

PART 8:

TRIDENT PLOUGHSHARES IN

THE PUBLIC EYE

8.1 Media Issues

There are two sides to this. Extrapolating from casual conversations there is the impression that the vast majority of people in the UK are quite unaware that there is now a strong, coherent and active campaign of direct action against Trident. They might be vaguely aware that there are from time to time what they call 'demonstrations' against Britain's nuclear weapons, but not much more. The other interesting point here is that when you describe the campaign and its achievements to such people they are then surprised that it is not more 'in the news'. The overall impression from this is that most people don't know what is in ordinary terms a very good story indeed.

On the other hand if you contact a worker in the mainstream media in the UK it is now more than likely that they will be aware of the campaign and its aims. At the last count there are nearly two hundred text and broadcast outlets worldwide which have carried our story in one form or another, and these are just the ones we know about. The range of these outlets is of interest. The list includes newspapers of international standing such as Asahi Shinbun in Japan, the New York Times and Le Figaro as well as a rich vein of alternative outlets, like Nisse Hult (Green Youth) in Sweden, BLU Magazine (New York) and Free Community Radio Melbourne. In many of these outlets we have had repeated coverage and this applies especially to local media where the story of a particular pledger or affinity group is followed through. Roger Franklin is a well-known face in the Stroud press and the same goes for fellow Midlander Marlene Yeo in Loughborough and Joan Meredith in Northumberland. The quality of the coverage varies enormously. Although outright hostile reporting is rare, scrappy, skimpy, inaccurate or downright misleading copy is common, in the broadsheets as well as in the tabloids. An early hostile item was a Daily Express cartoon (19th August 2000) giving the familiar "ancient hippies with an ancient agenda" spin. In the immediate aftermath of Greenock, knee-jerk responses in the Scottish broadsheets led to antagonistic editorials. The Herald talked about "This asinine ruling" while The Scotsman (22nd October 1999) referred to "idealistic vandals" and Gimblett's "muddled thinking". Incidentally, the Scotsman editorial led to a welter of correspondence on the trial, most of it strongly supportive of the Trident Three. The report in the Guardian (8th November 2000) about the Jubilee Two action at RAF Wittering is a fine example of the sloppy end of the spectrum.

Under the heading "Priest accused of RAF burglary" it reads,

"A security investigation has been launched after a priest and a Catholic worker were allegedly found inside a nuclear warhead compound at RAF Wittering, Peterborough. Martin Newell, 33, of Canning Town, east London, and Susan van der Hijden, 31, are in custody charged with burglary".

No context, no detail, no understanding. Among the better work is John Lloyd's Article in Scotland on Sunday (24th October 1999) which ends,

"The Trident Three, and the review of the Gimblett judgement which will inevitably come, prompt us to think again about the world we have made unsafe for our children. Three mothers did it and a fourth let them off. Anyone who has a heart should say - good for you all. Now, let the rest of us become engaged."

Ruth Wishart's piece "A voice louder than bombs" (Herald, 10th August 2000) showed a grasp of the nature of the campaign and the core issues and bore this bouquet,

"It strikes me, in this week of man's increasing inhumanity to man, that they [TP] might just be saner than anyone else on the planet".

Stephen Naysmith (Sunday Herald, 13th August 2000), who followed our story from the start in the Big Issue (Scotland) and was the only journalist to cover the Maytime story as it happened, referred to the shockwaves the campaign was still "sending through the Scottish legal establishment" after Greenock, and gave a good description of our diversity.

There has also been some reasonably good broadcast reporting, such as the Finnish YLE Stations 30-minute TV piece on Katri Silvonen and Hanna Jarvinen, in which their personal motivations are well set in a campaign context, and the mainstream Danish TV stations' coverage of Ulla Roder's part in Maytime and Greenock. Among good radio work have been the short pieces on Radio Four's Law in Action and Maggie Charnley's live interview on the same network's World at One on 14th February 2000.

The overall picture is much too complex, and the evidence too fragmentary, to attempt any summary of what our public image is, beyond the widening but still small circle of those who are fully in the know and supportive. The field is also complex in terms of the different kinds of audience we want for the story, the general public (whatever that is), the peace movement as a whole, opinion formers and decision makers, folk in the civil police and the legal profession, the arts and entertainment and business, the whole world of those who campaign for social justice and sustainability.

