

PIECES OF PEACE



Luci with her 'piece of peace'

I'm sitting here at a sunny Urdd Eisteddfod staring at a huge jigsaw puzzle all about... PEACE! You may be wondering why. Well, it all started in Belgium. In April, Fay (who belongs to the Welsh Youth Forum on Sustainable Development) and I (I'm from a youth organisation called Gwerin Y Coed which works on peace, cooperation and equality) went to a seminar in Antwerp, Belgium to set up a new organisation called the Youth Network for Peace (YNP). It is a truly international organisation, with members from Palestine, Israel, Nigeria, Egypt, Wales, France, Greece, Turkey...

The main aim of YNP is to establish and maintain a global network of individual young people, youth groups and organisations to work together to promote peace, international solidarity, understanding and cooperation.

On the rather long train ride home, we started thinking - wouldn't it be good if the young people of Wales had a chance to learn about and discuss peace and conflict issues on a local, national and international scale?

So off we went to the Urdd Eisteddfod in Ruthin, to the CND Cymru stall, to ask the young people of Wales to make their own (jigsaw) 'piece of peace' about their opinions on peace and what they want to see in peace education. Young people also took in turns to become roving reporters to interview people about peace and conflict. Many press interviews, cups of tea and cold nights later, we have created a masterpiece of youth feeling on peace, made from the 200+ jigsaw pieces we collected!! The response was incredible, as young people from all backgrounds were really enthusiastic about the project - somebody told us the CND stall was the best stall in the whole Eisteddfod!

The next step is a meeting in Machynlleth on July 8th (to be confirmed) to plan what we want to do in this crazy, amazing project. So please, if you are a peace-obsessed young person aged 15-20 (ish) or if you just want to learn more, please come along!! For more information, contact Luci by email: wales@spanthatworld.com.

Web links

Gwerin Y Coed: www.woodcraft.org.uk
Welsh Youth Forum on Sustainable Development:
www.wyfsd.org
Youth Network for Peace:
www.youthnetworkforpeace.com

ALARMING CANCER CLUSTER AROUND TRAWSFYNYDD

Richard Bramhall of the Low Level Radiation Campaign (LLRC) writes about a new survey carried out in the vicinity of Trawsfynydd nuclear power station, the alarming results of which were examined in a recent TV programme broadcast on the Welsh channel S4C. One of the most shocking findings from this survey is that women under the age of 50 living close to the plant are 15 times more likely to have cancer than the general population.

Researchers going from door to door administered a questionnaire covering nearly a thousand people of all ages in three communities around the closed-down power plant. The questionnaire asked about cancer within each household during 1996 - 2005. It ascertained levels of cancer which ex-Environment Minister Michael Meacher has described as "sensational"... The overall picture is of increased risks of all types of cancer relative to national rates...

Alerted by a significant proportion of the breast cancer victims reporting that they had sometimes eaten fish from Trawsfynydd Lake, the researchers conducted a further survey to ascertain the background rate of fish eating. Trawsfynydd Lake... is artificial and has been used as a cooling lagoon throughout the active life of the power station. The lake-bottom sediment down to a depth of 300 mm is known to be highly contaminated with a mean concentration of 4¼ million Bequerels per tonne of radioactivity. This is more than 10 times the concentration which under UK legislation is defined as Low Level Radioactive Waste requiring control. The lake is nevertheless advertised as a sports amenity for swimming, boating and fishing. The lake trout are regularly monitored by the authorities. The second survey found that eating fish from the lake was more than twice as common among the recent cancer patients (i.e. in 2003 - 05) than among the healthy population. This is a statistically significant finding. The only cancer patient under 20 found by the study - an 18 year old with lymphoma - was said to be an avid angler who had fished the lake regularly...

Michael Meacher said: [the discovery of the Trawsfynydd cluster] "is a sensational development. It must be subject to a full inquiry independently of COMARE. The true health effects of radioactive discharges must be resolved before any commitment to new nuclear power stations is made."*

The report of the survey and its findings can be found on the LLRC web site: www.llrc.org/traws.htm

The report concludes that: *the results speak for themselves. The levels of cancer in the area in this period are significantly and alarmingly high... The most likely cause is radiation from the plant.*

*COMARE is the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment. COMARE has been criticised by the Low Level Radiation Campaign for its lack of independence.

