

WOMEN
for
LIFE
on
EARTH

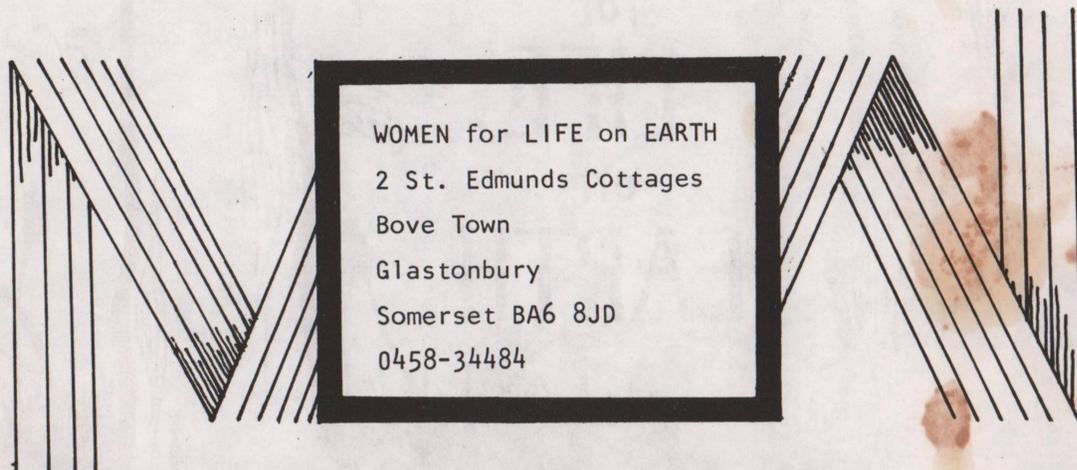
POOLING OUR RESOURCES

AUTUMN * 82

HELLO...this is a special issue as it is the first issue put together by both the Women and Life on Earth and Women for Life on Earth networks. Stories about the histories of our two networks are on pages 12 & 13.

We realised we were duplicating efforts and that it would make life a lot easier and give us greater solidarity if we worked together -- pooling our energy and resources.

We follow no particular creed nor adhere to any one ideology. Rather we are a network, supporting and linking together women who encompass many different viewpoints and perspectives. What we do have in common is a concern for life on earth and a desire to act together on our shared visions.

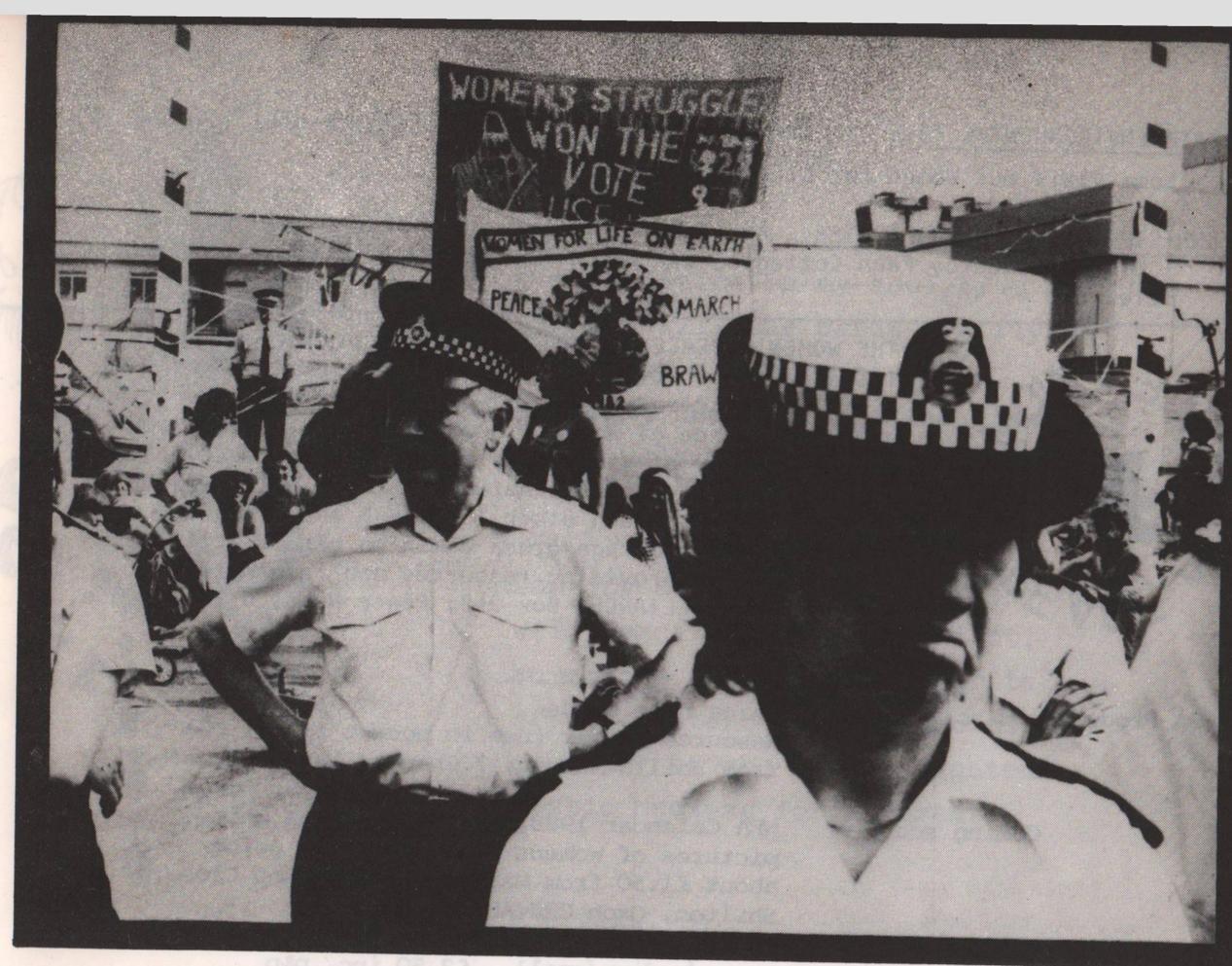


WOMEN for LIFE on EARTH
2 St. Edmunds Cottages
Bove Town
Glastonbury
Somerset BA6 8JD
0458-34484

If you would like to support the network and receive the newsletter, you have a choice of the following:

- Annual membership: £10 for groups and organisations
- £5 for individuals
- £2.50 unwaged and pensioners

OR pledge to sell five copies of each issue of the newsletter instead of paying a sub.



WOMEN FOR LIFE ON EARTH MARCH TO BRAWDY, SUMMER '82

COMING SOON!... BRAWDY -- THE MOVIE

The film of the Women for Life on Earth March to Brawdy has provisionally been given £1000 by the Welsh Arts Council to complete, subject to approval of our script by an 'Assessor'. It will need about an additional £250 to get it finished. Please send donations to WFLOE c/o Karman Cutler, 2 Waungron Cottages, Bettys Ammanford, so that we can get this film out for showing in local groups everywhere. It's technically good quality and absolutely rivetting. (Shows policewomen with tears)

Women for Life on Earth banners on POST-CARDS. Available from Liz, 70 Morris
Finer Close, Cardiff C5

A Women for Life on Earth candidate in every constituency? Why not!? Let's have FUN! If you are interested start raising money for your deposit now (2 jumble sales should do it) and get in touch with us with your ideas, etc. Tune in next issue for more information.

BATH ENVIRONMENTAL FAIR at the Guildhall, 20th November (Saturday) 10:30-4:30.

Come visit our Women for Life on Earth stall.