8.2 Some Notes About Media Work

At the time of writing the campaign has a very strong reservoir of experience and skills in working with the media. Many came into the campaign already experienced and others have developed these skills in the last two years. This was well illustrated at the disarmament camp in August 2000 when as many as thirty different activists worked in the media team, many of them working directly with press etc. and giving interviews. This breadth of involvement makes sense in a campaign founded on affinity groups.

Ideally most of the media work would be done at affinity group level, and integrated into the planning that the group undertakes for its activity. It would make sense to identify one member of the group who co-ordinates the media work. This can involve:

- the development of the local and relevant national media contacts, both in terms of lists, and of establishing relationships with particular journalists;
- preparing a standard format for press releases that is recognisable;
- collecting the information and the personal details of those involved, along with quotes;

- getting advance information out when appropriate;
- sending out stories promptly (with due regard for the very varied deadlines at local level) and following them up with a checking call;
- trying to get journalists as well as film people and photographers to the event (if appropriate);
- being consistently available at the end of a phone (or responding quickly to phone messages);
- considering what will make a good picture and thinking through the various elements of that, the banners, placards etc. and the potential of the action itself;
- taking own photographs and video for media use and for internal consumption;
- having more extended briefing packs available when required;
- getting local media interested in more extended features as well as news;
- monitoring media coverage and keeping records.



Outcry as sheriff rules nuclear weapons illegal

Crown to appeal after 'Trident three' walk free

KATRINA TWEEDIE

A SHIPPER yesterday triggered an outcry when she branded Britain's nuclear deterrent illegal under international law.

Sheriff Graham's judgment, in the case of three anti-nuclear campaigners who caused more than £80,000 of damage to a laboratory at a naval base, was attacked as "abuse" and an encouragement to other protesters.

Legal experts said the sheriff had got it wrong. The Crown Office moved to launch an appeal over her ruling.

The sheriff ordered a jury to acquit the three women campaigners of maliciously damaging equipment at the Faslane base, near Lochgilphead, Argyll, part of the Trident nuclear submarine installation.

She accepted the defence argument that nuclear weapons were illegal and the women, therefore, had a right to commit a crime to prevent their use.

Ellen Mackay, 63, from Dalry, Clackmannanshire. Anne

It was the first time in Scotland that a jury had been asked to consider the legal authority of the £11 billion Trident nuclear submarine programme.

The women were arrested on 8 June after boarding an unmanned barge used to test sonar equipment and throwing documents and laboratory equipment overboard.

John Mayer, defending, argued a ruling by the International Court of Justice at the Hague which made nuclear weapons illegal gave the women the right to "disarm" them. This meant the women's actions had technically been a crime, but were justified by Trident's status as an illegal weapon.

They had been acting in the same way as someone who disarms a man carrying a knife or gun illegally - a view that Sheriff Graham accepted.

Sheriff Graham, sitting at Greenock Sheriff Court, ruled the women had the right to disarm the submarine installation and ordered the jury to acquit them. A charge of steal-



Incal de 'at tee MARK

AN INTER-continental demands year-old, heroin course of 5

The 6 City Court internal Michelle died in 1 city after care from

Eighty-the trust of drug a a child-aided who necessary placed it own 56 workers place for she was Knighton

A full protection was und- vision a lost and cordent incident

Kay U the west over soci- dely sh- for the p that Mri a secure

She 1 thought panel be placed in priority 1 This you been p

Politicians held with Faslane protesters

By GILLIAN HARRIS, SCOTLAND CORRESPONDENT

MORE than 170 anti-nuclear demonstrators, including two politicians, were arrested yesterday as they attempted to close down a Trident submarine base in a protest backed by Sir Sean Connery.

About 400 campaigners staged their Valentine's Day protest in torrential rain outside the two main entrances to the Faslane Naval Base near Lochgilblhead, Argyll. Some linked arms and sat in the road while others handcuffed themselves to lorries in an attempt to stop work at the base, which houses Britain's Trident nuclear submarines.

The arrest of 87 women and 92 men began early yesterday morning when officers from Strathclyde Police arrived at the facility to clear a path for workers to enter. Among those

charged with public order offences were Tommy Sheridan, the Socialist MSP, and Caroline Lucas, Britain's only Green MEP.

