

CONWY COUNTY PEACE GROUP.

William Powell AM  
Chairman, Petitions Committee.

Dear Mr. Powell,

I am writing to express the views of the above Group regarding the petition which calls for the National Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to recommend that the armed forces should not go into schools to recruit.

Our members are greatly concerned that introducing children to the military ethos of violence does not contribute to developing a culture of peace, justice and reconciliation in a world that is disturbed by increasingly violent conflicts. This is exacerbated by the weapons construction and 'security' industries who have a vested interest in their extension.

It is evident that, when Armed Forces career officers give advice, a picture of excitement, travel, educational benefits and security is presented in order to attract the natural interests of children. The real picture of war and violence is rarely mentioned, and the inevitability of suffering and death to themselves and their opponents is not highlighted. The fact that these children would be the ones who inflict death and mutilation on their fellow human beings, and the consequences of that, is not brought to their attention. Neither is the evidence that returning soldiers are often traumatized by their experiences and find it difficult to readjust to civilian life, resulting in a higher rate of domestic violence, criminality and suicide than in the population at large.

The army were allowed to recruit and advertise when St Athan's Military Academy was in the planning stage. This was also the case for all deprived areas such as the Valleys in Rhondda Cynon Taf and in Wreccsam housing estate. This is deliberate exploitation of long term unemployed families (as is the flooding of Job Centres with army leaflets.)

The National Curriculum does not contain Peace Studies. The real background of war, the interests behind it, the suffering and loss that was caused by the two World Wars, and alternative means to resolve conflict is not taught. This should be a priority.

We have noticed that there has been a sharp increase in militarisation and it's propaganda in the last few years even though the real threat to the UK of external enemies is questionable. The attendance of the military at schools is

only one aspect of this. We consider this to be counter-productive to your own repeatedly proclaimed aim of achieving peace in the world.

The Conwy County Peace Group has been active for many years with the aim to develop a climate that values a culture of peace, justice and reconciliation. Wales has a long history of peaceful activity and we wish this to be continued and extended.

We request that military recruiting in schools be prohibited, as well as any TV and radio advertising during hours when children are likely to be exposed to that. Children are to be protected and not to be used as cannon fodder.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Donald Saunders". The signature is written in black ink and includes a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Donald Saunders Chairman