

## END THE OCCUPATION OF IRAQ

Continued from page 3.

After the action, we posted the individual letters to Tony Blair and arranged to present the giant letter to local MP Ian Lucas. Lucas is quoted in the Evening Leader report of this event as saying that he *"always disagreed with the Government's decision to go to war."* While it is true that Lucas voted against the Government just prior to the war (*"I will never support military action, except as a last resort and after a new resolution at the UN Security Council..."*) and I wrote to congratulate him for doing so, it should also be remembered that he felt unable to criticise the decision to go to war once it had been made, and said at the time *"If we do have to go to war then I will be giving my full support,"* [my bold] and later, *"I will not demand Tony Blair to send the troops home. That is ridiculous."*



*Michael Still presents the giant letter to MP Ian Lucas*

This war was started on a pretext in contravention of international law; our Government told us bare-faced lies to try and win our support for the war; thousands of innocent people have died as we knew they would; our troops have been asked to risk their lives for an unjust cause; the legacy is a country without peace, order or security, littered with unexploded ordnance and contaminated with Depleted Uranium, being sold off to US corporations while its people continue to suffer, being run by the US for the benefit of the US. I'm sorry, Ian. Giving your *"full support"* and failing to maintain pressure on the Government to bring the troops home amounts to complicity. It's a bit late now to be saying that you *"always disagreed"*.

### FALLUJAH DONATIONS UPDATE

Following our action to raise awareness of the situation in Fallujah in April (WPJN Issue 7), we collected donations totalling £70 and this sum has been sent to the Islamic Relief Agency for relief work in this area.

## ASYLUM SEEKERS IN WREXHAM

Where do you feel safe? At home perhaps, with your friends and family? But what if your home suddenly becomes unsafe, if you're likely to be arrested or killed if you stay there? What do you do? Do you stay to face arrest, torture and maybe death, or do you leave everything - your home, your family, your friends? This is the dilemma that faces far too many people around the world. Some of these people manage to escape and seek safety elsewhere, and a few of these arrive in Britain to seek asylum.

Our Public Meeting in April was addressed by Allyson Smiga, Development Officer, Wrexham Refugee and Asylum Seekers Support Group (WRASSG), accompanied and assisted by Felicitus, a volunteer with the group and herself an asylum seeker.

Once a person has arrived in Britain seeking asylum they enter a bureaucratic labyrinth which, if they are lucky, will lead to the right to stay permanently as a refugee. Allyson described the process of seeking refugee status, which can be baffling and intimidating to a person who has escaped danger and possibly had a traumatic journey here. The process of obtaining refugee status can take up to ten years during which asylum seekers are entitled to a woefully inadequate six hours of free legal advice each. As a result, an important part of the work of WRASSG is supporting asylum seekers at meetings with Immigration Service Officials and accompanying them to appointments with voluntary legal advice services in Liverpool and Manchester.

Allyson also exposed several myths regarding the asylum seekers in our town: They are not "swamping" our culture - there are only around 80 in the whole of Wrexham County, and all of these people are housed in accommodation rented out by private landlords. In Wrexham, no asylum seekers live in council houses. They are not allowed to work, and receive just £38 in benefit each week. Asylum seekers whose applications to stay in this country are successful are then granted refugee status, after which they are allowed to work. Allyson said that all the refugees she knew were anxious to pay their way and support themselves. People come to this country because it is seen as a haven, a welcoming country with a reputation for upholding human rights. It is important that we continue to extend this welcome to people escaping persecution and danger.

Donations of just over £30 were made at the meeting and this money was given to WRASSG towards its important work.



*Felicitus and Allyson at the meeting*