

# Aldermaston Update!

Quarterly Newsletter of the Aldermaston Women's Peace Campaign

November 2000 – January 2001

## One down, one to go



Rosie (l) and Rachel (r) outside Manchester Crown Court. Photo: lppy/AWTT

Inside this issue  
**not much!**  
(bumper issue next time...honest!  
Convoy action  
Judicial Review  
Roving Reporter  
Questions in the House  
Strategy meeting

### The verdict: Not (terribly) Guilty

In Manchester on September 20th a jury found Rosie and Rachel, of Aldermaston Women Trash Trident affinity group, Not Guilty on a minor charge of criminal damage caused by spray painting 'Illegal' and 'death machine', on the Trident submarine Vengeance. However, they told the judge that they were unable to reach a majority verdict on the major charge of disarming radar testing equipment valued at thousands of pounds.

After a two week delay, the Crown Prosecution confirmed that they will continue with the second charge to a third trial, following a mis-trial at Lancaster in January, and the hung jury in Manchester. Rachel's reaction to hearing that the next trial will be next March, two years after their disarmament action, was 'Great! It's another opportunity to bring the argument against Trident in front of another British court!

The refusal to convict the two was particularly encouraging as the jury were only allowed to consider the very narrow grounds of defence of necessity and self defence allowed under English law, the judge having ruled out defences based on international law. In a brief explanation of his rejection of the defence team's arguments, he made the extraordinary statement that "crimes against humanity are not crimes in English law". In his summing up he informed the jury that the British government was not committing a crime in preparing or deploying Trident.

However, the jury were evidently not entirely convinced. Despite the fact that the letter of the law allows for no defence for an action like this which does not directly prevent the harm of nuclear weapons, the jury was able to acquit by a majority. Perhaps they found the simple explanation that the painting was done to 'name the submarine for what it was' impossible to find fault with.

The defence for the main charge was more complex, and rested to a large degree on the closeness of the danger posed at the time of the action by Trident, and how far Rosie and Rachel's action could have averted that danger. For me, it was perhaps the best part of the trial to hear, through the guarded statements of prosecution witnesses, that the action had indeed achieved its aim. For a length of time, whether days or weeks, a quarter of the UK's nuclear capacity had been delayed from launching on sea trials.

The powerful testimony of the expert witnesses must also have left a lasting impression on the jury: Paul Rogers of Bradford Peace Studies calmly outlining how close to 'accidental' nuclear war the world has been; Angie Zelter dealing with TP's and other's exhaustive efforts to get the legal system to deal with the illegality of Trident; and Rebecca Johnson, a defence analyst, emphasising how the British government continues to rely on Trident as a first strike weapon. The prosecu-

## Aldermaston Update! November 2000–January 2001 continued from page 1

tion's clumsy attempts to make these witnesses seem like woolly hatted anti-nuke cronies of the defendants came badly a cropper!

Although the jury were not allowed to hear the full international law arguments, they could not avoid realising that the legality and of course the morality of Trident and other nuclear weapons is seriously doubted in many quarters internationally. I will remember with pleasure for a long time the judge laughing openly in Rachel's testimony about the German Judges who blockaded a US nuclear base. 'Had I better get my wet suit out?' he joked, only to get more serious when he realised the judges had in fact broken the German law to oppose nuclear weapons.

But above all, it was the straightforward and dignified explanations of Rosie and Rachel from the witness box which must have brought home to the jury the rightness of the action. Rosie described making paper cranes after hearing the story of Saddako (Hiroshima victim) as a child, and how she swam out to the submarine to protect everyone she cared about. Rachel, when asked what she thought they had achieved by their action, replied simply 'It worked'.

The next trial will also be in Manchester in April 2001. Rosie and Rachel will again need supporters to leaflet and be a presence throughout the trial. Any donations towards support work, travel costs etc will be gratefully received. This will be the last time - the prosecution can't bring another case next time, even if it's a hung jury!

## Scene of the crime!

This action enticed about 20-30 women to Aldermaston on Sunday 1 October, equipped with cameras and notebooks, and specimen jars for soil and water samples. Accompanied by WPC Helen, smartly dressed in uniform and police cap, the women gathered at Main Gate, along with drumming monks.

Many photographs were taken, milling and amiable ambling (along with the Hampshire Gazette). Undercover Agent (dressed in a cover!) Charlotte did her inimitable strolling, along with Scooby Doo who did her best to evade the MDP. Meanwhile one woman managed (after nearly 2 years of on and off plotting!) to bumble up onto the AWE Reception roof for a photo opportunity...

Later in the day water and soil samples were taken whilst three women gained the platform of a portakabin roof at Construction Gate – alongside the "Citadel" where the dirty, criminal business of making weapons of mass destruction is carried out. Although one of the women is a 40 day veteran of a tunnel, nevertheless boredom soon struck. Whilst one remained on the roof, another made for a gate further towards North Ponds where she remained for the next half hour or so; the third made for the series of four fences surrounding the citadel. MDP compounded their crime by using force in the fence; nevertheless, after very slow progress all the fences were climbed (and photos taken) before final ejection from Main Gate...after the MDP had borrowed the womens' ladder...and then returned it so the roof-occupier could come down and walk out with ladder to a well earned cup of tea...All in all a successful day's crime detecting...

