



# WOMEN FOR LIFE ON EARTH

RECLAIM THE EARTH GATHERING



ECO~FEMINISM

NUCLEAR WASTE  
TRANSPORT

THIRD-WORLD  
CONNECTION

COMPUTERS

WINTER '84 / 60p





THE WFLOE RECLAIM THE EARTH WEEKEND in London, Oct 15-16, 1983 was a first of its kind in the U.K.. Thanks to funding provided by the GLC through the Womens Committee we were able to invite women from other countries to share their experiences with us. It provided an invaluable opportunity for us to explore the connections between the many diverse areas and issues to which women are devoting their particular skills and energy.

This issue, a London issue, includes several of the talks which were given during the weekend as well as additional contributions from women in London. We received an incredible amount of material for this issue, much of which we have had to hold over for the next one due to lack of space. As it is, in order to allow room for the material we have included we have had to exclude our 'News and notices' section as well as our 'Letters' pages, and promise to make space for these next issue. Thank you to all of you for writing in.



Time and again we are asked: WHAT IS WOMEN FOR LIFE ON EARTH? Well...first of all we are not a 'group': there are many WFLOE groups and individuals scattered all over the country, and, increasingly, the world. We're not a campaign either, in the classic political sense. We don't focus on a single-issue, or operate out of a 'campaign office' somewhere. As for what we do... (apart from being wickedly subversive at all times!) this differs from region to region. Some of us work on local environmental issues from a feminist perspective, others are deeply involved in the peace movement, supporting or living at Greenham or one of the other bases. Yet others are trying to disseminate information on ecological or peace issues to an ever-growing number of women through public meetings, educational events or local newsletters. What's certain is, that with more and more women waking up to the threats ranged against life on earth, and connecting this with their feelings and experiences as women, the range of activities and concerns gets more and more complex. In trying to get at the roots of our problems, our view of the symptoms expands all the time.

WFLOE is a fine web of connections between issues and people. More precisely perhaps, we are an experiment in communication. Communication which allows us to expand our horizons and coordinate our actions, without being crushed by the weight of someone else's priorities and attitudes. This gives us the strength of diversity, of being locally rooted, of remaining autonomous, with enthusiasm and energy generated from our own hearts and lives, not from some top-heavy bureaucracy. Thus WFLOE has grown in the most organic way possible; spontaneously and with no advance planning.

Nonetheless, in order to stay in touch with one another across this web, someone has to do specific kinds of work. Someone has to do net-working, in fact, to provide a pool of information for women wanting to make new connections and contacts. Someone also has to put together the magazine every three months, making it lively, readable, nice to look at so that we are encouraged and empowered by it throughout the network. And finally, someone has to look after the finances, selling tee-shirts and earrings and labels and any other bright marketing ideas we might have to support the work of WFLOE. Until now, for the past three years in fact, the bulk of this work has been done by our trusty national coordinator, Stephanie Leland, with the occasional help of volunteers and regional contacts. Now, with the network growing daily so is the work-load and Stephanie is experiencing eco-feminist burn-out. Quite apart from that, it's very necessary that the organising initiatives not get stuck with one, or even two or three women. They should be rotated so that we make use of the power of the diversity of resources we possess when we all pitch in together. So, we need: 1. One woman to coordinate membership and enquiries. 2. One woman to look after money and marketing items. 3. One woman to be responsible for the production and distribution of the quarterly magazine.

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WOMEN  
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LIFE  
on  
EARTH



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If you would like to support the network and receive the magazine  
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Annual membership: £10 for groups and organisations

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of the newsletter instead of paying a sub.



# Eco-feminism

## Where the Spiritual and the Political come together

First of all I want to thank Women for Life on Earth for inviting me here to talk to all of you and to meet all of you, sisters in spirit and politics. But more important than thanking them for inviting me here, I want to thank them for being. It's very exciting for me to come here to England and meet women who think so much the way I do, and who are working in so much the way that I am – it gives me more faith than ever in our efforts and our perspective and movement. And three years ago I opened the first eco-feminist conference held in Amherst, Massachusetts, with these words which said at that time what we were about in calling women together:

'We here are part of a growing movement of women for life on earth, we come from the feminist movement, the anti-nuclear movement, the disarmament movement, the wholistic health movement. We have come because life on earth and the earth itself is in terrible danger. We feel a great urgency. We don't have much time but we have to move against those, mostly men, who form systems of patriarchal government and power which poison and pillage our farms, forests and rivers, have destroyed our cities and armed our children against the children of our sisters. They do this every day as part of their ordinary work. We all know there has to be another way of being, of living and working on this earth. There is, and because of the physical and historical facts of our experience, we women know it. We're here to say the word ecology and to announce that for us as feminists it's a political word. That it stands against the economics of the destroyers and the pathology of racist hatred. It's a way of being which understands there are connections between all living things and indeed we women are the fact and flesh of connectedness. We own the real powers of our numbers and political consciousness and the combined power of our history and our life in the mythologies of creation. We intend to use these powers as health makers, to forcefully resist the destroyers, the poisoners. The world has to have a future. We intend furiously and with some joy to connect this exalted (?) planet to that future.'

So how did we get to that conference? I have been asked to talk a little bit about how the Women for Life on Earth group in America came into being. Basically we were a group of women from the northeast United States who had talked for years about the different movements we were involved in, about the inadequacy of any one political perspective or project that we knew and we lived with and we took part in, to really express who we were and what we thought about the world. And I think all of us had an increasing dissatisfaction with the kinds of things we were involved with.

In that core group there were about 10 of us, we were from the anti nuclear, disarmament, ecology, lesbian, feminist movements. What brought us together the first time was the near melt down at Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania. And I think all of us in the north east United States, and probably people elsewhere in the world, were paying attention as well, but were sort of rivetted to our television sets watching the situation unfolding.

In that situation you could see all of the pathologies in the way of our culture operating all at one time. One expert would tell us one thing and another expert would tell us the other, and it was clear the situation was entirely out of control. Yet we had all these bloodless bureaucrats on the tube telling us that they were going to take care of everything. And I think at that point nobody believed them. It wasn't just we wild-eyed eco-feminists. It's very clear that nuclear power is an utterly lethal technology for which no provision for accident has been made. Out of that experience we realised that we had to understand what this had to do with women and feminism and where this whole civilisation had gone wrong, beyond economic inequality and the domination of women.

So out of this crisis came the Women for Life on Earth conference that we held. We decided to hold a conference. We thought we would have a couple of hundred women, and we would hold it in Amherst, Massachusetts. Well, we decided to hold it on March 16 and 17, and what we found was that we weren't the only women thinking that way at all. Some of us were used to working

exclusively with women in the lesbian feminist movement, the feminist movement, the women's spirituality circles, and some of the women had been in mixed ecological movements. What we found was that the interest in our group was way beyond anything that we had anticipated. The letters, and cards, and notices started rolling in. And people wanted to come. We had about 80 workshops related to eco-feminist thinking and practice, and we closed registration when we had 650 women registered! We had struck a nerve and we had ended up with something that certainly took over all of our lives. It changed all of our lives too, taking us into a whole different kind of politics, and into a continuing involvement with each other, and the beginning, I think, of a different wave of the feminist movement, which led to the forming of the Women's Pentagon Action.



We decided to hold an action at some pinnacle of patriarchy which expressed all of the hatred of life, the fascination with death, machinery, oppression, that characterises our American government. We chose the Pentagon, but it was not only an anti-militarist action. Those of you have read our unity statement in *Reclaim the Earth* can see that we actually were there to stand against all forms of oppression, that we were not asserting a hierarchy among them. When we began to organise in this way all the old-time politicians told us that we wouldn't be effective if we didn't form a coalition, that we needed sponsorship of non-national groups, and this was a really silly way to operate. They said, oh, what do these women know about politics? We decided nonetheless to be a group of individuals, to take no sponsorship and no endorsement, that we were not going to be a coalition – you know how coalitions work, the lowest common denominator, the smallest issue that everybody can agree on. It's not that this isn't an important way to work at times, but that wasn't what we wanted to do. We decided that we would write a statement that really exemplified all the things that we felt and believed and it would include everybody's issues. Amazingly, we were able to do that. And in about two months time we organised about 4,000 women to come to the Pentagon. This action led to the establishment of an on-going network in the United States – Women's Pentagon Action. We now have special women's peace camps in the United States.

I think a lot of the actions come out of an eco-feminist kind of perspective. There may be those of you who are here today who think, maybe I am one but I'm not really sure what eco-feminism is, and this is a very vague idea.

Others may have been trying to say to you – oh, no, this is not a vague kind of idea. I would like to say to you that it is a fluid kind of politics, a vague kind of an idea, an embryonic kind of consciousness, a way of being in the world, seeing the world doing politics. And that we actually take some pride in that vagueness. We're acting against the totalising that everything has to be shoved through one particular ideology which is preformed for you, and when you join a group, you pledge allegiance and that's that.

When we formed Women for Life on Earth we had really enough of that. I'd taken part in the ecology movement, I'd been in the feminist movement, I'd done different things and I felt that some part of my perspective, and my own needs, and what I felt needed to happen with the world was embodied in all those different kinds of ... movements. But after a while I began to realise that there was a stronger, more truthful synthesis that could be made by women of these different insights. So I want to talk a little about this emerging vague theory of eco-feminism. First, I think feminism and ecology are where politics come face to face with biology, and where the spiritual and the political come together. These movements come together in the way that they understand the world, these perspectives are where the chickens come home to roost. This is something that the left and socialism in general has not been able to come to terms with, that the crisis of this civilisation which has led us to the brink of nuclear annihilation, is spiritual as much as it is economic. And that it has to do with a world divided against itself on many different fronts. The fact that it's economic I don't deny, but the long road to capitalism went hand in hand



with the systematic devaluation of everything associated with women, with the spiritual and with life itself. This white, western, patriarchal civilisation – with this celebration of logic and of the linear mind – is based on a profound dualism. It depends on dividing the soul from the body, the intellect from the feeling, the spiritual from the political, and nature from culture. And we couldn't be where we are today if we didn't live in a society which

who ever saw these connections, I don't think. I think other people in time, in history, have not known quite what to do about them. Just as an example, prior to the rebirth of the feminist movement and the birth of the ecology movement in the 1960s, German philosophers Max Hockheimer and Theodore Adorn wrote about how women-hating and nature-hating were inextricably entwined in this civilisation. They wrote: 'Women became the embodiment of the biological function, the image of nature, the subjugation of which constituted that civilisation's title to fame. For millenium men dreamed of acquiring absolute mastery over nature, of converting the cosmos into one immense hunting ground. It was to this that the idea of women was geared in a male dominated society. People who have come to this perspective before us in history ended up being very pessimistic and not seeing any way that that sort of understanding translated into political action and to a consciousness and a sensibility that could live and work in the world. It was too radical – too devastating a knowledge. The feminist movement and the ecology movement arrived in this context and neither, I think, fit neatly into the economic categories of contemporary politics. Both are deeply cultural and even spiritual movements, whose principles explode the categories of the political, which force the political to include the biological on the one hand and the spiritual on the other. And they also necessitate a way of confronting sexual authority which is appropriate to such a sensibility. In other words, we have to come up with the kind of politics that make sense for our radical understanding of the world. I think we're just really beginning to do that. Eco-feminism grows out of the coming together of feminism and ecology. It's interesting how a lot of feminists have gone wrong by wanting to deny this connection to nature, by wanting to deny and repudiate the maternal because that's how we've been oppressed. They worry that claiming our connection to nature is putting the yoke on us again. I understand that feeling in a culture which devalues certain ways of living, certain functions and doing certain kinds of things in the world. Liberation is not having to do those things. Or having to get someone else to share the shit. But we need to think more about the shit and whether it's really the shit, or even whether shit is so bad. When we start thinking about biology, when we start thinking about ecology, I think we have to redefine what's valuable and meaningful work, redefine our sense of time, redefine the way that we understand history. There are all sorts of possibilities latent in our current situation. There is power, that's not structural political power and economic power as we know it, and this is the only kind of power that women have. We must have faith in a future for this world and in the power of women to bring this about. As eco-feminists we stand on the biological dividing line and this is where we intend to stay.

Most of us are pacifists because we think that ends and means must be brought together and because we want to put an end to objectification once and for all. And I think we want to oppose patriarchy to oppose men when they oppress women, when they dominate nature. We will stand in the way of men who are oppressors, but we will also try and love the enemy, in other words not to deny the potential of the other to change. We must have both the extended hand and the restraining hand. We have to stop them and simultaneously show a different way to be and to live. We must be a negation and an affirmation at the same time. I think we must also put one oppression above others – that Patriarchy is a maze of dominations, divisions, dualism and denials. We need to confront all of these at once. The idea of arguing forever about which domination came first is irrelevant.

