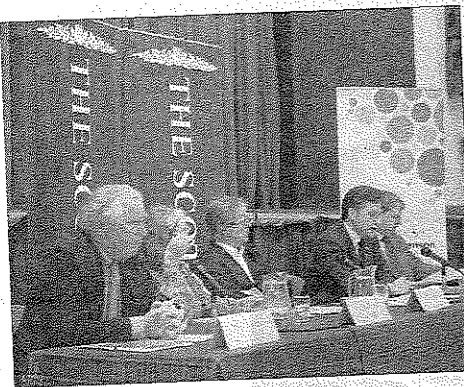


Debate & Opinion



THE weapons were words and the combatants surprisingly cordial. The battlefield for *The Scotsman* debate on defence was the Victoria Halls in Helensburgh, close to the Faslane naval base and site of Britain's nuclear deterrent, Trident. The CND banners which greeted guests were an indication of the evening's tone, but the panel grappled with more than the ethics of weapons of mass destruction. The Ministry of Defence employs about 20,000 people in Scotland (13,500 service and 6,400 civilian) and Faslane contributes £250 million to the Scottish economy - so what shape would an independent Scotland's armed forces take? Its contribution to the economy and impact on the world were also dissected.

The panel consisted of Jim Panton, a former army major and helicopter pilot and now chief executive of Poppyscotland; Angus Robertson, MP for Moray and the SNP defence spokesman; Helen Steven, ex-director of the Scottish Centre for Nonviolence and active participant in Faslane 365; and Clive Fairweather, former Deputy Commander of the SAS. The chairman was Ian Stewart, deputy editor of *The Scotsman*.



Defence of the nation has

WOULD AN INDEPENDENT SCOTLAND HAVE CONTROL OVER ITS OWN DEFENCE POLICY?

Angus Robertson (AR): "Almost every country in the world decides its own defence policy. Scotland does not. We subcontract it to Westminster. Often we can live with that, but there are occasions such as Iraq when we cannot. I opposed it, the majority of the public in Scotland opposed it and yet our servicemen were sent to fight and die. I don't see if Scotland had powers over defence there would be impediments to making decisions on two key areas: deciding whether to send our young men to war and whether you want weapons of mass destruction. Those are the reasons I want Scotland to be able to exercise the normal powers over defence; that is why we are seeing a growing number of people saying that's an appropriate way for us to go."

Clive Fairweather (CF): "As an independent country we would have a say in our own defence. But it's a kind of yes, as we would still be co-opting up to England and all the forces they have got. Trident would disappear and we'd be left with a very small navy. We'd end up with a very small air force, and an army of three battalions. I understand the SNP don't wish to belong to Nato, so they would be part of a European defence force or whatever. I prefer the position we are in now, but I get the distinct feeling in 20-25 years we could get a distinct say in our own defence policy. We then ask what would the threats be to an independent Scotland - that's what determines the budget."

Jim Panton (JP): "The support the veteran community in Scotland is beginning to see from an SNP-led Scottish Government is, without doubt, extremely positive. The initiatives introduced, effort put towards consulting with experts from all ex-service organisations is at a level that many of us have not seen for many years. So to go beyond where we are now, into independence, etc, we would be pleased to see that relationship with the Scottish Government strengthened, because it is going to be a long-term effort and issue. From a personal ex-army officer's point of view I agree with Clive - the idea of a credible, defence platform in an independent Scotland is a challenging one. Scotland is critical to our nuclear deterrent. The entire nuclear deterrent capability is based in Scotland and couldn't be based easily anywhere else in the UK."

THE SCOTSMAN DEBATES



Stephen McGinty

Helen Steven (HS): "If we had independence we could and would control our own defence policy. I'd like to see how it would be different - we aren't talking about dumping Trident in England. Those of us opposed to nuclear weapons don't want them anywhere. We have always been more linked to Europe and Scandinavia than the US. If not part of Nato we would be part of the UN with an important role to play in UN peace-keeping, which would call for a totally different armed forces structure."

