

Chapter 13: Trident Ploughshares 2000

At a meeting on Thursday 23 October, 1997, Angie Zelter spoke of the direct action project aimed at achieving the abolition of Britain's Trident nuclear system by the turn of the century. Present were Tricia Allen, Christina Arber, John Brierley, Isobel Guillou, Annie Harrison, Bob Overy, Michael Randle, Carol Rank, Andrew Rigby.

Presentation - Angie Zelter

Angie said there had now been enough response to an unsolicited letter she had sent out together with an initial explanatory briefing, for the project to go ahead. A Core group of seven had been formed who had produced a revised memo: *An Invitation to Join Trident Ploughshares 2000*. (Angie distributed copies of this). The idea for the project had emerged from two strands. One was the Snowball civil disobedience campaign of the 1980s which she had initiated. (See *Snowball*, published by Gandhi in Action - available in Commonweal Library). She had wanted to do an anti-nuclear Ploughshares action at that time but had felt that the time was not right as people then were even hesitant about cutting a wire fence. The other strand came from her involvement in the Institute for Law and Peace which focussed on the illegality of nuclear weapons. That had developed into the World Court Project whose efforts led to the International Court of Justice giving an advisory opinion in 1996 on the issue.

After the relatively successful Ploughshares action against the BAe Hawk fighter-bomber in 1996, and the acquittal of herself and the three other women involved, she wondered why more people were not willing to take part in such actions. Her conclusion was that most people felt too vulnerable where the group was very small, but that they might be prepared to take part in an action involving several hundred people. Ploughshares actions to date had involved very small numbers, from a single individual to a maximum of nine people, and they had mainly been symbolic in the sense that they had not gone in for serious destruction. She saw the value of a symbolic 'witness' action, but wanted to create maximum embarrassment for the government which could happen if large numbers took part.

It was important, she felt, to be open from the start. The fact that her initial letter proposing the project was unsolicited, and stated to be so, would protect anyone receiving it from a possible conspiracy charge. Another precaution was that no names would be made public until a given number of people had signed up for the project. That number varied from person to person since everyone had been asked to tick how many others would need to have signed up before they were willing to have their own name released. She had received 32 individual replies so far, some indicating a willingness to take part if there was only one other person involved, others wanting 300 to be involved. Twenty-one were willing to take part if the action involved twenty or less people, so their names could now be released. Some of the 32 had indicated that they were part of an affinity group, making the rough estimate so far of total numbers willing to take part around 60, though some of those would only do so if more than 50 were involved. However, they had only just started getting leaflets out and getting articles into magazines. She therefore thought it likely that they would get a couple of hundred participants. There was a group coming from Sweden, another from Belgium, and there was some interest from a group in Canada. They were also hoping they might get a group over from Japan.

Angie then read the draft pledge that people were signing up to:

I am aware that the UK has signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1968, Article 6 of which stated that each of the parties undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date, and to nuclear disarmament and to a treaty on Complete and General Disarmament under strict and effective international control.

Thirty years have now passed and the UK still continues the nuclear arms race and NATO is still a nuclear alliance containing three of the major nuclear powers. The Trident system is an escalation in the UK's nuclear capability, having three times the range and being far more accurate and being able to hit eight times as many targets as the Polaris system it replaces.

I am also aware that on the 8 July 1996 the president of the International Court of Justice, which is the highest legal body of the United Nations, Mohammed Bejali, stated:

*'The nuclear weapon, the ultimate evil, destabilises humanitarian law which is the law of the lesser evil. The existence of nuclear weapons is therefore a challenge to the very existence of humanitarian law, not to mention their long-term effects of damage to the human environment in respect to which the right to life must be exercised.'*¹

The court confirmed the Declaration of St Petersburg, The Hague Conventions, The Nuremberg Principles, The Geneva Conventions and the Genocide Convention all applied to nuclear weapons. It stated very clearly that the threat or use of nuclear weapons is generally contrary to international humanitarian law. The court could find no lawful circumstance for the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

