



# OXFORD CND

## NEWSLETTER

January/February 2018



### **NHS hospitals told to take drastic measures amid winter crisis**



**A&E: People on beds 'as far as you could see'**

**A&E doctor sorry for 'third world conditions' as NHS winter crisis bites**

**Trident replacement costs (£205 billion) could be shifted from the MoD budget**

**Jeremy Hunt apologises to patients over cancellation of thousands of NHS operations**

**TRIDENT  
ILLEGAL  
IMMORAL**

**MoD under fire over plans for £1.3 billion expansion of Scottish nuke bases**

Oxford Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

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# Nuclear Winter

**Daniel Ellsberg, famous for having leaked** the Pentagon Papers during the Vietnam War, has delivered a darkly seasonal present for Christmas: a reminder in his new book of the consequences of 'nuclear winter', and a warning that existing nuclear weapons systems could still deliver it – all the more to be feared with Donald Trump in the White House. And he introduces us to a grim word which should be part of our discourse as we campaign to abolish those weapons – Omnicide.

When working in the Pentagon on nuclear strategy in 1961, Ellsberg asked the Joint Chief of Staffs this question: how many people would die if their plans for general nuclear war were carried out. "Three hundred million in the Soviet Union and China", the answer came back, and double that number through "collateral damage elsewhere.

But this estimate did not take into account the phenomenon of nuclear winter, only fully researched later, in which the smoke injected into the stratosphere by the nuclear explosions blots out the sky and destroys the means of existence: in reality a nuclear war then, says Ellsberg, would have led to the death of almost all the world's population.

And today? There are fewer weapons now, but they are more powerful and could be just as devastating, and would result in Omnicide, the term coined by the America peace philosopher John Somerville, at the height of nuclear confrontation.

*"In other words, first-strike nuclear attacks by either side very much smaller than were planned in the sixties and seventies – and which are still prepared for instant execution in both Russia and America – would still kill by loss of sunlight and resulting starvation nearly all the humans on earth, now over seven billion."*

Ellsberg's book, published this December by Bloomsbury USA, is called *The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner*, (and for those who have Kindle, his Introduction can be downloaded for free). Its sub-title indicates a complex back-story about Ellsberg's career working on nuclear strategy in the 1960s and on how he had originally planned to release a cache of secret documents on this subject after the Pentagon

Papers. But I hope that his personal narrative will not get in the way, when the book is reviewed, of the message he now seeks to convey, namely that

*"The present risks of the current nuclear era go far beyond the dangers of proliferation and non-state terrorism that have been the almost exclusive focus of public concern for the past generation and the past decade in particular. The arsenals and plans of the two superpowers represent not only an insuperable obstacle to an effective global anti-proliferation campaign; they are in themselves a clear and present existential danger to the human species, and most others."*

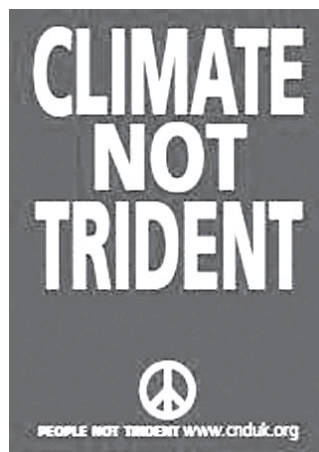
Ellsberg bases his argument on three counts: the most familiar one is that of nuclear war by

false alarm or accident, and this is not the first such warning. In 2013 Eric Schlosser's *Command and Control* provided a shocking picture of the nuclear accidents and near-misses over past decades. Schlosser concluded with the warning that the weapons systems that may be so fallible are still there – 'every one of them is an accident waiting to happen, a potential act of mass murder'.

But Ellsberg explores another significant dimension: the doctrine of 'first-use' which means that the US (and also Russia) insist on retaining a capability to strike first with nuclear weapons – not a 'bolt out of the blue' but pre-emptively. The scenario would be one where it is feared that the 'other side' is planning to attack, and here too there is obviously ample space for mistakes and miscalculation.

