

Selling the myth

At a recent House of Commons meeting on raising the age of armed forces recruitment, Liz Saville Roberts MP, from Plaid Cymru, spoke of her concern that 'we are being sold a myth that the army is the right solution for young people'.

There is now plenty of evidence, from research and media reports, that military environments can be harmful to many young people. The deaths of young recruits at Deepcut barracks between 1995 and 2002 is one example; the second re-inquest is currently underway. The recent court martial of instructors at the Army's training college for under-18s on abuse charges is a reminder of other dangers. The cases were handled with such incompetence by the military police that they had to be dropped. See coverage and comment on our blog.

SNP adopt #Makelt18

We continue to work with our partners to change the commonly-held narrative that the military provides unrivalled opportunities for young people. Raising the age of recruitment was on the agenda at the SNP Autumn Conference where a resolution for the party to support calls for change was passionately championed by the youth wing of the SNP (pictured right, celebrating) and passed without amendment. A letter from over 50 academics supported the motion.



Moral exploitation

We have started to work with philosophy, education and psychology academics to explore in detail the ethics of the many ways that the armed forces become involved in young people's lives. What moral lines are being crossed in the military's attempts to satisfy its recruitment targets and to create support for its activities? Watch this space!

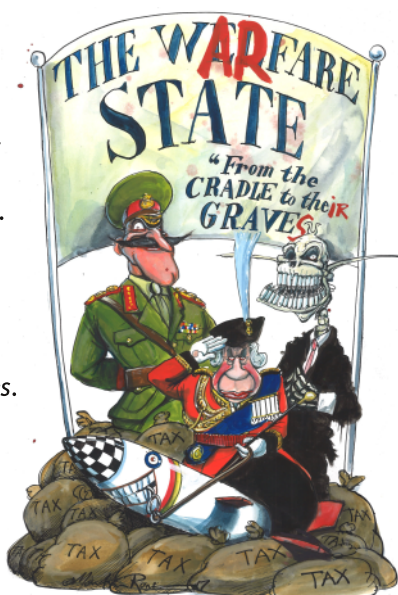
Public meeting: War, militarisation & British democracy

A public meeting to launch a report by Paul Dixon, 'Warrior Nation: War, militarisation and British democracy'.

With **Professor Paul Dixon**, Birkbeck College, **Professor Joanna Bourke**, Birkbeck College, and author of *Wounding the World: How Military Violence and War-Play Invade Our Lives*. Chaired by **Pat Gaffney**, General Secretary, Pax Christi UK.

Monday 25 June, 7-9pm (doors open 6.30) at Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ.

All welcome. Organised by ForcesWatch



A web version of this newsletter, with links to the references and resources, can be found at www.forceswatch.net/news0518

'The UK Government should end the recruitment of children under the age of 18 into the armed forces and visits of armed forces to schools.'

Statement made by the UK's four Children's Commissioners in their report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2016

The First Ambush? Effects of army training and employment

This report from Veterans for Peace UK details the forceful impact that army training has on attitudes, health, and behaviour of army recruits. It explores how moulding young civilians as soldiers demands unquestioning obedience, stimulates aggression and antagonism, overpowers a healthy person's inhibition to killing, and dehumanises the opponent in the recruit's imagination. Drawing on veterans' testimony and many studies, this report creates a powerful argument against recruitment into the armed forces at a very young age.



Our response to the Army's new recruitment campaign

'By appealing to the adolescent child's need to belong, the army have latched onto a very popular recruitment tool, powerful in particular among those who feel isolated or marginalised, or who have a sense of non-belonging and potentially low self-esteem.'

