

Diary Dates

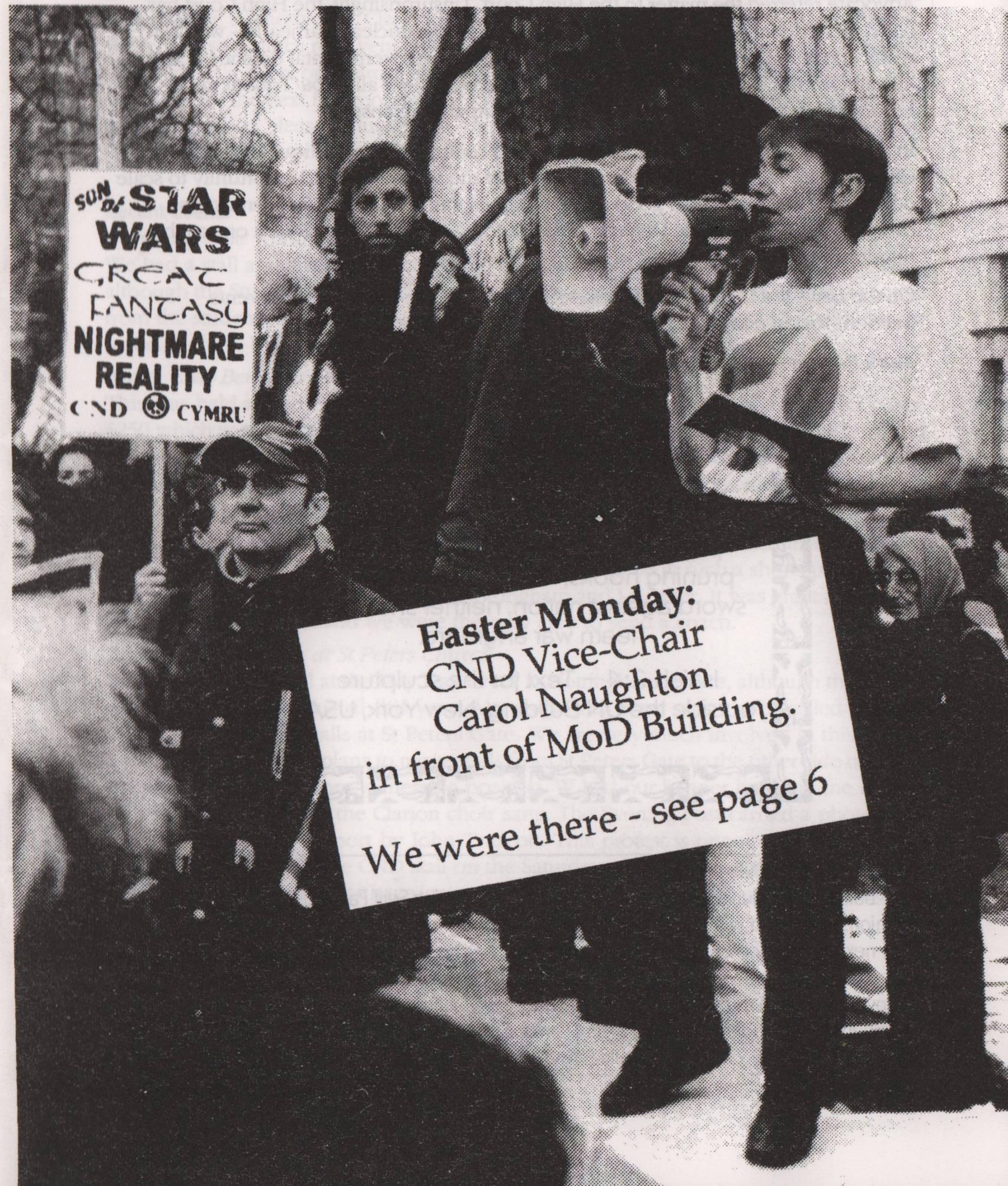
- 23 June **Nottingham CND stall at National Sheet Music Festival**, Nottingham Trent University Student's Union, 9.30-12.30.
- 4 July **Public Meeting on Missile Defense** (Star Wars) with CND chair Dave Knight. 7.15pm at The Place, 2a Melrose Street, Sherwood. All welcome - refreshments provided.
- 8 July **Cuba Garden Party 12-4** at 10 Denmark Grove, Alexandra Park. Admission £5.
- 4 August **Demonstration at Fylingdales**. Please contact us if you are interested in going.
- 6 August **Hiroshima Day**. Details to be decided.
- 2 September **Green Festival** at Victoria Embankment.

CND Stall dates at St. Peters Gate, 11am - 2pm
 30 June, 21 July, August 4, September 22