Ellsberg also draws our attention to a less well-known problem – the system of delegating the 'power to launch' to other military or even civilian authorities in the case of crisis: this, he says, has been 'one of our highest national secrets'. He suggests too that the same system of delegation may exist in all other nuclear weapons states, including the newer ones. "How many fingers are on Pakistani nuclear buttons?", he asks. "Probably not even the president of Pakistan knows reliably." So, we may need to be worried by more than the single finger in the White House and the other one in Pyongyang. ■

**John Gittings**



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# The UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

**There was an evening in Oxford celebrating** the work of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), recipient of this year's Nobel Peace Prize for its role in the passing of the UN Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. This was in Christ Church Cathedral on Sunday 19th November, with presentations from Caroline Gilbert of Christian CND and David Cullen, director of the Nuclear Information Service, who spoke on 'The Ban Treaty and the UK, and which was moderated by the Reverend Canon Edmund Newey, Sub Dean of Christchurch.

There was also the chance to see the Cathedral's current exhibition, *Faith and Peace: Perspectives from Three Religions*, curated in collaboration with the Peace Museum, Bradford.

## **53 countries have signed the United Nations' Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons:**

The following countries have ratified the United Nations' Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons:

- Guyana
- Holy See
- Mexico
- Thailand

## **4 countries have ratified the treaty so far.**

The treaty can only enter into force when 50 states ratify the treaty – until that time, pressure must be put on all countries to sign *and* ratify.

In a resolution recently adopted by the First Committee of the UN General Assembly, the UN has set the dates and mandate for a High-Level conference on Nuclear Disarmament to take place at the UN from May 14-16, 2018. The principal aim for the conference is to make progress on effective measures for nuclear risk-reduction and disarmament.

The resolution reminds nuclear-armed States that they have previously agreed to hold an international conference to 'eliminate nuclear dangers', but not yet done so. And it calls for progress to be made on a nuclear weapons convention – a global agreement which would include the nuclear-armed States and provide a

phased and verified process for prohibiting and eliminating nuclear weapons.

*'Nine nations continue to hold the world at risk of nuclear annihilation,'* said Jonathan Granoff, President of the Global Security Institute and UN Representative for the Summits of Nobel Peace Laureates. *'Although 120 non-nuclear weapons states have negotiated a treaty to ban the weapons, the states with the weapons remain deadlocked in inertia. It is time for leaders to come together the high-level conference, to discuss measures to reduce nuclear threats and start the process of collective universal nuclear weapons elimination.'*

'The UN conference provides an opportunity for the UK and other nuclear-armed States to make progress on incremental disarmament measures to which they agreed in the Non-Proliferation Treaty conferences but have not yet implemented,' said Baroness Sue Miller, Member of the UK House of Lords and a Co-President of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament. *'Prime Minister Theresa May should commit now to attending the 2018 conference and working with her colleagues from the other nuclear-armed States to adopt concrete measures at the conference.'* ■



## **Towards a global nuclear ban treaty**

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# Nuclear Power

**Boar found to have 10 times the accepted** amount of radiation. On April 26, 1986, a disastrous accident at the power station in Chernobyl, Ukraine, led to the release of more radiation into the atmosphere than the nuclear bomb released over Hiroshima, Japan in the Second World War. For almost two weeks after the disaster, the ruptured Chernobyl reactor continued to spew radioactive substances into the air, including iodine-131, cesium-137, plutonium and strontium-90. Now, even after three decades of clean-up attempts, a boar shot in Sweden has been found to contain 10 times the normal level of radiation.

## **UK government to release funding for mini nuclear power stations**

Up to £100m is expected to be released in an effort to make UK leader in technology and provide fresh source of clean power. A small reactor generates about a tenth of the power of a large nuclear power station, such as the one EDF is building at Hinkley Point C. Ministers are expected to back the first generation of small nuclear power stations in Britain with tens of millions of pounds, in an attempt to give the UK a competitive edge on the technology and provide a new source of clean power.

However, energy experts said the case for SMRs was far from proved, especially given the falling cost of alternatives such as offshore windfarms. Paul Dorfman, a research fellow at University College London, said: "The real question the government must ask is this: given the ongoing steep reduction in all renewable energy costs, and since SMR research and development is still very much ongoing, by the time SMRs comes to market, can they ever be cost competitive with renewable energy? The simple answer to that is a resounding no."

