

# The Peace Board

Peace news and views for, from and about Quakers in the North of Britain  
Issue no: 16 May 2004

## Peace Testimony consultations

### or “What happened to that questionnaire?”

**A**round Christmas time 2003, those of us who are members of the Northern Friends Peace Board were given the task of asking their local Meetings a series of questions about their approach to Friends' Peace Testimony. The purpose of this exercise was to collect responses to help plan future work which might be most helpfully shaped to meet Friends' needs.

This consultation and discussion have been carried out in various ways throughout the Board's area, Northern England, North Wales and Scotland. After checking with our PM Clerk, I decided to invite responses from every fifth person on the address list. This seemed the best approach for a large Meeting and it worked well, providing a good variety of people and a good level of response. Results were also gathered by others, using the 'phone and face to face discussions.

As responses began to arrive at them NFPB office, from all over 'the North', I initially helped Philip Austin, Co-ordinator of the Board to begin the analysis. Much more has since been done with the help of Steven Walling and Jo Valentine, our clerk. It is clear that the exercise was valuable for those who took part, and it has been moving to read

the responses. Friends are active for peace in visible ways, and at times find the demands of active peace witness difficult. Friends seek to work and live in a peaceable way with family, work colleagues and others in their communities - this is also challenging but it is often a less visible expression of Quakers working for peace.

**I try to live my peace testimony by being non-aggressive & non-confrontational. I am steadfast in my opposition to war. I find it easy, on the whole, to be non-violent and to cope with other people's anger and aggressive behaviour. But trying to change the hearts and minds of others, who argue for war and violent punishment, I find very difficult.**

Paraphrase of one questionnaire response

Many respondees do feel led to voice concerns to decision-makers and have valued the range of resources and activities produced by Friends to support them in communicating peace concerns effectively. They would like to see these developing and continuing. We learned that expressing a deeply felt commitment to peace

to an unsympathetic audience - without being too confrontational - was a particular difficulty for a number of respondees. For others the dilemma was about the practical application of the peace testimony in international affairs - if we are saying 'no' to war, what can we offer as a workable alternative? And we were encouraged to think about how children and young people could become a more integral part of our peace work. Friends in the remoter parts of our area expressed a plea for 'less paper and more people'.

NFPB members met in Lancaster in February and spent half of the day in groups focusing on these emerging themes (the first time I have experienced Power Point presentation at a Quaker meeting!). The results of this exercise will be considered by the Executive Committee, to give shape to a future programme that addresses at least some of the concerns and needs expressed. As our existing work continues under the headings of 'Challenging Militarism, Culture of Peace and Communications', we look forward to building on our recent and our more distant history (91 years old this year!) with Friends old and young, Quaker and non-Quaker well into the future.

Clare Whitehead  
Hardshaw East MM and Clerk to  
NFPB Executive

# Who's threatening whom, and with what?

## Missile 'defence' discussions in Bradford

In mid-March, a conference was put on in Bradford by the British American Security Information Council and hosted by the Department of Peace Studies at the University. Its title, *Missile Defence – Threats, Response and Projections* reflected the fact that the entire US missile defence system is based on assumed threats. Speakers at the conference came from a range of backgrounds, but all were in some ways 'experts' in the technology or politics of Missile Defence. Some had worked in the defence ministries of either the UK or US and brought a very particular perspective with that. Others had developed their expertise working on these concerns within the peace movement in one way or another.

There was plenty of background information and detail communicated at this well-attended conference, reinforced (or hindered, depending on your viewpoint) by high-tech presentation after presentation. As we were frequently reminded during the day, a lot of the information is available on the internet in one form or another – visit the NFPB website as a starting point to find some of this. But for this writer, there were several illuminating comments made that it seems worth sharing more widely...

- ▶ The real dangers of missile proliferation are actually much smaller than we might be led to believe by the US and UK governments, and probably lie elsewhere than in the so-called 'axis of evil' countries. And a missile de-

fence system is likely to encourage other countries to develop their own missiles to try to get through the shield, if they perceive the need.

