

British Pugwash Group

Annual Report of the Executive Committee 2009

The British Pugwash Group is the UK arm of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, an international network of scientists and others concerned about the social impact of science, with particular emphasis on abolishing weapons of mass destruction and war. With its reputation for absolute integrity and lack of nationalistic bias, Pugwash helped to make possible agreement on issues such as the Partial Test Ban Treaty, the NPT, the ABM Treaty, the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty and the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions. In addition to working to help create the conditions for, and to encourage progress towards a nuclear-weapon-free world, Pugwash is also currently engaged in dialogue to build bridges between the US and Iran, in the Middle East, North Korea and Kashmir. Together with one of its founders, Joseph Rotblat, it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995.

British Pugwash is one of the more active national Pugwash groups. It currently has more than 200 members, a third of whom are fellows of the Royal Society. British Pugwash activities range from private meetings with officials to regular public discussion meetings; and from in-depth publications and books to letters to newspaper editors.

In the past year, British Pugwash has focussed strongly on the UK's position on nuclear weapons. We have continued to applaud the government's positive public statements in favour of an eventual nuclear-weapon-free world, and have worked in a number of ways to encourage the UK

Government to deliver practical steps consistent with its avowed aims. However, we have been particularly concerned that the UK Government's position on renewing its submarine-based Trident nuclear weapons system seriously undermines its position in calling for movement towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

This report summarises many of the activities of British Pugwash during the calendar year 2009. More details can be found on the website: www.pugwash.org/uk.

Projects

Advancing UK and European leadership in nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. The President of International Pugwash, Amb. Jayantha Dhanapala, who chaired the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, spent October to December as a visiting scholar at St John's College, Cambridge. British Pugwash took advantage of his presence in a project that aimed to promote European dialogue for progress in the May 2010 NPT Review Conference. During this project, which was generously funded by the Polden-Puckham Charitable Foundation and the Ploughshares Fund, Jayantha had a number of public and private meetings in London and several other European capitals, gave a number of public talks (see below), and drafted the Pugwash Issue Brief on the NPT – *Planning for the 2010 NPT Review Conference: A Practitioner's Overview*.

British Pugwash Group

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The Management of Separated Plutonium in the UK. The working group, established in 2008 to explore options for the management of separated plutonium in the UK, completed its work during the year and published its report in November 2009. It addressed three possible options: “do nothing” (other than ensuring that the risks involved in storing it are kept at an acceptably low level); “bury it” (i.e. put it into a form that would allow safe disposal as waste); “burn it” (i.e. convert it into nuclear fuel suitable for use in existing or future reactors). It concluded that a firm conclusion could not properly be reached because of the public unavailability of relevant technical and commercial information for security or commercial reasons. There is therefore an urgent need to open up the debate by making relevant information publicly available; only then can a decision be taken which commands widespread public support.

The Nuclear Weapons Policy Liaison Group. Convened in 2008, this group of experts from academia and NGOs seeks to provide robust technical and policy advice on nuclear weapons issues in a timely manner. The group has met monthly during the year to set priorities and coordinate the actions of the participating experts. Its members have continued to interact informally with decision makers and officials on a number of nuclear-weapons related matters. Towards the end of the year, we were awarded funding for this project from the Polden-Puckham Charitable Foundation.

Realising the Disarmament Laboratory. In 2007, Margaret Beckett called for the UK to “be at the forefront of both the thinking and the practical work” that would be required if we are to move towards a world free of nuclear weapons: she called for the UK to be a ‘disarmament laboratory’. Following up this initiative, in December 2008 British Pugwash made a proposal aimed at defining more precisely the ‘disarmament laboratory’ concept, and proposed the establishment of a UK Centre

of Excellence which would bring together the UK expertise on the nuclear non-proliferation, arms reduction and disarmament implementation problems that need to be tackled on the road to a nuclear-weapon-free world.

In July 2009, the Network for Social Change awarded British Pugwash a grant from the legacy of the late Professor John Ziman – a long-standing Pugwashite – to take forward this idea. In the same month, Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced that the UK would establish a ‘Nuclear Centre of Excellence’ which would “enable the UK to be at the forefront of international efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation and reduce the costs, environmental-impact and carbon-footprint of civil nuclear power”. Although the NCE proposal has a certain family likeness to the Pugwash concept, its scope is much more limited. The Pugwash project is considerably broader, bringing together the science and policy issues, and including activities relating to arms reduction and limitation, confidence-building, nuclear weapon break-out, and economic, social and technical aspects of disarmament implementation and verification.

A Steering Group including colleagues from VERTIC, the Mountbatten Centre for International Studies and the Bradford Disarmament Research Centre has been set up and is now taking this project forward.