Dr Lucas said earlier that she would claim parliamentary immunity if she was charged. The immunity could only be lifted after a debate in the European Parliament during which Dr Lucas said she would argue that Trident nuclear weapons were illegal.

The one-day blockade, the biggest for 15 years, was organised by Trident Ploughshares and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. It came after a contentious court ruling when three women were acquitted of breaking into the naval base on the grounds that the weapons they were attempting to disarm were a violation of international law.

The Lord Advocate, Scotland's most senior law officer, has asked the High Court to rule on whether Sheriff Margaret Gimblett was correct in law, but the three women's acquittal will stand. The protest-



Police attempt to remove protesters from the entrance to the Faslane Naval Base yesterday. About 400 protesters tried to block the main entrances

October. Angela Zelter and Eileen Moxley were among the first protesters to be arrested. By mid-afternoon, with many of the campaigners being held in police custody, the demonstration was scaled down. "The protest is still going on but so many of our activists have been arrested that it is now continuing on a small

scale. "We are obviously delighted at the response we have had and to stop the base completely for an hour and a half in soaking weather conditions was exceptional," David McKenzie of Trident Ploughshares said.

Graham Tran, convenor of the AEEU, the union that represents civilian staff at

Faslane, said the blockade threatened jobs and safety. "The workforce is sick and tired of these people trying to stop us earning a living," he said. "Their demands would cost 8,000 people their jobs. Just think what that would do to the region. It would devastate whole communities."

LINKS
www.motherearth.org Trident Ploughshares
www.cnduk.org Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
www.fas.org/news MoD information on Faslane Naval Base

SEE MITCHELL / GETTY IMAGES

Leicester Mercury

www.thisisleicestershire.co.uk

THURSDAY, JUNE 1, 2000

27p

1,460 JOBS INSIDE

**CHANCE TO
WIN A TUMBLE
DRYER PAGE 40**

PLEDGE: ANTI-NUCLEAR CAMPAIGNER WILL NOT PAY BILL FOR FENCE DAMAGE



MAKING A STAND: Protester Marlene Yeo says that she is prepared to face a term in prison

GRAN, 69, PREPARED FOR JAIL

A 69-year-old grandmother says she will go to prison rather than pay £291, her share of a bill to repair damaged fencing at the Atomic Weapons Establishment in Aldermaston.

Marlene Yeo of Burton-on-the-Wolds, near Loughborough, said: "I helped cut the fence so we could reach people inside to try and convince them they shouldn't be working there."

"I have been campaigning against nuclear weapons for nearly 30 years and will continue to do so."

"I will go to prison rather than pay the damages."

BY JIM McPHEATOR

"I am not looking forward to that but I have the support of my husband and three children."

"I am effectively campaigning for the future of my three grandchildren."

Mrs Yeo was convicted by magistrates in March of criminal damage.

She and her three co-defendants were ordered to pay for repairs to the perimeter fencing at the Berkshire establishment.

Mrs Yeo appeared before Loughborough Magistrates' Court on May 23 for non-payment of £250 court costs and the £291 damages.

Magistrates adjourned the hearing until July 3 saying they wanted to seek information from the Ministry of Defence.

Since then Mrs Yeo has written to the court enclosing a cheque for the £250 costs.

But in an accompanying letter, a copy of which she supplied to the Mercury, she states: "I do not intend to pay the repair costs."

AWE Aldermaston manufac-

"I will go to prison rather than pay the damages. I am not looking forward to that but I have the support of my husband and three children."

Marlene Yeo

tures the nuclear warheads that are used by the British Trident Nuclear Submarines, and which are so destructive as to be incompatible with international and British laws of warfare.

"They also are a constant danger to the population and environment because of the risk of accidents."

She adds: "I believe I was justified in committing this damage."

She added: "However, as the court hearing did, at least, give me an opportunity of putting forward my arguments, I am willing to pay my share of the court costs."

The checking call to journalists is an irksome but necessary task, at least at the beginning of the process. As relationships grow, you will find that certain journalists will come at you for stories, even on occasions appearing to be prompting you to action! You will have to talk through as a group what to do in response to the penchant of so many journalists for the merely quirky ("A grandmother protests" etc.) and just how much of that individuals can stand. Please note that all of the above is a counsel of perfection, very quickly modified in the face of certain realities, such as the irritating need to go to work, to sleep and to engage with family and society as a relatively normal human being.

