

Cross-Party Group on Nuclear Disarmament

Tuesday 13 June 1.00 p.m.

Minute

Present:

MSPs:

Bill Kidd, Richard Leonard

Invited guests:

Claire Duncanson

Non-MSP Group Members:

Janet Fenton (Secretary CPG, SCND, Secure Scotland),

Chris Barbour (Parliament MSP staff) Seonaid Stewart (Peace and Justice), David Kelly (Glasgow CND/Reclaim Our Clyde), David Mackenzie (Nukewatch), Ruth Sieland (UNH Scotland), Archippus Sturrock (Parliament MSP Staff), Anne McCulloch d'Lyske (Conscience), Anne Milne (Edinburgh CND), Isobel Lindsay (Scottish CND), Lynn Jamieson (Scottish CND), Steve Davies (ALBA), Margaret Ferguson Burns (Faslane Peace Camp), Liz Malcolm (Soroptomists)

Apologies:

Dr Olamide Samuel, Katy Clark MSP, Carol Acutt (Soko Gaki International, Maranne Pallister, Ros Mauchline (Pax) Guy Johnson (Medact, Michael Orgel (Medact), Karen Adam MSP, Bill Ramsey (SNP CND, PES), Araine Burgess MSP, Mark Ruskell MSP,

Agenda item 1

Minutes and welcome

Minutes of previous meeting, proposed by Seonaid Stewart, Seconded by David Mackenzie

Bill Kidd welcomed to Claire Duncanson, and offered apologies from Dr Olamide Samuel

Agenda item 2

Updates

UN Meetings on nuclear issues:

The Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee will take place at the UN in Vienna in August, and the Second Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW will be held in New York in November. A briefing paper was circulated and copies were given to Chris White for circulation to absent MSP members and it was agreed that these UN meeting should be discussed at a future meeting of the group.

Nukewatch (David Mackenzie) : Following a letter to the Community Safety Minister, Elena Whitham, Nukewatch has had a useful online meeting with officials from the Defence Policy Unit and the Resilience Unit, and have submitted follow-up questions. We have ongoing concerns about the quality and scope of convoy risk assessments, the questionable acceptance by the Scottish government of the MoD risk assessments, and the need for a clearer account of the role of Scottish civil authorities in responding to any serious accident involving the convoys. The risks posed by the convoys do not feature on public risk registers in Scotland – a policy decision based on a decision not to alarm the public. We now need to go back to the Minister with our concerns about public information.

Q and A

Isobel Lindsay (SCND) questioned whether the fact that Nukewatch amateur trackers was so effective in spotting and noting the convoy and its routes meant that the Government could see the potential terrorist threat

Response

David agreed with Isobel and pointed out that the MoD accepted that risk, stating in 2004 that disclosure of the route could threaten the existence of the British State, but that they consider that an appropriate risk

SCND Festival of Survival

(Lynn Jamieson) This is a Scottish CND whole day event on 4th November, focussing on the twin and urgent existential threats – nuclear war and climate collapse. The day will promote the Reclaim Our Clyde project.

Anne asked if stalls would be permitted and Lynn responded that stalls for related organisation are likely to be available.

Agenda item 3

Scottish Government and Feminist Foreign Policy:

Bill welcomed Dr. Claire Duncanson, Senior Lecturer in International Relations at the University of Edinburgh .

Claire noted that the independent report summarising the views of international and domestic stakeholders on what a feminist approach to foreign policy may mean for Scottish Government international engagement would be published on 15th June. The work is sited within the Government's Global Affairs initiative. Claire has additionally engaged with the Government in a number of workshops and studies that have ensured that civil society has participated in the Government's consultation.

Nuclear disarmament will be a central plank of the report. Claire gave a short account of the theoretical background, touching on the binary nature of our social discourse in which masculine values dominate. It is clear that a feminist approach addresses the values that apply to different concepts and how the so-called masculine attributes are valued more highly than those perceived as being based on attributes ascribed as female. It may be of value to increase the proportion of women in the work place or the think tank, but as long as the binary approach remains, the value that it gives to nuclear weapons will remain. The change requires valuing the abstract over the concrete, and not such distortions as celebrating a "precision strike" while ignoring the damage done. It is well established that the impact of nuclear weapons disproportionately affects women and girls. The masculine framing exalts strength and has delivered the received understanding of "security", which in turn devalues interdependence and a cooperative approach to security. The report will bolster the Government's anti-nuclear weapon stance and is based on the concept of the good global citizen. The work is not a set of policy papers but is rather an orientation.

(This presentation was filmed by Ruth Barrie (Waltzer films) and will be made available to CPG Member MSPs in due course)

Q and A

Anne McCullough-Lyske (Conscience) asked whether the right to withhold taxes for reasons of conscience should be written in to the national constitution. Claire agreed, noting that not every state (even in Europe) has established that right.

David Kelly (Reclaim The Clyde) questioned whether despite ScotGov being opposed to nuclear weapons we can move forward from traditional peace movement perspectives

David Mackenzie raised the issue of "femwashing".

Janet Fenton (Secure Scotland) asked what resonance the consultation had with MSP's particularly noting that four (cross party) WILPF member MSPs would already have a clear understanding of the the feminist approach response

Claire agreed that money is a key part of the problem. She also noted that ScotGov is taking its time over this and the consultation is in its early days, but seeking advocates amongs MSPs will be important. She reiterated that the feminist approach is about real integration of concepts, not the number of women in the room, although that is important as well and went on to point out that 10 states now have feminist

foreign policies, although this has to be balanced against any credit for the approach was the fact that it is not a vote-winner.

Bill Kidd commented on The feminist approach providing a useful divergence from conventional aspects of disarmament that we need to think far more about and welcomed a clear explanation of the rationale that can help us to have more impact.

Agenda item 4

Bairns Not Bombs;

Janet Fenton told the groups that The Nuclear Information Service has now digitised John Ainslie's extensive archive on their website and made this available to researchers, academics and campaigners. Spokesman has published a compact book which highlights the unique position that Scotland can play in global efforts for nuclear disarmament, through bringing together in a handy volume the particular reports that together inform John's Trident: Nowhere to Go argument. John Ainslie's research is still relevant and even key to the formulations currently being undertaken by the Scientific Advisory Group in advising TPNW Member States on timelines for dismantling the warheads and on verification standard and measurements that will become essential as the TPNW becomes universal. A copy of the book was given to each member of the Cross party group.

Lynn Jamieson responding by underlining how it was the existence of the two elements of the Clyde nuclear weapon complex (the submarine station at Faslane and bomb store at Coulport) that made its relocation unfeasible, particularly the deep water storage and the explosive handling jetty. She stressed that for an independent Scotland early accession to the TPNW who provide certainty in the face of the intimidation and bullying powers opposed to the removal of the weapons.

Q and A

Isobel Lindsay pointed to the value of John Ainslie's work in showing how quickly effective disarmament could be achieved.

Steve Davis noted that only a minority of the jobs at the Clyde bases were directly connected to the nuclear weapon system.

Bill Kidd MSP thanked everyone and closed the meeting.