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# peace matters

MAGAZINE OF THE PEACE PLEDGE UNION



## Resisting everyday militarism

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**“War is a crime against  
humanity. I renounce  
war, and am therefore  
determined not to  
support any kind of  
war. I am also deter-  
mined to work for the  
removal of all causes of  
war.”**

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The Peace Pledge Union is the oldest  
secular pacifist organisation in Britain.  
Through War Resisters' International it  
links with similar groups around the  
world. It is one of the original sponsors  
of the Campaign Against Arms Trade, a  
member of Liberty and a co-operating  
organisation of Landmine Action.

**For information, visit  
[www.ppu.org.uk](http://www.ppu.org.uk)  
or call 020 7424 9444.**

# Crossing boundaries

*Symon Hill*

A week before the EU referendum, a retired British general broke ranks with his colleagues.

Charles Guthrie, former Chief of the Defence Staff, had been one of twelve former senior officers to sign a letter in February backing EU membership. But he changed his mind, telling the *Daily Telegraph* that he feared close European co-operation over “defence” because many European armies are “hopeless”.

Guthrie, now a director of the arms company Colt Defence, said, he would rather co-operate with countries such as Australia “which has a jolly good army and one which is prepared to do things”. By “things”, he presumably means fighting wars, which is what armies are for.

Both Guthrie and his pro-Remain colleagues share familiar assumptions. Violence is deemed to be necessary, repeatedly and on a large scale. The UK establishment is assumed to be worth defending.

In the Ministry of Defence (pictured), they talk about “defence” but

mean war and preparations for war. For all the talk of security threats, armed forces do not address the underlying causes of violence, such as global poverty, inequality and climate change.

In the wake of the Brexit vote, British politics feels unstable. The future is hard to predict. One thing we can guarantee is that militarists will continue to push their agenda, whether in the UK, EU, Russia, the US or elsewhere.

As pacifists, we must be just as determined to stand up to this, building alliances across borders, making clear that violence cannot end violence and that militarism is an assault on human dignity.

Militarist values and assumptions are present in everyday life in the UK, from military visits to schools to local events to mark Armed Forces Day. The Peace Pledge Union has decided to step up its work challenging everyday militarism. The following pages give some examples of everyday militarism - and of ways to resist it.

I recently took up the post of PPU Co-ordinator, succeeding Jan Melichar, who has served the PPU for many years. I am honoured to be in this position and I look forward to working with you in tackling militarism and promoting a strong pacifist alternative.



## News of peace and war

### Army under pressure over Deepcut

The British army is struggling to defend its reputation after the latest revelations about the deaths of young personnel at Deepcut barracks in Surrey.

Two decades after the death of 18-year-old Cheryl James, a new inquest confirmed a verdict of suicide, to the surprise of many. But this didn't let the army off the hook. The coroner made clear that evidence had been lost due to a lack of proper investigation. The inquest heard yet more

evidence of sexual harassment and bullying of vulnerable young people. Amnesty International called for fresh inquests into three other mysterious deaths at the base.

Army boss Nick Carter, Chief of the General Staff, fought a rear-guard action at the Defence Select Committee, insisting that army "culture" would change. Even he acknowledged that it was "sexualised".

The Committee sadly failed to ask him how an organisation rooted in violence and hierarchy could ever move away from bullying and abuse.

### Ministers in the dock over Saudi arms

There was success for the peace movement on 30 June, when the High Court ordered a judicial review into the legality of UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

The legal case was brought by the Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT), to which the PPU is affiliated. It may be several months before the issue is debated in court, but there's already been an outraged reaction from arms companies and the Saudi government.

### The Chilcot small print

Like many peace organisations, the PPU welcomed the fact that John Chilcot's recent report recognised the flimsiness of Tony Blair's argument for invading Iraq. However, Chilcot seemed to shy away from questioning the armed forces.

Buried away in Section 6.1 of the report, however, is the revelation that military commanders pressed for a greater UK role in the invasion during the run-up to war. The PPU insisted that commanders as well as politicians must be held to account.

The problem is war, not just this war. War is possible because people do what they're told.

