

# UNITING for PEACE

September 2018

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## "Can We Unite for Peace" - UFP Spring Conference - Saturday 10th March 2018

A successful morning AGM session of Uniting for Peace reviewed 2017 – 2018 activities. These included Chair's Report by Vijay Mehta, Coordinator and Inter Faith Report by Brian Cooper and UFP Vice President Frank Jackson's report for the Labour Party Conference 2017. The election of the new committee was followed by a Q/A session in which the officers and the members had interaction to carry forward the peace agenda for 2018 and 2019.

In the afternoon session, the 2018 Spring Conference was held on the theme, 'Can We Unite For Peace? Building Citizen Power for Change'. There was a welcome address by the Chair Vijay Mehta and opening comments by the Chair Rita Payne, President Emeritus, Commonwealth Journalists Association.

First speaker, Keith Best, Chair, World Federalist Movement, said that his movement stood for global governance under a renewed and re-empowered United Nations with Security Council reform especially important. His insights into sovereign power and its misuse to benefit powerful elites and militarism, were set within broad historical survey from the Imperial era, including positive progress towards a world of justice and prosperity. He stressed the vital role of the collaboration of nations within a climate of enlightened common interest, driving the way for more peaceful relations between and within seemingly disparate national groups.

Lindsey German, Convener, Stop the War Coalition said that since her movement began 18 years ago, it had campaigned against wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen, all of which had resulted from deep state foreign adventurism and interventions. The possibility of dialogues between USA and North Korea was much to be welcomed. The latest UK deal with Saudi Arabia to sell it over £10 billion worth of arms has ignited new wars in the Middle East. The false flag of prevention of terrorism was used to justify great power interventions with resultant huge civilian casualties. The deterioration in UK-Russian relations was much to be regretted, so growing public peace awareness against the culture of suspicion and mistrust was very welcome.

Vijay Mehta, Author and Chair of Uniting for Peace, in his talk examined what is peace activism and why it is more needed now than ever. He also outlined how one can become a 21st Century Peace activist. By giving some examples of successful peace and justice campaigns, he emphasised the needs to work with other organisations for positive change and building a more peaceful world.

There was a lunchtime workshop on 'Nonviolent Russian Revolution' conducted by Milan Rai, Editor, Peace News, which was well received.

Clive Wilson, Chair, Harrogate UNA, described a visualisation exercise in which a diversity of people closed their eyes for three minutes to visualise the world we would like to see in 2030. The scenarios envisaged, by people of different nations and cultures, were always of a world of peace, justice and prosperity, in line with UN Sustainable Goals 2030, which as individuals, we could help to advance.

Sally Milne, of PeaceJam UK, explained that it worked with Nobel Peace Prize Laureates to educate young people to challenge the prevailing culture of violence



Spring Conference

and war mongering, and foster their sense of global citizenry – to help them address issues of conflict resolution, environmental protection and Human Rights. PeaceJam's three way approach of Education, Inspiration and Action could also apply to those in businesses wishing to pursue a more ethical agenda. She emphasised the potential of ordinary people to be agents for positive change was fundamental.

Hur Hassnain of Y Care International involved with the humanitarian arm of YMCA discussed progress towards fulfilment of UN Sustainable development goals – especially SDG'16 'to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development'. With regard to this, UN Reported increased violent conflict in recent years with a few causing high civilian casualties. Only 16% of a fragile states had made progress on the Millennium Development Goals and the rest little or none – although collecting reliable data was difficult. Relationships of trust was essential for gathering and sharing knowledge for taking actions for peace.

Susan Tamondong of IDEA / UN Women's Advisory Council / Evaluation Council spoke about American Field Service as a successful example of an international people to people peace building. She also discussed cross cultural work among students, and her UN work on preventing violence against women in conflicts.

Anthony Russell, Chandos Foundation and UFP Committee Member urged closer unity of peace organisations for more effective action. Peace building included upholding a holistic view of ourselves and our environment. He stressed Civil-Isations included the fundamental right of all to the dignity of respect which should be a core value for UFP and peace activism generally. The latter had to confront the reality of mass media controlling society with propaganda, lies and deceit.

The conference had a fitting ending with peace songs and performance by Laura Topper and Jason Salmon, especially their beautiful rendition of their song, Peace Begins with Me.

There was a vibrant Q/A session which carried on till the end of the conference. An excellent networking opportunity for members to discuss plans for 2018 and 2019 and exchange ideas and actions with like minded organisations.