CHRISTMAS PEACE FAIR, EXETER 4th December. Contact: Tricia Cassel-Gerard,
1 Higher Comberoy Faun Cottages, Westwood, Nr. Broadclyst, Exeter EX5 3DN
Tele: 088 47 483



THE WOMEN'S PEACE ALLIANCE exists to promote peace in all its aspects, enabling women to support each others' initiatives for disarmament and the prevention of war. We are an alliance of women's groups and individual women with a variety of strategies for achieving these objectives, who have created a network through which we can communicate with each other. Through the alliance, we also seek to encourage other women to become active on this issue, by providing resources and information. WOMEN'S PEACE ALLIANCE, Box 240, Peace News, 8 Elm Avenue, Nottingham.

- WPA Productions so far -
- Peace note cards
 - Resource Folder (now in pocket folder £3) from Scilla McLean, 7 Chaucer Lane, Woodstock Oxon.
- Coming soon -
- WPA Calendar 1983, with 12 black & white pictures of womens peace actions, price about £1.50 from Margot Miller, Pump Close, Shilton, Oxon OX9 4AB.
- T-shirts -
- White cotton with green outline dove
 - Large/medium/small £3.50 inc. p&p
 - Also from Pump Close, Shilton, Oxon.
 - Cheques to Margot Miller.



The PEACE NETWORK

The PEACE NETWORK aims at increasing the flow of information amongst peaceminded 'planetary citizens' GLOBALLY using communication based on personal computers. The information base will be interdisciplinary, like a Peoples Encyclopedia-- a pool of information to contribute to and draw on as desired. For further details write to: Sabine Kurjo, 197 Piccadilly, London W1

WOMEN'S ECOLOGY GROUP

WOMEN'S ECOLOGY GROUP is a small network of individuals who co-operate on matters of Ecology. General supportive membership is open to men and women, who will be put on to a contacts list for notification of events, lists of literature, etc. Write to: The Secretary, Women's Ecology Group, 18 Annandale Road, London SE10 0DA



Scottish Network for Animal Rights and Liberation -- newly formed group in the West of Scotland. Monthly meetings and actions every Saturday. Contact: Liz Begg, 5 Nith Avenue, Palsley, Strathclyde PA2 0PZ, Tel: Brediland 4986



HARMONY, a nationwide organisation of multiracial families and people with a worldwide outlook is also working for peace. The peace we are working to create in Britain is peace between people of different races, cultures and faiths. HARMONY, 42 Beech Drive, Boreham Wood, Herts. WD6 4QU. 01-953 8862

SWAPO WOMEN'S SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

The SWAPO Women's Solidarity Campaign was formed as a response to the demands of the SWAPO Women's Council. Since 1975 it has been working among women in Britain to raise understanding of the nature of Namibian Women's oppression under South African occupation and of their role in the struggle for national liberation. It also concentrates on Britain's collaboration with the illegal occupation of Namibia and Britain's implicit role in reinforcing the oppression of Namibian women. It has been appealing for contributions of sanitary towells, underwear and funds for contraceptives, believing that to pursue their struggle effectively, Namibian women need to be free from a constant pre-occupation with daily physical survival. The group has also tried to spread information about the work of the SWAPO Women's Council and the struggle in Namibia among women in Britain. The SWAPO Women's Solidarity Campaign feels that Britain's deep involvement in Namibia and in the increasingly bloody war there mean that it is now, more than ever, that support for the SWAPO Women's Council should be generated, and that women in Britain should use what opportunities there are to learn from their Namibian sisters. SWAPO Womens Solidarity Campaign, P.O.Box 194, London N5 1LW 01-359 9116/7

WOMEN AND EL SALVADOR

The Women's Committee of the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign has two purposes. One is to inform the public of the massive daily human rights violations of the Salvadorean people by the military dictatorship whose story has been terribly distorted by the international press. The second purpose of ELSSC is to support the FMLN/FDR, the principle organization through which the Salvadorian people work to achieve democracy and development to overcome poverty and inequality. It unites trade unions, professional associations, students, feminists, peasants, political parties, church, community, and small business groups. The Salvadorean women are active participants in all aspects of this struggle -- in community development, groups such as 'Mothers of the Disappeared', and the political as well as the armed struggle. As women of ELSSC, we feel a deep commitment to support our Salvadorean sisters in their fight for their people's liberation as well as their own as women. Theirs is a deadly battle. Contact: Carila, 29 Islington Park Street, London N1



SISTER SEVEN



ART-NUCLEAR POWER/NUCLEAR WAR
EXHIBITION

Mary Michaels
28 Carysfort Road
London N16 9AL



pretty
disgusting
things

theatre company

7 Wolseley Place · Manchester 20
061-445 9734

Administrator: Sarah Pritchard

"Pretty Disgusting Things" is a new Manchester-based, profit-sharing theatre company, with a particular interest in work by and for women. We require scripts, especially by unpublished writers, for our 1983 seasons. Would any women writers interested in having their work performed please contact Carol Gorman c/o PDT, 7, Wolseley Place, Manchester 20.

"WOMAN MAGIC - CELEBRATING THE GODDESS WITHIN US" TRAVELLING EXHIBITION OF IMAGES OF WOMAN SPIRITUALITY & ANCIENT WOMEN CULTURES

Monica Sjoo
3 Dwr Bach
Jordanston
Nr Fishguard
Dyfed
WALES

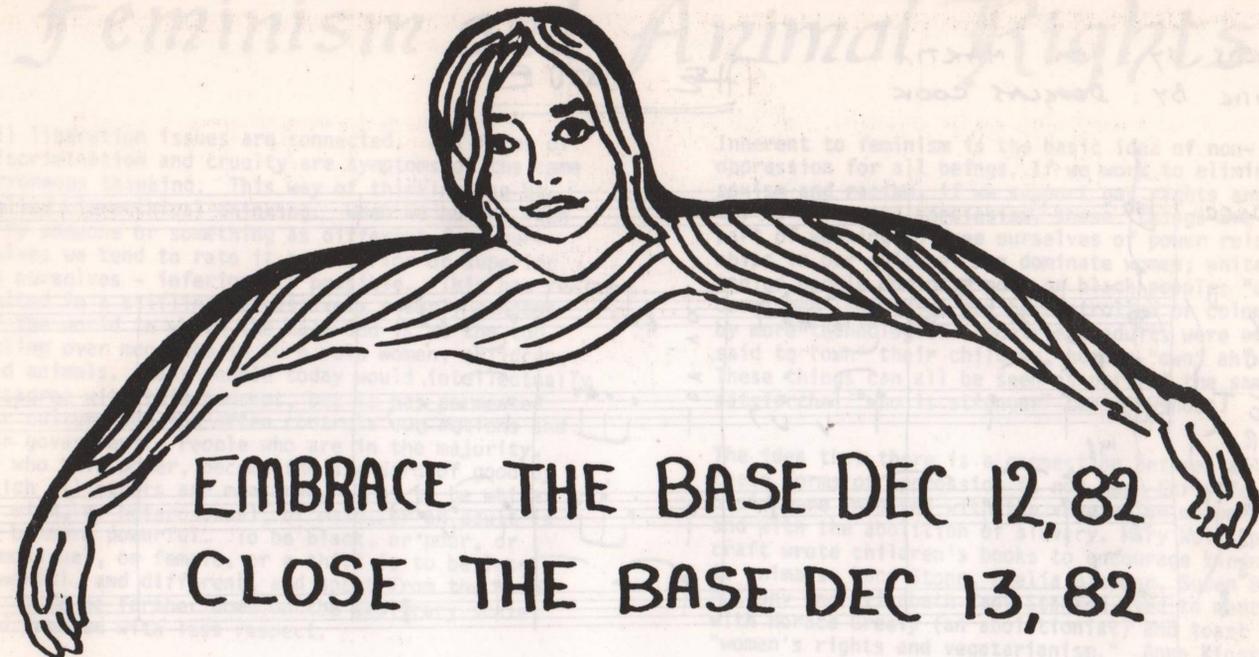
'WOMAN YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO DANCE, YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO SING.'