Also see:

- our submission to Parliament's Defence Committee inquiry on Armed Forces and Veterans Mental Health
- our submission to the Human Rights and the Scottish Parliament inquiry
- our briefing on the armed forces and social mobility - *Does the military give young people a 'leg up'?*
- our submission to Parliament's Education Committee inquiry on Alternative Provision
- *Is pushing the cadets really in pupils' best interests?* Schools Week, Oct 2017

The military in education and our communities

The creep of militarism continues. The Ministry of Defence have announced more cadet forces in schools in 'less prosperous areas', and have commissioned a report on the benefits of 'military ethos' in schools. We know that meeting recruitment targets is the main driver for these developments; we continue to argue that the influence of defence interests within education is unacceptable.

We have been researching the operation of wider military interests - arms companies as well as the armed forces - within the education system. See our article *Arms companies and immorality* for preliminary findings and watch out for our report due to be published shortly.

For the last two years, we have been working with Quakers in Scotland to challenge armed forces activities in Scottish schools in the Scottish Parliament. The Public Petitions Committee has received a wide range of submissions in support of our petition calling for more scrutiny and guidance on armed forces visits. Parents, teachers, child rights and young people's organisations, veterans and others have responded. The armed forces also gave evidence. The Committee will be producing a report and, we hope, some recommendations, later this year.

Take a look at our [Take Action on Militarism resource pack and website!](#) Developed with Quakers in Britain, this resource provides summary information about different areas in which everyday militarism has increased in recent years, with selected resources and case studies of challenges that individuals and groups have made.

All the information is downloadable and the whole pack can be ordered for free by post. See forceswatch.net/takeaction

A new ForcesWatch briefing on armed forces visits to schools in Scotland for 2016-17 found that 68% of state secondary schools in Scotland were visited in one year, some many times, and 75% of visits are directly promoting a career in the armed forces.



How to get involved

- Join us on **social media**, in our facebook group *A Social Audit of Everyday Militarism* and on facebook and twitter.
- Sign up to our **email newsletter** at forceswatch.net/stay_in_touch
- **Donate to support our work** or become a *Friend of ForcesWatch* with a monthly donation.
- **Write to your representatives** with your concerns; ask them to support motions/EDMs; if you are in a political party, raise the issue at your branch meeting.
- Promote **peace education resources**.
- See our website for resources and ideas for **raising awareness and challenging militarism** in your community.
- Get in contact if you would like us to **speak at a meeting or run a workshop**.
- **Share your experience** of militarism and contact us if we can help.



'The modern world does not require conformity, it demands innovation ...If we are looking for a dividend from youth robust enough to make the future, we are going to need to make an 'investment' in youth that is something more nuanced than militaristic line dancing.'

Dr Brian Belton, a leading international authority on youth work, in response to expansion of cadet forces in schools.

our security

Young people across the UK are sharing their ideas about how to make our world more secure.



Enter the **Our Security competition** with your ideas.

ForcesWatch are working with the Rethinking Security network and Quakers in Britain to develop educational materials on the theme of 'our security'. The resources will help teachers and students explore what makes us feel secure and insecure (poverty and inequality, climate change and scarcity, violent conflict and militarism) and how we can build a more secure, peaceful and equal world.

Find information about the competition (deadline 1 October) and learning resources for schools on our website.

ForcesWatch - what we do

- Research armed forces recruitment and promotion of the military in civil society.
- Publish reports, education resources and other materials.
- Raise awareness among young people, the public, decision makers and media.
- Support and work with others to challenge military influence on young people and wider society.

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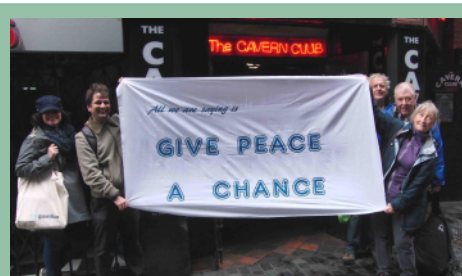
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What are you doing on Armed Forces Day?

Many local councils will be facilitating Armed Forces Day events in late June. The national event will be in Llandudno, north Wales, where local groups are organising alternative events, which we are supporting. Look at our website for ideas for how to make a response to what is happening in your area.



Merseyside Peace Network prepare for Liverpool Armed Forces Day in 2017