I believe that the Trident nuclear weapons system is illegal, dangerous, unjust, polluting, a terrible waste of resources and deeply immoral. I think Trident poses a threat rather than a defence. It is the duty of every citizen to uphold the law relating to nuclear weapons and under the Nuremberg Principles carefully, safely and peacefully to disarm any nuclear weapon system that is breaching humanitarian law. I am also aware that most national legal systems, including the UK's and other NATO countries' legal systems, allow serious damage to be done to objects if the damage is done in the belief that this would prevent serious crime from taking place. I believe that the damage I intend to cause to the UK Trident system will stop the ongoing crime of threatening to use nuclear weapons contrary to humanitarian law. As a global citizen with international, national and individual responsibility, I will endeavour peacefully, safely, openly and accountably to disarm the UK nuclear weapons system by the year 2000. I will do this by acting with others in the Ploughshares 2000 project. This means that if the UK government, NATO, and others in positions of political and military power have not guaranteed to completely disarm the British Trident system before the year 2000, then I pledge personally to enter Faslane and Coulport, and any other Trident-related facility from 11 August 1998 and to dismantle the system in such a way that it cannot be used to threaten or harm living beings. My acts of disarmament are, and will be intended, to stop ongoing criminal activities under well-recognized principles of international law. I pledge that I will harm no living being by my acts of disarmament and pledge to be calm and peaceful at all times.

All participants, Angie continued, would have to sign the pledge and take part in a two-day training workshop. So far they had raised about £5,000 so they had enough money to go ahead with printing the handbook and other preparatory work. On the proposals for negotiations with the authorities, outlined in the invitation document, it looked as though it might be sensible to start secret negotiations before the main public launch, so that if the government really did have something in mind they wouldn't have to lose face. That might sound very optimistic, but she felt that we ought at least to bear in mind that it was difficult for governments to lose face, and that we should give them the opportunity to change their policy before the action was publicly announced. The Core Group had a set of criteria - which they were still working on - about what the authorities would have to agree to for the action to be called off.

There were five criteria in the present draft, all of which - with the possible exception of the fifth one - would need to be fulfilled.

1. A written agreement from the Prime Minister of Britain and his Cabinet, or from NATO Headquarters, or from top military commanders, that all British nuclear weapons would be completely disarmed by the year 2000 and that a non-nuclear security policy would be implemented.
2. Immediately, i.e. before the year 2000, the removal of all nuclear warheads from delivery systems and their verifiable storage.
3. The return of all Trident missiles to the USA and of all warheads to Aldermaston or another suitable site by the year 2000.
4. A timetable for the de-commissioning of all the warheads as fast as is safe and feasible. A rough estimate of the time given present capabilities is between five to ten years.
5. An agreement that the operation of all sites should be switched from the maintenance and production of nuclear arsenal to the de-commissioning, clean-up and maintenance of safe storage and disposal of nuclear materials. All nuclear sites, both military and civil, past and present, should be declared to the IAEA and opened to intrusive and unannounced inspections, and the use of intelligence and satellite equipment, in order to enforce all international agreements concerning nuclear weapons by the year 2000.

Discussion

Aim of direct disarmament

Tricia noted that the document focussed almost entirely on the intention to engage in direct disarmament. Yet one passage in the Initial Briefing document read: 'The Ploughshares Trident Action is also one of disarming public minds and it will not matter if not a single Trident submarine is disarmed by us.' Angie said this was included so that individuals did not get hung up on seeing success and failure in terms of actually getting into the Trident submarine and hammering. The authorities probably already knew about the plans, and there would be a period between May and August of next year when the whole thing would be

public. Security at the base, therefore would be high, and it was unlikely that in the initial two-week action anyone would get near a Trident facility.