Nottingham CND Bulletin

June 2001



Nottingham CND Public Meeting

Missile Defense - The Case Against

Speaker: Dave Knight, CND chair

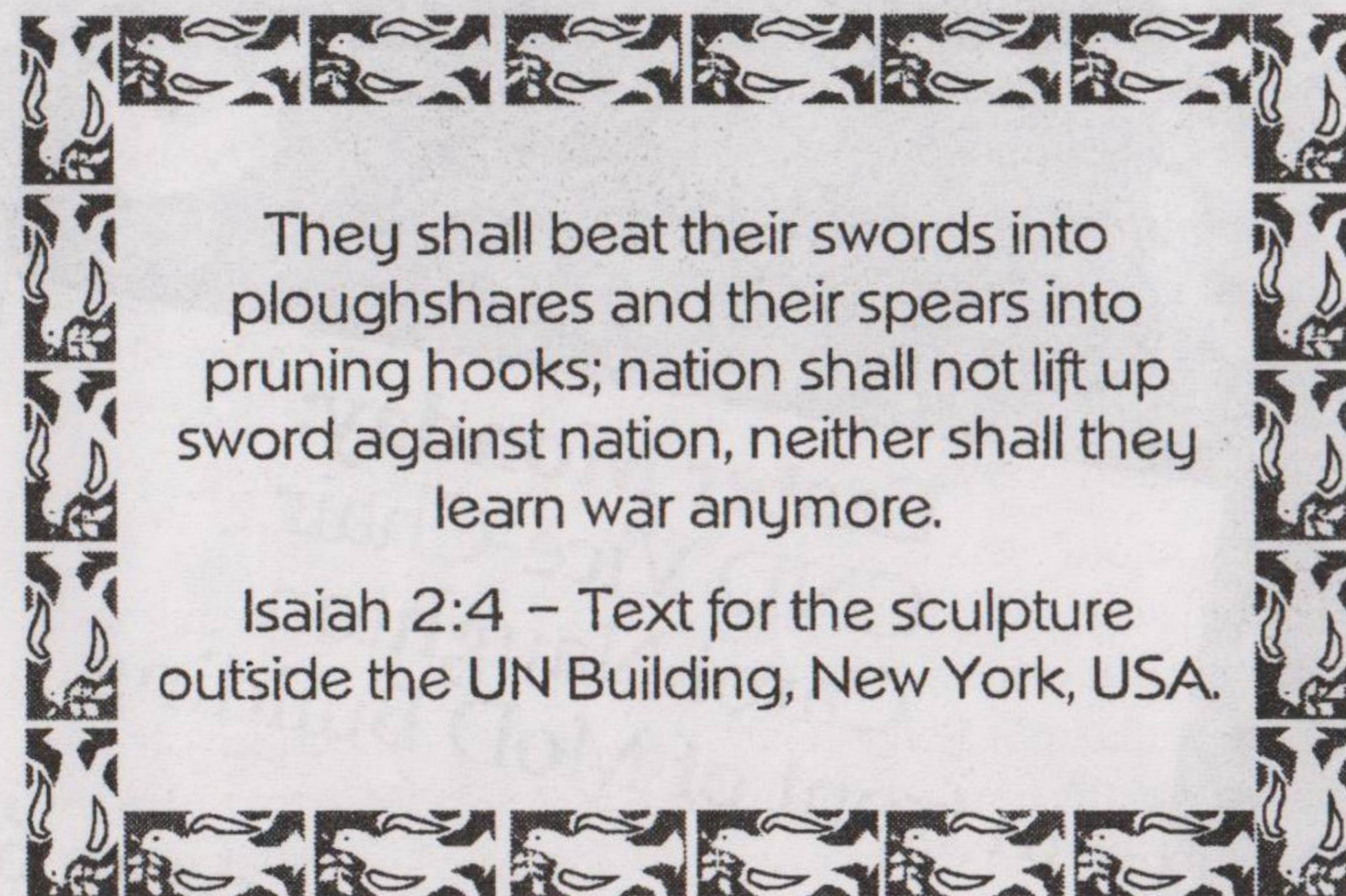
Wednesday 4th July, 7.15pm, at The Place, 2a Melrose Street, Sherwood (behind Sherwood bus depot)

After months of waiting the Lord Advocate's Reference was finally resolved with a decision about the legality of Trident. Last year three Trident Ploughshares activists involved in a Trident disarmament action were acquitted by a Scottish court when the Sheriff ruled that, in the international climate at that time, there was a threat to use Trident which is illegal under the International Court of Justice ruling. The Lord Advocate referred the matter to the High Court. Unsurprisingly, the High Court has ruled that Trident does not constitute a "threat" to use nuclear warheads – would we really expect our High Court to do other and declare Governmental defence policy illegal? Oh well, whichever way the legal wind blows, we all *know* Trident to be immoral and wasteful and will continue to campaign against it.

In the biggest threat to Bush's Star Wars plans so far, a US Republican senator has changed sides giving the Democrats control of the senate and the opportunity to scale down Bush's plans. This is good as far as it goes, but remember, the Democrats campaigned on an Missile Defense platform too, just not as ridiculous a one as the Republicans.

On the news last night I heard President Bush say "The ABM treaty prevents freedom-loving people from exploring the future." Unbelievable!!

Mark Ramsey – Editor



Nottingham CND Bulletin #2001/2

The Bulletin is produced quarterly by Nottingham CND, using Serif PagePlus 6.0. Any articles or opinions expressed within are not necessarily the policy of Nottingham CND.

The next issue of the Bulletin is due in Sept 2001. Articles (preferably on PC computer disk) or other material to be considered for inclusion should be sent to Nottingham CND at the address below or e-mailed to bulletin@nottinghamcnd.org.uk by August 1st.

Nottingham CND, Nottm Voluntary Action Centre, Sandfield House, 7 Mansfield Road, Nottingham NG1 3FB. Tel: 0115 9348459. enquiries@nottinghamcnd.org.uk www.nottinghamcnd.org.uk

Nottingham CND Update

Since the last Bulletin, Nottingham CND has been extremely active. This is due mainly to the hard work which has been put in by local members, plus some help from outsiders. We have made positive connections with other local organisations like Greenpeace, Amnesty, the Clarion Choir, and Nottingham University Students Union. We have also found a new venue for holding events – 'The Place', at the back of the old Sherwood bus depot on Melrose Street. Below is a summary of our recent activities, plus our plans for the next few months. As you will see, there is a lot happening besides the monthly stall so please volunteer as we now have a chance to make a difference in Nottingham. Thank-you for all your help in the past.

