

The Big One in Britain

This year has seen an astonishing acceleration of anti-nuclear campaigning in Britain. Most of this dissent is focused on the Tory government's proposed defence commitments, particularly a decision to allow 160 Cruise missile bases to be installed on British soil. The programme makes Britain the biggest concentration of US firepower overseas, a sitting target for thermonuclear attack.

Kay Salleh reports on the many organisations mobilising in opposition to the conservative government's defence policies.

A British Broadcasting Commission opinion poll held at the end of 1980 showed roughly half the population opposed to the Trident submarine and Cruise missile programmes, and convinced that they would see nuclear war in their own lifetime. But a solid majority were still not in favour of disarmament. Even so, opposition is now impressive and continues to grow.

The mobilising effect of the British government's fraudulent 'do-it-yourself' survival guide *Protect and Survive* cannot be overestimated. When officials concede that 30 million must inevitably perish in the event of nuclear war, to propagate the notion of 'correct, proper and responsible' civil preparedness is bureaucratic criminality in the extreme.

While parliamentarians, local councillors and militia use public moneys to furnish bomb shelters for themselves, ordinary people are coolly advised not to head for the hills if they expect government 'assistance with essentials' to be forthcoming. Instead, you are told to stay and make a fallout room at home. Instructions include constructing an inner refuge of sand bags, doors, tables, heaped clothes and books as radioactivity barriers — if you are able-bodied enough to haul these

around, that is. Take down flammable curtains and paint windows over with an opaque emulsion. Fill the bath with about 3½ gallons of water each, stock up 14 days' food, first aid kits, transistor with spare batteries; and stay inside for at least 48 hours after detonation.

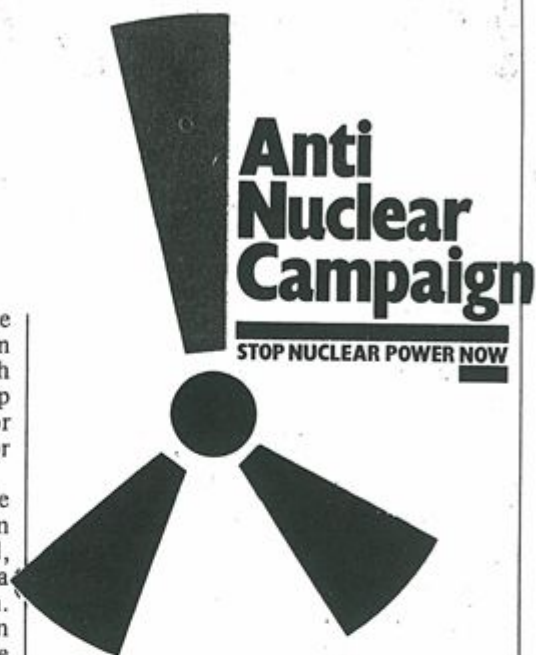
Yes, people react against nonsense like this. They have come together in huge rallies — London, Bradford, Nottingham, Bristol, Manchester, a mobilisation of 50,000 on one occasion.

What is this remarkable human counter-force made of? Who are the nuclear resisters?

Since its heyday 20 years back and the lull when support was drawn off into the Vietnam struggle, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) has revived with a second generation following. The new public face of this peace movement grew as a result of the UN Special Session on Disarmament in 1978 and the Geneva Commission which followed it. CND, in true liberal form, defines itself as an open alliance, outside 'ideology and politics'. Its programme is reflected in the aims of almost all nuclear opposition groups: a British foreign policy based on peace and co-operation, unilateral disarmament, the dissolution of NATO and Warsaw Pacts, domestic review of the current defence budget (40% of government expenditure) and restitution of funds to welfare, housing, health and education. CND is also working with the Lucas Aerospace shop stewards on a strategy to turn arms manufacture over to socially useful employment and production.

The core CND push is educated, humanist and older, an economically privileged and culturally protected group, along with a sprinkling of younger counter-culturals. Meanwhile, Youth CND puts up a concerted drive to capture the third generation with broadsheet messages from 'Ron Raygun', 'Olivia Neutron Bomb', zippy t-shirts, folk concerts, school petitions and recruitment nights in Wimpy bars.

A second group is historian E.P. Thompson's new campaign for a Nuclear Free Zone across Europe, set up as a series of lateral committees to develop a European network of trade unionists, academics, parliamentarians and church people.



A third general disarmament body, launched in 1980 by the fragile but impassioned 91-year-old ex-cabinet minister, Olympic medalist and Nobel prize winning Lord Noel-Baker, is the World Disarmament Campaign (WDC).

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On the road to Trafalgar Square, London.