However with the secret actions, which would not start until after the initial two weeks, it would be more difficult for the authorities because there were a lot of Trident-related facilities, and a lot of groups planning such actions. Unless everyone was arrested, some of the actions were likely to succeed. The statement was a way of trying to make sure people did not get disheartened, or think that the *whole* point of the action was to physically disarm. They intended to disarm and would try to do it, but if that proved impossible the fact that they had tried, and were willing to risk a long prison sentence, was what mattered.

Initially, Angie said, she had wanted to find people who would be committed for the full 18 months from August 1998 to the start of the year 2000 to try again and again to disarm Trident. But the feedback she got was that that was not going to be possible. The Core Group wanted to involve a full range of people, not just full-time activists, and decided to settle for an overall project commitment for the 18 months. This meant that each affinity group would have at least two members committed to participating continually in the two-week's action in August and to taking part in one subsequent action. The subsequent action would be decided on by the affinity group and might be open or clandestine. There would also be open follow-up actions every three months for people who were reluctant to take part in small-scale actions. The people at the Faslane peace camp also wanted there to be a continuing focus on long-term action.

Tricia asked about the group's views on causing maximum as against more symbolic levels of damage. Angie replied that she personally believed in maximum damage - for one thing it made your defence much stronger in court. However, the objective was to cause enough damage, and only enough damage, to put the thing out of operation - to stop it being able to kill. The action was not aimed at causing criminal damage but at preventing criminal activity. Putting jam, for instance, down the missile tubes would make them unusable. They had included various suggestions in the handbook because there would be old and disabled people involved who had no possibility of getting onto a Trident submarine. The suggestions covered ways in which they could disarm the system, or prevent Trident from being used, without getting on the sub - for instance blockading or digging up roads.

John asked if it was really going to be possible to disarm the submarine. If not, would the legal defence stand up? Angie said the participants would have made clear by what they said and what they signed that disarming Trident was their objective. There would be no admission that they might not do so. The possibility of not succeeding was of course in the handbook, but the intention was nevertheless clear. Moreover, there were some groups with a good chance of getting past the security to the submarine. Women peace campaigners had already on three occasions got through to the submarine, one of them right into the control room.

Michael said that presumably the objective was to get a message across and to influence people through the symbolic power of the action. But the message of physically attacking equipment was ambiguous, and there was a danger that other groups would be encouraged to see the physical destruction of weapons and equipment as the principal aim and embark on a campaign of sabotage.

Angie replied that they were trying to get the message across, but that was not the main point in this instance. The main point was to stop something, and to bring about the nuclear

disarmament that had been promised to the world community for a very long time. Unless the authorities were pushed on the issue they would go down the path of developing micro-nukes, nuclear weapons in satellites and so forth. You got the message across through being open, and accountable and explaining the reasons for your actions.

As regards what others might be prompted to do, she agreed that one did have some responsibility in that respect. But if you took on total responsibility in this sense it would be difficult to do anything. What they had done in this project was to put in extra bureaucratic things to limit the risk of people acting irresponsibly. The insistence on openness and nonviolent training was an important safeguard. The possibility that other groups would take some completely crazy action like putting a bomb under Trident was something one could not control. It was actually a risk at the moment in any case as a terrorist group could do this. That was one important argument for getting rid of nuclear weapons and civil nuclear reactors.

Bob thought that when Angie said the main thing was not to get the message across but to stop things this was rhetoric. It was not conceivable that this direct action would stop Trident. What would stop it was the political decision of various groups within the society. What you were doing through the direct action, and direct disarmament, was to put a message across. He thought she was fooling herself if she thought that was not what she was doing. The symbol was crucial. What mattered was who was moved by it and how the various bits of the body politic were affected by it.