*Conference report by Bernie Holland, Brian Cooper and Vijay Mehta.*

World peace is not a utopian dream. It can be realised by overcoming forces of destruction, violence and warmongering. Uniting for Peace, incorporating Action for UN Renewal and World Disarmament Campaign, is a civil society organisation helping to do just that.

**Chair: Vijay Mehta \* Co-ordinator: Rev. Brian Cooper**  
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## September 2018 Newsletter Editorial – Issue 20

### Editorial – The World at Crossroads – New Challenges for Peace Movement

The world seems spinning out of control. West-Russia relations deteriorate dangerously with US punitive "sanctions war" and NATO threatening expansion into Georgia and Ukraine. The Israel-Gaza border crisis festers with many protesters killed, and no just solution for Palestinians in prospect. US sanctions on Iran and trade war on Turkey further destabilise the already volatile region; power rivalries prevent the vitally needed Syria peace conference. US \$717bn. military budget confirms its global aim of 'Full Spectrum Dominance', strongly against China, and into the cosmos with US SpaceForce. Yemen's vicious civil war is unabated; Africa's conflicts remain ignored. Brexit, xenophobic populism and Brussels' rigidity gravely weaken Europe. Meanwhile climate change - denied by US Republicans - is manifestly serious with extremes of temperatures and wildfires, monsoon-style rainfall and flooding.

All this argues for urgent restoration of the authority of UN as world's leading and most representative forum for global conflict resolution and peace-building.

'Summits', G7/8, G20 and regional peace processes all need to be set within UN context. Major states must ensure its aid and development agencies are fully resourced. Our UN Symposium 2018 [29 October] is relevantly themed Moving towards a new United Nations.

To counteract the above dangerous situation, UfP is embarking on a programme which includes having a stall in the Labour Party Conference Liverpool (stall number: A29) 23rd to 26th September, 2018, hosting the UN Symposium and starting a new campaign for the establishment of the Department for Peace as a UK Government department based on Vijay Mehta's upcoming new book *How Not To Go To War – Establishing Departments for Peace and Peace Centres Worldwide*. Please join us at these events and more importantly please consider donations and contributions for promoting our work on peace and justice.

Vijay Mehta (UfP Chair) and Brian Cooper (UfP Co-ordinator)

## Democracy Vibrant - or under Threat?

When the Cold War ended Francis Fukuyama confidently proclaimed 'the End of History': triumphant political and economic liberalism, clearly destined to encompass the globe, marked the apogee of human progress. It did not happen. Nationalism and sectarianism became resurgent; non-nuclear wars proliferated; the democratic Arab Spring turned into bitterly oppressive winter; economic giant China proved democracy unnecessary for successful capitalism. With Hungary and Poland building 'illiberal democracies', and Erdogan in Turkey and Sisi in Egypt subverting mass democracies into authoritarianism, the question 'Is Democracy in Retreat?' must be posed.

US academics Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt do so in **How Democracies Die: What History Reveals about our Future** [Viking, £16.99]. Arguing constitutions alone cannot stop demagogues, they identify tolerance, legitimacy of opposition, restrained use of power and abhorrence of violence as essentials for successful democracy, along with respect for checks and balances, rule of law and human rights. Some of these they see menaced by Trump's presidency, but does he threaten US democracy as such? Certainly

he has said and done much that is unpalatable, worsening rather than healing America's deep political and cultural divisions - but as yet there is no sign he seeks to dismantle its democratic institutions.

The authors' historical survey of 'failed' democracies is lop-sided, not mentioning USA routinely subverted democracies in Latin America and Asia in the Cold War to install pro-US military regimes. They fail to discuss the overthrow of democratically elected leaders by mass street protests [often externally orchestrated]: e.g. Morsi in Egypt, Yanukovich in Ukraine. Positively, 21st-century Africa and Latin America enjoy unprecedented degree of democracy. This book needs broader scope: key threats to democracies are the rise of populism, spillover of conflicts, terrorism, corruption, subversion by outside powers - and when states engage in unpopular wars.

Brian Cooper, UfP Co-ordinator

## Frank Jackson celebrated his 90th Birthday

Our very own Frank Jackson celebrated his 90th Birthday at Harlow Museum on Saturday 14th July - in fact his 90th birthday was the previous day, Friday 13th July.

Here is a group photo taken in the Walled Gardens of Harlow Museum - During the celebrations Frank provided newspaper and magazine articles going over several decades showing various facets of his illustrious career - included amongst these articles were copies of letters he had published in newspapers over the years. These were all pinned to the wall forming a sort of 'exhibition' which one could wander round and look at.

