBERSECURITY

Major General Jonathan Shaw (Ret'd) gave an interesting interview through Sanlam on Zoom on 25th March. As first Head of Cybersecurity of the British Army, he has indepth insight into the UK's present defence needs:

He identified that the UK is in transition. At the moment we can't identify the enemy. Nationalism - Russia, Baltics, India are all likely threats to peace.

Current security problems are not military defence, which depends on NATO, and which is secure, and diplomacy. Terrorism can be dealt with locally, and invasion of the UK is unlikely, so a large army is unnecessary, but is needed for civil defence and emergency. It makes more sense to have a large Navy to protect trade.

The likely challenges for the UK in it's present position are Brexit, data protection and criminality. To prevent major problems with these we need a response capability of the whole nation through computer awareness and skill, which is seen as soft power. Cyber security is in the front line, but at the moment it's fragmented and often hacked. That's where computer knowledge and skill of the majority of honest people comes in.

At the moment we need self-sufficiency and protection of global supply chains. Collective 'norms' are not working as there's a breakdown of international law (Trump, Putin and China).

If China becomes an enemy, we need to understand their way of thinking - they 'manage' problems and so any attack is wide, whereas nations like USA tend to 'knock it on the head'.

Active defence is important - actively searching for potential of attack.

Nukes - the future of the UK is unknown - increasing them is not useful. Russia has improved it's system. Constructive ambiguity is more powerful though. Israel says their nukes are so vulnerable to attack, they should get rid of them

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/issue-brief/troubled-...>

For more information, go to the public National Cyber Security website.

Sand

OUR CHALLENGE CAN FORCE CHANGE

CAMPAIGN Against Arms Trade is going back to court to challenge the UK government over the supply of weapons for the war in Yemen.

CAAT has been granted permission for our legal challenge to proceed to the High Court. Thank you so much for everything you have done to help make this happen.

For more than six years now UK weapons have been used to tear lives apart in Yemen. Throughout this time the government has continued to promote and protect weapons sales, despite the devastating human cost.

In 2019 legal action by CAAT forced the government to stop issuing export licences for weapons that could be used in the war in Yemen. The government was ordered to retake all its previous decisions in a lawful manner.

But in July 2020 the government resumed arms sales, and since then it has licensed more than £1.6 billion additional weapons sales in support of the war.

Judges will now consider whether the government's decision to resume arms sales is lawful. We hope the case will be heard in the next few months.

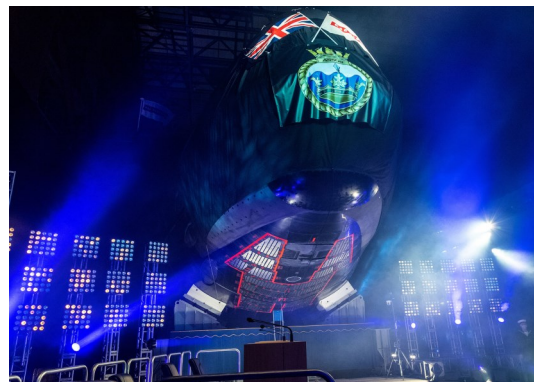
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Compassion, to be effective, requires detailed knowledge and understanding of how society works. Any social system in turn requires men and women in it of imagination and goodwill. What would be fatal would be for those with exceptional human insight and concern to concentrate on ministering to individuals, whilst those accepting responsibility for the design and management of organisations were left to become technocrats. What is important is that institutions and their administration be constantly tested against human values, and that those who are concerned about these values be prepared to grapple with the complex realities of modern society as it is.

Grigor McClelland, 1976

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Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it's the only thing that ever has'.
Margaret Mead.

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NEW NUCLEAR SUBMARINE HMS ANSON ROLLED OUT



The submarine is named after 18th Century Admiral George Anson who delivered an impressive victory over the French at Cape Finisterre in 1747 and went on to reform the Admiralty. Anson's first Commanding Officer, Commander David 'Bing' Crosby, said recently that it was now time for the ship's company "to bring HMS Anson to life".

"It will require all of us to work together to achieve this goal, but we are ready for the challenge – and we are determined to succeed."

Anson will enter the water shortly – there's a basin next to the Devonshire Hall not only large enough to accommodate her, but also to allow a practice dive which almost allows the boat to completely submerge.