Ruth Noble, Dance Workshops, Autumn Programme available from: 6 Barton Terrace, Dawlish South Devon

LABYRIS



Labyris is a Feminist co-operative committed to creating an alternative economic base by and for women centred on trust and mutual support. We are doing this by providing a Feminist taxi service and a centralised referral system for women who have or require skills and services. We hope to establish centres for the transmission of these skills between women and we would like to liaise with all women involved in the furtherance of our autonomy. LABYRIS CARS/LABYRIS LISTINGS, P.O. BOX 89, London WC2 01-609 6749



EMBRACE THE BASE DEC 12, 82 CLOSE THE BASE DEC 13, 82

ON DECEMBER 12, 1979 THE DECISION WAS TAKEN AT NATO HEADQUARTERS TO SITE AMERICAN CRUISE MISSILES IN BRITAIN. IT IS IMPORTANT TO PROTEST NOW BECAUSE MUCH WORK HAS BEEN DONE AT THE BASE IN PREPARATION AND THE MISSILES ARE DUE DECEMBER 1983. CRUISE MISSILES AND THE CONTINUING ARMS RACE THREATEN OUR LIVES AND THE FUTURE OF LIFE ON EARTH. WOMEN HAVE BEEN CAMPED OUTSIDE THE MAIN GATES FOR OVER A YEAR TO VOICE OUR PROTEST AGAINST THIS THREAT.

SUNDAY DEC 12

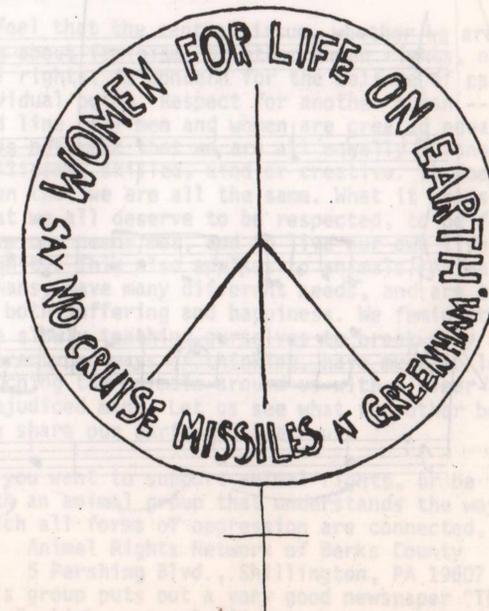
DEC 12, '82 IS AN INTERNATIONAL WOMENS DAY OF PROTEST, AT GREENHAM COMMON, NEAR NEWBURY, BERKSHIRE. WE ARE CALLING ON ALL WOMEN FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD TO COME AND HELP US SURROUND THE BASE (WHICH IS 9 MILES AROUND). WHEN YOU ARRIVE, GO TO ANY OF THE NINE GATES AROUND THE BASE, WHERE THERE WILL BE INFORMATION AND BASIC FACILITIES. PLEASE COME AS SELF-SUFFICIENT AS POSSIBLE. WARM CLOTHES, WATERPROOFS, FOOD, DRINKS, CANDLES, SONGS, BANNERS, WOOL AND SCARVES FOR LINKING WILL BE USEFUL. WE INTEND TO SURROUND THE BASE WITH POSITIVE WOMEN'S ENERGY, WE BELIEVE THAT AT THIS TIME OF CRISIS WOMEN MUST JOIN TOGETHER AND SHOW THE AUTHORITIES THAT THESE MISSILES ENDANGER OUR LIVES AND DO NOT PROTECT US.

MONDAY DEC 13

ALL WOMEN WHO WISH TO TAKE PART OR SUPPORT DIRECT ACTION ON MONDAY, COME PREPARED TO STAY OVER FROM SUNDAY. BRING TENTS, SLEEPING BAGS, SURVIVAL BAGS, VEHICLES TO SLEEP IN. HOPEFULLY SOME OTHER ACCOMMODATION WILL BE AVAILABLE. MONDAY MORNING THERE WILL BE WORKSHOPS, INFORMATION SHARING AND A CHANCE TO TALK AND PREPARE WOMEN'S DIRECT ACTION.

Postal Address: Womens Peace Camp
Main Gates
USAF Greenham Common
Nr Newbury, Berks.

Please visit or write, and ask for speakers and more information.



WORDS BY: JAN MARTIN
MUSIC BY: DOUGLAS COOK

THE DOVE

Voice

RECORDER

Harp

V/C

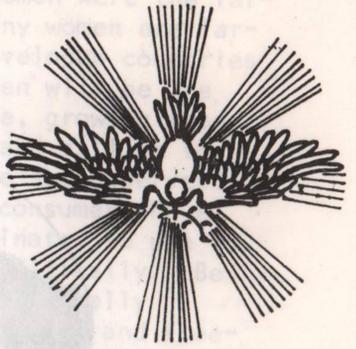
Musical score for 'The Dove'. It includes staves for Voice, Recorder (D), Recorder (F), Recorder (B), Harp, and Violin/Celli (V/C). The music is in G major and 3/4 time. The recorder parts are marked with dynamics like mp and mf.



The dove flies upwards from our wounded hands -
Plumage, freedom, soft song
The hope she carries in her breath
Will keep her children from sharp death.

Firmly from our watch beneath
The thread of hope joins gold and strong,
Floating like webs, fine and long -
Delicate indestructible strands
Dove-borne over seas and lands

Hope sings of Peace,
And still the Rainbow stands.



Jan Martin
Sept. '82

A unique Peace Exhibition, which opened Saturday 2nd October at Blythburgh Church, Suffolk, is the result of months of hard work by Jan Martin and Yvonne Innes. On entering the lofty building we were greeted with the ethereal sound of recorders and voice performing a piece of music especially composed for the occasion.

The centre-piece is a Dove Banner created by the people of East Anglia. It is made up of 12" x 12" squares, each depicting a dove -- and is spectacular. (Look out for it on future peace demonstrations.) There are many interpretations on the theme of peace ranging from the prophetic message of poetry and prose to illustrations of peaceful occupation in pottery, ceramics, weaving, photography, painting and needlecraft.

Jan's involvement in the peace movement came about when she first moved to Suffolk and discovered herself surrounded by like-minded people. They increasingly became concerned with the build-up of nuclear weapons, the Sizewell B nuclear power station, and the general world tension. One day they stopped chatting, worrying and having nightmares, and formed SANC (Suffolk Anti-Nuclear Campaign) the first active peace group in Suffolk.

Yvonne Innes
Brices Farm
Debenham
Suffolk
Debenham 860302

Yvonne, when she moved to Suffolk, found it all going on over her head (we have a lot of American cowboys in the area), and while she could ignore the issue in London, it was inconceivable in East Anglia when confronted with the sight and sound of war machines every day.

The organisers themselves write: 'This exhibition was conceived as a celebration of positive peace.

We want to show ways of living that are creative, not destructive.

The work of the craftsperson is a right use of the earth that is our heritage; the work of the artists communicates the existing peace of our world, images of a threatened culture, images of human unity.

Pictures in both paint and words can express the fears of what may come -- fears which generate a positive desire to work for peace.'

As it moves around East Anglia it is hoped that other people will present exhibits, so the whole exhibition will grow and change and not become static. If you live anywhere near where the exhibition is being held do go along and see it -- it is inspiring -- and don't forget to tell other people about it.

Ipswich Corn Exchange, Nov.22,23,24
Norwich, Cinema City, Dec.

Jan Martin
Castle House
Holton Road
Halesworth
Suffolk
Halesworth 2409



"ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE WERE TWO NETWORKS; WOMEN FOR LIFE ON EARTH, AND ...

WOMEN FOR LIFE ON EARTH began in 1981 (around June) as a decision to organise a march which would, like the Copenhagen to Paris march, be led by women. The first three women who said they'd come on it got roped in to organise it as well, and this we did in the spirit of thinking 'If it's only us going to walk to Greenham Common, we'll still go'.

