

Aldermaston Update!

Quarterly Newsletter of the Aldermaston Women's Peace Campaign

April 2001

Perverse judgements!

The negative result on 29 March of the judicial review of the process by which the Environment Agency issued (in early 2000) an Authorisation for radioactive discharges from Aldermaston should perhaps have come as no surprise. The one crumb of comfort was that Judge Turner acknowledged that the Environment Agency acted unlawfully in that they should have consulted MAFF. But what the judgement really confirmed was that the production of nuclear warheads by the British government (ie military nuclear production) is not subject to the same European environmental regulations as the rest of the nuclear industry.

In Judge Turner's opinion, the activities of a military site – Aldermaston – are exempt from the Health and Safety provisions of the Euratom Treaty. The judgement also – stated that the EA had no need to make any independent evaluation of the justification for the emissions as the justification and legality of the Trident missile system were beyond the scope of the Agency (no surprises there then)

The Environment Agency were delighted and stated that the judgement meant that the authorisations – issued in 2000 – are both “lawful and in the public interest”. But the reality is that the judgement states that the environmental impact of Trident production is outside the scrutiny of the law.

Just one day later, on 30 March, the Lord Advocate's Review (LAR) of Sheriff Gimlett's decision to acquit Trident Ploughshares activists Angie, Ulla and Ellen for their disarmament of Maytime (the submarine testing facility in Loch Goil) was given. The LAR judgement basically threw out any defences that use international law, stating that international humanitarian law (the laws of war) are only applicable in a time of war. This seem to imply that states can prepare as much as they like for nuclear war, but their preparations for such wars cannot be ruled illegal under international law until they have actually failed to discriminate between civilian and military targets. – until they've actually killed and maimed thousands of people – and until they've destroyed the environment for the next 10,000 years.

We are not that naïve to believe that the state will just lie down, roll over, and give us the verdicts we want.



photo: Manuela (l) outside High Court in London during judicial review.

We may use the legal process to challenge the states' preparations for nuclear war; some of us may even accept – by using the legal process – that it is possible to regulate or control wars through a legal process. But can we use the legal process – can we use the courts – to challenge what is – as both these judgements suggest, outside the law?

Two separate branches of the judiciary – one in England, the other in Scotland - have within two days, come up with the same story: the law is there to protect Britain's nuclear weapons – from production to deployment.

The hard work of pursuing legal challenges to the legitimacy of nuclear weapons is unlikely – on its own – to bring about an end to nuclear weapons. A combination of legal challenges, non-violent direct action and an empowered and visible mass opposition to just might.

Inside this issue

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The Big Blockade

Organised by TP2000 and Scottish CND the Big Blockade on 14 February succeeded in closing the Trident base at Coulport for X hours; 386 people were arrested – including our AWPC on-the-spot reporter, Jean Kaye

Not on the spot for very long as I arrived at the evil nuclear sub base at 6.30am and by 7.30am was sitting in a police van for transport to a Glasgow police station. However I can report that there were lots of people milling about outside North Gate, some arrests were already in progress and more protesters were arriving. Also literally hundreds of police—field day for all the Strathclyde criminals? The bit I saw felt good; as our van moved away we could see that the road was completely blocked. A drive through beautiful countryside, past Loch Lomond, snow on the hills though the sun was shining brightly by this time; how dare they put these obscene weapons in such a lovely place—or anywhere else for that matter!

Not a lot more I can say as I didn't get out of Govan police station until 6pm. Was taken to the Quaker Meeting House by Di who, in true Cruisewatch mode appeared outside as I was released. The Quakers did an amazing job of feeding the returning arrestees and TP2000 were very efficient in checking who was still in custody and directing those released to their coaches.

I was slightly apprehensive about doing an action with a new affinity group but there were several women whom I knew from AWPC in my group so it was fine. I must say I was somewhat incensed at being told I was charged with 'disorderly conduct'— I thought I sat down in a very calm and orderly manner—and that going limp constitutes 'resisting arrest' Interesting that in Scotland police bail is called 'interim liberation' according to the green notice on the wall of my cell. The Govan police station was reserved for women and was staffed by women police officers, some of them looking as if they had only just left school. After finger-printing and photographing it was a bit of a surprise when we were released without a bit of paper to turn up at a later date or even report for possible future summons.