Her punch, say the Royal Navy, will be delivered by Tomahawk cruise missiles and the newly-upgraded Spearfish torpedoes being introduced to the Fleet from 2021.

Anson is due to remain in Barrow for completion until 2022 before leaving for sea trials and joining her older sisters at HMNB Clyde, while BAE finish the final two Astute-class boats: Agamemnon and Agincourt, completing the programme in 2025 after a quarter century of work on the entire programme, say the Royal Navy.

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HO HO SCOTLAND

The Trident nuclear deterrent would have to remain in the Clyde if Scotland became independent, according to a former leading civil servant.

Ciaran Martin, who was constitution director at the Cabinet Office between 2011 and 2014, said the Scottish government had "no convincing plan for what it intended to do about" the missiles during the campaign for independence. He urged both sides to be more honest about the outcome of a second referendum, which he said should take place if there is a pro-independence majority returned at the Holyrood election. "In reality, given the costs, security and safety issues around nuclear submarines, and the lack of an easy alternative location, there is no practical prospect of getting nuclear weapons safely out of Scottish waters for decades, and a grown-up Scottish government would have to come to an arrangement with the UK based on a recognition of that reality," he wrote in a paper. "The Scottish government would do well to come clean about this in a future campaign."

More than 9 out of 10 do not get recycled!

A coffee shop in Kent has made a brave decision to go 'cup free' and only serve customers who bring their own into the shop. To illustrate why they are doing this, they filled their shop floor with disposable cups More than 9 out of 10 nationwide do not get recycled!



Thank you those who have sent items for this month's edition. Please send your entries for the next newsletter to jennyrid@yahoo.co.uk
Copy date 25th May **latest**

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EU SANCTIONS MILITARY COMPANIES

The European Union has finally imposed sanctions on the two big military owned conglomerates, Myanmar Economic Corporation and Myanmar Economic Holdings Ltd. These conglomerates own dozens of companies whose profits go to the military. It is a huge success to get the EU to impose these sanctions.

Several European companies had business links to the military and these business relationships will now be illegal. Thank you to everyone who joined our campaign and emailed EU member states.

We will be in touch soon regarding a new campaign to get the EU to now impose sanctions on the timber and gems industries, which earn the military hundreds of millions of dollars.

Death toll keeps rising. More than 700 people have now been killed by the military since the coup, and more than 3,000 arrested.

In Karen State the military has been bombing civilian villages using fighter jets, killing more than 20 people, including a child, and destroying schools and homes. Fighter jets are also bombing in Kachin State.

Despite this, every day people are still taking to the streets, organising protests, strikes and resisting military rule anyway they can. Their bravery is not being matched by the international community. Every action the international community takes is only the result of sustained campaigns and pressure on them to act. We have to keep up the pressure.

On Friday, the formation of a National Unity Government in Burma was announced, formed by MPs elected in the Nov 2020 elections, activists and other community representatives. The international community should recognise the National Unity Government instead of the military dictatorship.



Providing aid, saving lives, mobilising international action

Our international advocacy is having an impact, starting to cut revenue going to the military. We have also seen Australia stop training the military and South Korea impose an arms embargo. We need to step up our campaigning to increase international pressure on the military.

At the same time, we are providing life-saving aid to tens of thousands of people in Burma. We are paying for food for thousands of villagers in Karen State who have had to flee bombings by the Burmese military.

We have given support to people involved in protests who had to flee arrest, torture and jail. And we have funded healthcare for people affected by the coup.

For security reasons we can't tell you everything we are doing. We can tell you we have saved lives.

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A few more from bygone fetes



KAREN VOGT REPORTING ON THE LAST MEETING OF FARINGDON PEACE GROUP

FABIAN HAMILTON MP, SHADOW MINISTER FOR PEACE AND DISARMAMENT

Faringdon Peace Group was grateful to Fabian Hamilton MP for making time in his busy schedule to speak at their online April meeting about nuclear disarmament and other peace-related issues. He was the first Labour MP to be elected for Leeds North East in 1997 and since 2016 has been the shadow Minister for Peace and Disarmament, a post created by Jeremy Corbyn and continued by Keir Starmer.