About forty women walked the whole way from Cardiff to Greenham Common that summer, with an extraordinarily exhilarating kind of atmosphere building up which was maybe something to do with simple, home-made feeling of the thing, and the fact that we really were tolerant of each other and out-going to the public. In fact, we were even so soft that we allowed the last-minute inclusion of a few men who had asked to come along. The only thing we were asking from women was a commitment to doing something about stopping the arms race. We liked 'Women for Life on Earth' as a title and as a symbol, the world with the disarmament symbol sprouting into a tree -- because it was not narrow or particular, it was wide and universal and deep. We wanted to hear women's voices for once, talking about the life-and-extinction issues which we face, because we all sensed that there was a huge potential within women.

The Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp grew out of that march, and a growing, supportive network grew out of the peace camp, including other peace camps.

Linnie Baldwin, who had been on the first march, decided to organise another one to Brawdy in West Wales in the summer of '82. This time about seventy-five women and a lot of children walked 120 miles, spreading ripples wherever we went, singing the entire way and talking to thousands of people. The Brawdy March ended with a week-long blockade of the base, and with the decision to hold further meetings so we could keep in touch with each other.

This is the way we have grown -- not through trying to hammer out a statement of beliefs which we ask people to agree with. We'd still be sitting round someone's kitchen table, disagreeing, if we tried to do that. Instead we agree on what we want to do, and then do it. Each of the marches has been like a human atomic reaction, with dozens of further ideas and actions as spin-offs which in turn generate fresh responses from women who see other ordinary women breaking the habit of silence to speak out in public, or blocking the way for military trucks and bulldozers, writing letters, starting up groups and even managing to keep their sense of humour with it.

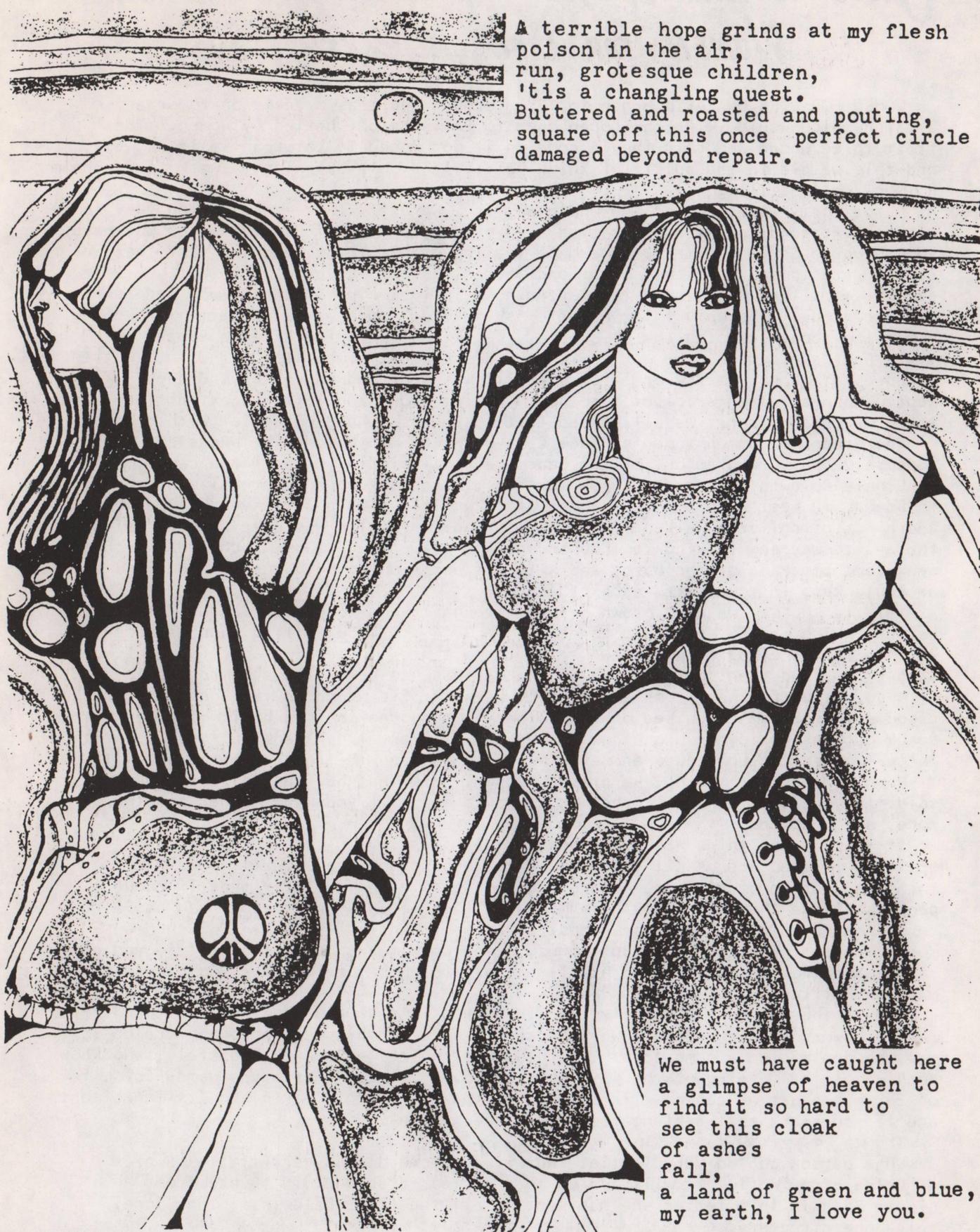
When women start moving, surprises happen. Mrs Thatcher was correct when she said: 'If you want to get a speech made, ask a man. If you want to get something done, ask a woman.'

If there's one thing WFLOE has been about, it's communication. We spread optimism in the face of all the odds -- that solutions are actually possible to the great gorgon of vicious, encircling problems in the world -- that if enough people believe they can stop the arms race, then we can, and history can begin to turn from despair towards hope. Most women are frantically busy -- which means mostly part-time activists. But to us, peace-work means doing what little you can, rather than not doing anything at all because you don't think what you can do can make any difference.

And if there's one thing we've had in common it's been a feeling that things really have gone far enough. We just can't leave the big decisions anymore up to men who don't give a damn about the future for which we care passionately, who know nothing of the meaning of the life that we love. We call ourselves Women for Life on Earth because we can hear in our hearts the cry of this earth and its inhabitants, and if you share that feeling you are joined with us.

"One person can do very little. But if everyone does a very little towards a nuclear-free world, it will add up to a nuclear-free world." Quote from Linnie Baldwin in a letter she has sent to all the other Baldwins in her local telephone directory.

-- Ann Pettitt



A terrible hope grinds at my flesh
poison in the air,
run, grotesque children,
'tis a changling quest.
Buttered and roasted and pouting,
square off this once perfect circle
damaged beyond repair.

We must have caught here
a glimpse of heaven to
find it so hard to
see this cloak
of ashes
fall,
a land of green and blue,
my earth, I love you.

*Lynette Gusman
- Canada*

WOMEN AND LIFE ON EARTH

In March 1980, over 600 women spent a weekend together in Amherst, Mass, U.S.A. to explore the connections between militarism, feminism, healing, and ecology. There followed the development of a broad network of women's groups and individuals calling themselves Women and Life on Earth, out of which grew the Women's Pentagon Actions in November 1980 and 1981.

Rumours of these developments travelled across the Atlantic to our little island, and fired the imaginations of a small group of women who began meeting in each other's sittingrooms to talk about the possibility of setting up a similar network over here.

In October 1980, the possibility became a reality. We publicised our meetings in local papers, and more and more women became involved. At first we thought we'd organise a weekend conference much like the one that happened in the U.S., but we just didn't have the funds or the womanpower necessary to organise such a mammoth event. Also, as our network was spreading out all over the British Isles (and as far as Canada, New Zealand, and Australia) we realised it was far easier in terms of transportation, accommodation, funding, etc. for women to create one-day events in their own areas.