TP 2000 camp

The next TP 2000 camp at Aldermaston will be held from 10- 15 May. The women's camp will be extended to cover these dates. **AWPC is organising a women's action for Monday 14 May, bring wool and meet at camp on Sunday 13 to find out more** There will also be a mixed blockade at 7am on 14 May, organised by TP and London Region CND. For details of transport & training in your area ring 020 7607 2302

Trash Trident Part Three

IMPORTANT NOTICE



****NEW TRIAL DATE****
from 30 April
Manchester Crown Court

Rosie and Rachel's trial is now due to go ahead on 30 April. This will be the third and final trial that both women have faced for damaging HMS Vengeance.

Their action took place in February 1999 and the legal process has now taken over two years to run its course. In September 2000 both women were found not guilty on one of their two charges of causing damage to the sub. They now have to defend themselves against the second charge.

Sustaining a defence campaign over three trials and more than two years has been a costly business – in both financial and human resource terms. If you can offer support in either of these areas – please get in touch.

Please contact us if you would like to offer support
awtt tel (m) 07808 553778
e-mail: awtt@hotmail.com

www.gn.apc.org/aldermastonwpc or www.gn.apc.org/tp2000

AWPC website launched

Visit

www.gn.apc.org/aldermastonwpc
and see Aldermaston Women's Peace Campaign online.

The site has information about AWPC campaigns, forthcoming events, links to other groups, an AWTT page and soon, Update! itself will be available – with a full catalogue of previous issues.

We hope to use the website to reach out to more women, and to present an alternative opinion about nuclear weapons. We will continue to publish Update! in paper form and will also use our email list and leaflets to keep people in touch with what we are doing.

So, to keep in touch with what AWPC are up to, hear the latest news and views from camp, and find out about forthcoming actions and events.

But don't just visit us in cyberspace! Come to camp – second weekend of each month. See back page for dates and details.

In Court



Helen and Andrea from the Women's Peace Camp were among a group of anti-Trident activists on trial in Newbury Magistrates Court on 18th January. They were arrested – along with several other camp women – during the women's blockade at Falcon Gate in May. This was part of the TP blockade which brought traffic entering the base to a standstill for nearly an hour. Despite the demonstration being banned by Chief Constable Pollard of Thames Valley Police (under the 1986 Public Order Act), over 150 people took part in the blockade. Even though almost 50 of the blockaders were arrested, only seven people – including Andrea and Helen – were charged. Of these, only Andrea was charged with breaking the ban. Andrea said "The fact that so many people ignored this ban shows the strength of feeling over the illegal manufacture of nuclear weapons at AWE Aldermaston." Helen, who was charged with said "The real criminals are those who continue to prepare weapons of mass destruction inside Aldermaston, not those who try to peacefully enforce international law." After some good arguments by Andrea, the charge under the public order act was dropped, but both were found guilty of obstruction of the highway and fined £50 and ordered to pay £100 costs (along with Ganesh and Helen John)

Roger Franklin, Joan Meredith and Ulla Roder also appeared in court on 20 January, charged with criminal damage for attempting to enter AWE during the TP camp last May. Despite a long judgement, in which the magistrate argued that their defence was invalid – no surprises there then! – then he decided not to impose any "criminal sanction" (a fine or imprisonment) on the three "in view of their honesty and sincerity. His generosity was rather limited – as he imposed court costs of £150 and a £200 compensation order on each of them! Roger and Joan have a long record of not paying fines for what they see as their crime prevention work. Last August Joan was ordered to sit at the back of the court for a day for refusing to pay a previous fine.

EA Judicial Review

On 11 January before a packed court of lawyers and other interested parties, Judge Turner heard the case brought by Manuela Marchiori and NAG (Nuclear Awareness Group) Ltd. against the Environment Agency (EA). They argued that the EA had wrongly issued a new Radioactive Discharge Authorisation to AWE in April 2000. NAG and Manuela's case is based on arguments that the EA:

- did not examine the legality of the activity for which they were issuing authorisation;
- breached their legal duty to await the decision of the Secretary of the State for the Environment on whether or not to call in the application;
- breached their legal duty to receive approval from MAFF (Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food) before issuing the authorisation;
- did not comply with Chapter Three of the Euratom Treaty on health safety covering military and civil radioactive discharges, and that they failed in their duty to notify the EC of its discharge authorisation.
- ignored the International Court of Justice advisory opinion on the end product of the industrial practice it was regulating – that is, that use of Trident nuclear weapons would breach international humanitarian law.