Fabian began with a scathing critique of the Government's recent 'Integrated Review' of defence and foreign policy strategy, particularly the decision to increase the number of nuclear warheads. This flies in the face of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NNPT), now in its 50th year, and is against the spirit of the new Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) supported by over 100 states around the world. He believes this diminishes our credibility and tarnishes our reputation, leaving us isolated on the world stage and making it difficult to negotiate with rogue states. The Conservative Government claims it is 'committed to multilateral disarmament and a world without nuclear weapons' but has no strategy to bring it about and is increasing its own stockpile rather than reducing it. The Labour Party in contrast, has laid out steps to achieve nuclear disarmament. It has a clear 'no first use' policy – as opposed to the Government's policy of 'deliberate ambiguity'.

Fabian was honest in admitting that, while he himself is a unilateralist and has been a member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) since his teens, as a member of the Labour front bench he must obey the Party's policy in favour of Trident replacement. He had figures showing that the majority of the British public and even some Conservative MPs support nuclear disarmament and believes that if Labour is to win the next election it will need to make a case for multilateral disarmament, conflict resolution and diplomacy in line with the public mood, rather than aggression and sabre-rattling. He thinks that we can no longer go back to business as usual.

He also believes that the UK has a role to play in reducing tension between the US and China in encouraging them to the negotiating table when relevant treaties are reviewed. The biggest driver of insecurity is inequality between nations and the best way to secure the future in his view is through the framework of international law and treaties.

As both a Labour Friend of Israel and a Labour Friend of Palestine and the Middle East, Fabian seeks to understand both sides of the conflict and believes that an independent Palestinian state is essential to the future of both countries. Though he is Jewish by birth - his grandfather was a Rabbi - and he has family in Israel, Fabian is strongly critical of the Israeli government's treatment of Palestinians and its secrecy regarding its nuclear weapons programme.

Fabian voted with the Labour Party in opposing the government's recent Police, Crime and Sentencing Bill, describing it as repressive in clamping down on free speech and public protest, and failing to tackle the issue of violence against women: it proposes harsher sentences for damaging a statue for example than for rape. He concluded by praising the power of collective organisation rather than individualism and the importance of engaging the younger generation in all the issues he had raised with us.

Karen

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Tuesday 27th April 7pm

Music as Direct Action. Musicians from the Fallout Marching Band (remember them from Fairford in the Iraq war??? They were great) and activists from Greenham Common peace camp. To explore how music has shaped the peace movement

Register: mstar.link/musicaction.

Organised by London CND and Youth CND

Friday 30th April, 2pm

International Day of Action against foreign military bases, at Menwith Hill spy base. Socially distanced protest. (For info only)

Wed 5th May

FPG Monthly Meeting (see p 1)

Thursday 6th May

Local elections

Wed 12th May 7.30-9pm

"Education Reform – Fairer and Better?"

Campaign for State Education

[Http://www.campaignforstateeducation.org.uk](http://www.campaignforstateeducation.org.uk)

Saturday 15th May

10.30-evening. Levellers' Day Online.

Wednesday 19th May 7pm

People's Covid Inquiry. Part 7 with Michael Rosen. Online. Michael Mansfield QC in the chair. 'Privatisation of the Public's Health'

Thurs 20th May 11.30am

Oxfordshire Peace Campaign, meeting online

Saturday 22nd May 1.30pm

Why Socialists support the Global Palestinian Resistance. Led by Hugh Lanning.

Chair Christine Blower www.labouroutlook.org

Saturday 22nd May(2) afternoon

Conference. CND working for Peace in the Middle East. Kate Hudson, Michael Feinstein, Lindsay German (Stop the War) and others. Org by CND

Wed 2nd June

FPG Monthly Meeting(see p.1)

Sunday 26th June

Stop the War demo. Details later.

For further information on any of these events,
or to get Links,
please contact Jennie Tel: 01367 710308 or
castle@myphone.coop

LEVELLERS' DAY 2021

SATURDAY 15TH MAY

The World turned Upside Down A virtual event

Covid, the climate crisis, Trump and Fake News, 'We're all in this together' but we're not. Obscene wealth, and abject poverty. The world seems more upside down than ever.

On 17th May 1649, three soldiers were executed on Oliver Cromwell's orders, in the churchyard at Burford, Oxfordshire, just 15 miles from Faringdon. They were a group with beliefs in civil rights and religious tolerance. They stood up to Cromwell's arrogance and were shot for their pains.

