

campaign



Trident: what next for Britain's nuclear weapons?

CND General Secretary **Kate Hudson** examines the government's most recent announcement on Britain's nuclear weapons system.

LAST MONTH the government published its latest 'Defence Command Paper', entitled *Delivering the UK's Nuclear Deterrent as a National Endeavour*. This glossy publication spins the sorry story of imperial delusion, nuclear proliferation, and international lawbreaking, into a breathless hype of ongoing attempts to replace Trident, develop a new warhead, and build a

successor to the Astute class subs, preferably to be paid for by the Australians.

Little more than a Public Relations exercise, it ignores the reality of Britain's nuclear weapons system. That massive drain on public resources that is endlessly plagued with problems, from failed missile tests to security breaches, to massively extended submarine tours of

duty that put personnel at risk in dismal circumstances.

Despite the government's best efforts to seem like a serious nuclear contender, most of the Paper is recycling old information, like the replacement of the Trident submarines, which was agreed by parliament in 2016. Reference is also made to the new nuclear warhead which the government committed to replacing in parliament in 2021 – but here we do have some news! The warhead is now referred to as 'our sovereign warhead', presumably to disguise the fact that it is a co-production with the US's new warhead, and to offset observations that the system isn't actually 'independent' at all. And it has a name now, too: the A21/Mk7, known as Astraea. A bit of a misnomer however: in classical mythology, Astraea is the goddess of justice, innocence, purity, and precision.

AUKUS gets a mention too – supposedly the agreement by which the US and UK facilitate the provision of nuclear-powered submarines for Australia. Reading the small print it's now pretty clear that Australia will be making 'a significant investment into the UK's submarine industrial base', for

the privilege of being tied closer into the US's military expansionism.

Some additional money is announced for infrastructure modernisation, and to help improve the quality of life in Barrow-in-Furness, where the submarines are built, but these are relatively small sums. Noticeable by its absence is any overall balance sheet of spending on nuclear – information which has been promised but not yet forthcoming.

What does seem like a change is the emphasis on tying military nukes and civilian nukes together; usually they have been kept well apart in the government narrative. Now it has been announced that the MoD will be working with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) to 'coordinate our defence activity with investment in the civil nuclear sector'. This cross-funding isn't new, but now it's out in the open. Senior academics have made this point very clearly in recent times – money wasted on dead-end nuclear power is in effect going to subsidise the nuclear weapons establishment.

Time to redouble our work against both.

Spotlight

This month Central Manchester CND



With everything going on in the world right now, CND activists are needed more than ever. So we're delighted to say that new branches are popping up across the country! While plans are afoot to formally re-launch Cambridge CND (contact information@cnduk.org for more details), the inaugural meeting of Central Manchester CND will take place on 4th May.

If you live in central Manchester and would like to support this new branch, please get in touch with 0161 273 8283 or email gmdcnd@gn.apc.org.

And of course, if you want to set up a new group in your town – please get in touch with the CND office, we can help!

'Extremists' and the establishment

Annie Tunnicliffe was involved in the Greenham Common protests in the 1980s. Here she addresses the similarities of those days with the political situation today.

FIRST, a story.

In 1981, when a march of a handful of women and children (and some supportive men) from Cardiff to Greenham arrived at the base, it was unreported, of no interest to the media. The base commander remarked with contempt when he heard four women had chained themselves to the fence that “they can stay there forever as far as I’m concerned”.

Some days after their ignored arrival, at seven thirty in the morning, the single policeman on the gate was approached by a woman who started reading from a typed piece of paper: “This is an open letter from Women for Life on Earth to the base commander...”. He was clearly baffled by this and interrupted her with the words “Aren’t you a bit early?”. “What do you mean by that?” she asked. “Well,” he said, “the cleaners don’t usually arrive until eight. You are the cleaners I take it!”*

Fast forward to today and here we go again – the familiar

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smears and insults, the propaganda and threats that those of us who were a part of the 1980s peace movement remember vividly. The protest actions at Greenham Common, Upper Heyford and other nuclear sites, coupled with the exponential growth of CND moved through the same trajectory as the protests for Palestine today.

By 1983, when Michael Heseltine, then the Defence Secretary, donned a combat jacket for his appearance at the base and remarked that if the women got too near the missiles they would be shot, propaganda against the women’s camp and nuclear disarmament campaigners more generally was at its height. The right wing press constantly promulgated the smear that the women and the wider peace movement were in the pay of

the Soviets. They were constantly vilified, infiltrated, and undermined. Then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher tried to dismiss the women as an ‘eccentricity’ and ‘the enemy within’, but they had captured the public imagination.

Sound familiar? The upside of course is that we only get this kind of attention from the establishment when we begin to have power and influence. What appears to be a negative development actually shows us we are beginning to have an effect, to influence a change in the world.

So – onward! Keep it up! We must continue to protest – both for a ceasefire in Palestine and for a world without nuclear weapons.

*Story first reported in *Walking to Greenham*, by Ann Pettitt.

West Midlands CND meeting

9 April 7:30pm. Online.

■ To register, contact wmcndall@gmail.com

How uranium mining harms communities – CND webinar

11 April 6:30pm. Online.

■ To register, contact information@cnduk.org

Abingdon Peace Group meeting

16 April 8pm. Online.

■ To register, contact abingdonpeace@gmail.com

A Celebration of Pat Arrowsmith

18 April 6pm
LSE Library, 10 Portugal Street
London WC2A 2HD

■ To register, contact information@cnduk.org

Northern CND groups gathering

20 April
12 noon-4pm. Venue TBC

■ Contact gmdcnd@gn.apc.org for more information

Nuclear power costs the earth – Scottish CND webinar

25 April 7pm

■ To register, contact scnd@banthebomb.org

Reclaim our Clyde – information event

29 April
6pm, Unite The Union Building,
145-165 W Regent St, Glasgow.

■ Contact glasgowcnd0@gmail.com

A day in Parliament with Youth and Student CND

30 April 10:30am-4pm, Houses of Parliament, London SW1

■ Contact information@cnduk.org

Don't put Britain on the nuclear front line: Day of Action 11th May

Join the Day of Action against US nuclear weapons coming to Britain – events will be taking place across the country – get organising now!

Contact information@cnduk.org for more information and/or resources to help you plan your action.

Lakenheath Alliance for Peace: join the peace camp – July 13-25th

The Lakenheath Alliance for Peace was launched last month to campaign against US nuclear weapons coming to Britain. 14 organisations have already joined the group – including CND. Members have delivered a letter to the base commander at RAF Lakenheath.

There will be an international peace camp from July 13th-25th – we're expecting participants from other US bases in Europe as well as other campaigners from across the world. The plan is to start in the centre of Norwich and walk or bike over three days to Lakenheath to establish a continuous presence at the base until the end of the camp.

More info: lap@gn.apc.org or www.lakenheathallianceforpeace.org.uk

Meet the staff

This month: Helen Griffin, Peace Education Officer

"The Peace Education work here at CND continues to thrive, with my focus being on training teachers, developing our resources (a new edition of 'Under Pressure' is due out soon!), and managing our Schools Speakers Network (SSN). As well as my CND work, I also work for DECSY, a global learning charity in Sheffield, and spend any spare time with my two-year-old grandchild.



Our SSN works across England, delivering workshops to secondary and upper primary pupils, and we have taken exhibitions of our teaching resources to various conferences and education festivals up and down the country. If you are interested in volunteering with the peace education team, please do get in touch: peaceeducation@cnduk.org."