**Photographs and information about the proposed "Scene of the Crime" exhibition will be published in the next issue of Update!**

## Catholics convert convoy

Catholic priest Martin Newell and Dutch Catholic Worker Susan van der Hijden, calling themselves 'Jubilee Ploughshares 2000', entered Wittering air-forcebase in Cambridgeshire and symbolically disabled the Nuclear Weapons Convoy, which transports nuclear warheads to and from British Trident submarines.

After entering the base, the two disabled a Trident warhead carrier, hammering inside the cab on the dashboard and on other equipment in the back of the cab. Then they painted the words "The Kingdom of God is Among You", "Drop the debt, not the bombs", and "Love is the fulfilment of the Law". They then went in search of the guards and security people in order to tell them of their actions.

In their statement they said: "We have acted in a spirit of repentance for our complicity in crime against humanity and God. We have acted to uphold the law. Through the Jubilee 2000 campaign, the church has committed herself to working for justice for the poor and the oppressed. British nuclear weapons are a central part of the chains of oppression."

Susan van der Hijden, who lives and works with refugees in the Netherlands [she also visits Aldermaston!], said: "I have lived with the victims of international violence for seven years, it is high time to go to the roots of the problem – the rich exploiting the poor – and Trident plays a major part in that." **Both have since been remanded to prison. Send messages of support via: Peace Pagoda, Willen, Milton Keynes, MK15 0BA.**

**AWPC ANNUAL STRATEGY MEETING  
FROM 11AM SATURDAY 9 DECEMBER  
ALL WOMEN WELCOME – BRING YOUR IDEAS  
(AND WEAR SOMETHING WARM!)**

## Trash Trident Trial Part III

Manchester Crown Court from 3 April 2001.

Please contact us if you would like to offer support  
awtt tel (m) 07808 553778

e-mail: [awtt@hotmail.com](mailto:awtt@hotmail.com) or see [www.gn.apc.org/tp2000](http://www.gn.apc.org/tp2000)



awtt would like to take this opportunity to say a very big thankyou to everyone who has provided support to us over the past two years. We do appreciate it and could not continue to function without it. Your contribution is valued.

## EA Judicial Review

On 30th October a management hearing was held in the High Court when Mauela and NAG sought to get the AWE case referred directly to the European Court of Justice.

The reason was that in the end, it is expected that the judge will refer the case so that the ECJ can say whether or not Euratom applies to military sites. In their skeleton argument written before the aborted hearing in September, the MoD suggested that the case be referred.

However, just before the Hearing on 30th, the MoD said they wanted the case to be heard here in Britain in a three day hearing as originally planned.

The case is listed for 11th, 12th & 15th January 2001 in the High Court in London. **For more info contact Di**

## From our Roving Reporter

On Friday 15th September I visited some tatty buildings inside our atomic weapons establishment at Aldermaston. Unlike the inmates I was not paid to do so, nor did I wear a suit or white coat, wear a dosimeter or the other trappings of respectability and containment - as if you can contain the ramifications, both physical and mental, of designing and producing weapons of mass destruction.

Whilst not difficult to climb, the fences demarking this area of criminal activity are not designed for scaling, and I had suffered an enforced sabbatical for most of the summer, so it was especially pleasing to slip through the razor and barbed wire virtually unscathed, and with plenty of time to trot through the undergrowth to the next internal fence gate. Here, with a wave to the watching camera, I duly turned off my mobile phone, severing my links with the sane world, and fully entering the madness of atomic weapons.

I entered a complex of buildings, one of which I had previously inspected earlier in the year. I met the manager, complete with walkie talkie, and we said hello before I went up a large silo/tank; he warned me not to fall from it, nor - if I was to continue my walk - to fall into the holes they were digging. Deciding the tank was a convenient dead end (from their point of view), I descended and continued walking, avoiding the trenches being dug.

I then saw a running doghandler muttering "where is she?", so I called out. Big grin, arms held out - "come to me, Juliet, come to me". How nice, but I declined, hopped over a waist high fence, saw an open door beckoning with no hostile signs on it (but perhaps there were on the outside??) and slipped in. Discarded white suits and boots lay on the floor and in lockers; a knee high nice-to-sit-on bench divided the room from another entrance, through which my friendly seeker came. We met, we nodded, I agreed to leave the building, and then stay whilst Health & Physics came with monitors.

The manager, who had been joined by a higher manager, angrily tried to establish where I had been, saying hadn't I seen the signs to keep out? Well, silly billy, if I kept to their demarcations, I wouldn't be there, would I? I'd be part of the knowing and unknowing public who are complicit in their war crimes, obediently believing that whereas it is wrong to kill - except in war; wrong to kill certain categories of people even in war (like pregnant women, women and children, the old, doctors and nurses) - except if you happen to be one of 5 countries with a "nuclear deterrent"; wrong to poison water and food sources - unless with a "nuclear deterrent" which contaminates our planet in its making even without its end use... and so forth. Unfortunately for me I can no longer believe all that cosy madness; I can't split myself off from the rest of the world's inhabitants who are threatened by such monstrous weapons, even supposing we ourselves could escape the results of such use.

