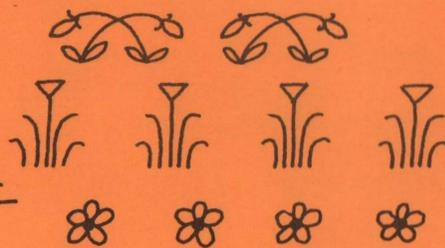


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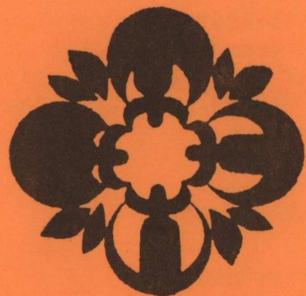
Women for Life on Earth



PERSEPHONE



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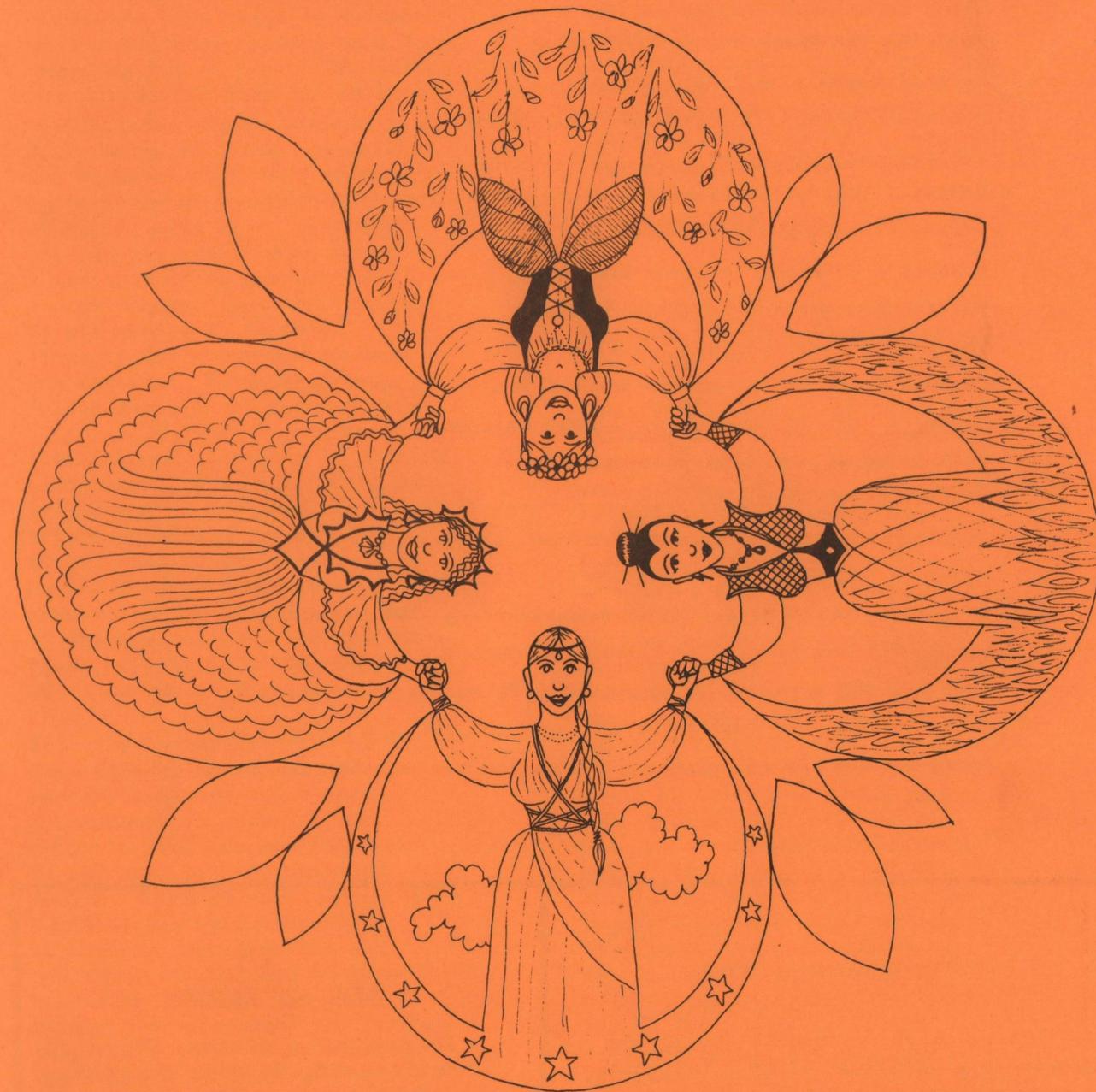
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Annual membership: £10 for groups and organisations

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Spring 84

60p

BECAUSE NO GROUP was in existence in Bristol, a spontaneous collective emerged after a few telephone calls specifically to produce this issue. In sharing the creative process we all learnt from each other. We would say more but it is now midnight and the mag is about to go to bed and so are we! Thanks to: Andrea, Ann, Becky, Candy, Fiona, Kathleen, Nicky, Nicky, Sigrid and Sue.

POLICING THE PEACE




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'As for the police, the Greenham Common women, like the Black movement, have begun to document police violence against them for stepping out of line. The police are a domestic army but an army nonetheless. Their actions on a daily basis in Black communities, and whenever they deem necessary, against any group which moves out of place, clue us in that what governments really mean by deterrence is deterrence of social change; that the function of all armies is to deter struggle for a new age at home and abroad.' Wilmette Brown, 'Black Women & the Peace Movement'

I want in this article to outline something of what the police have been doing at Greenham, to briefly relate their activities at Greenham to their activities in relation to women more generally, and to point to some of the implications for women's peace organising of the Police Bill now before Parliament.

With the recent eviction of the Main Gate at Greenham, and the massive media presence that accompanied it, some of the police's violence against women at the camp hit the national media. Women interviewed on the World at One were actually allowed to report on the air something of what had happened, including the fact that the police who surrounded the benders threatened to rape the women at the first opportunity, to gas women in their benders, and to 'give them something to show the

doctors'. That this verbal abuse was so sexual, and so reminiscent of the verbal abuse experienced by women inside a violent marriage, is simply a reminder of how rape and sexual violence are constant disciplines on women, which the police use to the full - not only in failing to protect women against violence, but in imposing it themselves.

But the police's violence at Greenham has been physical as well as verbal. On the two occasions that cruise convoys have left the base, police have used not only intimidation to try to prevent supporters reaching Greenham (we were stopped by the police while following the convoy on the motorway for a 'routine check'); but actual physical violence in rounding women up and cordoning women off right by the fence, pulling and twisting arms and throwing women on top of each other. This is not the first show of physical violence by the police. Women have been manhandled at blockades in the past - to the point of two women having had their arms broken and since the Main Gate eviction, women blockading and sitting down in front of bulldozers have had muscles badly bruised when the police dragged them away, in what seems to be a new technique in brutality. Add to this the experiences of police taking their numbers off and surrounding and abusing women in the woods around the base at night, and the strip searches imposed on some of the Main Gate women

Fertility Awareness Poster



A full coloured representation of the events in a MENSTRUAL CYCLE - including a sample chart of a woman's daily recording of the physical changes that signify her fertility.

Size 42cm x 60cm. Cost £1.80p plus 25p p&p. Bulk orders welcome. Write or phone: Bristol women's Health Group. 30 Sydenham Rd. Cotham. Bristol. BS6 5SJ. or tel. Bristol 735203 and 427959

WOOD AND WATER

Ecologically minded, feminist influenced, Goddess centred. Sample issue - 85p. includes Monica Sjoos's illustrated article.

4 High Tor Close, Babbacombe Rd., Bromley, Kent.



arrested on charges which could by no stretch of the imagination warrant a strip search (who could hide bolt cutters about their body?), and the picture of police abuse is very nasty.

Both police and magistrates have colluded in directing their attacks against women resident at the camp much more than at visiting supporters. Naturally they know who the residents are, and have been going out of their way to arrest and charge these women - when others have either not been arrested, or once arrested not charged - and then to impose particularly high fines on them.

In the week of 4 November, 9 women were fined £70 each for cutting the fence, a number of women were fined £50, and still other women resident at the camp were fined £480, £380 and £225 respectively. In that week alone, the total fines amounted to well over £1700 - money that women don't have, and don't want to pay to the courts either because money paid to the courts is money again used against us, or because women feel that money should be used for the camp and for organising and travel, or because on principle women don't want to pay when they have done nothing wrong. In fact, in imposing these high fines, the magistrates have followed the practice of magistrates now defying the will of Parliament in imposing on prostitute women fines way beyond what they can pay, and then sending them to jail for non-payment of fines, in effect imposing jail sentences for what are supposed to be non-prisonable offences - from soliciting to cutting the wires at Greenham. This kind of financial harassment by the courts is of course particularly effective against women, most of whom simply don't have the resources to pay up (and are often in trouble with the law in the first place because poverty has forced women onto the game, into shoplifting or whatever).

The other collusion between police and magistrates has been in the bail conditions imposed - many of the Greenham resident women have been put on bail conditions which forbid them to be anywhere near the camp (just as prostitute women in Kings Cross have bail conditions forbidding them to be near Kings Cross, and some women in St Pauls Bristol are under virtual house arrest with a bail curfew condition forbidding them to leave the house between 7 at night and 7 in the morning). And how convenient that these bail conditions against Greenham women are in force at the moment of maximum evictions, which in turn coincide precisely with the moment when the Government is trying desperately to prove that it can bring the convoys out, however briefly.=

Then there's the collusion between the police and the GPO - many phones have been mysteriously out of order when the convoys have come out, making it difficult for the women at Greenham to start the phone trees now functioning well in so many towns (difficult, but fortunately not impossible). Not to mention the collusion between police, councillors and 'road wideners', whereby the roads were closed off all round Greenham on the morning of 4 April, to facilitate the main gate evictions, but ostensibly because of road works! And finally there is the important collusion of social services with the authorities - women living at the camp with children have been threatened with their children being taken into care if they stay at the camp, just as the worst threat against mothers on the game is the threat of losing their kids.



This high profile of abuse from the police and the authorities is of course a mark of our success in the women's peace movement. The fact that the police were unable to evict at Greenham on 2 April because they simply did not have the numbers to outnumber the women there on that day by the 6 to 1 they now feel necessary, is a tribute to how anxious we have made them. The fact that the MOD can only bring a convoy out when they have sufficient police to massively outnumber the women at the camp, and to surround the convoy with a huge escort of police cars and motorbikes, is a tribute to the peace movement. And the fact that on the morning of 29 March, the police had to leave Greenham as soon as the convoy was back in the base in order first of all to police the miners' picket lines, and also to police the massive demonstration in Liverpool, and the pro-GLC and Stop the City demonstrations in London, meant that at Greenham we happily closed the main gate for some



6 hours, even pushing back the army lorries that had attempted to come out. With a police presence that only matched us one to one and no reinforcements available, the police simply could not keep those gates clear. The miners, and others on demonstrations that day, had in effect helped us to blockade at Greenham.

With the threat of the Police Bill now before Parliament it's important to get what the Bill can mean in perspective. The Bill undoubtedly poses a threat to all our organising, in legalising what the police are now doing illegally. But many of the powers that it will give in law in practice they are already exercising. The road blocks they will be empowered to set up if the Police Bill goes through, they have already used openly against the miners and

against Greenham. The powers of detention for questioning of up to 96 hours they have already used against the Irish community, with the Prevention of Terrorism Acts. The power to stop and arrest on suspicion they already use against prostitute women (it's just the Police's word against yours if they arrest you, no witnesses needed), against kerb crawlers (only the police's word for it), and in practice against young women and men all over the country especially, but not only, if you are black. These are the powers of abuse by the police that have been the daily experience of black people:

The terrorism that is practised ... against prostitute women is a terror we all know, a terror in the Black community that always falls first and heaviest on Black women. Whether it is the terror of being beaten in the bedroom or a parked car, on the street or in jail, or the terror of not being able to find a decent place to live where the police don't feel able to break down the door, it is terror rooted in our having to be at everyone's disposal because we don't have the money to be able to say NO, to be able to choose where and how we want to live and whom we want to sleep with. (Wilmette Brown: 'Money for Prostitutes is Money for Black Women')

Speaking in Bristol last week at a Campaign Against the Police Bill meeting, and describing some of the police violence that she had experienced, (including being dropped on the pavement on her head), one of the Greenham women, Liz Beech, pointed out: "Greenham women are largely middle class, like me - and it's been a privilege for me to understand what oppressed minorities have been going through for years and to identify with what people have been going through - oppressed minorities, working class people, ethnic minorities. The Government has made a mistake with Greenham, because ... we'll now make the connections with everyone because we're experiencing it ourselves at Greenham. and that's a good thing." I think this is the key to how to view our ability to deal with and defeat the current extension of police powers and abuse beyond the Black and immigrant communities to all the communities: Now what the Greenham women have done has led them to a position which is increasingly critical of



police handling of women.... Having led themselves to that point, the possibility of Black women identifying their struggle as our own is much greater. That is an example of an exchange of power that is possible on the basis of what people are doing, what people are fighting for and against on a daily basis.

(Wilmette Brown: 'Across the Divide of Race, Nation and Poverty: Women Organising for Peace').

In this context, the fact that the Police Bill would legalise long imprisonment without access to a solicitor, strip searches (including children as young as 10), road blocks, house searches and arrest on 'suspicion' etc, has to be seen as an attack precisely on a growing movement, a movement which cannot now avoid confronting the fact that the police and the State are ranged against us, but can see at the same time how massive - and growing - are the forces on our side, and how important it is to find ways of making visible the connections between us.

6 April 1984 Suzie Fleming
(Spokeswoman for the English Collective of Prostitutes, Bristol, and member of the Greenham Support Group)

POSTSCRIPT

Since the Main Gate eviction, police activity at Greenham has been stepped up with:

- continuous harrassment of women living at the camp by keeping women on the move (including extinguishing camp fires). Immediately after the Main Gate eviction women were arrested for 'Obstruction' for not walking fast enough, and were told they'd have to walk to Hampshire!

