

PNND speech for UN New York
12th October 2009
Bill Kidd
Member of the Scottish Parliament

DELEGATES AND FRIENDS,

IT IS MY PLEASURE TO ADDRESS THIS SESSION OF THE PNND CONFERENCE 2009. I BRING YOU CORDIAL GREETINGS FROM THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT AND FROM COLLEAGUES IN THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT.

WHEN I RETURN HOME TO SCOTLAND IT WILL BE TO GO STRAIGHT TO MY PARTY CONFERENCE AT INVERNESS TO GIVE A REPORT ON THIS EVENT, YOU WILL OF COURSE HAVE HEARD OF THE LOCH NESS MONSTER, BUT THERE IS A MUCH MORE MENACING MONSTER LURKING IN THE WATERS AROUND MY COUNTRY;

AND THAT IS THE FLEET OF TRIDENT NUCLEAR SUBMARINES AND THEIR WARHEADS WHICH THE UK GOVERNMENT KEEPS STATIONED AT FASLANE ON SCOTLAND'S WEST COAST.

OVER THE FIFTY YEARS THAT THESE, OR SIMILAR, WEAPONS OF MASS-DESTRUCTION HAVE BEEN SITED JUST 30 MILES FROM SCOTLAND'S LARGEST POPULATION CENTRE, WITH OVER TWO-AND-A-HALF MILLION PEOPLE, THE CIVIC AND POLITICAL OPPOSITION TO THEIR EXISTENCE HAS BEEN STRONG AND GROWING;

TO THE POINT NOW WHERE THERE HAS BEEN AN OVERWHELMING VOTE OF OPPOSITION, ACROSS POLITICAL PARTIES, TO THE CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AT FASLANE.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE FIGURES IN SUPPORT OF THIS STATEMENT:

MARCH 2007 AT WESTMINSTER – 33 SCOTTISH MPs VOTED AGAINST TRIDENT WITH ONLY 22 IN FAVOUR; OF COURSE SCOTTISH VOTING IS SWAMPED BY THE MAJORITY ENGLISH VOTE, BUT THE INTENTION WAS CLEAR;

IN JUNE 2007 THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT SAW A VOTE OF 71 MSPs AGAINST TRIDENT WITH ONLY 16 FOR; AGAIN THE, AT PRESENT, DEVOLVED PARLIAMENT LACKS THE POWERS TO PUSH THIS DECISION THROUGH BUT THE INTENTION WAS VERY CLEAR;

AND WHEN THE SCOTTISH PEOPLE WERE POLLED ON WHETHER THEY WOULD PREFER THE £25 BILLION CAPITAL COST OF TRIDENT REPLACEMENT TO GO ON PUBLIC SERVICES SUCH AS SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS, HOUSING AND LOCAL POLICING, 76% WERE FOR AND ONLY 12% DISAGREED.

SO, IS THIS ALL JUST HOT AIR AND IRRATIONAL OPPOSITIONISM?

WELL NO. AS A MAJOR REPORT JOINTLY PRODUCED BY THE SCOTTISH TRADES UNION CONGRESS AND SCOTTISH CND SHOWS, THE REALITY IS THAT THERE IS A REAL OPPORTUNITY COST TO THE SCOTTISH ECONOMY IN DIVERTING SCIENTIFIC AND ENGINEERING WORKERS TO TRIDENT REPLACEMENT.

THEY SUGGEST THE CREATION OF AN 'ARMS CONVERSION AGENCY'.

THIS BODY WOULD TARGET THE FUNDING PRESENTLY PLANNED BY WESTMINSTER TO GO ON TRIDENT MAINTENANCE AND REPLACEMENT INTO LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND THE SOCIAL ECONOMY SECTOR;

THEREBY CREATING JOBS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF GENERAL INFRASTRUCTURE, TOURISM AND COMMUNITY-BASED ENERGY GENERATION PROJECTS;

FURTHER, INVESTMENT COULD BE MADE IN TECHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT THAT WOULD BRING ECONOMIC ADVANTAGE BOTH FOR SCOTLAND AND THE REST OF THE WORLD.

SUPPORT FOR ALL OF THE ABOVE WOULD BE MAINTAINED BY WORKERS WHO WOULD BENEFIT FINANCIALLY THROUGH A 'JUST TRANSITION PROGRAMME'.

IT CAN BE SEEN THEN THAT THERE IS LIFE AFTER TRIDENT; AS SURELY AS IF THERE IS LIFE WITH IT, THEN THAT IS AN UNCERTAIN ONE FILLED WITH FEAR AND SUSPICION.

FROM THIS YOU WILL INFER THAT IN SCOTLAND WE HAVE BEEN EXCITED BY THE CHANGE OF ATTITUDE OF THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE OBAMA REGIME.

THE HOPE THAT IS ENGENDERED FOR A GENUINE MOVE TOWARDS NON-PROLIFERATION AND ABOLITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS THAT HAS BEEN BROUGHT ABOUT BY TALKS BETWEEN PRESIDENT OBAMA AND PRESIDENT MEDVEDEV IS PALPABLE AMONGST THOSE WHO OPPOSE TRIDENT'S CONTINUED EXISTENCE;

AND THIS, ON THE BACK OF UN SECRETARY GENERAL BAN KI MOON'S FIVE POINT PLAN, HAS GIVEN THE FIRST REAL HOPE THAT THE WORLD IS LOOKING AT LAST TOWARDS A NUCLEAR WEAPONS-FREE FUTURE.

