



Northern Friends from many parts were present at the recent Stop Trident demonstration in London, part of the continuing concern and witness of many. See our website for links <http://nfpb.org.uk/current-concerns/challenging-militarism>

European Connections

In November we were represented at the Peace and Service Consultation near Brussels for Friends in Europe and the Middle East. Taking place against a backdrop of the security clampdown in the city after the Paris attacks, the gathering agreed a short statement, which can be read in full at: <http://www.fwccemes.org/news/european-quakers-call-for-an-end-to-the-cycle-of-violence>.

The statement concludes: *“The faith that led us over the past centuries to deny war, oppose slavery, support conscientious objection, help rescue Jewish children in the 1930s, care for refugees and rebuild war-torn Europe, impels us today to pledge ourselves to serve our neighbours, wherever and wherever they may be, and to take a principled stand against the belief that violence is the solution to conflict.*

“We call on those in power to reject military responses, and adopt non-violent strategies to bring about stability and safety for all people.”

Militarism and military spending - asking questions and promoting alternatives

NFPB is again supporting the Global Day of Action on Military Spending, which this year will be on 18th April and is now part of an ongoing Global Campaign On Military Spending. We are linking with a range of other peace organisations to encourage awareness and action on the issue. There are a number of resources for people to learn more and suggestions for taking action at: <https://demilitarize.org.uk>

The wider context of militarism more generally was the subject of a recent seminar in Leeds, at which we were well represented. This was the first of a series of preparatory meetings around the world that will feed into an international conference in Berlin in the early autumn on the theme of *“Disarm! For a Climate of Peace – Creating an Action Agenda”*.

Veterans for Peace

We have met recently with members of Veterans for Peace, an organisation of former servicemen and women dedicated to the abolition of war. Their members’ wartime experiences range from World War 2 through to Afghanistan. They are available and keen to run school workshops that focus on three questions;

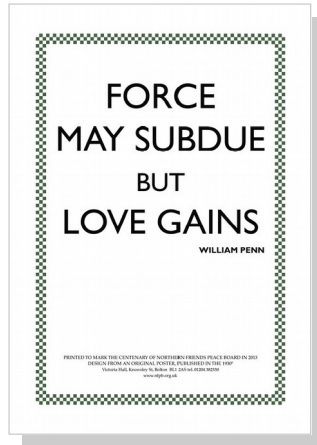
1. Why join the army?
2. What is army training like?
3. What is war like?

They help the students to find answers to these questions through their own experiences and the use of video.

If you are interested and require more information please email coord@vfpuk.org

Tea towels - organic and green

We have reprinted our tea-towels – with the quotation from William Penn – on organic and fair-trade cotton. The new printing has the checked border in green rather than red and are still available for £5 each plus P&P.



Go to:

<http://nfpb.org.uk/news/2015-12-1/peace-tea-towels>

Engaging with media on peace concerns

We are planning a day conference on how we can engage with news and other media in asking questions and putting forward alternative approaches to security in our interlinked and inter-dependent world. The conference is due to take place in Darlington on Saturday 11th June - see our website at <http://nfpb.org.uk/mediacnf> for more details as they become available.

WW1 Centenary - focus on conscience and choices

Northern Friends continue to play a part in planning and putting on a range of materials and activities that explore the challenges to conscience during the 1914-18 war. In Hexham, the theme Voices and Choices provided a framework for the town's twin communities in France and Germany, Noyen and Metzingen, to join as three communities remembering the individual choices made during World War 1 and reflect on the decisions we face 100 years later. A fortnight of activities during November saw an exhibition, music, and talks and discussions on both past and current issues of militarism.

In February, Friends in East Cheshire focussed specifically on the relevance of the introduction of conscription in 1916. An exhibition shown in Macclesfield throughout the ten days was supplemented by workshops for families and a storytelling performance.

NFPB Meetings

At the end of November NFPB members gathered in Lancaster for their final meeting of the year, with Robin Bowles completing his second term as Clerk. We were pleased to be joined by Friends from Lancaster and the region, hearing from them about their concerns and action on social justice. Brian Larkin, from the Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre, talked about the range of their work on current peace education and Trident-related concerns, as well as the progress of their plans to have a memorial to conscientious objectors placed in a prominent location in the city.

The NFPB Executive, who serve as Trustees, spent two days at Swarthmoor Hall in October, taking stock of our current work and looking ahead. They also took the opportunity to meet with local Friends, with the links between neighbouring Barrow-in-Furness and the possible renewal of Trident forming a key focus for discussion. From that exploration and sharing of perspectives, a small group is looking at ways of developing further work on the interlinked issues of job-security, austerity, climate change and nuclear disarmament. Some proposals for how this might be taken forward in the Barrow area will be considered when the Board meets again, in Nottingham on 5th March.

Sowing the Seeds of Peace

NFPB joined with South Manchester Friends to facilitate a weekend workshop at Glenthorne in November. The weekend was a mix of reflection, discussion, listening and worship. With the violent attacks in Paris fresh in people's minds, the group explored the challenges and opportunities for building and taking action for peace, drawing inspiration from our Quaker heritage and from new insights and cultures in Britain today.

If other meetings would like help in planning an event on a peace theme, from a half-day to a whole weekend, please do get in touch.

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