- women arrested for 'obstruction' were held for 9 hours at the Newbury Racecourse even though they were not charged

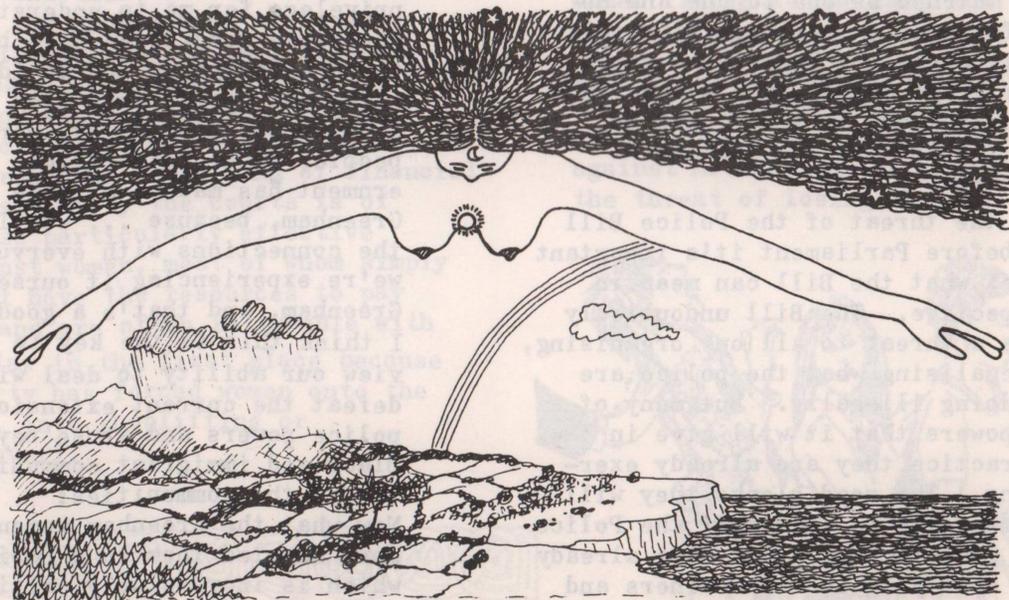
- visitors to the camp have been stopped by police en route and asked which newspapers they read and how they vote, in an obvious attempt by the police to build up a picture of who the peace movement is, in order to find out how we organise.

- parking restrictions are being arbitrarily imposed and constantly changed to make it difficult for any one wanting to park near the base. Women at Greenham have noticed an influx of police who don't know the women at the camp and who appear to have been specially trained in brutality.

(Information on police behaviour since Main Gate eviction supplied by Liz Beech at Bristol Campaign Against the Police Bill meeting of 6 April)

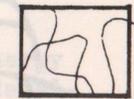
Sources

Wilmette Brown: 'Black Women and the Peace Movement' and 'Money for Prostitutes is Money for Black Women', both available from King's Cross Women's Centre, 71 Tonbridge Street, LONDON WC1.



bristol women's health group

SELF-HELP



Bristol Women's Self-help Group is a group of five women interested in learning about their own health and sharing and exchanging information about women's health generally. We feel that by taking a more active part in our own health care we can improve our lives and well-being and reduce medical intervention in them. The Health Service often doesn't provide what we really need. Much of women's experience (menstruation, reproduction, the menopause, etc.) is not sickness, but health, and in looking more closely at our own needs we have found that we can deal with them by learning for ourselves, talking and listening to other women and by disregarding myths and poor information and seeking out good information. The areas the group has been particularly interested in are:

Fertility awareness: By learning to recognise the physical changes that accompany the different phases of the fertility or menstrual cycle a woman can understand her reproductive ability. She can choose the best time for fertilisation if she wants to be pregnant, she can learn the skills of natural birth control, and she can maintain a healthy spinning cycle. Women in the group have been learning about this and sharing it with others for the past five years, teaching groups of women to recognise the changes in mucus production, changes in the cervix (the neck of the womb) and changes in body temperature. The following points may be useful to anyone thinking through the implications of fertility awareness.

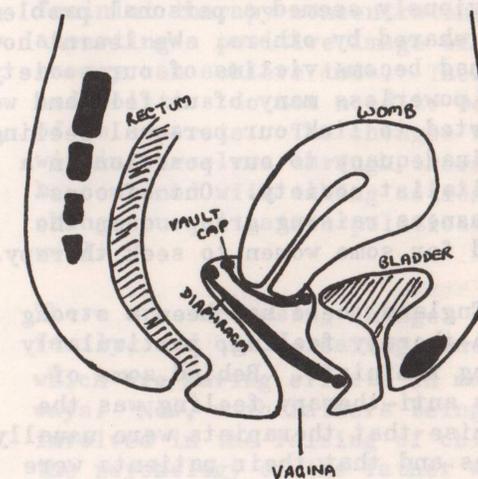
- * Women are fertile at a certain time of the cycle.
- * The egg or female germ-cell lives for about 12-24 hours (in fact, probably only 10 hours). In any cycle where an egg is released there are only 12-24 hours in which the egg is capable of fertilisation.
- * Men may be fertile at any time of the year, apparently having no detectable cyclical fertility.
- * The male germ cell or sperm may live in a favourable environment for 3-5 days, otherwise sperm die in about three hours.
- * Fertile mucus produced by women in the neck of the womb is the link between the female egg and the male sperm. It guides, nourishes and prepares sperm for fertilisation, generally it provides an ideal environment for the sperm.
- * Women produce fertile mucus *before* they release an egg, usually between one and six days before ovulation.

Depo-Provera: We have recently become concerned about this injectable hormonal contraceptive being used on a long-term basis on some women in Bristol and have been learning more about the drug and the problems associated with it. We would be interested in talking to any women who have had it or been offered it.

Caps: Because several of us were dissatisfied with the information and advice we had been given about barrier methods of birth control we began to explore and experiment with different kinds of caps and to read about research which had been done. We found that a small cap fitting directly over the cervix was more suitable for many women than the large sized diaphragm usually offered to us. Also we discovered that the use of spermicide with barrier methods is not backed up by research and many people are sceptical about its role. The main advantages of the small cap, as we see them, are:

- * it is closer fitting, so can be used without spermicide, if left in place for 24-36 hours.
- * it is smaller and less 'in the way'.
- * it is more comfortable.

- * if used without spermicide it can be inserted in advance.
- * the cervix changes less during sex than the vagina, so the fit of this cap is more likely to remain good.



Once a month we hold a meeting on caps for any women who are interested in finding out more about them.

Wellwomen Information is a weekly session which is the focus for exchanging information about women's health. It was set up last year out of our desire to give more women access to the information we had collected over five or six years and to learn more ourselves. Women can call in, although about a third of enquiries are by phone. They come to browse over our files and leaflets as well as talking over problems, sharing experiences and finding out how to get the best out of the health service. They can look up detailed information on specific topics, get in touch with self-help groups and find out about self-help remedies.

Wellwomen Information is at Room 48, Central Health Clinic, Tower Hill, every Thursday from 10 till 2. Telephone 291010 ext. 210.

Finance: So far we have paid for all expenses by pooling a twentieth of our incomes and doing what we can from that. Sometimes we get extra money from standing orders or donations from women. We are hoping soon to get some trust money or a larger sum to keep up with the work.

For more information about any of these topics we can be contacted at *Wellwomen Information*, or write to 30 Sydenham Road, Cotham, Bristol 6.

Feminist Therapy Thoughts On



Out of the Women's Liberation Movement of the 60's and 70's came consciousness raising groups, structured to promote personal and cultural changes, and there we learnt that as women we had the common experience of feeling second-best in our society. Women met and talked, and in turn discovered what had previously seemed a personal problem was shared by others. We learnt how we had become victims of our society, how powerless many of us felt and we started to link our personal feelings of inadequacy to our position in a capitalist society. Out of consciousness raising groups came the need for some women to seek therapy.

In England there had been a strong anti-therapy feeling, particularly among feminists. Behind some of this anti-therapy feeling was the premise that therapists were usually males and that their patients were frequently female. From the beginning it has been men who have been the therapists, the experts, and more often than not women who were the patients, seen as the sick, and needing to be cured. There is, however, a very real difference between straight therapy ie psychiatry and the establishment, and radical therapy done in the context of a feminist perspective. For, when a therapist lives in accordance with the values of a capitalist society, then s/he is likely to continue these values into the therapeutic situation and ignore the facts of female oppression.

Feminist therapy has grown out of the needs of people in various political movements rather than from within existing therapy. Changes in the position and roles of women in today's society has necessitated a different attitude on the part of therapists, as mental health professionals, as they are increasingly asked to facilitate the changing times.

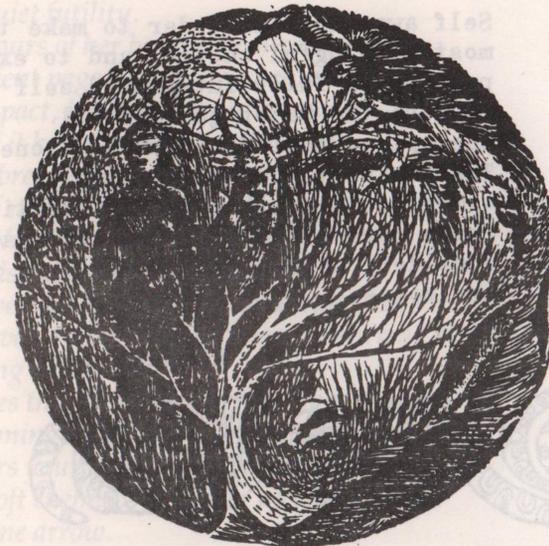
In looking at the literature on psychotherapy, there has been little distinction made between male and female psychotherapy or between the notion of client/patient, and yet the socialisation process of men and women is so different that it is time we acknowledged these differences. On the cover of a book entitled 'Women look at Psychiatry' are the words "I'm not Mad, I'm Angry". These words summed up for me the frustrations encountered by women who seek help through the established channels, from the often unaware psychiatrist. And when the term 'patient' is used, for me this suggests that the individual is passive and is 'done to' by the expert, whereas the term 'client' suggests that the individual is taking some control over her treatment.



Many women today are specifically seeking a therapist with a feminist orientation; more importantly they are seeking a female therapist, someone whom they feel can empathise and understand the role the socialisation process has had in creating attitudes that are inhibiting women's self-realisation. Women are seeking therapists who can help and support them in their efforts to overcome the stereotyping women's roles. In my work with women, a goal I have is seeing my clients gain a sense of their own power and autonomy. It is important that women see themselves as connected to and influential in public as well as private systems.

I have become a feminist therapist through my own development - from my involvement initially, and experience of the Women's Movement, and through my training as a Gestalt therapist, and I try to integrate these two in my work. The techniques

I use as a professional therapist may be no different from those of a male therapist with similar training; however, they may be differently received because they are shaped by a feminist consciousness.



As a Gestalt Practitioner, my central focus is on the clients' responsibility for shaping their own existence. Gestalt psychotherapy explores the separated parts of ourselves through self-awareness and leads to acceptance of these parts. The basic premise of Gestalt is that an individual has her own 'cure' within herself, and with awareness she can move towards clarity and in turn integration of inner and outer feelings. With this greater awareness the client can learn to exercise more choice. Gestalt is a non-judgemental therapy, and is concerned with 'what is' as opposed to how one should be. Many of the humanistic therapies have the same stand point. My concern is for the whole person and when working with women my commitment is in exploring the positive image of female power.

A definition that I like of feminist therapy comes from the book 'Feminism as Therapy' by Anica Vesel Menden and Anne Kent Rush which goes as follows:

"It means to me the freeing of all people from the restrictions of their culturally defined sexual roles, and the focus on balancing out the cen-

turies of negation of female energy by the positive assertion and development of it in the world today. It's not simply the idea that women can benefit from rediscovering themselves but also that our whole culture can benefit from correcting its psychic/sexual imbalance, through each person becoming whole again."

From the above statement we can understand that men as well as women can benefit from feminist therapy. I believe the gap between men and women needs to be narrowed and a feminist therapy concentrating on asserting a positive image of female energy can achieve this. Therapy and politics do not need to be thought of as separate. The changes we make within ourselves through therapy can be combined with taking action to change our situation politically as well.

There are increasing changes in the family, and child-rearing practices which are having effects in many ways. Now, with fathers being more involved in the raising of children, the psychology of the father will also alter. Men are having to change radically and develop areas of themselves that are unexplored. In our time, there has been a profound questioning of the nuclear family which has been accompanied by an increase in divorce, single parenting, communal living and better knowledge of contraception. Conflicts have arisen between men and women over the changes in women's goals and values, particularly when they threaten the power and privileges of men, and the effects on individual woman and society at large.

Effective contraceptive measures have allowed some contemporary women to be released from the restrictions of the home and to become more concerned with their own self-achievement and realisation outside the family unit, and to engage in professional and vocational careers never before open to them. In most cultures however traditional values continue to put up barriers to women who want to express themselves in ways previously reserved for men.

In group therapy women can be encouraged and supported in the expression of negative feelings such as anger and resentment. As women we have been conditioned to repress anger, and yet we know it is a perfectly normal emotion. Particularly with a group of women we can learn not to discount our feelings, as we begin to see that other women share the same difficult emotions. It is important in supporting each other that we do not collude, and withhold our feelings, but allow honest expression of our emotions and thoughts.

both to undercut self-blame, and to increase women's awareness of the need to seek social as well as personal change. Successful therapy with women requires a fundamental belief in their ability to function well in all situations and to take on and fulfil responsibilities in similar areas to men.

Self awareness in order to make the most meaningful choices and to experience a fully integrated self must be the major goal of all therapies, including feminist ones. The Feminist Movement can help women to negotiate their traditional roles more effectively as well as to consider, choose and function in new roles.

Liz Shaper

Therapists need to inform female clients that many of the problems women experience are societal in origin, and that society continues to exert pressures likely to maintain such conflicts. This is necessary



The Aged are Concerned

'I will, be 84 years of age this spring, and I wish to go to Greenham Common for my birthday.

There must be thousands of active septuagenarians/octogenarians like me who are concerned for the well-being and survival of the younger generations. Thousands who are capable and wishful of using their remaining few years in something more active than cosy 'Over 60s' clubs. We have seen two 'world' wars and dozens of localised lesser wars solve nothing. We are old enough to know better.

We have heard (on TV) of old persons being 'invisible' - just wrinkled old bodies with no one visible inside them. We intend to become fully visible on 20th May at Greenham, to express our concern and to show that we consider nuclear weapons to be an unacceptable evil, contrary to our Christian stewardship of the earth, of life, and a terrible misuse of God's gifts.'

Kathleen Nightingale

There will be a demonstration at Greenham Common of older citizens on May 20 from 1.00 pm to 3.00 pm. Many of them have lived through two world wars.

The inspiration for this has come from Kathleen Nightingale (aged 84) who lives in Devon. After her village had been addressed by a local representative of the civil defence organisation Kathleen Nightingale said that the reaction in her local community was 'Nuclear war must never be allowed to happen.'

Kathleen makes it clear that old people who are often regarded as impotent have a great responsibility for the world they are handing on to the generations of the future: their wisdom can influence events. She herself shows courage and persistence in insisting that old people must be seen to take part in the nuclear debate. 'I would like to make it known,' she goes on, 'that there are many active septuagenarians and octogenarians who wish to show that though aged, they are concerned for the well being and survival of the younger generations. They intend to become fully visible (in a non-controversial way) at Greenham Common. No doubt this

will cause comment by some that, 'They are old enough to know better.' Just so! The septuagenarians and octogenarians are those who having survived two major wars are precisely those persons who know better than to imagine that war of any kind does anything except kill or disable and destroy.'

