

## **War and Peace: Opposition to Trident and Support for Clare Short's PMB**

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This short briefing paper considers two issues relating to war and peace – the ongoing Labour opposition to the replacement of Trident and the support given to Clare Short's (unsuccessful) Armed Forces (Parliamentary Approval for Participation in Armed Conflict) Bill. Neither could be classified as an issue of Grade A concern for the Government whips, but the latter was something they attempted to derail, and the former clearly has the potential to cause some discontent on the Labour benches.

### **Trident**

Since the General Election, a total of 56 Labour MPs have expressed doubts about the Government's plans to replace the fleet of Trident nuclear submarines through three separate anti-Trident EDMs.

- Forty-six Labour backbenchers supported EDM 129 in the name of Alan Simpson which called on the Government to abandon any plans 'to build a successor to the existing Trident nuclear missile system', believing such a measure to be incompatible with the UK's 'unequivocal undertaking' at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in May 2005 'to accomplish the elimination of nuclear arsenals'.
- Thirty-one Labour MPs supported EDM 649 in the name of Jeremy Corbyn, which called for 'the fullest possible public debate on any replacement for the Trident nuclear submarine system', expressed concerns at the cost of such a system ('up to £15 billion') and called upon the Government 'not to conclude any agreements with the United States, or to engage in preparations to build a new generation of nuclear weapons, until after this debate and a clear decision made in Parliament'.
- Twenty-two Labour backbenchers supported EDM 1113 in the name of David Chaytor welcoming the Government's decision to launch a public debate on the future of the United Kingdom's nuclear weapons, but calling on it to 'publish a consultation paper setting out the issues' including 'all nuclear and non-nuclear options' as the basis for that public debate.

Of these 56, 37 (two thirds) have already voted against the Government in this Parliament (Table 1). Eight of the signatories belong to the 2005 intake of MPs: Gordon Banks, Katy Clark, Mary Creagh, Jim Devine, Nia Griffith, Jim McGovern, Linda Riordan and Peter Soulsby. Of these, three – Clark, Riordan and Soulsby – have already voted against the Government. Of the remaining 14 MPs, 12 voted against the Government in the last Parliament, but have yet to do so since May 2005. David Borrow and Laura Moffat are the only two Labour MPs to have signed at least one of the anti-Trident EDMs, and who remained loyal to the Government in this and the last Parliament.

The Government faces a tough task in winning over Labour rebels. Not only do most of the EDM signatories have a rebellious record, but also the decision on whether or not to replace Trident is one of those issues where the whips will have

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very little room for bargaining, since it is essentially an either/or decision. The ranks of the rebels may also be swelled by the fact that the Conservatives will probably be supporting the Government in any future division lobbies.

However, the problem for the rebels will be how to engineer a parliamentary vote on Trident. Defence procurement does not require primary legislation. The rebels may have to divide the House at the end of an adjournment debate on the issue and/or vote against the annual defence estimates when the funding for Trident's replacement kicks in. However embarrassing a rebellion may be, therefore, it will not alter the policy.

### **The Short Bill**

Clare Short's recent Private Members' Bill calling for Parliamentary Approval for Participation in Armed Conflict also reflects an increasing demand among Labour backbenchers that Parliament should determine matters of war and peace.

On 21 October 2005, 48 Labour MPs supported a technical motion ('That the Question be now put'), after the Government whips had attempted to filibuster to stop the Second Reading debate from taking place. They were joined in the aye lobby by 33 Liberal Democrats, five Conservatives (Tony Baldry, Roger Gale, Philip Hollobone, Richard Ottaway and John Penrose), three Plaid Cymru, two SNP MPs, and two independents, Peter Law and Richard Taylor. Thirteen Labour MPs opposed the Bill, together with the Conservative ex-Minister Eric Forth, who likes to oppose most PMBs, almost regardless of their subject matter.

Of the 48 Labour supporters of the Bill (see Table 2), 37 (or just over three-quarters) voted against at least one aspect of the Government's voting on Iraq, along with Sandra Osborne who abstained on the two key votes on 18 March 2003 before resigning from the Government. Of the remaining ten MPs, four were from the new intake – Katy Clark, Nia Griffith, Sadiq Khan and Sir Peter Soulsby. The remaining six MPs were loyal on Iraq, but voted in favour of Short's Bill: Nick Brown, the former Chief Whip and leading ally of Gordon Brown; perhaps surprisingly Blairite Stephen Byers, Andrew Love, a PPS at the time of Iraq, but now an increasingly rebellious backbencher, Michael Meacher, then a Government minister, but now a rebellious former minister; George Mudie, who was a strong supporter of the war in Iraq and involved in unofficial whipping at the time; and Andrew Smith, another leading Brownite, who was Secretary of State for Pensions at the time of Iraq.