Since then, Liz Butterworth has organised three such events in East Anglia, Caroline Wyndham organized a day event with Susan Griffin in South Devon, and there is another one planned for the Southwest in March of this coming year. Some of us, without previous experience, have also held workshops, spoken at conferences, rallies, schools, mother and toddler groups, etc, and written for magazines. The more urgent our present life-threatening situation becomes, the easier it has become for many of us to stand up and speak out. We feel this educational process to be a vital part of the network.

We also realised that another useful tool towards helping us overcome the separation imposed by physical distance and help us to link up and inspire each other was a newsletter. So we began sending out every solstice what was originally a few duplicated pages and now has grown into this 24-page newsletter, which, judging by the many contributions flowing in, could be larger still, and obviously provides a much-needed outlet. Unfortunately, as the newsletter continued to grow, we found jumble sales and donations could no longer support the cost of sending it out for free to our growing mailing list. So we have had to begin asking for a subscription to cover the cost of postage and printing and envelopes.

So what's it all about? It's about over-coming divisions which separate us from one another. It's about believing in womanenergy and empowering ourselves by linking together. It's about re-discovering our female/woman/feminist perspective and effecting change through our shared visions. It's about equating our struggle as women with the struggle against oppression wherever it occurs. It's about knowing that our long experience as nurturers and healers is now urgently required to nurture and heal our ailing Earth. And it's about women caring -- caring for each other, caring for the Earth and all life upon it.

-- Stephanie Leland

Then one day Ann met Stephanie and Stephanie met Ann,

and they said: "Surely we should become stronger if

we joined together and pooled our resources...."

And they did.

VEGETARIANISM AND THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT

Vegetarianism is a noticeable element in the feminist movement. One sees 'flat-shares' for 'vegies' and vegetarian fare at gigs, conferences, festivals and women's centres.

Sequel, in a recent questionnaire, asked feminist vegetarians about their dietary choice, and some of the answers (which are still coming in) are quoted below.

QUESTION: Could you please give your reasons for becoming vegetarian?

ANSWERS: 'I became acutely conscious of world poverty and starvation and very sickened by the gross over-consumption of the privileged in the North/West, especially the disgusting meat industry, which deprives nine people of grain protein (not to mention minerals, vitamins, fibres, etc.) to provide one person with meat protein.'

'This must be linked to a more general awareness about the shit we give ourselves, i.e. fags, food, alcohol, drugs, etc.'

'My image of prehistory is that growing vegetables and crops were women skills while hunting animals is male, superfluous and associated with male bonding.'

'Because eating dead flesh is not good for your body. Because it's more difficult to digest (per se). All the things we read confirm this. I've also changed my whole range of food, cutting out rubbish food.'

I believe that being a feminist and eating meat is a contradiction in terms. It is not just to strive for liberation of one's self and other women when at the same time, in such a fundamental activity as eating, we join forces with the patriarchy three times a day, and by eating dead animals they have slaughtered for us, support a system which violates the concept of liberty -- in this case, the liberty of animals, and denies any consideration of their interests.

As Peter Singer writes in 'Animal Liberation', 'a prerequisite for having any interests at all, is the capacity for suffering and enjoyment.' There is no doubt at all that animals suffer pain; alas, this has been proved by millions of experiments in vivisection laboratories all over the world.

The early history of feminism produced many vegetarian feminists: Margaret Fuller, Louisa May Alcott, Victoria Woodhull, Mary Shelley, the Grimke sisters, Lucy Stone, Amelia Bloomer and Susan B. Anthony. Anna Kingsford (without the use of animals) acquired her medical degree in Paris. She was unable to do so in England. Her aim was to make a scientific study of a diet that did not require the slaughtering of animals. She finally disassociated herself from the suffrage movement, saying: 'These women are deluded because they cannot see that universal peace is impossible to a carnivorous race.'

Factory farm victims are engendered by rape, castrated, debeaked, docked, forcibly fattened, forcibly made anaemic, clamped down, crated, made neurotic and forced to stand on slats or chicken-wire, and finally murdered to supply a cutlet for an over-fed human's stomach.

Women's oppression and exploitation is as nothing when compared with the daily Holocaust of abattoirs.

Black Liberation, Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation movements all have one thing in common. We have the power to organise. The liberation of animals rests with us -- with the growing animal rights movement, to which, in my opinion, every feminist should lend at least tacit support. If she is not able to give time and energies to the animal rights movement, a most important decision and act of support for her is to become, at least, a vegetarian.

Norma Benney

A Plea for Humanitarian Agriculture

The growing threat of war and the destruction of humanity is of primary concern to many women on this planet. But the time has come that we must also concern ourselves with the threat to the environment that supports us. The beauty of our countryside is a source of never-ending joy to us, especially in troubled times. Flowers have the power to heal us, physically and spiritually. Bird-song has awoken and delighted all the children that ever lived on the Earth. Women have a special role to play as guardians of the Earth and must get into the habit of thinking of the Earth as a being. We must be aware of Earth-consciousness.

'As we look with our eyes on trees and stones, so does the Earth consciously look into space and contemplate all that takes place in the stars. While people move about on the Earth in a superficial way, thinking merely of the stones against which we knock or of the many things that our senses reveal to us, the Earth thinks with its consciousness of the whole cosmos. She has indeed greater, more all-embracing thoughts than we have.'

This being is our mother, our sister, our daughter. Mother Earth. The Goddess herself. Wrapped in a mantle of soil, the precious soil that feeds us through the animal and vegetable kingdoms it sustains. It appears a never-ending source of abundance, but it is really a very delicate fabric.

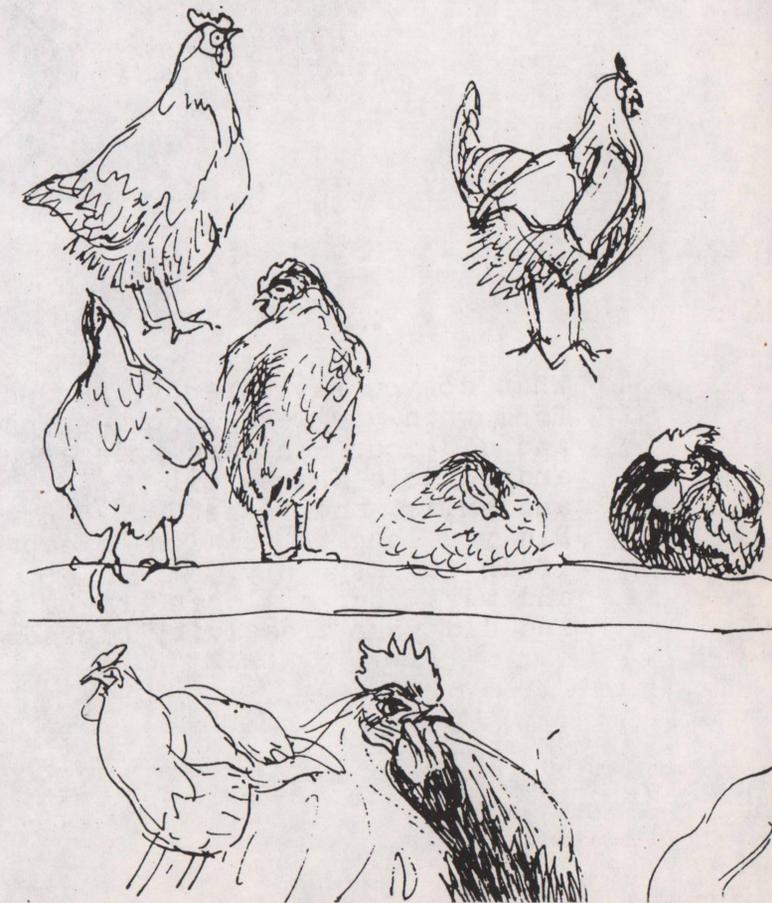
Men poison her with tons of chemical fertilisers, herbicides, and insecticides, polluting water supplies, destroying wildlife and causing unknown damage to ourselves. Is this what we want? Nitrate levels in water in East Anglia are so high that mothers are advised not to give tap water to their infants. Many women whose husbands have worked with herbicides have given birth to damaged babies. What can women and their children do about this? It must be our concern to oppose all unnatural farming methods and demand pure wholesome food and uncontaminated water.

