

# SCRAP TRIDENT, 30.3.15

## Margaret Bremner, Stop Trident Campaign

I'm speaking tonight as someone who has been actively campaigning to get rid of nuclear weapons for more than 30 years to try to encourage folk to join in the demonstrations planned by Scrap Trident in the build up to the elections.

RIC is part of the coalition planning both the Glasgow march and rally on the 4th April and the Blockade at Faslane Naval Base on Monday 13th April.

In the build up to the referendum there was a real sense that getting rid of Trident was being seriously considered, and now it has to be high up the agenda in all pre-election discussions. It will certainly be a critical factor after the elections.

We want political leaders to be clear about the strength of feeling there is about this issue: a mass gathering in George Square must actually be a MASS gathering. Tweet it, facebook it, publicise it and be there! If you can help by stewarding on the day sign up with [scraptrident.org](http://scraptrident.org)

The platform of speakers on the 4th April is a real attempt to show that the choices being made to cut benefits, punish the poor, destroy trade union activities, and demonise immigrants go hand in hand with the choice to pour money down the drain on the Trident weapons system. As well as the political party representatives such as Nicola Sturgeon, Patrick Harvie and Katy Clarke; there will be Cat Boyd and Ann Henderson (STUC), Sascha Callaghan (Disability History Scotland), Nicola Watt (Human Beings on Benefits) and 2 great singer/songwriters Karine Polwart and Penny Stone.

The Blockade on the 13th is at Faslane Naval Base where Britain's 4 nuclear powered submarines are based, though at all times one is at sea patrolling and armed with enough nuclear warheads to destroy the world. There are also warheads stored at Coulport, on Loch Long. The warheads are made and maintained at Burghfield and Aldermaston atomic weapons establishments in England and there is regular antinuclear activity there. Check out [www.actionawe.org](http://www.actionawe.org)

There are buses from Edinburgh and Glasgow to Faslane, : book online at [scraptrident.org](http://scraptrident.org) Edinburgh bus starts at 4.30 am from Joppa and will leave Faslane at 3pm. It is important to value all the roles needed at a blockade, not just lying on the road but also support, media, legal observation, transport, talking to passersby; so don't think it is just for those who are able to be arrested! Do sign up and come along. Everyone is encouraged to abide by the non-violence guidelines available on the [scraptrident.org](http://scraptrident.org) website

Sign up online for accommodation and NVDA training in Glasgow at Kinning Park Centre on the 12th April if you want to meet up with some folk there and prepare together.

If there is an Edinburgh based group from RIC who want a Non Violent Direct Action Training before going to Faslane please contact me.

## Discussion

**Judy** asked what is the argument against Trident as a deterrent?

**Alistair** asked why Scrap Trident's activities don't figure more on the social media

**Margaret** replied that activity around nuclear weapons took place regularly. On March 2nd there was an activist lockdown at Burghfield in Berkshire to protest against the new Trident programme.

It is true that there could be an improvement in the use of social media. Older activists still don't make enough use of this. Susan Archibald, the disability rights campaigner, who is media savvy, provided an excellent service at the 2013 Faslane Blockade.

Young people from peace camps do become involved in the various actions. However, there does not appear to be the same urgency as during the Cold War, and the resort to the use of nuclear weapons has seemed to be less likely.

**Alistair** said that young people wear the CND symbol, but see it as a general symbol for peace, rather than being associated with nuclear weapons.

**Margaret** wondered if young people today were as aware of the impact of nuclear weapons.

**Judy** asked how do you argue against those who say that the weapon will never be used, but its existence means there will be continued peace between the major powers.

**Allan** replied, by saying back in the days of the Cold War, there were a number of occasions when nuclear weapons were almost launched by accident. On one occasion, the three levels of protection against their use, were stripped right back to the last stage, when a flock of geese (many of which had been ringed), flying over northern Canada, triggered off the early warning system.

There is no foolproof system against accidents. We are now entering a period of increased international instability, involving nuclear powers, as the sabre-rattling over Russia highlights. Furthermore, the jingoistic Neo-cons, who have a major influence on US military policy, have openly declared they want the US prepared for first use nuclear strikes.

**Sally** said there was widespread opposition to Trident, but many people still don't believe that it will be used. This is why it is important to link its high cost with other issues. The Bairsns not Bobs campaign is doing this.

**Jamie** said that Bairsns not Bombs and Nurses not Nukes made the campaign relevant, but how do we get that message across more widely?

**Alistair** said that he had recently joined the SNP for pragmatic reasons. However, he felt that the SNP leadership only paid lip service to the issue. No publicity was given by the platform party at last weekend's SNP conference about the forthcoming anti-Trident demo, despite Nicola Sturgeon being invited as a speaker.

**Judy** pointed out that there are NATO member countries without nuclear bases.

**Rocco** asked Margaret what she thought about NATO. You could be a NATO member, like Italy, without Trident bases, but still have US planes and ships carrying nuclear weapons using the country's bases.

**Judy** asked if there was an increased possibility of war, particularly with a nuclear-armed Russia, then was there not an argument that it was necessary to keep Trident?

**Allan** replied that it was precisely the growing escalation of conflict that made the use of nuclear weapons more likely, either accidentally or deliberately, especially given the attitude on Neo-cons in the USA. Russia is a declining imperial power, with its back to the wall. After the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, Russia asked if it could join NATO. This was denied. Next it called for the former Warsaw Pact countries bordering Russia to be excluded from NATO, i.e. remain neutral. Instead, Poland, the Baltic States and now Ukraine are being brought into NATO's nuclear encirclement of Russia. However, brutal Russia's actions, they are largely defensive. With the US actively considering pre-emptive strikes, this is where the responsibility for nuclear war lies, and this is why we have to campaign against the US led NATO nuclear alliance as well as Trident itself.

**Allyson** argued that perhaps it wasn't necessary to raise the issue of NATO straight way. If Trident was scrapped first, then maybe Scotland would be thrown out of NATO anyhow!

**Judy** argued that we should not be arguing about the costs of Trident, since it was a moral issue.

**Sally** argued that people in the middle need more links and connections to be established to persuade them to oppose Trident.

**Pat** argued that Trident is a moral question, but this is best addressed by linking it to the type of society we are living in. Why is that the rulers of today's would rather spend money on Trident than on nurses or maintaining benefits?

There was also the worry of the SNP retreat during the referendum campaign over NATO membership. This upset many members and led to the resignation of two of their best MSPs. Having people in office who opposed Trident was important, but this must be backed by a massive campaign to hold them to their promises.

**Alistair** argued that one problem we faced when making arguments, was the sheer scale of the numbers involved -whether potential deaths or costs of nuclear weapons.

**Judy** asked what kind of society are we?

Margaret replied that it was important to be able to find away to talk about the issue of nuclear weapons in away that involved then. What kind of society do we live in, which is based on the threat of the use of nuclear weapons.