WMD Awareness Programme. 2009 was again a successful year for this programme, a collaboration of concerned NGOs which aims to reach out to the public on WMD issues, in particular nuclear weapons (see www.wmdawareness.org.uk). Among other activities, the annual Joseph Rotblat Memorial Lecture was held at the Guardian Hay Festival. Lord Ashdown gave the lecture to 1,300 people. This was followed by a lively question and answer session chaired by Rosie Boycott in which John Finney also participated. The two Get Up Stand Up! Glastonbury shows (involving stand-up comedy and music to raise

awareness) successfully reached 3,000, mostly young folk, and the Edinburgh Fringe audience was again excellent, with about 1,000 people seeing our award-winning short film *Anthropology 101* for the first time. A DVD was produced of the Peace of Art awards ceremony held in late 2008 (see last year's report) and, in fact, the winning music artists played live at Glastonbury on our show.

The programme's communications strategy was developed further with advice and input from professionals to help shape how the information is presented at the various events. We continue to engage with parliamentarians, government departments and diplomats and take part in seminars, conferences and other meetings. We have also continued to reach out internationally, for example John Finney spoke about the programme at a Japan-US Pugwash workshop in Tokyo. Our education materials again proved popular with teachers at the NUT conference.

We continue to be grateful to the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust for core funding for this project, and we are particularly pleased that funding has been awarded for a further two-year period 2010-2011.

Other Activities

In a letter to the *Times* on 16 January 2009, General Sir Hugh Beach, a member of the British Pugwash Group Executive Committee, joined two senior military colleagues, Field Marshal Lord Bramall and General Lord Ramsbotham, in questioning how the United Kingdom can exert any leadership in pursuing its stated aim of a world free of nuclear weapons if it continues to pursue a successor to Trident. They wrote, "Our independent deterrent has become virtually irrelevant except in the context of domestic politics. Rather than perpetuating Trident, the case is much stronger for funding our Armed Forces with what they need to meet the commitments

actually laid upon them." This letter was followed up on 20 January 2009 when the *Times* carried a letter by John Finney and Robert Hinde, supporting the generals' letter, which stated, "World opinion is becoming increasingly antipathetic to the possession of nuclear weapons and the use of force to settle international disputes.... Were we to postpone a decision on renewal, we would not only save money, but also create a space in which to assess fundamentally how the UK can best respond to the threats of today's world rather than of yesterday's."

The Group submitted evidence to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee Inquiry on Global Security: UK-US Relations. In its memorandum, evidence was submitted on the relationship between the UK and the US and the implications this has on UK foreign policy.

Meetings

Prospects for Dialogue in the Middle East. On 30 April 2009, British Pugwash sponsored a discussion meeting featuring: Paolo Cotta-Ramusino, Pugwash Secretary General; Andreas Persbo, Senior Researcher, VERTIC; Nomi Bar-Yaacov, Middle East Expert; and Rosemary Hollis, Director, Olive Tree Programme. Paolo and Andreas discussed "Improving Relations between Iran and the West: recent Pugwash experience" and Nomi and Rosemary addressed "Prospects for Peace in the Middle East, post-Gaza and the Israeli election".

Joseph Rotblat Lecture, Guardian Hay Literary Festival. On 25 May 2009 British Pugwash and the WMD Awareness Programme co-sponsored this year's lecture, *Ashdown's Third Law*, which was given by Lord Ashdown of Norton-sub-Hamdon. The event, which included a stimulating audience-participation discussion, was chaired by journalist Rosie Boycott, and introduced by BPG Chair John Finney.

A Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone. 5 October 2009. The 4th London Conference on this important and difficult issue was organized by the Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy at SOAS, and co-sponsored by British Pugwash. The meeting's keynote address was given by Pugwash President Jayantha Dhanapala on *The Middle East and the quest for a nuclear-weapon-free world*.

The Military-Industrial Complex, the Bottom Billion and the UN. This address was given by Pugwash President Jayantha Dhanapala on 12 November 2009, at a meeting in St John's College Cambridge co-sponsored by Cambridge Student Pugwash and British Pugwash. Jayantha discussed the linkage between human security and national security, exploring the resources behind the military-industrial complex and the failure to meet the Millennium Development Goals. This connection between development and disarmament has been made by the UN and other agencies. Dr Rebecca Johnson, Director of the Acronym Institute and Dr Glen Rangwala, Trinity College, Cambridge served as discussants following the talk. Katie Taylor, Cambridge Student Pugwash President, chaired the meeting.

Securing Fissile Materials. This joint VERTIC and British Pugwash event on 26 November 2009 launched the British Pugwash report on the management of separated plutonium in the UK (see Projects above and Publications below). Excellent press and (international) TV coverage was given of this meeting and the report. Following the launch a DECC spokesman said: "Government expects to consult on a strategy for managing plutonium in the near future. We will take into account the points raised in the Pugwash Group's Report and would welcome their formal response once the consultation is launched".