## **EDF's plans to dump dangerously radioactive mud in the Severn estuary**

EDF are planning to build a new nuclear power station at Hinkley Point in Somerset. The company wants to dump muddy waste in the Severn Estuary to clear the way for a new nuclear reactor. More than 300,000 tonnes of this mud is from old nuclear power sites. Some of the mud is the by-product of Britain's atomic weapons programme. The first nuclear power plant built at Hinkley Point, Hinkley A, was built to manufacture plutonium for the British nuclear warheads, with a small modification in the design that enabled plutonium suitable for military purposes to be extracted.

With the new dumping site just a mile away from Cardiff shoreline, there's real concern from critics that this mud could re-concentrate into more dangerous radioactive material and be washed ashore in storm surges.

Nobody knows for certain if this mud is safe or not, but what we do know is that the methods for deciding so are based on an out of date assessment. EDF must test this mud properly to ensure the mud isn't dangerously radioactive.

Government plans to build a new nuclear site at Hinkley are already a financial disaster. We can't let EDF make Welsh waters an environmental disaster too.

The Office for Nuclear Regulation and two other government bodies have given the green light for the Japanese reactor design for Horizon Nuclear Power's plant at Wylfa, on Anglesey, marking the end of a five-year regulatory process. If Horizon is successful with Wylfa, it hopes to build a second new nuclear power station at Oldbury in Gloucestershire. The plants will use Hitachi's advanced boiling water reactor (ABWR), which has been approved for use at Wylfa. ■

**Prue Drew**



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# Trident submarine plans facing a 'perfect storm' of problems, says MoD report

**UK Government plans for the next generation** of Trident submarine reactors are under threat from staff shortages and spending cuts, according to an expert report for the Ministry of Defence.

The report criticises the MoD's nuclear submarine programme as "introspective", "somewhat incestuous" and warns it's facing a "perfect storm" of problems. It also urges the MoD to work more closely with the civil nuclear power industry.

Critics warn that the MoD is putting public safety at risk by cutting corners, and that nuclear defence could be "cross-subsidised" by the civil industry.

The submarine report was commissioned by the MoD in 2014 after a radiation leak at the Vulcan reactor testing facility near Dounreay in Caithness. The leak forced a £270 million rejig of the refuelling programme for existing Trident submarines based on the Clyde.

But the report has been kept secret since then, until a heavily-censored version was released by the MoD late last year under freedom of information law.

It was written by three academics close to the nuclear industry – Professor Robin Grimes from Imperial College in London, Professor Dame Sue Ion who used to be a director of British Nuclear Fuels Limited, and Professor Andrew Sherry from the University of Manchester.

They were asked to review plans for a new reactor to power the Dreadnought submarines due to replace the four existing Trident-armed Vanguard submarines in the 2030s. The availability of specialist nuclear staff "appears to be at the bare minimum necessary to deliver the programme", their report concluded.

"We believe the naval nuclear propulsion programme could soon be facing a perfect storm with an ageing expert community facing competition from a resurgent civil nuclear industry."

Capability is "sparse", they warned. They criticised the programme for a "culture of optimism" that assumed success. Research groups were "introspective and closed", and the programme was viewed as "somewhat incestuous".

They said that driving down cost was "potentially introducing consequent risks which do not to us

appear to have been properly addressed."

The MoD should, they said, "seek imaginative methods to better engage with the emergent civil new build programme on nuclear matters to the benefit of defence."

The SNP insisted safety had to be paramount. "It is absolutely clear from this report, and many others we have seen, that the MoD is dangerously trying to cut corners – and that is clearly very worrying," said the party's defence spokesperson at Westminster, Stewart McDonald MP.

"I don't know which is the more alarming, the amount of this report that is redacted or what we actually can read about the continued pressure to find savings in nuclear programmes."

Dr Phil Johnstone, a nuclear researcher at the University of Sussex, said: "This report reveals that the difficulties experienced by the UK submarine programme are even more serious than was known before."