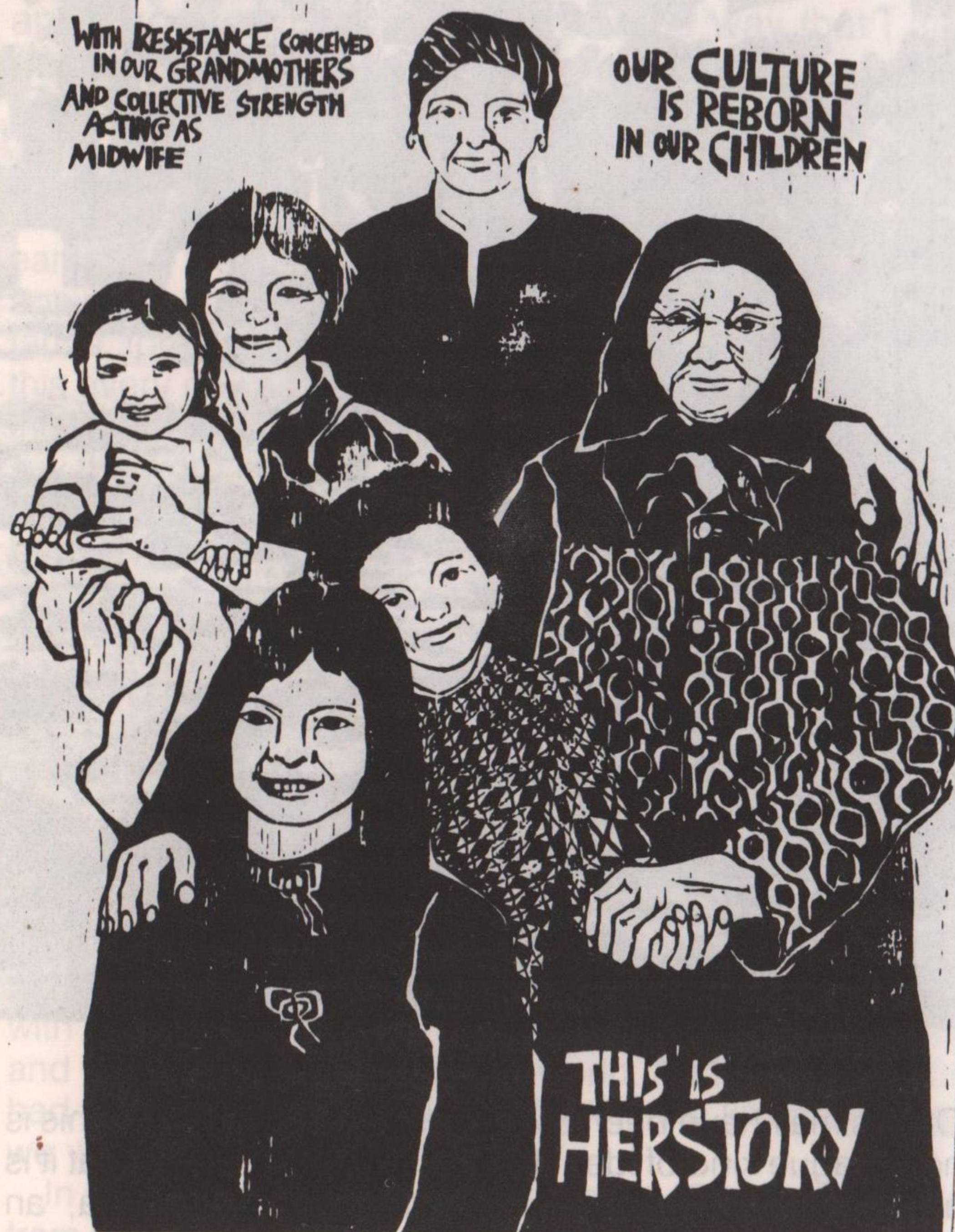
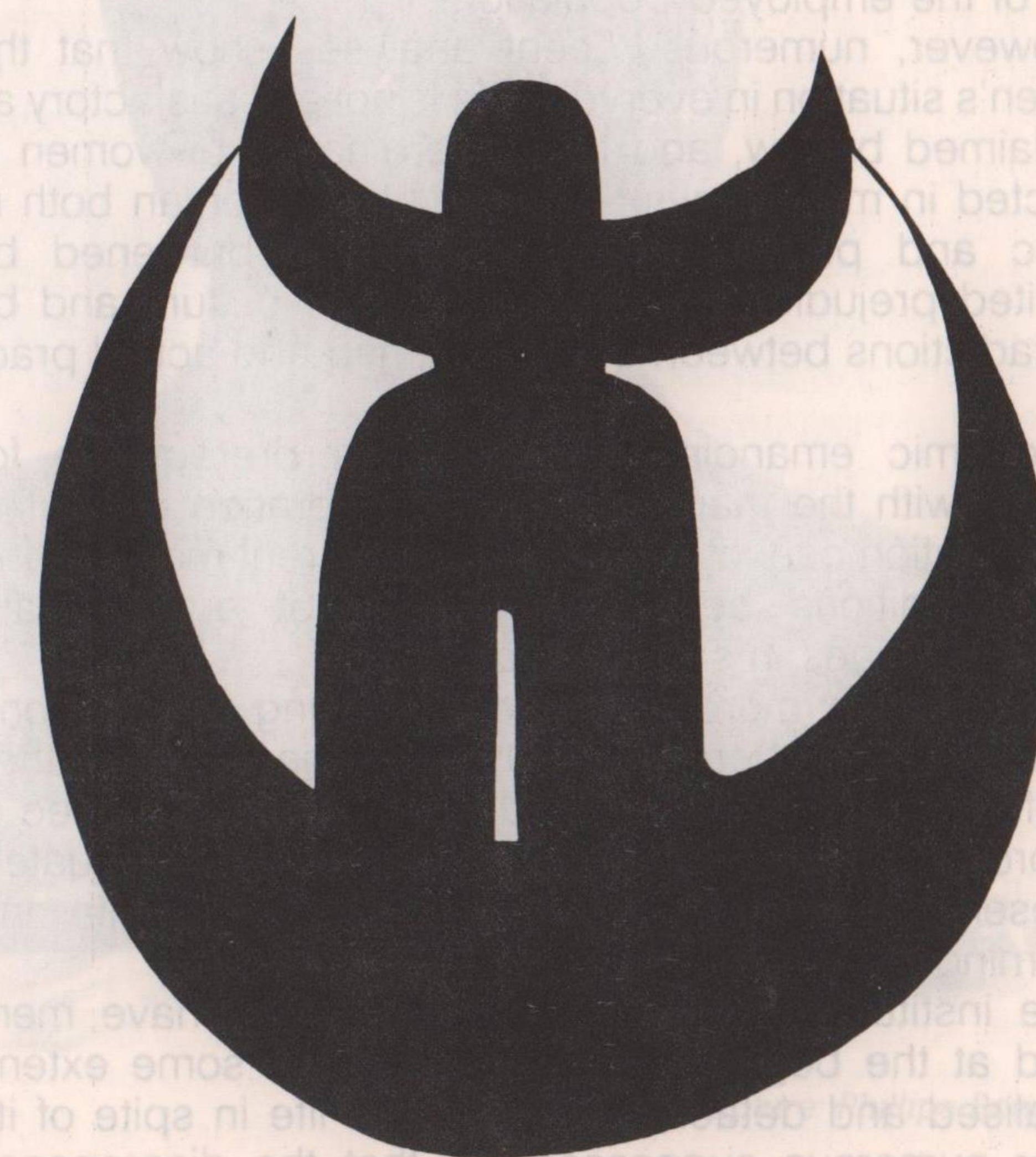
Most of us are also anarchists because we believe that hierarchy itself is poisonous. We take from ecology the idea that life is an interconnected web, and we attempt to bring this idea home in every way that we can. You see that in the forms of politics of resistance we've begun to evolve. In the Womens Pentagon Action there is an affinity group from Vermont called the Spinsters. I first saw them in action at a demonstration at the Vermont nuclear power plant. The Spinsters showed up there with balls and balls of yarn. There is a long entryway that leads into Vermont Yankee and on each side there are trees. And they started at one end and wove the whole driveway between the trees with this yarn. There was this beautiful brilliant coloured yarn blocking the entrance. The workers wouldn't drive their trucks through the yarn. Now they could have easily, with the kind of horsepower they had, burst all of the yarn. They could have driven right through it all and it would have made no difference. But something about seeing this maze in front of them, they wouldn't go through! They somehow didn't believe that they could get their cars through that maze. And since then we've used this kind of weaving at entrances to places of destruction as a way to make our message about the interconnected web of life. At the same time we are stopping them from doing what they're doing, using our women's forms proudly. We did that again at the Pentagon. We've done it in all sorts of places. Certain mixed groups in the United States are actually using the weaving. Weaving is one of the women's symbols that we've taken up and turned on its head and taken to a public place to use.

We also have been concerned with trying to come up with forms of action that are indigenous to women, that make sense to women, that help women bring our private pains into a public place. One of the most moving things about the second women's pentagon action to me was that part of our action embodies the ritual which takes us through the range of our feelings about what's going on in the world. And the first stage is mourning, the second stage is rage, the third stage is empowerment and the fourth stage is defiance. And when we use these stages in action, the fourth stage involves civil disobedience. Sometimes you put together a ritual and you think this is an orchestrated event, but if you do it right, it takes on a life of its own, like a liturgy. It takes on a meaning and touches people's spirit. When we were getting ready to do the first stage, the mourning stage, which involves the placing of tomb stones for women who've been victims of patriarchy and war and violence, a woman came up to us who was middle aged. She said she had to have her tomb stone. We said to her, oh no, you can just take any one of them. We were caught up in the organiser mind trip – just take one of these, just do this, do what we want you to. This behaviour is against our principles but we fail sometimes. This woman brought us up so short because she said 'No, I really have to have my own. I came all the way here from California to place this tombstone, I have to have it. It says "For the three Vietnamese women my son Killed"'. That was such an incredible moment for us, because what we had been able to do was to let this woman take her private pain, which was really a public

pain and bring it into a public place and lay it to rest and make a statement with it too. She went on to tell us that she's never been on a political action in her life, but she had sat thinking about these women and who they might have been, and who their children might have been, and their families. It had been a nightmare for her. And this was the first time she'd ever seen any form of politics which allowed her to bring these womanly feelings that she had into some political place and to transform them.

This woman is a story of what we're trying to do. So I'm going to finish up here. Basically I think what we're trying to do is oppose the idea that it's not only human hierarchy we oppose but the idea that human beings are better than nonhuman nature. And we really accentuate the positive in our vision, even while we're resisting. We're creating a religion or a spiritual movement as much as a political movement. We're also trying to bring together the insights of different communities of women and to live our lives in a different way. For me at least, and I think for most eco-feminists, this is not a biologically determined politics, but because of what women have been and done in this world, we do have special insights as do any people out of their lived experience. The other thing I want to say here is that lesbians have been central to our movement, and lesbian energy and the insights that women have from living in communities of women and having a primary connection to women has been a positive source of inspiration, love, strength, woman power and everything else to our movement. We're developing a transformative eco-feminist vision which fires our utopian imagination and embodies our deepest knowledge, which is an affirmation at the same time as it's a movement of resistance. We will use the forces of life to make the world live.

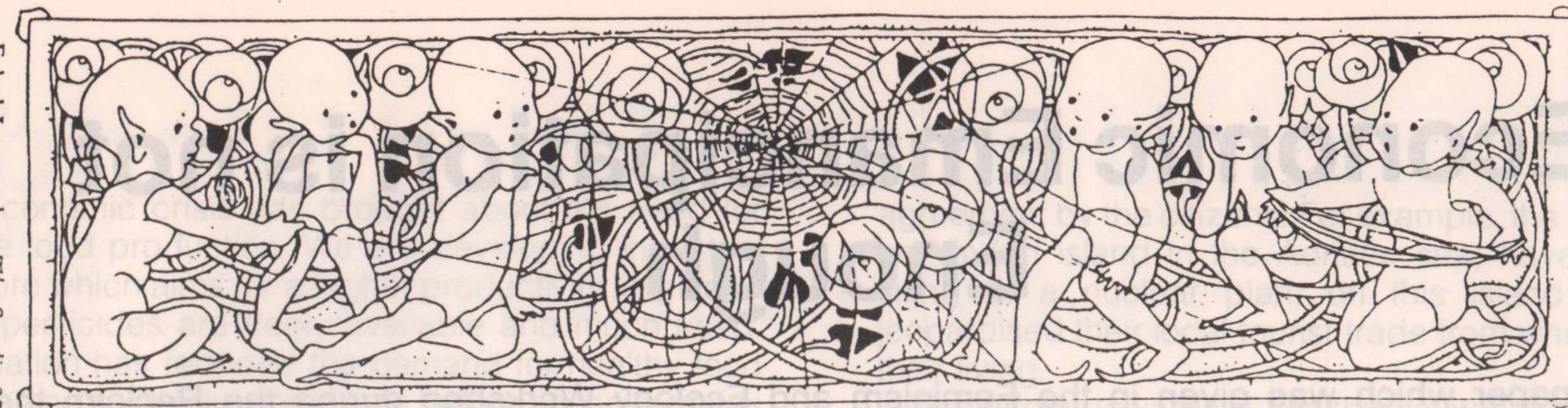
Ynestra King



basically disrespects life. Women are in a particularly important position in this culture, and I think that this really raises absolutely pivotal questions to feminism. We live in a culture that is founded on dominating nature, repudiating the natural, and as feminists we can either try to get into that culture and be part of the culture based on the domination of nature, or we can use the fact that we are believed to be closer to nature, less alienated from nature, stand on that dividing line. I don't mean that we can't think, that we can't be scientists, but we embody this divided consciousness. This may make certain things very hard for us but it's also a strength if we can figure out how to give voice to that consciousness of being inbetween.

One of our problems in the west is that we are heir to a radical emancipatory political tradition which is also the product of enlightenment rationalisation of the world. I think this is where socialist feminists have a tendency to err – that Karl Marx made the most cogent case of anyone for progress in history, for linear rationality, for seeing the history of the world in a series of economic stages and for a tidy inevitable progression to socialism and then communism. But we today are faced with the failure of Marxism and with ever greater misgivings about progress. We dread the future, we lack faith. When we act, we act out of a certain faith that I think is deeper than any kind of way we can analyse our political effectiveness. We need to trust that faith more than our sense of our 'objective' political powers. We aren't the first people

Ethel Larcombe, The Studio 37





# Economic Emancipation is not Enough

This is a paper which was given in the Feminism and Ecology Workshop during the Reclaim the Earth Weekend by a woman from Yugoslavia who has asked to remain anonymous.

I will try briefly to inform about the women's movement and ecological situation in Yugoslavia.

Considering the social development of Yugoslavia and the way of solving particular social problems, I can say that the women's rights question has been most successfully solved. The articulation of it started within the workers' movement as early as 1919, and included the fight for voting rights for women, equal wages, etc. Aided by genuine and extensive involvement of women in promotion of social changes within the workers' and communist party organisations, the women's movement succeeded in establishing itself after the war as an institutional organisation within the socialist alliance of the country. Arisen as a movement fighting for lateral social equality, grounded on the ideal of equality of the sexes, it managed to fundamentally change the position of women in Yugoslavia.

The best proofs of this are the legal rights, the socialisation of family functions, the protection of mothers and children. Numerous laws regulating this area are more radical than the ones in the West, and are often the aim which some progressive movements are fighting to attain in western countries.

Abortion and contraception are entirely legalised. Paid childbirth-leave with a duration of one year can be used by both mothers and fathers. The laws regulating marriage and family enable women to attain divorce easily. There is now a law which enables women to work as long as men if they wish to do so (40 years), along with the previous one which forced them to go on a pension after 35 years. Now they can choose. In elementary education the women participate with 48%, and in the most developed parts of the country they partake with 44% of the employed population.

However, numerous recent analyses show that the women's situation in everyday life is not as satisfactory as proclaimed by law, and the subordination of women is reflected in many ways. The role of the woman both in public and private spheres of life is burdened by inherited prejudices of precedent male culture and by contradictions between the proclaimed and actual practice.

Economic emancipation is only a prerequisite for equality with the man, but it is not liberation itself. The emancipation cannot be solved by different material and legal conditions because it does not automatically involve changes in social attitudes.

Women have more difficulties in finding jobs. Among the unemployed there is 60-70% of women. At work they are often professionally subordinated or are employed in low-profit branches of industry. They are not adequately represented in public and political spheres of life and governing structures.