There are not many women farmers in Britain today, yet women were the farmers of the past, many women are farmers now in under-developed countries and perhaps some women will be the farmers of the future, growing food that is fit to eat, and tilling the soil with a reverence she deserves. Meanwhile, women as consumers have the power to discriminate, to use their buying power politically. Be vigilant. Ask for organically grown fruit and vegetables and free-range eggs. And remember:

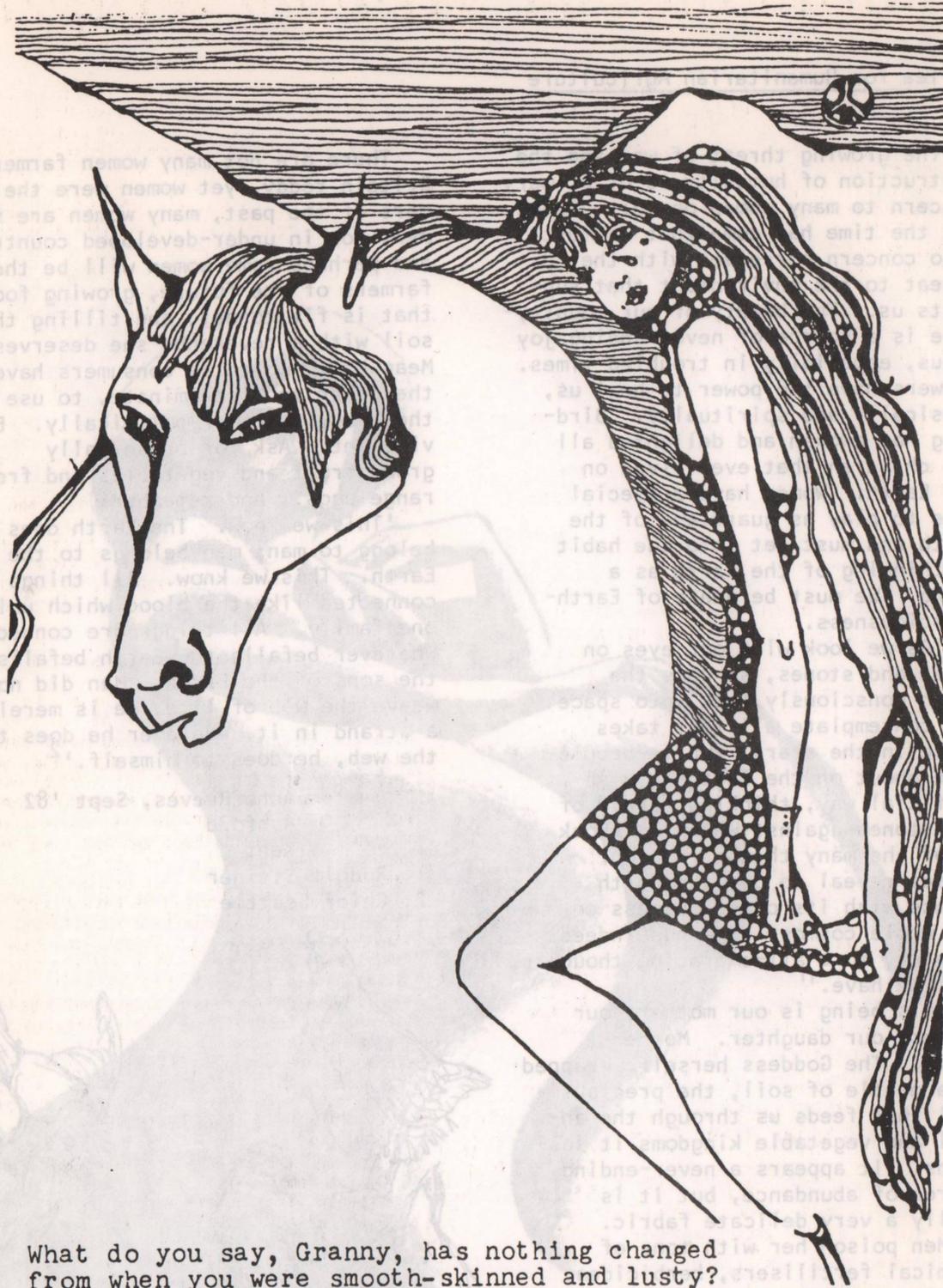
'This we know. The Earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the Earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected. Whatever befalls the Earth befalls the sons of the Earth. Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.'

-- Anne Reeves, Sept '82
Ashford
Kent

1. Rudolf Steiner
2. Chief Seattle



Feminism and Animal Rights



What do you say, Granny, has nothing changed
from when you were smooth-skinned and lusty?
And did your men care and carouse
and conjoin and enroll
and enlist and insist?
Did you long to be alone except for your lovers?
If in fantasy only,
and were your children bright around you
and did your creativity blossom and yield?

Lynette Gusman
— Canada

All liberation issues are connected. All forms of discrimination and cruelty are symptoms of the same erroneous thinking. This way of thinking can be called hierarchical thinking. When we humans identify someone or something as different from ourselves we tend to rate it as inferior or superior to ourselves - inferior, if possible. This has resulted in a stifling, excessively orderly concept of the world in which the male God is at the top, ruling over men, who in turn rule women, children, and animals. Many people today would intellectually disagree with this concept, but it has permeated our culture and too often controls our actions and our government. People who are in the majority, or who have power, become the standard of good by which all others are measured. Thus to be white, or rich, or heterosexual, or male, or an adult is to be more powerful. To be black, or poor, or homosexual, or female, or a child is to be less powerful, and different, and apart from the norm. It is to be farther down on the arbitrary scale, and treated with less respect.

Animals and nature are at the very bottom of this artificial human hierarchy. Many people believe that they exist only to serve humans; many more people behave as if this were true. The most important interests of an animal - life, health, the right to freedom from pain - are routinely sacrificed to humans' most petty interests. For example, almost all of the soaps and shampoos that we use every day have once been tested by rubbing them into rabbits' eyes, to see how much they will irritate human eyes. This is called the "dray test". Every time a shampoo advertises that it is "new, improved!" it has probably been tested in this way.

Our human prejudice, or bias, against non-human beings is called "speciesism" - discrimination on the basis of species. This is a new concept for most of us because our culture teaches us not to think in these terms. We are conditioned to use animals. Most of us start eating meat when we are too young to know what it is. Eating animals then becomes a habit and we have no chance to decide if it is right or wrong. We are also taught that it is OK to cage animals in zoos, trap them for furs, harm them in rodeos or bull fights, or hunt them. At the same time we are taught that animals are "cute and cuddly" and that we should be good to our pets. Children have attractive animal books which picture happy, free animals with their young in a sunny open field. This is a deliberate deception. Ninety percent of our meat and dairy products come from "factory farms." Here animals are often kept in stocks so that they can't walk at all. They have no windows and get light only at feeding time. Baby animals are separated from their mothers at birth.

Humans have two conflicting attitudes about animals: using them, and loving them. These two attitudes are kept carefully segregated in most people's minds. Also, we are kept uninformed about how cruelly animals are treated by those who make money through them.

As with most oppressed groups, animals are mistreated by individuals as well as by money-making institutions. They may be ignored, under-fed, and physically abused by individual "owners." They are also raped. As many animals are raped as women. According to the Kinsey study, 17% of all rural males have had sex with an animal. These animals are not consenting. When any being is treated as an object, whether animal or woman, the results are similar and are incompatible with feminist philosophy.

Inherent to feminism is the basic idea of non-oppression for all beings. If we work to eliminate sexism and racism, if we support gay rights and try to eliminate speciesism, these things are all part of working to free ourselves of power relationships in our culture: men dominate women; white people dominate poor or black people; "underdeveloped" countries may be controlled or colonized by more technological countries; adults were once said to "own" their children; humans "own" animals. These things can all be seen as part of the same patriarchal "who is stronger" consciousness.