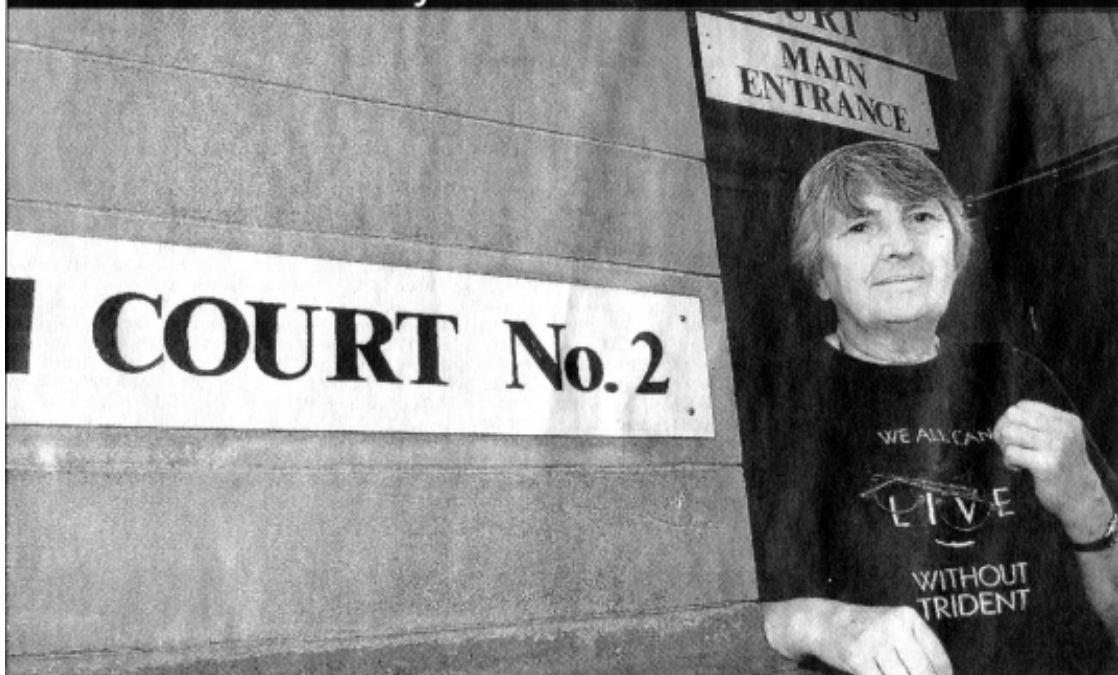
It is hard to overestimate the value of local media work. For one thing consistent coverage appears to be more achievable at local level than at national, and local outlets have extensive and regular readerships. There is also the chance that the national media will take up stories from local outlets. This is more obvious in the case of broadcasting networks, but can apply to papers also, as witness the way that Joan Meredith had fifteen minutes of fame in August 2000 when a whole raft of dailies had her picture (Ground Zero T-Shirt and all) next to the story of her being confined to the Alnwick courtroom for one day for non-payment of a £100 fine (featured below). Local outlets are also more likely to print and broadcast our material, in terms of extended quotes, briefings etc. A good example has been the coverage in the Wee County News in

Clackmannanshire of the Lord Advocate's Reference, through the local connection of Ellen Moxley which told the story of the LAR more professionally than most.

The same principles apply to the media work for a 'maximum disarmament' event. The big difference is that preparation must be more thorough to allow for the likelihood that the activists themselves may be quickly relatively incommunicado in prison. Documentation ready beforehand should include activists' statements with their rationale for the action; background information to set the event in context, short biographies and photographs. (In the case of the Pheasants' Union 'prep' photos were still being sought over a year after the event.) If on remand the activists should mail out as quickly as possible their own accurate version of the story, especially since the authorities will be turning out misinformation in response to journalists queries. Have a back-up arrangement in terms of information in case the person with that role is held, which can happen. If the time on remand is lengthy, make sure that prison support and media support are well linked. You may find that journalists and editors who are uneasy about the story will use the excuse (especially in Scotland) that since the activists have been charged and the matter is therefore *sub judice*, they will not publish material which could prejudice a trial. In such cases a statement from the activists that they are not denying the facts of the case and will not take action against any journalist who tells the story could be helpful.