## 1. Declared Labour Opponents to Trident

<i>Name of MP</i>	<i>EDM 129</i>	<i>EDM 649</i>	<i>EDM 1113</i>	<i>Status</i>
Abbott, Diane	X	X		**
Austin, John	X			**
Banks, Gordon	X	X		New
Borrow, David			X	
Caton, Martin	X	X	X	**
Chaytor, David	X	X	X	*
Clapham, Michael	X			**
Clark, Katy	X	X		New**
Cohen, Harry	X	X	X	**
Corbyn, Jeremy	X	X	X	**
Cousins, Jim			X	**
Creagh, Mary		X		New
Cryer, Ann	X	X		**
Dean, Janet	X	X		*
Devine, Jim	X			New
Dismore, Andrew			X	*
Dobbin, Jim	X			*
Drew, David	X	X	X	**
Efford, Clive		X		*
Etherington, Bill	X	X		*
Fisher, Mark	X		X	**
Flynn, Paul	X		X	**
Gerrard, Neil	X	X		**
Gibson, Ian	X	X	X	**
Godsiff, Roger	X			**
Griffith, Nia		X		New
Hamilton, David	X			**
Hamilton, Fabian	X			*
Hopkins, Kelvin	X	X		**
Jackson, Glenda	X		X	**
Jones, Lynne	X	X	X	**
Lepper, David	X	X	X	*
Lloyd, Tony	X			**
Marris, Rob			X	*
Marshall-Andrews, Bob	X			**
McDonnell, John	X	X	X	**
McGovern, Jim		X		New
Mitchell, Austin	X	X		**
Moffat, Laura	X			
Mullin, Chris	X			**
Owen, Albert	X	X		**
Prentice, Gordon			X	**
Riordan, Linda	X	X	X	New**
Ruddock, Joan	X		X	**
Sarwar, Mohammad		X		*
Short, Clare	X			**
Simpson, Alan	X	X		**
Skinner, Dennis	X	X		**
Smith, Geraldine	X			**

Soulsby, Peter	X			New**
Stringer, Graham	X		X	*
Taylor, David	X	X		**
Vis, Rudi	X	X	X	**
Walley, Joan	X	X		*
Wareing, Robert	X	X	X	**
Wood, Mike	X			**

*Note:* X indicates the MP has signed the EDM; \* indicates a rebellion against the Government 2001-2005 but not since May 2005; \*\* indicates a rebellions against the Government since May 2005; New indicates MPs elected for the first time in 2005.

## 2. Labour MPs who supported the Short Bill

<i>Name of MP</i>	<i>Iraq rebel?</i>
Austin, John	X
Berry, Roger	X
Brown, Nicholas	
Burden, Richard	X
Byers, Stephen	
Caton, Martin	X
Challen, Colin	X
Clark, Katy	New
Connarty, Michael	X
Corbyn, Jeremy	X
Cousins, Jim	X
Davidson, Ian	X
Dobson, Frank	X
Drew, David	X
Efford, Clive	X
Flynn, Paul	X
Gerrard, Neil	X
Griffith, Nia	New
Grogan, John	X
Havard, Dai	X
Hoey, Kate	X
Hopkins, Kelvin	X
Iddon, Dr Brian	X
Jackson, Glenda	X
Khan, Sadiq	New
Lazarowicz, Mark	X
Lepper, David	X
Lloyd, Tony	X
Love, Andrew	
Marshall-Andrews, Bob	X
McCaffery, Christine	X
McDonnell, John	X
Meacher, Michael	

Mudie, George	
Osborne, Sandra	(X)
Owen, Albert	X
Prentice, Gordon	X
Purchase, Ken	X
Ruddock, Joan	X
Short, Clare	X
Skinner, Dennis	X
Smith, Andrew	
Soulsby, Sir Peter	New
Strang, Dr Gavin	X
Stringer, Graham	X
Trickett, Jon	X
Turner, Dr Desmond	X
Vis, Dr Rudi	X

*Note:* X indicates an MP who voted against the Iraq war; (X) indicates an abstention; New indicates MPs elected for the first time in 2005.