



BRENTWOOD

JANUARY

2008

WIRE

FIFTY YEARS OF CND

The year 2008 marks the fiftieth anniversary of CND. Not, perhaps, a cause for celebration, as our aim is to get rid of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction and thereby the reason for our existence and we seem to be far from that goal. We should, however, not forget what has been achieved so far whilst acknowledging that we still have some way to go to convincing Parliament of our case.

During 5 decades of campaigning we helped to achieve the Partial Test Ban Treaty in 1963, which outlawed atmospheric nuclear tests; thanks to pressure of public opinion, nuclear weapons were not used during the Vietnam War, nor were they used on the many other occasions when they were considered; President Carter withdrew his plans to site the neutron bomb in Europe because of popular protest; the INF Treaty – 20 years old – which disarmed thousands of nuclear weapons, was due in no small part to CND's anti-cruise missile and the women's campaign at Greenham.

We can also draw some comfort is from the fact that CND members (national membership is once more on the increase) are still very active and carrying out effective peaceful protest. The nuclear submarine base at Faslane in Scotland was blockaded innumerable times last year with well over 1,000 arrests of people who simply refused to be moved from the gates. The result of the Faslane campaign, which still continues, is that the Scottish National Executive has declared itself totally against the siting of the nuclear submarine base in Scotland and has the support of a majority of the Scottish people. This is a real achievement and we have yet to see how this dynamic, unthinkable 20 years ago, will unfold.

At Aldermaston in November, an 80 strong blockade blocked roads leading to two of the gates, causing disruption to work and leading to 13 arrests.

Amongst these was a 77 year old councillor, Ray Davies, from Caerphilly. The quirkiness of the law and the inefficiency of the criminal record system were well demonstrated in his case. He pleaded "guilty to trying to stop the destruction of the planet

with nuclear weapons" and when the magistrate asked what was known about him, the clerk of the court said he had a long record of such actions and had been to prison five times. The magistrate then adjourned the case as it was felt that the bench could not try the case. Later in the day, in a different courtroom with a new bench, the same question was asked and, to Ray's amazement, the reply came: "Mr Davies has a clean record and is of absolutely good character". Ray was given a conditional discharge for two years, a sentence which is unlikely to put a stop to his campaigning. The demonstrators used concrete filled wheelie bins, lock-on tubes made from concrete, and super glue to make it more difficult for the police to remove them. All of this took place in spite of Thames Valley Police's special operation codenamed "Rumble" (they find out what the protestors are going to do by logging on to the Block the Builders website – very smart tactics!) which was intended to thwart the protestors' actions. It took a police cutting team 2 hours to arrive!

More locally, Irene Willis from Southend CND, spent a few days in prison for refusing to pay a £50 fine (plus £50 court costs) imposed for deliberately obstructing traffic around Parliament Square in March, while the House of Commons was debating the renewal of Trident.

On the exact anniversary of the launch meeting of CND, on 16th February 1957, CND an important conference is being organised to plan future strategy. The emphasis will be on strengthening UN and international links. Experts and grass roots campaigners from every established nuclear state will attend, as well as the UN High Representative for Disarmament, Ambassador, Sergio Duarte and the former UN Under-Secretary General for Disarmament, Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala. The US, as the most significant nuclear state, will also be represented by Ambassador Thomas Graham, Director of the Bipartisan Security Initiative. The emphasis will be on developing global strategies for a nuclear weapon-free world.