SUPPORTING BRIAN HAW

At the request of some of Brian Haw's supporters, I recently visited Brian's protest outside the Houses of Parliament. This background information is taken from Brian's web site: www.parliament-square.org.uk.



Brian has been protesting in Parliament Square since 2nd June 2001. Initially he was campaigning against the economic sanctions on Iraq and the bombing of the country by the US and UK. After 11 September 2001, he widened his focus, directing his messages of peace against the 'war on terror', the terror that the US and UK have inflicted on Afghanistan and Iraq. He protests on behalf of those innocent people who suffer and die in other countries, as our governments seek to further their own economic, military, political and strategic interests around the world...

Since 2001, various authorities have tried to remove Brian. In October 2002, he won a major case in the High Court, in which the judge ruled that Brian was exercising his right to freedom of speech in Parliament Square, his placards did not constitute advertising, and that any pavement obstruction was not "unreasonable".

In 2005, the Government... passed a law (the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act - SOCPA) specifically aimed at removing Brian from Parliament Square. The Government has also taken the opportunity to restrict everyone's right to protest within a 1km are of Parliament... Just days before 1 August 2005, after which Brian could be evicted under Section 132 of SOCPA that bans unauthorised protest near Parliament, a High Court hearing ruled that Brian's protest is not covered by the legislation because prior authorisation is only necessary for demonstrations that "start" before 1 August, whereas Brian started his protest in June 2001.

On 8 May 2006 the Home Office won an appeal... The judges ruled that Section 132 of SOCPA could be applied retrospectively and therefore does apply to Brian. Brian then applied to demonstrate under SOCPA which states that permission has to be granted. The police have imposed conditions on Brian's protest that range from the unlikely to the impossible, including that he must reduce his display to 3 metres in any direction and that all items must be on display "at a glance" and cannot be concealed by any other item...

At 3am on 23 May 2006, the police mounted a massive night-time operation to remove almost all of Brian's display in order that it complies with the SOCPA conditions they have imposed. Only the placards and personal items that he managed to salvage... remain. This was despite the fact that Brian was due to appear in court on 30 May in a hearing about the same issue.

So, Brian remains in the Square but almost all of the placards, banners and messages that people from around the world have given him have been taken away. A group of supporters is staying with him - maintaining the resistance to state suppression of free speech.

When the police raided Brian's display in the middle of the night, they stole many of his possessions including valuable artwork and papers needed for his various court cases. These were stolen rather than "impounded" or "confiscated" as no inventory was made and Brian was not given the opportunity to check or sign for the items taken. It is therefore crucial that there should be witnesses with Brian at all times. WPJF has been asked whether we can support Brian by sending a group of people down to the protest to relieve Brian's regular supporters for a couple of days now and again. A second, but equally important, aim is to build a network of mutual support around the country, so that we can help each other out with campaigns as necessary. I think this is really important. Spending time together and getting to know each other is just as valuable as protest. If we can do both at the same time, all the better.

In order to do this, we need a few people who are prepared to spend 48 hours at a time in Parliament Square; this will include sleeping out for a couple of nights (not so bad in the summer and remember that Brian has been doing this every night for the past five years...) The facilities are very basic. No tents can be pitched on Parliament Square. Although it would be an ideal camping ground, apart from the traffic, the police and council officials just won't have it, so it's a case of wrapping up in sleeping bags, 'bivi' bags and tarpaulins overnight. During the day, people just need to be around to keep an eye on the stall, talk to passers-by and provide cover if Brian has appointments elsewhere.



Brian Haw's display: reduced but still powerful

As well as people, we need contributions towards expenses, which will mainly be travel costs, and possibly the purchase of things like waterproof tarpaulins, 'bivi' bags and large umbrellas!

Please help in whatever way you can. Get in touch if you'd like more information about coming down to London with us. Contact details and information about how to donate are on the back page. If you send a donation, please make it clear that it's to support this campaign by writing "Brian Haw" on the back of the cheque.