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They are hoping to organise a world convention at the Moscow Stadium, possibly preceded by a European peace walk under the auspices of War Resisters International, and are well on the way in the collection of 1,000 million signatures (the Japanese already have 25 million) to go to the next UN Special Session on Disarmament in 1982. The group wants to see arms spending channelled into development aid. With a global military expenditure of \$1 million per minute, a mere 12 hours of this would cover the whole World Health Organisation malaria eradication project.

Among the churches, Quaker Peace and Service provides consistent stalwart opposition. They estimate that £12 per week per family goes towards the arms build-up, so are trying to get this amount itemised on income tax forms with option for tax to be payable into a National Peace Making Fund. This new affirmative activism reverses their traditional passive resistance.

As for the Church of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury is on side, but the spouse of the titular head of the Church, the Duke, in contrast to his movement-lionised uncle Mountbatten, has come out with a pro-deterrent statement.

The Methodist Division of Social Responsibility inspired by Lord Soper, another patriarch from the Upper House, is giving the issue a lot of publicity, but the mass of true believers are strung out on a line that stretches all the way from red terror to sympathetic Encyclicals such as Vatican II. Pax Christi is working hard to establish overseas links. The British Council of Churches treads a cautious and thoughtful 'realist' path. The Student Christian Movement, meanwhile, puts out a nuclear information kit.

British trade unions are not as solidly behind disarmament as we Australians might expect. The Transport and General Workers' Union, Tobacco Workers, and the National Union of Mine Workers are affiliates of WDC, but while activities such as Manchester Against the Missiles Conference and the East Anglia Signature Drive show a committed force in some areas, attempts to organise regional discussions among union councils have met inside resistance. A major difficulty is the fact that American dollars let workers at nuclear sites earn a wage far beyond the normal British means. A London based independent labour group called Socialist Environment and Resources Association, SERA, runs a union education programme looking at things like job creation through alternative energy projects and the conflict between trade union rights and security in the nuclear industry.

Friends of the Earth is much bigger than SERA with some 200 active centres in Britain and very deliberately



Heavily guarded Falsane Submarine Base in the Firth of Clyde, Scotland, home of the Polaris fleet and, if Thatcher and Reagan get their way, of Trident too.

'non-political', watching carefully who it works with although its loose structure of local branches allows some variation. FOE pursues well organised collective projects for insulation, waste salvage, cycle safety and, like SERA, concentrates on nuclear power rather than arms. But while FOE's offensive against technology celebrates autonomy, SERA activities fall clearly within the ethos that drives the wheels of production and the worker bodies under them.

The 1980 Labor Party Conference endorsed the CND platform, but a motion for the gradual phasing out of nuclear energy in Britain was lost. The party as usual is divided. The break-away Social Democrats are favouring Polaris and refurbishing the conventional force. The pro-Soviet CP and Young Communist League, firmly pitted against the 'mighty military-industrial complex' are wholeheartedly unilateral.

A singular turn in the growing momentum is the appearance of many women's groups. WDC names the Co-operative Womens' Guild, Women for World Disarmament, Womens' International League for Peace and Freedom and the National Assembly of Women among its subscribers; well-heeled reformist organisations, largely consisting of older people. The emergent second generation, however, advances its action as critique of patriarchal culture itself. This informal coalition of women are from the Feminist Anti-Nuclear Group, the Feminism and Non-Violence Collective at Manchester, Feminists Against Nuclear Power, a caucus which formed at the Women and Science Conference at Imperial College, London, and from the 1980 East Anglia Womens' Liberation Conference, Women Oppose

Nuclear Threat (WONT). This wave of resistance coincides with an international swell of feminist concern over militarism and violence in all its forms. Some of these people have considerable experience in political campaigning and are now convinced that if they are to get anything done at all, they must organise separately from men's groups where they continue to be set back by intimidation and trivialisation. Many assert as well the need to make a radical break from the socialist terms of reference. WONT specifically demands an end to the manufacture of weapons for mass destruction; of arms spending at the expense of domestic programmes; no conscription for either women or men.

Another development alongside CND is a grouping of skilled scientific workers fighting the proliferation of nuclear arms. The British Society for Social Responsibility in Science, BSSRS, has joined CND, but if its last conference is any indication of its priorities, these centre more on the job question - 'scientists and the slump', 'women and the new technology' - than on the threat of imminent annihilation. One perceptive BSSRS blurb ties the nuclear crisis to the division of labour between those who design, those who implement, and those who kill, the constant shift of personal responsibility. In a move to overcome this, Prof. Michael Pentz at the Open University has started a briefing group of technicians, engineers and even social scientists called Scientists Against Nuclear Arms.

SANA plans to demystify the technical jargon of deterrence which produces the public sense of impotence and alienation. A look at Pentz's early efforts, however, suggests that if the medium is part of the message at all, these aims may well backfire. The pamphlet is not so much a critical examination of the language, premises and unintended social consequences of instrumental rationality as a spontaneous exercise in more and 'better scientific management', an escalation of glamorous expertise and intensification of the gap between specialist and mass.