- ▶ Nuclear weapons are the only real weapons of mass-destruction.
- ▶ The most frequently used missiles in recent years have been cruise missiles from the US and its allies.
- ▶ Ballistic missiles are simply a delivery system – it is the tendency by the US and USSR to arm them with nuclear warheads which has made their development such a potent issue.
- ▶ There is a very close correlation between the existence of a nuclear energy programme in a country and that country's ability to develop nuclear weapons.
- ▶ Whilst few countries have missiles that can reach the US, the fact that the US has bases and interests all around the world means that it is vulnerable in many regions.
- ▶ The US Missile Defence system under development is under severe strain due to lack of effective monitoring or cost-controls - \$53.1 billion are earmarked for expenditure on missile defence up to 2009.

The UK government (and probably the US too) does not perceive there to be any real public concern and pressure for

serious discussion of missile defence, we were told by one consultant with close contacts in the MoD. The nonviolent action at Menwith Hill the following day may have changed his mind about that.

In spite of the massive financial commitment from the US administration to MD, the future is far from certain. In particular, the related issue of deployment of weapons in space was flagged up as needing urgent attention. The US is currently the only country that has indicated that it wishes to do this, but if it were so to do, then the development of a new arms race in that realm would seem

**“... to be serious about security, we need to be most concerned about the security of our potential foes”**

inevitable. Recent moves by Canada to develop international consensus to prohibit such developments were the type of positive initiative that our governments might be encouraged to support.

To save space I have omitted names and organisations from this report, but a concluding comment is worth attributing, to Philip Weber of Scientists for Global Responsibility. If governments want to be serious about security, he suggested, then we need to be most concerned about the security of our potential foes, because it is when they feel threatened that they are most likely to arm themselves.

# Peace movements

The war against Iraq, and the British government's apparent determined rejection of the arguments against it, have left many of those who marched on the streets very despondent. There is certainly a lot to be distressed about in the current situation in Iraq and in relation to other global peace and security issues.

The response of some groups of activists is a strengthened resolve to keep resisting in a public way, challenging the very assumptions that lie at the heart of military endeavours.

**Voices in the Wilderness UK**, for instance, is promoting "A week of protests, non-violent direct action & occupations to expose the bogus June 30 'power transfer' in Iraq" between 26<sup>th</sup> June and 4<sup>th</sup> July.

**GROW** (Grassroots Opposition to War) is committed to developing and maintaining a non-hierarchical network of like-minded groups, stating 'we need to build a campaign that is prepared for the long-haul, and

which is prepared to tackle the roots of the problem, not just its symptoms.'

Another clutch of groups views the challenge as one of getting a practical (and ideological?) commitment to non-military peace initiatives into the very heart of government itself.

**Ministry for Peace** has perhaps the grandest aim and is working for the creation of such a ministry within government, with the aim of implementing the action programme identified in the UN Declaration on a Culture of peace.

**Peace Direct**, meanwhile, seeks a change of hearts and minds by collecting and publishing evidence on the value and cost effectiveness of war prevention and conflict resolution in order to influence government policies and resource allocation. It also seeks to support people working in conflict areas and to raise the profile of non-violent conflict resolution – 'to show how [they] can work'.

**Peaceworkers UK** promotes civilian strategies for the preven-

tion, management and resolution of conflict. It runs training courses for people getting ready to work in practical areas and has also now set up a Peaceworkers Register, that would 'hold details of people suitably qualified and available for work on the prevention, management and resolution of conflict. It is also promoting the idea of a UK Civilian Peace Service and working closely with the international Nonviolent Peaceforce. This work is attracting the interest of the British Government and of the EU, for whom they have run some of their training.

There are differences in opinion as to whether it is best to work to challenge those in power through radical action on the outside, or to try to engage the interest and support of governments through getting a peace agenda into their structures. Both approaches will involve some compromises and will be effective in different ways and at different times. But it is clear that the commitment to peace seen on the streets of our cities in the spring of 2003 has certainly not gone away.

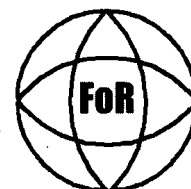
## "Called to be Peacemakers"

- a new resource from the Fellowship of Reconciliation

**'P**eachmaking is a vital part of our commitment to a life of faith', writes Chris director of FoR '... yet too often it is ignored in practice as it is seen as causing difficulties. Fear of upsetting people and causing division has led many congregations and church groups to avoid looking at issues surrounding peace and conflict. The Called to be Peacemakers pack aims to help individuals and church groups reflect on current issues of peace, conflict and security in the light of our Christian faith.'

The pack includes an information briefing, a worship guide, an action guide and a petition to call on the government to work for genuine peace and security in the world. Recommended for ecumenical networking on peace concerns.