Diane Lunzer – Secretary

Recent Events

University One World Day – March 15th

We had a stall at this event and managed to get a lot of help throughout the day. Sadly, although the Students Union had put a lot of work into making this event, the response from the students was very poor but I felt encouraged that they want to keep the event – and we have been invited to have a stall at another university event.

Nottm CND Benefit Night - March 24th

This was held at The Place. We managed to get a very wide range of artists and raised £250 which we sent to the Fylingdales Action Group. It was the first event of its kind and wouldn't have happened without the support of the Clarion Choir who suggested the idea in the first place. The atmosphere was great and I think everyone enjoyed it.

Anti-Star Wars Demonstration in London – Easter Monday

From the enthusiasm of the benefit night it was agreed to run a coach to the national CND event in London. We were amazed what we could do in such a short space of time and managed to take 25 people from Nottingham and Leicester. It was great to feel part of a large organisation and we were the only area to send a coach.

May Day and Action at St Peters Church

We had our usual stall at the May Day event in Nottingham square, although there were not as many stalls as usual this year. Alongside this event was a protest led by John Truscott to keep the stalls at St Peters Gate. We are very much involved in this protest over the City Council's plans to move stalls from St Peters Gate to the other side of Marks & Spencers, a much more vulnerable position. We had our banner hung on the railings outside the church, and the Clarion choir sang. The Evening Post carried a photo of us together with a large report by John Truscott. This protest is ongoing so we do need volunteers to help run the CND stall on the Saturdays that we have been allocated (see back of Bulletin). The police have ignored us so far as they do not see us as an obstruction.

Future Events

23 June – National Street Music Festival

We are having a stall at this event at the Nottingham Trent University Student's Union 9.30am-12.30pm when alternative choirs from all over the country will be there. It has been organised by Nottingham Clarion Choir. Please come and help on the stall.

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Nottingham CND Future Events (contd)

4 July - Public Meeting on Missile Defense with Dave Knight (CND chair)

We are holding this at The Place and hope to advertise it as widely as possible. Any help with producing a poster or helping with publicity would be most welcome.

8 July - Cuba Garden Party

A pleasant afternoon at Beverly and Barrie's (10 Denmark Gr, Alexandra Park - off Woodborough Rd) where you can meet friends and relax. Admission £5 - donations to Cuba. There will be food, drink, stalls and the Clarion Choir.

4 August - Demonstration at Fylingdales

We are hoping to take a minibus or coach to this event - please contact us if interested. It should be a very moving and inspiring day out. It is a CND protest - please only bring CND materials and banners. Please note that if you want to join in with the non-violent direct action, unfortunately it will not be possible to keep the transport waiting past a set time.

6 August - Hiroshima Day

Commemoration of the dropping of the first atomic bomb. Does anyone have any suggestions for a venue as some people feel that the Arboretum is unsuitable and want a change.

2 September - Green Festival

This is the 10th anniversary and we want to make it special. Ideas for a theme for the stall will be gratefully received.



**March events -
see previous page**

**One World Day,
Nottingham University**

**Benefit Night:
Leela Hort, singer
Heather Fong, accompanist**



Peggy Westaway Remembered

In the last Bulletin we were very sad sorry to announce the death of long-standing member Peggy Westaway who died in late February. Here are two appreciations of her life and contribution to Nottingham CND.

I first met Peggy on the first Greenham Common Demonstration and thought her a lovely companion - a view which still remains unchanged. Whilst meeting at the Nottingham CND office in St. Mary's St. and King St., it was at the Castle Gate office that we worked together - often blue with cold or warming up after the office had been burgled, but Peggy was always happy and considerate - the only times she was depressed was when our membership was reduced. Peggy considered every lapsed member as a lost sheep.

On our holiday in Central Asia - then part of the Soviet Union - the airport coach left us at the East Luc service station where we were rescued by the police who referred to us as the "abandoned ladies". On behalf on Nottingham CND we laid wreaths of white poppies on unknown soldier graves in Tashkent, Leningrad and Moscow, where the wreath was given pride of place by the Moscovians.

Another year we visited Bulgaria where everything that could go wrong did so and always involving innocent parties - us!

Peggy was a most delightful companion, always happy, unruffled, keen to explore and to learn what could be learnt.

I miss Peggy very much and would like to pay the tribute that Peggy would have made, to Ivan and her family who cared for her so selflessly and kindly through her long months of pain.

Doreen Gower

Peggy was a founder member of the Radcliffe on Trent Peace Group, which

was started in the early eighties, following a well-attended meeting at the local school hall which she had helped to organize. She was to the fore in all our activities: delivering leaflets; collecting signatures on petitions; running street stalls; laying wreaths of white poppies on the village war memorial. It was in no small way thanks to Peggy that Radcliffe was one of the last surviving Nottingham CND neighbourhood groups.

She was part of the NCND contingent at many national events: linking hands round the Greenham Common perimeter; protesting at Molesworth; marching from the Thames Embankment to Hyde Park.

Most will remember her as the NCND membership secretary, a vital and time-consuming job which she undertook for many years. Even when progressing cancer had rendered her housebound and she was often in considerable pain, she continued her work for the cause.

Those who knew her will treasure her memory.