The demonstration, though intended primarily for those over seventy, should include pensioners and all other persons concerned for the future.

Local groups should make their own arrangements for travelling to Greenham on May 20. It is hoped to provide seating for some participants.

For further information contact:

Sue Cousins, Lanthorn House, Bond St, Cornwood, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 9QE. Tel: Cornwood (075-537) 338

or

Ruth Gillett, 51 Eastfield Road, Westbury on Trym, Bristol BS9 4AE. Tel: Bristol (0272) 622718.

GODDESS - TOWARDS A LITURGY FOR SURVIVAL

Quite likely you will discover her squatting comfortably
in your kitchen
or perhaps

in the night time hallway by the narrow stair.

Quite likely she will arrive at a time
of quiet futility.

The contours of her body may surprise you -
ancient pagan circumference, small,
compact, her belly firmly round
as if it has birthed more than once -
her breasts large and generous
as if nuzzled and butted hungrily.

Wide hips, warm thighs.

Her hands, lithe and lightly strong
move untrembling sure and travelled,

And her voice evokes the intimacy of stirring sheets.
Something in her eyes

belies the impression of homely roundness
- a mingling of impassivity and carnality.

She enters your domain simply equipped.

A soft chemise, a candle, incense, music,
one arrow.

Ask her for a map -
she will not give it you.

She is the fierce archangel of unmarked travel
from the places where dark and light
become fused with the lost map
of her journey.

Should you deceive her
she will not return your lie
with one of her own.
The lie is not her province.
She will be silent.
Hear her silence carefully.

Also you know that you must not
make an idol of her.
She is the image breaker,
iconoclast of the simple solution,
of too long lived woman fear.

Already you may have been touched by her visitation -
But there is an element of luck, even cunning
in this discovery.

If not yet I am hopeful that you may find her soon.
Attend to the possible moments of her arriving -
kitchen, narrow stair, quiet despair.

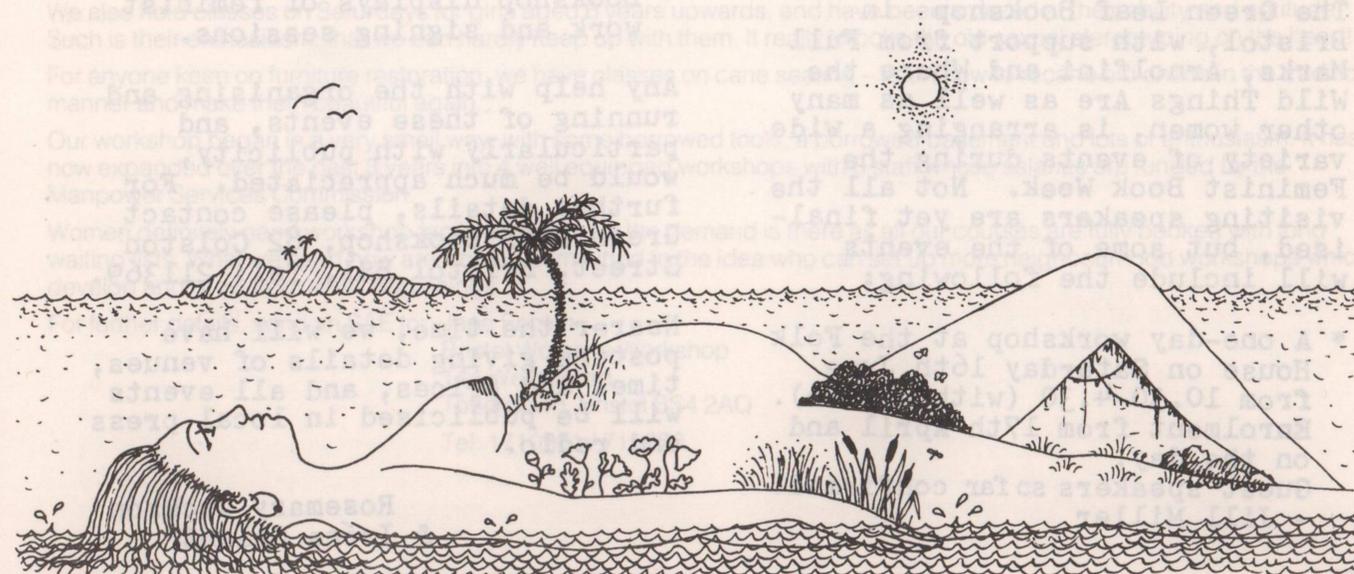
One whispered warning:
do not take her arrival lightly
for it may kill you both.

When you embrace her in the fire warm
comfort of your bedded dreamtime
(yes you must)

you will begin to perceive
the becoming word of woman
groaning toward utterance -
something to move towards.

One flame tongued word forming the firehills
of your awesome longing
the conceiving of a liturgy for survival.
Having attended, you will never be the same.

Linda Hurcombe
January 1984



1st INTERNATIONAL FEMINIST BOOK WEEK '84

WRITING WOMEN ARE EVERYWHERE

Given the incredible growth in feminist writing in the 1980s, a group of women in publishing - the Feminist Book Fair Group - have organised a Book Fair and Book Week to celebrate the diversity of women's work.

The First International Feminist Book Fair will be held at Jubilee Hall, Covent Garden, London WC2 on the 7th, 8th and 9th June.

Following from that, the Feminist Book Week will spread throughout Britain and Ireland from 11-17th June. This will be a major national event with many women writers from Britain, Europe, USA and the Third World travelling round the country to discuss their work. Many women from radical publishing and bookselling are organising events to coincide with this week; from readings and performances to writing workshops and signing sessions; and envisage the week as not only promoting feminist books but also encouraging all women to participate in finding their own means of expression as well as discussing others'.

The Green Leaf Bookshop in Bristol, with support from Full Marks, Arnolfini and Where the Wild Things Are as well as many other women, is arranging a wide variety of events during the Feminist Book Week. Not all the visiting speakers are yet finalised, but some of the events will include the following:

- * A one-day workshop at the Folk House on Saturday 16th June from 10.30-4.30 (with creche). Enrolment from 17th April and on the day.
Guest speakers so far confirmed:
- Jill Miller

- two women writers from Zimbabwe
- Rowena Fowler
- Sheila Jaeger
- Libby Houston
- women involved with Bristol Broadsides.

In the evening, there will be live performances, hopefully including the Raving Beauties.

- * An evening of local women playing live music by women composers and poetry performances by women poets, incl. Michelle Roberts.
- * An exhibition of women's art, incl. Pandora's Box at the Arnolfini and a talk there by Rozsida Parker, author of "The Subversive Stitch".
- * Video of "Carry Greenham Home" and discussion of women and militarism, led by Cynthia Enloe and Wendy Chapkis.
- * Readings by practising women poets in Bristol.
- * Workshop for teachers and publishers on educational texts.
- * An afternoon of story telling with music, for children.
- * Bookshop displays of feminist work and signing sessions.

Any help with the organising and running of these events, and particularly with publicity, would be much appreciated. For further details, please contact Green Leaf Bookshop, 82 Colston Street, Bristol BS1, Tel: 211369.

Nearer the time, we will have posters giving details of venues, times and prices, and all events will be publicised in local press and radio.

Rosemary Jackson
& Irène Galant

A WOMENS WORKSHOP

Did you know that less than 1% of all carpenters are women? Most women had no opportunity to learn woodwork at school and have been given little encouragement to take it up later. In fact women have been given very few opportunities to learn any kinds of useful manual skills.

The Bristol Women's Workshop is evening out that balance a bit by offering short courses in woodwork and home maintenance for women. The daytime classes are free, and evening and weekend courses are held at low prices.

All our instructors are women and can understand the difficulties that women sometimes have when faced with unfamiliar tools etc. The teaching takes place in small groups where everyone can learn at their own pace, and the atmosphere is friendly and relaxing.

The courses are quite short, and at the end of your 6 or 12 weeks (depending on whether you do an evening or a daytime course) you may not be quite ready to install your own central heating or knock up an intricate Welsh Dresser, but many women have gone on using the workshop on the 'rentabench' scheme and made lovely items such as book cases, spice racks, beds, etc. etc. And after a Home Maintenance course mending a leaking tap, reglazing a broken window or installing a socket is no longer the baffling problem it used to be. It is a fine feeling to see through the mystique surrounding many of these 'men's' jobs and to experience the increased confidence and independence that accompanies these new abilities.

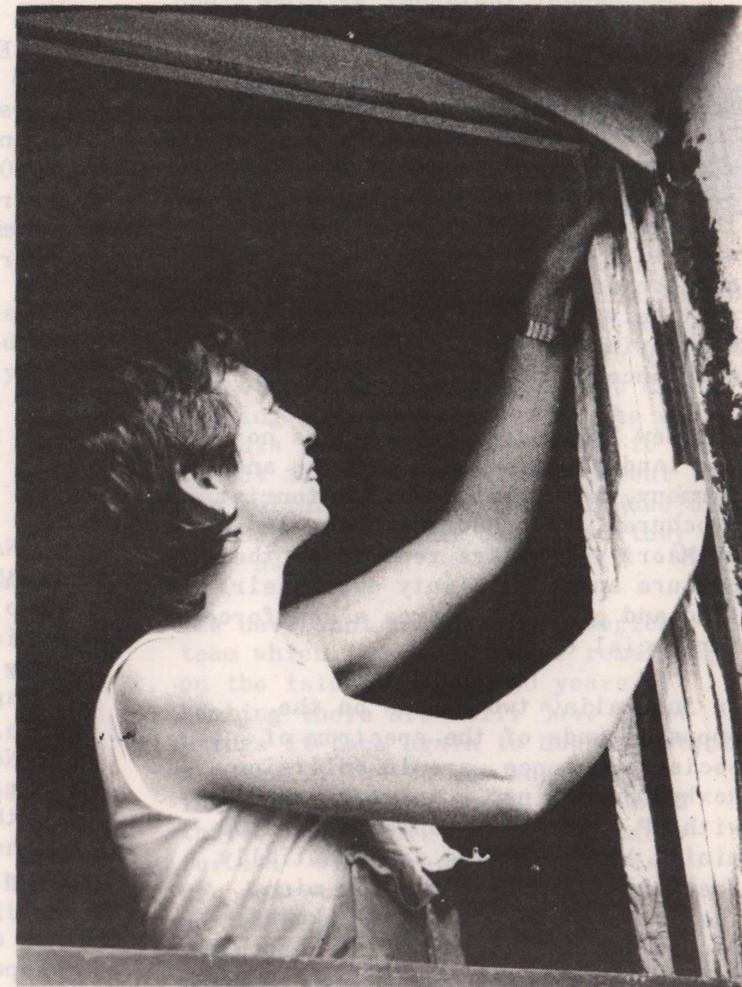
We also hold classes on Saturdays for girls aged 6 years upwards, and have been amazed at their ability and aptitude. Such is their enthusiasm, that we can hardly keep up with them. It really knocks the old sexual stereotyping on the head!

For anyone keen on furniture restoration, we have classes on cane seating - learn how to recane old chairs in the traditional manner and make them beautiful again.

Our workshop began in a very small way, with some borrowed tools, a borrowed basement and lots of enthusiasm. It has now expanded over the past 3 years into 4 well equipped workshops with 6 staff whose salaries are funded by the Manpower Services Commission.

Women definitely need workshop facilities. We know the demand is there as all our courses are fully booked with long waiting lists. What we need now are women committed to the idea who can set up more neighbourhood workshops which develop and grow from small beginnings

For further details, send an SAE to: Jane Eccles
Bristol Womens Workshop
144 Wells Road
Totterdown, Bristol BS4 2AQ
Tel: 1710981 / 711672



PACIFIC CONNECTIONS

Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific; what has been happening there, and the movement that is rising against it is inextricably linked to the green, peace and feminist movement here in Europe.

The physical and mental distance from us has been convenient for the American and French military who, with escalating nuclear bases and continued nuclear testing respectively, have been disrupting and destroying the land, culture and existence of the Pacific people.

No, New Zealand, (Aotearoa) is not the land of racial integration and harmony, as depicted in the tourist brochures. The Maori people, led by Maori women, are reclaiming their culture and sovereignty over their land and giving Aotearoa a new force for social change.

In Australia, two worlds on the opposite ends of the spectrum of social existence, are in collision. Roxby Downs mine, a joint venture with BP, has been granted a uranium mining lease, making it potentially the world's largest uranium mine. The land is sacred to the Kokatha people and they are actively opposing it.

The following extracts from 'Broad-sheet' NZ's feminist magazine, reveal how our struggles are all connected.

THE RIMPAC EXERCISES

RIMPAC stands for both the nations which rim the Pacific and the large-scale military training exercise sponsored by the United States in which these nations participate. Beginning in 1971, the United States has invited the nations of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and since 1980, Japan, to participate in this joint military training exercise, an exercise which has included the bombing of Kaho'olawe, one of the eight major islands of Hawaii. In 1984 there is a great possibility that France shall join the RIMPAC nations in these military manoeuvres.

The size of the RIMPAC exercises is awesome. In 1978 it included the nuclear aircraft carrier SS Enterprise and 41 other warships, 255 military planes and 22,000 personnel. In 1980 it included 41 naval ships, 200 aircraft and 20,000 personnel. In 1982 the exercise involved 60 warships and submarines, including the aircraft carrier USS Ranger, 120 aircraft and 29,000 sailors and marines.



PUANANI FERNANDEZ, LUANA BUSBY and LEIANUENUE PARKER belong to Project Kaho'olawe 'Ohana, a Hawaiian organisation which aims to stop US navy and Rimpac bombing of the sacred island.

PUANANI: The Hawaiian movement really started in 1969, in the Kalama valley on the south side of the island of O'ahu. For decades our people had planted taro and farmed pigs there but this valley was threatened by the expansion of Honolulu. The developers came in with state backing and tried to put up upper class housing - houses costing around \$250,000. Our people resisted. That was our first political fight and we lost.

That struggle is considered to be the beginning. Since then there has been more along the same lines.

LUANA: In 1974, Hui Alaloha started, which was a grassroots organisation from Moloka'i. It was anti-development and anti-activist, just people who were into spiritualism. The people wanted access to areas of land which had kapu signs on them meaning private ownership. From Hui Alaloha, Project Kaho'olawe 'Ohana began.

We went over to Kaho'olawe to check it out. We could see it was being bombed from Moloka'i but we weren't told anything about it. We knew it

was just a pile of rocks that the military were using for national defence purposes.

When we actually got to Kaho'olawe we found historical sites there. We started asking kupuna (elders) about the history, it was a very sacred island holding a lot of Hawaii's past links with Polynesia. It was a place where our kupuna learnt how to navigate, tell tide currents, and gained a lot of knowledge about the stars.

