



Trident: Contacting the media



Quaker Peace & Social Witness
Peace & Disarmament Programme

Using the news media to raise awareness of an issue is a useful campaigning tool as it serves to keep the issue alive and can help to move a debate forward. Moreover, you don't need to be an expert on nuclear weapons to have your say — there are a number of ways in which you can make your views heard.

You could write letters to your local and national press, magazines and journals; or you could write your own story or press release. You can even just write in to ask why they've not covered this important issue.

However you decide to go about it, and whatever medium you choose, here are a few simple tips for getting your point across:

Be clear

Make a list of your best arguments – the ones that resonate with you most and that you feel most able to articulate – and use them to illustrate your point. You can even stick to just one: it is better to make one point clearly than to make several points and end up leaving people confused.

If writing a letter for publication, keep it under about 150 words; keep press releases to one side of A4 with short paragraphs, beginning with the most important *news*.

Be current

Your letter is more likely to get printed if you can link it to an existing news story, preferably something new and frequently talked about. The high financial cost of replacing Trident, the lack of transparency and debate around the issue and the involvement of some prominent companies at Aldermaston, the UK's nuclear warhead factory, mean that there are plenty of ways to link in with other issues.

Try scanning the press for articles on: cuts in government spending, other nuclear issues (eg Iran, North Korea), climate change, development, government accountability and any other potential links you can think of.

Be interesting

Put yourself in the shoes of the editor. Of all the letters and press releases they receive, why

will they want to publish yours? Is it because it says something novel, has a human interest angle, makes a point concisely and powerfully, is particularly relevant to the readership (eg a local angle for a local paper, a medical angle for a medical journal)?

If you write your own article or send a press release, make sure your story is newsworthy and that it grabs people's attention. By tying in what you write with an event or action, as some Friends have done with the *Faslane 365* initiative, you are creating an opening for putting your views forward.

Write a letter as a group or get others to sign up to your letter – the more signatories to a letter, the more impact it has. You could also try to get someone with a high profile to sign your letter — it is more likely to get printed that way.

Be prepared

What is news one day can be old news the next, so if you are linking your letter with the day's news story, send it as soon as you can (preferably by email) and always the same day if you are submitting it to a daily. Try getting your argument(s) together and then keep scanning the news for suitable "hooks" to hang your story or comment on.

Think widely about what media there are to use

- Radio phone-ins are a great way to reach a large audience easily.
- Web forums and discussion groups are easy to access.
- Journalists often publish their email addresses at the end of articles, or maintain their own web sites – a personal response to an article can help to inform the journalist's approach to the subject in the future.
- Complaints and compliments can be passed on to news media. The BBC runs a formal complaints service, and there are ways of providing feedback publicly through programmes such as Radio 4's *Feedback*.

Some media contacts

Send letters and press releases to these, as appropriate. We can provide phone numbers and addresses for some of these if you need them — see address on the cover of this pack.

BBC feedback, including official complaints — www.bbc.co.uk/feedback

BBC News 24 — bbcnews24@bbc.co.uk

ITN — itvplanning@itn.co.uk

Channel 4 News — news@channel4.com

Five News — <http://news.five.tv>

Sky News — news.plan@bskyb.com

Resurgence — editorial@resurgence.org

Premier Radio — john.buckeridge@premier.org.uk

Church Times — helen@churchtimes.co.uk

The Tablet — thetablet@thetablet.co.uk

The Friend — editorial@thefriend.org

Ekklesia — jonathan.bartley@ekkleisia.co.uk

Religion correspondents for some national dailies — jonathan.petre@telegraph.co.uk;

stephen.bates@guardian.co.uk; ruth.gledhill@thetimes.co.uk