There was great pressure "to engineer a cross-subsidy from electricity consumers to cover the huge costs of maintaining the military nuclear industry," he argued.

His colleague at Sussex University, professor Andy Stirling, added: "Military pressures for secretive support to an uneconomic civil nuclear power industry are not just placing a burden on UK electricity consumers, but are threatening the rigour of public accounting and the accountability of UK democracy."

Nuclear Information Service, the research group that obtained the report, pointed out that the public were already paying for submarine reactor mishaps. "Plans for the new Dreadnought submarines are based on the assumption that nothing will go wrong," he said. "This cavalier attitude virtually guarantees that taxpayers will be picking up the bill for the MoD's complacency for decades to come."

The MoD stressed that the nuclear programme "absolutely" meets required safety standards. "This has not and will not be compromised and remains our priority."

None of the three authors of the MoD report responded to requests to comment. ■

*The Herald –  
19th November 2017.*

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# Peace Remembrance Day 2017 – Bonn Square



On Saturday 11th November a group of peace campaigners from Oxford and Abingdon met at the Peace Plaque in Bonn Square to mark Peace Remembrance Day. There were readings, poems songs and a vigil to remember all the dead of all wars. ■

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# Peace Remembrance Day – Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp



**On Saturday November 11th, Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp** held a vigil at the main gate to the nuclear weapons factory, AWE Aldermaston. We were remembering all the dead of all wars for Remembrance Day. We were joined by Kristine Karch, an activist and campaigner from Germany, who is co-chair of the international network -No to war – No to NATO. She is also very active at Ramstein, a huge American surveillance base connected to USAF Croughton here. Later it was very inspiring to hear about all the this as we sat around the camp fire with warm soup and drinks.

**Margaret Downs**

**At the November Aldermaston Women's Camp,** we had been inspired by Kristine to look at ways we could draw in the local community. We decided to make the December Camp bright and welcoming and invite local people to come in for traditional Christmas refreshments. In the week before leaflets were delivered to Aldermaston village inviting people to drop in for mince pies and drinks.

We had hardly got everything set up when one man stopped by with 2 rather diffident sons and was welcomed down to the little dell. He turned out to have belonged to Wallingford Peace Group and worked in Aldermaston village. His mother had been at Greenham Common.

We had quite a good Oxford contingent there to make up for Margaret's not being able to come. Rene Gill and Penelope Newsome braved the cold and joined me.

Along with the usual banners questioning the role of the nuclear weapons factory there, we put Christmas decorations on the fence and road signs and had an inviting table of mince pies and chocolates out in front. We were lucky. There were blue skies and the bad weather held off until the next day.

Let's hope we can keep up a tradition of a small group of us supporting the camp each month and keeping that crucial small corner by the nuclear weapons factory there for continued protest and pressure. ■

**Nuala Young**

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## Public meeting – Tuesday 30th January 6.30pm, St. Aldates Room, Oxford Town Hall

### **Milan Rai – ‘1917: The Nonviolent Russian Revolution’.**

Milan Rai is editor of ‘Peace News - for nonviolent revolution’, and a long-time activist who has been to prison for nonviolent civil disobedience. Many people believe that the Russian Revolution of 1917 demonstrates the need for ruthless violence to achieve radical social change. In fact, open-heartedness, persuasion and nonviolent civil resistance – by the Bolsheviks as well as by other groups – were all critically important to the success of the revolution throughout 1917.

Mass nonviolent action was vital in overthrowing the dictatorial rule of the tsar in February 1917, in defending the fledgling democracy from a military coup in August 1917, and in toppling the right-wing Provisional

Government in October 1917. In these crises, ruthless armed action by grassroots or pro-soviet forces could have derailed the revolution.

We should not pretend that the Russian Revolution was one long Gandhian Salt March, but we can try to see the Russian Revolution more clearly.

There are extraordinary, inspiring, surprising moments of nonviolence that can and should be celebrated by nonviolent revolutionaries.

Amazingly, one of these shining episodes of nonviolence is the Bolshevik-led ‘storming of the Winter Palace’. The talk will include a critique of Neil Faulkner’s ‘A People’s History of the Russian Revolution’.