### Arms dealers for peace

Members of the PPU and CAAT attended the AGM of arms giant BAE Systems on 4 May. Chairman Roger Carr became rattled by ongoing questions about arms sales to Saudi Arabia, the bombing of Yemen and BAE's academy school in Cumbria. Eventually, he claimed that BAE was selling arms to preserve "peace".



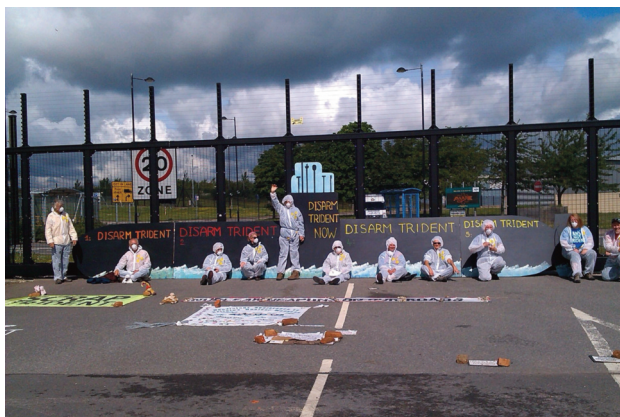
## News of peace and war

### Taxes for Peace Bill

Labour MP Ruth Cadbury has presented a bill to Parliament that would grant taxpayers the right to choose to have the military portion of their taxes diverted towards expenditure on non-military security.

The bill is backed by Conscience, the group campaigning for conscientious objection to military taxation. While it has little chance of becoming law, it is ensuring that the realities of military expenditure are discussed in Parliament and the media. The UK has the fifth highest military spending in the world.

*Welsh activists blockade  
AWE Burghfield.  
Photo: Trident  
Ploughshares*



### Nonviolent action against nukes

While the media were absorbed by Brexit, a nuclear weapons site in Berkshire was coping with a security threat posed by a particularly dangerous group of people: pacifists.

Throughout June, pacifists and other peace activists blockaded entrances to the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Burghfield (next to Aldermaston), where Trident missiles are developed.

A blockade of the main gate on 6 June continued overnight and stayed in place for over a week. Similar actions took place every day for the rest of the month.

On 27 June, a number of faith groups took part in a day of action under the banner 'No Faith in Trident'. Support was offered by Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Buddhist and secular figures.

There were several arrests during the month, including eight on 27 June, mostly from the Christian pacifist group Put Down the Sword.

It's a reminder that pacifists are not passive.

## Everyday militarism

*Militarism is all around us. If it seems invisible, it's only because it's so deeply embedded in British life that it looks like a natural part of the landscape.*

*As we step up the PPU's resistance to everyday militarism, here are some examples to remind us of what we are up against, and how we can take it on.*

### Armed forces join human rights march

London's LGBT Pride parade on 25 June featured uniformed soldiers and a flypast by the Red Arrows. Arms company BAE Systems formed a section of the parade, declaring support for LGBT rights.

One of BAE's leading customers is Saudi Arabia, where gay, bisexual and trans people are routinely imprisoned and tortured.

The Red Arrows, part of the RAF, state that they aim to "assist in recruiting to the armed forces".

LGBT activists joined with the Peace Pledge Union and other grassroots campaigners to launch the

No Pride in War campaign.

"Why should the military be allowed to walk at the front of the march when NHS doctors, who I depend on for my medical support services, have to walk at the back?" asked Dan Glass from Act Up, one of the first groups to speak out.

On the day of Pride, around thirty activists, including PPU members, handed out leaflets to the thousands of people who were marching. There was a positive response from many. When the Red Arrows flew over, there seemed to be about as much booing as cheering.

As the BAE section marched past, some activists tried to engage BAE staff in conversation, but they refused to talk and some of them resorted to obscene gestures.

The chant went up, "BAE out of Pride! There's no pride in genocide!"

**TAKE ACTION:** Sign the petition to Pride organisers: <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions>.

No Pride in War demonstration (Photo: CAAT)



# Everyday militarism



## Buy our products - the army likes them!

A company is assuring customers that one of their products is "army approved". Is it a gun, a tank or at least a parachute? No, it's a mobile phone cover.