Jos Wood



Easter in Trafalgar Square Revisited

It's 33 years since I was last on a CND rally at Easter in London. In those days, of course, it took days of foot slogging from Aldermaston before we arrived in our tens of thousands, stopping all the traffic and packing into Trafalgar Square for the final rally.

Ok, so on this occasion it was only for the day, but as we travelled down in our hired coach, picking up the Leicester contingent on the way, there was that same sense of comradeship united in a common purpose as there had been all those years ago.

Disembarking near Westminster Abbey, banners unfurled we marched round Parliament square and up Whitehall towards the rally.

Here, across the road from Downing Street, we joined other contingents with banners from all across the country.

All right so we were only there in our hundreds and not thousands, let alone tens of thousands, but there was the same determination and enthusiasm; the same singing of protest songs both old and new, especially by our local Nottingham Clarion Choir; and even some of the same speakers, including Bruce Kent, former chair of CND, from all those years ago.

There were, however, some differences, including a wonderful home made 12 foot high giant Darth Vader Star Wars puppet. Also, when, at the end of the rally, we all surged across the road towards Downing Street, blocking Whitehall and stopping traffic, a group of Japanese tourists borrowed some of our placards

and joined us in an act of international solidarity.

Then, having brought Whitehall to a standstill, and still occupying the full width of the road, keeping up our protest chants, we marched towards Trafalgar Square with Darth Vader "leading the way".

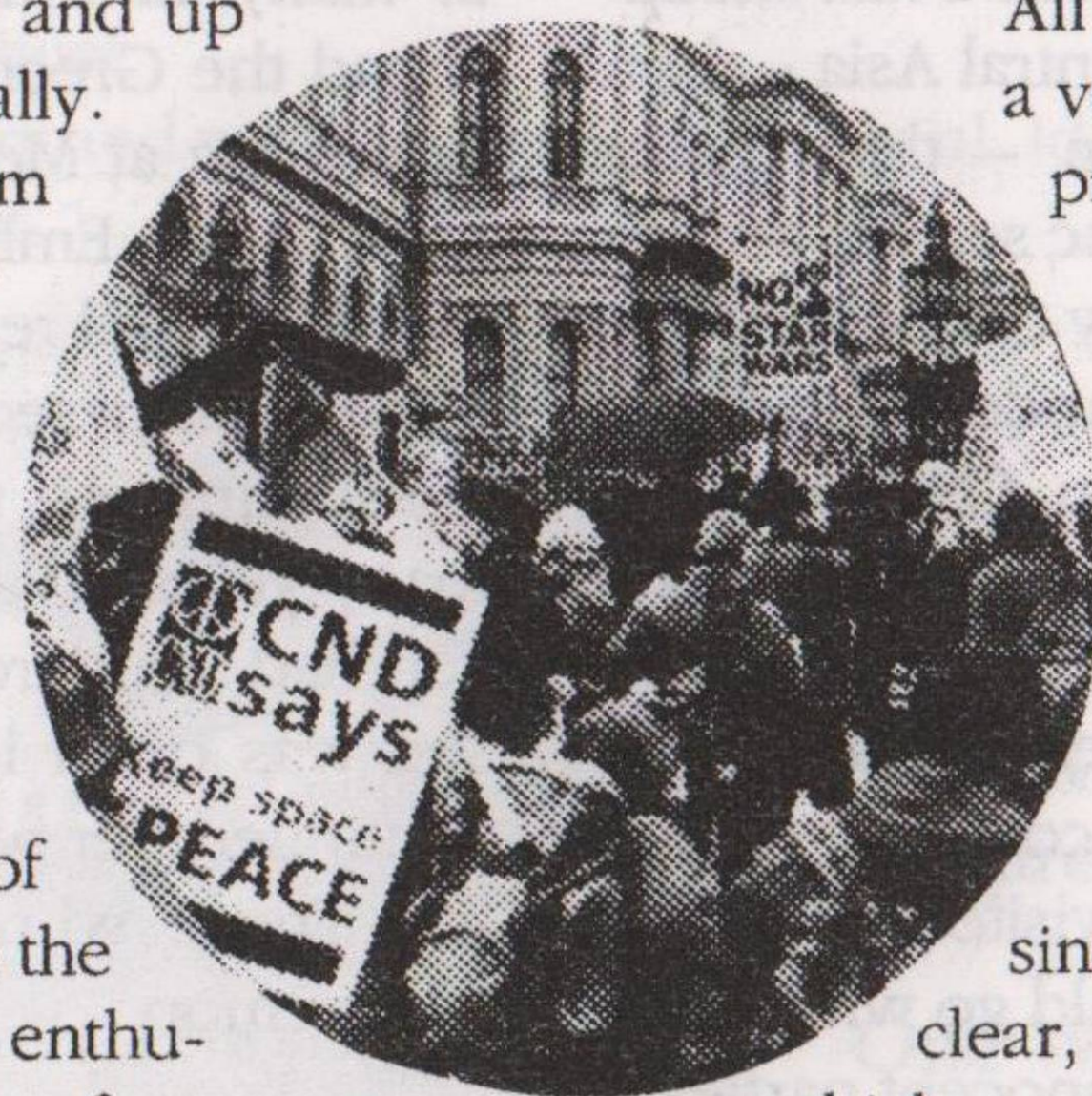
By the time we arrived in the Square the police had brought up considerable reinforcements and after much "to-ing and fro-ing", a little bit of, generally good humoured, pushing and shoving, and a couple of very minor skirmishes, we and they both settled for us having a final short impromptu rally.