Connecting Inconvenient Truths: The Urgency of Nuclear Disarmament in a World of Pressing Problems. British Pugwash collaborated with the Trustees of the Polden-Puckham Charitable Foundation and the Association of Charitable Foundations in organising this meeting at the Royal Society on 1 December 2009, which was hosted and introduced by the President of the Royal Society Lord Rees of Ludlow and chaired by Baroness Williams of Crosby, a special advisor to the Prime Minister. In his address to the meeting, Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala, former UN Under-Secretary General, linked the need to free resources for environmental and humanitarian challenges with the urgency of a nuclear-weapon-free world. He discussed the need to build dialogue across political, economic and religious divides as a precondition for creating a more peaceful and prosperous world community.

Publications

The validity of the rationale for UK's possession of nuclear weapons. In this January 2009 analysis, Robert Hinde argues that "the basic reasons that have been given for retaining or improving our nuclear weaponry have remained surprisingly similar across the years".

Trident. White Elephant or Black Hole. Hugh Beach. *RUSI Journal*, **154** (1) 36 (February 2009). Britain has possessed its own nuclear weapons for just over fifty years and is laying plans to keep them going for the next half-century. Hugh Beach argues that there are better things to spend government money on and that the Trident replacement programme should be cancelled.

The Management of Separated Plutonium in the UK by General Sir Hugh Beach, Dr Ian Crossland, Prof Roger Cowley, Dr Jack Harris, Dr Christopher Watson. British Pugwash Group, November 2009. This report of the British Pugwash study is

available from www.pugwash.org/uk. “...this is some of the brightest minds in the country looking at this and they decided they couldn’t reach a conclusion because such was the secrecy around this...” – BBC journalist Rob Broomby. “...a helpful introduction to the debate about the future of the country’s plutonium stockpiles” – GMB (the main trade union at Sellafield).

The End of Nuclear Sharing? US Nuclear Weapons in Europe by Hugh Beach, *RUSI Journal*, 154 (6), 48 (December 2009). US nuclear weapons are still based on the soil of non-nuclear European allies. The doctrine of first use also remains. However, change is in the air: nuclear weapons seem increasingly irrelevant in modern war, and the new US administration advocates a nuclear-free world. Hugh Beach argues that a new policy may be required, but that it will have to come from Europe and be able to match the credibility and solidarity afforded by current nuclear sharing.

International Activities

International Pugwash Responsibilities.

John Finney is a member of the Pugwash Council, the Executive Committee and the Nuclear Weapons Task Force. Julian Perry Robinson is one of four coordinators for the International Pugwash steering committee on CBW issues, and organized two International Pugwash workshops on these topics in 2008. Robert Hinde serves as a trustee of the Geneva-based Pugwash Foundation. Sandra Ionno Butcher is Director of the Pugwash History Project.

International Pugwash Consultations.

Two of these took place in London during 2009, engaging current and former policy makers in discussions on Iran in July and on the NPT Review Conference in October 2009. This latter meeting was chaired by Des Browne, former UK Defence Secretary and convenor of the Top Level Group – a group of senior UK parliamentarians who

have come together to advocate multilateral nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

CBW. Chemical and biological weapons (CBW) have been an active Pugwash concern since the 1950s. British Pugwash has continued its close association with the Pugwash Study Group on Implementation of the CBW Conventions. Two BPG members serve on the Steering Committee of the study group, which, in December 2009, held a two-day workshop in Geneva on *Preparing for the Seventh BWC Review Conference*. This brought together diplomats and CBW specialists, both governmental and non-governmental, from some 15 countries including India, Iran and Pakistan. Normally a second annual CBW workshop would have been held in the Netherlands focussed on the CWC, with involvement of the OPCW, which is the treaty’s international authority, headquartered in The Hague. But in 2009 Pugwash Nederland hosted the big annual Pugwash Conference and found itself unable to host a CBW workshop as well. The year ended with Pugwash considering how best to align itself with a newly-formed international organisation of civil-society groups called ‘The CWC Coalition’ that aims to promote chemical disarmament.

Other Meetings and Conferences

Hugh Beach spoke at a series of meetings on the uselessness of Trident, including meetings of the UNA in Edinburgh and of Scottish CND in Glasgow, both in April. Also in April, he spoke on the same issue at the Annual Conference of International Pugwash in The Hague.

Hugh also spoke on *Prospects for new START* at a CCADD International Conference in Bratislava in September, on *Theatre Nuclear Weapons* at NATO HQ Brussels in October (with a delegation from IPPNW) and participated in a meeting in Oxford of the Policy Foresight Programme in November on *Trident*.