The case finished on 16 January, and the judgement was delivered by Justice Turner on 29 March 2001. He dismissed Manuela and NAG Ltd's application and concluded that although the Agency had acted unlawfully in failing to reconsult MAFF before granting the authorisations, that military activities are exempt from the health and safety provisions in chapter 3 of the EURATOM Treaty, and that independent evaluation of the justification and legality of Trident production was beyond the scope of the Agency. He also refused the applicants leave to appeal and awarded costs against them.

NAG issued a statement reflecting their disappointment at the result, emphasising that corners had been cut in the consultation procedure because the contract for the management of AWE was about to change hands. NAG felt that the procedures laid down to ensure adequate scrutiny of the authorisation to discharge radioactive waste into the environment were sacrificed to the short term needs of AWE.

NAG were particularly disappointed at the failure to acknowledge that radioactive discharges need to be regulated – whatever their source, and said "Out in the real world it makes no sense for civil installations to be forced to clean up their act if the military can pollute at will." Pointing out that emission levels are set to rise under the new authorisation, NAG concluded that the health and safety of local people and the long-term protection of the environment have lost out to military and political interests

Shareholders Action

Serco Group plc, along with Lockheed Martin UK Ltd and BNFL currently runs AWE Aldermaston for the Ministry of Defence. Serco held its AGM 10 am at the National Physical Laboratory, Teddington, Middlesex, on 29 March. AWPC shareholders went along thinking that the AGM would provide us with an excellent opportunity to both question Serco directly about aspects of their management of AWE, as well as informing other shareholders that they are making money out of Britain's nuclear weapons production.

Five women from AWPC – four of whom were rather late! – attended the meeting. A few more of us and we would have outnumbered the “serious” shareholders who could be bothered to make it. Charlotte made two excellent interventions, challenging the board and shareholders present to understand what the company is doing by investing in and profiting from the AWE contract. There was absolutely no provision for anyone to ask any questions of the board – although at the end of the meeting, realising it was our only opportunity, women stood up and asked questions while the shareholders and board scuttled out of the room as Hazel ranted a poem specially written for the occasion. After the meeting some of the rather embarrassed directors agreed to answer some of our questions, though it became glaringly obvious that none of them had any idea of what actually goes on at Aldermaston.

The group's annual report includes details about their social and environmental responsibility- they are “currently conducting an audit of our performance in these areas – and ‘maintaining partnership with the community’”. More specifically, concerning AWE they say they are ‘currently discussing a Public Private Partnership which would extend our 10 year contract by a further 15 years and enable our consortium to raise private finance for a series of major capital works’. The extension of the contract – only a year after being awarded the initial contract – is worrying, especially in view of the track record of both BNFL and Lockheed Martin on safety issues. Serco claim that “Both the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate and the Environment Agency have praised our safety and environmental performance to date”. But if you read those reports – available on the web – this claim seems rather dubious.

Serco also report that “Our operations have already been extended to include support for the weapons convoys serving AWE- a significant demonstration of our customer's confidence in our capability.” As far as we know, the MDP have now taken responsibility for the weapons convoys from the RAF, and that the convoys may be garaged at AWE, rather than Wittering.

So, having failed to get any answers at the AGM we are wondering who wrote their annual report for them! . As we generously pointed out to the departing shareholders and board ; we'll be back! (next year)

Camp News

April Camp

No special activities are planned for this camp – but as its the first anniversary of the takeover by Serco, BNFL and Lockheed Martin, there may be the opportunity for some sort of action. Having consulted with a local farmer, it has been agreed that camp will go ahead whilst the area remains clear of foot and mouth disease; we will review the situation just before each camp if the situation has changed. However, women from rural areas are advised to consider the implications of coming to camp.

May Camp

We decided to extend the May camp, as several camp women are also involved in the TP camp, and thought we would like to open the women's camp early. We'll be there from Thursday 10 to Tuesday 15.