Frank also showed a hitherto unseen side of his character, that of the 'Music Hall Comedy Singer' and he sang a couple of comic songs for us - he also cut the first slice of a special 90th Birthday Cake which was made for him. I was kindly offered the opportunity to recite my 'Ode To Frank Jackson' which had been composed in the classic 'haiku' declamatory style. Many members of generations of his family were there to share the joy together with many of his friends and colleagues, including a few folk who had only recently met him.

I had a lovely time, enjoying Frank's good humour and learning much about his life that I didn't know before. It was also great to talk to several members of his family whilst we enjoyed a spread of refreshments laid out for one and all. I took many photographs, which have all been sent to his son, Julian, who is going to produce an on-line resource by means of which others will be able to see them all too. I have



selected just one to show you here, which is one of my favourites and I hope you like. It was lovely to see Frank so happy and well in such good company - we all had a wonderful time together.

Bernie Holland, Uniting for Peace Committee Member

# How Not To Go To War: Establishing Department for Peace and Peace Centres Worldwide

A new book by Vijay Mehta published by New Internationalist, London

War has been institutionalised. Giant military industries, formed from thousands of companies and employers, ensure that every old generation of war profiteers is replaced by a new one. Admirals, generals and senior defence officials demand that trillions of dollars are funnelled every year into the coffers of arms companies. People whose careers depend on the cycle of arms and warfare, insist that any break in funding is some kind of betrayal or national humiliation. Manipulated by vested interests, mainstream media justify increased military spending with spurious appeals to patriotism.

In 2017, the world spent all time high \$1.7 trillion on its uniformed fighters. That's equivalent to about a thousand dollars per family on the planet. Yet all these weapons have not made the world less violent. In 2015, violence cost the global economy some 14 trillion dollars, a surge of 15% from 2008. That number might seem high, until one considers the escalating inequality, famine, pollution, disease, collapse of public services, environmental damage and climate change that follows in the wake of war.

Institutions endure. They can outlast the people that create them. The question asked by this book is, How can peace be institutionalised?

The book finds that the institutions of war need to be matched by institutions of peace. For every department of defence, there needs to be a department of peace that allocates public resources to forestall violence and militarism, by measures of pre-emptive conflict resolution rather than waiting for it to occur and then deploying violence against it. Such departments of peace will be distinct from foreign and development ministries, compromised as they are by espionage, export-promotion and securitisation of aid. By opening peace / social centres / franchises, in each city, town and village, the Peace Department can contain violence and foster a culture of peace.

Fundamental to all this is the pressing need for institutionalised Peace- a network

of self-sustaining peace centres and social enterprises / companies, governmental peace departments and commentators that have peace as their core mission, in the same way that arms manufacturers and defence ministries institutionalise conflict.

The book shows how the establishment of Departments of Peace and Peace Centres worldwide will result in saving of trillions of US dollars which governments can utilise in jobs creation, healthcare, education and peacebuilding.

Only by institutionalising peace at many levels of society, can the peace movement become coherent and powerful enough to face-down the many commercial and official networks that have a vested interest in armed violence. A better world has less violence and war. That is what this book aims to achieve. The time for action is now. There may not be a tomorrow to wait for.

Among many luminaries who have supported the idea of the establishment of a Department for Peace, two prominent ones are below:

'There has to be a change in attitude on Foreign Policy and the UK's recent history of sending troops into battle. I have spent my life opposing these to see a Foreign Policy based on democracy, human rights and based on justice. And in the ministerial appointments, we may well be appointing in the future, a Minister for Peace and Disarmament'

**Jeremy Corbyn**, *Leader of the Labour Party in an interview to filmmaker Ken Loach*

'The proposal that there should be a Ministry of Peace within Governments is not merely admirable, but if implemented, would represent serious indication of actual intent. I'm happy to give my support to such a body whose responsibility would include being a consistent voice for non-violent means of settling disputes'

**His Holiness The Dalai Lama**, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 1989

Further enquiries about the book can be made by either emailing Vijay Mehta [vijay@vmpeace.org](mailto:vijay@vmpeace.org) or Dan Raymond-Barker [danrb@newint.org](mailto:danrb@newint.org) of New Internationalist

## Edinburgh Inter-Faith Event for World Peace

'Faiths Striving for a More Peaceful World' was the theme of Edinburgh 2018 Inter-Faith Occasion for World Peace, organised by Uniting for Peace and St. Mark's Unitarian Church, held there June 26. Minister **Rev. Peter Fairbrother** welcomed all present and UfP Inter-Faith Secretary **Rev. Brian Cooper** declared such events "witnessed to the faiths' concern for peace - in the community and globally." **Sister Louisa Gupta** of Brahma Kumaris then set a reflective atmosphere with a Peace Meditation.

