

DIARY DATES

A NUCLEAR-FREE FUTURE ALL WALES CONFERENCE

Saturday 19th February
Old College, Aberystwyth. 10.30 - 5.00
More info: Linda Rogers 01248 490715

WPJF PLANNING MEETING

Monday 21st February, 6pm
Basement, 35 Kingsmills Rd, Hightown.

POLITIKA CAMPAIGN NIGHTS

From 8pm. Alexander's, Rufus Court,
off Northgate Street.
Sun 27 Feb - Chester Stop the War.
Sun 27 Mar - Amnesty.

BLOCK THE BUILDERS TRAINING AND ACTION

Sunday 27-Monday 28 February
Aldermaston AWE. This action is depend-
ent on the outcome of the planning appli-
cations which will be decided on 23rd Feb.
More info: 07969 739 812

A EUROPE FOR PEACE

Saturday 5th March 10.15-5.00
Mechanics Institute, Manchester.
More info: 0161 273 8283

ALL WALES DEMO & DAY OF ACTION "RESPONSIBILITY AND WAR"

Saturday 19th March, Aberystwyth
March and demo AM, Seminar PM.
Speakers include Phil Shiner, human
rights lawyer, Milan Rai and members of
the Peace Tax 7. WPJF is hoping to
organise a coach. Call: 0845 330 4505
or email: wrexhamsaw@yahoo.com
asap if you want to book a place.

NATIONAL STOP WAR DEMO

Saturday 19th March, London

PUBLIC MEETING WITH MILAN RAI

Monday 21st March, 7pm
Trinity Church, King St, Wrexham.
How Can We Stop Al Qaeda? Author Milan
Rai of 'Justice Not Vengeance' condemns
the Government's "war on terror", analy-
ses the threat from al Qaeda, and sets
out a positive security agenda to reduce
the risk of anti-Western terrorism.
More info: 0845 330 4505

IT'S ALL RIGHT WITH ME

It's the wrong time; I was wrong, for
Though this war is charming, it's the wrong war
In the wrong place, but such a charming place
That it's all right with me.

You're George Wrong Bush, call me Wrong Blair;
We said he was arming; we were wrong there;
It's the wrong scare, but do we really care?
No, it's all right with me.

You can't know how happy I am that we met;
I'm strangely attracted to you.
You may not have mastered the whole alphabet;
Whatever you say, I just do.

We have smart bombs, such a strike force,
Precision guided to the wrong wars
In the wrong cause, but such a noble cause
That it's all right with me.

You can't know how happy I am that we met
I'm strangely attracted to you.
You may not have mastered the whole alphabet;
Whatever you say, I just do.

It's the wrong war on the wrong soil
Though the oil is tempting, it's the wrong oil
It's not our oil, but it's such tempting oil
And it's all quite, quite free
And that's all right;
Yes, it's all right;
Yes, it's all right with me.

Les Barker

www.mrsackroyd.com

IMPEACH BLAIR ROADSHOW IN WREXHAM

A cross-party group of MsP is calling for Parlia-
ment to use ancient powers to impeach the
Prime Minister for his actions on Iraq. There was
an **Impeach Blair Public Meeting** in Wrexham
on January 21st - report in next issue - with
speakers Adam Price, the Plaid Cymru MP who
began the impeachment process, and Mehdi
El-Radhi, an Iraqi architect now living in Wales.

It is vital that the campaign to impeach Blair is
supported throughout Britain and is not just a
Parliamentary affair. Find out more about the
campaign and sign the Impeach Blair petition at
the Impeach Blair web site:

www.impeachblair.org

FAIRFORD COACH CASE APPEAL JUDGEMENT

We have reported in WPJNs 6 and 10 on the case of the 120 protesters prevented in March 2003 from reaching USAF Fairford. Coaches carrying the protesters from the London area were stopped by the police a few miles from Fairford. The passengers were searched then put back on the coaches, which were forced to return to London without stops under police escort. Even after leaving the coaches some protesters were followed and harassed by the police.

The protesters brought an action in the High Court in February 2004, challenging the legality of the police action. The judges reached an ambiguous conclusion, and both the protesters and the police appealed against the judgement. On Dec 8th, following hearings in October, the Law Lords gave their verdicts on the cross-appeals by Fairford Coach Action, representing the protesters, and Gloucestershire Constabulary.

The original verdicts were upheld in each case, meaning that the police were held to have acted lawfully in preventing the protesters from reaching the air base, home to the B-52 bombers carrying out illegal murderous attacks on Iraq, but that in escorting the coaches back to London without any stops the police unlawfully detained 120 people: "virtually prisoners" in the words of an appeal judge.

No one was arrested at the time and the protesters are now considering suing the police for wrongful detention. Although refused leave to appeal to the House of Lords, they may also take their case to the European Court of Human Rights, as the right to protest was clearly denied them. Barry Hugill, of the civil rights group Liberty, which supported the demonstrators, said after the appeal ruling: "The right to protest is absolutely central to the British way of life and in our view the Fairford anti-war protesters were denied that right."

The police justified their action with the claim that they found weapons such as "2 pairs of scissors" on the coaches. David Blunkett's remarks in September 2003 to the Home Affairs Select Committee that there were "cudgels and swords" appear to have been pure fantasy, (a fact he may have recognised later in a bizarre written answer to Lynne Jones MP: "I was speaking metaphorically... my reference to 'cudgels and swords' should not be taken literally.")

At the Appeal hearing in October, Gloucestershire police argued that they were in fact protecting the protesters' right to life by detaining them and forcing their return to London. In his witness statement, Chief Superintendent Kevin Lambert, the officer in charge of policing the protest, stated that "had a member of the public penetrated the defences and been killed or injured by one of the armed personnel guarding the B52 aircraft... the public reaction and political consequences would have been extremely damaging to the coalition partners". Penetrated the defences... with scissors? Helen Wickham, a coach passenger, said: "I think it is deeply worrying that Gloucestershire police, confronted with the possibility of US troops shooting protesters who breached the base, chose to defend the US use of lethal force and pursue a political agenda."

The real weapons in this case were very large and not hidden at all – the B-52 bombers just the other side of the fence at Fairford. To quote Glos. Police's own Press Release, "RAF Fairford [officially USAF, by the way] and other military installations in the UK had been the scene of increasingly destructive disorder in the weeks preceding this incident". You don't say...

As the military machine geared up for action, why weren't our brave bobbies trying to stop the terrible violence about to be unleashed on Iraq, rather than preventing peaceful protesters from carrying out legal protest?