The movement started on a very grassroots level. When it first started the media made everything seem silly. Those Hawaiian people were crazies and wanted to go back to something that could never be again. A lot of Hawaiian people didn't buy it either, they thought it was a bit crazy too. But it was people who worked in the rural areas who began to relate to what we were doing.

PUANANI: The media called us racist against America, said that we didn't like America because we didn't want to be protected by the navy. They kept throwing in our faces "Remember Japan"; "Remember Pearl Harbour"; "We could all be speaking Japanese now". Well, we're speaking English and that's a foreign language! But a lot of people, our own Hawaiian people, don't always make that connection. We are fighting against the US military, dealing with the most powerful presence in the world, but we are making accomplishments.



Kaho'olawe is in the middle of all our islands, its like our "piko" (belly-button), its a very unifying thing for us. If we can get Kaho'olawe back it would be a real boost for our people. We need a big win. But we are not just after Kaho'olawe, we will move on. We've got people working in the legal system and lobbying within the political system. We have people who are really involved in agriculture, regreening the land,

using traditional ways to build long houses. We have people who are committing so-called "illegal acts". We will go to the island and occupy it if we have to. I think people are beginning to realise that everyone's role is important though it is not the same.



We have had one most significant win, we have the consent decree with the US navy which is the basis of our negotiations. The navy has to get rid of all the goats which are destroying the native flora by the end of this year. They also have to instruct the foreign military about the cultural significance of Kaho'olawe. So they learn about us before they bomb us!

The navy sent in an archaeological team which found 544 sites remaining on the island. After 30 years of bombing there are still 544! That brings it back again to how important a place it was to our ancestors. There is a reason there is so much there, and we are still searching for it. With every bomb that is dropped it is harder and harder for us to find.

LUANA: When we go there we can feel it, the island has a lot of mana. As soon as you step on it you can feel it. It's a hurt vibe, it is wounded, sad. The shape of Kaho'olawe is the shape of a foetus. Kohe Malamalama O Imanaloha, the original name for this island, means "the shining vagina of Kanaloa". It was like a birthing spot, like a womb. The whole of Polynesia is connected by it.

PUANANI: After all the archaeological evidence was exposed, the island was put on the US register of historic sites. That means Kaho'olawe is put in the same category as the White House and Mt Rushmore, where the presidents' faces are carved into sacred Indian land. Kaho'olawe has the distinction of being the only historic spot that is being bombed! Dammit, this is cultural arrogance!

What is the women's role in the movement?

LUANA: For a long time, the men were the leaders and the women stayed in the background and got stood on, when actually it was the women who were doing all the work: taking care of the kids, making the meals, and typing all the papers. We never got recognised for the work that we did. Even today, only a few women stand in the front and get full support. There's a lot of jealousy and macho behaviour that we have to confront. A lot of women have left because of it.

In June of last year we formed Wahine Noa for indigenous women. That was seen as divisive. Hawaiian women getting together is threatening.



20,000 women went out on to the streets of Aotearoa on May 24th, 1983, International Disarmament Day, in solidarity with the Greenham women.

Here is a response from a Maori woman:

HILDA HALKYARD

LAY DOWN YOUR GUNS, SO THAT CHILDREN MAY LIVE

From way back, women around the world have never agreed to war, because their children have died.

In former times, the cream of Maoridom was lost in the World Wars. For who? For what?

And so, people of Aotearoa, we are saying, don't send our warriors to die overseas. It is our purpose to find a pathway for our generations to come. It is through Mana Maori Motuhake wi will achieve this, the right pathway for Maori people, not through war.

HE WHAKAARO

15,000 women mobilised for nuclear

disarmament. KA PAI TE KAHO O TE AROHA O NGA WAHINE.

The symbolism of peace is good, but releasing hundreds of balloons and holding candles will hardly cease American MX missiles testing on Kawajalein and the French nuclear testing of Polynesie.

Our government needs to be directed by us NOW and not with songs and balloons. The Super Powers have billion dollar defence budgets. I don't intend to put down the acts of women today - but we must face the solid and realistic commitment if we aim for a nuclear disarmament. We have to go all out.

Pacific Peoples Anti-Nuclear Action Committee has spearheaded the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement in Aotearoa. Basically the nuclear issue is a land issue. People can stop the bomb but they cannot survive without a healthy landbase. The US and the French have riddled Pacific islands with a nuclear disease that can never be cured. Whole races of people have had their future, their culture and their heritage bombed from under them. For what? So the big boys can play games. Tahiti has had five cyclones this year. Even New Zealand's seasons are out. Nature's balance has been eroded since colonialism. Pollution and exploitation of the land are the baby stages of nuclear warfare.

For indigenous peoples - the nuclear madness is merely an advanced form of colonial terror. Care of the people is always important, but the land is of higher importance.

"PATU NGARONGARO TE TANGATA. TOITU HE WHENUA"

(People come and go, but the land remains.) If the land is ill the people will perish.

MAORI STRUGGLE IN THE NUCLEAR FREE AND INDEPENDENT PACIFIC

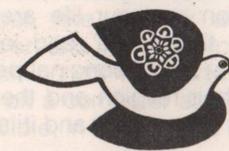
We, as Maoris, can always extend our hand of solidarity overseas. We must always do this in the spirit of aroha and care. But we can act with more strength in our own community/country. If we continue to manake our own Maori land take, we are helping to challenge the Pakeha colonialist

mentality that actively works against us. In looking after the land, we look after our past, our present and our future.

By keeping our land issues alive we actively nibble away at the solidness of the capitalist network in the Pacific. WE ALL HAVE A PART TO PLAY. Don't go and build a nuclear shelter. Don't go and live up life now and wait for the end of the world to come.

Every time we challenge the Super Power mentality - we are strengthening the people's movement.

Pacific Peoples Anti-Nuclear Action Committee will continue to work in Maori struggle and draw parallels to our land and other land struggles, to how the nuclear cycle can be stopped at every level - from uranium mining to processing to exportation to testing.



THOUGHTS



"There is only one history of importance and it is the history of what you once believed in and the history of what you came to believe in."

These words of Kay Boyle's started me thinking about the way I've changed in the last few years - something like a fundamental shift in consciousness has occurred in my thinking and attitudes, and because I find in talking to other people that this is a common experience, I thought it worthwhile to share these thoughts with you.

I think it began with my increasing concern about the escalation of the arms race and the threat of nuclear missiles. I joined CND because I wanted to be active and give my support to a mass pressure group. I even, briefly, joined the Labour Party in the hope of influencing grass roots support for unilateralism - but formal hierarchies are not for me. I became more radical; the formation of the peace camps excited my imagination and I started to become interested in non-violent direct action, not just as a tactic, but as a philosophy.

I was trying to understand how the human world had got itself into such a mess and I began to see how the iron logic of power can only be overcome by the universal logic of love. And just as I saw quite clearly that the hand grenade and the submachine gun are as much of a threat as nuclear missiles, so I began to understand that power relationships exist as much in the home, school or workplace as they do between nations. If I want to resist nuclear weapons I must logically resist war and all the weapons which make it possible; if I want to change the power structure which causes war, I must start with myself and my relationships with my friends. Thus for me, pacifism and feminism are inextricably linked.

I no longer believe in political parties as a way of bringing about change. Formal organisations with hierarchies are just part of the power structure; they become institutionalised and respectable. I don't want to follow; I don't want to lead; and I don't want to join. But I am happy to belong and I will cooperate rather than compete. It has been a real joy to experience the strength of working in small, leaderless groups - experiences which have been underlined at Greenham, Fairford and Upper Heyford.

I am concerned, increasingly, about the threat to our planet - not just nuclear (though it seems the most pressing). It's a sobering thought that commercial interests alone could decimate the living species of this world in our own lifetime. To threaten all life, not just our own, is the supreme arrogance. Part of what it seems to me to be human implies a responsibility to care for this earth, to protect it and not selfishly exploit it. But there is a growing commitment to a more ecologically sound life-style, and a belief in peace, cooperation and equality. There is a logical connection between these attitudes - they are not threatening; they are life-enhancing. They are the expressions of an idea whose time has come.

We will also continue to state that the nuclear issue is beyond "inner peace", "nuclear free body zones" and "mass apathy". We must fight the cause not the effects.

We also know that you Pakehas are all getting up and riled cos your arse is on the line. If nuclear war only killed indigenous peoples you wouldn't get up and fight. Just as well nuclear madness kills us all - otherwise the whole Pakeha race would be in a state of lethargy over the issue.

In conclusion, we support all, any and every stand that helps to weaken the nuclear cycle continuing - whether it be microwave ovens, pollution, mining, voting out crooked politicians, Maori land take, conferences etc...

No reira e hoa ma
Kia kaha koutou katoa
Kia manawanui

Computers – to use or not to use: A Reply

How pleased I was to see on WFLOE winter magazine cover *Computers* listed under *Third World connections*. The contents list subtitles the article 'Computers – to use or not to use'. For me there is no doubt in my mind, heart of spirit that we should not use computers. But I have so far found myself alone with my conviction that the use of computers is not compatible to my/our ends. My reasons (some of which have nothing to do with 'reason') are many and connected. What has pressed me into writing this was my disappointment in what was offered as a debate on 'to use or not to use'. It was more like how to get the most out of your computer. There was an acknowledgement of debate as to whether computers can be used in a non-capitalist, non-authoritarian and non-bureaucratic way, and a list of four reasons why we should not use them, but these are dismissed by 'Anyway, I'm getting away from the facts'. Well, to me it is a fact that third world women are going blind after three years of work on computer components; that this work is part of their limited choice to starve or become prostitutes. And this fact does also apply to electronic washing machines etc... Another aspect of the racism computers depend on and perpetuate is that 'much of the drudgery' they can relieve us of, is that the 'us' is a First World privileged elite, in world terms ... and those are my terms, as a woman and eco-feminist. I would like to quote Wilmette Brown (and Virginia Woolf again) from *Black Women and the Peace Movement*: 'The terms of our struggle for peace are that the direction and the organisational priorities that we need to carry out at any particular moment guarantee that the peace movement not grow at the expense of those of the bottom. Otherwise the peace movement will grow, but accommodate war'. For peace read women's liberation, for we will not have one without the other.

To make visible the life and words of Third World, Afro-American and native women as WFLOE makes a point of doing, and then let slide the tokenism displayed by the 'getting away from the facts' attitude is something we as a network must challenge. And just in case we think we might be included in the privileged minority whose lives are to be improved by computers, I refer to *The Guardian* (March 8, 1984) on a report on computers to be presented at the TUC Womens conference: 'Women workers are likely to suffer disproportionately through the introduction of new techniques'. And the position of women who remain with jobs working with computers does not sound too attractive: 'While women workers share with male colleagues all the problems new technology brings, they also have to cope with the problems of commitments outside work, their limited education and training opportunities, and extra health risks (my emphasis).

Another listed problem is that they were built firstly to meet military and secondly big business needs; that small business and leisure usage has been a side effect. No mention of the radiation side effects, although Rosalie Bertell gives a clear report in the article *The Health Hazards of Visual Display Terminals* (WFLOE winter magazine, and see also chapter three in *Reclaim The Earth*). The thought of the numerous children who regularly are exposed to this radiation horrifies me. The cumulative effect through generations leading to infertility connects with women's struggle in reclaiming child-birth from technology. This technology, its links with silicone chips and computers, is for me a prime symptom of male control of women and nature. We do not need these things. We could use 'alternate technology' to relieve us of drudgery, which would be cheap and simple enough to be accessible world wide. Using computers takes us yet another step away from living in balance with nature. As Carrie Dann, a Native American woman says in March *Outwrite*: 'We get all that we need from Mother Earth, for our lives, our religion and our life are tied together; we cannot separate them.' We read in *The Dreamtime* (WFLOE winter issue) how Aboriginal people are losing their sacred rites. Their religion and their life are separated. It is part of their oppression and it is part of ours.

I went to America in 1981 and there first heard about experiments at Stamford University using human volunteers who were paid. After complaints from volunteers the research stopped using them, but presumably did not cease, as non-volunteers are readily available in hospitals, especially mental hospitals, the largest of which are military mental hospitals. The research concerns micro-implants, in the eyes and brain. These implants act as transmitters; all that is seen through the camera-eye is transmitted and can be picked up on a TV screen and recorded. The same with the brain waves, similar to EEG used in hospitals. The implications for use in espionage, diplomacy, etc. are far reaching. An obvious development this line of research could take is that the transmitters also become receivers, with two-way transmission. In other words, the creation of human robots.

Last summer there was a short-lived expose of a bird sanctuary which sold eggs to Birmingham University. These eggs were hatched for experiments using implants (no details given as far as I know). The protest seemed to focus on the fact that although the birds continued to live a healthy life and were not used to test chemicals nor were infected, they had to be killed by law after six months. These animal experiments bring us again through animal liberation to birth technology, test

tube fetuses and genetic interference.

Members of my local Labour party told me about the Bilderberg Project. This is an EEC computer being built in Brussels. The technologists working on the project have nicknamed their computer 'The Beast'. It is supposed to take 10 years to build and will eventually have the capacity to hold 20 pages of information on everyone. They were not sure who 'everyone' was, but I dare say everyone in the First World would do for a start. The project is a major contributor towards the cashless society, part of the EEC/IMF/USA plans for tomorrow's Europe in which Britain has been designated a non-manufacturing but hi-tech area. Of course, the trade unions would never have it, so they have to go first. Note that the Coal Board last year got an American chairman. American industry has an excellent record for weakening and dissolving unions, and the British coal industry is being run down in favour of American nuclear technology.

American economic influence and imperialism in Europe has been reinforced by computer imports, especially in the military world. The anti-American attitude of British people that was so strong after the second European tribal war has disappeared; correspondingly Russia (the Soviet Union) has gone from being a European ally to being part of the Asian menace, the enemy. The enemy which, as Susan Griffin states, is created by us through enemy-creating thought and pornography. A year and a half ago Leonie Caldecott told me that instead of cash it is planned we all have a number, like a bank account or National Insurance number, and that research is underway to find some way of marking our wrists invisibly with a ray which could be read off a computer at, for example, a supermarket exit. The Bible, in Revelations (chapter 13, verses 16-18) says

'And he (the beast) causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six' (666). Aleister Crowley named himself 'The Beast' and the numerology of the occult gives the beast the number 999 (or 666 inverted). The BFPO (British Forces Post Office) number for the Falkland Islands is 999. I would be interested to hear more on any of these things. I know I have just pieced together things I have heard over the last few years, and I found it particularly hard to talk to many women about the implants when I first returned from the US.

But times are changing fast; such concepts we are more able to believe possible as we grasp more deeply the degree of women-hatred and control of nature that patriarchy desires. I may have yet to really convince you, or anyone, how absolutely incompatible to our ends the use of computers is for us as feminists. And I did admit that some of my reasons for this belief may seem far from reasonable. But I hope I have contributed something new to the computer debate, because I do not hear anyone talking about the issue from a spiritual/religious/psychic point of view. Or from a political/economic/ecology perspective in terms of distribution of resources. Therefore for me the debate on computers, to use or not to use, is indeed an eco-feminist question and has so far been unbalanced. And I am left considering whether or not to renew my subs to computer-aided WFLOE network, magazine and mailing list, for I believe our means must be compatible with our aims, otherwise we will accommodate war, and as long as there is war women will suffer.