The idea that there is a connection between all these forms of oppression is not new. Early feminists were involved with the vegetarian movement and with the abolition of slavery. Mary Wollstonecraft wrote children's books to encourage kindness to animals. Lucy Stone, Amelia Bloomer, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton used to meet with Horace Greeley (an abolitionist) and toast "women's rights and vegetarianism." Anna Kingsford was a vegetarian doctor in England who left the suffrage movement saying, "These women are deluded because they cannot see that universal peace is impossible to a carnivorous race." There are many more examples.

Certainly humans and animals are different, for every species is different from every other species. But we humans are much too quick to define ourselves as superior to all other species. We always define superior in terms of what we do best, such as intelligence or the ability to use tools. We forget that every species has its own special skills. Elephants are stronger than we are, horses are faster, trees are more durable. All green plants have the ability to make their own food, while humans are dependent upon them. As for the intelligence that we humans are so proud of, we may not be alone in this. Whales and dolphins have brains that are larger than ours and just as complicated. There is more and more evidence that they may have a complete language of their own with sound structures that are equivalent to our words and sentences. But whales and dolphins have no hands, so they cannot use tools and develop technology. Maybe it is our human thumb, and not our brain, that has allowed us to control our environment and become such a powerful species. But as feminists we know that power is not superiority. Most of the power that humans take over animals and the environment is destructive.

I feel that the central issue, whether we are talking about feminism, or other human rights, or animal rights, is concern for the welfare of each individual being. Respect for another human -- that old line "All men and women are created equal" -- does not mean that we are all equally strong, intelligent, skilled, kind or creative. It does not mean that we are all the same. What it means is that we all deserve to be respected, to be fed, to have our needs met, and to live our own lives with dignity. This also applies to animals. Animals, like humans, have many different needs, and are capable of both suffering and happiness. We feminists, who are slowly teaching ourselves to break away from stereotyped ways of thinking, have much to learn by watching the animals around us with a clear and unprejudiced mind. Let us see what the other beings who share our earth can teach us.

If you want to support animal rights, or be involved with an animal group that understands the ways in which all forms of oppression are connected, contact: Animal Rights Network of Berks County
5 Pershing Blvd., Shillington, PA 19607
This group puts out a very good newspaper "The Unicorn" which cost only \$5 a year.

Reprinted from WOMANSPiRiT,
Summer, 1981

Tracie Greth
Willingboro New Jersey

from THE WAR IN PENCADER
or SWEET WILLIAM and the
PAINTED LADY

When its a fine day
and the house is quiet
and I'm on my own

when the cat kills a bird
and the fire gets low
and the sun is blazing

on the daffodils, when
the chickens scratch
and cluck, scratch

and cluck and the house
is quiet and the sun
is blazing on the daffodils

when the pale mauve
anemones are open to the sun
and the blue green daffodils

unsheath to yellow
in the blazing sun
when the house is quiet

and the chickens scratch
and cluck and the lambs
learn to eat grass

when the blue green
daffodils unsheath to yellow
as the jets scream overhead

should I plant onions
or write a poem? Shall
I plant flowers or read

the paper? Would it
be better if I had a job
or is that part of the war

machine? Is it better
to be certain or
uncertain? If I do

something for peace,
does it help? If I do
something for peace

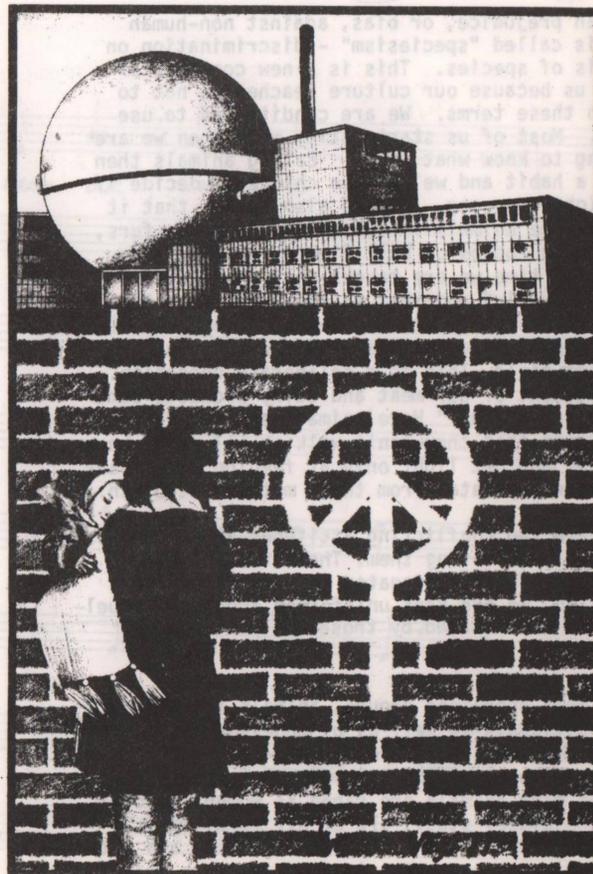
does it help peace
or does it help me?
if I do nothing
what does that mean?

tell me, its the one thing
I ever wanted to know, tell
me this one thing, and I'll
never ask again, tell me
the truth, its what I want
to know, I need to know,

tell me, how am I joined
to the war machine, tell me
can I get off?

Janet Dube

(due to be published by
Mustardseeds at £1.25 each,
£2.25 for two, from
Abernawmor, Pencader, Dyfed)



Women against the nuclear threat
Janet do Wagt, 1981
Published by Leeds Postcards

WOMEN TURN THEIR BACKS ON WAR

LETTER TO AN UNKNOWN WOMAN ON THE FALKLANDS VICTORY PARADE DAY:12th Oct.,1982

I don't know your name, in spite of having stood beside you all morning on the parade. I never discovered it. But your face stays clearly in my mind:- incomprehending, distressed. It won't go away. That's why I wanted to write to try and explain.

We'd known about the parade for weeks; known that while ostensibly it was saying 'welcome home' to the soldiers, it would also be saying 'war is glorious', and while saying 'well done boys', it was also praising Mrs Thatcher for sending them to war. We knew that while the hardware, the guns, the tanks, the marching bands would be there for all to see, there would be no coffins. No victims of burns, no drowned sailors. So we had to go ourselves - to say there's nothing glorious about war, and nothing well done about problems solved by killing people. (That's if you can call the problem of the Falklands solved in any way; I still feel sorry for those people living in what has basically become a military garrison.)

We're just a small group of women. We knew it wouldn't be easy to make our point clearly and without offence. For you have to believe that from the start we didn't want to offend anyone. It is war and those who cause it that offend us. So we thought we would do it very simply. Go as a group, and in silence turn our backs on the parade. Holding up a banner saying 'WOMEN TURN THEIR BACKS ON WAR'. That was all. We knew that people around us would be hostile, that they would shout and perhaps physically abuse us. Such occasions seem to breed a violence of their own - where no point of view but that of the mob, even one peacefully expressed, can be tolerated. Odd, isn't it? Because the Falklands victory was surely, if nothing else, victory for our 'democratic liberties' - including that of freedom of speech - something sadly missing in Argentina.

Well, we prepared ourselves. Some of us took the parts of hostile onlookers so that the others could experience what it would feel like. We organised ourselves so that some would form a cordon of peace-keepers round the actual demonstrators, giving them at least some protections. I was one of these - my job to talk and pacify if possible.

We hadn't prepared ourselves for you however. A plump, smiling woman, your hair freshly done, bright blue eyes, who came and stood right in the middle of our group. You chose us deliberately, you told me, because we weren't too tall and you thought you could get a good view over our shoulders.