So, with MDP trying to explain where I had been, we stood around waiting. I started sticking up posters saying Trident is illegal, and another poster explaining what BNFL stood for (Big Nasty [choose your own expletive] Liars) - unfortunately I had run out of my favourite which urges the reader to start their own revolution. The under manager wished to take them down saying he had a right to do so. Poor MDP were left to practice conflict resolution between us. How do you explain that you've risked a mauling by the fence (let alone by police dogs...or handlers, perish the thought); ostracism from "normal" society;

possible prosecution; loss of liberty etc in order to try and convey a message, and they haven't even the decency to wait five minutes before ripping down that message?

Fortunately Health and Physics then arrived, I was invited into the building (!), and I was duly monitored. I was most impressed that MDP insisted I have the process explained to me, but I'm afraid I was utterly uninterested, though I appreciated the thought. I mean, I was supposed to have walked through a contaminated area which had a small ordinary chain link fence surrounding it; does that keep out the wind and the sun? So are they monitored? How can you contain such contamination? Why was it contaminated? Am I to trust people who cause such contamination and get paid to do so? All in the name of incinerating others?

We walk and talk the same (though the manager and I did have a short discussion about the different language we were using), we must have the same basic needs, joys and sorrows - but what a gap once this side of the fence! Outside no doubt we would not recognise the gap on casual acquaintance; inside a madness has grown and spread which, like radiation, knows no bounds in time or space. And each calls the other mad and irresponsible; but I don't feel superior, justified or right; I just feel terrible fear...

## House of Commons questions

**Mr. David Rendel (Newbury):** How many job losses there have been at AWE Aldermaston since the new management consortium took over responsibility. [132985]

**Mr Hoon:** As at 16 October, a total of 197 jobs had been lost [at AWE] [...] since 1 April under the voluntary redundancy scheme introduced by the new management contractor and approval has been given to a further 34 applications.

**Mr. Rendel:** I am sure that the Secretary of State has seen the recent report by the Environment Agency, which raised the concern that the company could not maintain proper environmental and safety standards. Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm, should the redundancy programme go ahead, that he has taken measures to ensure that redundancies will not cause environmental or safety concerns?

**Mr. Hoon:** I am surprised by the hon. Gentleman's comment. During the past three months, positive reports were published by Her Majesty's inspector of nuclear installations and the Environment Agency for England and Wales. The Environment Agency said: Arrangements for the management control of radioactive wastes at AWE and also the training of employees are good. It also said that the initial impact of the new management systems, especially the environmental management systems, were promising, and could potentially fully meet overall requirements in the near future. The Environment Agency gave a positive report on the first three months of operation of the new management contractor.

**Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley):** Does my right hon. Friend recognise that throughout the country there are fears-BSE and the rail crisis, for example—about the possibility that information has been hidden and that staffing requirements may be cut? Will he give an assurance that no hidden secrets about Aldermaston will suddenly emerge, and that safety is absolutely paramount?

**Mr. Hoon:** With regard to that operation, safety is absolutely paramount. I assure my hon. Friend that the contractor's obligations include the need to satisfy the Ministry of Defence and independent regulators about safety considerations and that that will remain the case. I give him the assurance that he seeks.

# Future camp dates

- December 8-10
- January 12-14
- February 9-11
- March 9-11

Camp mobile phone  
07808 553778

Camps run from around 8pm on Friday, until 2pm on Sunday. All women are welcome; supportive men may visit in daylight hours. The camp is situated near a main road, but is suitable for animals and children when supervised. The camp is fairly accessible, but more information for disabled women is available by contacting AWPC. Please bring a sleeping bag and tent to sleep in if you can. Contact us in advance of a camp if you need to borrow these. Vegetarian and vegan food is communal. Either bring food to share or put money in the kitty. If you are coming by train, aim for Mortimer railway station.

**We look forward to seeing you**

## Contact:

AWPC  
157 Lyndhurst Rd, Worthing, W Sussex  
Tel: 01639 700 680 email aldermastonwpc@hotmail.com

## Peace News

for nonviolent revolution

With a substantial thematic section taking an in-depth look at a range of contemporary issues and ideas from a radical perspective.

- *the* international quarterly magazine for nonviolent activists
- published since 1936
- where nonviolent activists do their best thinking and reflecting
- for nonviolent revolution

## In the next issue

- TP2000 visit Aldermaston (again) – Report on the November Trident Ploughshares Disarmament Camp
- Report on the annual AWPC strategy meeting

I would like to subscribe. I enclose:  £10 or  £20 supporting:  
Credit card no. \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ expiry \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
Cheques £ payable to "Peace News"  
Name.....  
Address..... Country.....  
Return to: *Peace News*, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DY, Britain  
For all other subscribers, please contact us for rates.  
(Tel +44 20 7278 3344; fax 7278 0444; email peaceneeds@gn.apc.org).

# To:

Return address: