

Strengthening peace in the United Kingdom

Campaign Against Arms Trade

The Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) is possibly the best-known of the four organisations receiving a QPSW peaceworker this year, and is the only one to have hosted previous peaceworkers.

CAAT is a loud and passionate voice in the UK peace movement. It was founded, with the help of Quakers, in 1974, and remains committed to non-violent protest. It is a network of individuals and groups all working to end the international weapons trade and the influence of the arms industry over government policy. It also advocates ethical investment which does not support arms-trading companies.

CAAT is most visible through its peaceful demonstrations at arms fairs in Britain, which it opposes outright. Defence Systems and Equipment International (DSEi) is one of the world's biggest arms fairs, held each year in the London Docklands with the support of the UK government, and each time it has been held, CAAT has been there to raise awareness and protest against such events. It has also been a longstanding critic of BAE Systems, the UK's leading arms company (and the third largest in the world), and examines the work of the government departments responsible for arms export issues.

More recently, CAAT's vociferous campaign style has been brought

to bear against UK Trade and Investment (UKTI), a cross-departmental government agency which brings together staff at the Foreign Office and the Department for Business to advise, promote and support British businesses – including arms dealers. CAAT calls for the closure of the Defence & Security Organisation section of UKTI, which employs civil servants to help private companies sell arms. It has launched a campaign – 'UKTI: Armed & Dangerous' – to raise public awareness and get people protesting to UKTI, to the government or to their local MP.

Publicity is key to CAAT's work. The arms trade is extensive and notoriously discreet. Rigorous research is needed to cast light on what exactly goes on at the behest of governments and arms dealers the world over. CAAT isn't afraid of telling it like it is: in its January 2009 newsletter, for instance, it draws attention to the British government's role in selling arms to both Russia and Georgia, before decrying the armed conflict which erupted between the two countries in August 2008.

As well as individual supporters, CAAT has an active Universities



Two of CAAT's challenging reports on the British arms industry

Network, drawing on the passion of student activists. On 11 February 2009 CAAT co-ordinated a Universities Day of Action and peaceful demonstrations were held at several higher education institutions up and down the country.

Through its Christian Network, CAAT also equips churches to mobilise Christian faith communities against the arms trade and military influence, holding a day of prayer each June and distributing materials through churches to support those calling for the fulfilment of the Christian commitment to peace.

Like many UK peace organisations, CAAT has global reach. It was a co-founder of the European Network Against Arms Trade, and works in partnership with similar groups in Canada, South Africa and the USA.

In 2009, the support given to CAAT by British Quakers will include a QPSW peaceworker to support its aims and help CAAT to make a mark for peace.

Find out more about Quaker peaceworkers – visit
www.quaker.org.uk/appeal

