

# COACH CASE VICTORY



Most people will have heard of the Fairford coach case, a judicial review of police action against peaceful protesters, which we reported on in issue 6: *Demonstrators from London were on the way to RAF Fairford [in March 2003] when their three coaches were stopped by Gloucestershire Police... several miles from the air base. The protesters were detained for over two hours, searched and forced back on to the coaches, which were then escorted back to London. The police allowed the coaches no stops on the journey.*

In February 2004, the High Court ruled that protesters had been unlawfully detained, but also that the police had been within the law to stop them from reaching Fairford, because of fears that a breach of the peace may have otherwise occurred. During the High Court Appeal, the officer in charge of policing the protest argued 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.* Coach passenger Helen Wickham commented: *I think it is deeply worrying that Gloucestershire police, confronted with the possibility of US troops shooting unarmed protestors, chose to defend the US use of lethal force and pursue a political agenda.*

The ruling was upheld by the Court of Appeal in December 2004, the judges agreeing that the police had violated the Human Rights Act by illegally detaining the protesters. The protesters believed that the police had additionally denied them two other human rights: freedom of assembly and freedom of expression, and appealed to the House of Lords. The police also appealed, to try to have the ruling on illegal detention overturned. On December 13th 2006, five Law Lords did indeed overturn part of the previous ruling, but not the part requested by the police. The Lords ruled that the police had violated the protesters' right to freedom of expression and lawful assembly by preventing them from reaching Fairford, and dismissed the police appeal on the unlawful decision to detain the protesters on the coaches.

Jane Laporte, the peace campaigner under whose name the case was brought, said afterwards: *I am absolutely overjoyed. The Lords have confirmed that freedom to protest is something that should be treasured in this country and police don't have the right to take it away.* Gloucestershire police force, meanwhile, was reported to be 'disappointed' with the ruling, but said it would be reviewing its policies and expressed 'regret' for inconvenience caused. Total victory for human rights and free speech then, although it remains to be seen whether the decision actually impacts on policing policy and practice.

More info at: [www.fairfordcoachaction.org.uk](http://www.fairfordcoachaction.org.uk)

## DIARY DATES

### WPJF PLANNING MEETING

**Monday 15th January, 6.30pm.**

**\*Note change of time\***

Friends Meeting House, Holt Road,  
Wrexham. All welcome.

We will do our best to offer lifts to and from the bus or train station for people travelling by public transport. Depending on where you live and who is coming to the meeting, we may be able to pick you up/drop you off at another more convenient point. Please contact us in plenty of time if you need a lift.

Directions: From the roundabout by Wrexham Swimming Baths, take the Holt Rd exit. Friends Meeting House is on the left at the bottom of the hill just by the first set of traffic lights.

### RED ROPE WALK

**Sunday 28th January, 9.30am.**

New Brighton to Hoylake - 6 miles approx.

Meeting at 9.30 outside the Ship Victory or at

10.30 outside New Brighton Station

If you want to join this walk, please contact Simon beforehand to confirm the details in case there are any changes: Simon Sait - 07746 822 317.

[sksait@btinternet.com](mailto:sksait@btinternet.com)

### WPJF TRIDENT ACTION

**Saturday 3rd February, from 10am.**

Please come and help out for an hour or two.

Outside Marks & Sparks on Hope Street, or under the arch opposite the Horse & Jockey pub further up Hope Street if the weather's not so good.

We'll be finding out what Wrexham people think about Blair's plans to spend up to £75 billion on a replacement for Trident and gathering ideas about how the money could be better spent.

### STWC/CND NATIONAL DEMO

**Saturday 24th February. MIDDAY.**

On the twin themes of No Trident and Troops Out of Iraq, CND and STWC have called a national demo in London from midday.

More details available soon from STWC

0207 278 6694.

### NORTH WALES TO FASLANE AGAIN

**Date to be confirmed.**

The North Wales to Faslane Group will be blockading the Faslane nuclear base in Scotland again early next year as part of the Faslane 365 campaign. More blockaders and supporters needed.

Please contact us if you'd like to get involved.