Angie disagreed with Michael and Bob on the symbolic versus actual disarmament issue. Their contention was again a way of disempowering ordinary people implying that it was only MPs or people in positions of power that could get something done. (Bob intervened to say that was not what he was implying). To some extent everything was symbolic, so she took on board the symbolism bit. But although you could not stop Trident as a whole through the action you could stop a particular submarine for a particular length of time and in that sense it would be a disarmament action - in a way that, for instance, pouring blood over it would not be. So one could distinguish between degrees of symbolism. No one project could succeed on its own, but if people were moved by an action or idea, and if enough of them became involved, then they could force something to happen, as history showed. She did not know if the time was right, but in a sense this was an experiment to see if it was. Bob agreed that disabling a submarine for a short period of time was a concrete step, and if you could get a lot more people to take that small step, you would have taken a bigger step. But he felt this was only a partial response to his point.

Tricia spoke about the group who had taken action against the NAVSTAR navigational system in the United States. Their whole argument had focussed on the need to do the disarmament and not needing to make a great fuss about the witness and taking responsibility - but they flipped it round when they got arrested and called it a Ploughshares action. What struck her about that action, making it different from most Ploughshares actions, was that they thought strategically about what would cause the most disruption. They calculated that if they spent two hours hammering on the NAVSTAR equipment that would put the whole system out of action for six months and would be much more effective than putting ten submarines out of action. At the other extreme you had symbolic actions like a soldier breaking his rifle. She wondered what was the strategic focus of Angie's thinking when she spoke of using jam to gum up the tubes, or removing tiles.

Angie said that some of the actions mentioned were intended to make the project accessible to

people who didn't have diving suits and boats and could not crawl through barbed wire or deal with complex technology. There were some older people who felt they could risk ten years, but would not want to use tools or climb up communications equipment. There would be different kinds of affinity groups. Older people prepared to go back again and again were likely to have a much greater effect on the public mind than 20-year-old men with their fast boats and equipment who would be more effective at the disarmament level. But the project aimed to incorporate both elements and to find ways in which they could work together and be jointly responsible for each other. For instance, the groups taking a less active part in the disarming could engage the attention and efforts of the security personnel while the other groups went into action.

Michael asked how far Angie and the Core Group judged the success of the action by the degree to which it inconvenienced, or put out of action, the Trident system. In the Committee of 100 period some people argued that rather than trying to get hundreds or thousands of people to sit down outside a base, it would be more effective to drive lorries loaded with wet cement to the entrances and let down the tyres. But blocking the base was essentially symbolic, and the important thing was having all those people committing themselves through direct action. If the emphasis was entirely on gumming up the works, then the action of the US group against a communications system would have to be judged far more important than someone breaking a rifle. But in terms of communicating the message, breaking the rifle might sometimes be the more important thing. He was still hesitant about the plan to physically damage equipment. If you could get thousands of people to blockade a Trident base or installation, that would be gumming up the works too but in a much more powerful way - and the risks too would be smaller.

Angie said that the handbook mentioned blocking the access roads as one of the disarmament actions that could be undertaken. She was trying to organise an action that was at once symbolic and an effective act of nuclear disarmament. When CND got out a quarter of a million, or half a million people onto the streets in the early 1980s, there was an element of disempowerment in that they asked themselves what was the point when the government simply ignored them. We were in a different political space now and if we could get all those people out on the streets again it would have a political impact and we wouldn't need to have the Ploughshares 2000 project. But the peace movement wasn't at that point any more, and you had to adapt your campaign to the position in which you found yourself. We needed the equivalent of the blockades with cement at the moment - although she understood what Michael was saying about the importance of the commitment of people. The cement type action would appeal to a younger generation who were in a do-it-yourself type culture. Her vision was to get the older type peace people with their nonviolence and affinity groups and so forth working with the environmental constituency and somehow combining the two.

