

‘WHY WE NEED AN ANTI-WAR GOVERNMENT’

This was the title of a talk given by Ian Chamberlain to the Faringdon Peace Group in March. Ian’s ‘peace’ credentials are very sound – he works for CND and the Stop the War Coalition and has volunteered as an ‘Ecumenical Accompanier’ in Palestine, but he believes that not only the peace movement but also the wider public have started to question our involvement in wars and to consider alternative solutions.

The UK has been at war for the last 17 years, under the pretext that it will curb terrorism, but the result is the opposite. In 2003, 1 in 25 households went on the anti-Iraq war demo in London and polls indicated a majority against war. Protests were ignored and we are now seeing the disastrous consequences of this war and those following, not just on local populations but in the rise of Islamophobia, racism and terrorism at home. The 2013 defeat of the Cameron government over bombing Syria suggested MPs were listening to their constituents, but although there has been a move against visible and vulnerable ‘boots on the ground’, war has continued to be waged remotely and secretly through the use of drones. However strong the arguments for peace are, they never seem to be heard by the media and politicians.

Ian believes that our greatest hope of an anti-war government lies with Jeremy Corbyn. With his strong and consistent anti-war position he has won many admirers but has divided the Labour Party and antagonised the military and security establishments. He also has the power of the conservative media to contend with. He was the only politician brave enough to link the Manchester bombing to the war on terror and his popularity rating went up. He offers a radically different approach but even if the Labour Party agreed on an anti-war manifesto, would they have enough support to win a General Election and form a government with Jeremy Corbyn as Prime Minister? Once in position, would he have the necessary power to stick to his principles and take the government in a new direction?

Whether or not this comes to pass, Ian stressed that the role of the peace movement is very important at the moment in shaping public opinion and calling the government of the day to account.

Our next meeting is ‘Votes for Women in Oxfordshire’ with Dr. Katherine Bradley. She will talk about Faringdon’s own suffrage society and other local campaigns. 7.30, Weds. 4th April, Friends’ Meeting House, Lechlade Road. All welcome.