

You should visit Faslane

Shadow poet laureate **Adrian Mitchell** was one of nine peaceful protestors arrested at the Faslane bockade on one day last December. In an open address to *Red Pepper* readers he advocates a visit to Faslane and speaks of his hopes to return



To my friends and fellow artists

You should visit Faslane. You'll be in great company. You'll meet veterans of Greenham Common and the early Aldermaston marches, all of them keeping on – still laughing and singing and organising against the mass murder of the innocents. You'll meet the new generation of protestors – compassionate and determined. Young or old, they are practical visionaries and great company.

You should visit Faslane. It's quite a sight to see, especially in sunlight. Stand on the road and face the perimeter of the base that nurses our killer submarines. Sparkling, spiralling, vicious razor wire, hedge after hedge of malicious steel. Beyond the steel, a maze of buildings. Beyond the buildings an enormous shoebox, huge, a larger than life, bleak block, which they call the shiplifting shed. A gormenghastly surgery where they operate on nuclear subs.

So far, so nightmarish. But raise your gaze above the base and you will see the gently sloping green, brown and blue hills, gracefully descending to the waters of the loch. And, above them, a vast, light-blue Scottish sky. Beyond the monster factory, the angelic beauty of Scotland.

This is a double vision – Blake saw such things. In one poem he saw London as a dirty murder shop. But in another he saw the streets of Marylebone and Kentish Town 'builted over with pillars of gold/And there Jerusalem's pillars stood'.

Blake was talking about the New Jerusalem, that great city of mutual friendship and love. He didn't see it as a Utopia for the far-off future. He spent his life building the New Jerusalem, with his wife and his friends, with his drawings and paintings and poems and songs and illuminated books.

You should visit Faslane. The demonstrators who are there all the year round are today's builders of the New Jerusalem. Join them for as long as you can. Help them if you can. You may well feel, as I did, that you want to join them in their blockade of the nuclear base by sitting down with other demonstrators to block the base. I hope you do.

Look, I'm 74, and not very brave. But I did the nonviolence workshop the night before, and when it came to lying down on the road I was happily going limp, smiling widely and singing 'We Shall Overcome'. I was arrested and charged along with nine others for breach of the peace. I spent 23 hours in the Dumbarton local nick – a room to myself with toilet, paper and pencil, and room service (tea, meals, water and blankets). Next morning I was sent back to England with a printed warning that I shouldn't do it again. I hope I will.

The police who carried us away and the ones in the Dumbarton nick were courteous and gentle throughout. One of them even advised me to turn vegetarian to avoid the worst meals, and, when I finished the book I'd brought, handed me another – a hefty autobiography by somebody called Greg Dyke.

So do take enough of a paperback book to last 24 hours. But since you're interested in changing the world, you should certainly visit Faslane.