



Quaker Peace
& Social Witness

Peaceworker journal letter from London

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CAMPAIGN FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT PEACE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Dear Friends,

The winter sun is beginning its daily peek through the windows here at the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) office in Islington. As it starts to set, I'm reflecting on my first three months as a Quaker peaceworker. Just as winter days are short, so too has my experience raced by, and I write this letter with gratitude, in marking new progress made, confidence gained, and work accomplished.

CND is an organisation that I know Friends will be familiar with. Slotting into a team of committed people, working for a nationwide, grassroots and locally-driven movement has been humbling and insightful. And what a year for it: 2018 has been a tumultuous time for nuclear politics, witnessing back-and-forth negotiations between the USA and North Korea on the topic of denuclearisation; heralding new weapons technologies from the likes of India, Russia and the USA; and most recently, President Trump's move to

withdraw from the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. There's a lot of work to be done, which makes me all the more thankful to be able to contribute to CND's valuable work via the peaceworker scheme.

More specifically, my placement concerns peace education. As part of CND's non-campaigning work, the Peace Education team produces free resources and facilitates workshops that promote critical independent thinking, by bringing nuclear weapons issues into the classroom in engaging and interactive ways. This takes me into schools up and down the country several times a week, meaning that my work isn't confined to the office; it also exists in the connections and discussions had in educational settings across England. In delivering workshops for students ranging from primary school pupils to trainee teachers, we bring controversial issues to the table and ask them what they think – leaving room for discussion, so that views can be heard, queried and talked through, even when disagreements might arise. I was originally apprehensive about this part of my work, and unsure if I could command a room full of young people. But providing students with the opportunity to

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speaking their minds, and be listened to, creates an atmosphere where all are involved in the session, and fewer feel left out or distracted. This has been a great lesson to learn as a facilitator.

Although I come to this work with a heartfelt opposition to nuclear weapons, it's been transformative to attend to others' concerns, find ways of relating to emotional tensions, and facilitate dialogue where conflict might otherwise spring up. This is the value of teaching in respectful and explorative ways. Through teaching, I too have learnt a lot from CND. For example, how to take active listening skills into my personal life – learning to question viewpoints I disagree with in more dialogic ways than resolute disagreement.

My colleague and CND Peace Education Officer, Owen Everett, also participated in the peacemaker scheme, and has provided me with support throughout this sometimes disorienting start in the sector. So too has the Peace Education Network (PEN), with work ranging from peer mediation, to reconciliation, to anti-militarisation, acted as a mooring for my work, offering connections, feedback, and opportunities. In three short months, I've had conversations about colonialism and nuclear testing, theatre's role in social education, and the gendered notions of deterrence, to name a few. From these conversations, my main project for the year has begun to take shape.

I am writing a new teaching pack for CND Peace Education, containing several lesson plans and activity ideas, and complementing the existing five teaching packs already available. I hope to focus on ideas of marginality, vulnerability, strength and security in nuclear weapons discourse,

paying specific attention to gender, race and indigeneity. These aren't conversations that are often had, or heeded, in nuclear politics. However, these are certainly conversations that are appropriate for the times we live in, when schools are putting diversity and equality at the heart of their curricula whilst a brash businessman sits in the Oval Office, tweeting about the size of his 'nuclear button'. The children I work with are all too aware of the prevalence of racism, sexism, and even international political tension, so I feel it important to provide them with creative ways of exploring these issues both in and outside of the classroom. Peace education, of course, needn't focus only on the weapons that prevent peace from flourishing. It can, and should, help students to see how to create the conditions of peace in their lives, and communities: personal and political.

Connecting our social and global struggles in this way is exciting, if daunting, and it's coloured my conversations with other peacemakers and activists. The PEN Autumn meeting considered 'what' we remember, and 'how'. It has left me thinking about how events such as the Greenham Common protest camps, and activities such as Pacific Island nuclear testing, have begun to slip from our collective memories. How might remembering these events differently be a tool to change our perspective? Is there a way we can reframe what we know of nuclear legacies to play with the narratives of 'victimhood', 'protest' or 'vulnerability'? Is it possible to instead teach survival, agency, and courage?

This brought me to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom's (WILPF) autumn seminar, which focused on the Treaty for the Prohibition of

Nuclear Weapons, or as it is commonly known, the UN's nuclear ban treaty. There, I heard of the impacts of uranium mining, the lack of reparation for nuclear test explosions in French Polynesia, and, of course, the notable role of women in negotiating the treaty – listening to the voices of the affected and the marginal, instead of bowing to the power of the 'mighty'. Perhaps a careful and respectful study of marginalisation and 'strength', can enrich teaching around gender, race, and other political positions. The challenge remains: to find engaging teaching methods that can also translate these themes into relatable learning outcomes for students of all ages in schools, at a time when the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists have set their Doomsday Clock at 'two minutes to midnight'.

I have come to CND at an interesting time, and I find myself making connections between today's social movements and our numerous nuclear challenges. Young, imaginative and curious minds in classrooms up and down the country are the fertile grounds for growing new visions of peaceful futures. My work lies in the sowing of seeds, trying to engage and inspire, start conversations, and engender change. I had better get writing.

In peace,

Joe Jukes