WHAT DOES THE PANEL THINK OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BRITISH/SCOTTISH ECONOMIES AND INCREDIBLE COST OF WARS IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN? (asked by Ronald Harrison, ex-diplomat)

HS: "Money should not be spent on illegal foreign adventures. I'd like to see it spent equipping Scottish regiments properly, having good after-care for returning combat soldiers and then, hopefully, lots of surplus money being put into health and education, schools and housing. I'd also like a Scottish college of peace-keeping, where people learn skills of non-violence and negotiation to contribute to the UN."

JP: "Current conflicts can be summed up in just one word: expensive. The contingency reserve has been tapped. £3 billion for the current conflict - the equivalent of the annual defence budget. I don't know how deep the war chest is and how long it can be tapped. It's also pretty expensive in terms of long-term after-effects on individuals. [That] is going to cost this nation a lot whether it comes out of the public purse or through support from other organisations. We [will] be paying the price for a very long time to come."

AR: "Would we play the same role as the UK in the world? In the case of Iraq, no - thank goodness! In a democracy, you should choose how you wish to engage with the outside world. I wish for Scotland to have a genuinely ethical foreign policy, aimed at being a force for good. For a country of five million people, the role it is likely to play in the world will be very specialised, yet for those of you who sniff at that, you sniff at the role of the Norwegians and what they have done in the Middle East and Sri Lanka. They have found a niche where they are a force for good."

IS AFGHAN WAR UNWINNABLE?
CF: "I don't think so - I don't know if we are going to win it, but I don't think it's un-winnable. It requires more forces, not significantly more, just a bit more to create security that might allow civil development to blossom."

IS TRIDENT A MEANS OF REDUCING TERROR, PROJECTING TERROR ACROSS THE GLOBE? (Jim Taggart, treasurer of Scottish CND)
CF: "Do we have the ability to project terror? Yes. On the other hand, all the time I was in the army there was a threat from the Soviet Union who had quite a considerable nuclear force and so Mutually Assured Destruction kept the peace for quite a long time. When the Soviet Union collapsed, you think well do we really need it? I began to think 'no', then looked at Iran as it developed a nuclear capability; it can only reach Israel now, but ten-15 years on, we could be in the frame."

HS: "Trident is a terrifying and terrible weapon. But we don't only project

terror around the world, because we have Trident, we attract terror because it makes our country, Helensburgh and Faslane a target. A final thought: wouldn't it be nice if the membership of the Security Council of the UN was barred to anyone who possessed nuclear weapons?"

JP: "The value of life in the world today is at an all-time high. Consider the 60-70,000 people killed on the first day of The Somme compared to a person killed in Iraq or Afghanistan now and the emphasis put on it. The value of life has reached a point where I just can't see how any sane person who has the red button or nuclear codes would ever be in a position where they would use them."

AR: "I've been inside a Trident sub and in the officers' mess, was shown a short film [about] the submarine and its capabilities. It showed what happened when the codes were used, the missiles take off and go into near earth orbit, different war heads deploy and - you know what? - the film ended. It did not show the destruction that would be wreaked in our name."

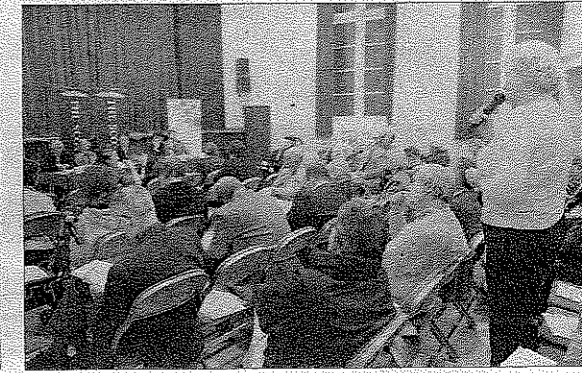
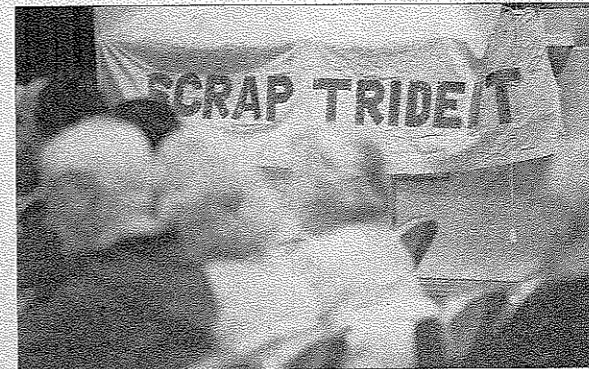
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"Bank of Scotland is not just a brand like Crawfords biscuits or Baxter's soup. It is a vital part of Scotland's story"