The institutional women's organisation I have mentioned at the beginning has become, to some extent, formalised and detached from actual life in spite of its earlier numerous successes, so that the discrepancy between theory and practice has left space for an informal women's movement.



This movement was established in 1970 as a section of the Sociology Society of Croatia, having female intellectuals as members, who started lively activities in the form of workshops, round tables, journalistic and other writings. Showing that women's duties have been doubled by their emancipation (women at work – at home – the society has not taken over the function of family aid), this informal movement is occupied with small groups and often 'smaller' problems. It gives accent to the consciousness, that is, to the importance of selfconsciousness of woman, it analyses the roles of the sexes, stereotypes of woman in school textbooks, women's topics in journalism, the situation of women in modern urban surroundings, etc., pointing out the predominance of male culture and underdevelopment of culture in general, but it still remains arbitrary and marginal.

Although the two organisations belong to the same theoretical circle and the existence of an informal movement can well be justified, the activities that are un-institutional in their character are being considered illegal, over-critical, imported from western ideology, politically suspicious and have undergone different sexist theories which only mystify the real problems of women.

The ecological situation of Yugoslavia is determined by the fact that we are an underdeveloped country. We have had a sudden growth of industry which did not take into account the changes of environment. But, we are one of the first countries to have granted the right to a healthy environment to each citizen by the Constitution. We have proper laws that consider environmental pollution as a criminal offence. Yet, practice shows quite the contrary. The factories are very slow to incorporate protective or purifying filters. Court procedures against offenders take a long time. Anti-pollution systems are costly and small factories do not have the money.

The economic crisis has brought about the need for intensive food production. We are developing industrial agriculture which aims for a higher productivity level, and various pesticides are freely available and much used. This situation has reduced the demand for healthy food products and it will take some time before consciousness about promotion of non-industrial agriculture appears.

There is also the existence of our first nuclear power plant. The location of this is determined by the representatives of the commune in which it is likely to be placed, so that the decision cannot be made without

agreement by the citizens. For example, the people living on Vir (an island in the Adriatic sea) have stopped the siting of a nuclear plant on this island because it jeopardised their local tourist trade from which they earn their living.

The efforts towards a healthy environment and better quality of life are not enough, but this too is slowly changing. More people are becoming aware of it, though the women's movement has not yet occupied itself with this topic.



*In the far dim distance,  
Like a speck of dust  
Hanging,  
In the centre of space  
The Star  
Shone  
For a few pulses of time;  
A brilliant, gentle, glowing light,  
Glimmering, and spreading,  
So far away  
But once seen, not forgotten.*

*Shining through from the Pure Light  
Reflecting in rainbow rays,  
We are spinning a web  
Of multi-coloured thread  
That weaves across our globe.*

*Have you heard the voices  
Calling you home to the Heartland?  
A country unseen  
Except in our dreams.  
We all have a piece of the vision  
A seed-spark, a part of the truth  
We stumble along  
A voice calling us home  
To where we can all belong  
In Unity, One.*

*And while we are all travelling  
Along our seemingly separate ways,  
The Heartland pulse beats within us,  
And if some days it grow dim and dark,  
Remember there's many more of us  
Reaching out for the spark.  
And some day when we're all together  
We'll join up all the web's threads  
And fill it with Love, Peace and Freedom  
From our hearts to the Great Heart.*



Sculpture: Phillipa Bowers

Jude



# Reclaiming the Third World Connection

For people who haven't read the *Reclaim the Earth* anthology, a few quotes from my essay, *Roots: Black Ghetto Ecology* will help to summarise my experience as a Black woman cancer survivor which I describe there. First, to set the stage with a few statistics.

In the US, Black people's cancer death rate is 30% higher than white people's – Black men's is higher than white men's, and Black women's is higher than white women's. Fewer than one third of Black cancer patients survive for five years. At Harlem Hospital, one in five Black cancer patients survives ... income is inversely related to mortality and poor patients have less chance of surviving every type of cancer. In all the most 'cancer-prone cities', there are large Black ghetto communities. (pp. 74-75)

In Third World countries Women's workload, particularly in traditional rural areas, but also in poor urban areas, increases their vulnerability to disease. (p. 75)

Putting together that picture of the world with my personal experience leads me to certain conclusions about how the holistic health movement can best organise to fight cancer.

Cancer forces the issue of how responsible the individual can be for personal health when our every environment – from the urban Black ghetto in the metropolis to the tropical rain forest in the Third World – is continually being raped for profit by the military-industrial complex. (p. 76)

Without reference to the daily lives of Black women, we cannot know how comprehensive the issue of cancer is, nor how comprehensive and powerful and capable the holistic health movement is of winning against it. Without reference to the daily lives of Black women, cancer wins – through our own sex, race and class divisions. (p. 82)

Getting well means mobilising body and soul to defeat more than an illness or a disease; getting well means organising to defeat the power relations of sex, race and class that make cancer, illness and disease possible. (p. 76)

I want to talk today about the perspective that has enable me to survive, and a little bit about the organising that perspective comes from. That organising has, I think, more than anything, kept me alive. I feel that dealing with the questions that have been raised in the discussion so far, about alternatives and the variety of tactics that we use, about the importance of being flexible, and above all about the importance of not being pitted against each other and divided from each other, that dealing with all of those issues is what can keep us all alive.

I'm new to the *Women for Life on Earth* network. I met Leonie Caldecott, one of the founder members, at what we called the 'International Women's Day Convention, Women and Peace', which was held in this same room at County Hall, London, back on March 8 1983. That event came out of organising that I had been involved in here at the GLC, as a member of the Peace Working Group. I am also an additional member on the Women's Committee of the GLC. The Women's Committee represents a piece of the action, a piece of power that women have won for ourselves in government, and therefore the question that I'm always grappling with is: at what point does that piece of power for which many, many women – women of colour, Black women, Third World women as a whole, more women than are visible or ever given credit for contributing – have fought and died for over many, many generations in many parts of the world, at what point does that power become a weapon that one set of women, who happen to be predominantly white, metropolitan career women, are using against another? That's a very practical question that affects every network and everything that women organise.

At the Women and Peace Convention there were women from South Africa who are committed to armed struggle and wanted to approach the issue of peace from their point of view. There were women from Palestine where there is also armed confrontation involving all kinds of issues such as nationalism, Zionism,

racism. There were also women from Turkey, Iran and Latin America, together with women from the United States, Britain and other European countries, and somehow we were all trying to participate together in defining the question of 'women and peace'. So that was the context in which I met Women for Life on Earth.

I have been organising for several years as part of the International Wages for Housework Campaign network. I was glad to make contact with Women for Life on Earth because I felt this was another echo of what we are already involved in, from a different approach still. It's really two sides of a coin. We were talking a minute ago about spirituality on the one hand and nitty-gritty day-to-day problems on the other. We in the Wages for Housework Campaign network deal daily with issues of women's economic independence and recognition for the work that women do in the home, focussing on women getting money, women getting financial power, to be able to get a place in all our lives where we don't need money any more.

That takes a lot of painstaking work day in and day out. But that kind of contradiction – of fighting for money so that we can survive now, to be able to reach a point where we don't need money – is, I think, the kind of contradiction that we're involved in all the time. From our perspective that process of organising day by day in order to move to a place where we are no longer held back by problems of survival, to be able to realise our full humanity, is the heart of the matter.

My experience in the Wages for Housework Campaign has made, and makes, it possible for me to participate in the kind of dialogue between Black and white people, beginning with women, where I know I am getting somewhere. That's what I see myself here today responsible for contributing; that's what I contribute, I think, to your network: dialogue between Black and white women that goes beyond both the guilt and the tokenism that have gone on in the past, and which still go on today. It is from the perspective of that kind of dialogue that



*Roots: Black Ghetto Ecology* talks about the sex, race and class divisions that undermine women's health; how Black women have organised against those divisions; and how this makes it possible for all of us to have health and to define holistic health, wholly, fully, completely.

Now one of the points that is essential to *Roots* is that there is a kind of unfinished business to all of the movements that have gone before.

The Left movement, the movement for working class power, 'workers of the world unite', has left a lot of unfinished business. Many of us in our 60s experience came out of that Left because we found that there was somehow a contradiction between fighting for working class power and fighting for women's liberation – and that was true in the Black and in the white Left.

Likewise the Black movement, in so far as it was male-dominated, left a lot to be desired, and many Black women took our autonomy within the movement in order to deal with the contradiction between what was being called Black liberation on the one hand, and our liberation as Black women on the other.

The women's movement has also left a lot to be desired. I gave one example earlier of the kind of struggle that is going on in Women's Committees, but there are all kinds of examples of whether or not 'liberation' for women is going to mean that you get Margaret Thatcher as prime minister, who can do the same work as Ronald Reagan. Is that women's liberation? Is she a career woman we should be proud of? There are smaller examples, unfortunately, all along the way. When a woman goes in to claim Social Security and she gets the runaround from another woman who is her social worker, is she supposed to shut up for the good of

the women's movement? Or is she supposed to fight as hard as she had to fight the man who had that position before?

The Third World liberation movements also leave a lot to be desired by way of overcoming sex, race and class divisions, and there are any number of battles being fought in the Third World countries as women and men in those countries try to sort out the best ways to solve the problems of human liberation.

So all of those movements have left things to be desired – a lot to be desired. But they have also provided us with a kind of transcendence in great moments of struggle: when we integrated certain places; when we picketed certain facilities; when Black and white people defied police dogs and water hoses to walk down the street and gain admission to a swimming pool or a park or a school; and during the protests against the Vietnam War. These were moments of great spiritual transcendence that were based on day-to-day struggle by some of the poorest people in the world.

I think that it is important while looking at all of the unfinished business and all the failures of the previous movements, that we also appreciate that those movements, for all their shortcomings, have contributed – and continue to contribute – a tremendous heritage of struggle and therefore a heritage of spiritual transcendence, which we are still aspiring to and which still inspires us today. So I see the eco-feminist movement, not as replacing those earlier movements, not as substituting for those movements, but instead as coming along side by side with those movements to bring out still other dimensions of our experiences, so that we make sure that we leave no stone unturned, that we reclaim all of the earth, every inch, cell by cell if necessary.

## Organising

Now I just want to run down a few examples of the ways in which this kind of nitty-gritty day-to-day organising is really part and parcel of taking back all of the earth, and how all the movements always owe a debt to each other, which each needs to recognise. What the movements contribute to each other must be recognised, again, not out of a sense of guilt, but in the same spirit in which Audre Lorde, a Black lesbian poet in the United States, says: 'everything can be used except what is wasteful'. I think that guilt more often than not is one of those wasteful things. It's really about looking at all of the pieces so that we are fully armed to be able to do what we have to do. That is why I am interested in cataloguing – and why white people owe it to themselves to acknowledge – the experience, the contributions, of the Black and Third World movements that have gone before. You and I (I and I) deprive ourselves of weapons to the extent that we don't see what our own history has been.

There is in fact a conspiracy to hide our history. The sister from Greenham mentioned earlier how the State tries to charge the movement with conspiracy. But we have had enough experience to know what the real conspiracy is; the real conspiracy is to hide our history from us, to make us feel that we have no connections, that we have no allies, that we can't possibly win, that it's impossible for men and women ever to get together.

One aim of that conspiracy is certainly to convince white people in a movement like the eco-feminist movement or in the ecology movement, the holistic health movement as a whole, that you are not and can never be connected to all the Black people who are the majority of people on earth, and that therefore for you to speak about reclaiming the earth is a piece of arrogance: that you have no right to speak about reclaiming the





Welfare mothers demanding more money for winter in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

earth in your own names because you are disconnected from Third World people. I think it's important for white people to refuse that kind of divisive propaganda by acknowledging the connections that you *do* have with Third World people, by advertising the connections that you intend to make, and by making those connections real, practical and day-to-day, so that again we can leave no stone unturned in taking back what is ours.

Now there are all kinds of examples of how these connections can be made, but let me just pick out a few.

One of the areas that I've been involved in is welfare rights organising. In the 60s there was a big movement in the US of Black welfare mothers demanding money from the government for women's work in the home, and protesting against their sons, the product of their work, being sent by that government to make war in Vietnam. Lo and behold in 1983 women living in peace camps in Britain are able to survive – that is, to have the money, time and space in their personal lives to commit themselves to organising against US and British militarism – to a great extent because they are able to claim Social Security benefits. So nitty-gritty day-to-day struggles, largely of single mothers, for welfare, have made it possible for people to organise international peace action in metropolitan countries. In other words, have made it possible to expand the horizons of eco-feminism. And it's important to recognise that connection, that debt, and to claim it.

Another example: many of the reference points of the eco-feminist movement are Third World peasant societies, and their beliefs about land ownership – lack of ownership really – and cooperation. I think it's important for people in the eco-feminist movement to stop and think about how immigrants to Britain and to other European countries bring these traditions with them from Third World countries. This gets us into another area because what is happening in Britain with the Nationality Act is that Third World people are being told that we have no right to be here. The racism is so obvious in the debates that go on, particularly in the Tory Party about repatriation, and whether to end all immigration from Asia. There's no way that the eco-feminist movement can fail to address these issues and be true to its own beliefs, to its own tenets. It's an impossible contradiction on the one hand to praise the values of Third World peasant societies, and on the other hand not to support, and fight for, the right of Third World immigrants to come to this society, bringing with them those values and those traditions. And what's more, bringing the truth about their lives.

Because it's no good romanticising what has gone on in Third World societies or what is still going on. And the best cure against that kind of romanticism in the ecology movement is to have Third World people here to speak for themselves. There's no substitute for that. So that it's impossible for the eco-feminist movement not to address the whole issue of immigration.

Similarly, with the struggle against racism in general. Going back before the present women's movement to the earlier movements of the 60s from which it came, to the Black Power movement and the civil rights movement in the United States, and back beyond that to the anti-colonial movement in Third World countries in the 50s – those movements opened a wedge against the American State, and against the State internationally, which made it possible for everyone who came after to have a fuller sense of their own humanity. It's important to remember that the anti-racism on which the eco-feminist movement prides itself didn't come spontaneously out of the goodwill of white people. Anti-racism came out of the prodding of Black people, organising and refusing to be treated as sub-human; just as men don't out of the goodness of their hearts suddenly decide that they are anti-sexist, just as anti-sexism comes out of the prodding and the fighting, the going on strike, the picketing, even the violence, of women against that sexism. It's important that none of us arrogate to ourselves the credit for what others have taught by their painful struggle, as though our consciousness was always so high or our attitudes were always so correct, that we just knew these things without being taught. That's to rip off the struggle that has gone before.

In my experience the same issues come up again and again in all the movements.

