

**Last month, Wrexham Peace & Justice Forum decided to affiliate to this new Anti-War organisation after Genny attended the regional GROW Gathering in Nottingham. Here is Genny's report in brief:**

GROW is a nationwide organisation which has been set up specifically to oppose and expose the so-called "War on Terror". This from the GROW web site: *"Military action increases terrorism. The only way to eradicate it is by eliminating the root causes of terrorism. In Bush's "war on terror", we are all losers."*

I spent the weekend of 12-14 March at the GROW Gathering in Nottingham with about twenty other activists from across the country. It was wonderful to have the opportunity to spend time with people from other anti-war and peace groups, and I found it helpful and inspiring to discover how other groups operate, what they are doing at the moment and what they plan for the future. It is this sort of networking that I hope GROW can encourage and facilitate.

GROW's structure is deliberately "horizontal" and non-hierarchical; the organisation aims ultimately to make all decisions by consensus, although until the nationwide network is firmly established, day to day decisions will be made by the Working Group.

GROW intends to support local groups such as ours with ideas and materials for campaigns and actions, and to provide a forum for us to share our ideas with others. One of the possibilities we are considering at the moment is how we might share material for local newsletters amongst ourselves. Since much of our newsletter content is national or international, articles could be shared between groups making less work for everyone.

The Gathering decided to begin work now on a month of action to be carried out by local groups on both sides of the Atlantic between 19 March and 15 April 2005. The action is being taken in response to Government plans for a set of "counter-terrorism" exercises. These exercises will include mock-ups of chemical or biological attacks; the dates chosen for the month of action also mark anniversaries of the "official" start of the Iraq war and the attack on Libya.

Exercises like this will add to the climate of fear, enabling the Government to curtail our civil liberties still further. The idea is that GROW could be involved in co-ordinating some alternative counter-terrorism exercises, to combat the terrorism perpetrated by the Government and to show that the most effective counter-terrorism measure is to seek peaceful and just solutions to conflicts.

**GROW web site: [www.grow.org.uk](http://www.grow.org.uk)**

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## THE MINISTRY FOR PEACE

Supporters of the many peace movements seek to influence the shape of political policies on "defence" and disarmament. It is extremely important to educate ourselves and others on the underlying issues, and then to pass this information on to Members of Parliament who are of course involved with many other matters. Mass rallies can be valuable too, and even though the great February 15<sup>th</sup> demonstrations did not prevent the war on Iraq, we did make some impact which is likely to reduce the chances of an easy extension of military actions.

How then to get nearer the heart of political power? We may have put power into peace, but how do we put peace into power? Ministry for Peace is a new organisation working for the creation of a necessary structure within government, together with an independent Commission outside of government. The joint purpose is to implement the Programme of Action outlined in the 1999 United Nations Declaration on a Culture of Peace. The United Kingdom joined then in the unanimous passing of the Declaration, but it is not likely to do anything to implement it unless there is a government department to ensure this, and a Commission to act as watchdog.

The aim of the Declaration is to elicit values, attitudes and behaviour which address the root causes of violence, and to seek to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation at every level. So how might this come about? One parliamentary ten-minute Bill has already been presented, and, while not reaching completion, was nodded through with cross-party support. John McDonnell MP (Lab), who is co-founder of Ministry for Peace, led the way, but had the support of John Randall MP, who is



*"Wake Up To The Ministry For Peace"*

a Conservative Whip. A new and improved Bill will go forward soon.

A Study Day and Public Meeting on April 3<sup>rd</sup> in London brought together ten speakers showing the wide range of people in support. The project plans to be *"open, democratic, transparent, co-operative and creative;"* Scilla Elworthy (of Peace Direct) emphasised that *"our methods should be coherent with our aims"*. We do not stand on any high moral ground, and intend a non-confrontational approach in dialogue. The movement seeks to be vigilant and to persuade, but with a closer insertion of people into political power.

The web site [www.ministryforpeace.org.uk](http://www.ministryforpeace.org.uk) gives much more background information; consider this as your daily newspaper.