Andrew said he remained confused about the emphasis. At one level Angie was saying that the talk of direct disarmament was not rhetoric, even if the stoppage was of one Trident for one minute. But she was also saying that unfortunately we had to play the numbers game, and was thinking about the 'ripple effect' on the broader society. Angie said that from the individual's point of view the action was direct disarmament; the intention was to stop the thing, if only for a short period. She wanted to go for a communications system and disrupt the thing for a long period. But on another level, you were only one person, or one project, and the action had to be seen in an overall context. You needed to get more people involved and talking about the action in order for the sea-change already being indicated by the polls to have an effect on the system as a whole. If you want to get rid of the nuclear system *for ever* then you needed the

other decision-makers to act. You were doing the two things at once. You knew what you were doing was small and finite but at the same time worthwhile. You were disarming, but recognizing that on your own you could not disarm the system totally or for ever.

Risks involved

Bob said that in recent years the state in Britain had been remarkably gentle compared to say the 1960s - and over the whole period things could have been a lot worse, with people, for instance being shot. So participants risked not simply ten years but losing their lives, especially if they started to be successful

Angie said that if we were serious about nonviolent defence, and about alternatives to Trident as a defence, we had to face the fact that this would require a body of people willing to give up some time at least, even if not their lives, in order to defend their country. In a way that was what this kind of action was doing. It was saying that people who go to war were willing to give their lives so people who wanted nonviolent defence were going to have to commit themselves to something a bit more than saying they didn't want nuclear weapons. Her intention in saying this was not to guilt-trip people, though there was a tendency to be glib about nonviolent defence. It actually meant being willing to give your life in order not to have to threaten somebody else's life for your defence. She was not suggesting that people should give their lives, but that now was the time for people to be thinking about a serious commitment. She was not even asking for an eighteen month commitment but for two weeks, and one extra action - though of course with the possibility that you might be one of those that got a ten year prison sentence. Some people queried mentioning the possibility of ten years in at all since the advice of the legal people in Scotland was that fines were much more likely. For political reasons, the authorities would not want to escalate the situation by imposing excessive sentences - unlike in the US where Ploughshares people had been sent to prison for eighteen or twenty years.

However, you could not go into an action like this without being prepared for the worst that could happen. Moreover, the spiritual force of the project came from the willingness of large numbers of people to face up to that risk and give up that amount of time. She would feel very disappointed if we did not get several hundred people willing to become involved in this action. There were thousands of people in the peace movement who at the time of Greenham, and on other occasions, had been willing to take great risks. The problem was how to contact people, and to make sure that the project had the elements that were needed. She hoped that people in the group would be willing to go through the handbook and come up with suggestions as to how to make it more accessible and also think of ways in which we could involve more people in support roles.

Annie said she thought Angie was mistaken in thinking that the reason people were not willing to take part in Ploughshares action was that the small groups did not provide enough support and that this would be dealt with by having a large-scale action. In her view the reason people did not undertake ploughshares actions was that they risked ten years in jail. The Swedish Ploughshares people had a vision of hundreds of people taking part in such actions, but she thought that was because the first Ploughshares actions in Sweden resulted in people receiving only small fines. In the US there had been dozens of Ploughshares actions, but they tended to be carried out by the same few highly committed people prepared to spend long periods of their life in jail. They saw this as part of their life, part of their witness and spiritual journey. There had probably been far less people involved than there had been actions.

Michael asked if it was likely that in the end a few people would end up with long sentences. The mass action was unlikely to result in anyone getting near Trident, but people in small groups in subsequent clandestine actions might well do so, and these could face very severe penalties. Angie said there that risk existed - which was why the joint responsibility aspect had been included. However, she recognised there were problems about that, including the possibility that people might take part in the first one or two actions and then tire. She thought the best tactic for the Authorities would be to downplay the whole thing, not create any martyrs and only go for those who succeed in doing things that cost a large amount of money. Some of the secret actions were likely to succeed, as the Trident communications network was very vulnerable. If the project succeeded in getting enough people, and the right mix of people, at the initial action, that would open up possibilities. It would help if we could get a few bishops involved, a few MPs and a couple of rock stars. Also having nuns take part was always useful. It might not be so difficult for nuns to spend long stretches of time in prison and could certainly help reform the prisons

Bob pointed out that in terms of the notion of safety in numbers, the Committee of 100 plan did not work. It was the key organisers that the authorities went for and kept arresting and sending to prison until even they moved on to other things. Michael said the Committee of 100 worked in the sense of persuading a lot of people to take part in civil disobedience who would not otherwise had done so. Angie said that having a time limit was important; without that you were always going to wear yourself out. The Trident Ploughshares 2000 project would end on 1 January 2000.