### Domination

In the Black movement in confronting the whole issue of culture and reclaiming our culture, our connection as Black people in metropolitan societies with the Third World societies we came from, we also had to sort out what was women's role and women's power in Third World societies, and what was male domination. The issue raged in the Black movement throughout the 60s. Many men, and some women, were telling us that in our traditional societies our 'natural' place was ten paces behind, so if you're a real Black woman, a real African woman, that's where you belong.

The ecology movement has gone through the same kind of trip: the blackmail that if you are really 'natural', if you are really holistic and want to get back to the proper balance of yin and yang, women must deal with women's sphere and let men deal with men's (as though the present division of labour or any division of labour along sexual lines is natural), and then somehow women and men will harmonise and overcome the chaos that the women's movement is said to have introduced. So there is something to be learned from the lessons of all the other movements that have gone before, sometimes point for point in terms of the issues that have been dealt with. And part of why we're here today is to compare notes, to see these connections, which is part of claiming our heritage. Comparing notes – exchanging experiences – we can organise not to be sucked into definitions of 'natural' which in fact deprive us of what is ours.

The Black movement has provided other lessons about the involvement of children in the movement. The Black movement recognised children's right and capacity to participate in the movement in their own right. For example, the civil rights movement involved children in sit-ins and direct action of all kinds. The movement itself was an alternative to the self-destructive activities which the State promotes among Third World youth. But the



kids have also initiated another struggle which we have to look at and learn from, which is the struggle of tearing down the schools – I mean literally, brick by brick. There too, the children's movement has a long history.

Another dimension of the struggle in the schools was the struggle for Black Studies. I was very active in the 60s in that fight, which involved not only transforming the curriculum, but opening up the universities in the US to Black students, and all students, who didn't have the money to pay. The history of that fight is relevant to all the current attempts to change school curricula away from racism, sexism and militarism; it shows, for example, how implementing peace studies is inseparable from the fight against education cuts. Black Studies was about making technology available on a broad scale, which is part of what the eco-feminist movement should be about now, in terms of making sure that technology is not monopolised, that working class people have access to it and are able to develop it to our own uses and to our own devices, and that what is 'appropriate technology' is not defined for us but that as women, as Black people, as Third World people, as people who work for our bread, we define what is appropriate to us.

So those are just some examples. But I list them because I think you'll recognise that those power relations that were conflicts in the earlier movements haven't gone away. What I think we have to learn from those movements is not to be arrogant, not to be led down the garden path where our most profound demands, our deepest felt demands for change, become reduced to a question of lifestyle, reduced to the changes we are able to make by accommodating to the system. If the little niche that we are able to carve out for ourselves, however holistic in style it may appear to be, leaves the rest of the machinery intact, not only is it not going to last, it is not in substance holistic.

The experience of those other movements, I think, warns us against letting the values that we shape in the process of our struggle turn into blueprints of how other people should live. None of us is in a position to dictate to other sections of the movement, or to other movements, how they should be living. *Selma James* makes the point that we are not in a position, fighting as we are day to day for survival, to say that the values which we hold at any one moment in the course of our struggle are going to be

the values we will hold after we have liberated all of ourselves, and that, as she says, 'our needs will change as we leave behind the shackles on our minds, bodies, activities and relationships.' To think that we – sitting here still in slavery – are capable of projecting how free people will live, is to deny the enormity of the changes that we need, and are entitled to.

It is also to deny the contribution of the majority of the people in the world to that process of change and to what the future will be. Another name for that kind of denial is racism; and where it can lead – and has already led in the feminist movement – is to careerism: the transfer of power to a new management where those people who are the experts in the 'new values', or the experts in the 'new technology' become the new managers who impose the 'new society' on the rest of us.

So that it seems to me that those of us who are organising in metropolitan countries like Britain to reclaim the earth have the responsibility to make sure that we are always fighting for resources to be put at the disposal of all of the people who cannot be here to speak for themselves, so that more power is available to them to speak out wherever they are. This means confronting government where we have the power to confront: that we in Britain are in the position of confronting this State right here – and the American State with whom they have a 'special relationship' – on the fundamental issues of the ecology movement as the struggles of the Black and Third World people have defined them, so that more power is at the disposal of the people who are forced to confront the British and American States worldwide.

Otherwise we are only developing a new technocracy, and participating in yet another cooptation of a working class movement. But when we take responsibility for putting the pressure on government where we are able to put the pressure, in order to make the power and resources available for change, we are helping to transform the terms of struggle for the whole world. The more we do this, the more the eco-feminist movement ceases to be a movement of white metropolitan women only, the more the movement of all of us, Third World and metropolitan, Black and white, women and men, becomes powerful enough to take back what is ours. It is to help this process that I am here today.

Wilmette Brown



Drawings by Elizabeth Raynham for Women's International League for Peace and Freedom



# The Dreamtime

## The Dreamtime ...

### To Aboriginal people, the Dreamtime is Creation

*Before Dreamtime, the Land existed, without shape or life. Spirit beings then travelled over the Land, creating the natural environment, all living things and people. The spirit beings gave people their own tracts of land to caretake, along with their language and social rituals. The landforms always retain the spiritual essence of the Dreamtime creators.*

#### An example of a Dreamtime story ...

In the Dreamtime, Kingfisher Woman went on a long journey. Wherever she sat down to rest she made a hill or a waterhole, which the Aboriginal people would call 'Kingfisher Dreaming'. It would have special songs, rituals, dances and paintings, and it would be the responsibility of the people whose totem was the Kingfisher, passed on through generations since the Dreamtime, to respect and protect this place. In the Dreamtime, Kingfisher Woman continued on her journey, or 'dreaming path' until she sat down to lay hundreds of eggs. To Aboriginal people, this is a sacred fertility site of Kingfisher Dreaming and must not be disturbed. But since the European invasion of ABORIGINAL Land, this land has been disturbed and named: Coober Pedy (South Australia) and thousands of opals have been torn from beneath the Earth's surface.

The Aboriginals believe, that for a child to be born, a spirit must first enter the mother's womb to give the child life. The spirit comes from the dreaming site and becomes the child's totem and name. The place is the source of the child's lifeforce, and is inseparable. The spirit is part of the Land and therefore the Land is Aboriginal. The link is never broken, even after a person dies, as the spirit returns to the site where it first came from. All the Land has spiritual significance and some sites have particular importance. Stories, ritual and song belonging to these sites may be protected by one member of the clan, and it is this person's duty to pass it on to the coming generation of the same totem, so that the spiritual energy is constantly renewed. Some sites are sacred to women only – initiation and fertility sites, and some, only to men. Sacred sites are connected by 'dreaming paths' created during the Dreamtime, which traditional Aboriginal people followed as part of their rituals and ceremonies, some of which continue today. With the intrusion of European culture, many practices associated with certain rituals and sites have been subdued, or – in the case of the Aboriginal people forced to co-exist with urban capitalist society – long gone, but knowledge of, and belief in, traditional religion continues.

If a sacred site is disturbed or destroyed, then Aboriginal Law has been broken and either the caretaker or the whole clan or humanity must heed the warning. Traditional Aboriginal people have died with the knowledge of the destruction of their

sacred Dreaming sites.

'Uranium, they say, uranium, they make anything from it, invent anything, yet during the war when Americans flew over, what happened to Hiroshima? And that'll happen here too if they're messing about with that thing. They never learn'.

*Roley Hill - Aboriginal Elder, Yeelirrie*

The Aboriginal people have been in Australia for 50,000 years. They teach us that no-one owns the Land. The Land is our Mother-here to protect us. We are caretakers of the Land and must respect her, not destroy her, for the destruction of the Land will be our destruction also.

'Money is water that flows away, only our Land is there forever to look after us.'

*Yirawala, Guniwinngu Elder, N.T.*

For almost 200 years since the arrival of Europeans, Aboriginal people have demanded acknowledgement of prior custodianship – Land Rights – and just compensation for the land invaded and desecrated by a violent, patriarchal culture. The last 40 years have seen the imposition of multinational mining companies on land and sacred ground relevant to contemporary Aboriginal communities throughout Australia. In the early 1950s, Aboriginal people from Maralinga, South Australia, were, without their knowledge, guinea-pigs for the British nuclear-weapons testing programme. There is a long her/history – not all of it recorded – of non-violent opposition by Aboriginals to the violent exploitation of their land in the form of mining Uranium, bauxite, coal and oil. The struggle of the people from Noonkanbah in West Australia vs Amax Petroleum in 1980 is documented in the film *On Sacred Ground*, carried by The World Bike Ride. To the Aboriginals, the recognition of Land Rights is the recognition of Aboriginal Law ... set down in the Dreamtime, defining individual and clan responsibilities for particular areas of land. The Western capitalist system makes land a possession which can be used for individual profit to Aboriginal people, this is not possible. No one owns the land – it cannot be sold in traditional Aboriginal Law.

If someone chops that tree, they are chopping my back – if they dig the Earth, they are digging the belly of my Mother.'

*Bill Neijji, Bunitj Elder, Kakadu, N.T.*

# ABORIGINAL LAND RIGHTS ... HUMAN RIGHTS

To Aboriginal people still close to their sacred ground, the mining companies, and its supportive system are committing spiritual murder.

In Australia the largest uranium deposits are Aboriginal sacred ground in the Northern Territory. Energy resources of Australia's RANGER mine borders Mount Brockman – the sacred Dreaming site of the most powerful creative being – The Rainbow Serpent. The Aboriginal people have long respected the earth energies of uranium ore, acknowledging its powerful and potentially harmful qualities through myths and rituals 50,000 years old.

Aboriginal women and men who today live close to the area warn that to disturb the Rainbow Serpent Dreaming will bring disaster to all humanity.

The Rainbow Serpent travelled in the Dreamtime through many parts of the Land. It is no coincidence that much of the sandstone escarpment country in and around Kakadu National Park is Rainbow Serpent Dreaming and rich in uranium ore. On Mount Brockman, only a few kilometres from the uranium mine, are the rich colours of the Rainbow Serpent's blood, stories of which are painted on a sacred boulder which stands on top of the powerful mountain. A sacred water hole, believed never to go dry, is the permanent Dreaming site of the Rainbow Serpent – both sites are believed to be dangerous and are prohibited to non-initiates outside their totem.

Aboriginal people in the southern part of Australia have sacred Dreaming sites and stories connected to the Rainbow Serpent. S/he is said to return in physical form in times of great crisis as a warning, calling for change. Women and children from the Wallaga Lake Aboriginal community in N.S.W., where Aboriginal cultural and spiritual renewal is going on, have seen the Rainbow Serpent in the Lake in early 1982 ...

At Narbalek in Arnhem Land, N.T., a uranium mining company drilled within the sacred Green Ant Dreaming site-Gabo Djang, without the consent of the Madjarrarr custodians. The Aboriginal people believe Cyclone Tracey, which wrecked Darwin N.T. on Christmas Day, 1975, was the first warning of Gabo Djang.

Canadian owned 'Koongara' uranium deposit lies in the centre of the World Heritage Kakadu National Park. This area encompasses Lightning Dreaming, another sacred place of potential danger if disturbed. Sacred ground has been bulldozed and disturbed by the French Minatome Uranium Mining Co. at Ben Lomond in Qld., and Aboriginal traditional custodians of Yeelirrie in W.A. are warning: 'The sacred ground is each side of Yeelirrie. The name means death. Anything shifted from there means death ... white fella can't see it.'

Aboriginals have been sold out 'in the national interest' to allow uranium mining to proceed on the boundaries of World Heritage Kakadu National Park. The so-called Ranger 'Agreement' between the traditional Aboriginal elders – women and men – makes a farce of 'democratic' Australia. In 1978 only four out of forty traditional elders were coerced into signing the Federal Liberal Government's document, believing what the Federal Minister told them: that they had no choice – without the mine go-ahead they would not be able to claim back any of their (rightful) land. Repressive government legislation continues to deny Aboriginal people the right to prevent mining on their sacred land.

Those of us opposed to the desecration of Aboriginal culture and land, the exploitation of the environment and of all people by multinational corporations tied to the nuclear industry, must work to expose their operations on every level.

You can support the Aboriginal people in their struggle for justice by contacting:

ABORIGINAL MINING INFORMATION CENTRE  
C/O P.O. BOX 237 HEALESVILLE  
VICTORIA 3777  
AUSTRALIA

Contact Judy Monk for further information, contact lists and resource materials. Donations are always useful and please inform your friends and as many groups as possible; reprint material in newsletters, spread the warning of the Rainbow Serpent as far and as fast as you can ...



Sculpture: Phillipa Bowers



# Our Mother Earth is not for sale

We were privileged to have an amazing trio of women, one American and two native American Indians, as the final speakers at the conference. Sadly, the tapes of their speeches were inaudible, so Caroline Wyndham has put together the following piece taken from an interview she had with them, and her account of time spent with them in America.

The first woman to speak was Carolyn Tawangyowma. She is a 78 year old elder of the Hopi people. I remember my first meeting with her last summer when I was visiting the Hopi villages way up on the Colorado Plateau in Northern Arizona. On entering her small home I was welcomed by this tiny smiling woman, her deep brown eyes bathed me in kindness and I felt instantly in the presence of a 'wise woman'. In the following days I spent with her in the village of Hotevilla on the remote plateau of the third mesa, I came to know some of this wisdom and I received many smiles and much kindness. I also came to know the sacredness of Hopi corn and to see in action that very special relationship which exists between those people and their Mother Earth. It is that way of relating to the earth which permits corn to grow at all on desert land where rainfall figures fall far short of what *should* be needed to grow such an abundance. But, it seems that the Hopi have an instinct for detecting the flow of subsoil moisture and that by invoking the aid of the Kachinas or nature-spirit helpers they are able to grow as much as is needed.

'They are my children', remarked Carolyn when we visited her corn fields, 'I sing and talk to them'. She told me about each stage from planting to harvesting having its own ceremony and ritual, and the importance the Hopi place on this aspect for 'good corn'. We sampled her corn picked freshly from her field and cooked immediately, and in its sweetness and potency it was truly like Nectar from the Goddess. In the following days I was introduced to many varieties and colours of corn, red corn, pale cream corn, deep gold corn and – most amazingly – blue corn. This blue corn was ground up and rolled into small marble sized pieces and eaten with a kind of porridge. I had no previous idea that corn could be used in so many different ways and taste so different. From observing Carolyn I began to see how necessary it is to reaffirm daily our connection with our earth, and how by seeing ourselves as separate we are denying ourselves Life. She, our Mother Earth, and we are one – interdependent one on the other.