Jill Raymond

CHESHIRE CATS IN REVERSE

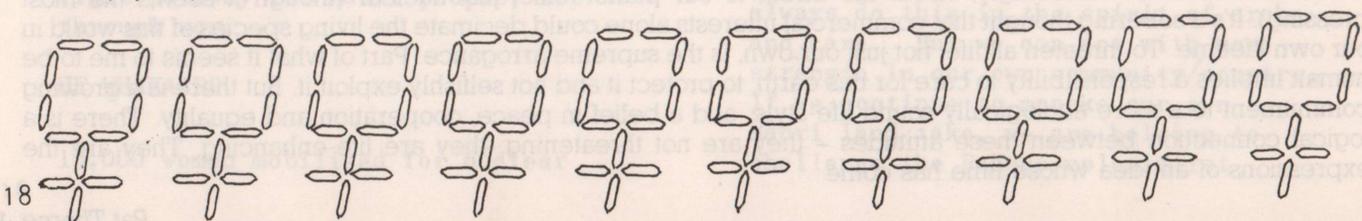
Yes, we said,
As we walked briskly
Down the darkened street
Through the frosted forest
Alongside the perimeter fence
Yes, this is
What we are
The stuff of life
The fabric of the world
The indispensable element
Yes, yes, yes
We said
Making ourselves
A fraction
More visible
With each smile.

Leonie Caldecott
(1983)

BOTH SIDES OF THE WIRE

I would have gone to my lord in his need,
Have galloped there all the way,
But this is a matter concerns the State,
And I, being a woman, must stay.
I watched them leaving the palace yard,
In a carriage and robe of state,
I would have gone by the hill and the fords;
I know they will come too late.
I may walk in the garden and gather
Lilies of mother-of-pearl.
I had a plan would have served the State –
But mine are the thoughts of a girl.
The Elder Statesmen sit on mats,
And wrangle through half the day;
A hundred plans they have drafted and dropped,
And mine was the only way.

Translated by Helen Waddell
from the Chinese original written in 675 BC. 19



BRISTOL BLACK WOMEN'S GROUP

What follows is a short description of the Black Women's Group of Bristol: who we are, how we are organised, what we have achieved and what we expect to accomplish. There are several reasons for writing this pamphlet:

- 1) to illustrate the process of women of different cultural backgrounds uniting in recognition of their common treatment by British society as black women.
- 2) to serve as an example to others who may want to start a similar group.
- 3) to document the history of this organisation of black women.
- 4) to communicate with the community at large about what we believe.
- 5) to welcome all women of Asian, African and Third World descent in the Bristol community who agree with our aims to share with us. (Contact St Werburghs Community Centre tel: 551351 to find out times and dates of meetings).

This pamphlet was collectively written by the members of the Bristol Black Women's Group in the summer of 1983.

WHO WE ARE

We are women of Asian and African descent who are concerned to encourage other black women and girls to develop to their full potential, by encouraging access to educational and social resources. Our purpose is to expand services and opportunities for black women.

We have equal respect for the work women accomplish in the home and in the workplace, and respect each woman's right to decide for herself what options are best for her to pursue.

Our main aims are:

- 1) to assist all black women to help themselves
- 2) to support the cultural, social and educational needs of Asian, African and Third World descent women.
- 3) To take up issues to concern to black women.

Our membership is open to any woman of Asian, African and Third World descent who agrees with our objectives and aims, and is willing to work collectively toward their accomplishment.

HERSTORY

The Black Women's Group of Bristol originated just over a year ago when the local CRE office was approached to call a general meeting for all black women in the community to come together to address common issues. The goals of the original meeting were vague and those who attended had many reasons for attending. This diverse group of women of Asian and African descent had various degrees of community experience. Some of us were more interested in delineating specific tasks to accomplish, others felt exploratory meetings were essential to lay the ground-work for an enduring organisation. We all wanted to explore practical ways of serving the black community, but some of us felt this could be better accomplished by first understanding our own experiences as black women living and working in Bristol. The more task-orientated women tended

to drop out of the organisation at an early stage. Those of us who continued to meet believed that by starting from an understanding of our own experience we would be better equipped to deal with problems common to the whole black community.

work experiences. By taking the time to learn about each other we have discovered what we have in common to unify us. Sharing personal experiences with racism and sexism has solidified our



We believe that this exploratory ground-work has served us well because it has permitted a mutual respect to develop that holds the group together.

We believe that black women are an important historical force, that black women deserve to be recognised for the contribution we make to our families and our communities, and that the future of the black community as a whole is dependent upon the role black women take today. This is the perspective that has held us together.

Cohesion is especially important because the Bristol Black Women's Group is a diverse organisation. Each member has competing time commitments to other community organisations, to work, to school, to family.... we represent different cultural, educational and

reason for being. Maintaining an identification as black women in this racist/sexist society keeps our politically and culturally diverse group together. The fact that we do not have a dogmatic political perspective, that we are in practice democratic, that representation of Asian and African groups is balanced, strengthens our identification as black women. With this identification comes an appreciation of the need to maintain unity to improve the quality of life for all blacks.

This imperative arises from the common circumstances of living in a racist/sexist country and less from abstract political principles. In the course of our development we may develop a more refined political approach to our activities ...but it will come from our own experience as black women... not from others.

A MATTER OF TRUST

AN IMAGINARY BUT QUITE TRUE DIALOGUE!

I was very puzzled when I learned that Sarah Tisdall's appeal against her sentence was rejected, even though most people thought she had been treated much too severely, and that the law she had broken was widely thought to be unsatisfactory. It had all been done, I understood, in the Public Interest. Now, as a member of the public, I didn't quite understand how my interest had been served by all this, so to find out I contacted a civil service friend of mine in the hope that he could set me straight.

"I expect you and your colleagues, the judiciary and the government, to look after my interests", I said. "After all, that's what I, as a taxpayer have a right to expect. Now this Sarah Tisdall... She must have really offended against my interests to have got such a stiff sentence, and no appeal to boot. What was it exactly that she did that was so terrible? Did she endanger National Security?"

"No, not at all", he replied. "That doesn't really come into it. National Security is much harder to damage than you might think from reading the newspapers. We have so many secrets we can afford to lose a few now and again."

"That's good", I said. "I guess she must have really embarrassed the government, huh?"

"Not really. The government was, of course, embarrassed, but I don't think that matters too much. You see, if something comes up that's really damaging, we tend to ignore it and hope that it'll go away. It usually does."

"I see. If she didn't really do any harm, how have my interests been threatened?"

"She broke the law"

"But a lot of people say it's a bad law and should be changed. What do you think?"

"It's absurd, but that's not the point. The criticism the law has received makes it all the more important to enforce it strictly. Otherwise it might just go down the drain."

"Might that not be a good thing if it's such a bad law?" I asked, getting more confused.

"Not necessarily. Successive governments, including this one, have held on to that law in spite of its shortcomings. If we allowed it to be changed now it would look as if we'd been wrong all along. It would look bad for the government. We'd lose credibility with the public and they might not pay attention to us anymore"

I still wasn't sure how enforcing a bad law was serving my interest.

"A lot of people have broken the Official Secrets Act", I persisted, "and got off much more lightly than Sarah Tisdall. Some of them really have been spies. How come those people haven't endangered my interests as much as she has?"

"You don't seem to understand", he said patiently. "It's not a question of how much damage she may have done. It's really a matter of betraying trust. You expect spies, Communists and people like that to do such things. That's their job. But a nice girl like that. The sort you'd think you could rely on. That's what hurts."

"Are you saying that if she'd been a spy she would have got off more lightly?" I could see that the requirements of Public Interest were very complicated.

"It would all depend on how important she was or whether or not she had worked for the Queen".

"If she had been politically motivated would she have got a lighter sentence?"

"Absolutely. We can't afford to get

involved in political witch-hunting.

"And if she'd done it for money?"

"She'd have got off"

"As I understand it. She was unpolitical and even pro-nuclear, and the only motive she had was disgust at a shabby attempt by the Defence Department to manipulate public opinion. Why is that worse than if she'd been, say, a member of CND, a Greenham woman, a vegetarian or something of that sort?"

"Anyone who supports these fringe causes is presumed to have impaired judgement, and by definition, defective conscience. The government would have been an injured victim of a deranged fanatic. As she's really quite normal, it doesn't look so good."

Things were getting a bit clearer. It seems that my interest lies in the good image of the government, irrespective of what was really going on. "Is that why," I asked, "the judge said that the sentence was inflicted in order to deter, as he put it 'people like you'. Did he mean ordinary people doing what they believed to be right?"

"Exactly".

"Doesn't civilization rest upon the concept of people doing what they believe to be right?"

"Morality has nothing to do with it. Civilization rests on the general acceptance of established authority, in this case the government and the law. If every upstart, non-entity, grade 10 clerk took it upon themselves to pass judgement on government policy and to decide for themselves what laws they will or will not obey, we'd have anarchy in no time. And that, you must admit, would be very detrimental to the public interest."

"I suppose so," I conceded, "but what if she'd been a high grade civil servant?"

"She would have had to resign, but she wouldn't have gone to prison."

"That doesn't seem very fair", I said.

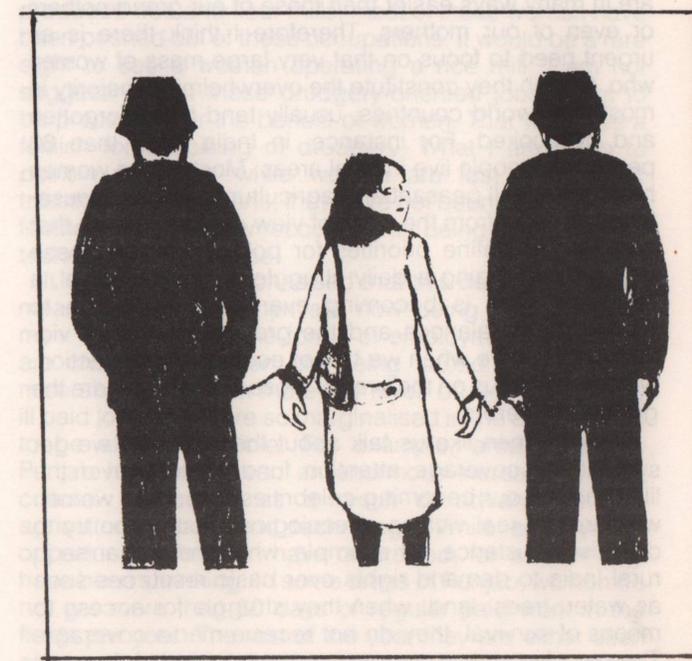
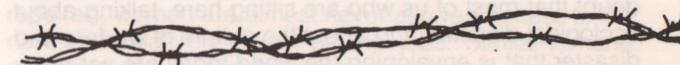
"Fairness has nothing to do with it. It's a question of what is fitting. And it is not fitting for a silly girl of average education and low status to take it on herself to make such judgements. That sort of thing must not be encouraged. If ordinary people start thinking and acting on their own initiative, what will become of us, whose job it is to do it for them." He was genuinely distressed.

"So Sarah Tisdall was punished for her presumption in thinking that she knew more than her elders and betters."

"I wouldn't put it quite like that" he said.

Doesn't it make you feel warm inside to know that Whitehall never sleeps in its concern over our interests?

Andrea Hanfman



women in india

The following is an article by Madhu Kishwar of the Manushi Collective in India. It is rewritten from the transcript of her speech when she addressed the RECLAIM THE EARTH conference, October 1983, and arrived too late to be included last issue.

I feel very happy indeed to have this opportunity to build connections with what I think is one of the most significant developments in the women's movement in the West. For the first time perhaps a possibility has emerged for the movements in the three parts of the world to share some common concerns. This is because the ecology and peace movements go far beyond posing a challenge to the relations between men and women in the First World. They also question the basic power relations within and between different societies including those between the First World and Third World countries.

Having said that, I would also like to stress, and I think the point can never be overstressed, even though it may seem like a plea for separatism, that there are significant differences between the situation of women in the first world and in the third world and also between sections of women within each society. Even within India a woman's life situation is as much determined by the traditions, culture and economy of the region, community, caste or class group she belongs to, and also whether she is living in a city or a village. Therefore, when speaking of women, we need to specify exactly which women we are talking of, instead of speaking of women as a general category.

The ecological movement in the West is, to a large extent, based on the fear of a future disaster whereas in the third world, the disaster is occurring today. I have no doubt that most of us who are sitting here, talking about ecological disaster, and about the culture of warfare and disaster that is enveloping the world today are not really among the primary victims of that culture. We are likely to be among those who reap some of the benefits. Our lives are in many ways easier than those of our grandmothers or even of our mothers. Therefore I think there is an urgent need to focus on that very large mass of women who, though they constitute the overwhelming majority in most third world countries, usually tend to be forgotten and overlooked. For instance, in India more than 80 percent of people live in rural areas. Most Indian women belong to small peasant and agricultural labourer households and it is from the point of view of such women that we need to define priorities for political action. These women are waging a daily struggle for bare survival, a struggle which is becoming ever more grim due to ecological imbalances and the growing culture of violence. Therefore when we talk of ecological destruction, we need to focus on the lives of those women who are the greatest sufferers.

When women like us talk about these issues, we get sympathetic coverage, attention, funds, there is even the likelihood of our becoming celebrities. But when women who are the real victims of ecological destruction try to organise resistance, for example, when they organise in rural India to demand rights over basic resources such as water, trees, land; when they struggle for access to means of survival, they do not receive media coverage. They receive violent repression at the hands of the rural elite whose power is bolstered up by the government administration and the police.

This grim battle for survival is being waged in India not because there is any absolute lack of food or water in the country. India became more than self sufficient in food production within about two decades of independence from colonial rule. Today India is an exporter of food. As is well known, the country is richly endowed with natural resources. Yet more than half of the population, by the government's own acknowledgement, lives below the poverty line, that is, in a condition of perpetual semi-starvation. That this should be so in the context of growing abundance and wealth clearly points to the unequal distribution whereby most of the resources are concentrated in the hands of a few.

First of all, the vast majority of the hundred of thousands of villages in India do not have any source of clean drinking water. Government's own figures admit that more than 90 per cent of the country's population do not have access to potable water. There are large regions of the country which have become perennially drought prone due to sheer mismanagement of the country's ecological and water resources.