The pack is available as downloadable PDF files from: <http://www.for.org.uk/peacemakers/> or free (donations welcome though!) from FoR at: **The Eirene Centre, Clopton, Kettering, Northants NN14 3DZ**



## Some current US Quaker peace work

**T**he **American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)** has two correspondents based in the Middle East, reporting regularly about their perceptions of the current situation in Iraq. Their most recent report was written in Amman, Jordan, due to the deteriorating situation in Iraq itself and focuses on the abuse of prisoners.

AFSC's Rick McDowell and Mary Trotochaud write: *"The President has joined a chorus of apologies to the victims of the torture and abuse and to their families. Many Iraqis will tell you the apologies are too little, too late. The US government has lost much of its credibility in Iraq; its words fall on shallow ground. We need to ask: Where has the outrage been over the year of occupation? Where is the outrage at the ongoing abuses of occupation? Where is the outrage over the lies and failed promises? Who will apologize to Iraqis for the years of devastating sanctions...?"*

Another strand of AFSC's current work is a *'Listening Project on Peace and Security'*. This is an effort to relate the peace agenda to the concerns of ordinary people, through a process of interviews and follow-up meetings. The project is particularly keen to involve young people and 'people of color'. Initial findings suggest that the general economic infrastructure in the

US is an important concern when it comes to thinking about security. Preemptive war is not seen as a means to greater security. The welfare of service personnel families and the erosion of civil liberties in the country are also significant issues.

The **Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)**, meanwhile, is working on **'Peaceful Prevention of Deadly Conflict'**, responding to the question it asks itself "If war is not the answer, what is?". It has put together its key policy ideas in a booklet, (which is downloadable from their website at: [www.fcnl.org](http://www.fcnl.org)). A number of the policies are specific to the US but the underlying principles are just as applicable to other countries.

A number of US Friends are part of the **'GI-Rights Network'**, "a network of nonprofit, nongovernmental organizations who provide information to service members about military discharges, grievance and complaint procedures, and other civil rights." Quaker House at Fayetteville, North Carolina reports a massive increase in calls to the GI Rights Hotline in recent months. They (Quaker House) have also produced a 'draft-o-meter' which measures the (in their view) increasing likelihood that the military draft will be reintroduced; they encourage people to actively oppose this possibility.

## Diary

**Meetings for Worship at Menwith Hill:** 2-3pm on 5 June, 7 August and 2 October,

**Meetings for Worship at Fylingdales** 12-1pm, 3 July and 4 September

For details of both these Meetings for worship, contact CAAB at: 01943 466405, [caab@btclick.com](mailto:caab@btclick.com)

5 June **Global Insecurity - what is our response?** A day seminar to explore 21st century alternatives to war and ways to a sustainable, peaceful future. Bull Street Friends Meeting House, Birmingham, organised by *conscience* and QPSW. For bookings contact **conscience** on 0870 777 3223 and [projects@conscienceonline.org](mailto:projects@conscienceonline.org).

5-12 June  
**Stop the Arms Trade Week**

6 June **Arms Trade Day of Prayer**, organised by Campaign Against Arms Trade and Pax Christi

*Materials available for the above from Campaign Against Arms Trade at: 11 Goodwin Street, London N4 3HQ, 020 7281 0297, [enquiries@caat.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@caat.org.uk) <http://www.caat.org.uk>*

13-15 August **Unite for Peace** gathering Theme: Star Wars / American Bases Further details from the Fellowship of Reconciliation (see contact details on previous page)

*The Peace Board* is a newsletter of Northern Friends Peace Board. It is sent free to Northern Quaker Meetings and others. If you would like additional copies for your group or yourself, please get in touch. A donation to cover extra postage would help, but is not essential.

**Victoria Hall, Knowsley Street, Bolton  
BL1 2AS [www.nfpb.gn.apc.org](http://www.nfpb.gn.apc.org)**

**Tel: 0845 458 3095 (UK) +44 1204 382330 E-mail: [nfpb@gn.apc.org](mailto:nfpb@gn.apc.org)**  
Please send any news, views, letters, reviews etc. to the above address.

## Peace-Snip

Negotiations are taking place between *The Peace Museum* and the *Royal Armouries* over the possibility of developing a large-scale peace museum in Leeds, under the umbrella of the *Armouries*. ... Watch this space!!!