AWPC is organising a women's action for Monday 14 – we haven't yet decided what we will do, so women interested are encouraged to come and plan with us at camp on the afternoon of Sunday 11 May. Bring wool and any useful props. We'll also be having a Beltane party on the Saturday night (TP alcohol rules do not apply). There will also be a mixed blockade on Monday 14, see details on p2.

June Camp

Nothing exciting planned as yet, so come to camp in April or May and help us with our planning! Alternatively see the diary page on the website for details nearer the time (www.gn.apc.org/aldermastonwpc).

July Camp

We're hoping that this will be a good weekend for women who've never been to camp before or women who haven't been for ages. With workshops, guided tours and a range of other activities, we hope women will come and find out the joys of camping and campaigning at the same time, and/or enjoy themselves in one of the few regular women only spaces in the country. The extended camp – from Friday to Monday – will include a Crossing Paths – where we hope women from other campaigns will share information about their activities.

What else are we up to?

At our strategy meeting in December, we also planned several other activities including more stalls, meetings and events which would focus on raising awareness of AWE and AWPC in the local community and in large towns nearby like Reading and Basingstoke.

Scene of the Crime exhibition An exhibition/installation, based on last October's Scene of the Crime event, will be available later in the year. We are actively looking for venues which would be able to host this exhibition looking at the nuclear crimes committed at AWE Aldermaston.

Publicity If you are able to distribute publicity leaflets about AWPC and the events and actions we organise, please contact us

The Roving Reporter

Ah, a ten year ambition finally realised. Cycling through Aldermaston, free as a bird...even if for only a few minutes. What exhilaration, what pure fun; a moonlit night, crisp air, open road and a really nice bike....

It happened like this. A double blue convoy (2 special nuclear materials carriers with full police escort) left Aldermaston for Sellafeld (?) on Monday 11th January; first possible return day Wednesday...so there I was, in a layby, Wednesday. No convoy. Hours of sitting, in need of exercise; result, ended on a roof on Aldermaston (attended by the AWE Fire Engine, who snipped the lock of the compound gate I had used en route to the roof, since the MDP had no key), still hopeful the convoy might return horribly late after being stuck in traffic. Nope. Thursday ditto. Friday saw the convoy finally home (beautiful new escorting Range Rovers!), and me pelting back to Southampton to join the family at the cinema...only to hit a huge traffic tailback. I turned round, but unable to meet my deadline I had no immediate need to return home...so.. I spent the next hour or so rolling around in frost-crisping bracken inside Aldermaston; disconcertingly, where I was, I kept losing a leg up to my hip down deep holes – it's an odd sensation! Having evaded the police cordons thrown round my point of entry, I had the place to myself – whew. I went up and round a building or two, and then I found an unlocked bike outside the front door of a building with an open gate.... Oh bliss. I needed to get home, which meant making contact with the MDP in some form or other; what better way than appearing on camera at speed on a bike? So I sped past Decoy Ponds and on to another interesting building, where I met two doghandlers minus (hungry) dog; after some reclining I entered a police van for ejection from Main Gate, but had a slight and rather noisy (on my part) hold up as an unfortunate sergeant was allotted the task of serving me with a S69 Aggravated Trespass warning. After some aggravation he tore it up, and I left Aldermaston....

First citizen's building inspection of 2001 at Aldermaston

On a grey, but-for-once-not-raining Saturday lunch time I heaved myself over the fences into Aldermaston, and potted off towards the interior (it helps to put off the dogs to put as many fences between your point of entry and wherever you are going). I finally ended up at a familiar road, which is awfully straight, and there was a van watching for the unwary woman. So I went up on a roof, and sat there munching my lunch (well, alright, slurping up crumbs since I had rolled on my biscuits at some point) and watching the world go by...the odd MDP van and a doghandler trotting purposely down the road.

Then I got to feeling guilty, sitting there at my ease with the whole of Aldermaston to explore; I really ought to be trying some doors and being diligent instead of indigent. So I ran my eye along the building opposite, pretending to examine the doors for the type that I would most likely be able to open – ie having a handle. On the third run through I decided I had not been mistaken; it was difficult to see from this distance, but it did appear as though one set of doors were not flush with each other. OK; if I went for that door it was likely the doghandler was somewhere near enough to see me; but if I didn't I wouldn't achieve anything either.