Whatever the quality of water available, in most parts of the country women have to walk long distances to a stream, well or pond in order to bring home insufficient quantities of water for the family's consumption. This task is seldom, if ever, performed by men. Fetching heavy pots of water under a blazing sun or in cold winter takes a drastic toll of women's health. Furthermore, the inadequate quantity and the unhygienic quality of the water add a big burden on the family's struggle for survival. It is estimated that 80 percent of all illnesses in Third World countries are linked to the consumption of polluted water. The infant mortality rate in India is among the highest in the world. In at least 80 percent of these deaths, diarrhoea, a disease chiefly caused by consuming contaminated water, plays a major role. The high mortality rate of children also results in a much heavier burden of childbearing for women. Moreover, millions of women die every year in India from tetanus and other infections contracted during childbirth. Since sterilised or even clean instruments are often not available, rusty knives and stones are often used to cut the umbilical cord after childbirth. This endangers the life of both mother and child. Maternal mortality in India is also among the highest in the world.

Similarly, over the years the task of food and fodder collection has become more and more onerous for women, as the government has either appropriated or helped to destroy the entire forest wealth of the country. The forest policy devised by the colonial rulers in the 19th century vested complete charge of most forest wealth in the hands of the State. Since independence, the government has assumed even more sweeping powers, thereby making the forest policy increasingly oppressive for the rural poor. The laws make it possible for whole areas of forest land suddenly to be declared 'reserved' or 'protected' by a single administrative notification. Thus over night it becomes a punishable offence to enter such forests to graze cattle, gather fodder, fuel or other forest produce needed for poor people's subsistence. Women

usually play a primary role in such gathering activities. Thus the forest laws have a disastrous effect on the poor, especially on women. It has led to a severe curtailment of people's rights over once communally owned forests. Often women are compelled to pay bribes to forest guards or to take the risk of being caught committing a so-called offence. Being declared offenders for exercising their age old rights, they become even more vulnerable to all forms of exploitation at the hands of forest guards and officers.



On the other hand, it is not as if such so-called protective measures are resulting in genuine preservation of forests. The government is increasingly encouraging the commercial exploitation of forest resources for the urban consumer market or for export, leading to severe deforestation. Forest wealth has been exploited in so mindless a manner that if one travels from the north to the south of the country, the landscape today looks like a desert. The damage has been more devastating in the hill regions, leading there to frequent landslides. The forest laws have only resulted in the alienation of the poor from their age old rights and the control of the rich over more resources.

For example, the poor woman's fuel has become so scarce that she has to spend hours everyday in search of fast diminishing sources of fuel. In the hill regions of Uttarakhand, which have witnessed very serious deforestation in the last few decades, a woman has often to spend eight hours climbing rocky mountains in search of dry shrubs or scrub wood. A recent study done in the plains of Gujarat shows how the landless poor women in this area spend four or five hours every day searching for whatever little they can find as fuel or fodder. There are no forests nearby. The rich farmers do not any longer allow the landless poor to pick up the crop leftovers which they once used as fuel and fodder. Women's struggle for survival today in India is truly mindboggling. The work routine of an ordinary women in a village is truly brutalising.

Various micro studies have shown how a very large number of rural women work 15 to 16 hours a day, and even at the end of that day, many of them cannot ensure that they and their family will be well fed. A three year field study conducted in some villages of Karnataka with the aim of discovering rural energy consumption patterns, showed that the labour of women and children together contributed almost 70 percent of total human energy spent on doing all the work in villages. This survey did not take into account certain kinds of domestic work such as sweeping, cleaning, childcare and so on. Most of the energy of women was spent not on income generating activities, but on survival tasks such as gathering firewood and fetching water.

Among the poor a majority of women have to combine long hours spent on survival tasks with attempts to earn an income for the family. Contrary to the popular stereotype of a household as a unit headed by a male, a large percentage of households in India, particularly among the poor, are female headed. Even where there is an earning male in the family, it has been found that women have to assume a much larger responsibility for the economic survival of the family despite the fact that women usually get much lower wages and employment opportunities for them are severely limited.

At the same time, even the few low paid jobs women are permitted to perform are increasingly passing out of their hands with every slight advance in technology and trade organisation. This is particularly true for rural areas. For instance, threshing was traditionally considered a women's occupation but with the coming of simple thresher machines, women are pushed out and the job passes on to men, that is, precisely at the point when the same work becomes much less arduous and much better paying. Equally significant is the fact that in the factories where the machines are manufactured and repaired, women are almost never allowed access to the new and relatively better paying jobs. Similarly, hand pounding of rice and hand grinding of corn or wheat at one time provided employment to millions of rural women, but with the coming of simple, indigenously produced rice and flour mills, most of these women have been pushed out of these occupations. It would be a rare sight to see a woman operating a rice mill. I am not suggesting that these drudgery-oriented jobs ought to be preserved for the benefit of women. That would be a foolish romanticising of drudgery. What I am trying to point out is that while women are fast losing their traditional occupations, they have not been able to gain a foothold in the new occupations being created with technological advance.

It must also be emphasised that this decline does not mean that more women are now being supported by men. It means that the forms of employment of women are changing. Women are being forced to eke out a miserable living from more low level, drudgery-oriented, ill paid jobs which are so marginalised in the economy as to be almost invisible. For example, areas such as Punjab have witnessed an enormous increase in agricultural production as a result of advancement in agricultural inputs and technology. While employment opportunities for men have diversified, for women they have been shrinking. In some areas of Punjab, women do not get more than 60 days of regular paid work in the fields per year. The rest of the year they are either seen scavenging the countryside, picking up crop leftovers or performing very arduous tasks like collecting fuel and fodder for the landed households.

Another important source of women's powerlessness is that no matter how much they work on the land, as members of peasant families they almost never own or control land in their own right. They are deployed like servants to perform whatever tasks require their labour and supervision, and withdrawn from visible field work as soon as the family can afford to hire labour.

We do not know much about the exact nature of women's land rights in pre-colonial India. What we do know is that in the 19th century land settlement operations were carried out by the British colonial rulers in different parts of the country. The main purpose of such operations was the extraction of a heavy and exploitative revenue which was at that time the mainstay of the Raj. In the process of vesting land rights in the hands of a few men, creating a new landlord class in some areas, and in some others different categories of tenant landowners, the British completely bypassed the existing communal land rights of each village over its surrounding forest and grazing land. This is somewhat similar to the enclosure operations which took place during the 18th and 19th centuries in England. Secondly, land came to be seen more and more as private property, vested in the head of the family who was inevitably defined as the male. Through this process, women were alienated from land in most parts of the country.

This system of land ownership brought into being a rural landowning elite which acted as a bolster to the exploitative colonial administration, and on the other hand, a large mass of landless labourers whose immiseration has steadily continued. I am not suggesting that there were no landless people in pre-colonial India but the enormous increase in their numbers during the colonial period was quite unprecedented. From this time onwards, two trends are perceptible: one, the acceleration of the process of alienation from land whereby more and more people sink downwards into landlessness while land gets concentrated in the hands of a smaller group of people; and two, the near total alienation of women from rights to land.

Thus a majority of women in India are fighting a losing battle and are made to bear the brunt of poverty, destitution and neglect. Some simple statistics bring this out clearly. The 1901 census records 525 women per 1000 men in the country's workforce. Similarly, according to the 1901 census, there were 972 women per 1000 men in the total population and the total deficit between males and females was three million. By 1981 the deficit of females in the population had increased to 22 million and there are only 935 women per 1000 men in the country's population. This deficit has certainly not been caused by wars and killing but is evidence of a higher mortality rate among females due to neglect, discrimination in food and health care, overwork and millions of deaths from infections during childbirth because of lack of access to basic health care.

For most Third World countries, the killers are hunger, polluted water and the harshness of the struggle for survival and should be treated as priority issues because these are the factors that are killing women today. In such a situation, the prospect of a nuclear holocaust seems rather distant an issue, though I fully recognise its importance.

Dimensions of Disarmament

In my view, the question of disarmament also acquires a slightly different meaning for women in the Third World. I agree that it is very important to stop nuclear armament

but it is equally important to demand an end to all armament. I do not see why we should get excited only at the prospect of nuclear arms. I do not want anyone to be killed even by an ordinary gun or beaten with the baton of a policeman. It is crucially important to talk about disarming all those who have weapons including the policeman carrying his baton.

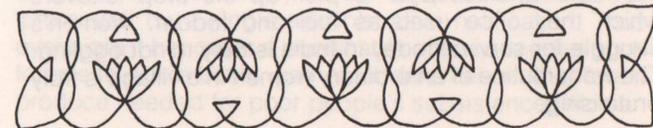
In Third World countries, I think we must start from the reality that exists in villages. There it is not just the military and the police who represent force but also the rural landowning elite. They are increasingly arming themselves with guns and rifles to repress the struggle of the poor. Wherever in India the survival struggles of women in the countryside take the form of organised movements demanding better living conditions and the implementation of existing laws like the one which guarantees minimum wages or to resist sexual exploitation, the protesters are faced with violent reprisals by the local elite – rich peasants who hire ruffians to terrorise the rural poor, especially the women. These rich peasants are backed up by the local police and administration. The reprisals are like a miniature war launched by the armed peasants on the unarmed or inadequately armed poor. Suddenly, often at night, a whole band of armed ruffians hired by the rich peasants will descend on the settlements of the rural poor. Houses are looted, people indiscriminately assaulted, even killed. Women are molested, raped, subject to torture. Often in such a situation, men flee to the fields, while women cannot run away because they have to look after the children, and so end up facing the brunt of the attack. There have been several instances of people being burnt alive in their huts.

The police almost invariably connive with and at the behest of the rural rich. They have great powers to arrest, interrogate, search houses and so on. The leaders of the struggle may be marched off to the police station and there tortured and intimidated. An atmosphere of terror is created in the area by the combined force of the guns of the rich peasants and the police.

Thus the increasing financial expenditure on police and military in India is matched by the proliferation of ever more sophisticated arms in the hands of the rural rich, who control not just economic but also political power in the villages and at the state level. They often have close familial or community links with the local administration. Wherever local struggles spring up, the oppressors are in a good position to crush them brutally. The government treats the struggles as 'law and order' problems or as a disturbance of the peace by trouble-makers who must be quickly crushed.

I think that the disarmament needed urgently is the removal of guns and musclepower from the rural elite. We need to be vigilant and somehow find ways of tying the hands of the government so that it cannot intervene on the side of the rich in every such conflict and is forced to cut down the expenditure on police and military. Unless these two movements for disarmament proceed simultaneously, we will not even have touched on the survival problems of millions of women in the world today.

Madhu Kishwar



Reclaiming our bodies through breastfeeding

Have you ever watched, or been part of, a scene where women are reacting to a piece of minor sexual harassment? We tend to bunch together, and withdraw from the situation. It is a double-bind; if you object, you're no fun; if you appear to welcome the attack you run the risk of escalation. Withdrawal seems like the only situation – and to seek the support of other women.

We are in just that same situation inside our bodies. Women's bodies are pretty dangerous place to live; there are snipers around every corner. Walking down the high street – pow – the telly shop has got videos for sale with pictures of women being terrified on the packet (no doubt there's worse inside). Turn on the TV or radio – pow – nasty jokes about women – zap – women's bodies wrapped around cars and cigars for packaging – zowie – another rape in the paper. Our own memories are minefields: encounters with doctors who have little faith in our ability to control our fertility, to birth, to breastfeed and the pain of the resultant intrusions. Our sexuality is the place where we are most vulnerable; our soft tissue. You don't want to leave yourself lying around there!

Feminists have for some time taken the option of withdrawing from birth and breastfeeding – with good reason! Women who do not reckon themselves feminists often withdraw from the sexuality into modesty. (I reckon excessive grooming, whether of the body or other property, can be a symptom of such unease).

But it seems to me that something else is beginning now. We are beginning to reclaim our sexuality. We have always demanded ownership of our own bodies, the right to make decisions concerning our fertility, our health, and our lives. These rights, basic though they are, seem dry and arid, as if they concern bodies that belong to heads.

I discern now a tingling, as sensation returns to muscles and organs long gone numb. We are moving back into our bodies again, and it is not always easy, not without pain and confusion. We are rediscovering our muscles as we build up cooperative work structures; our senses, through our sinister perceptions and creations in various art forms. And also our sexuality; not in the limited, genital sense which conditions patriarchal thinking, with its heavy emphasis on orgasm as the be-all and end-all but sexuality as the whole cycle of changes that our bodies spin through, the waxing and waning of our body-selves through pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding.

Like many women, I was highly suspicious of birth and breastfeeding before I had my children. It seemed like a good way to get women to stay where they belonged – close to the sink. I began to grow into my female body while I was pregnant. And as I grew, I grew into a different way of thinking. I gained a new respect for the skills of nurturing and caring and wondered why this respect was not shared by the rest of the world. I wondered what the world would be like if it was.

I don't want to talk a lot about birth here; it is too big a subject to skim over. I will just say that the birth of my first daughter, Corinne, left me feeling that some bits of my body actually belonged to the NHS. When my second daughter, Frances, was born I chose the place of birth, and the people who were with me, and I did make contact with the ancient self who knows how to birth. That



experience left me feeling that I had affirmed myself through my sexuality. And it gave me some hope that we can, if we work together, take back the energies of birth from obstetricians and manufacturers who would replace them with technology. What happened in between those two birth experiences was that I contacted several people who had birthed their babies joyfully, and talked endlessly with them, and I read everything I could find about normal birth. I also ate really well, and exercised in ways I enjoy.

Even after a depressing birth experience, I found that breastfeeding was lovely. I gloried in remaking the relationship with Corinne that hospital routine had interfered with: I spent hours playing with her, skin to skin; I luxuriated in long, leisurely feeding times, watching the birds outside my window, or just watching her feasting blissfully at my breast. I began to feel that I owned my body again. I delighted in watching her grow creamy and fat, her little smiles, the way she took in everything that was going on. I took pride in her growth and health. In those early weeks, there was plenty that was dull, plenty that made me feel that, as a mother, I was a second class citizen. But the feeding, and the silly games with the baby, were always good.

I was lucky that I made some knowledgeable friends through the La Leche League, who could help me through the usual tricky patches. With their help, I developed confidence in my ability to care for my baby, and understand her needs, and how the feeding works. It felt right to learn women's skills from women: we could discuss breastfeeding in the context of our developing relationships with our babies – quite different from a 'patient' consulting a medical 'expert'!