The company asserts that the phone case had been "put through military-grade drop testing" (see left). It seems we are supposed to trust the product - because we are expected to trust the army.

## Militarist trains

Pacifist activist Sam Walton recently came across a Great Western train named after the Red Arrows and celebrating their "excellence". Meanwhile PPU staff member Ben Copsey found himself on a train covered with red poppies and slogans about the "fallen" - sanitised language that presents war as clean and straightforward and does nothing to honour the dead.



## Promote the army - and pay for the privilege

Cardiff councillors recently received an invitation to a reception run by the Army Engagement Team - in the councillors' own building.

Councillor Ed Bridges has asked the Council's leaders who will be paying for the event. An answer will be provided at the next Council meeting, but Ed isn't hopeful. In 2013, he asked how much the armed forces paid for their recruitment stalls on Cardiff streets. The answer: nothing at all.

That year, Cardiff Council raised £203,000 by charging businesses for public stands - but none of it came from the armed forces.

**TAKE ACTION:** *You can ask your council whether they allow the armed forces better deals than other employers wanting to recruit. Please let us know what they say by emailing [mail@ppu.org.uk](mailto:mail@ppu.org.uk) or calling 020 7424 9444.*

## Writing for Peace

Young people from across the UK have been reflecting on opposition to war by taking part in the Peace Pledge Union's *Writing for Peace* award.

They were invited to submit poetry or prose exploring the feelings of a conscientious objector, or another man or woman opposed to war, during World War One.

"The quality of the entries was very high," said Peter Glasgow, the PPU's Peace Education Officer.

"It was difficult for the judges - who included a playwright, who has written scripts for *Brookside* and *Eastenders* - to determine the actual winners."

In the end, two people each won a joint first prize: Samira Idmessaoud, from Ratton School in Eastbourne, and Georgina Melia, from Soham Village College in Cambridgeshire.

In a strong third place was Holly Thompson, from Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg, Llangynwyd, near Bridgend.

Opposite you can



Georgina Melia (right) receives joint first prize from the PPU's Peter Glasgow as her teacher Jessica Fletcher (left) looks on.

read Georgina's poem, *The Toppling Pieces*. Georgina's joint first prize was welcomed by Julie MacIntyre, Director of English at Soham Village College. "We are delighted that Georgina's exceptional writing talent has been recognised nationally," she said.

Our next issue will feature Samira's entry *The Scarlet Price* while in the following issue you will be able to read Holly's poem *Protest Against the War*.

### Peace in your school?

*Are you a teacher, school student or parent? Would you like the PPU to visit your school? Let us know at [peaceeducation@ppu.org.uk](mailto:peaceeducation@ppu.org.uk) or on 020 7424 9444.*



# The Toppling Pieces

*Georgina Melia*

Where are they now?-  
The children of the military  
They're buried deep in the mud,  
Smiles sweet, flecked with blood

With their uniforms hung loose against their frames  
And the false cologne of confidence overpowering the fear in their boots.  
They're launched onto the fields like fodder  
For the machine guns to graze upon.

The boy to the right goes down, so does the left  
The German in front, the Austrian to his right.  
In their last breaths they all look at each other with a universal sorrow,  
And they then too join the casualties of war.

Casualties of a war far less personal than it seems;  
It's a King's war and the pawns are falling off the board.  
They're falling down fast on both sides and  
Soon there will be no one else for the Kings to use.

The curve of death will soon enter my hands,  
And that omen will be in my sights.  
I'd rather meet with him willingly,  
Than kill until I die.

So what are all really fighting for?  
It's just another man's war.  
On that field, I'll be there, fighting for peace,  
It will be my duty until my decease.

*Georgina Melia, 15, is a student at Soham Village College in Cambridgeshire  
and co-winner of the Writing for Peace award 2016.*

## Conscientious Objectors' Day



Walter Roberts was the first British conscientious objector to die in detention. He died aged 20 in September 1916, killed by the conditions at the Dyce work camp near Aberdeen.

A century later, Walter's niece Siw Roberts read from Walter's final letters to a crowd of people marking International Conscientious Objectors' Day (CO Day) on 15 May 2016 in Tavistock Square, London.