THE CAVEAT WHICH I MUST INTRODUCE HERE HOWEVER, IS THAT THE MAJORITY HAVE NO CONFIDENCE IN THE RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT BY UK PRIME MINISTER GORDON BROWN, THAT HE IS FOLLOWING THE OBAMA EXAMPLE BY REDUCING THE BRITISH FLEET IN CANCELLING ONE OF THE FOUR REPLACEMENT TRIDENT SUBMARINES.

THIS IS A MOVE DRIVEN BY THE EXPEDIENCY AND ECONOMIC NECESSITY AND NOT BY A COMMITMENT TO MULTILATERAL DISARMAMENT, AS EXEMPLIFIED BY THE FACT THAT THERE IS NO COMMITMENT, OR EVEN SUGGESTION, THAT THERE WILL BE A CONCOMMITENT REDUCTION IN WARHEADS - THESE WILL REMAIN AT THE SAME LEVEL.

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT STANDS ACCUSED OF WINDOW-DRESSING AND THE PRESSURE OF THE PEOPLES OF SCOTLAND, ENGLAND, WALES AND NORTHERN IRELAND TOGETHER WITH THAT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MUST CONTINUE BEFORE WE WILL SEE ANY WESTMINSTER GOVERNMENT COMMIT TO DISARMAMENT

IT IS THIS REALITY WHICH DRIVES THE COMMITMENT OF THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT TO MAINTAIN ITS UNSWERVING DETERMINATION FOR THE REMOVAL OF ALL NUCLEAR WEAPONS FROM OUR SOIL AND WATERS.

EARLIER THIS YEAR THE FORMER VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE, JUDGE CHRISTOPHER WEERAMANTRY SPOKE IN EDINBURGH.

HE SAID, "THAT SCOTLAND HAS OBLIGATIONS UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW TO UPHOLD INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN AND LEGAL OBLIGATIONS."

IN THAT, "THE SAFETY OF THE POPULATION OF THE PEOPLE OF SCOTLAND IS THE CONCERN OF SCOTLAND.

THE HEALTH OF THE SCOTTISH POPULATION IS THE CONCERN OF SCOTLAND.

THE WELFARE OF FUTURE GENERATIONS OF ITS PEOPLE IS THE CONCERN OF SCOTLAND.

THE PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT OF SCOTLAND IS THE CONCERN OF SCOTLAND.

THE PURITY OF THE SEAS AND OCEAN LIFE AROUND SCOTLAND ARE THE CONCERNS OF SCOTLAND."

IN ALL OF THIS HE IS CORRECT, INDEED THESE ISSUES ARE THE CONCERNS OF ALL COUNTRIES, OF ALL CIVILISED SOCIETIES.

THIS IS WHY I STAND HERE TO DAY AND STATE TO YOU THAT WHEN, AND ONLY WHEN, WE REMOVE THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS FROM THE FASLANE NAVAL BASE IN SCOTLAND WILL WE KNOW FOR SURE THAT THE U.K. HAS FULFILLED ITS INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS TO ERADICATE THE NUCLEAR ARSENAL WHICH IS ITS DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY.

WE MUST ALL WORK TO PERSUADE THE U.K. GOVERNMENT TO ABOLISH TRIDENT;

THOUGH WE SHOULD APPRECIATE THE WORDS OF ONE OF THE SENIOR FIGURES IN THE BRITISH ARMY, GENERAL SIR HUGH BEECH, WHO TOLD ME A FEW MONTHS AGO THAT,

"TRIDENT IS USELESS AS A DETERENT, BUT IT IS A TOTEM WHICH THE WESTMINSTER ESTABLISHMENT WOULD NEVER GIVE UP WILLINGLY WHILST THAT WOULD LEAVE FRANCE AS THE ONLY NUCLEAR POWER IN EUROPE."

SO IT IS A POLITICAL DECISION FOR THE U.K. TO HOLD ON TO ITS NUCLEAR PHALIC SYMBOL.

THEREFORE I CONTEND THAT AN INDEPENDENT SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT WOULD BE THE KEY TO THE DISARMAMENT OF THE U.K.'s NUCLEAR ARSENAL.

I SAY THIS BECAUSE THERE IS NO OTHER SITE AT WHICH THE U.K. CAN STATION ITS NUCLEAR FLEET, OTHER THAN ONE ON THE WEST COAST OF SCOTLAND.

THIS IS WHY I STATE CATAGORICALLY, THAT IT IS ONLY THROUGH AN INDEPENDENT NUCLEAR-FREE SCOTLAND THAT WE CAN GUARANTEE THE ENDING OF THE U.K. NUCLEAR CAPACITY.

HOWEVER, I MUST EMPHASISE THAT I, THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL PARTY, THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT AND INDEED ALL PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE ANTI-NUCLEAR WEAPONS COMMUNITY IN SCOTLAND WILL CONTINUE TO WORK IN CONCERT WITH PEOPLE OF SIMILAR MIND IN THE REST OF THE U.K. AND THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, TO RID MANKIND OF THE SPECTRE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS FOR ALL TIME.

I THANK YOU FOR KINDLY GRANTING ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS THIS SESSION OF PNND 2009 AND WISH ALL OF OUR PEOPLES A PEACEFUL AND NUCLEAR FREE FUTURE.

Ends

BILL KIDD MSP