



ministry for peace

Annual Report April 2006 – April 2007.

Founded in July 2003, *ministry for peace (mfp)* is now four years old. Our aim remains the same, to campaign for a structure or structures in government to reduce violence, both in the UK and internationally.

Governance

ministry for peace is a Company limited by guarantee managed by a twelve member National Co-ordinating Committee chaired by Eddy Canfor-Dumas. This meets fortnightly.

Achievements in the past year

A. Participated at the 2nd Summit for Ministries and Departments of Peace in

Canada in June 2006

B. Set up an All Party Parliamentary Group on Conflict Issues (APPG) in January 2007

and held 5 meetings on:

- **'The Changing Nature of Conflict'** - Sir Jeremy Greenstock and Prof Mary Kaldor
- **'The Power of Mediation'** - Lord (Douglas) Hurd and Prof Karl Mackie
- **'Preventing Violent Conflict'** - Rt Hon Hilary Benn (co-hosted with DfID)
- **'Dogs of War or a Force for Peace'** - Andy Bearpark (British Association of Private Security Companies) and Jon Hilary (War on Want)
- **'Swords and Ploughshares: Bringing Peace to the 21st Century'** - Lord (Paddy) Ashdown

- postponed was '**Preventing Violent Conflict - The Challenge for Government**' with two government ministers due to speak but they were reshuffled due to change of Prime Minister in May); we are seeking to reschedule in the autumn.

The members of the Advisory Group to the APPG are (so far)

Lord Ashdown (former Leader of the Liberal Democrat Party and former international

community's High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina

Lord Hurd (former Foreign Secretary)

Moazzam Malik (head of CHASE (Conflict, Humanitarian and Security Department, at DfID

Sir Rupert Smith (former Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe i.e. NATO)

Kai Brand-Jacobsen (PATRIR, TRANSCEND)

Dr. Scilla Elworthy (founder of Oxford Research Group and Peace Direct)

Judith Large (co-founder Responding to Conflict)

Simon Fisher (co-founder Responding to Conflict)

Jane Corbin (senior BBC TV journalist)

(We are also approaching individuals in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office,

Ministry of Defence and Cabinet Office, and academia)

C. Made formal contacts with the 14 members of the Peace & Security

Liaison Group (major UK NGOs)

BASIC (British American Security Information Council)

Campaign Against Arms Trade

CND

Conciliation Resources

Conscience

International Alert

Medact

Oxford Research Group

Peace Direct

Peaceworkers UK - now at International

Alert

Quaker Peace & Social Witness

Responding to Conflict (RTC)

Safer World

UNA

D. Held meetings in Parliament open to MPs and the general public to illustrate

the issues that a Ministry for Peace would need to work on in order to prevent

or reduce violence. This year the topics were:

Trident – a Weapon of Peace?

Climate Change – What's to be Done?

**What Lessons can be Learned from British NGO's Working to Transform Violent Conflicts?
Violence against Women – the Issues and Practical Solutions
Modern Day Slavery**

Our thoughts on the past year

By March 2006 we were getting respectable attendances at the open meetings we were holding in Parliament but were unable to engage with Parliamentarians or government. The main problem was that these groups seemed largely unfamiliar even with the concepts of conflict prevention, transformation and resolution, let alone the practical work that is under way in many parts of the world. Arguing for a department of government that would co-ordinate and further promote this work was therefore trying to build on a base of understanding that didn't exist. It was like explaining the need for a Ministry for Health to people who hadn't heard of medicine or doctors...

Help was at hand, however.

A number of *mfp* members attended the rally in Trafalgar Square to mark the anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, where we bumped into a senior Liberal Democrat peer. We got talking and, before she was called away to address the rally, she agreed to meet Eddy to discuss conflict resolution. Eddy sent her a copy of our 2005 manifesto and when they met in the House of Lords she expressed her agreement with nearly everything in the document. The challenge was, in her words, 'how to advance this agenda in this place' - i.e. in Parliament. 'We need an All-Party group or something,' she said. And so the idea was born.

All-Party groups in Parliament exist to promote causes and interests across party lines, and in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. There are lots of them, representing everything from the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Adoption and Fostering to the APPG on Zoos and Aquariums.

Eddy put the idea to the *mfp* AGM that very evening, it was approved, and the rest of 2006 was dedicated to setting up this group.

