

IN FOCUS: EVE MENEZES CUNNINGHAM explains why a Ministry for Peace could serve as a stepping stone towards a conflict-free future for us all.

A peace to end all war

NEXT Tuesday October 14, Hayes and Harlington MP John McDonnell will present a historic 10-minute rule Bill to the House of Commons. The Bill will seek the formation of a Ministry for Peace in Britain.

McDonnell explains: "We have ministers for supposedly defending us and, at other times, for waging war on our behalf. "Why can't we have a ministry now that is about the promotion of peace? Peace at every level. Peace in the playground, how we educate our children to avoid conflict and to use mechanisms to avoid hurting one another, how we promote peace within communities, how we demobilise those forces that promote

defence/war and how we work through international bodies to promote peace as well."

Campaign co-ordinator Diana Basterfield says: "I went along to that enormous demonstration in February and I was so touched by the diversity of age groups, ethnicities, everything. "I have never been to a demonstration like that before — I've done a few in my time — and I was aware that all across the world people were out marching. "It made me think that there was something new here that we couldn't let drop, an energy that has to go somewhere. "In the House of Commons, there have been debates on violence towards children and whether or not parents can slap their children. "We are now more sensitive about violence to children and animals, yet we still think it is fine to march into countries and maim and kill people. I think that, if we

get our energies together both within and outside Parliament and say that this is something whose time has come, things can change."

If adopted, the Ministry for Peace will give a voice to the millions who opposed the war on Iraq and numerous other attempts to wage war "for peace."

Widely described as an idea whose time has come, it would be committed to promoting a culture of peace at all levels — in homes, schools, on the streets, in communities, organisations and internationally.

Children, taught that fighting is no solution, would learn from parents and teachers as well as news reports showing world leaders using similar non-violent methods to resolve conflict.

It has been compared to medicine in that, if you had a stomach pain and spoke only to a surgeon, you would probably be advised to risk surgery. Decision-makers often see military action as the only option, because their advisers are all focused on the armed forces as our only available resource.

Perhaps a stomach ache could be cured with antibiotics or some changes in your diet. Likewise, the Ministry for Peace would supply a different slant, such as looking at the root causes of violence and war.

By ensuring that everyone is safer, by eradicating hunger and ending the exploitation of most of the planet and its population, richer nations wouldn't feel the need to endanger everyone by focusing so many resources on destruction.

Everyone would see the same message of non-violent conflict resolution filtering down and this consistency would give it more weight. People convicted of violent crimes would see that the state repre-



manding them was following its own edicts.

In the US, the proposal for a Department for Peace has reached the House of Representatives. It was sponsored by Democrat congressman from Ohio and presidential contender Dennis Kucinich.

In the build-up to the second reading of the US Bill in April 2003, the Global Renaissance Alliance, a group that aims to build social and political structures in

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ating a fundamental shift in human development.

This is an opportunity for us to create the world that we want, instead of directing our energy negatively at what we're protesting against, with some feeling that it's futile to even bother.

The military industrial complex is firmly entrenched, but the situation is not hopeless. Although a lot of our economy currently depends on arms and disarming might take a while, it's important that as many people as possible sign up for the concept of a Ministry of Peace.

People need to see an alternative to the fear and insecurity fostered by governments, arms dealers, mainstream media and advertisers. Even the slightest possibility of a world without war, hunger and oppression of any kind is worth embracing.

As author Frances Hodgson Burnett wrote, "At first, people refuse to believe that a strange new thing can be done. Then they begin to hope it can be done. Then they see it can be done. Then it is done and all the world wonders why it was not done centuries ago."

● **The organisers are calling on readers to ask their MPs to back the Ministry for Peace and be present for the parliamentary debate. To find out who your MP is and how to get in touch with them, visit the website www.faxyourmp.com**

UPDATE: Following up the latest on two asylum cases.

The true face of asylum-seekers

WE are told that Britain's ageing population and falling birth rate represents a massive challenge to the country's economic future.

are also banned from appealing against any Home Office decision.

Recently, parents Bozenna and Ryszard and their three children Krystyna, Gregorz and baby Diana received the news that they had been dreading.

by MARK METCALF and RICHARD BAGLEY

Campaigners and friends of the family reacted with dismay and anger upon hearing that they had been visited by an official from the Home Office and told to prepare for their removal. A legal attempt to keep them here on compassionate grounds has been dismissed.

Yet, each day, the gutter press continues its racially motivated attacks on a faceless tide of asylum-seekers which, we are told, is "swamping" Britain.

Echoing its anti-semitic editorial line of the last century, the Daily Mail has again stood proudly shoulder to shoulder with Murdoch's rabid Sun newspaper in pushing anti-refugee bile.

Kath Sainsbury, the organiser of the campaign to keep the Grabowskis in their new home, points out how ridiculous the decision is in the light of EU enlargement next year.