There will also be a short monthly Oxford CND meeting before the talk. ■

## Public meeting – Wednesday 31st January 7.45pm, Friends Meeting House, 43 St. Giles, OX1 3LW

### **The Rabble Element – police interviews with Chris Cole and Milan Rai**

Two long-time peace activists tell the story of an anti-war action that involved B-52 bombers, a black lesbian cop, an undercover cop, spray-paint, the Official Secrets Act, and two hilarious police interviewers. ■

## Olive Gibbs – centenary 6th February 5.30pm, Oxford Town Hall



**Olive Gibbs was born and grew up in Christ Church Old Buildings, Osney Lane.** There is a blue plaque on the wall. She was twice Lord Mayor (1974–5 and 1982), the first Labour Chair of Oxfordshire County Council (1984–5), and led many campaigns. For her outstanding service to the city she was made an Honorary Freeman, a very rare accolade. She was also made a Deputy Lieutenant of Oxfordshire.

On the national stage she became a founding member of CND which she chaired 1964–5, succeeding Canon John Collins, and was awarded the Frank Cousins Peace Award in 1986.

There will be a celebration of the centenary of her birth on 6 February in the Town Hall. The event starts at 5.30 pm and you are welcome to come. Bruce Kent will be there to say a few words about her. ■

# Diary

Scrapping our nuclear weapons could pay for all A&E services in hospitals for forty years.



**MONTHLY ALL YEAR:** USAF Croughton main gate Quaker meeting 2-3pm (fourth Saturday of the month). Contact Elizabeth Salisbury: 01865 515163.

## January

**Wednesday 3rd** – Faringdon Peace Group, New Year meet.

**12th-14th** – Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp – Margaret: 01865 248357

**Monday 15th** – Oxfordshire Peace Campaign meet, The Mitre, 2.30pm.

**Tuesday 16th** – Abingdon Peace Group meeting, 8.00pm, Northcourt Centre – AGM and film.

**Tuesday 30th** – Oxford CND meeting, Oxford Town Hall, 6.30pm.

**Tuesday 30th** – Milan Rai (editor Peace News) '1917-The Nonviolent Russian Revolution', St. Aldates Room, Oxford Town Hall, 7.00pm.

**Wednesday 31st** – 'the Rabble Element' – Chris Cole & Milan Rai, Friends Meeting House, 43 St Giles, 7.45pm.

## February

**Tuesday 6th** – Olive Gibbs, centenary, Oxford Town Hall, 5.30pm.

**Wednesday 7th** – Faringdon Peace Group, Friends Meeting House, Faringdon SN7 8AQ, 7.30pm.

**9th-10th** – Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp – Margaret - 01865 248357

**Tuesday 20th** – Oxford CND meeting, Oxford Town Hall, 6.45pm.

**Tuesday 20th** – Abingdon Peace Group meeting, 8.00pm, Northcourt Centre.

Reach HIGH for a nuclear-weapon-free world



## Latest news

### MoD can't pay £205 billion for Trident?

#### Expect further cuts to schools and hospitals

"This is an extraordinary development if the government goes ahead. Where precisely will £205 billion or more, the full cost of Trident replacement, be found outside of the MoD budget? The government has repeatedly said it hasn't got billions lying about so, for lack of a magic money tree, this can mean only one thing. Further cuts to schools, hospitals or other areas of social spending."

**Dave Webb,**  
CND Chair

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Subs are very reasonable – £10 or £5 low wage, but are essential for us to continue to campaign. Standing orders can continue as before.

Make cheques for 2018 payable to Oxford CND and send to: Membership, 22 Downside Road, Oxford, OX3 8HP.

### Oxford CND Newsletter by email

Some members already receive the OCND newsletter only by email. If you would also like to receive it only by email, contact: [oxfordcnd@phonecoop.coop](mailto:oxfordcnd@phonecoop.coop)

### Contributions to the next issue...

Please send letters and items to:  
Newsletter, 22 Downside Road, Oxford, OX3 8HP  
No later than 24th February 2018.

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