All in all I felt that it had been a very successful CND Easter protest.

Despite our small numbers compared with 33 years ago, we received some, if limited, generally neutral/favourable coverage in the media.

In the two months since then it has become clear, not least from the way in which people have come and spoken to us when we have had our CND stall in town, that there is an increasing public awareness of the massive waste of resources and dangers involved in President Bush's Star Wars plans. With the recent shift in power in the American Senate against his proposals, indeed largely brought about by them, there is a real possibility of being able to bring pressure on the newly re-elected Labour government to change its position.

Ian Cohen



Lord Advocate's Reference - A Perverse Ruling

George Farebrother, World Court Project UK, April 2001

"They've done it before and they'll do it again, and it seems that only children weep" (Harper Lee: "To Kill a Mockingbird").

In October 1999 three women from Trident Ploughshares were acquitted by Sheriff Margaret Gimblett at Greenock Sheriff Court following a Trident disarmament action. The Lord Advocate referred the case to the High Court and there were two weeks of hearings in October and November 2000, which included arguments on the legality of British nuclear weapons.

The Court announced its judgment on 30 March 2001. Essentially, this said that: international rules of warfare do not apply in peacetime; government military policy cannot be questioned by the courts; Trident is not a threat until it is about to be used; and ordinary citizens must not "take the law into their own hands", even to prevent a crime or a terrible danger. Thus the Court failed to make the link between the Nuremberg Principles and present-day preparation of war crimes. We are expected to stand by and do nothing in the face of criminal conspiracy.

The three judges were unable to understand the nature of nuclear weapons - their devastating effects and their threat to all humanity. The nature of risk entirely passed them by. Risk involves the likelihood of a bad outcome multiplied by the badness of the outcome should it transpire. Even a small risk of nuclear war multiplied by near-infinity is itself infinite and must not be contemplated for a moment. If a thing can happen, then, given enough time, it will happen. To ignore this is criminal recklessness. However, the

court disregarded the difference between legitimate self-defence and reckless threats of mass destruction.

The judges paid insufficient regard to the International Court of Justice, the highest possible authority on international law. Its 1996 Advisory Opinion on the legality of nuclear weapons contained one minuscule loophole for their possible legal use - in an extreme circumstance of self defence. The High court seized on this as a justification for deterrence but took little account of the bulk of the Advisory Opinion which found that nuclear weapons are generally illegal and scarcely reconcilable with the rules of international humanitarian law.

The High Court has failed nuclear resisters and, indeed all humanity. It attempts to put the military and the Government above the law. It was scathing about the right of citizens to thwart the dangers and criminality of Trident nuclear weapons. There will therefore continue to be a conflict of interest between nuclear resisters and the State. They will have to choose between collaboration with preparations for criminal mass-murder and confronting the state system.

The Court's ruling is perverse. A legal system can be supported by people only if it remains firmly grounded on natural justice and morality. Crime prevention is natural if it is done nonviolently, safely and accountably. If the law cannot protect citizens who are acting to prevent State

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Surely star wars merits a mention during the election

by Hugo Young

Elections are about winning, but also about telling. This is a four-week contest for a four-year world in which many things will happen that the contest doesn't touch. Some such events are unforeseeable. Nobody would reasonably expect Tony Blair to seek a mandate to deal with all-out war in Macedonia, a global slump or a terminal crack-up in southern Africa, where I have just got back from. Some developments, on the other hand, are not only predictable but high on the agenda of people who can make them happen. Yet they're miles over the horizon the voters are invited to inspect.

A case in point is national missile defence. I'm confident that Mr Blair has said not one word about it. Not a squeak, not a murmur. It's possible that, in some distant corner of the homeland, William Hague may have folded NMD into his weird crusade for Britain to become a colony of the US rather than a fully functioning member of the European Union. The only politician who I know for sure has put missile defence firmly on his voters' doorsteps is Tam Dalyell, father of the House presumptive, whose response to the logic of devolution is never to mention housing, health or education, which the Scottish parliament takes care of, thus liberating him to regale Linlithgow with his strong objection to the militarisation of space.

This sparsity of concern reflects the narrow public mind. If only 5% of voters, an all-time low, tell Gallup, as they did the other day, that Europe is the most urgent problem facing the country, how much more microscopic must be the figure for

global defence. It is, after all, pretty abstract. And yet it's no longer quite so irrelevant to a British election as it was.

Arguably the most important political event anywhere in recent weeks was the defection of Jim Jeffords from the Republican side in the US Senate. It transferred control there to the Democrats. The byzantine ways of the Congress don't yet permit a clear assessment of the full meaning of this. But it's already obvious that the political context of NMD has changed, perhaps to deep effect.

Until now, NMD was taken as a done deal. The technical problems were wiped out by the political consensus that they could and must be solved. President Bush sent teams of prophets round the world to secure support for what was a domestic fait accompli. But the swing of one vote in the Senate changes that. The new majority leader, and the new chairs of both the foreign affairs and the armed services committees, have all called NMD in question in the past month, especially because of the threat any unilateral US action poses to Russia.

This sudden rearrangement of American realities could, among other things, leave Britain stranded. For Blair has been supportive of NMD. He doesn't go as far as Hague, who couldn't wait to saddle up at Bush's command. But the ancestral juices immediately began to run. The political establishment's terror of saying a word out of place duly ensured that it succumbed to the messages flowing from the likes of Irwin Stelzer and Richard Perle, bully-boy propagandists from the

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Surely star wars deserves a mention

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American hard right. The very idea that there might be another case, an essential critique of NMD, was suppressed from New Labour's brain.

