



Swindon Stop the War Coalition

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Dear Anne Snelgrove

I am writing to you both as a voter in South Swindon and as secretary of Swindon Stop the war Coalition.

It is the policy of Swindon Stop the War Coalition to campaign against the election of MPs who support the war and the continued military occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. We therefore intend to make a great deal of publicity over the issue during the next general election, urging people to vote for anti-war candidates. We will of course not be endorsing, either explicitly or implicitly any other party or candidate.

On the other hand, we do not wish to jeopardize our good relationship with the Labour Party. Particularly as Swindon Stop the War Coalition includes a number of activists who are also involved in other campaigns, and who therefore wish to preserve a fraternal working atmosphere. Earlier this year we organised a very successful public meeting with Alan Simpson MP, the Chair of Labour Against the War to speak in Swindon, which we hope demonstrated that the Coalition is not opposed to the Labour party as such, just against the specific policies related to the war.

Can you confirm whether you would have voted for the war last year had you been an MP at the time? Can you also confirm whether the events since the invasion in march 2003 have led you to change your mind about the wisdom of the war?

Please bear in mind that no WMD have been found, there is an increasingly virulent popular insurrection in Iraq, and the road map for peace in Palestine has been wrecked by Israeli intransigence. A recent report published in the Lancet estimates that 100000 Iraqi civilians have been killed consequent to the invasion. In Afghanistan the aid that was promised for reconstruction of the country has not been given, and much of the country has reverted to warlordism. The United Nations recently reported that opium production has reached record levels in Afghanistan this year, most of the heroin on British streets comes from Afghanistan.

Opinions differ within the anti-war movement about whether or not to call for an immediate withdrawal of British and American forces from Iraq. The Stop the War Coalition's view is that there can be no peace until all foreign forces withdraw, and that the conduct of military operations by the occupying forces is in fact making the situation worse. We therefore would like the British government to follow the example of the Spanish in effecting an immediate withdrawal of troops. We would be very interested in hearing you own personal views on how Iraq can be restored to peace and stability.

You can of course respond in writing, but if you prefer you are more than welcome attend one of our open meetings to discuss these matters. Our next meeting is on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> December and the next one after that is on 4<sup>th</sup> January. You are welcome to either but I personally am not going to be at the December meeting and I would like to meet you, so if you would like to come then January would be better.

Our meetings are at 7:30 pm at the Friends Meeting House in Eastcott Hill (note limited car parking, better to park outside Swindon College and walk round the corner)

Yours fraternally

Andy Newman

Secretary – Swindon Stop the war Coalition