Each day Carolyn's small neat home was filled with young people of many different nationalities, all there to learn this same lesson and in return to offer their physical services to her and her cornfields. I have a strong image of this small vibrant woman standing preparing the lunchtime corn over her stove while we, an Italian, a Japanese, a German, a Mexican, several non-native Americans and we two English women, sit watching and listening as she speaks of Hopi ways and the prophecies which they are seeing one by one come to fulfilment. The Hopis feel that they are holding the future survival of the human race in their hands; that by being keepers of a way of life that is in harmony with the Earth and living that life as it has been shown to them by the Creator or Great Spirit, they have in trust this knowledge that most of the world has long since abandoned. But equally, as most of the world is hurtling towards self-destruction spurred on by greed and a hunger for power, the Hopis are struggling for their own survival. Already many of the younger ones seek change and 'progressive' ways,

seduced by money and a seemingly easier life-style. But the older members, the Elders of the Clans, are now showing with authority the necessity not to relinquish the old knowledge. In Hopiland they are experiencing the microcosm of the world situation. So with this mind Carolyn has made a journey to Europe to speak of what she knows to be true. The time has come when the Elders would have to make known the prophecies held secret for thousands of years and handed down from generation to generation during their secret ceremonies in the underground kivas in their villages. These prophecies, they believe, speak about the survival of the human race and of our planet.

'I am taught that you have to find your roots first before you can help your sisters and brothers; you only need a branch from your ancestors to get you back – then your heart will open – this is why we are here', she says. 'My people were chosen to be the guardians of this Earth. Our Elders are making prayers for the Land, for Life and for everybody'.

She believes that at this point we have a choice which is between the materialistic way of life and, as she puts it, the way of the Creator. The Hopi prophecies, existing on ancient stone tablets, as yet not shown to the world at large, are remarkably accurate. The ones which can be interpreted as having come to pass speak of a 'gourd full of ashes' which would be dropped from the sky, burning all around and where nothing would grow for many years. This can be seen as the Hiroshima bomb. They speak too



of the symbols of the sun and the Swastika which relate to the last war. The final stage, now near at hand, is talked of as the 'Day of Purification' and is symbolised by the colour red. It is possible for this to culminate in either total rebirth or total annihilation. The choice, she says, is ours.

So this is the message that this Hopi Elder is now carrying to other lands. A simple woman, a farmer, now – since his death – called to carry on her husband's task of communicating these truths as the Hopis perceive them in humility, she says. 'Stop, now before it is too late, we have a chance to return to our natural Mother the Earth and to follow the path shown by the Great Spirit.' She asks us from the platform to give a smile to somebody who needs it; and to see that that is what is lacking in the world, no love, no smile, no sunshine.

I remembered her in her doorway, in Hotevilla, waving us goodbye. Her smile filled the whole world. I feel we have much to learn from these beautiful, wise people and we should honour all Native people who in humility offer us a way to the lost knowledge we need to regain our daily harmony and balance on which, many of us now feel, ultimately rests the survival of our planet.

The second native-American to speak was a younger woman, tall and fine featured with dark flashing eyes. I had first seen Laura Kadenehe taking part in a Sacred Sun Dance Ceremony on Big Mountain, the home of the Diné (Navajo) people on the Navajo-Hopi joint-use reservation in North East Arizona. My friend and I had been the only Europeans at this ceremony which had lasted four days. The 50 or so women and men danced and sang from sunrise to sunset. The ceremony required that during this time they fast from all food and liquid; the daily temperature was 110m-112m! Part of this ceremony also asked for the men to make sacrifice of their flesh, so at certain points a young man wishing to show his bravery and devotion would fix a long thong *through* his chest which was then attached to a central cotton-wood tree; he would then dance and eventually be hoisted up, suspended until his flesh gave way – freeing him. This ceremony has been brought to the Diné people by another tribe, The Lakota Plains People. They have brought it to make prayers that the Diné may stay on their land, as the US Government are subjecting these people to a relocation programme due to be completed in 1986.

I had not met Laura personally on Big Mountain, so both of us were delighted to meet here in England. She is a 30 year old Otomi Indian, raised in Los Angeles with all the cultural values of a non-native American upbringing. She has, in the last few years, through spending more time with Indian people and marrying a Diné (Navajo) man and coming to live on the reservation with her three children, gradually found her way back to her own spiritual roots as a Native American woman. She told me how, after two full years of Sundancing, it had brought her into a deep awareness of communication between, as she puts it, 'me, the Earth and my Creator', and strengthened her commitment to what all those native people are struggling for – which is that all future generations will have a land base where they are able to practise their spirituality and communication with the forces of nature.

She is now in the unique position of knowing from experience both sides of the question and, being highly articulate due to the education she received in Los Angeles, she is able to speak both personally and factually about the political struggle for Native American

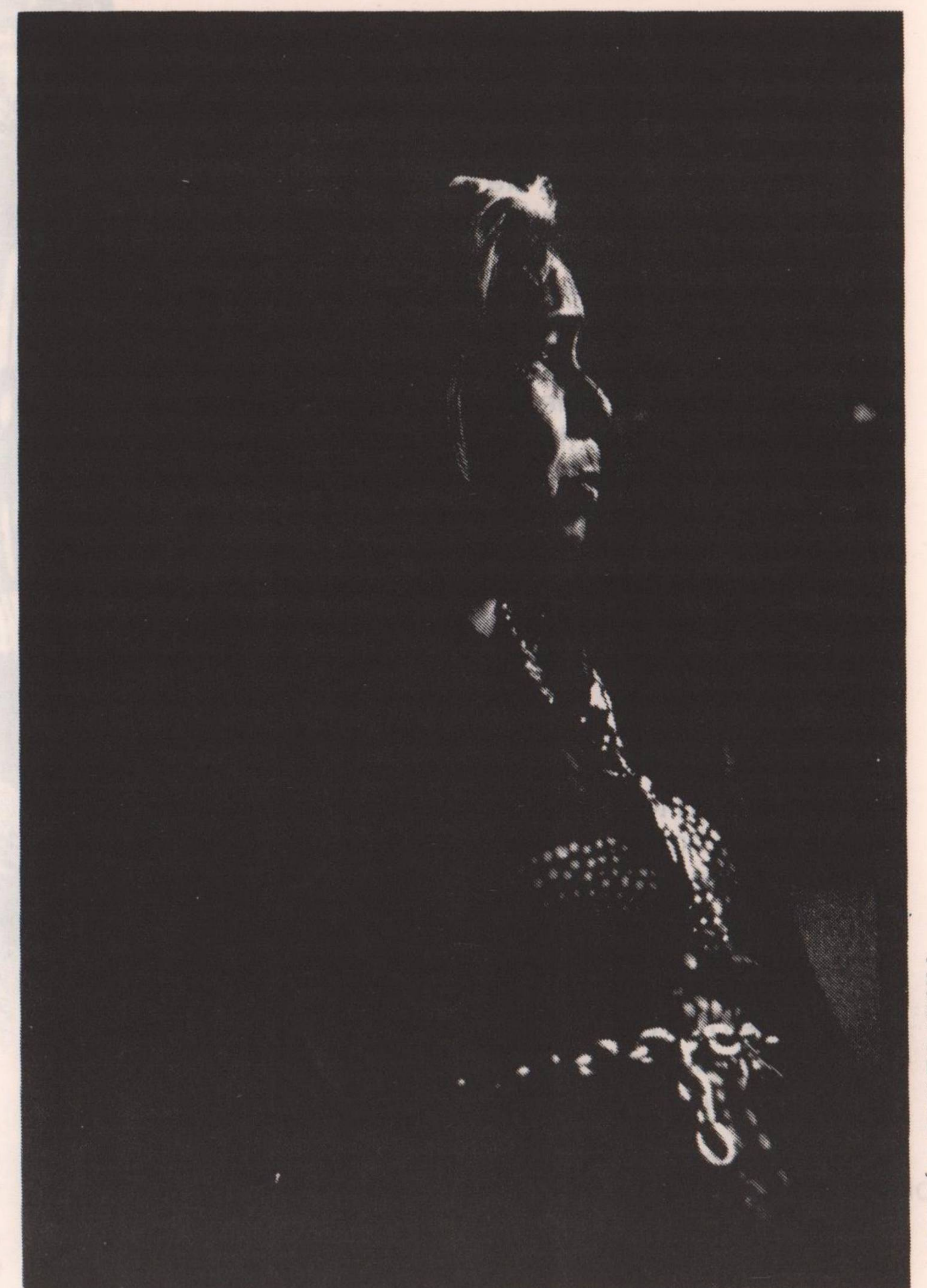


Photo: Caroline Wyndham

Indian peoples Rights. She talked about the struggle which is occurring now on Big Mountain. This is a joint-use area where both the Hopi and the Diné people have their homes. The Hopi, in the villages, and the Diné, primarily nomadic sheep herders, move with their herds around the 3,000 square mile area. They have always lived alongside each other, with the attendant problems that this brings, and they have always settled those problems between themselves. Now things have changed. The US Government has intervened and put up a dividing fence, declaring that the relocation programme must be enforced. So by 1986 there will be over 12,000 displaced people from this area.

To understand the profound implications of this one must know that these people have existed by sheep rearing for centuries. Their lands are Sacred to them, steeped in traditions and the ancestral history of their people. To relocate them means an end to their known ways, an end to their self-sufficiency and an eradication of their sacred shrines and their way of integration with their Mother Earth. These indigenous people are being divided by politics, their lifestyles annihilated by modernisation and their cultures invaded by religions which are not theirs. Their children are taken to schools where they are taught that their known ways are wrong. Their lands are seized and raped by exploitation, for the extensive minerals and natural resources they hold. There is 22 billion tons of coal under native lands as well as oil, natural gas and – of prime importance – uranium. Over fifty percent of all existing resources are on Indian lands. Local Tribal Councils have been set up to make negotiations in the ensuing disputes. However it is found



that members of these councils have joined the political arena and are often, and readily, in the pay of the multi-national development companies, who sit on the sidelines with their giant bulldozers at the ready to move in and demolish a way of life that goes back thousands of years – and with it the knowledge which just might save our civilisation.

As more and more native peoples are seeing the connections between the already operative mining programmes, which in some cases leaves open uranium pits, and the polluting of their water systems, they are now connecting this to birth defects in their children, spontaneous abortion and rising occurrences of cancer in their tribes. More and more are joining the resistance along with the non-native people already organising themselves for effective action to resist and to halt the attempts to assimilate all native peoples into mainstream white culture, thus cutting them off from their natural roots.

Laura is one of the more fortunate ones, some spark of her childhood contact with her roots in Mexico still burns and has served to guide her back. But for others the lack of knowing how to resist the pressure of a white imperialist power is not within their capacity and they fall victim to the vast machine.

So, as Laura says, to halt the US Government's programme of mass genocide of the native peoples will take the help of every nation of the world not to collude with them and to say 'No' – we will not let this happen.

*Our Mother Earth is not for sale.*

The third woman Joan Price is a 36 year old American, born in Colorado and now living in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Joan was trained in the fine arts, which has taught her to look inside herself for a rational explanation of her existence on this planet – as opposed to accepting a scientific one. She feels very strongly that American people do not have a sense or order of life and while many are searching to understand the world into which

they have been born, they do not have the necessary framework from which to do this.

From her work as an artist and sculptress, Joan has extended her vision to a new understanding of how so-called Spiritual centres of the world are in fact places where the natural elements are in total harmony; where wind, water and air patterns flow and interact in an unhindered way. She feels that if we allow these places to be disturbed, or misused or completely removed, the effects and consequences to life on this planet will be enormous. Our whole ecological balance will be disturbed on a global scale and that what will follow will be of cataclysmic proportion. So disturbed will our weather patterns be by disrupting these sacred places that earthquakes, floods, hurricanes will occur more and more frequently. So at all cost they must be preserved.

Joan began to see the truth in this when she started having contact with native American peoples, in particular the Hopi. She spoke about when she met these people; she found that they had a profound sense of order which intrigued her and took her back to her childhood experiences in nature. As her connection with them deepened so did her political awareness and commitment to saving their way of life. She saw that in over 200 years of trying to give these people their 'Rights', it just hadn't happened. That to insist on them having a 'Vote' or breaking up their lands to give each a 'plot' was totally out of keeping with *their* sense of order and was imposing the order of the dominant white culture – the invading culture – and in seeing this, she came to the realisation that she had to reevaluate all her previous assumptions completely and that we will have to change our entire way of life.

The native peoples have shown her that you cannot separate the spiritual and practical side of your daily life and that the ceremonies that they perform are the acts which permit them to carry that spiritual consciousness into their daily lives. To have a lifestyle which is in harmony with the natural cycles and rhythms is integral to their wholeness and unity, both in the individual and as a collective group or clan. Their innate understanding of human beings as complex organisms, relating to and interacting with, and receiving vibrations from physical influences such as natural electricity, heat, moisture, conditions their whole way of perceiving their natural environment. It is the acceptance of these things as a physical manifestation of a higher order and their sensitivity to this which is still intact. So, their Earth, their Mother, is sacred as are their ceremonial mountains, shrines of worship and their rivers. When these are taken away, destroyed, polluted, it is in unseen ways altering the balance of our whole universe. We are *all* interconnected beings – with each other, with every plant, animal, insect, tree, flower, piece of soil. Joan feels deeply that our spiritual centres of the world must be kept intact, to keep us connected to our own inner centre, and that the lives and ways of people like the Hopis must be preserved, as she believes that they are the keepers of our unclaimed spirituality until such time as we wake up and reclaim it for ourselves.

At the conference Joan shared her opinion on uranium as follows:

'We have come to think of uranium as a power of destruction, which it can be; but if you understand uranium as a treasure of the earth, you will know that it can be of great benefit, as are all the minerals, and that each has been given its own duty to perform. One of the

main sources of light, the greatest source of light, is uranium, and when we take it out of the ground lightning starts to act in strange ways as it forces through our bodies, and through the clouds and through all things, people begin to get crazy and forms of life become distorted. So we *must* act with respect towards it and see only its beauty as a natural source of light, and look on it as a treasure.' She went on to say, 'The planet of our Mother Earth has a heart of fire, and women are its flame, and I would like to suggest that uranium is its fire, so to extinguish the flame, the women, the female principle, is leaving the fire without direction, it is unleashing destruction ...'

To have had these three extraordinary women with us, each with the message: Stop, Look and Listen before it is too late, but coming from different viewpoints, has been a tremendous gift from the Goddess. Blessed Be ...

During my time in America I was deeply struck by how intricately linked is the nuclear question with the native American people's struggle. Daily a new connection was shown to me. Observing the uranium wrenched from under their sacred lands, discovering that what had been their homeland in desert areas was now used for testing nuclear weapons, I was shocked and pained by the facts as they emerged. I returned knowing that I had to remind myself daily of these facts and do what I could to promote an awareness of this in this country (the UK), so that we here, seemingly so distant from the events, may see that the struggle of the native American peoples is indeed our struggle too, and that we cannot ignore it. It is our *own* survival which is at stake and it is a plea to let us reinstate the sacramental view of life and to see ourselves as sisters and brothers living together as equals on this Mother our Earth.