Legal defences: to present the argument or secure acquittal?

Annie said that in the Seeds of Hope and other actions, people had prepared good legal defences, but in a sense the intention was not to get off but to present the justification for the action. There was an expectation that people would go to jail and this was almost part of the action, together with the preparation, and the support that was generated when people were imprisoned. It appeared from the Initial Explanatory Briefing for this project, as though Angie, following on from the Seeds of Hope acquittal, was designing the action with the defence in mind, and closing all loopholes so that people could get off. It was not what she understood to be the spirit of Ploughshares actions.

Angie said that if you did your homework first, and made sure that none of the documents or handbooks or other material you were putting out could be used against you in court, you would have a strong defence. But that did not mean that this was the main reason for taking the action. The reason for the action was not that the law was on one's side for once, since it might or might not be. However, the legal defence was one of the tools we had for putting our point across, and the ICJ's opinion was such a strong legal opinion with which we could embarrass the government

Annie wondered how much this emphasis limited people in terms of creativity around actions and the way they presented themselves and justified their actions. If people were working to a blueprint, how far could they feel they owned the action? There was a lot in the document about democracy and consensus, but there was a very tight framework. Angie responded that the tight framework was there partly for safety, but also because she found people did not get up and do things unless there was a structure. The consensus and the owning came in because the affinity groups would decide what they did, and nobody would be telling them what exactly

they should do. They were the ones who would work out their legal defence and so forth. The handbook simply offered advice. If an affinity group wanted to put forward a defence based solely on the moral argument, it would be free to do so. The only thing people were signing up to was the pledge, and that did not restrict the kind of defence they used.

Strategy, tactics, organisation

Carol asked about the plans for negotiations with the authorities, including the initial secret negotiations. Within a Gandhian framework you tried to have small realisable goals and to succeed step by step. But the goal of getting rid of all nuclear weapons by the year 2000 was a very large one, and she wondered if there was a way of breaking it down into a series of smaller steps. Angie replied that others too had raised this point. But she felt we were at a different stage now from the 1980s. The present window of opportunity for nuclear disarmament would not last much longer. Soon the next enemy would be up there. The project was also planned to fit in with the broader peace movement where there were a lot of things going on, for instance the Abolition 2000 campaign. Her view was that radical direct action was a way of allowing the middle ground in the peace movement to get what it wanted. She would not necessarily get what she wanted, but if there were a couple of hundred people doing the Trident Ploughshares action and this stirred a big debate and led to people attacking the Ploughshares' activists, it could help the people in the middle, those doing the high-level negotiation and so forth. They would start to be seen as moderate.

Annie said that if it wasn't in the handbook, many people taking part in the action might not have this perspective and be very disappointed if the year 2000 arrived and there was no nuclear disarmament. Bob said this was an important objection, and referred to the Freedom Now slogan of the Civil Rights Movement in the 60s in the US. It was a marvellous slogan for rallying people, until Black Power emerged. People said they hadn't got freedom now, and shifted towards the Black Power movement. Angie responded that Bob should not assume that our only goal was to get rid of nuclear weapons by the year 2000; that was what we were asking the government to do, and what we wanted, but it wasn't necessarily our only goal.

