

MERSEYSIDE C.N.D.

NEW YEAR UPDATE

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The only sure way to eliminate the threat posed by nuclear weapons is to eliminate the weapons themselves.

— Antonio Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General



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GENERAL ELECTION 2019

A Victory for Fear and Xenophobia

For anyone still clinging to a belief in the UK as a nation tolerant of diversity this election must have been a bewildering experience.

Why did so many deprived communities vote for a proven liar and misogynistic public school bully? Did they really swallow the big lie at the heart of the Tory campaign – the one that blames the EU and EU migrants rather than nine years of Tory misrule for their very real problems of poverty and inequality or was it voters' unwillingness to have anything to do with Socialist policies associated with Jeremy Corbyn?

Like right-wing populists everywhere, Johnson told voters what they desperately wanted to hear - that by leaving the EU and 'controlling' migration, Britain could become 'great' again - no more food banks, no more decaying schools, and a shiny new NHS run exclusively by, and for, the exclusive benefit of people 'like them'; a 'Little England' of milk and honey. The Conservative victory, like the original Brexit vote, was a victory for xenophobia, for misplaced nostalgia for a mythical past—a victory secured by the spread of downright lies and propaganda throughout the media..

Unfortunately, Issues of peace and disarmament were not a factor in this election as all the main political parties paid homage to both NATO and Trident. However, in the present climate of knee jerk nationalism, issues of internationalism and international justice were easily weaponised by the Right and the tabloid press to demonise the leader of the Opposition. Jeremy Corbyn's support for the Palestinian people was cynically presented as anti-Semitism and his record of supporting peace and justice initiatives across the world was used to brand him as unpatriotic and a threat to national security.

All in all a very sad picture. What does this mean for the peace movement? More years in the political wilderness, of hard grind trying to win hearts and minds. It would be so easy to give up, but we cannot do that, we owe it to future generations to continue to campaign even harder for what we know is the rational and humane course for this country and, above all, to get people to think for themselves and reject the easy answers and convenient scapegoats peddled by right-wing populists like Boris Johnson.

XR CLIMATE STRIKE



GROUPS' EVENTS

New Year Meetings

Wallasey CND A.G.M./Party, 11th January, AGM—14:00, Party— 15:30, 4 Taunton Road, CH45 3JN, 0151 638 3967, barb.hardcastle@gmail.com

Merseyside CND Co-ord, 14:00, 8th January, MCND office, LCVS, 151 Dale Street, L2 2AH (members only)

Birkenhead CND, New Year Party, 19:30, 14th January, 4 Quaille Park, Bidston Road, CH43 6WA, Contact Cathy: cathy.page@phonecoop.coop

Pax Christi, Peace Sunday, 19th January, details t.b.c Contact Jan Harper: janharper1@yahoo.co.uk

Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament 60th Anniversary Tour around the UK.

Plans are to join with CCND locally to celebrate with them, inviting local churches and other faiths to join us. Bruce Kent will be invited as one of the guest speakers.

Possible topics of the meeting include:

The Carbon boot print of the military – not a green enterprise!

Rethinking Security

The increasing presence of the military in schools and colleges

Come to a group meeting above to join the discussion!

CANADIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONDEMN NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Pope Francis directed the Holy See to be among the first to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

By Douglas Roche

Canada's Catholic bishops have bravely stuck their necks out in a formal statement by solidly backing Pope Francis's condemnation of the possession of nuclear weapons, and blasting NATO and the nuclear weapons states



for continuing "to shirk their legal obligation...to pursue good faith negotiations towards the elimination of nuclear weapons." The Canadian action is a striking counter-move against the American and European bishops, who are undermining, by their silence, Pope Francis's social justice teachings.

Pope Francis, in a historic statement, "firmly condemned... the very possession" of nuclear weapons. The clear language the Pope used in speaking out against the "mentality of fear" and "false sense of security" that drives the new nuclear arms race captured the attention of scores of diplomats, Nobel laureates, and journalists.

The Pope's words were a direct attack on NATO's nuclear policies, which continue to affirm that nuclear weapons are the "supreme guarantee" of security. A vigorous debate broke out within the Vatican, pitting hard-line conservatives against those who want to implement the words of the Second Vatican Council 54 years ago, that the nuclear arms race is an "utterly treacherous trap for humanity." The Pope directed the Holy See to be among the first to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, adopted at the UN in 2017. All the NATO states are shunning the treaty, which will enter into force when 50 states have ratified it. (So far 32 have).

Not one national hierarchy in a NATO country spoke up. Now, a plenary meeting of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops has – forcefully.

"NATO policy undermines the new treaty.", the bishops said. "We call on Canada, through changes in its own policies and practices, to persist in efforts to bring NATO into conformity with the treaty.

"This action would clear the way for Canada to sign and ratify the treaty, which the bishops see as a "major step towards comprehensive negotiations for the elimination of all nuclear weapons".

The bishops pointing out the continued existence of 14,465 nuclear weapons held by nine countries, expressed "great concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of even one nuclear weapon." This led them to elaborate their concern that reductions in numbers since the Cold War "merely mask the modernisation process in which today's nuclear weapons contain far more explosive power than the atomic bombs which destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki."

The Canadian bishops have seized this issue and are providing moral leadership that will make the hierarchies in other NATO countries somewhat uncomfortable.

In November, Pope Francis journeyed to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the sites of the only use – so far - of atomic bombs, and where more than 200,000 persons perished. Pope Francis has not forgotten this calamity, even though NATO and the nuclear powers seem to have and remain virtually mute as the hard-built architecture of nuclear disarmament crumbles. Pope Francis's restatement of the moral evil of nuclear weapons will add to the growing calls for the U.S. and Russia to extend the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) which limits the numbers of strategic nuclear weapons they possess.

This will be followed next spring by international efforts at the UN to put some teeth into the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The subject of nuclear disarmament is very much alive and the Canadian Catholic bishops have done a double service in nudging their fellow bishops around the world and waking up Canadian foreign policy at a critical moment.

Douglas Roche was a member of the Canadian Parliament from 1972-1984, a Senator from 1998 to 2004 and is also a former Canadian ambassador for disarmament and author. The original version of this article can found at:

<https://www.hilltimes.com/2019/10/09/canadian-catholic-bishops-show-world-leadership-in-condemning-nuclear-weapons/218046>

(subscription required)

Many thanks to Bruce Kent for sending us this article

PROMOTING THE GLOBAL BAN

Towns and cities around the world are becoming nuclear ban communities as they sign up to support the UN's Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

We are encouraging all Merseyside CND members and supporters to contact their local Councillors, asking them to table this motion at a future council meeting. A draft can be downloaded from the C.N.D. website: <https://cnduk.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/model-resolution-for-councils.pdf>

STOP PRESS!

It has just been announced that the next Archbishop of York, soon to replace Archbishop John Sentamu, will be Stephen Cottrell, Bishop of Chelmsford who has condemned nuclear weapons.



<https://www.mcnd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/cottrell.pdf>