

Choose a theme:

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF WAR

WHAT ARE THE COSTS OF WAR

TERRORISM

PROCESS
EXPLORATION -
CONFLICT
RESOLUTION

OTHER ISSUES

Preparing for peace Initiative - Eliciting coherence and promoting the message

Date:

Friends, it falls to me to tell you about how we elicited a coherent message from the wealth of material provided by our experts, and how we are promoting that message. First, however, I will give my own take on 'living this concern' as that is indeed how it has been for over four years.

I have a well-spring of energy for our concern which predates, but also arises partly from my professional life in social work. Over decades, with colleagues, we witnessed and responded to the hurts suffered by children from anxiety, deprivation, humiliation and violence. We saw the impact at every stage of the life cycle. We often used substantial resources and expertise to bring about healing. A question nagged away in my brain for years: if this is how British children respond to traumatic experience, quite often in contexts which also contained many positive features, what is the effect on children subject to the terror, injury, bereavements, and deprivations of war? Surely it is severe, surely the society is ultimately affected by this? Is there not something very peculiar about a society deploying substantial resources to heal the hurts of a few tens of thousands of children each year, when it manufactures weapons- and we are the second highest exporter of arms in the world- and spends £39b a year on so-called defence, resources used to wage war and inflict suffering on whole populations of children, as well as adults of course, who will bear that legacy for the rest of their lives?

Now we are accumulating the evidence of this harm. Just one example. In May this year it was reported that the babies of pregnant women at or near the World Trade Centre on Sept 11th have registered hormonal differences suggestive of post traumatic stress disorder and predictive of stress problems in adult life. I give this example in full awareness of the irony, in

terms of comparable impacts on Afghanistan or Iraq.

Preparing for Peace has two salient features which have a bearing on these reflections. The first is the point made so tellingly by Joseph Rotblat that globalisation means we inhabit one world. This means that we are mutually interdependent as a global community, and it means that we can no longer see the children of Afghanistan, for example, as any different from the children of Britain. I would like to believe that it is a dawning realisation of this sort which was behind the British response to the Indian Ocean tsunami. The second is that PFP is making a rational case for the redundancy of war: if we look at the facts, then war presents itself as an irrational activity for a global community seeking a good life.

Turning now to the practicalities of our concern. It has generated a wealth of valuable material, and far too much for one book. We have sought to resolve this by employing a modern model of publishing: our book is published in conjunction with our web-site. The book comprises our message, the case we are making, summaries of the 24 papers published to date on the web-site and a sample of eight papers. In this way this way the project remains open-ended with new papers which underpin and develop our main themes continuing to be published.

Our Friend, Eleanor Straughton, carried out the task of analysing the content of the papers. Using this we have structured our case in the book by first addressing the umbrella question 'Is war a rational tool of politics?' Brian Walker has already given you the conclusion of our answer to that question. Needless to say we have had to take care to represent the views of our experts fairly as their conclusions are not invariably or explicitly the same as our own. We were struck, however, by the cumulative impact of what they did say, in terms of the acuteness of the threats to peace and the terrible consequences of war. The strongest statement of support for war came from General, Sir Hugh Beach when he said that it could be the lesser of two evils, but always amounted to failure. In the next part of the book we took these threats to peace identified by our contributors and put forward

non-violent responses to deal with these threats, again many suggested by our contributors. A programme of action, our manifesto as it were, flowed from this analysis.

The analysis suggests that a peaceful world is dependent on activities falling into three categories:

- The proscription of war under international law
- The creation of new institutions to transform conflict
- Sustained and effective action to eliminate the causes of war.

Within these categories we are advocating the following policies, expressed in summary:

- A UN constitutional amendment that war is illegal for any reason.
- International law to include a set of reformulated crimes against humanity.
- Reform of the UN to make it a truly representative body.
- Establishment of an international civil peace service. This would include an international police service.
- Development of the supra-national regional bodies. In addition to being vehicles for cooperative action by the nations in their membership, these bodies would enable their citizens to realise their roles as global citizens by developing their capacity to uphold a democratically operating UN.
- Control of arms production and trade in arms; decommissioning of weapons of mass destruction.
- Sustainable development, protection of the environment and trade justice.
- Programmes to educate the present generation of the world's children for their future responsibilities as world citizens.

There remained some outstanding questions which persisted into the final stages of drafting. Who was the target audience

for our book? In terms of the original concern it was decision-makers in international bodies and national governments. We wished, however, to reach a wider audience. We hope we may have presented a case which will engage non-pacifists, and we hope to offer power to the elbow of those who are already pacifists by providing a comprehensive rationale to support their advocacy. We know that Friends are active in campaigning for all the policies we are advocating, and that they are nothing new. Where we hope we may add value is in the evidence we have collected which supports the indivisibility of this set of policies for making a peaceful world.

A second question: what did we as individuals in the PFP planning group mean by pacifism? How were we, thereby, constrained in the solutions we sought? How did we deal with our perception that pacifism as a concept carried no credibility in wider society? Well, I think you may have to read our book to see how we handled that one! Having said that we do not pretend to a final answer. It helped us to acknowledge that our peace testimony is not a creed, it has no fixed expression, but it is the embodiment of each generation's attempts to live in our world in the light of our faith.

Finally, and crucially, we have outlined a splendid conclusion, presented our shopping list for a peaceful world, what now? To answer this question, I will digress for a moment. Of all the PFP papers we were most excited by Chris Williams' and Yun-Joo Lee's joint paper entitled 'The Minds of Leaders: delinking war and violence'. They analyse the unique role played by leaders in initiating war, and make pertinent observations on how leaders are influenced and how the nature of leadership itself is shaped. We, in our turn, have been influenced by their ideas. So, our answer to 'what now?' is that we should look for leaders. We should look for a new kind of leader: leaders who may be from any country, leaders who understand that we inhabit one world community, leaders who understand that the biggest problems we face have global reach, leaders who, therefore, have a similar agenda to our own. In this way we forge our escape from the disenfranchisement which arises from having an agenda for peace while living within a sovereign state

defined by its contract to “defend” its citizens, and we move towards forging a new global politics in which we act as citizens of one world. We have found ourselves at the start of the 21st century as part of a global community: now let us act consciously as the citizens of that community.

In the coming months we plan to launch PfP at the UN in Geneva and New York, with the support of Quaker United Nations Organisation, at the EU in Brussels with the support of Quaker Council for European Affairs, and at Westminster with the support of our Parliamentary Liaison Officer. We are seeking out audiences to which to present our findings ranging from the Mothers’ Union to University Departments, from the Fabian Society to St George’s House, the Christian clergy’s think tank. We hope that Quakers world-wide might join with us in looking for leaders. We will endeavour to sell as many copies of our book as possible through mail order and through persuading bookshops to stock it. Finally, here and now, today we are launching our book among Friends, we are asking you to buy it at a special BYM offer price. And that is not all we ask of you. We hope you will take a copy to your local bookshop and persuade the manager to stock it. We hope you will give us feedback on our message, come up with ideas for new commissions for the web-site, and hope very much you might join with us in looking for leaders who will recognise that war is a redundant and obsolete institution and work with us for a peaceful world.

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