Herald 8/8/2000

Protester has a fine day in court



CAMPAIGNER against nuclear weapons Joan Meredith, 70, of Rock Moor, near Alnwick, Northumberland, was yesterday given the rare punishment of being confined to a courtroom for one day for non-payment of a fine.

She had been prepared to go to jail for seven days as part of her protest against the Trident nuclear programme, but magistrates in Alnwick said sending the retired teacher to prison would serve no useful purpose.

Instead they invoked a little-used power under Section 135 of the Magistrates' Court Act to detain Meredith until the close of business, at 4pm yesterday.

The grandmother had been given a suspended sentence last month for the non-payment of a £100 fine after being found guilty of breach of the peace at the Clyde's Faslane Naval Base.

Meanwhile, two anti-nuclear protesters were arrested trying to swim into the base yesterday, and in a separate incident eight demonstrators were held during a blockade of the north gate.

CATCH OF THE DAY: Joan Meredith on the steps of Alnwick Court, where she was incarcerated for not paying a fine

Picture: OWEN HUMPHREYS

From arrests to acclaim ... how Ploughshares became the nation's favourite nuclear saboteurs

By **Stephen Naysmith**

FOR two weeks, a campsite full of retired teachers, ministers, housewives, monks and nuns has been causing havoc on the banks of the Clyde.

The Trident Ploughshares camp, near the Royal Navy's armaments depot at Coulport, allows anti-nuclear campaigners to launch assaults, almost at will, on both the Coulport depot and the Clyde Submarine base at Faslane – both cornerstones of Britain's Trident nuclear weapons system.

So far, activists have been subject to 149 arrests, with some clocking up four, five or six each, for attempting to obstruct access to the two facilities, cutting through fences or swimming up the loch in an effort to reach the submarines themselves.

But the hostile reception the campaigners have received from police stands in stark contrast to increasing official and unofficial acceptance.

Their code of non-violence and complete openness about their activities, as well as a ban on drink and drugs, has helped win the group support, not only from celebrities such as author AL Kennedy, but also from West Dunbartonshire and Glasgow City Council.

At the end of July, a group of Trident Ploughshares peace walkers, including Japanese monks and nuns from Milton Keynes, passed through Clydebank on their way to the camp, having hiked from the Ministry of Defence's Aldermaston base at Reading, in Berkshire.

The group was welcomed by West Dunbartonshire's Lord Provost Alistair MacDonald, and presented with a silver quach.

Yet within days, after the opening day blockade of

Faslane, the group had suffered its first 83 arrests. Those taken to the cells included all but one of the monks.

Then, just a day later, the peace walkers were again being officially feted, this time at Glasgow's City Chambers, where deputy provost Jean Macey laid on food and tea for the activists, many of whom had only just been released.

At the same time, Trident Ploughshares' efforts are still sending shockwaves through the Scottish legal establishment after last October's ruling by Greenock Sheriff Court, which appeared to suggest that the Trident nuclear weapons system was illegal under international law.

Sheriff Margaret Gimblett's decision to acquit three female campaigners of all charges after they dismantled (Ploughshares prefer the term 'disarmed') much of a submarine research station aboard a tethered barge in Loch Goil in June last year will be subject to a Lord Advocate's reference in October. This will determine whether the verdict was valid.

Whatever the outcome, the group – which has no leaders and takes its name from the biblical injunction to "beat swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks" – seems to have revived Britain's moribund nuclear disarmament movement.

Marcus Armstrong, from Milton Keynes, thinks he knows why the campaign is winning new converts. He is one of them.

A community activist who works part time for a variety of causes in Milton Keynes, he was at first wary of getting involved in the campaign's deliberate law-breaking.

But over the last fortnight, Armstrong has been arrested six times, twice for attempting to



swim to a Trident submarine and sabotage it. Armstrong, who is a counsellor for the charity Childline, works in a hospice and also works night shifts in a YMCA homeless shelter, says his commitment to Trident Ploughshares' goals has grown steadily.