Nearly 300 years later, in 1936, 2,500 British and Irish men and women saw the appeasement of their national leaders and volunteered to join the fight against fascism in Spain. They were fighting for freedom and justice for working people. Over 500 of them were killed.

Levellers Day has been an annual celebration of the struggle for peace and justice since 1975, and Faringdon Peace Group's banner has been present on almost every occasion, demonstrating our support for Levellers' Day.

This year's event will be online so we won't be able to join in with the laying of wreaths at the plaque in the church wall commemorating the 3 Leveller leaders who were shot, or the speeches, or the march around the town with banners and music which many of us have always looked forward to. However, the programme will include film clips from earlier Levellers' Days, and from the film of the associated Diggers' occupation at St. Georges' Hill, in Surrey. The Spanish Civil War will also be remembered.

Music and a panel of keynote speakers with a Q and A session on the theme of The World turned Upside Down, will create an inspiring programme from 10.30am through to the evening.

Let's get to know our meaningful history!

Further information from Jennie
castle@myphone.coop or 01367 710308 or
John Haywood, 07785 235 715



The government's handling of the pandemic has been nothing short of a disaster and they have used the crisis as an opportunity to

advance their militaristic, authoritarian agenda. As social restrictions begin to ease it is time we step our resistance against it.

The criminalisation of protest has been an issue. Stop the War have continually taken action over our twenty year history and although there have been major attempts to clamp down on dissent during that period The Police Crackdown Bill is definitely the most severe. There is so much to fight for

There are protests in Trafalgar Sq. on May 1st

THEY SAID IT

“Asked by Yousef, from the Saudi Embassy in UK, whether my perceptions of Saudi Arabia have changed after this trip, I said that my previous notions have been blown out of the water. I've seen a modern, progressive Saudi Arabia that has totally changed my view of this country”.

A tweet from 2018 which has come back to haunt Labour's by-election candidate Paul Williams. The trip he was on was paid for by the Saudi Foreign Ministry. The Independent. 20/3/21

“Look.... peace is not going to break out in the Middle East any time soon. I think it remains an area where we'll continue to see solid growth”
Greg Hayes, Raytheon CEO, Defense One. 26/01/21

ARMS TRADE SHORTS ..

Organisers of the Royal Windsor Horse Show have agreed to adopt a human rights policy following accusations that the show is being used by the Bahraini royal family to distract from rights abuses. This follows a long and high profile campaign by Bahraini activists in the UK. The campaign has been supported by CAAT. (The Guardian, 12/01/2021)

The Italian Green Party has announced plans to sue the Italian government over arms sales to Egypt. The complaint relates to the sale of two warships in 2020 and follows continued anger over the 2016 murder of an Italian citizen, Giulio Regeni, who many believe was killed by Egyptian security forces.

New Arab, 08/01/2021

WAR CRIMES IN PALESTINE..

WRITE TO YOUR MP NOW

As you're probably aware, earlier this month the International Criminal Court (ICC) opened a formal investigation into war crimes committed in the occupied Palestinian territory. This is a very positive step, but.....

Boris Johnson is now trying to undermine the court in order to shield his friends in Israel from prosecution. We can't let that happen!

Successive UK governments, whilst issuing rhetoric condemning Israel's violations of international law, have failed to take meaningful action to hold Israel accountable. This is why we need you, friend, advancing the grassroots campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions.

The ICC decision to initiate an investigation gives hope that Israel's state level impunity may be coming to an end. The UK should be supporting this. Instead, Boris Johnson has shamefully made clear - in a letter to Conservative Friends of Israel - that his Government intends to undermine the legitimacy of the ICC investigation on the basis that Israel is a “friend and ally of the UK”.

This is not how international law works.....

A fundamental principal of law is that it applies equally to all. If Israel is not held responsible for its actions, then it has no incentive to stop its gross violations of human rights.

Worried about what the Court will find, Israel has launched a campaign to smear and deligitimise the ICC, including by questioning its jurisdiction. The ICC has already ruled it does have jurisdiction in the occupied territory as Palestine signed the Rome Statute - Palestine has every right to pursue claims on behalf of victims of war crimes at the Court.



DAILYSQUAT.COM

Circuses struggling to find new clowns as top prospects continue to go into politics