

Secure Scotland, Towards Peace

(Bella Caledonia 8th January 2020)

Ahead of the Women Peace & Security debate in the Scottish Parliament, and as we are once again, on the brink of war, Janet Fenton writes on the Secure Scotland initiative.

A small group, now called Secure Scotland, came together last year through shared concerns about international relations and what is termed 'security'. We all considered that that the mainstream discussions in Scotland on peace and security were mired in militarist definitions. Voices of many people in Scotland – and from around the rest of the world – go unheard, important aspirations are unheard and new or different approaches are ignored.

We discussed Scottish political party policies, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the Scotland's for Peace Covenant, "We desire that Scotland should be known for its contribution to international peace and justice rather than a launch pad for waging war."

When many politicians and other leaders refer to security, their ideas are informed by a culture of militarism, violent masculinities and discrimination. We wanted a clear alternative way of thinking and talking that could allow decision makers to develop policies and plan actions that contribute to understanding and defining real security needs, including the planetary emergency that is threatening the whole world.

Utilising Scotland's separate legal, parliamentary, and education system we might be able to enable some changes locally that would be more difficult to establish outside Scotland. Proportional representation and an accessible parliament provide distinct opportunities. Scotland is a small country, so we can talk to each other and create a visible cohesive and clear model of the Scotland we could become, to which people outside of Scotland can also relate.

We agreed to widen our discussion to include the Scottish Parliament, civil society, academia, faith and community groups in order to talk about things that make people feel safe, how they could be put in place and who might do that. We also wanted to highlight where the present 'security' measures are actually making people less safe. So far, we have held a residential seminar-style event, in which entrepreneurs, artists academics and activists and several weel-kent dreamers of the New Scotland participated, considering food security, basic income, non-adversarial parliamentary action, violence reduction and various aspects of formal and informal education and more. We have also collected some responses to our ideas and held stalls at various events in order to talk to people.

We are starting the new decade by supporting a cross party debate initiated by Emma Harper MSP (a participant at the Secure Scotland Seminar) on the United Nations Resolution that addresses Women, Peace and Security. Emma's motion and the debate on Wednesday 8th January after 5.00pm can explore how Scotland might approach a National Action plan on this resolution, which calls on UN Member states to act on the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women.

It recognizes the under-valued and under-utilised contributions women make to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution, and peace-building. Although Scotland is not a member of the UN, the Parliament and the Government in Scotland are not necessarily represented well by the UK administration, and we could reflect and build on the good work done by the Scottish Parliament in improving legislation to uphold women's human rights.

Secure Scotland has already reached out successfully to a wide range of Scottish organisations and

individuals. We agreed that it was important not to distract people already taking action, or to create a 'new campaign', so the project aims to develop a like-minded network to help each other make one of the changes that are needed. We defined this as:

- To shift prevailing discussions on 'Security' away from a toxic militarism and patriarchal dominance that lead to environmental degradation, and instead to address the real threats experienced here in Scotland – naming them and providing impetus for change.
- To celebrate and highlight existing initiatives and situations that constitute what really does give Scotland security.

We are keen to hear from other people and organisations that share our desire for change.

The present Core group for the project comprises: Janet Fenton, David Mackenzie, Gari Donn, Malcolm Spaven, Luke Padfield, Caroline Uchimi, Tony Fitzpatrick, Murray Dickie and Jessica Wheeler. Our new website will soon go live to augment our Twitter account @SecureScotland and the hello@SecureScotland.scot email address.