

Northern Friends Peace Board

Edinburgh, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2016

Report by Sue Beardon

In this brief report I am addressing 4 questions:

- 1 What was I personally inspired by?
- 2 What does Area Meeting need to know?
- 3 What does Area Meeting need to think about?
- 4 What might Area Meeting do?

It is always unpredictable where inspiration will come from, and on this occasion what sticks in my mind is what occurred at lunch time. Myself and two other Friends found a small café which was cheap and cheerful, although in the heart of tourist Edinburgh. There was little space so we shared a table with a couple on holiday. We soon fell into conversation about what we were doing, about Quakers, the peace testimony, various world issues and problems. They disagreed with much of what we said, but were very friendly. They often raised their voices and used words like “wrong”. We were respectful and listened. When the bill came the waiter had mistakenly put us all on the same bill. One Friend said that she was a great believer in the Gift economy and offered to pay for their lunch. At first they didn’t believe she was serious but when they realised she was, they accepted with amazement and joy. I think this is what is meant by “letting your life speak”!

Following this incident several of us walked along the Royal Mile with placards against the renewal of Trident. Tourists were interested, maybe a bit puzzled, but what was so incredible was that most Scottish passers-by shouted “thank you” and “well done”. I love Scotland.

Area Meeting needs to know that NFPB has put out a short statement of reflection on the EU referendum – what will happen after the result, how we will work with whatever the situation is, how we will deal with a country divided, where many people will be disappointed and angry. I have sent this statement for inclusion in the Sheffield and Balby bulletin. I think Friends will find it useful.

The other major issue of concern right now is Trident. AMs and LMs are still being encouraged to avail themselves of the Road Show that accompanies Tim Wallace’s book, helping Friends put together the arguments they need against Trident renewal. 13<sup>th</sup> July is a mass lobby of Parliament, so Friends are encouraged to contact their MPs and if possible go and lobby them on that day. QPSW has a lot of useful information on the national Quaker website.

The final item on our agenda was Building Positive Peace. This is something I believe as an Area Meeting we should think about. We were asked to consider what skills, approaches and resources we as Quakers have in relation to the building of peace. We were reminded of how the fundamentals of Quakerism are the cornerstone of our approach. Finding that of God in everyone, quietly holding in the light all those who suffer war and injustice, letting our lives speak, trying what love will do, – these are the special ways that we as Quakers can contribute – listening to all those in pain, whatever their views and whether or not we agree with them. These are the skills and approaches essential to conflict resolution and peace building.

Area Meeting is not being asked to specifically do anything other than what they already do to further peace. NFPB wants to be a resource to support what we do locally.

Finally I would like to pass on the delight and thanks of the NFPB treasurer, who reported that as a result of Friends asking AMs to contribute more to NFPB, the financial position is much improved and NFPB sustainable.