Boosted by media mistruths and mainstream politicians and commentators jumping on the asylum bandwagon, the fascist BNP has found renewed strength and support in many areas of the country.

"Deporting the family is a waste of public money. It is not safe for them to live in their native country and they will return after May 1 2004, when Poland joins the EU and they have the right to come here," she says.

But asylum-seekers are not faceless spectres. They are human beings. Vast numbers of them are vulnerable and genuinely seeking sanctuary. Every one of these has a painful story to tell.

Sainsbury is urging people to keep up the pressure on the government by continuing to write letters and protest to Citizenship, Immigration and Nationality Minister Beverly Hughes at the Home Office.

The Morning Star reported on two individual cases earlier in the year. There are many thousands more people like them.

Despite the notice being served on the family, she remains defiant, saying: "Although the situation does not look hopeful, we shall continue to back the Grabowskis."

One was the situation facing the Grabowskis, a Polish family of five who had faced victimised in their own country for their Romany background.

Readers may also remember the case of Kuresh, an Iranian man who was seeking to remain in Britain after fleeing Iran in fear for his life.

This had caused them trouble finding work and led to their daughter being attacked. It was the second time that they had fled to these shores.

A member of the country's Kurdish minority, he recounted in February that two of his friends had already died in Iranian prisons. After spending nearly three years awaiting a decision, he has finally been allowed to stay in the country and is, understandably, delighted.

Although they had integrated well into the local community and their daughter was doing well at school in Middlesbrough, they had the threat of deportation hanging over them.

Both of these cases serve as a reminder that Britain is not faced by a threatening subhuman tide of "scroungers" and criminals.

As Kuresh puts it, many of them are here to try and improve themselves.

"It is normal human behaviour," he says.

DEREK HANLIN

I realise that these are both reports and

ON THE INTERNET
www.ministryforpeace.org.uk

LETTERS

Government must draw a line on wars

BLAIR escaped the wrath of party members at the Labour Party conference and he lives to fight another day — or should we say another war!

It was shameful that delegates were denied a vote on the war in Iraq, the single and most important issue of the last 12 months.

But, although the party leadership managed to avoid a vote, peace campaigners were able to force the issue of the bloody invasion of Iraq onto the conference podium. What a debate that was. The contributions were excellent, not least by the Halifax MP Alice Mahon and Islington MP Jeremy Corbyn.

As predictable as ever, Blair was unrelenting and remorseless in his speech, but we are all a little bit older and wiser. As we await the report from the Hutton inquiry, we acknowledge Blair's persuasive speech and charisma, but it just doesn't hold any more.

We are sick and tired of spin and lies when people's lives are at stake. As peace activists, we still have so much work to do. We have to force Blair to end this destructive and dangerous relationship with the madman in the White House.

Britain is now the second most distrusted nation in the world and, as such, we are open targets for those who seek revenge for injustice against their people.

The government has to draw a line — no more pre-emptive wars and no more blind loyalty to the US in its quest for world domination.

As peace campaigners, we must organise opportunities for free and open public debates to which all local people are invited to come and discuss issues concerning world peace and the present government's foreign policy.

PAULINE WHEAT-BOWEN
Huddersfield

FOR OR AGAINST ARMS TRADE?

IT seems to me that a contradiction in Morning Star policy will have to be sorted out.

Derek Simpson states (M Star September 29) that "the government's recent decision to award a lucrative RAF contract for the Hawk trainer jet to the BAE Systems plant at Brough is an example of what can be achieved by unions, employees, business and government working together."

Then, in a report about the FoE anti-corporate demo in Bournemouth BAE Systems is named as one of the most environmentally destructive corporates (M Star September 30).

"The world's second largest arms producer and a massive manufacturer of missiles containing deadly depleted uranium, which has been used in Iraq and Afghanistan."

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Gun crime in the Commons

READING an article about the vicious gangs who deal in death with guns in London, I looked on the map that was provided with the article and could not find the House of Commons on it anywhere.

It is here that the biggest gun gang exists.

These people are the biggest procurers and purveyors of guns.

It is these people looting on the green leather benches that purchase tens of thousands of guns every week and then send young men off to do their killing for them.

The motivation is the same — greed, profit, trade, territorial gain, protection of their patch and ego-feeding. Think about it.

DEREK HANLIN
Porth

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that it was trade unionists that first devised a plan for turning armaments production into more useful production.

I think that more should be made of this aspect of trade unionism. Maybe it should be made clearer which line you favour.

WENDY CORUM
Cinderford

The Morning Star welcomes readers' letters. No more than 300 words please to: The Letters Editor, Morning Star, William Rust House, 52 Beachy Road, Bow, London E3 2NS. Fax: (020) 8986-5694. e-mail: lettersed@macunlimited.net