"As I learned more, I grew more confident in the organisation," he says. "It is well-organised and supportive. The non-violence pledge and the ban on alcohol and drugs were essential – it was important for me that the organisation was something with that sort of public image."

Unlike, for example, the anti-capitalism protests in London in June, Trident Ploughshares

members have always been disciplined since their first actions in May 1998. This is almost certainly one reason for the unusual level of tolerance they appear to command.

This was illustrated once more during Armstrong's third, unsuccessful swimming attempt to a Trident sub. MoD police had to help him out of the water because he was tired and gave him a lift back to shore.

Because he has been so persistent, Armstrong now faces being held on remand if he is arrested again. "I'm not planning to pay any fines I receive, so I expect to serve a few weeks each year for non-payment. I accept that, but I don't want to spend a long time on remand."



SCOTTISH SUNDAY HERALD 13/8/2001

he says. "Most of us treat this as our summer holidays."

Unlike some protest groups, Ploughshares are hard to stereotype. Many are at Coulport out of a religious commitment. Last week, Alan Wilkie, a retired company director and Church of Scotland elder, was among a group who staged a light-hearted "Harry Potter" protest at the depot's gates.

"We are here to overcome the latest manifestation of the dark arts," he told his fellow campaigners. Condemning MoD workers as "muggles" and Trident submarines as "unclear weapons", he added: "They can't distinguish between soldiers and civilians, friends and the enemy. They can't tell the difference



Ploughshares activists sit it out at Coulport, top, and the quach presented to them by West Dunbartonshire's Lord Provost

between wizards and muggles." Although the stunt was deliberately daft, the point was fundamental to the legal argument the group's activists have used hundreds of times in tiny district courts in Helensburgh and Dumbarton.

They claim nuclear weapons are illegal under international laws which state that weapons cannot be used if they don't distinguish between military and civilian targets and personnel.

Wilkie said the Lord Advocate's Reference at the High Court in Edinburgh in October was keenly anticipated not just by group members, but by legal experts around the world. "This is the highest court in the country actually addressing the

principles of the international court of justice. People from all over the world are interested to see how the Scottish justice system deals with it."

David Mackenzie, Ploughshares spokesman, said the courts were groaning under the strain of dealing with hundreds of minor offences over the past fortnight. "It has been an enormously encouraging two weeks. We are developing all the time in confidence and skills. We're also seeing a shift in the responses we are getting. Even the police are increasingly sympathetic.

"Whatever the outcome of the Lord Advocate's Review, we will go on."

The campaign has also found it useful to have an overall co-ordinating media infrastructure. This team maintains an overview of the media situation and in fact sends out the majority of press releases. It attempts to monitor coverage and to keep records. It co-ordinates media work at disarmament camps and other big events. It can offer the following to affinity groups and maximum disarmament groups:

1. Media contact lists which are regularly revised. This comprises a Main Media List as well as some more targeted, for example for AWE Aldermaston, and an e-mail list, which is composed mainly of 'alternatives'. At the time of writing there is the beginning of a switch among journalists towards e-mail, which will make communications so much easier.
2. A standard press release format which can be adapted to local use. Of course, affinity groups may prefer their own format, which is fine, but these should at least refer to the website and make the involvement with Trident Ploughshares clear.
3. Helping out the local group if it is at an early stage of growth or is short of local resources for covering media work. This could include helping develop local lists and contacts or sending out stories, or sending out scanned photographs.
4. A Press Release Checklist for making sure all the points are covered.

In return the media team need the following:

1. If at all possible some early warning of actions, especially maximum disarmament actions, so that we can respond reasonably intelligently to media queries.
2. Copies of press releases sent out (plus a copy to Mark Leach for the website).
3. Copies of local coverage for the media archive.
4. Knowledge of the good ideas and good practice that happen locally and could be adopted by the media team as a whole (including practical things like fax software that actually works, sources for contacts etc.). Tell us what worked for you and what didn't!

Contacts:

David Mackenzie	01324 880744 (07775711054) davidmc@enterprise.net
Jane Tallents	01436 679194 tp2000@gn.apc.org
Mark Leach	0131 664 8441 r.wensum@virgin.net

References and Acknowledgements

All press and photo archives are kept by David Mackenzie, who wrote this section.