**What is the problem with Peace?**

“War appears to be as old as mankind but peace is a modern invention” claimed Sir Henry Maine, the 19th century British jurist and historian. Was he correct? Sir Michael Howard, the late modern historian, writing in his book *The Invention of Peace: the Reflections on War and International Order,* believes he was. But Maine wrote those words one hundred and fifty years ago so why is it still as difficult to study the subject of Peace as it is to catch hold of a bar of soap in the bath? Just what is the problem with Peace?

Like any topic, one would expect help in a library or even a bookshop. Firstly, let’s check the libraries. Scanning the web seeking libraries that show interest in the subject of Peace, one can easily find about eighty libraries which claim to be ‘peace libraries’. Yet most of these are either the collected papers of a former statesman or diplomat (even a tyrant) or recommended student reading lists compiled by university professors. The Carnegie Peace Library at the Hague is a wonderful monument to dogged perseverance by its successive librarians, but it essentially concentrates on law. The Nobel Libraryin Oslo warns others not to follow its classification system and fails to lend the subject of peace any sense of adventure, discovery or even hope for the future. Worse, the Nobel Peace Center’s staffing levels, opening hours, events and educational programmes have been cut. The British Library refuses to give guidance, referring researchers to the Library of Congress in Washington. But check titles there using the keyword PEACE and you will find "*The West of Wild Bill Hickok*" as well as Chicago-style gun-slinging novels. While on that subject, what was the Peacemaker that ‘won the West’? Yes, the Colt Single Action Army Revolver. So, what is the problem with Peace?

Next, bookshops? Ask for the war section and you will be directed to shelves cataloguing all types of war: historical, technical, aerial, regional and even fictional. But peace? Those who enquire will be met with confusion, even panic! Publishers do not commission books on peace as bookshops and libraries don’t know how to catalogue them. That’s why those university professors have to build up their own reading lists and end up having internet search engines call them peace libraries. Face it, if there is a book to be written, it should be titled *Peace: How to damn well find it!*

In the real world, where the start and end of great war and battles are remembered, how does peace rate? Westminster United Nations Association, hosts of the Peace and Security element in this UN75 conference, initiated an annual conference in London to mark the International Day of UN Peacekeepers, launched in 2002. The day itself, 29 May, records the death of the first UN peacekeeper in 1948. In 2019, our annual wreath-laying ceremony at the Cenotaph attracted ambassadors from one hundred and ten countries, the largest such event marking this anniversary worldwide. Alas, that boast has little value as our event, continued over these past sixteen years, is the only one of its kind. Not one UN Member State marks the loss of its UN peacekeepers. Say it louder, **what is the problem with Peace?**

How does the UN system tackle this challenge? In the 90s’, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) set out to point the way, preparing the world to promote in 2000 the ***International Year for the Culture of Peace.*** However, even though the Preamble to UNESCO’s constitution reads “*since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed*”, the introduction of the International Year witnessed pushback by UNESCO’s member states, seeking to discourage further work in this field. Shout it again: **Just what is the problem with Peace?**

Worldwide, UNESCO’s initiative has been taken up, by NGOs, by peace activists and all those who ask the question “What is the problem with Peace?” The *Culture of Peace Programme* (CPP) had been developed through earlier initiatives, the most noticeable being the *Seville Statement on Violence* (1989) written by scientists and endorsed by many organisations and disseminated widely. The Seville Statement claims that “***peace is possible because war is not a biological necessity***”. It challenged widely held nostrums on human nature and has itself been challenged. Fortunately, that particular debate did not affect the development of the CPP. Some of those responsible for the *Seville Statement* worked together on the CPP, launched in 2000, the year so designated by the UN General Assembly. The CPP identifies these eight discrete ‘action areas’ as the building blocks for Peace. We will also.

1] Fostering a culture of peace through education

2] Promoting sustainable economic and social development

3] Promoting respect for human rights

4] Ensuring equality between women and men

5] Fostering democratic participation

6] Advancing understanding, tolerance and solidarity

7] Supporting participatory communication and the free flow of information and knowledge

8] Promoting international peace and security