Reluctantly I slid down the ladder, nipped over the pathway to be faced by a relatively small fence. Hmm, should I take off my boots for a clean climb? Fortunately I decided not to, and I shambled and slid over and made for the door when the familiar shout (shriek) came from behind: "Halt! Stand still or..." I forgot to listen to the rest and scamper through the door, slamming it shut and bolting it (I think) before the doghandler can reach it. What fun; I'm now on the inside and he is on the outside, furiously informing his shoulder (radio) of the bad news. Unfortunately the building, though beautifully heated, appears empty. Just before the last room there is a door to the outside with a key in the handle.... In the room are cabinets of keys, safely locked away...with the key in the lock; and loose boxes of keys; and two telephones.

I have time to ring homebase to let them know where I am, and then I start in on my dessert (apple) just as dog and handler burst in. I follow them out; I am invited into the front of my transport/MDP van, and we bumble on out to Main Gate.

But I have a problem. If/when it occurs to them that I have been alone in a room full of keys they may get the heeje beejees; and they may later accuse me of taking one/some, and I will find it impossible to prove a negative. So I suggest perhaps I ought to be searched....so I am, and then I amble off back to my van; and on the way the sun comes out, and the trees are nearly budding, and a cock pheasant slides away into the bushes. So I'm sorry, women, it was an empty building (almost), but it was inspected....

NEW VENUE, NEW DATE!

Susan & Martin's trial for damaging the nuclear weapons convoy

Chelmsford Crown Court on 21 May 2001

Both are currently on remand.

To offer support or prison visits tel 01908 663 652. Donations can be sent to 38 Twinflower, Walnut Tree, Milton Keynes MK7 7LH

Policemen of the world

*We are the world's policemen
So you all have to do as we say.
You want to have world peace? then
Our stars predict the only way*

*You will keep your kings and dictators,
Your juntas and petty regimes,
If the colour of your policy makers
Fits in with our own colour schemes*

*We don't like Red and we're iffy about Green,
Gold is our favourite hue,
Some shades of Pink we consider obscene,
But we're very much in favour of Blue*

*We have rather nasty ways of dealing
With people who try to overthrow
A ruler with tactics appealing
To our own ideas of running the show.*

*We oppose all weapons of mass destruction
And view them with serious alarms,
Unless their responsible production
Is safely under our protective arm*

*We keep our eye on loners out there,
Self-sufficiency will not do.
If you don't join in world market prices fair
Our elbow goes in and sucks to you.*

*We are the world's true democracy,
We carry Freedom's torch a burning flame.
Don't anyone accuse us of plutocracy,
With no dosh how you gonna join the game?*

*We specialise in seeking earth's resources
Too precious to lie idly underground.
You must recognise your one and only course is
To allow us to dig up what we've found*

*We'll free you from the hard oppressor's hand,
Providing we see him as a threat.
If you're hurt in the process, without home or land,
We'll accept it as part payment of your debt.*

*Remember! We are the world's policemen
So you all have to do as we say.
You all want to have world peace? the
Go for it! So long as you're going Our Way.*

Hazel

6-9 July 2001
Aldermaston Women's
Peace Camp
Falcon Gate, Nr Tadley
Berkshire
camping
is
fun!
visit the heart of Britain's nuclear weapons production

This camp is being specially designed for new women who are coming to camp for the first time. There will be lots of basic info and workshops on offer about the base, nuclear weapons, the camp, direct action, and women-only organising. The idea is to create an open, welcoming environment for new women to feel comfortable in and for there to be space to ask lots of questions and find out about Britain's nuclear weapons.

- If you are coming to camp for the first time and want to stay over, we suggest you bring the following things: tent, bedmat, sleeping bag, food/money for food, warm clothes, boots
- If you do not have a tent or sleeping bag, let us know in advance and we will arrange sleeping space for you.
- Nearest train stations: Mortimer, Aldermaston or Reading.
- Lifts from stations to camp available. Call us in advance to arrange yours.

For more info
call 0708 553 778 or
e: aldermastonwpc@hotmail.com
www.gn.apc.org/aldermastonwpc

Saturday 7 July is...