Michael said that how you presented the project would affect how people would see it. Howard too had argued in a letter to the meeting that since we knew in fact that the government was not going to disarm by the year 2000 we had to think about what achievements short of that we would consider a success, and also how we planned to take things forward after that point. Bob thought there was the beginnings of a response to that question in Angie's contention that a window of opportunity existed now which would not be there in a few years time. Angie said she hoped this project would be a way of galvanising the peace movement - and also the environmentalists who might come into the peace movement. It was a way of putting the issue back on the public agenda. There was also the point that if thousands of people joined in the actions we could in fact achieve nuclear disarmament by the year 2000. You had to aim high even though you realised that it might not be possible to achieve the goal. This kind of discussion needed to go on in the affinity groups so that people did not feel disempowered if the goal wasn't achieved by the year 2000. Christina said that if the government had changed direction so that you could see that there was an intention to adopt a different policy, that would be an achievement.

Andrew asked if she had thought of having many Trident-related actions on the same day. Angie said they had considered that, but in terms of political impact, you did unfortunately need to play the numbers game to some extent. Having all of the named people going to

Faslane together and saying to the commander - 'Please will you do it, because otherwise we will' - and symbolically raising their hammers in the air, would have a big impact and provide a dramatic photo opportunity. This could generate public interest and debate which might be lost if one simply had secret actions in various locations. However, some of the affinity groups would be sending just two people to the August action while others saved themselves for the secret action later on.

Tricia asked about groups from abroad carrying out solidarity actions in their countries against Trident installations - particularly in the US - rather than coming to Scotland. Angie replied that this might be a possibility, but they did want to have a large international presence at the August action at Faslane itself. The Belgian and Swedish groups, in particular, also saw their participation as a way of revitalising direct action in their own countries.

Different levels of participation

Angie said one of the documents in the handbook would be a petition in support of people doing the action rather than a commitment to taking part in it. Technically that was conspiracy, though the authorities were unlikely to take action against people who simply signed the petition. It could be used by groups canvassing for support for the action in various localities. Isobel suggested that people might pledge themselves to do other acts of civil disobedience in support of the Trident 2000 project. Angie said they were asking for people not wanting to be involved in the Ploughshares action as such to come along as supporters; if they wanted to do a road blockade or other civil disobedience, that would be great. However, the Group needed to talk to the people at the Faslane camp, and Scottish CND, to see whether they would look after those people and organise the supporting event.

There was also a section in the handbook suggesting how people could insist that they were co-conspirators of anyone arrested, including presenting themselves for arrest and blocking courts and prisons. Michael said that back in the Committee of 100 days, the authorities simply ignored those who signed declarations identifying themselves as co-conspirators and equally responsible for the actions. True, they had not blocked the court or the prisons, but if people did that they would probably be charged with obstruction or some other offence rather than with being part of the Trident Ploughshares conspiracy.

Carol she would be interested in forming an affinity group of different faiths and could do some work with Muslim women she knew. She envisioned concentric circles - the Core Group, the Affinity Groups, and then other support groups working within communities. Angie agreed that any radical direct action required those kinds of concentric circles of support around it. We should not get hung up on the idea that this project was going to do everything. There were lots of other things that people who supported nuclear disarmament could do.

Political Dimension

Bob said by linking the project to Abolition 2000 campaign you had the beginnings of a political argument - that there was an opportunity now which would disappear if it was not seized. But that was not getting across to the public and would not do so, because it was too complicated for most people to get a handle on it. Listing laws and resolutions, and the statements of eminent generals, somehow didn't amount to an idea that was easy to grasp. One needed therefore an additional political argument namely that really nobody supports Trident. Everybody thought it was complete nonsense - including most of the people within the Labour

Party responsible for policy. It was a bit like the way the Communist Party in the Soviet Union collapsed because nobody believed in it any more. Somehow the argument needed to be put across - and perhaps the proposed Ploughshares action could do so if it pressed the right button - that Trident was a complete nonsense.

Angie said she had approached a number of Labour MPs. Probably none would take part in the action itself, but some might be willing to join a delegation to see the Attorney General on the legality issue. She would welcome ideas on who else to approach about this, and also suggestions for negotiators. These would not necessarily have to be part of Ploughshares 2000.