I felt that what I was doing was not just growing a personal relationship, but had political meaning too. A woman's decision to breastfeed is part of the move to reclaim her sexuality. Breasts for so long belonged to men, as toys or status symbols. By using them for something as mundane as feeding a baby, a woman brings her breasts back out of the realm of sexual fantasy and into the real world. By learning to use them and care for them, she makes them as intimately part of herself as her child, she lives in her breasts as closely as in her child, she lives in here breasts as closely as in her speech. By using them to protect the weakest and most vulnerable from the pain of hunger, from loneliness, from cold, and from anxiety, she states values which are directly opposed to the values of the patriarchal system. By giving her relationship with the baby time to grow, she is re-humanising time. By teaching her child that her call will be answered, every time, she is teaching a basic trust which is essential to cooperative working. By teaching her that comfort comes from human bodies, not things, she is undermining consumer fetishism. By using breastfeeding to alter her own moods, through the relaxing effects of the hormones which cause milk production and milk release, she is in control of her consciousness in a way which is quite unique. By trusting in her own body to produce the very best nourishment for her baby, she is cocking a snook at the power of the enormous multi-national companies which pretend to rival the potency of women's bodies. By choosing to feed her baby herself, she is boldly stating her own worth as a person, indispensable and irreplaceable. By quietly enjoying the erotic pleasure of physical intimacy with a baby, she reclaims her sensuality from the domination of genital sex, and bonds with the vulnerable, the playing, the growing, the unsplit body-mind.

Despite the lip-service paid to the value of breastfeeding by the medical profession these days, there is very little real support for the nursing couple forthcoming from the medical establishment. For a start, no money. Why shouldn't women receive a wage for breastfeeding. We pay people to do all sorts of useless things. So why not pay them to do something really useful and productive? In Indonesia, lactating mothers currently contribute a value of 520 million dollars annually to the economy, a figure equalling ten per cent of exports, 3.5 per cent of the national budget, and twice the national health budget. (*Mother milk and the Indonesian economy: A major national resource, by John Eliot Rohda, M.D., Journal of Tropical Paediatrics, Aug. 82*). In Britain mothers receiving some benefits can claim free cow's milk to feed their babies; why not the equivalent in money or food to support breastfeeding claimants? Why not free bus passes for mothers caring for young children? Or 'company' cars?

Choosing to support the rights of the breastfeeding couple is an exercise in sisterhood which stretches our talents in several areas. The big guns are ranged against breastfeeding. Multinational companies make large amounts of money from the sale of 'baby' milk powders. In Britain alone, the baby food market is estimated at £50 million per annum. They do not hesitate to use unscrupulous advertising to undermine the confidence of mothers in their ability to nourish their children themselves, and to undermine the confidence of health professionals in the normality of breastfeeding. They continue to violate the code drawn up by the World Health Organisation to regulate advertising. There is work of a political and campaigning nature to be done by any women who feel motivated to protect the most deprived mothers from organised exploitation by big business. The Nescafe

boycott (the boycott of one product made by a famous food manufacturer) has already cost Nestles an estimated one million dollars in the USA, and is operating in this country also. Contact: *Patti Rundall, Baby Milk Action Coalition, 34 Blinco Grove, Cambridge* for details of the boycott and other actions.

For those who are more inclined to work within a support group context, La Leche League is the nursing mothers organisation in Great Britain. You say it *La Lay-chay*. It means 'the milk' in Spanish, a reflection of the international nature of the organisation, which is recognised by the World Health Organisation and others as the world authority on breastfeeding. The local groups provide friendship, information about breastfeeding and many aspects of child development, and support to women who want to breastfeed. Their bi-monthly newsletter gives a voice to the nursing mothers of this country, making visible the invisible skills and feelings of those caring for young children. The kind of support women find they need varies from the practical (sharing cooking, chores, minding older children) to the emotional (sharing experiences, talking over problems, reasserting the value of an under-valued profession). These groups also allow mothers to teach each other the ancient art of breastfeeding. La Leche League leaders are trained not only in their knowledge of breastfeeding, but also as counsellors, and in the skills of leading group discussions. The groups have access to a wealth of published material. La Leche League is a non-political and non-religious organisation, enabling it to offer breastfeeding help and information to any mother who needs it. It is run entirely by women. For more details, contact *La Leche League, BM 3424, London WC1V 6XX. Tel: 01-404 5011*.

Breastfeeding is first and foremost a way of relating to a baby. Taking back the body-territory alienated from us by patriarchal modes of consciousness is important as a liberating experience for women, but it is even more important as a retaking of our relationship with our children. There are skills involved in and developed through mothering: understanding and receiving communication from a baby, encouraging, provoking, drawing out the baby's messages, responding warmly to the smiles, gurgles, cries and grizzles; allowing the growth of trust as the communications are met dependably and in a relaxed manner. These skills are passed on from mother to mother informally, along with the now-how of breastfeeding, in the supportive community which mothers make as a sub-culture in their wider community. Such skills are the basis of language, both spoken and body, in our society, as in others.

Rachel O'Leary



LITANY FOR THE SISTERS

*We are the women who never sleep
Who do not say yes
Who do not say no
The women who watch
And watching, weep,
Who weeping, smile
And watch once more.*

The unimaginable women.

*Raising a little finger
We change the world.
The scarlet women.
Subtle as serpents
And gentle
Gently pressing upon
One another
As doves.*

*Picturing a string
Of precarious pearls
We stop to thread them.
We are the women
Who stop at nothing.*

*The doubtful women.
The women without fear.
The faithful women.*

*The women placing their
Hands
In each other's wounds
The known
The thirst
The blood-thirsty women
Eaves-dropping
Between finger and thumb.*

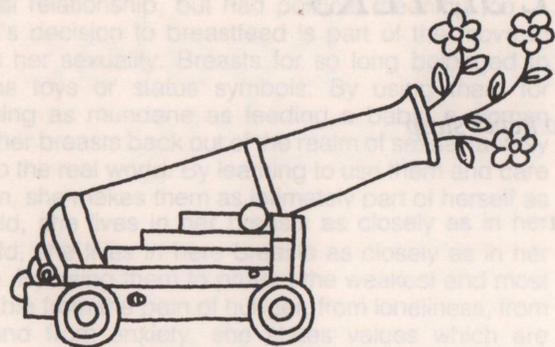
*The women who leave
Everything to chance
Who waste not
And want
The drops as they
Fall in fluorescent
Hours.*

*The women who make do.
The receiving women.
The women in their cups
Catching each other's eye
The other women who
Run softly to assemble
Vermillion blooms
In public places.*

*The bright-minded
The shameless
The parabolic women
Making everything anew.*



Leonie Caldecott
(1983)



Arms are for Hugging

In December 1982 a small group of women, inspired by their experience of Embracing the Base, came together to form a support group in Bristol for the Greenham women. Over the winter more women joined the group, bringing with them varied experiences: some are Quakers, some feminists; others with a background of meditation, politics, therapy and work with other peace groups. The things we share are: we are women, we are on the side of Life, we want to find ways of creating a more peaceful world. We found a name for our group, made a rainbow banner and took our first action: in February 1983 we sang, danced and chanted outside Newbury Magistrates Court where 14 Greenham Women were appearing on charges of "breaching the peace".

14 months later we have just returned from Greenham where the women face yet another eviction. These 14 months have been a continual learning process for us all. Our own determination always to work in ways that are non-violent has made us confront the violence that underpins society - not just the crude aggression of the arms race, but the violence that is shown towards anyone who attempts different ways of living, or who is simply different.

What motivates those continual violent, sometimes depraved, attacks upon themselves and their homes that the Greenham Women have to suffer? From soldiers, police, local residents and vigilantes? Why are they so regularly misrepresented in such a sick way by politicians and the media? Yesterday we witnessed a visit to the camp by the chairman of RAGE, whose campaign (he claims) doesn't focus on any political or economic issues but on the Greenham Women's "squalid" way of life.

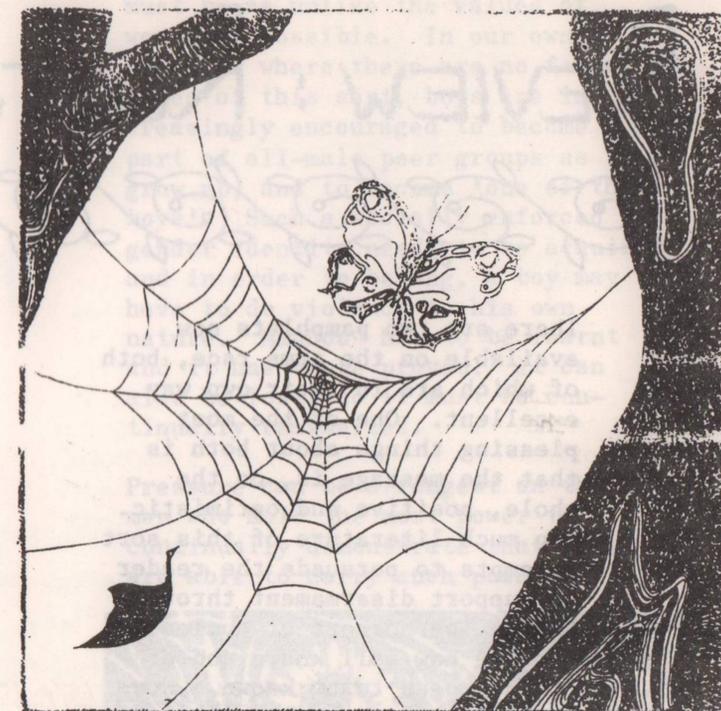
Perhaps the explanation is that all these people who attack the camp have a dark area of violence within themselves which they cannot admit to, even to themselves; and so they project these dark, unacknowledged, unacceptable feelings on to the women in the form of sick fantasies. These women, who reject all conventional structures with their total self-reliance and originality, are an intolerable threat to the rest who can only find security and safety through physical power, money and convention. Thus the women become symbols of hate; just like blacks or communists.

It's been important for us to look also at the violence within ourselves, at our own dark corners. How do we cope with our own anger, our fear, our violence? Do we end up playing the same games, projecting our unacceptable bits onto others?... like the police, the politicians, men in general? In our group we have tried to learn about ourselves through personal workshops.

But if involvement with the peace movement brings us into contact with the worst in people, the actions we've initiated or taken part in over the past year have also put us in touch with the other side of life: the creative, joyful, loving side. The memory, for example, of last year's International Women's Day for Disarmament, when women and children gathered for a huge picnic on Castle Green in the centre or the city. We were lent a ferry for part of the day: we decorated it with streamers and banners and gave free rides along the river. On Valentine's Day this year we handed out cards with the message "Arms are for Hugging" to businessmen in the city centre, and some responded surprisingly warmly, as if maybe we had struck a spark in their loveless world.

But it always comes back to Greenham. That's where the missiles are, that's where the women are. Yesterday, Sarah Hipperson urged the press not to trivialise events there: "If you want to watch people being thrown out of their homes," she said "why not go to Brixton, or Brazil?" The real issue, she continued, is the way that a few hundred people throughout the world are making decisions motivated by profit and greed that threaten the whole of humanity. As she talked about human suffering in the Third World, and the political situation in Central America, the reporters chewed their pencils and stopped writing. The Greenham Women speak, but so few hear.

Women For Life and Peace
April 3rd 1984



Women's Decorating Team

My life was one big question mark, the prospect of even a vaguely interesting and worthwhile job was a joke, so I decided to go down to the local voluntary work shop I'd heard about and see what was doing. The room I found offering things to do was just like a Jobcentre except it was packed with cards and posters from wall to wall. Where to start? Well, I moseyed around for a while wondering if there was anything I'd be any good at until I came across a small card saying *Women needed to form a Women's Decorating team - no experience necessary.* I wouldn't even have thought twice about looking into it, having absolutely no experience in decorating, but it said I didn't need to know anything and also what had caught my eye in the first place was the 'Women's team' bit. It would be all right muddling through with other women who perhaps knew as little as me.

Anyway, from that a team has developed, ranging from four and ten women depending on who can make it each Friday. At first none of us knew very much so Roz, Avril

and Sue from the Service 9 voluntary work shop who had organised it all, came along and gave us a few tips before we began. Soon though, it turned out that Wendy, one of our team, is a whizz kid at decorating and could show us all the technicalities involved like dropping a plumb line to get wall paper straight, and it's been uphill ever since.

The places we do are either for old people who can't manage to climb ladders any more or single parent families. It's always a real laugh, and as Jannie said, it's as much a social occasion as anything. Being all women we have wonderful indepth conversations down the pub at lunchtimes, getting to know the pub scenes all around Bristol! All together it's been a total education, and not only in decorating skills. I've learnt a lot about how good it can be to work with women - there's no stopping us now!

Libby

REVIEW: ROOTS OF CONFLICT



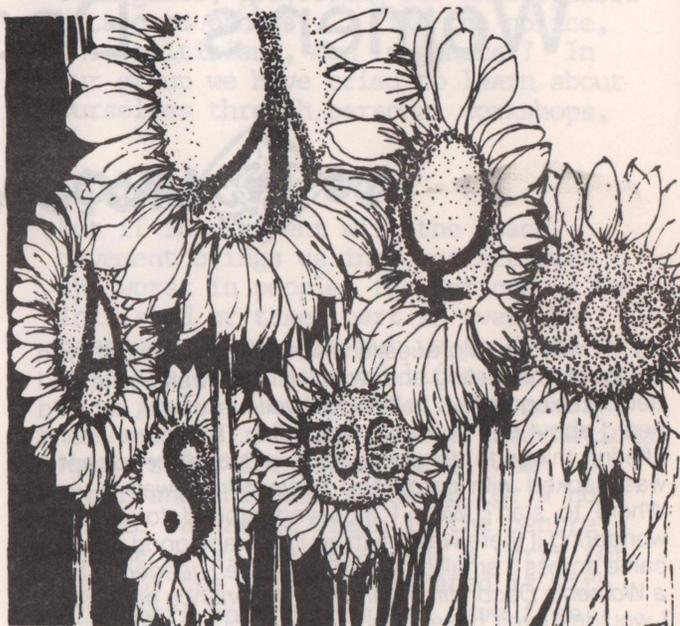
There are two pamphlets now available on the arms race, both of which are in their own way excellent. One of the most pleasing things about both is that the message is, on the whole, positive and optimistic. Too much literature of this sort attempts to persuade the reader to support disarmament through fear. The horrors of nuclear war are now well known and of course, need to be known. However, ploughing through a litany of destruction can all too often leave the reader feeling powerless and desperate and only reinforces the conviction that there is nothing which can be done to avoid Armageddon. Small wonder, then, that the vast majority of people choose not to think about it altogether.

Neither of these booklets expend much space on such doom-mongering and concentrate instead on the underlying cause of the arms race in the hope that understanding these causes will open up new possibilities for action other than demonstrations which largely fall on deaf governmental ears.

EMBRACE THE EARTH - A GREEN VIEW OF PEACE (CND Publications Ltd., 90p.)

produced by Green CND approaches the subject from the viewpoint of green politics. The arms race is viewed not as an isolated evil but as a symptom of a deeper malaise in modern industrial society. The assumption that prosperity can come about only through producing and consuming more is fundamental to orthodox economic thinking. Such production is measured by the Gross National Product, an indicator

that makes no distinction between production of bread and the production of guns. Clearly then, the GNP will not necessarily reflect the extent to which real human needs are met. Technology, with its capacity to increase productivity and efficiency is seen as a good in itself, and has its own demands - that which can be done will be done whether it contributes to human welfare or not. Economic imperatives are thus at variance with ecological and human requirements. The authors effectively make the connections between this attitude and many of the world's most serious problems - Third World deprivation, environmental destruction, the arms race and sexist/racist attitudes.