A Medical Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons is tackling the government's absurd civil preparedness strategy and concept of 'limited' war head on. There is no possible medical response to nuclear attack. A Health Service circular tacitly acknowledges this, advising that deployment of staff in high radiation areas is pointless; hospitals should accept only casualties with a chance of recovery in the long term.

There are local pockets of anti-nuclear dissent. The University of Sussex is one, heavily involved in the movement through the presence of its Arms and Disarmament Information Unit, similarly Bradford University

through its School of Peace Studies, Oxfordshire, and hence Oxford University, is directly threatened by the proposed Cruise missile programme, and so is East Anglia and Cambridge University. In addition Cambridge is the home of the original Cavendish Laboratories and half of all academic military research still goes on there. Cambridge, whose local council has now refused to co-operate with the Emergency Planning Authority for Civil Defence, is full of retired historians, scientists and military personnel, a competent articulate leadership for a conventional political campaign. The university colleges, town and surrounding villages have some 35 anti-nuclear groups. The National Union of Students is officially attached to CND and there is also a body of Students Against Nuclear Energy, SANE, but some of the smaller universities are not much involved.

Throughout Britain there are local groups working with the Sheffield based umbrella Anti-Nuclear Campaign, ANC. The Severnside Anti-Nuclear Alliance in Wales and the South West runs films and is trying to stop military recruitment in schools. The Lothians Against the War Drive, LAWD, sustains marches and festivals directed at the proposed Torness nuclear power plant, and the Scottish Campaign to Resist the Atomic Menace, SCRAM, held its first huge peace conference in Edinburgh earlier this year.

Only the farmers don't seem to be represented in this vast movement for common sense and survival. Perhaps they are taking the *Protect and Survive* recommendations seriously: cows should be milked before the holocaust and post-devastation agriculture geared up to meet a grain diet.

The disarmament campaign does seem to be making some political headway. Within a mere 6 months of frantic movement activity the government is re-examining its whole defence outlay and a joint party House of Commons Defence Committee is split over the advisability of Trident. According to a mid-year *Guardian* survey most people in Britain do reject Trident now, compared to only half last year. Yet culturally, there is much less awareness of the deforming effect of the prevalent technological assumptions on social relations here than there was during the high point of the Australian anti-nuclear campaign. Alternative groups in Britain are putting most of their energies into practical civil projects leaving the peace campaign to established productive forces and self-legitimising professionals. It is plain that each arm of it is partial, and ambivalent in its opposition to the status quo. Labour, peace groups, the churches, women . . . each group has different aims and different tactics. Their combined impact can be expected to reflect their collective ambivalence.

Chain Reaction

EDITORS and ADVERTISING MANAGER

Applications/proposals are invited for the positions of Editors* and Advertising Manager of *Chain Reaction*, the national magazine of Friends of the Earth Australia. (* Currently there are two people working as Editors, one of whom handles advertising. Other arrangements may be proposed by the applicants.)

The magazine, published quarterly, goes to all members of Friends of the Earth in Australia, other subscribers (including schools, unions, community groups, libraries and individuals) and is on sale at community centres and various retail outlets. *Chain Reaction* covers a wide range of environmental, energy and food issues in Australia — emphasising the work of community groups.

The Editors work with Collective of volunteers in Melbourne and Sydney, with FOE and other community groups around Australia. The magazine has been based in Melbourne since it was established in 1975. The Editors' responsibilities include ensuring continued operation of the Collectives, encouraging people to work on the magazine, determining content of the editions, organisation of production, managing the finances of CR, distribution and promotion of the magazine. The present Editors have had a two year appointment.

The Advertising Manager sells advertising space in the magazine. Remuneration — negotiable. Applications close on 31 December 1981.

Applicants may be required to attend interviews in mid or late January 1982 at a Friends of the Earth Australia meeting in Victoria.

The new Editors and Advertising Manager would commence work on 1 April 1982.

Applicants are welcome to discuss the magazine and obtain further information from the present Editors and Melbourne and Sydney Collectives — telephone (03) 63 5995 or (02) 698 4114.

Send written applications/proposals and enquiries to the Selection Committee, *Chain Reaction*, Room 14 Floor 4, 37 Swanston Street, Melbourne, 3000.



Friends of the Earth Brisbane
requires
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1-2 days/week \$20-30
(Terms Negotiable)

Commencing 14 February
(approximately)

Activities: Fund raising; CR distribution;
co-ordinate meetings; correspondence;
etc.

Preferably someone who is prepared to
work in a co-operative group based on
consensus decision making.

Applications stating relevant experience
and interests to be submitted by about
12 January 1982. Send to: FOE
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business are secretive but don't
let working in there get you down.
Pass information on to us so
Chain Reaction can let the public
know. Our address is *Chain Reaction*
Room 14, Floor 4,
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