As usual, the day was observed around the world. In Venezuela, 43 people marked the day by defying their call-up and declaring themselves to be conscientious objectors.

In Turkey, four conscientious objectors were prevented by police from marching and planting trees in Diyarkibir (pictured left).



In South Korea, a cycle protest demanded the release of more than 700 people locked up for refusing to fight.

In the UK, the Peace Pledge Union joined with others to insist that conscientious objection remains relevant despite the abolition of conscription.

The PPU called for "conscientious objection in everyday life" to resist the growing militarisation of British society. The PPU's call was reported by the *Guardian*, *Morning Star* and BBC Ulster.

Events to mark CO Day were held in British towns and cities including Cambridge, Carlisle, Edinburgh, Leicester, London, Manchester, Milton Keynes, Oxford, Penzance, Rochdale, Sheffield and York.

Members of the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection attended the event in London, having held their regular meeting in the city on the previous day.

New memorial stones for COs were laid in Leicester and Carlisle, but in Penzance the local council refused to allow the planting of a tree in honour of COs in the town's war memorial park.

## Review: *The Hammer Blow*

Virginia Moffatt  
reviews  
***The Hammer  
Blow: How ten  
women disarmed a  
warplane***  
**by Andrea Neeham**  
(Peace News  
Press, £10)

I have to confess that I have a strong personal connection with *The Hammer Blow* as the author, Andrea Needham, is a close friend. But even if she wasn't, I would be highly recommending this lively and entertaining account of one of the most important peace actions of the last thirty years.

The book, which gives Andrea's perspective on the 1996 'Seeds of Hope' Ploughshares action (when women disarmed a Hawk jet bound for Indonesia), begins with an account of the author's path from an ordinary middle class childhood to full-time activist.

It is when we reach the main event that this book really comes to life. From the time the group of women come together with an intent to disarm a plane, every part of the action is planned carefully; every potential outcome thought through. This leads to hilarious descriptions of Andrea and her fellow activist Jo Blackman sitting in fields staking out BAE Warton, trying to identify the Hawk. When they finally do, the account of the group making its way in the dark to the

base, cutting through the fence and disarming the plane is both exciting and extremely moving.

This is a gripping story and extremely well told, moving effortlessly between humour and deep emotion as Andrea tells of their subsequent arrest, imprisonment and trial and their hopes and fears. She paints an unsparing picture of the difficulties of being in prison but also demonstrates how the women prepared for trial, ably assisted by their support group on the outside.

The book reaches its denouement with tensions rising in the courtroom as the women wait for the jury to reach their historic verdict, followed by an eruption of joy when the women are found not guilty.

Seeds of Hope was a rare moment in campaign history when activists not only succeeded in their goal but were found not guilty: a result that certainly contributed to international efforts to resolve the situation in East Timor.

## Tax resister, not tax dodger

*Can we challenge corporate tax-dodging while also opposing the use of taxes to fund war? Pacifist tax resister Simon Heywood argues that we can and that we should.*



*Simon Heywood is a Quaker writer, composer and storyteller and a member of the PPU.*

I don't know if David Cameron has ever been called a soap-dodging hippy. But if he has, he's following in a long-established tradition of controversy over the subject of taxation.

Mr Cameron's tax affairs came under scrutiny in April, following the leak of the so-called "Panama Papers." Cameron's supporters argued it was fine to avoid tax, because ... well, who wants to pay tax? Financial journalists reminded readers of the difference between tax evasion and tax avoidance - which, if you're interested, is that tax evasion is legal, and tax avoidance isn't.

It's about ten years since I found myself court-ing accusations of tax avoidance. It's one of the few things I have in common with David Cameron's dad. In one sense my ac-cusers were making a rea-sonable mistake: I was part of a group protesting against having to pay tax for military purposes.

That can sound like an at-tempt to dodge the tax alto-gether. But it isn't. Unlike David Cameron's dad, we

all wanted to pay - but we could not in conscience do so without seeking to en-sure that the money we paid went towards making the world a safer place.

