

9.10

An Invitation to Join Trident Ploughshares

A mass nuclear ploughshares action focused mainly on Faslane and Coulport in Scotland, and on certain Trident-related sites in the U.K.

A **Ploughshares Action** is one in which we make a commitment to peace and disarmament by nonviolently, openly and accountably disabling a war machine or system so that it can no longer harm people. It is an enactment of the Biblical prophecies to 'beat swords into ploughshares' but is no longer purely a Christian or Jewish movement as it now embraces people from many belief systems. The underlying appeal is the universal call to peace, to abolish war and to find nonviolent ways to resolve our conflicts. It recognises that war is always an abuse of power and that threats to kill are deeply immoral.



The **Trident Ploughshares** project is part of the international peace movement that has been actively engaged in nuclear disarmament work ever since the first use of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki over 50 years ago. As our part in the attempt to encourage a nuclear weapons free millennium, we will endeavour peacefully, openly and accountably to disarm the British nuclear Trident system. Our acts of disarmament are intended to stop ongoing criminal activity under well recognised principles of international law.

Over 170 international activists, organised into small, independent, support groups called 'affinity groups' of 3 to 15 people, have already signed a '**Pledge to Prevent Nuclear Crime**'. They are referred to as 'Pledgers'. Trident Ploughshares pledgers have publicly committed themselves to peacefully attempting to disarm the British Trident nuclear weapon system.

We first approached the Government in March 1998 asking them peacefully and responsibly to disarm the Trident submarines themselves in accordance with the many international agreements they have made. For instance, Article VI of the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) states, "Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

We set up a group of independent advisors and formed a **Dialogue and Negotiation Team** who outlined a series of nine feasible and verifiable requests that would commit the government to a practical process of nuclear disarmament. There has been no constructive reply to these requests and we have been refused a meeting. However, the dialogue work will continue throughout the life of Trident Ploughshares.

Liaison with Police and Security has also been ongoing, open and conducted in a friendly manner. The Handbook, Video and the Internet site have been useful in explaining our philosophy and rationale. All of the various authorities have been given a full list of those who have signed the Pledge to Prevent Nuclear Crime which again emphasises our commitment to full openness and accountability for our actions. Updated material with the names of new Pledgers is sent regularly to the Prime Minister and others.

Trident Ploughshares was publicly launched on May 2nd 1998 in London, Edinburgh, Gothenburg, Gent and Hiroshima. Further letters have been sent to government officials and all 16 NATO Heads of State and Foreign Ministers have been approached. We continue the exchange of letters and are keeping the doors open for any dialogue and negotiation. We are making it clear that we would prefer the 'authorities' to disarm Trident and that we are only making our own attempts because they continue to prevaricate.

The first of the **Open Disarmament Actions** started in August 1998 when several hundred people attended the first two-week disarmament camp, which led to around 100 arrests. By the end of the camp nine people from different countries were on remand in Scotland and tens of cases were being heard in the local Helensburgh District Court. Since that time, there have been a number of high-profile courtroom trials which provided the opportunity to present experts in International Law to demonstrate the general illegality of all nuclear weapons. The most successful of these was the ground-breaking trial in Greenock in Scotland, in

October 1999, of the 'Loch Goil Three'. The trial ended when Sheriff Margaret Gimblett found Angie Zelter, Ellen Moxley and Ulla Roder not guilty of malicious damage to a Trident submarine testing station and uttered the immortal words:

"I have heard nothing which would make it seem to me that the accused acted with such criminal intent."

By acquitting them and by recognising that international law applies to Britain's nuclear deterrent, she opened up a huge crack in official complacency about our weapons of mass destruction.

At the trial of the 'Newbury Four' in England, in March 2000, the judge allowed Trident Ploughshares activists to present expert witnesses in their defence but



ultimately found the defendants guilty. The trial of Rosie and Rachel - from the 'Aldermaston Women Trash Trident' affinity group, who boarded and damaged the latest Trident nuclear submarine while it was still at Barrow, resulted in a hung jury in September 2000. Full details of all these trials can be found on the Trident Ploughshares website www.tridentploughshares.org.

Each **Affinity Group** has to take part in a **Nonviolence and Safety Workshop** which is run by people trained by the Quaker-based Turning the Tide programme. This workshop helps individuals and groups to prepare themselves emotionally, physically and legally for their actions as well as clarifying the non-negotiable ground rules for those actions. These ground rules include total nonviolence, safety, openness and accountability. A Core Group member liaises with each group to check progress and give support and to ensure only responsible, totally committed nonviolent activists take part. We are dealing here with extremely dangerous and radioactive nuclear weapon systems and must ensure everyone's safety.

