

Keep Space for Peace

by Oswestry Visitor

Bruce Gagnon is co-ordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space. He has just completed a speaking tour of Britain, including Oswestry, prior to Keep Space for Peace Week, which runs from 4-13 October.

Statement of Concern www.space4peace.org

The arms race is moving into space. The U.S. Space Command... has publicly stated that it intends "to control space in order to protect U.S. interests and investments"... The Pentagon believes that future military success will depend on space capabilities. Using current satellite technologies the U.S. is able to intercept communications from anywhere on Earth and is able to identify and target any 'enemy' that it wishes... These same satellite capabilities also allow the U.S. to spy on private citizens and companies... Activists at Menwith Hill... uncovered official U.S. documentation... that the spy base is eavesdropping on British citizens...

But there are obstacles to U.S. space 'dominance'. Present international space law speaks against the notion of U.S. space control. The Outer Space Treaty of 1967, signed by the U.S. and 90 other countries, affirms "the peaceful purposes" of outer space and forbids "weapons of mass destruction" from being deployed in space. This same space law also declares that all interplanetary bodies belong to the common good... The U.S. is now exploring ways to circumvent international space law in order to 'exploit' these planetary bodies... There is big money to be made building and launching rockets... [and] satellites. There is money and power to be derived by 'controlling' space. And there is money to be made mining the sky...

It is crucial for peace and environmental activists to view space as an area of concern. The enormous expenditures of our tax revenues for space must be questioned. The morality and ethics of moving an arms race into space must be vigorously debated. The environmental consequences of U.S. space policy must be explored and resisted.

Bruce hasn't always been a peace campaigner; in fact he was once a Young Republican. He was raised in a military family and spent much of his childhood moving from one military base to another. He first encountered protesters at an airbase, from which the soldiers flew out to Vietnam and the body bags returned. "These people set in motion the process that turned me into a peace activist" he said. In the forces, he was assigned to share a room with a GI resistance leader, who had been isolated to prevent him from contaminating other GIs with his ideas, but there were no other rooms left in the barracks. With anti-war posters all over the walls, resistance meetings every night and the air thick with marijuana, Bruce slowly realised that he needed to re-evaluate everything he'd been taught. Once out of the army, it was as a member of a peace and justice group in Florida that he began to hear about the new arms race in space and he has been campaigning on the issue ever since.

With ongoing corporate globalisation, companies exploit the availability of cheap labour overseas, which has led to many jobs being lost in the US. The Pentagon sees the US's role in the world as 'security export', and in order to maintain that role, the US needs to be in a state of 'endless war'. The use of space technology in war is already here. 70% of all weapons used in the initial 'shock and awe' attacks on Iraq were directed to their targets by space technology. If the US can do this, so can others, and we are at risk of a global arms race in space. There is a desperate need to have a new UN Treaty to ban weapons of mass destruction in space, and every year America blocks the initiative which would bring this about, while in a recent planning document, *Vision for 2020*, the Pentagon openly states its intention to dominate and to deny other countries access to space.

In pursuit of this end, US health and welfare programmes are at risk as attempts are made to divert public



funds into space technology programmes. US 'allies' are being asked to invest as well to avoid being left behind. Never mind the crumbling health service or abysmal lack of care for the elderly. Let's have Star Wars toys instead.

Bruce spoke convincingly of the need for the Peace movement to present positive alternatives to demonstrate that the issue is not a straight choice between arms jobs or no jobs. The military industrial complex could quickly convert to non-military manufacturing. Building a decent rail network across the US would help counter climate chaos and provide jobs, for example; likewise manufacturing solar panels and wind generators. Both these projects would have the added advantage of reducing the need to go to war for oil.

At the age of 11, having been relocated to South Dakota from Leicester, Bruce became aware of the plight of the native American people and studied Sioux culture and beliefs. He learned that all things on earth are connected in a 'sacred hoop' and that today this hoop is broken. We need a spiritual reconnection between the earth and its people to mend it.

Bruce Gagnon recommends this website as a good place to find out what's really going on:

www.afterdowningstreet.org

Poetry Page

I was following *indymedia* reports of the *No Borders* camp near Gatwick Airport, and came across one of some leafleting in Crawley town centre. No Borders activists had taken the trouble to produce a news sheet with information about their campaign against immigration policy and immigration prisons. Mainstream media can never be relied on to get accurate news to the public, so this sort of action is vital, and the report was illustrated with engaging photos of people accepting and reading the *Gatwick X-press*.

I was dismayed to see that someone had commented on this report, criticising the use of the word 'action' for leafleting. The comment read: *Could we please keep the word 'action' for referring to actions rather than demos and leafleting?* and I was inspired to write this reply, which started out as a straight comment and ended up as nearly a poem.

More information about the camp:
www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2007/09/381277.html

Doing Something

Action is doing
Action can be covert or overt
fluffy or spiky
engaging or confrontational
educating and demystifying
challenging
subverting
publicising
making music and theatre
art and poetry
writing, speaking, clicking, filming
recording and reporting
cooking, cleaning, mending
feeding people
healing people
building places to sit and talk
and sit and shit
waiting at the nick
legal help
court support
just being there
with a smile and a hug
and a listening ear
All these are Actions
We need them all
and together
We are Activists

in Action

Genny Bove



Reading the *Gatwick X-press*

We Shall Not Forget

I was 18 years of age when war broke out and in September 1939 left home for Training College. I had attended co-ed. primary and grammar schools and for the last two years had 'grown up' with boys aged 16-18 years in the sixth form.

We were all scattered in 1939, and over the next six years many of my close friends and relatives were killed in that war. Others came home crippled, some in body, some in mind - especially those who'd been in Japanese prison camps.

I've never forgotten those boys and found myself putting together a few lines:

**'They shall not grow old
As we that are left grow old'
That's what I've been told
Since I was five years old.**

**We are told how they 'fell'
In some far-away hell
'Falling' sounds graceful
And death - so peaceful.**

**After all these years
I'm still moved to tears
To watch them arrive
Home, no longer alive.**

**Those who are left
Sad and bereft
Of those whose praises are sung
I think they died far, far too young.**

Rowena Thomas

To put your name on our mailing list or to make a donation to support WPJF, complete and return this form to WPJF, PO Box 661, Wrexham LL11 1QU. Please make cheques payable to Wrexham Peace & Justice Forum.

If you have a friend who would like to receive WPJN, please fill in their details overleaf.

Name _____ I enclose an (optional) donation of £ _____
Address _____ Please tick below as applicable:
_____ Please add me to your mailing list.
_____ I already receive WPJN by post.
Postcode _____ Signed _____ Date _____