We knew our taxes could easily be spent pre-venting wars by fighting their causes: poverty, op-pression, misery and injus-tice - to name but a few. We knew that real peace-work needed funding - everything from expert mediation in cri-sis situations, to the slow, patient work of many life-times in and for communi-ties in entrenched conflict.

We knew these things had worked before, often unnoticed - wars that don't happen don't make the news. For example "War Fails to Break Out in the Baltic" was never going to be a big headline - not even in the early 1990s, when, thanks to an unobtru-sive round of nail-biting, last-minute diplomacy, it certainly should have been. We knew that such meth-ods could work better with more public recognition and better funding. We knew that they were a more cer-tain means of self-defence,



in the long run, than binges on more military hardware. A team of expert mediators could be kept in business, literally for centuries, for the cost of a single hi-tech bomber plane which could be turned to useless wreckage in a moment.

We knew, too, that this was more than just a matter of policy. War never is. It was, and is, a life-and-death issue which engaged individual conscience, just like conscription - and conscription demands the right to conscientious objection. We knew that paying to kill is killing, and, in effect, we were being drafted to kill through our taxes, just as if we had been forced to pay a hired assassin for a contract killing, thousands of times over. We knew all these things. But the law didn't.

So we challenged the law, withholding a percentage of self-assessed tax (because we could - an opportunity denied to anyone who pays tax solely through PAYE) and coming together as a

group - the Peace Tax Seven - to bring a legal challenge in the High Court.

For us, bringing the case involved (among other things) a crash course in the comments threads in the reasons why we were wrong. We were told that tax couldn't be hypothesized - that is, earmarked at source for specific purposes. We'd paid enough National Insurance and TV licence fees to feel confident that it could.

And, of course, we were told we were soap-dodging hippies. The irony is that we did all this in an attempt, not to avoid tax - still less to evade it - but to pay it. We kept the withheld tax to one side in readiness.

The case ended with a ruling in the Treasury's favour. But the intervening ten years have made the basic issues all the more current. The causes of war remain, and the alternatives seem to be receding in an ever more troubled world. There are evils the world needs to avoid more than anyone needs to avoid paying tax.

**MILITARY SERVICE ACT 2016**

Since the 1966 Military Service Act we have had the right to conscientiously object to taking part in the organised killing of other human beings. However, as UK taxpayers today, we fund the entire military apparatus. This includes the current bombing in Iraq and Syria, the research, design, manufacture and deployment of ever more deadly weapons and the training and equipping of military personnel for use in future wars and military interventions around the world.

**We invest in a future culture of death and destruction.**

**NEW CONSCRIPTION NEEDS NEW EXEMPTION**

120 years later, conscription no longer exists, yet war and preparation for war is taking place in our name, with our money.

Conscience Teams for Peace Tax that is introducing a Bill to Parliament this year which would allow citizens to redirect their portion of military tax into a third alternative source - military security, conflict resolution and prevention work - if they so wish.

**CONSCIENCE CAMPAIGNS FOR THE RIGHT TO INVEST IN PEACE**

**SUPPORT THE #PeaceTaxBill TODAY**

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <small>Go to our website and register your objection for funding tax in support of the #PeaceTaxBill @ <a href="http://conscienceonline.org.uk/register">conscienceonline.org.uk/register</a></small> | <small>Contact your MP asking them to support the Taxes for Peace Bill and EDS4 100% @ <a href="http://conscienceonline.org.uk/empire">conscienceonline.org.uk/empire</a></small> | <small>Join up to date with new progress of the #PeaceTaxBill on Facebook page @ <a href="https://www.facebook.com/peacematters">peacematters</a> &amp; Twitter @ <a href="https://twitter.com/peacematters">peacematters</a></small> |
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## War toys in the midst of conflict

*The PPU's Peace Education Officer, Peter Glasgow, spoke to parents of young children to find out their views on war games. He found the parents already putting peace principles into practice.*

Do war toys create a sub-conscious acceptance of the inevitability of war? Do they provide subliminal encouragement of a view that the armed forces are ever-present agents of good in a dangerous and evil world?