John Finney spoke on *Changing attitudes and identity about nuclear weapons issues* at a Japan-US workshop, held in Tokyo in January, on possible Japan-US cooperation on Reducing Threats Posed by Nuclear Weapons. He also gave a talk on *Moving towards reductions in UK nuclear forces* at an International Pugwash workshop on Strengthening the International Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime in Beijing in November.

In April John took part in a two-day Science, Politics and Drama event organized by The Royal Society of Edinburgh. In addition to a showing of *The Strangest Dream*, the documentary film about Joseph Rotblat that was premiered in London in December 2008 (see last year's report), there was a reading (with John Finney playing Werner Heisenberg...) of *Operation Epsilon*. This is an adaptation by Sir Michael Atiyah (a past President of Pugwash) and Jan McDonald of the original Farm Hall reports, which were transcripts of discussions between ten leading German scientists, including Werner Heisenberg and Otto Hahn, who were secretly brought to England during World War II and interned at Farm Hall near Cambridge. Their recorded conversations provided a vivid commentary on their predicament and on their work in Germany on nuclear energy. The event concluded with a panel discussion, including Michael Frayn, the author of *Copenhagen*, a play whose writing was influenced by the Farm Hall reports, in which the actions of German physicist Werner Heisenberg in 1941 in relation to nuclear weapons are intensely analysed and questioned.

At the invitation of the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, together with a number of other representatives from NGOs world-wide, John participated in a visit in March to the Marcoule and Pierrelatte former nuclear weapons fissile material production facilities. In addition to seeing at first hand some of the processes

involved in the dismantling of their enrichment and reprocessing facilities, some interesting technical and political discussions took place during the visit.

The Pugwash History Project

Sandra Ionno Butcher spoke on *Remembering Humanity: Pugwash, Scientists & Peace* at the IPB/MAW Conference on Peace History at the Imperial War Museum, London in April. She also published an article on Pugwash in the Autumn 2009 Newsletter of the British Institute of Radiology.

Joseph Rotblat's papers continue to be catalogued by the National Cataloguing Unit for the Archives of Contemporary Scientists at Bath University, and the papers themselves are becoming increasingly available at the Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge. During 2009, Andrew Brown – who wrote acclaimed biographies of James Chadwick (with whom Jo worked during the war) and Desmond Bernal – accepted the offer to be Jo's official biographer and was awarded a one-term residence at Churchill to spend time working on the archive in 2010.

Other Public/Educational Outreach

Peace Jam. The 2009 PeaceJam Conference, held at the University of Bradford, was the largest and most diverse in the history of the programme. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Shirin Ebadi, the Iranian human rights lawyer and activist, described her struggle for women's rights in Iran. Speaking to a packed lecture theatre of students, academics and local people, and talking and working over the week-end with 200 young people and their teachers and youth workers from many parts of the country, Ebadi was an inspirational figure. Projects and workshops offered the participants the opportunity to explore the

issues of human rights and related subjects such as racism, refugee problems and conflict resolution.

With generous support from the Polden-Puckham Charitable Foundation and Beth Nielson Chapman, contacts have been gradually and steadily built up over the year with education authorities, youth groups and schools themselves, both to expand the numbers of young people with access to the PeaceJam programme and to embed the programme within schools and youth organisations. The three key aspects of PeaceJam are education, inspiration and action. As part of the practical element of the project, young people have been building on the skills they have learned, and undertaken a wide range of voluntary projects for their schools and neighbourhoods and, in some cases, worked internationally.

UK Student/Young Pugwash

British Student and Young Pugwash (BSYP) had a change of chair following the AGM in April 2009, with Luca Ciciani (Imperial College) stepping down to be replaced by Poul-Erik Christiansen (School of Oriental and African Studies). Along with the Cambridge and Oxford groups, BSYP helped launch the revamped Rotblat Essay/Video Competition 2010, on Science, Ethics and Politics. The winner will be announced at the national Student and Young Pugwash conference in October 2010.

Executive Committee 2009

President: Prof. Robert Hinde CBE, FRS, FBA

Chair: Prof. John Finney FInstP, FRSC

Deputy Chair: Dr Christopher Watson

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Dr Tom Milne

Dr Nick Ritchie

Prof. Julian Perry Robinson

Prof. John Simpson OBE

Henrietta Wilson

For PeaceJam: Sally Milne

For WMD Awareness Programme:

Carol Naughton

We note with great sadness the passing of Jack Harris on 3 February 2009. Jack served Pugwash for many years, including being vice-chair of British Pugwash from 2002-2008. In 2001 he was asked to succeed George Rathjens as Secretary General of International Pugwash but reluctantly declined, fearing that his health would not stand up to the constant travel. He was a man of absolute integrity and the essence of kindness, and a real friend with the interests of everyone at heart and someone striving for a better world for everyone. We miss him.