To qualify, it needed 20 MPs and members of the House of Lords to sign up, and they had to come from all parties, with at least ten from the governing party. We set ourselves the goal of having it established by the time Parliament rose for the Christmas recess - nine months away - and set to the task.

First, we did some research. What was the best way to approach Parliamentarians? Why did some of these groups thrive and others wither on the vine? What was the best name?

After a month we came to the decision that we would call our group the APPG on Conflict Issues (for reasons explained below), then set about contacting MPs and peers to see what they thought of the idea. We couched the approach in this way, rather than make a direct attempt to recruit, as we have found that asking politicians for advice is more likely to get a positive response than asking them to make a commitment. We also asked for referrals if the person we were approaching was not himself (or herself) interested.

In this way, bit by bit we built up a list of those interested in the idea, ranging from the lukewarm to the excited. But we quickly saw that the interest of Parliamentarians grew as the list did; in other words, the idea of forming an APPG on Conflict Issues became more attractive as Parliamentarians saw a growing number of their colleagues, in all parties, expressing interest.

By the autumn we had almost fifty names on the list. The challenge now was to turn twenty of those into serious support. Again, we sought advice, this time from our staunchest supporter, John McDonnell MP, who helped us identify a shortlist.

And - to cut a long story short - we managed to get agreement from twenty Parliamentarians and meet the other criteria necessary to register the group a few days before Parliament rose before Christmas.

Our first meeting was in February this year, and the APPG has definitely taken us to a completely new level. It is our stepping-stone to developing wider support within Parliament, government and NGOs working in this field. In time, we hope we will be able to engage them in dialogue about the concept of a Ministry for Peace...

What we have learnt in the past year

- We have learnt that branding our work in terms of 'conflict' rather than 'peace' has attracted more interest and less immediate rejection. For example, to talk about 'exploring alternative approaches to preventing or resolving conflict with less or no violence, and at a much lower human and financial cost' has reaped greater benefits than to talk about 'peace', which means different things to different people; the former sounds hard-nosed and practical, while the latter can be dismissed as 'idealistic'
- This approach is also more attractive to the military, many of whom find the violent aspect of their work distasteful but necessary. It is also more attractive to those generally on the Right, for whom violence in certain circumstances is seen as entirely legitimate
- Recruiting people from the Right and the military is a great boost to our

cause - it has opened up the internal corridors of government to us to some extent i.e. we are increasingly seen as not 'against' these people but genuinely concerned to discover with them practical alternatives to the current approach, which simply isn't working

- Building positive relationships, especially with those with whom we disagree, is essential

Accounts for 2006/7

The Ministry for Peace and Conflict Resolution Limited

DRAFT Abbreviated accounts for the year ended 31st March 2007

Balance sheet as at 31 March 2007

	2007		2006
	£		£
Current assets			
Debtors	23		354
Cash at bank	386		1,320
Cash in hand	0		0
	409		1,674
Current liabilities			
Creditors	(5,088)		(6,105)
Net total liabilities		(4,679)	(4,431)
Accumulated profit / (loss)	(4,430)		(2,485)
Profit / (loss) for the accounting period	(249)		(1,946)
	(4,679)		(4,431)

Funding - your help is needed

As you will see from the above accounts, *mfp* is currently in debt to members of our committee.

This severely limits the amount of campaigning that we can do.

Please consider becoming a **Member**, or rejoining if your membership has lapsed. The form is attached.

If you prefer to make a small **monthly donation** let me know and I'll send you a form for your bank.

One-off donations are also very welcome. Cheques made payable to :

ministry for peace
19 Springhill
Stroud
Glos GL5 1TN

2007-8

In the coming year we are going to focus more of our energy on the **APPG** so will only be holding three open meetings in Parliament . The

first will be held on Wednesday 14th November and the flyer is attached. The second will be in the New Year and the third in Spring. Notification will be sent out as usual.

We will also continue to participate in the **Global Alliance for Ministries and Departments of Peace**. James Eckhardt, a committee member is, in fact, in Japan at this moment, attending the third Summit of the GA.

Spreading the message locally

We'd be happy to come and talk about *mfp* locally, if any local supporter is interested in organising a small meeting (expenses could be discussed).

We very much look forward to seeing you at one of these meetings.

Best wishes

Diana Basterfield
Co-Founder