**Fr. Jeremy Bath**, Inter-Faith Officer of Edinburgh Catholic Archdiocese, expounded 'The Peace Mission of Pope Francis', focusing on his 2017 Peace Message on 'Non-violence', and Catholic Church stance on Nuclear Weapons. Stressing Pope Francis' 'deep concern' over the terrible Middle East crisis, global terrorism and violence upon the environment, Fr. Bath said the Message "challenged people of all countries to reflect on non-violence, as a style of politics of peace", and promote "charitable love and non-violence in how we treat each other as individuals, in society and internationally." Chaotic city development helped create violent culture marked by "social aggression, drug abuse and loss of identity". Social media too easily spread fear and hostility rather than "compassion, understanding and humble reconciliation." Jesus of Nazareth was "unequivocal about non-violence"; exponents such as Gandhi and Martin Luther King embraced it "in the cause of making the world a more just and caring place"; it was "enshrined in many religious traditions".

Citing Encyclicals and Apostolic Exhortations, Fr. Bath discussed Pope Francis' total moral condemnation of nuclear weapons, re-stated at 2017 Vatican Conference on Disarmament: "The Church is genuinely concerned by the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental effects of any employment of nuclear devices, and their accidental detonation as a result of error. The threat of their use as well as their very possession, is to be condemned. They exist in the service of a mentality of fear."

**Mr. Naren Sood** [Edinburgh Hindu Mandir] discussed the significance of Rabindranath Tagore [1861-1941], Indian poet, playwright, artist, and devoted "cultural bridge-builder for peace between East and West."

'Confronting Islamophobia in Scotland', Muslim women's activist **Mrs. Samena Dean** gave disturbing evidence of harassment of Muslim primary and secondary schoolchildren in Edinburgh. Her research among 100 children in 40 schools



Inter-Faith event

revealed over half of primary and secondary Muslim pupils had been verbally abused - called 'bomber', 'terrorist' - with up to a quarter attacked or having hijabs pulled off. Stressing Islamophobia was an all-UK issue - eg. incidents in 46 universities - fuelled by negative media and state policies, she appealed for all faiths to unite against it.

**Rev. Brian Cooper's** conclusion highlighted 'fundamentals for peace' common to most faiths: a vision of harmony with the Divine, fellow humanity and nature; blessedness of peace-making; compassion; sacredness of life - all urgently relevant at community and global levels. Such were currently ignored by Myanmar Buddhists oppressing Rohingya Muslims, Shia Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia battling for Middle East power, and Eastern Europe so-called 'Christian states' rejecting refugees. Yet the power of faith could, and must be, mobilised for peace-building: "peace is never easy, but always possible." Framed by prayers from different traditions and Lesley Hartley's 'peace music', the Occasion was much appreciated by the fifty-five people present.

**Rev. Brian Cooper - UfP Churches/Inter-Faith Secretary**

## FORTHCOMING LONDON AND SCOTLAND EVENTS ON UN REFORMS

LONDON, ENGLAND

Monday, 29th October 2018 | 18:30 - 20:45

London Hilton Euston, 17 - 18 Upper Woburn Place, London WC1H 0HT

### UN SYMPOSIUM – MOVING TOWARDS A NEW UNITED NATIONS

**Speakers:** Fabian Hamilton MP, Jeremy Gilley, Natalie Samarsinghe  
Julia Häusermann MBE and Vijay Mehta

**Hosted By:** Uniting for Peace

**Free Public Meeting** | **RSVP:** Vijay Mehta - [vijay@vmpeace.org](mailto:vijay@vmpeace.org)

EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

Thursday, 4th October 2018 | 18:00 - 20:30

The University of Edinburgh, 50, George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9LH

### UN: PEACEMAKER OR TOOTHLESS TIGER?

**Keynote Speaker:** Vijay Mehta, Author and Chair, Uniting for Peace

**Hosted By:** Edinburgh Peace & Justice Centre

**Free Public Meeting** | **RSVP:** <https://un4oct.eventbrite.co.uk/>

FORRES, SCOTLAND

Saturday, 6th October 2018 | 14:00 - 16:00

St Leonard's Church, 43 High Street, Forres, Inverness, IV36 1PB

### IS THE UN CAPABLE OF ACHIEVING PEACE?

**Keynote Speaker:** Vijay Mehta, Author and Chair, Uniting for Peace

**Hosted By:** Moray Peace Builders

**Free Public Meeting** | **RSVP:** Donald Prentice - [donaldprentice0@gmail.com](mailto:donaldprentice0@gmail.com)

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