The PPU has long campaigned against the pernicious influence that war toys can exercise. That said, when it comes down to considering individual toys and games things are not always clear-cut. There appears to be a lack of definitive evidence to suggest that, on their own, individual toys or games make children more aggressive or belligerent.

However, what is clear is that they constitute elements of that "drip-drip feed" that makes the unacceptability of violence acceptable.

In my work, it has become apparent that the important thing is that parents should be thinking about whether or not toys and games are flexible enough to provide children with opportunities for creative play - the sort of play

that support a child's healthy mental development. Certain toys are obviously incapable of having a positive creative influence, The M16 Camo Dart Gun in conjunction with the Full Camo Set-ACU Digital Camouflage soldier's outfit is a case in point!

So what happens when you explore the nuances of this issue through discussion? Is it possible to identify what is and is not harmful?

A few months ago, I found myself running a session with a diverse group of parents about the impact of war toys. They had approached the PPU and asked us to organise this discussion. It quickly became clear that the parents were hoping for some guidance on the sort of toys that they should be buying or not buying for their children.

We commenced with a questionnaire that allowed the parents to focus on and discuss the relevant issues. Case studies were considered

in pairs and used to compare the usefulness and value of different types of play and toys. The session included a Guiding Play Checklist that could subsequently be used to support parents' future purchases of toys and games.

I asked the parents if they had played war games when they were young. One woman responded immediately, saying her own experience of war as a child went beyond toys. As a child in 1982, she had lived in Beirut and was aware that a full-scale war was going on around her and her family.

She had barely finished speaking when another woman exclaimed, "I remember that, I was just on the other side of the border, in Israel".

They acknowledged each other, without rancour, and we continued our discussions. They were, of course, speaking about the 1982 Lebanon War, when the Israeli Defence Force invaded southern Lebanon, surrounded

west Beirut and subjected it to heavy bombardment.

It seems that there must be some comfort to be drawn from the discussion of these two mothers. They had youthful experiences of being on opposite sides during a brutal war. This was in an area of the world where the ubiquity of violent conflict seems endemic. Yet they were now able to participate together in considering the adverse potential that war games and toys might have upon the healthy mental development of their respective children.

It also says a lot about the brilliant work, undertaken by the managers, teachers and other staff in our inner city state schools. At their best, they create and maintain oases of peace in what otherwise seems to be a very troubled and violent world.

### ***Don't join the army!***

*The latest army recruitment campaign aimed at young people makes ironic use of the expression "Don't join the army", implying that it's a phrase young people might hear from relatives and friends.*

*The posters featuring the saying continue in ironic tones to say "Don't learn new skills", implying that there are in fact many benefits to signing up.*

*The army's attempt to parody anti-army comments suggest that they know such views are common. They may also have backfired.*

*The group Veterans for Peace have now parodied the parody, producing their own website, [www.dontjointhearmy.co.uk](http://www.dontjointhearmy.co.uk). It gives evidence of the realities of army life, with headings such as "Don't believe the hype", "Don't lost your rights", "Don't follow orders" and "Don't become a killer".*

# A handy guide to militarist euphemisms

*The way we think about violence is affected by the words we use. Militarist attitudes infect our language and subtly twist our conversations. This is one of the most consistent examples of everyday militarism.*

*To remind ourselves what's being talked about, here are some quick definitions.*

**Defence:** War and preparations for war

**Security:** War and preparations for war

**Defence spending:** Money for war

**Defence industry:** Arms industry

**Security measures:** Restrictions on civil liberties

**The national interest:** The interests of the UK establishment



**Intervention:** Military intervention, i.e. going to war

**Doing nothing:** Doing something other than going to war

**Bombing ISIS (or the Taliban, or the Nazis):** Bombing areas controlled by ISIS (or the Taliban, or the Nazis), full of innocent civilians

**Deterrent:** Weapon of mass destruction owned by the UK government

**Terrorists:** Vicious killers who the UK establishment does not like (e.g. ISIS)

**Allies and trading partners:** Vicious killers who the UK establishment *does* like (e.g. Saudi Arabian regime)

*If truth is the first casualty of war, perhaps language is the second.*

*Even pacifists can slip into militarist language! Let's speak out when we see language misused to promote warfare.*