Some affinity groups are also committed to doing 'secret' disarmament actions whereby they do not inform anyone of their exact plans and dates, although they will of course be fully accountable and stand by their actions and explain them and take the consequences. All Trident-related sites can be the target of Ploughshares actions. Affinity groups may well do their follow-up actions and secret disarmament actions at the Trident related sites nearer to their homes, or if they are from abroad, at the NATO sites near them.

Although we have a good defence in law and we believe we are upholding the law, the courts may not agree with us. Each activist must understand that theoretically we may face **possible imprisonment of up to 10 years** if we are ultimately found 'guilty' of actual criminal damage or of conspiracy to commit massive criminal damage. Although the sentences in the Scottish courts have so far proved to be minor (most people have not been charged, and of the 40% of arrestees that have, they have mainly been admonished or given minor fines) we cannot rely on this continuing.

In any case, whether planning our actions for Scotland or England we have to be prepared for the maximum sentence. The maximum is 10 years. The whole moral and political strength of this action is to show just how many ordinary people are willing to make this personal sacrifice in order to disarm nuclear weapons. We must all be willing to face this possibility.

For those not willing to risk imprisonment, there are many essential active support roles that are just as important as the active disarmament roles and each affinity group needs both. There are also very many different disarmament actions with greater or lesser risks of imprisonment attached.

As this project is open and the 'authorities' know who we are and the dates for our open attempts, it is very hard to get near a Trident submarine and disarm it. However, even if we are arrested before we get near the bases - or whilst we are attempting to cut through the fences - we will not have failed because this project is also about disarming the public mind and persuading the Government to respond to popular opinion. It is the attempt and the intent that matters. Maybe hundreds of us, committed to disarming Trident ourselves, will persuade the British Government to do the disarmament themselves.

We have produced the 'Tri-denting It **Handbook** - an Open Guide to Trident Ploughshares'. This Handbook gives a fairly comprehensive overview of the philosophy, background and structure of Trident Ploughshares and also contains useful chapters on nuclear weapons inventories, the legal status of Trident, how groups work and advice on action, court and prison preparation, as well as ideas on how to disarm Trident.



It is advisable to read this thoroughly and also to view the 16 minute **video** entitled 'Tri-denting the Nuclear Conspiracy - Uphold International Law'. which gives a visual tour of Faslane and a summary of the nonviolence and safety ground rules.

Although many people taking part will be giving purely moral defences to their disarmament actions we have a very strong legal defence based upon the **World Court's Advisory Opinion** on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons (8th July 1996). There are now several written up examples of such legal defences that have been through the courts and which are available on our website www.tridentploughshares.org/ or from the TP Office, 42-46 Bethel Street, Norwich, NR2 1NR. There is also a permanent **Legal Support Team** able to support all of those appearing before the Scottish courts - and we are currently working on setting up a similar one to cover English court cases - it is stressed however, that each affinity group should be as autonomous and self-supporting as possible so that the campaign does not fall apart if there are mass arrests at any stage in the future.

If you are interested in taking part then please fill out the Response Form (on next page) and return it to the TP office in Norwich. We will then try to help you find an affinity group if you are not already part of a group or have no-one else in your area willing to join with you.

Help Fund Trident Ploughshares

The project is designed to be as financially self-sufficient as possible, which is why each activist is asked to donate £10 to an account called 'Trident Ploughshares'. The public are also being asked to donate funds to us. Even if you decide you do not wish to take an active part we would be grateful for donations.

Response Form for Individual

Please complete this response form, ticking where appropriate and then return to Trident Ploughshares, c/o 42-46 Bethel St, Norwich, Norfolk, NR2 1NR, UK. Please be aware that filling in this form could open you up to charges of conspiracy and if you are worried about this then please contact the core group for a face to face confidential meeting.

1. NAME:

ADDRESS

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TEL: FAX: E-MAIL:

2. I am interested in being a Trident Ploughshares activist: YES NO

3. I have my own affinity group YES NO

If YES, this affinity group consists of people who will become Trident Ploughshares activists with me.
put number in group

If NO, I will try and create an affinity group in my locality YES NO

or

I would like you to put me into an affinity group YES NO

4. If you want us to put you in an affinity group then please state anything about your age, sex, interests, or any personal details that you think are relevant to placing you in a suitable affinity group.

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5. I would like to volunteer to help in the following ways:-

general mobilisation and outreach YES

press work YES

fund-raising YES

Please specify here any other offers of help you would like to make:

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6. I would like to give a donation now of £..... (cheques made out to 'Trident Ploughshares' and sent with this response form). Each activist is asked to donate £10 if they can afford it.

7. I would like you to send me (put number required) leaflets that I will distribute.

8. Please feel free to make any comments or suggestions, in this space, about Trident Ploughshares.

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