It had been a difficult morning before you arrived. We had got there early to get a good place by the barrier. The women holding the banner however had got the sections muddled and had to go up and down the underground station to get it sorted out. The coming and going alerted the police who got suspicious and search us. They didn't find the banner, (we wore it under our clothes) but they found a leaflet in my bag with the giveaway words 'Feminism and Disarmament' (are they really so frightening?). Anyway they warned us they'd keep their eye on us. Any barracking the troops or jumping the barriers and they'd be down on us like a ton of bricks. Of course we could promise them there would be neither.

It began to get crowded. And you arrived. Friendly from the start, you told me you were worried your camera wouldn't work - you didn't know how to use it, did I? Or perhaps one of us could take the pictures from the front. Your son would be marching by and you didn't want to miss him. That was when it hit me. How really difficult, almost impossible it was what we were trying to do. Here you were, in your best clothes, come a long way with your husband to see your son, who'd got home safe from the war, have his moment of glory. Little enough reward for having put up with the horrors of the South Atlantic. And here was I, equally glad your son was safe, and wanting to deprive him of that moment -

seeing in it the seed of other wars, from which he might not come back. How could I explain that to you, standing there so pleased and so proud, how could I explain that I thought we had to stop being pleased and proud and be bitter and sad and angry and say 'It had to stop. There must be another way, some method of solving conflicts that didn't waste and destroy. Finding it would really give us reason for pride.' I had two hours before the parade came by. If I had tried, would you have listened? Or would you have called the police and had us removed? I don't know because I'm afraid I lacked the courage. I said nothing, but I couldn't bear the thought of how you would feel when we turned around and held up our banner. I didn't want you to miss your son. I asked the women at the front to find a place for you. You wouldn't take it at first, insisting we were 'too kind', but you gave in and moved next to Karin. I felt like Judas.

The waiting was awful. I saw you chatting and making friends with Karin, everyone does. Your place beside me had been taken by a severe looking woman in a smart blue hat who eyed me suspiciously and made no attempt to talk. Mary next to me was having problems with her child. The man behind her didn't like her baby carrier. But his wife told him to shut up, and told us not to mind - she had grandchildren herself. The child went to sleep. It started to rain. A band somewhere was playing 'hits' from the Sound of Music' and 'My Fair Lady'... we sang along in a desultory sort of way.

Then the helicopters came. Did you see them? What did you feel? I can only tell you that to me there is nothing beautiful about helicopters. They lack even the rudimentary bird-like grace of an aeroplane. And as they loomed over us, black insects with white search-lights for eyes, startling the birds, I felt only a cold gripping sensation of fear - whilst around me the crowd cheered and cheered. The lady on my left was waving her Falklands souvenir programme and the expression on her face was rapt.

And then the parade itself began. We let one contingent go by and then seven women in front of me turned - arms holding up the banner, quiet, quick and simple. And the crowd went wild. The hard-faced woman beside me lunged for Andrea's piece, screaming 'I suspected you from the first!', pushing and thrusting. We let her through to the barrier. The police grabbed other pieces and stood solid the other side. The man behind us was yelling 'you bastards' and another was screaming about 'out country' and amid all the hubbub I saw your face turn to Karin and I saw tears pouring from your eyes. 'I thought you were my friends! I thought you cared about my son. Don't you dare upset me like this. Don't you dare upset me....' Karin was crying too, her back turned to the parade and the policeman shouting over her head 'ignore them, ignore them'. And I, forgetting my peace-keeping role, shouting to make my voice heard, said to you 'we're just as upset as you. It's because we care about your son that we're here!' I wanted to say more, but you turned away to the woman on your other side for comfort, and then a policeman lunged over the barrier at me, hands around my neck, saying 'right, you dirty cow, I'm taking you to the police station where scum like you belong'. So I didn't see the rest of the parade, though I know the rest of the women stayed, backs turned and silent to the end.

And of course I didn't see you again. Which was a pity, because we share the same values, you and I. We love freedom, and happiness. Only perhaps you would tell me such things can only be maintained because your son fights to protect them. And I would reply: the fact that he has to fight destroys those things in themselves. I wish there was somewhere we could meet, you and I.

-- Lynne Jones



Mystic Madness

Sitting on a Scottish hillside
contemplating on my soul,
higher still the birds are flying
far below a moving river .
sunlight heating, grasses growing,
later walking home elated.

Dancing at a full moon ritual
wild, excited in the midnight,
summoning the silenced spirits
of our sisters gone before us,
crowding as the circle tightens .
mystic madness for a moment.

Stumbling through a thick grey sea mist,
reaching finally the shore,
forces strongly calling somewhere
something greater than the water
fearful of the hidden meaning
running I retreat for safety.

Staring at my purist candle
thin white flame with many layers,
beyond the flickering, shapes familiar
taking on some other meaning,
sudden blackness shuts out insight
shaking hands reach for the light switch

Sighing out the anxious moments
breathing in the still and calm,
bodies tranquil, spirits reaching
together in some silent wanting
almost holding to a presence,
that slips and glides away unseen.

FROM:

*Under
Wide
Waters*

*a collection of poems
by Feminist Writers
Bath 1982*

LETTERS

Dear Sisters,

Some friends of mine in London meet on Friday evenings to 'beam' their power and energy to the women at the Peace Camp at Greenham. They do this starting at 8 P.M.. They are trying to build up numbers and groups of women to do this.

I did this for the first time last night and at one point remembered women I know and have met who would be interested in joining us, and thought of you (all). Please do the same and tell other women you know who might be interested.

The London women have found their intentions have changed since they first started...from at first sending energy in the general direction of Greenham, they are now thinking perhaps of one woman who they might have met or know there; also, to women and men who are on the inside of the base, trying to help them open themselves to the 'other' (i.e. our) side of the meaning of the base and peace camp. (Whilst I was there recently a huge American car drove out of the gate, driven by a very smart black woman.)

Try different ways, have different aims, be creative, innovative, free. But also be diligently aware of the power of what we are opening ourselves and others to.

There are plans to encircle the base (Pentagon Action style). Some of us have been thinking of the greater effects of containing the destructive energy inside the base....that it cannot be contained indefinitely, and that even if it could, it seems likely that sooner or later it would just burst out, perhaps with even greater force as it would have built up. It seems to me that encirclement is the beginnings. Once we have contained the energy we are dealing with, we have to do something with it. Perhaps we could 'earth' it...channel and direct it (perhaps along a ley-line) to an earthing point, e.g. a well.

Think on all this, act on it where you feel to.

May she be with you, and all of us; especially on Friday nights!

-- Jill Raymond
West Somerset

Dear Sisters,

Thank you for sending me the summer edition of the newsletter which the group and myself found informing and interesting. I have found as I suspected a need for a Women and Life on Earth group in this area. I also found that all of the women who attend our weekly meetings had many varied views to express but had never really had the opportunity before as some of them believed their ideas uninteresting and rather silly. I believe society to a certain degree is to blame for this in their attitude towards housewives. It seems to say housewives haven't any opinions of value. Our group take it is turns to meet each week at each others houses and this has worked very well. Most of the time babysitters can be found, but if not we encourage our friends to bring their children along.

Since forming the group much has been achieved within the immediate circle. Some have found confidence in themselves to mix where as before they had felt isolated and their confidence gradually ebbed away. Others have realised conflicts in their relationships. Although we only meet once a week, some have found that their husbands have resented it and sought to make them feel guilty.

The interest in our group continues, and if it grows I should imagine that we will be looking for more suitable premises.

-- Cassandra Ackermann
Middlesbrough
Cleveland

Dear Sisters,

Thank you for your newsletter and for your offer of an exchange. We don't put out newsletters regularly, but we are putting you on our mailing list to receive every mailing.

You will be interested to know that members of our Campaign in Germany are also members of the Green Party there.

We were glad to see that you published Anita Garcia's letter. I think the connection is becoming clearer between those of us who are concentrating on demanding peace and those of us who are concentrating on demanding that the military budget be spent for peace, and first of all be spent on those whose job it is to keep the peace in the family, and who are poorer because of that.

Power to the sisters,

Selma James
Wages for Housework
London WC1