

THE BIG BLOCKADE: ALDERMASTON 15 FEBRUARY 2010

The Women's Gate

12 January 2010

It's only a month away! The plan is to impede work on the UK's planned new warhead for the Trident nuclear missile system by closing down all seven gates of the Atomic Weapons Establishment Aldermaston simultaneously. This is an invitation to come to Aldermaston, in rural Berkshire, to share in a women's action as part of the Big Blockade.

Who's organizing? The Big Blockade is being organized by Trident Ploughshares and supported by CND, Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp and other groups. The women's gate blockade is being organised by Women from AWPC, Women in Black against War, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Women against NATO and the London Feminist Network. We, among other groups, are already mobilizing members. We hope that over the next few weeks many more groups and individual women will commit themselves to join the blockade.

What's the aim? As women, our plan is to close, for as long as we can, one of the gates of AWE. Known as the 'Home Office Gate', it is one of two entrances used by 50% of Aldermaston's workers. Other gates will be blockaded by groups of men and women from Scotland, Wales, England and other countries; by students, cyclists and 'faith' groups.

Why Aldermaston? Aldermaston houses the facilities that produce Britain's nuclear warheads. The UK government plan to spend a billion pounds each year for the next three years on modernizing its dangerous, illegal weapon of mass destruction. Greenpeace have estimated a £97-billion pound price tag for the renewal plan for the Trident submarine-borne nuclear weapons system to the year 2050. But although massive building work on facilities to test, design and build new warheads is already well under way at Aldermaston, the final decision about whether to go ahead with the new warheads has not yet been taken by Parliament. Trident renewal is current policy, but it is not irreversible.

Why now? The blockade is timed to take place three months before the international Non-Proliferation Treaty review conference. The new US administration is a little more committed to international cooperation to reduce nuclear arsenals than the one it replaced. Here in Britain, with the present financial crisis dictating cuts in public

expenditure, and a general election coming up, this is a critical moment when we have just a chance of persuading politicians to think again. We aim to help convince the parties that spending scarce resources on Trident while cutting needed services won't win votes.

What do I have to do? That's entirely up to you. There is a role for everyone to play. The blockade will start at **7 am promptly on the morning of Monday 15 February**. We want to start the blockade with as many women as possible sitting in front of the gate, to clearly show women's opposition to Britain's plans to build new nuclear weapons. You can sit for a long or a short time as you want (if you want to sit for a long time, then visit <http://www.activistslegalproject.org.uk/daresources.html> for some ideas). We also need women to stand around the blockade holding banners and placards to get our message across. **You do not have to risk arrest:** the police will typically give warning before they arrest anyone, which will give women who do not wish to be arrested ample time to join supporters at the side of the blockade.

Planning. We hope that the blockade will be effective, non-violent and safe. There will be coordinated support at each gate, with legal observers and legal support, transport from police station for those arrested, police liaison, care, first aid and media work etc. Please contact us if you are interested in helping with any of these roles.

Thinking through the message. We decided that Women's Gate messages will express our feminist critique of nuclear weapons and the militaries that deploy them, of the UK government's irrational notion of 'security', and of NATO with its ever-growing, nuclear-tipped ambitions. We want to contrast this with the lack of government support for women suffering violence – whether it's cuts in funding for rape crisis centres, or the lack of funds for women's refuges, or the ever declining conviction rate for rape. We want to let the government know what we mean by security. As women we'll refuse violence in every aspect of our lives, from home to street, from nation to the international arena. Let's say no to violence - whether from fists, boots and knives, or from guns and fighter jets – and a resounding NO to nuclear weapons.

Bringing our message to Aldermaston. We hope all of you will bring your own placards and fence decorations with powerful messages, make colourful banners, bring musical instruments and songs (and any other magic to close down 'our' gate).

HOW TO JOIN IN... If you'd like to join the Women's Gate blockade, it would be helpful (though not essential) if you could let us know in advance, by contacting Andrée:

<mailto:andreeduguy@yahoo.com> or Tel. 020 8248 0763.

We shall hold a planning meeting for our women's action at a nearby location from 5 pm on the evening of Sunday 14 February. You will also be able to stay the night (floorpsace only - bring a bed-roll and sleeping bag). There will be a hot meal available, bring food to share. Please contact Andrée (as above) to book a space, and for access and other details.

Otherwise, just turn up a little before 7 am on Monday morning at the gate, dressed in warm and waterproof clothes, prepared for darkness, and for bitter or rainy weather.

Getting information. You will find maps, routes and addresses, where to leave cars, advice concerning safety and risk, legal considerations and a mass of other useful information at <http://www.tridentploughshares.org/article1577> on the Trident Ploughshares website. For information about AWE Aldermaston and resources for action visit the website of the Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp(aign) www.aldermaston.net

So come along and bring your friends. There is a role for everyone in this diverse, creative, and important protest. Numbers matter.

Every woman counts.