The turnaround in Washington, however, presents an opportunity - or rather, an imperative need. There must be limits to London's subservience and one of them is surely the prospect of a Labour government supporting a Republican president against the opposition of Democrats who have acquired the power to frustrate his schemes. Jeffords' decision to close some of the doors on extremist Republicanism should be echoed here with an adult NMD debate instead of the furtive toadying we have seen so far this year.

Senator Jeffords has, in effect, given Europe breathing space to organise a serious position of its own. Instead of being hustled into an angry pretence of acquiescence, which is what happened last month, the major EU players have the

A Perverse Ruling

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crime then it has failed us all. Citizens will need to reclaim the law for ourselves and insist that it changes so that it bears some relation to the human values contained within international humanitarian law.

Only last month the Government let the cat out of the bag. Dr Lewis Moonie, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Defence, wrote in a letter: "Nuclear, biological and chemical weapons are indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction, specifically designed to incapacitate or kill large numbers of people". Quite simply, they are illegal; and the Government knows it.

This is not the end of the debate nor

chance to make a measured argument in support of the new doubters in Washington. That should be Europe's role. Britain, the special relation, has both the locus and the duty, instead of silencing debate, to lead it.

During the cold war, elections were the occasion for at least glancing attention to such issues. Britain's purpose in the world was part of the argument conducted not just by Harold Macmillan and Harold Wilson, but right the way up to the early Thatcher elections. Developments in Washington have now given a new dimension to the near-apocalyptic happening that may or may not unfold in the next four years. It is, at least, a matter worth presenting to the voters: telling them they should be interested, even if they're not. Blair wouldn't dream of wasting words on such selfless concerns. But I'm with Tam myself.

Taken from *The Guardian* May 29, 2001

of the legal process. There are other legal avenues to explore. Even if the judges are still unable to apply the law effectively to nuclear weapons, juries continue to be persuaded by arguments appealing to common justice and decent human instincts.

This summary is based almost entirely on a full initial legal assessment by Angie Zelter of Trident Ploughshares. To read

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Bush starts selling Star Wars

George Bush tried to gift wrap his controversial missile defence plans in a promise of unilateral nuclear weapons cuts yesterday, a strategy designed to make the "Son of Star Wars" less objectionable to Russia, China, and America's sceptical Nato allies.

Conspicuously dropping the word "national" from what have hitherto been called "national missile defence" plans, he said the US intended to defend "ourselves, our friends and our allies".

He confirmed that the US would go ahead with the untested scheme, developed under the Clinton administration, to position interceptor missiles on land, and perhaps at sea, but he said it would "consult closely" its allies before deciding on the final plan.

He offered no details and only a few general hints of the form that the missile shield will take, but made it clear that the US would not be constrained in its efforts by the 1972 anti-ballistic-missile treaty with the former Soviet Union.

That treaty, Mr Bush said, "does not recognise the present or point us to the future. It enshrines the past."

There were no details, either of his proposed cuts in nuclear weapons, nor any suggestion that they would be negotiated with Russia or anyone else.

"The United States will lead by example to achieve our interests and the interests for peace in the world," he said.

But he said he wanted to "reach out" to Russia, which he addressed at some length, as well as China, which he mentioned once in passing.

He said he was sending teams of envoys to Canada, Europe, Asia and Australia to discuss the plan.

Tony Blair was warned last night that he was being put in a near-impossible position by Mr Bush's campaign.

As the Conservatives challenged him to offer the US "clear support" on the project, in contrast to the doubts in other EU capitals, Donald Anderson, Labour chairman of the Commons foreign affairs committee said: "This may be the moment of truth. It will be seen in the context of Kyoto and growing unilateralism in Washington."

"It is a problem for Russia and China, and for Tony Blair. He tries to be a bridge, but how can you be a bridge between such contrary views?"

Downing St said it welcomed Mr Bush's "very open approach" and his intention to develop a framework for consultation, and that it shared his interest in doing this.

But ministers and officials are sceptical about the project, which will involve upgrading the early warning radar at Fylingdales on the North York Moors and building a 6.8-hectare (17-acre) X-band radar station.

Nevertheless, Whitehall and other capitals contrasted the promise of consultation with the peremptory way the White House announced its decision to pull out of the Kyoto protocol on reducing greenhouse gases.

Germany, after initial hostile reaction to the project, seems to have come round to the inevitable. France remains opposed, fearing that it will trigger a new arms race. Nato officials described the package as "sellable", pointing to the offer to cut the US nuclear stockpile.

Taken from The Guardian 2 May 2001

Nato snubs Powell over missile defence

America's Nato allies refused yesterday to endorse the Bush administration's plans for a "son of star wars" missile defence system and compounded the snub by rejecting US efforts to persuade them even to accept that the west faced a common threat from so-called "rogue states".

Reflecting the shared concern about the project, Nato foreign ministers meeting in Budapest agreed only to "continue substantive discussions" with Washington.

A surprisingly sharp communique added that the allies "intend to pursue these consultations vigorously, and welcome the United States's assurance that the views of allies will be taken into account as it considers its plans further".

Despite a recent diplomatic charm offensive by senior US officials, the prevailing view among allies is that there is

little evidence that a hugely expensive missile defence system would work. They say it could erode existing arms control agreements and lead to a new arms race.