Caroline Wyndham



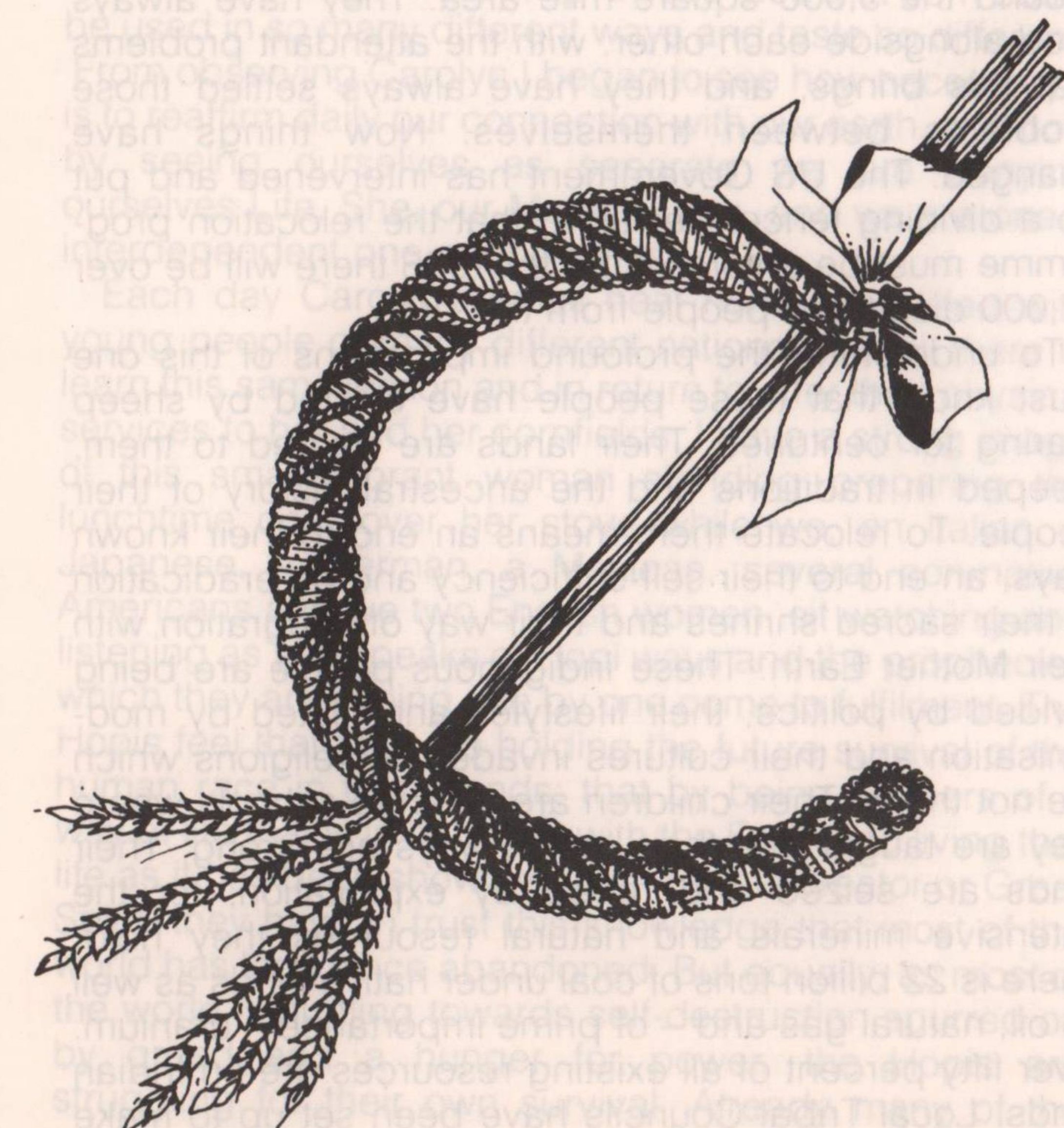
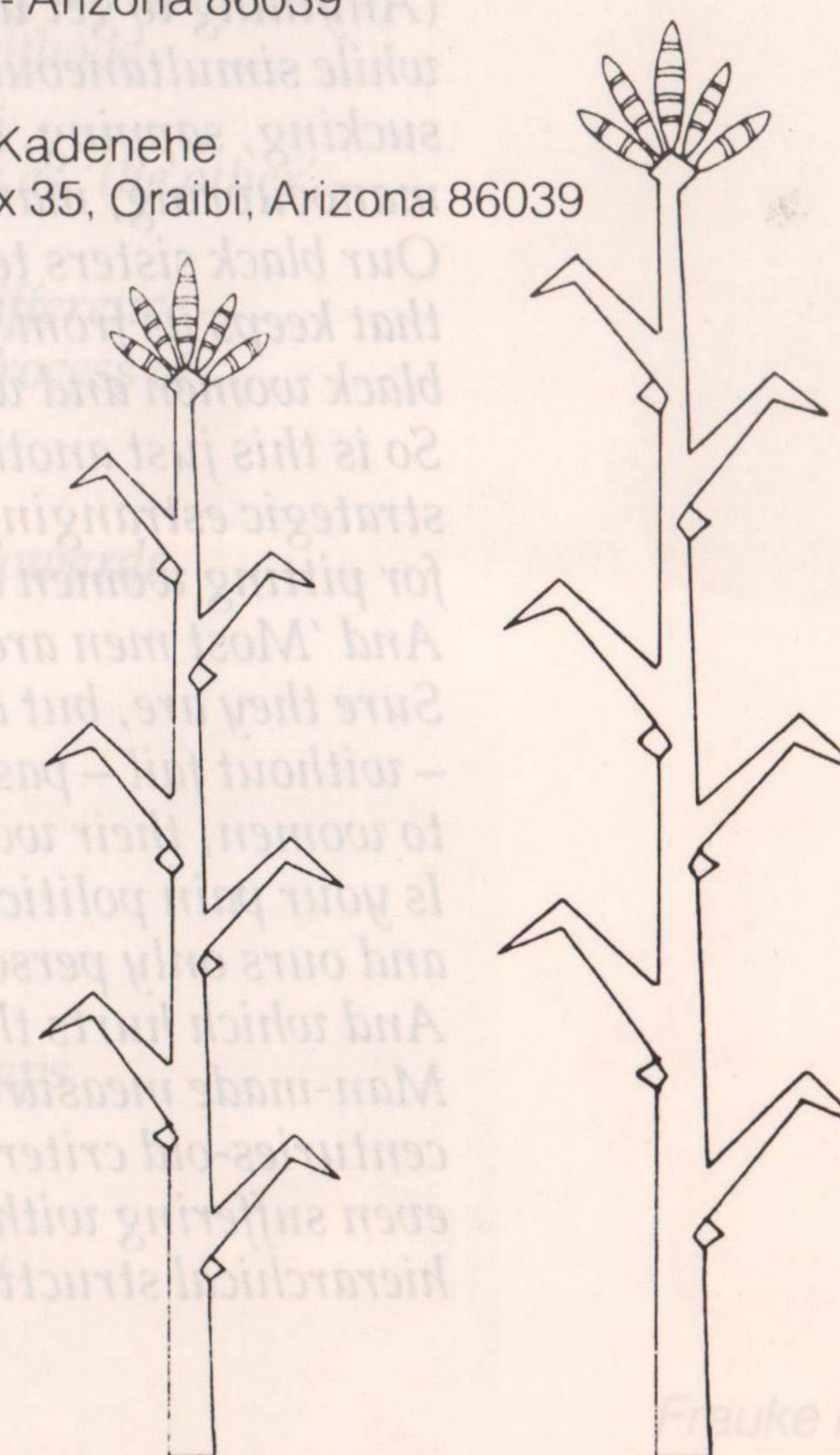
The Big Mountain Support Group needs support:

Donations/letters or requests for more information should be addressed to:

Kee Shay  
Independent Big Mt. Dine Nation  
PO Box 203  
Oraibi - Arizona 86039

OR

Laura Kadenehe  
PO Box 35, Oraibi, Arizona 86039





## Brothers

*You still think you have nothing  
to do with it all*

*standing there, stoically weathering the storm  
or waiting for the whirlwind to pass,  
for life to resume its familiar patterns  
where man has his place and woman her role  
— supporting him.*

*You stand there as if unaware  
of the reasons for our age-old rage  
of being dominated, dwarfed  
colonized creatures*

*controlled, conditioned  
domesticated to your needs.*

*Considering you have — so long ago! —  
given us equality — autonomy — a share in Your domain  
are you perhaps pondering, grieving even  
at our insatiable greed?*

*Maybe you tell yourselves — even believing it —  
that we have equal chances, equal rights  
and hence equality.*

*Yet you continue putting up scaffolding  
erecting barriers around our being:*

*freezing frames of reference*

*roadblocks, mindblocks, diversion signs*

*saying: 'Wrong road, this leads to selfishness,*

*go lose yourselves, help your struggling black sisters*

*and all those poor people in the Third World'*

*(Anything to get us off your backs*

*while simultaneously, surreptitiously*

*sucking, sapping, stealing our strength*

*manoeuvring, manipulating our movement to your ends.*

*Our black sisters tell us it's our guilt*

*that keeps us from getting together:*

*black women and white.*

*So is this just another of your*

*strategic estranging devices*

*for pitting women against women?)*

*And 'Most men are oppressed too'*

*Sure they are, but don't they*

*— without fail — pass on their oppression*

*to women, their women?*

*Is your pain political*

*and ours only personal and private?*

*And which hurts the most?*

*Man-made measurements*

*centuries-old criteria for ranking*

*even suffering within your rigid*

*hierarchical structures.*

*So, our 'white middle-class' brothers  
— considering the power you possess  
compared to your middle-class sisters —  
what have you done to ease the anguish  
alleviate the agonies  
of your black brothers in the Third World  
— and in the First?*

*Let us not trade in trite distasteful tokenism  
but stick to the issue in hand: Men and Women  
our estate in this world, our place on this planet  
our constellation to each other  
in all our relationships: You and I, brother.*

*What is it we want?*

*Equality defined for us by you?*

*I think not. It is you who in the end  
will have to come over to our idea of humanity.*

*When you shall no longer distract us  
from reclaiming and trying to save this lovely  
Earth with all remaining life upon it  
from the polluting grasp of the Destroyers.*

*For all this to happen we first need to reclaim our lives  
and we would ask you to*

*Stop*     *fearing our femaleness  
feeding off our energy  
obstructing our paths  
severing our connections  
veiling our visions  
making us prisoners of your assumptions  
diverting us away from our truths  
hampering — hindering — trying to halt  
our search, our struggle for Selfhood.*

*Start*     *shifting from your conceptions  
of yourselves as the norm of us as 'the other' —  
taking us seriously by lifting  
the heavy curtains of your indifference —  
empathizing with our proud process of  
becoming*

*By faltering you are forever preventing  
perverting progress — ours and yours — towards  
becoming human.*

*By not knowing that two crippled halves  
can never make one*

*Whole human being*

*You are perpetuating our split condition.*

*Yet still you linger*

*looking at us 'objectively'*

*objectifying us, wearily wondering perhaps*

*at our feelings of*

*frustration — despair — outrage*

*as if these too had nothing to do with you.*

Frauke Hansen



# WFLOE Reclaim the Earth Weekend

October '83, County Hall, London

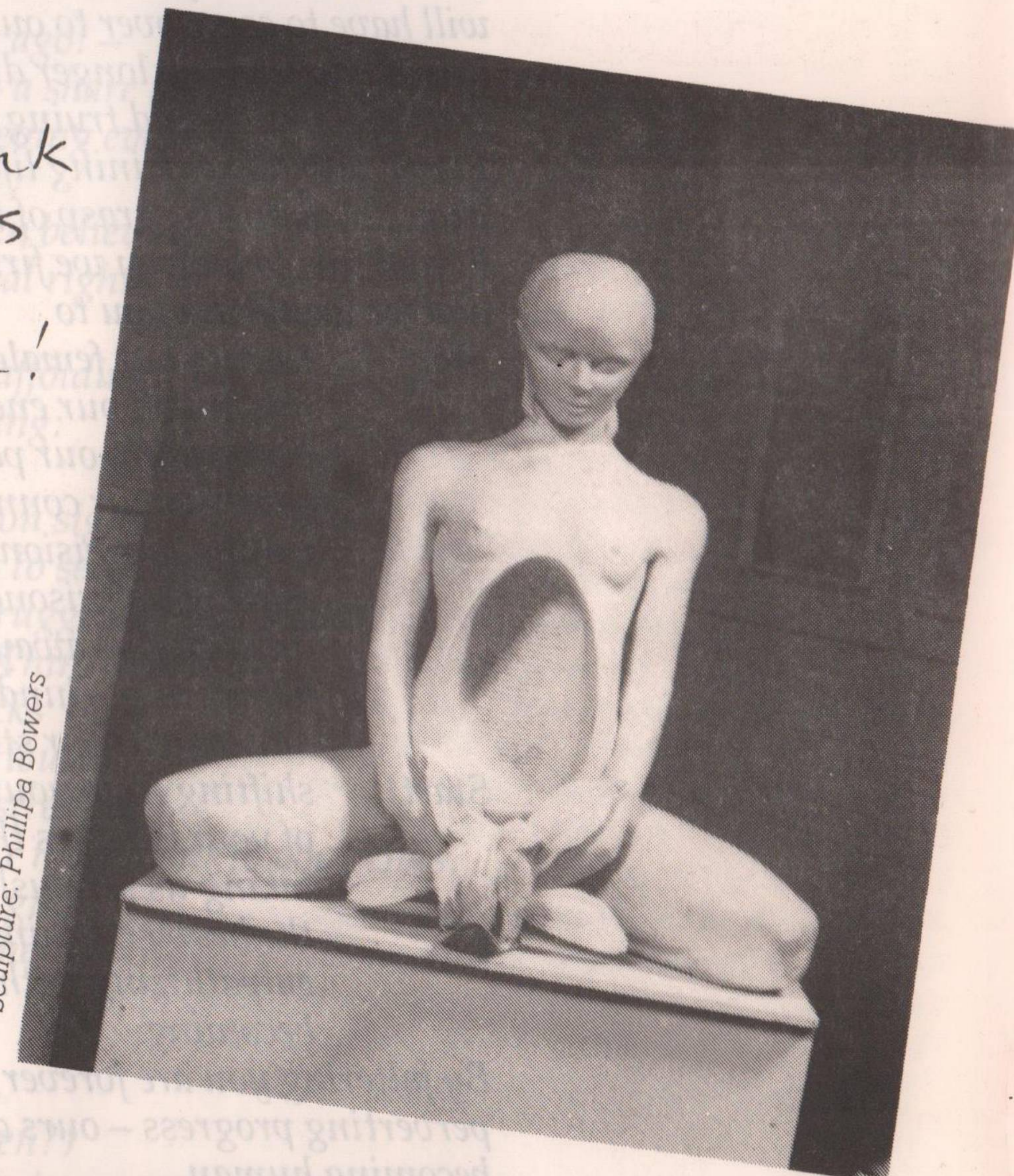


we  
talked  
a lot...



drank  
lots  
of  
tea!