For more info about WPJF events, call: 0845 330 4505 or email [wrexhamsaw@yahoo.com](mailto:wrexhamsaw@yahoo.com)

# PROOF THAT THE ARMY TARGETS POOR KIDS

Plaid Cymru AM Leanne Wood has called for army recruitment in schools to be banned, following the release of figures which she claims demonstrate that the army is targeting schools in the poorest areas of Wales.

The figures, which were obtained following a request under the Freedom of Information Act, demonstrate clear regional differences. The statistics show a correlation between deprivation and increased number of army recruitment visits: schools in deprived areas receive 50% more visits than those in more affluent areas. Secondary schools where more than 20% of the pupils receive free school meals had an average of 7 army recruitment visits, whereas those with less than 20% of pupils receiving free schools meals had an average of just five visits.

At a time when the army is seriously undermanned, these figures are a disturbing reminder of the cynical and exploitative way in which the army recruits young people for their imperialistic and illegal wars.

Army spending on advertising has nearly doubled in recent years to £25.3 million, and the MoD recently spent £1.5 million making a 30 second army recruitment TV advert, ensuring that the bombardment of propaganda doesn't start and finish at the school gates.

Leanne Wood said she would be writing to the Welsh Minister to request that army recruitment in schools be banned stating: *The Army is clearly targeting the most deprived areas in Wales. I believe that young people in Wales should not be subjected to armed forces propaganda.*

In the Wrexham area the average number of visits to schools by the army was 4.1, which is below the all Wales average of 5.9; however Ysgol Bryn Alyn and Ysgol Rhosnesni both received a significant and worrying 8 visits from army recruiters. The school with the highest

proportion of pupils receiving free school meals in Wrexham, Ysgol Rhiwabon, had no visits at all from army recruiters, perhaps indicating that the preference of head teachers and careers advisers has more to do with the number of visits than specific targeting by the army.

Anna Brychan, Director of the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) Cymru, said the armed forces is just one of the career options that children are given in schools: *Ultimately, what head teachers are doing is giving pupils the widest possible range of career options backed up by specialist advice from school staff.* In Scotland, the SNP called for the banning of army recruitment in Scottish Schools following the release of figures that revealed there were more than ten times the number of visits to schools in 2005 than in 2003.

Despite the best efforts of the army, they are still undermanned and although they have met this year's recruitment targets, the Commons Defence Committee recently stated that this is only because they have lowered them!

A new web site and email list have recently been set up with the aim of building a movement to challenge army recruitment practices across the country:

*Counter-recruitment is more than just attempting to prevent the military from recruiting young people – it involves challenging the military wherever it promotes itself, in the public domain, in schools and universities - everywhere. This has an impact which goes far beyond the recruitment statistics, in the same way as the military's recruitment and 'youth outreach' efforts have an impact that goes far beyond achieving recruitment targets.* [Andreas Speck]

[www.counterrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.counterrecruitment.org.uk)

## HAFOD QUARRY UPDATE

Protest at Hafod Quarry is continuing following Welsh Assembly minister Carwyn Jones' cowardly decision to take the easy option and allow tipping at the site to go ahead in spite of the very many good reasons why it should be stopped.

We should no longer be surprised at New Labour, the party of big business, prioritising the pursuit of profit above all else. After all, Tony Blair has just pulled the plug on the Serious Fraud Office investigation into corruption and bribery in arms deals between BAe Systems and the Saudi government. Why would we expect his party to care about damaging the health and welfare of ordinary people, about contaminating the public water supply or about air pollution?

Hafod Environmental Group and Hafod Action Group are looking at the various legal options available to them, and a petition to the European Parliament aimed at shutting the landfill site has been presented by MEP Jill Evans.

## NEW WEBSITE FOR WPJF

WREXHAM PEACE & JUSTICE FORUM



By the time you read this, Wrexham Peace and Justice Forum will, hopefully, have a brand new website.

Keeping the old address of [www.wpjf.org.uk](http://www.wpjf.org.uk), the website has been completely re-vamped, with a new look, easier navigation around the site and several new features including a blog, a feedback form and an improved and expanded links section.

Big thanks to Ferass for all his hard work on the new site.

If you have access to the internet, please take a look around the site and let us know what you think via the feedback form or the email address in the contacts section. Suggestions for improvements and additions always welcome!