Bill Jamieson, Page 28



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panellists battling it out

list of social, educational and health projects that we would be supporting and there will be people who would prefer the money used for tax cuts. I personally would like a substantial amount of that money to go towards funding conventional defence. If we are going to send people into armed conflict they should all have body armour, weapons that work - and if they are wounded they should have dedicated health facilities, and support when they come out of the services with health and housing. It should be a given and at the moment it is not."

HS: "One threat to our security that we have not spoken about is climate change, probably the biggest threat of all. It may not be Trident that does for us, but rising sea levels. We should put some of that money into renewable energy resources and research."

AR: "The capability of the British Royal Navy at Faslane is smaller than that of the Norwegian, Danish and Swedish navies. There is virtually no conventional navy based in Scotland. If we take our neighbouring countries as good templates and decide we want armed forces to play a role in the UN supporting European projects, we will actually have more service personnel in Scotland than is currently the case."

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IF TRIDENT GOES AWAY, DO YOU THINK THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE WOULD KEEP THE ASTUTE CLASS HERE? WHERE WOULD THAT LEAVE FASLANE?

AR: "If we reconfigured in a way similar to neighbouring countries we'd have more vessels at Faslane than [now]. If we go down the independent route, and want to have a configuration similar to our neighbouring countries, big enough to support UN missions and expeditionary peace supporting efforts, we'd have a base of a similar size to Faslane at of now. Norway's main naval base has a complement of 3,600 and the current service complement at Faslane is 3,000... There is no reason for any jobs to be lost."

CAROLYN STAIT, former base commander at Faslane: "If Trident left Faslane, I don't believe the current UK government would keep Faslane operating. The Astute class submarines would be based at Devonport (in Devon) as the cost of maintaining nuclear operations is expensive and if the UK can put all its nuclear eggs in one basket, I'm certain it would choose to do so. Before we get to the stage of an independent Scotland with its own government determining what conventional forces would go into the naval base, the naval base, in its current

form, would cease to function. It employs nearly 6,500 and hundreds of contractors. An independent survey in 2003 showed £185 million a year generated in the local economy, and across Scotland it was £250 million."

AR: "If the motivating factor against the decision to replace Trident or not is down to the financial advantages and spending of service personnel in neighbouring towns, that is not convincing enough."

DOWN THE LINE, WILL THE SNP RENEGOTIATE THE TERMS FOR RETAINING TRIDENT? WHEN I SEE NOW ALEX SALMOND DEALT WITH TRUMP IN ABERDEEN, I AM CONCERNED (long-standing CND member Frances Mascarenhas)
AR: "I am absolutely certain when we are in the position to make decisions about defence and foreign policy one of the first things we will do is ensure that the Trident weapons system will leave Scotland."

HS: "I hope in 100 years, we will look back and consider Trident as unacceptable as the slave trade."

CF: "In 25 years time, Trident will be gone and Trump will be here. I don't agree with either position."

WHAT NEXT?

THE ScotsmanDebates have been organised to promote public discussion of the big issues facing Scotland in 2008. There are three more debates scheduled:
RENEWABLE ENERGY: 14 October, 7pm-8.30pm, Town Hall, Jedburgh. Chaired by Lesley Riddoch, panellists include Patrick Harvie, Green MSP
MEDIA: 24 October, 7pm, Mitchell Library, Glasgow
PROGRESS BEYOND POLITICS: 4 December, 7pm, Albert Hall, Stirling
 To reserve tickets, e-mail scotsmandebates@scotsman.com, or write to David Lee, *The Scotsman*, 108 Holyrood Road, Edinburgh, EH8 8AS.
 Social research consultancy Blake Stevenson is working with *The Scotsman* to organise the debate series. They agree the events provide an important opportunity to give local communities a chance to participate in key debates about Scotland's future.

Blake Stevenson
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