Sculpture: Philippa Bowers



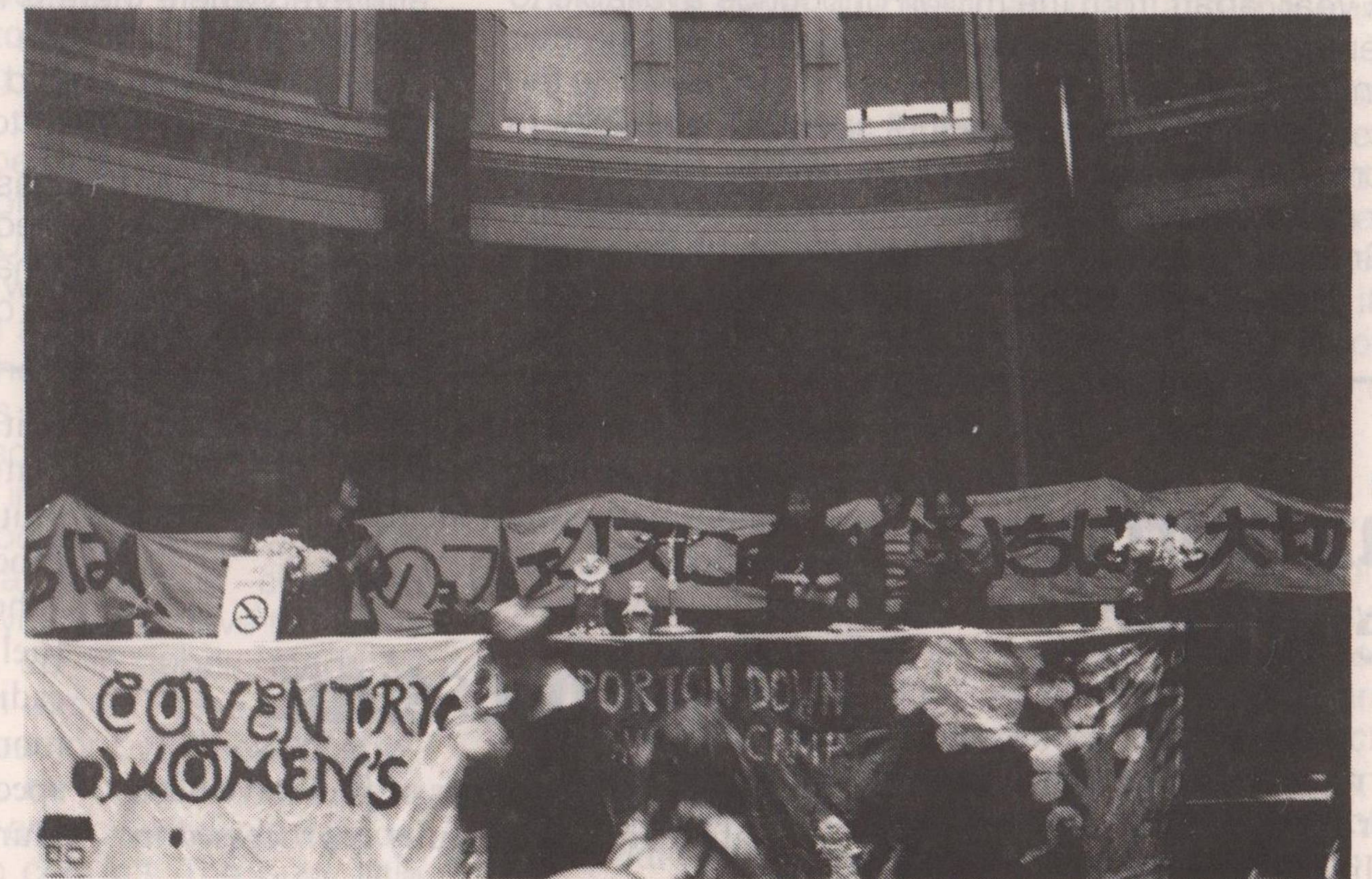
had greetings  
from our  
Sisters  
from Hiroshima



Connected  
with our  
Third World  
Sisters...



shared  
resources



you  
can't  
kill  
the spirit

Photos: Caroline Wyndham



# Nuclear Waste Transport

Every week several tonnes of radioactive spent fuel from Dungeness, Sizewell and Bradwell nuclear power stations travel by train through London on their way to Windscale. Pictures of trains taken at Temple Mills marshalling yards, Stratford station in East London, Mare Street, Hackney, and Caledonian Road in Islington were used by the GLC for their poster campaign publicising the Nuclear Free Zone policy, with an invitation to 'join the nuclear train spotters'.

Now we know what they look like, but what are we supposed to do about it? How do we find out what nuclear spent fuel is, and why we should be worried about it going past women's homes, past shops, and over busy roads? Is it dangerous, and if so in what ways? It was to find some of the answers to these and similar questions that a group was set up in December 1982 called ALARM - Alert Londoners Against Radioactive Materials. I have been working with the group since then, and the most striking discovery for me has been the extent to which we are denied information, and the patronising, dismissive attitude of the men in control of this traffic towards our questions about safety. This was neatly put by a former chairman of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Sir John Hill: 'The public doesn't and cannot be expected to understand the issues of nuclear power in other than the very broadest terms.'

This year, apart from the million of pounds available to the Central Electricity Generating Board to present their case in favour of building a PWR station at Sizewell to the Public Inquiry, the money being spent on publicity is phenomenal. The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and other members of the Nuclear Power Information Group are producing vast quantities of free pamphlets, films and teaching materials aimed at schools

and colleges. They have put up a new exhibition in the Science Museum, and there are 140 speakers employed by British Nuclear Fuels Limited alone, travelling round the country telling people how wonderful the nuclear technology boys are. As part of this publicity campaign, the CEBG are arranging to crash a full size fuel flask in order to prove container safety.

I don't think it matters what lengths you go to to prove that something can never happen - it is the nature of accidents to be unexpected. Only weapons are made expressly in order to kill people, but the number of unintentionally dangerous situations we are living with is reaching terrifying proportions. How long before the earth is so damaged by our activities that we will be unable to heal it? ALARM wants to know if the transport of spent fuel is absolutely necessary, and in what conditions it could be brought to an end.

Below is a page of a pamphlet published in July 1983, and everywhere there is an arrow, radioactive material is being taken from one place to another. I want to comment on what is said about *Transport of spent fuel* in the few words devoted to the subject in this pamphlet.

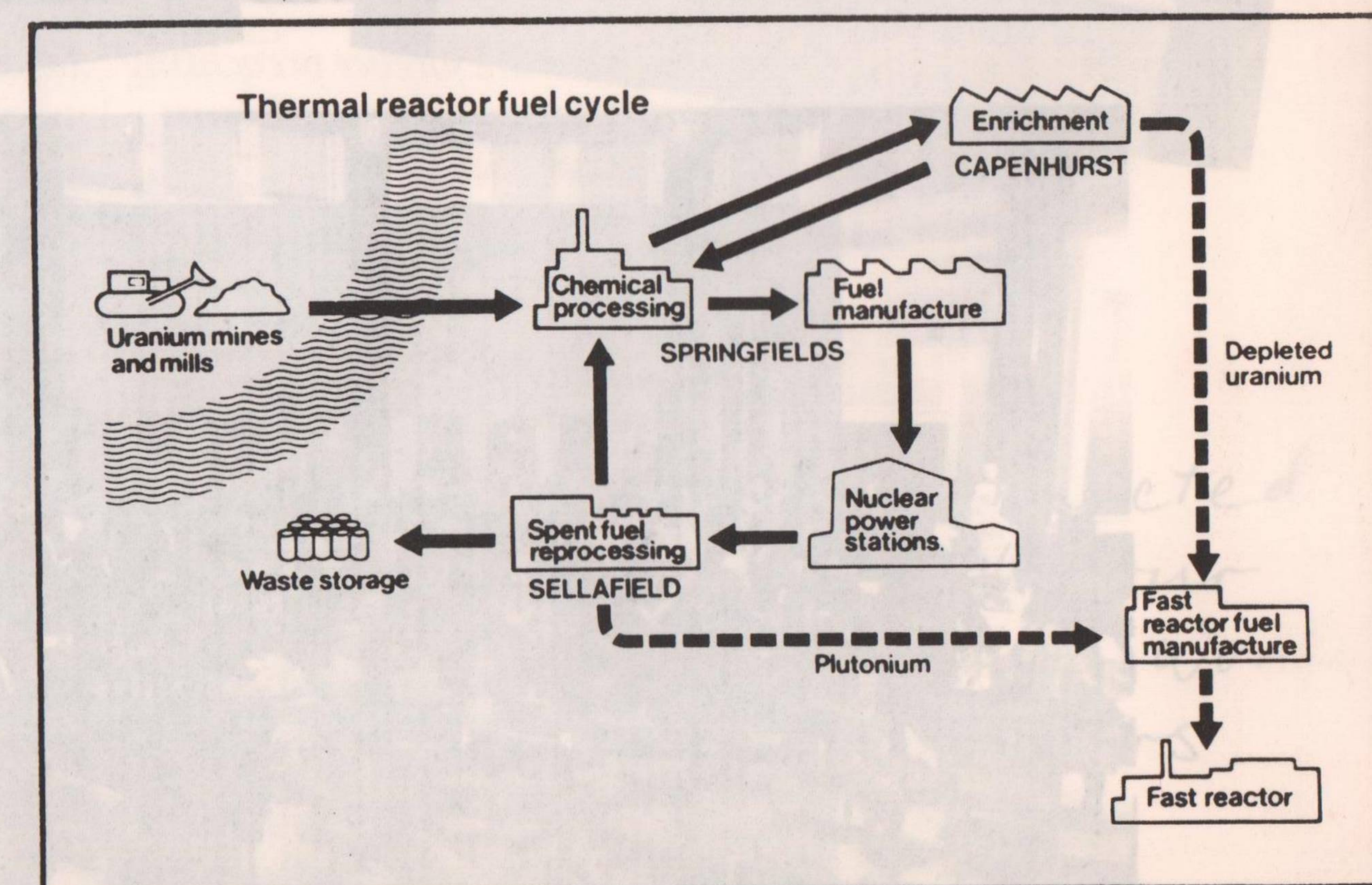
1. When nuclear fuel has been in a reactor for a number of years it is transformed into the same deadly brew of radioactive materials that make up the fall-out from a nuclear bomb. The rods of fuel are lifted out of the reactor

water. British Rail have transported spent fuel flasks over four million miles without an incident leading to a radiation leak.

## Reprocessing

Over 20,000 tonnes of fuel have been safely and successfully reprocessed in

Britain. Spent fuel contains valuable materials - unburnt uranium and plutonium created in the fission process - which can be re-used as fuel. When removed from the reactor, spent fuel is physically hot and highly radioactive, so it is stored for several months, usually under water in a special 'pond' at the reactor site. During this temporary storage period



## Transport of spent fuel

When nuclear fuel has been in a reactor for a number of years it loses its ability to generate heat and must be replaced. The spent fuel is transported to the reprocessing plant by road and rail in heavily shielded containers weighing 50 tonnes or more. These are designed and tested to meet stringent international standards.

The tests are designed to simulate severe accidents. Assessments are made of the cumulative effects of a drop from nine metres on to an unyielding surface, a drop from one metre on to the end of a rounded metal punch and immersion in fire with a flame temperature exceeding 800°C. There is a separate requirement for the containers to withstand immersion in 15 metres of

# and Women in London

by remote control, and are placed in boxes made of stainless steel which are gently lowered into ponds of water at the power station. They generate too much heat, and at this stage are too radioactive to be taken anywhere, so they sit in the cooling pond for at least 100 days before the risk of moving them is considered 'acceptable'. This is fuel from Magnox stations; according to evidence at the Sizewell Inquiry the fuel rods from the proposed PWR station would be kept in pools for five years. This is partly because the pellets of fuel will be arranged in steel casings, which don't corrode as quickly as the Magnox fuel rods. Magnox is a magnesium alloy, and it is attacked by water. It has to be reprocessed within five to eight years, or the rods crumble, and the stuff could catch fire - in water or in air.

2. 'It must be replaced' - only if you want to go on producing nuclear power.

3. Some of the words used in discussing waste transport need to be examined. For example, 'waste' implies something that has no further use, that you can throw away, but this is far from the case with nuclear waste. The earliest power stations were built expressly to produce 'waste', so that the usable uranium and plutonium could be separated out and made into bombs. This is done at Windscale, in the reprocessing plant. Nuclear waste is sometimes called 'spent fuel' or 'irradiated fuel'. It is spent in the way that coal can be said to be spent, when it has burnt to ash. In the case of nuclear fuel - mostly of a kind called 'Magnox' in the UK reactors - the fuel is 'spent' when it is so bunged up with by-products that it is no longer efficient at producing a steady supply of heat. The by-products consist of the range of radioactive substances that uranium breaks apart to form, a process known as fission, during which some of the original bits of the atoms are transformed into intense bursts of heat. A nuclear bomb explodes and produces fall-out; a nuclear reactor works steadily with a stream of controlled explosions and after five to ten years you have the same stuff, but it is still wrapped up in tubes made of magnesium alloy, a kind of thin metal. These tubes are removed from the core of the reactor by remote control, they are deadly and have to be handled at a safe distance. They are put in crates and lowered into 'ponds' of water, where they are left to cool off. The busy little radioactive substances keep on disintegrating and giving off different kinds of radiation, and heat, but they gradually slow down, and after three months to a year they are lifted out of the pond and put inside flasks.

4. After re-processing, there is some material so dangerously radioactive that it must be kept from touching living things or their environment for half a million years. The first high-level wastes ever produced are still sitting in America waiting for someone to work out how to achieve that isolation. The trouble is that everything in the world, rock, sea, plants and animals, and us, is made of the same kind of stuff, and there is no barrier that can prevent eventual contact between one natural substance and another. The experts seem to be saying that we can leave that problem to our grandchildren, but they refuse to acknowledge the harm done to future generations by even low-level radiation.