Ultimately, the authors argue, the solution lies in a change of heart within the individual. Respect

for the earth and for each other should underlie our social structures and economic endeavours. The needs of the planet are the same as the needs of the person, since we are part of the web of life on the planet, and this understanding should inform all our activities. Change can come about if people are prepared to take control of their own lives, and live in a way that is consistent with ecological balance, rather than wait for a leader to do it for them. The pamphlet is attractively produced with good illustrations and covers a wide area clearly and simply. There is a useful reading list for those who wish to pursue the ideas expressed in more depth.

IT'LL MAKE A MAN OF YOU - A FEMINIST VIEW OF THE ARMS RACE

by Penny Strange (Peace News/Mushroom Publications, 95p)

focusses on the same issue from the perspective of male psychology. She does not suggest that all individual men are necessarily violent, but that the qualities that are traditionally associated with masculinity, toughness, competitiveness, contempt for weakness and for the body, lead to a society where winners and losers, superior and inferior, in-groups and pariahs struggle for survival. Enmity is taken for granted, violence is inevitable. Male supremacy, white supremacy, technological and economic power, and the military, are the manifestations of these attitudes.

Entry into womanhood is a natural biological occurrence. The onset of menstruation is a clear sign that a girl has become a woman and is ready for child-bearing. This event happens to every girl, regardless of what she is or what she does or does not do. Entry into manhood, on the other hand, has no such clear signal. Consequently, writes Penny Strange, manhood is marked by various socially contrived activities. In some societies where there are initiation rites, boys are removed from the company of women and placed in all-male groups, and inculcated with the values of that group. These values, in order to preserve

the distinction between the sexes, must be as unlike the values of women as possible. In our own society, where there are no formal rites of this sort, boys are increasingly encouraged to become part of all-male peer groups as they grow up, and to become 'one of the boys'. Such a socially enforced gender identity needs to be acquired and in order to belong, a boy may have to do violence to his own nature. Manhood has to be learnt and it has to be proved. It can also be lost, so it must be continually reasserted.

Pressure can be strongest on those men who hold the most power to continually demonstrate that they are able to carry such power.

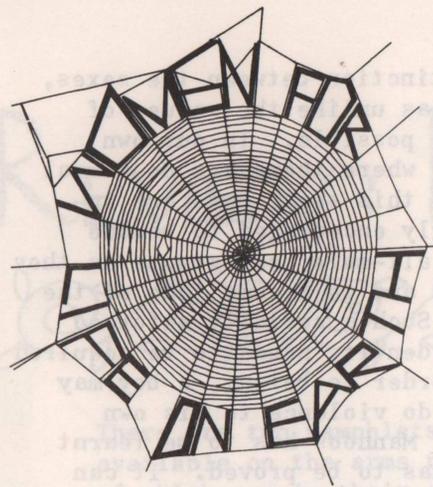


Examples of American presidents, who increasingly find themselves listening to the most Hawkish and consequently more 'manly' of their advisors, are cited. The arms race, with its postures, shows of strength, threats and counter threats is merely the most extreme example of acting out of the male fantasy.

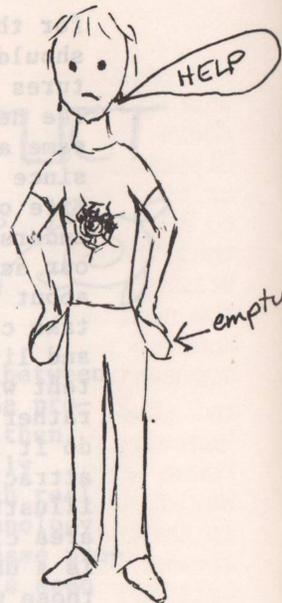
In a male dominated world qualities of aggression and competitiveness are regarded as natural and desirable. Technology, big business and militarism thrive in this environment. What then can despised and powerless women do? Work together, says the author, to assert themselves and the humanly valuable qualities of sharing, co-operation, respect and compassion that women have held in trust for all people.

This analysis of male psychology is extremely well presented and researched, and though not everyone will agree with the arguments presented, they are convincingly put. The pamphlet contains lists of women's groups and further reading. It's a good buy for women who want to see the feminist case clearly and cogently presented. I hope men will read it too.

Andrea Hafman



SUPPORT WFLOE



★The WFLOE T-SHIRT. Two Designs: 'Women for Life on Earth' in two sizes, M or L (on the small side) and 'Greenham Women are Everywhere' (only a few in size M left). Choice of green web and mauve lettering or vice versa on 100% cotton white background. Price: £3.50 (£3.00 to WFLOE network).

★SILVER SPIDERWEB EARRINGS. £3.50 per pair, £1.75 single (£3.00 and £1.50 to WFLOE network)

★SPIDERWEB ENVELOPE LABELS - £1.00 per 50, £1.75 per 100, £3.00/200

★RECLAIM THE EARTH CARDS - Full colour. 50p each, £4.00 for 10

★RECORD SINGLE BY FRANKIE ARMSTRONG. 'Shall there be womanly times' £1.00

All available from: Mary Upton, 1 Hamilton Terrace, St Julians Rd, Shoscombe, Bath. Tel: Radstock 34937

★GLASTONBURY CND FESTIVAL There will be a womens tent at the festival again this year. If you would like to help on the WFLOE stall (free tickets!) please contact Mary Upton at the above address. The dates are: June 22/23/24th.

★Janice Owens will be standing in the Euro-elections in June as a joint Ecology Party/WFLOE candidate. This is quite an expensive business! If anyone can help by making a donation of money, however small, we would be very grateful.

Cheques should be made payable to South-east London Women for Life on Earth, and sent to: 91 Kirkdale, Sydenham, London SE26 4BL, please mark the envelope EURO-ELECTION.

Our advertisement rates are: (negotiable!)

Full page £40

Half page £22

Quarter page £12

Eighth page £7

Sixteenth page ... £4

Cheques payable to
Women for Life on Earth

Letters

Dear Friend,

We are from a small fishing village on the North-east coast of Scotland, a village famous in past days of the North Sea fishing boom and for its lifeboat. Our folk have been fisherfolk here for ten generations or more. Times are hard today and many of our people are out of work. We have known hardship and danger and lived with it for generations, but now there is a new danger that we cannot live with. and that is why we are writing to you.

On Marmond Hill behind our town there are now several monitors belonging to NATO. They say they are there to give early warning of a nuclear attack. We do not know whether the threat of such an attack is real or imagined, but we do know that there is no defence in nuclear war and that there will be no victors either, only losers.

We want to do something to stop the nuclear arms race, because it is a race to oblivion, and we want to ask for your help and support for this.

We want Fraserburgh to join with the hundred and sixty cities and towns, counties and regions in Britain that have declared themselves Nuclear Free Zones, as a way of saving that we want to move towards a time when there will be no nuclear arms or nuclear bases in Scotland, or in Britain. or in Europe, towards the day when the monsters can go from Mormond Hill and the fear can go from our hearts.

We are hoping to make links with other villages and towns like ours, in Europe. both East and West, and to work together with them for a nuclear-free Europe.

We are writing to you to ask for your encouragement and support. Write to us and we will publish gladly what you write.

Ardmachron,
Rathen, by Fraserburgh.
Aberdeenshire,
Scotland

Dear Sisters in Peace, and for
Life on Earth,

In response to the article in your autumn publication of WFLOE, I write to tell you of my experiences in the USSR. Ever since my first visit as a teacher/member of a School Journey party in

summer 1966, I have been aware that Russian people (as distinct from politicians) are more afraid of war and more determined not to allow it to happen than we are.

On each of my visits, now 8 in all, I have had people, just passing in the streets of Leningrad and Moscow, recognise from my clothes that I am a foreigner turn and hold me by the arm to ask: first if I am American, second if I am English will I please go home and TELL THEM ALL WE DON'T WANT WAR.

On these occasions the intensity of emotion causes them to squeeze the arm they hold tightly enough to cause bruising.

On each and every occasion I have said that 'I cannot tell them ALL but I shall tell all the ones I meet.'

The women I have met almost invariably lost male relatives, lovers, husbands or sons in the last war and so have a vested interest in Peace.

Children in the USSR are regarded as the wealth of the future, and are so treated by everyone.

As a result of my visits I have friends there. who now watch closely the television reports of our demonstrations to see if they can see me!

These reports are considerably longer than anything we see on our television news and are much more factually commented upon than one might suspect. I have to admit even I expected more anti-capitalist propaganda!

I should like to finish by quoting from two letters from one of my friends received this year:

'So far I have no seen you on television yet, although there was one picture where I thought you were sitting, clapping your hands during some ban-missile manifestation. Well anyway, I was proud for you to be engaged in activity!' (dated 20/12/82, just after the embracing of Greenham)

'As for the TV news, be sure that we follow the news programmes as close as possible. Being far away from sites, we do admire the wisdom of you British workers and citizens of the world inasmuch as you show to somebody else that you are concerned with having someone to talk to, instead of having the clamouring for arms and ruins all over as a result of continuing the sickening hostility race! I find no other words to express it other than I've done, even if it might sound pathetic.' (dated 10/9/83)

These are the words of an ordinary Russian, who loves Russia in a way we cannot comprehend; who, like those in the street, place the responsibility for preventing nuclear war squarely upon our (British) shoulders. They feel unable to trust both of the super powers to make the right decision.

We cannot let them down.

I am unable to say how strongly I support your efforts to get to the USSR to meet people there. We must also turn similar attention to the USA where millions believe Reagan to be a Moderate!

In sisterhood,

Marjorie Lee
87 Haydn Ave
Purley
Surrey CR2 4AJ

Dear WFLOE,

The Launceston WFLOE has taken off with gusto. The group came into being when we made a huge banner for Women's International Day for Disarmament last May. Last Friday (Nov 11) we had a Rainbow Serpent (from Aboriginal Mythology) parading Launceston Streets to publicise the Womens Action at Pine Gap in central Australia and a wonderful concert starring Judy Small -- a Sydney based feminist who came and gave two concerts in Tasmania for free in support of the Pine Gap action.

So we are off and running and with you in love and spirit. The wonderful web of women is here to stay and we will bring peace to Mother Earth.

Bless you,

Sue Todd
Golconda
Tasmania

Dear WFLOE,

I agree absolutely with all your aims and statements, and I welcome the broad life-affirming base: most groups will only campaign on one particular issue, e.g. nuclear weapons, environment, animal lib, education, etc. - and this obsessive focussing on one aspect of a problem, isolating it, is a typical patriarchal mode of going about things. Women are used

to making connections, weaving webs, seeing a much fuller and more real picture. It's because we create and nourish life that we have this wider vision, that's quite direct and specific as well -- that we're all totally dependant on the Earth and the life-system She supports, and we're sick, angry and fearful at the destruction and abuse She undergoes.

I find that the kind of knowledge and awareness that comes with seeing everything in these terms, recognising what's really going on, can be really painful, agonising sometimes. I get filled with numbness and despair. For me it's so important to know other women who feel as I do, seeing it all in a similar way. I'm lucky that I do know some amazing women already. Going to Greenham Common made me realise just how many of us there are - and millions more who couldn't be there that day.

What's been happening at Greenham (the Peace Camp itself as well as the demonstrations) is not merely a political event or demonstration - powerful though it is in its obvious message. It's also been working on a deeper, subtler, psychic level: we've been making magic, in other words. The encircling of the camp, joining hands, passing energy on and outwards, lighting candles and chanting, sowing seeds; all these are magical celebration with very powerful symbolism. The 'spiders web' theme is beautifully apt on all sorts of levels: one mythological connection is with Arachne the Spinning and Weaving Goddess, who wpins the threads of life, from the great Wheel of the stars to the flesh of a child in its mothers womb. That's been a favourite image of mine for years, so I was delighted to discover the Web was an important symbol for other women too.

In sisterhood,

Hilary
Dyfed, Cymru

Dear WFLOE,

I'm writing as a follow-up from the WFLOE Conference in Oct. It was the first thing of its sort that I'd been to, and I got an enormous amount out of it.

What struck me fairly forcibly was that there are not many such opportunities available, and that there were so many options there which I would have liked to have followed through. All the people who I met there felt the same - that it was frustrating that there were so many things they didn't have the time to do!!

So I do hope there is a chance that you'll have another one soon! In particular I'd like to mention that in the group on Spirituality there were some leaflets available on Despair Work, which everyone seemed quite keen to buy. Only one person in that group mentioned the despair she felt about out probable (?!) destruction - but she was not allowed a space for it.

Afterwards, having read the leaflet on 'Despair Work', it seemed that perhaps a valuable opportunity had not borne fruit...

So if you are thinking of planning another conference - and I very much hope you are - is there any chance of including a workshop on these lines?

My very best wishes,

Sarah Joiner
E. Molesey, Surrey

Dear WFLOE,

I enclose a quotation you might like to use in your next issue. It is from a novel ALL PASSION SPENT by Victoria Sackville West and written about 1930. The attitude seems crucial to feminist, and peace thought.

"She supposed dutifully that these things were of major importance, since they were clearly the things which kept the world on the move; she supposed that party politics and war and industry and a high birth-rate (which she had learned to call manpower) and competition and secret diplomacy, were all part of a necessary game, unintelligible; she supposed it must be so, though the feeling more frequently seized her of watching figures moving in the delusion of a terrible and ridiculous dream. The whole tragic system seemed to be based upon an extraordinary convention, as incomprehensible as the theory of money which (so she had been told) bore no relation to the actual supply of gold. It was chance which had made men turn gold into their symbol, rather than stones;

It was chance which had made men turn strife into their principle, rather than amity. That the planet might have got on better with stones and amity - a simple solution - had apparently never occurred to its inhabitants."

I am trying to put together yet another collection of peace songs, words and music and would be grateful to hear of any that readers particularly like, and those which they feel have been particularly effective at demonstrations. Also any from abroad.

With thanks,

Susan Doyle
Lady Nance House
COLAN
Nr- New Quay
Cornwall

Dear WFLOE,

Childbirth and breastfeeding are my main passions at the moment and I feel are central issues to all discussions about ecology -- we live a long way away from the ecology of our own bodies. To me there are tremendous parallels in the way we treat the Earth our Mother and the way we treat women as mothers. I can wax lyrical about birth both from a positive (active birth) and negative (post-natal depression) angle for a long time. My first child was born in a very nasty and violent way and I personally feel this is one way the violence enters our souls. Our Western industrialised culture claims to be scientific in its approach to birth and yet is so far away from what is physiological. (as near to birth as a drip feed is to a gourmet meal, to quote R.D.Laing)

Yours sincerely,

Mary Field
Orpington
Kent

