

STOCKPORT PEACE FORUM REPORT: year ending 17th November 2008

for AGM at 7.30pm on Tuesday 18th November 2008

Stockport Peace Forum continues to organise regular meetings on subjects broadly in line with our aim to 'increase understanding of the causes of conflict and tensions ... and to bring together people and groups from all back grounds ...'. The committee meets every eight to ten weeks to arrange the meetings and other activities. There are currently twenty 'paid-up' members of SPF who may attend the AGM, stand for the committee and vote, and they receive a financial report. This annual report of activities is circulated, either by post or email to about 180 supporters, who are encouraged to become members by paying an annual £5 subscription.

Meetings:

26th September '07: Dave Webb, from Network for Peace, gave an enlightening but worrying talk about the militarisation of space and the US Missile Defence system, subjects on which he has great in-depth knowledge.

31st October '07 - Sandy Broadhurst, who has worked with many Romany families in the Manchester area, talked about their rich culture, and their life and treatment here.

3rd January '08 - Julian Abrams spoke on "Working with the UN - does aid work?" giving us a very honest account about his experiences working abroad with the United Nations on development assistance projects.

5th March '08 - Rae Street told us about the history and latest developments at the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston prior to the 'surround the base' demo on 24th March (see below).

23rd April '08 - Phoebe Spence introduced 'Sustainable Security' which, rather than trying to control the current symptoms, dealt with the long-term resolution of the causes of threats to our security and how we can influence these. This took the form of 'Working Group' discussions and was thought-provoking and productive.

24th June '08 - Showing of 'Occupation 101' DVD followed by discussion about the occupation of Palestine.

3rd July '08 – Two speakers on 'How we can stop torture and get justice for victims'; Richard Scorer, a lawyer acting for four British men who were detained and tortured in Saudi Arabia, and Maggie Harris, from the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, told us about their work with victims from their different perspectives.

8th September '08 - Rae Street provided us with detailed information about the breaking of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty by the proposed NATO bases in eastern EU countries.

The attendance of meetings has varied from 10 to 20 plus.

Other activities and events:

SPF stalls and Vigils:

- Peace stall in Stockport precinct with Marple CND has continued every four weeks or so.
- 17th December '07: stalls in Marple and Stockport to collect signatures on a Christmas card for the Prime Minister, with the wording 'Peace is for all the year round not just at Christmas. We all need a daily reminder of the UN Core Peace Principles: Respect all life - Listen to understand - Preserve the planet - Reject violence - Share generously - Rediscover solidarity'. Some also added personal messages.
- 15th February '08: Vigil at Stockport War Memorial to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the huge demonstration against the invasion of Iraq.
- 13th June '08: Vigil at Stockport War Memorial, as the 100th British serviceman died in Afghanistan; remembering both the British troops and the many others who have died there, and in other conflicts.

- 6th August '08, Hiroshima Day: Vigil at Stockport War memorial.
- 9th August '08, Nagasaki Day: stalls planned for Marple and Stockport, sadly had to be abandoned in heavy rain.
- 21st June '08: joint stall with CND and UNA at the One World Festival in New Mills

Demonstrations:

- The SPF banner was on the Manchester demonstration, led by Military Families Against the War, on 16th February '08.
- On the national demonstration in London on 15th March '08.
- At Aldermaston on 24th March, celebrating 50 years of protest against nuclear weapons.
- At the national Stop the War demonstration in Manchester on 'The Cost of War' on 20th September '08.
- Group members have also been to Faslane to protest against Trident - resulting in a really good article in the local paper about Joan Abrams.

Supported organisations:

- Affiliated to Greater Manchester Against War steering committee which meets every two months as a link organisation for community groups and organisations promoting peace in this area. Members attended various meetings organised by Greater Manchester Against War and by Greater Manchester CND.
- Supported Marple CND's Coffee Morning.
- Supported Trades Council organised campaign against the BNP, which stood candidates in bye-elections in Offerton Park Parish, Stockport, in May and November '08.
- Supported Stockport UNA's activities, including the International Supper.
- Members also attended 'Taste of Afghanistan': a meal and quiz organised by a group of Afghan asylum-seekers and Quakers from Huddersfield;
- and also attended the Marple Justice and Peace group's meeting on Modern Day Slavery.

Web-site: We now have a web-site on which this report will be available, as will information about forthcoming meetings and events: www.stockportpeaceforum.org.uk