In a minor concession, Mr Powell persuaded foreign ministers to omit from the joint statement any mention of the 1972 anti-ballistic missile treaty, which the Bush administration describes as a "relic of the cold war". Nato ministers last year called it "the cornerstone of strategic stability".

The US also diluted Nato's position on the comprehensive test ban treaty, which the US has not ratified. Yesterday's communique said only that as long as the treaty has not entered into force, Nato must urge all states to maintain the existing ban on nuclear testing.

Taken from The Guardian 20 May 2001

Senator's defection undermines Star wars

Senator James Jeffords single-handedly changed the political face of the United States yesterday, leaving the Republican party to become an independent thus handing control of the Senate to the Democrats.

Although his defection will not alter the overall complexion of the Senate, where centrists will continue to hold the balance of power, the chamber's procedural rules mean that Democrats will gain control of its legislative agenda. Political analysts predicted that the change would block President Bush's controversial programme, from his plans to build a missile

defence system to his producer-friendly energy policies.

Although the White House and the Democratic leadership argued yesterday that the switch opened up new opportunities for bipartisanship, some pundits said that it was more likely to create a gridlock in Washington. The missile defence scheme, which has outraged Moscow and Beijing, would be blocked and the Bush-Cheney energy plan, with its emphasis on oil, coal and nuclear production, have much dimmer prospects.

Taken from The Guardian 25 May 2001

Bunker-busting US 'mini-nukes' alarm scientists

18 April 2001

The Pentagon is examining the feasibility of producing a low-yield nuclear warhead capable of hitting deep fortified targets such as Saddam Hussein's underground bunkers. But US scientists warned yesterday that "mini-nukes" would lower the threshold of nuclear war.

The Pentagon is due to report to the Senate in July in response to a Republican request to it and the energy department to find a way of destroying "hardened and deeply buried targets". But a Pentagon spokesman insisted that work on mini-nukes had not yet begun.

Robert Sherman, head of the federation's nuclear security project, said: "We have gone 56 years without a nuclear weapon being used anywhere. There is universal recognition that once you use the first nuclear weapon it becomes a great deal easier for someone to use the second. "It's incredibly stupid to think you can use a small nuclear weapon, cross the nuclear firebreak and get away from it. Trying to sell it on the rationale that it can be used without collateral damage and that will be the end of it ... is incredibly irresponsible."

Russia closer to taking the world's nuclear waste

7 June 2001

Russia took a big step towards becoming the dumping ground for the world's nuclear waste yesterday when parliament scrapped a ban on the import of spent nuclear fuel.

Ignoring public opposition, environmentalists' protests, and expert opinion that the scheme is flawed and doomed, the lower house passed a package of amendments in support of a project which the government claims can earn Russia £15bn in the next 10 years by making it the world's biggest repository for other countries' unwanted nuclear waste. The bill

now goes to the upper house before President Vladimir Putin signs it into law.

Opinion polls show that up to 90% of Russians oppose the plan. Environmentalists collected 2.5m signatures of protest in an unsuccessful attempt to require a referendum on the issue, and yesterday experts at the Academy of Sciences warned that there would be "unavoidable catastrophic consequences for the ecology which will threaten the lives of Russians for centuries to come".

But the US holds the trump card: it has an effective veto on 90% of the potential imports because countries using US-designed reactors are not allowed to export their waste to a third country without US consent.

Leak shows nuclear trafficking doubled

14 May 2001

The worldwide smuggling of radioactive materials has reportedly doubled in the last five years, according to a leaked United Nations study, and there are now thought to be more than 100 terrorist organisations capable of developing a rudimentary atomic bomb.

The report, drawn up by the UN's terrorism prevention branch and detailed in the Sunday Herald newspaper, reveals that since 1993 there have been 550 recorded incidents of trafficking of nuclear materials across the globe. Most of the incidents involved materials such as radioactive scrap metal but one in 10 is said to have included weapons-grade plutonium or uranium.

The study quotes the head of the UN anti-terrorism unit as warning that much of the nuclear material in the former Soviet republics is poorly protected and the risk of some being stolen is growing.

A UN spokeswoman said yesterday that she could not confirm or deny the existence of the report or its findings.

CAAT Report on Labour

As we approach the end of the Labour Government's first term, it seems a good time to take stock of its record on the arms trade. As in other fields, the term began with high hopes. A few days after taking office as Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook announced that the country's foreign policy "must have an ethical dimension and must support the demands of other peoples for the democratic rights on which we insist for ourselves."

For a wild moment some of us supposed that this statement heralded drastic action against the arms trade. We should have noted other pronouncements. Cook's mission statement also made it "a top priority ... to promote British exports and boost British jobs". More important still, the Labour Manifesto proclaimed support for "a strong UK defence industry, which is a strategic part of our industrial base as well as our defence effort." What Labour did promise was a "responsible", "properly regulated" arms trade. The formula adopted was that licences would not be issued "for the sale of arms to regimes that might use them for internal repression or external aggression." Except that the word "might" was substituted for "are likely to", this was identical to the formula used by the previous government.

Crucially, repressive behaviour, denial of human rights and absence of democracy were not accepted as being in themselves reasons for blocking sales. So Saudi Arabia, Turkey, China and now Morocco are considered legitimate markets. Torture equipment, water-cannons and sniper rifles were banned, but the delivery of Hawk ground-attack planes to Indonesia, then a military dictatorship which was in illegal occupation of East Timor, went ahead. Even though the government

could plead that its predecessor had issued the Hawk licences, it seemed to many that it had failed an acid test at the very beginning of its rule.

But the UK government does not merely permit arms exports - it actively promotes them. A cautious academic study has concluded that the benefits accruing to the UK economy from arms sales, at £203m a year, are more than outweighed by subsidies amounting to £431m. Of these, £239m came through the Export Credit Guarantee system, which insures exporters and investors overseas against loss. More important still is diplomatic support, often at the highest level. The Prime Minister has gone out of his way to promote highly controversial arms sales to South Africa, and the Defence Secretary recently visited India in the hope of clinching the sale of 60 Hawk planes.

Through its constant referral back to the need for a competitive export trade the government has essentially, and heavily, relied on a sophisticated version of "If we don't others will". It was thus keen to establish a European 'Code of Conduct' to ensure that competitors would not take advantage of any virtuous abstention by the UK, but did not succeed in framing a code that would have any great effect.

Labour promised much greater transparency over arms exports, and to some extent this has been delivered. The 1999 Report on Strategic Export Controls provided for the first time details about the arms licensed and their destinations, and also about actual sales, although the information about sales covered less than a quarter of the real total. The Commons Select Committees have been able to provide searching criticism of the UK trade.

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Letter Writing

Belgium takes over the EU Presidency in July. Please write to the Belgian Prime Minister and several of his ministers making some or all of the following points about nuclear weapons and NMD:

- Write something about hoping the Belgians will use their Presidency to work for Peace;
- Will Belgium demand that the US remove its free-fall bombs under NATO control, from its country?
- Will Belgium work for NATO to abandon its policy of dependence on nuclear weapons? Could they give assurances that Europe will consistently oppose the US Ballistic Missile Defence programme (if you want to expand on this, use arguments in the previous Bulletin)?
- Could they give assurances that they will oppose any proposals or suggestions to introduce a nuclear element into a European military force, including low-yield nuclear weapons (under 5 kilotonnes) being developed by the US?
- Will Belgium oppose the European Space Agency being used for military purposes?

Each letter will cost 36p from U K, an "E" stamp. Write to:

Guy Verhofstadt, Prime Minister, Wetstraat 16, B-1000, Brussels, Belgium. fax 0032 2 512 6953

André Flahaut, Defence Minister, 8, rue Lambermont, B-1000, Brussels, Belgium. e-mail cabinet@mod.mil.be fax 0032 2 550 29 19

Louis Michel, Foreign Minister, 15, rue des Petits Carmes, B-1000, Brussels, Belgium. e-mail cab.ae@diplobel.org fax 0032 2 511 6385

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One of the arms trade's obvious abuses is 'brokerage', the process whereby UK-based businesses arrange arms transfers between two other countries. Legislation to control this business is in preparation, and though parliamentary time has not yet been found for it, there is reason to hope that it will be enacted early in the next parliament.

One striking success was the negotiation of the Ottawa Convention, whereby most countries - though unfortunately not the US or China - agreed to ban the manufacture and use of anti-personnel mines.

A big disappointment has been the

long-promised Defence Diversification Agency. Set up in 1998, it is a small and ineffective organisation with no clear remit. Instead of helping arms companies to convert to civil production, its emphasis appears to be on helping small companies to contribute to military needs.

The Defence Minister Dr Lewis Moonie told the Commons last February that "the Government believes that defence exports foster a healthy, technologically capable and competitive UK defence industry". So long as that mind-set prevails, steps towards the limitation (let alone the abolition) of the UK arms trade are likely to be little more than cosmetic.

Taken from www.caat.org.uk

Trident Ploughshares latest

29/30 May 2001. A Scottish local magistrate sent Marcus Armstrong, a peace and community worker from Milton Keynes, to prison after he refused to pay fines imposed for taking direct action against Trident. At Newbury Magistrates Court Bernard De Witte was sent to prison for non payment of fines for criminal damage (fence cutting at Aldermaston).

25 May 2001. The trial of Trident Ploughshares 2000 Pledgers Fr. Martin Newell and Susan van der Hijden at Chelmsford Crown Court finished today with a majority verdict of guilty. During the case embarrassing admissions of poor security were dragged out of the Ministry of Defence prosecution witnesses. Susan and Martin were released having already spent six months on remand. They had undertaken the Jubilee 2000 disarmament of a nuclear convoy vehicle at RAF Wittering on November 3rd 2000.

22 May 2001. Peace activists who last year took part in a direct disarmament action against a UK Star Wars communications facility have been given jail sentences after being found guilty of criminal damage. On 19th June 2000, Helen John, Angie Zelter and Anne Lee got through the new high security fence at Menwith Hill in Yorkshire in an attempt to

dismantle the inner fence that serves to protect the communications array designed to be part of the US Missile Defence system. They were found guilty of criminal damage; Helen John was sentenced to three months and Anne Lee to two months. Helen is standing as an independent parliamentary candidate in Tony Blair's Sedgefield constituency on a No Star Wars platform.

14 May 2001. 50 Arrests were made as anti-Trident campaigners blockaded AWE Aldermaston, holding up worker traffic entering the site for five hours.

27 Apr 2001 'Trident Three' activist Ulla Roder breached high-security at Faslane naval base on the Clyde in Scotland and spray-painted "Useless" on Britain's nuclear weapon submarine HMS Vanguard. The Danish campaigner said breaching high-security was "Easy-Peasy".

Trident Ploughshares is a campaign to disarm the UK Trident nuclear weapons system in a non-violent, open, peaceful and fully accountable manner. More details from www.tridentploughshares.org