...women crossing paths...

an opportunity to meet with women from other campaigns and share ideas and action.
A one-day event – as part of "Camping is fun"

Is camping enough?



Women occupy a roof at February camp

In this article Juliet raises some questions about protest at Aldermaston. Articles continuing the debate would be welcome for the next issue of Update!

This difficult "protest" business a la Aldermaston

"You know the rules of the game" is a common MDP statement at Aldermaston. Well, actually, I don't. However they appear to be thus: we are allowed to "protest" on MOD land outside the gates, as long as we are not too much of a nuisance; and on those terms the MDP, as police officers, will protect us.

So what does this permitted "protest" consist of? Sitting round a camp fire; holding banners; walking round the outside of the fence. Well and good. Not getting in the way; not stopping any "lawful activity"; not making people "uncomfortable".

In fact, not actually effectively creating circumstances which might stop someone in their tracks long enough to think about their actions. So this is protest as per the MDP; this is respecting the boundaries between fences, between activities which are lawful (making weapons of mass destruction) and unlawful (trying to stop the making of weapons of mass destruction). Anyone stepping beyond these boundaries is breaking the "rules" and the law. And the gatekeepers deciding which behaviour is acceptable protest, and which is

breaking rules, is the government, the MOD, the MDP and the courts...in so far as the latter are allowed into the equation.

Hence it has been put to me that the MOD are unanimous in allowing us to camp outside Falcon Gate, and those that break the rules and enter the Establishment are not playing the game, and are putting at risk the lawful protest of those who stay outside.

But hang on a minute, who says it is a game, and who makes the rules? The facts are quite different: the government is involved in extremely serious crimes against humanity in producing and researching into weapons of mass destruction; the MOD, as landowners and employers, are criminals; and the private police force (executive agency) of the MOD guarding this haven of crime is composed of constables who have taken an oath to uphold the law without fear or favour. Despite this oath they only arrest rule-breaking protesters, not the makers of the weapons; and despite this oath they are asked to act outside the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (which authorises and regulates their use of the criminal [public] law), and are instructed to act as private agents of a private landowner in the private law of trespass – behaviour their oath precludes them from.

So who are the lawbreakers and the rule breakers? And why is such a serious business described as a "game"?

People on each side of the fence see those "on the other side" as misguided or beyond-the-pale criminals. Those outside the fence are portrayed by the Establishment as scrounging (get a job!) criminals (or potential criminals), whilst those inside are hard working individuals labouring for their country (and their pay packets, nice cars, homes and suits). But those outside the fence see those inside the fence as criminals costing us the earth.

Snippets from the evil empire.....

MOD POLICE SET FOR CIVILIAN DUTY

Watch out, there's a MOD plod about!

Legislation brought before the Commons in January 2000 will give nearly 4000 ministry of defence police officers the authority to act outside military premises. So instead of hanging around waiting for Juliet and the odd terrorist to pop into Aldermaston, our very own mod-plods will be out there, helping to combat rural crime. Apparently the Police Federation have opposed the plans, expressing concerns about the level of training MoD police have received.

THE DU CONNECTION

Following the outcry about the use of DU in Kosovo, Bosnia and Iraq at the beginning of the year, it came as little surprise to find that the technology of DU weapons was developed at AWE Aldermaston.

Future camp dates

- May 12-14
- TP camp 10-15 May
- June 8-10
- July 6-9
- August 10-12

Camp mobile phone
07808 553778

Camps usually run from around 8pm on Friday, until 2pm on Sunday. All women are welcome; supportive men may visit in daylight hours. The camp is situated near a main road, but is suitable for animals and children when supervised. The camp is fairly accessible, but more information for disabled women is available by contacting AWPC. Please bring a sleeping bag and tent to sleep in if you can. Contact us in advance of a camp if you need to borrow these. Vegetarian and vegan food is communal. Either bring food to share or put money in the kitty. If you are coming by train, aim for Mortimer railway station.

We look forward to seeing you

Contact:

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www.gn.apc.org/aldermastonwpc

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In the next issue

- TP2000 visit Aldermaston (again) – Report on the May Trident Ploughshares Disarmament Camp
- Rosie and Rachel in court

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