5. The containers weigh 50 tonnes or more, which would take a lot of force to crack. But the lid is bolted on, and bolts have been seen to move in tests where a flask was crashed. There have been cracks seen in the old flasks which are now being replaced by the CEBG, (each flask

costing about £250,000). The containers are heavily built with 14in thick steel walls, but they are still hot, and they get hotter during the journey. The flasks are contaminated on the outside when they are lifted out of the cooling pond, and they continue to radiate during the journey. The containers are filled with water, to cover the spent fuel rods and keep them cool, and if there is an accident involving a flask, the train driver is supposed to check that none of the water is leaking. What if it is dark or raining, or he has been injured? If he sees a crack in the container he is supposed to keep well out of the way, and he has to send for experts from the power station the flask has come from. How long will it take the experts to arrive, and what will they do when they get there?

6. The 'stringent international standards' are set by the International Atomic Energy Agency, which is interested in promoting use of atomic energy. They are likely to reflect what can be done economically, rather than a fool-proof safety system.

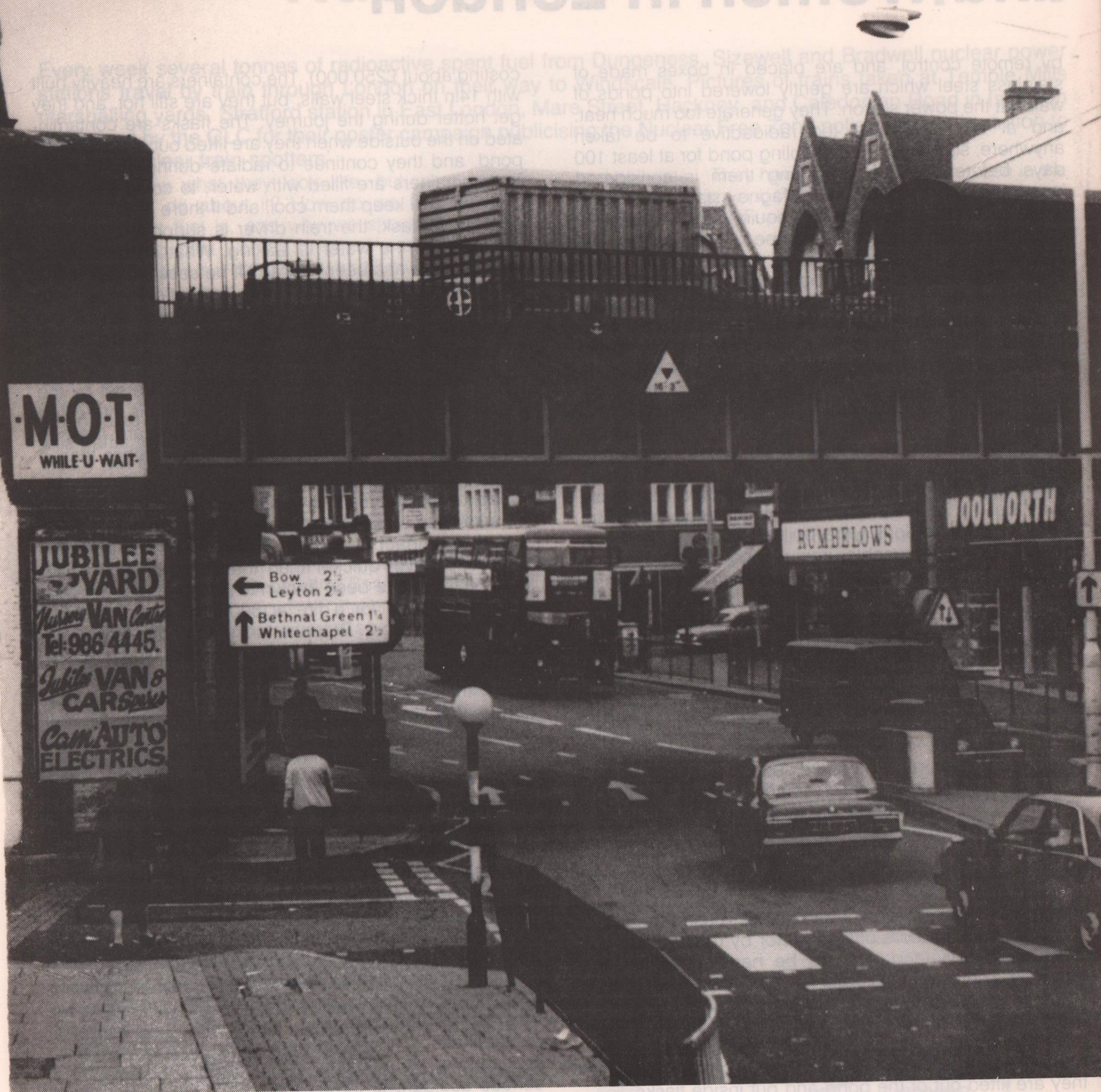
7. Up to now, the tests have been carried out on models, a quarter the size of the real thing, and they have been tested for impact at 30mph. Trains coming in opposite directions travel quicker than that, and the trains with waste flasks have been known to go at 60mph. The fire tests have been for a fire at 800°C all over the flask, lasting half-an-hour. Propane tanks can have fires like a blow-torch, concentrating in one place, and many substances carried by rail can burn at temperatures higher than 800°C. The magnox tubes would melt if the temperature inside the flask reached 650°C, and if it went as high as 1100°C the uranium would burn. A lot of the fire tests were carried out on a computer, where experts imagine what might happen, and then test it.

8. While it may be true that so far there hasn't been a crash which damaged a flask so that radiation leaked, we have to remember that the set limit of radiation at the surface of a flask before it sets off on the railway is 200 millirems an hour. One chest x-ray gives a dose of about 100 millirems to the skin. At least five flasks carried by rail have been found to have higher radiation activity at the surface when they arrived at Windscale. And presumably most of the way there. Contamination of flasks and 'flatrols' (the carriages they are chained to on the train) builds up over time, and there is some loose contamination, which can be washed off by heavy rain. The amount of radioactivity that *could* be leaked in a serious accident is three times more than the amount Windscale is 'permitted' to pour into the sea in a year. The precise amount cannot be calculated, because every load is slightly different, but the only people who know the figures are the CEBG staff at the power station. Local Authorities are not even told when a nuclear train will be passing through their area, much less what it contains.

Imagine an accident in London - what might happen?

It is very unlikely, but let's imagine that a train is derailed in the tunnel on the North London line near Finchley Road, and a train carrying an explosive material caught fire in the same crash. Would the firefighters be able to stop the fire before the spent fuel rods were uncovered by their water boiling away as radioactive steam? The women living and working nearby would risk contamination, but what facilities exist for providing health care in such an emergency? Suppose that the fire was still burning two to three hours later, and some of the





Nuclear waste train travelling through London

radioactive waste was going up in smoke. This picture of a young woman showing which substances go where inside the body, and what damage they can do, reminds us that you wouldn't know if your body had been invaded by radioactive 'bullets' - we can't see, hear, smell or feel either the gamma-radiation or the particles of other stuff like plutonium, and strontium, which can be breathed in, or swallowed. Everything about this scenario is nuclear - nuclear power, nuclear waste and damage to the nuclear part of the body cells.

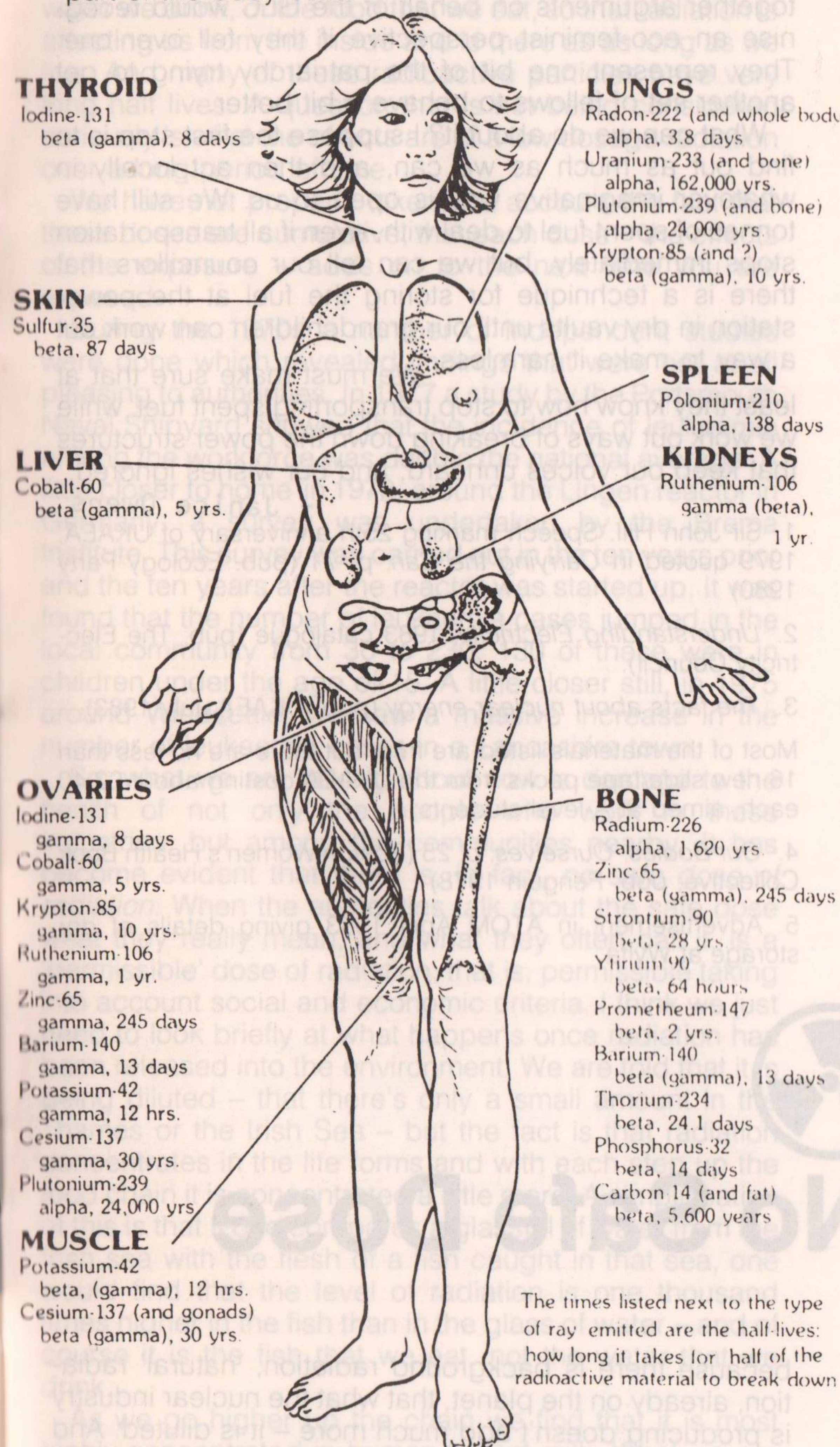


Illustration from 'Ain't Nowhere We Can Run, Handbook for Women on the Nuclear Mentality', by Koen and Swain, published by Wand. USA.

Children change as you look at them. I was amazed when my children hurt their knees, for example, to see how quickly new and beautiful skin grew back in place. Their cells are dividing at many times the rate of a fully-grown person, adding on more of the same to make their body bigger, and sometimes showing a dramatic change in development when they reach puberty, and begin to grow breasts, and body hair. Cells while they are actually dividing are much more sensitive to damage from radiation, and the whole body chemistry can be more easily upset in children, such that they lose the capacity to protect themselves.

In an unborn child the damage can be drastic. Thalidomide caused children to be born with severe disabilities, but at least women knew that the thalidomide was the cause. It is impossible to prove a direct connection between radiation and foetal damage, although as long ago as 1957 Dr Alice Stewart showed that x-raying unborn babies was bad for them, and that there was a direct link between that kind of radiation and death in childhood from leukaemia. Dr Rosalie Bertell's work on low-level radiation hazards is building up our information about this very difficult subject.

At the other end of the time-scale, old people also lose the capacity to make good what has been damaged, and they become less able to cope with illness. People who do not have a very good living standard, mothers for example, who eat bread and marg, or feed themselves on the leftovers, so that their families will not feel hungry, are another group less able to tolerate harm to their body's cells. A healthy body needs many different substances to keep healthy, and we need a variety of nutritious food. It is almost impossible nowadays to buy food that has not been grown on soil thick with chemical fertiliser and pesticide, and our body tissues can only tolerate so much 'insult'. We might be able to stand small amounts of chemical poisoning, or air pollution, or increases in the radiation in the atmosphere, but added together the risks are multiplied.

There is one particular kind of cell in which the messages of life are of extreme importance. This is the egg - a single cell with a half-pack of genes, ready to pair up with the same number, coiled like strings of beads, in a sperm. A girl baby is born with 300,000 to 400,000 follicles - balls of cells with an egg in the middle, and between 300 to 500 will ripen and leave the ovary during mature life. When an egg is fertilised, the genetic material from the sperm and the egg combines to form the blueprint for a new person. A damaged gene will cause the new person to carry messages not present in either the mother or the father's body cells; this is mutation - a change in the genes carried in a fertilised egg. Mutations occur naturally, just as our natural environment bombards us with background radiation. Some parts of the earth are not as healthy for genes as others, for example there is a part of India where the radiation on one side of a range of hills is higher than on the other side, and more babies with Down's Syndrome are born to women living on the side of the hills with higher background radiation. Most mutations cause harm, and many go unremarked because the fertilised egg does not grow, or the foetus is aborted at an early stage in the pregnancy. Genes can mutate in a secretive way; since two matched sets must entwine to produce a new life, a defect in one of a pair may not show up for several generations, until both mother and father are carriers of that same defective gene.

In the 1950s I worked in a laboratory breeding flies for genetic research. The flies were separated as they emerged from their pupae, and carefully selected pairs were put together to mate. The parents were removed and the next generation examined under a microscope, and counted to see how many had which characteristics. you may have done the same kind of experiment in biology lessons. The point is that it took only six weeks before you were looking at the grandchildren. Well human life is on a different timescale, and we will not see the effects of genetic harm for a long time, on such a scale that we can prove beyond doubt that harm is being done. There are indications around us, and particularly in areas suffering pollution from nuclear power stations. Lancashire, and specifically Barrow-in-Furness, has the



highest rate of childhood leukaemia in the country. The nuclear industry say, 'Prove it' when this is pointed out, or they claim that because the level of radiation is lower than that declared 'acceptable' by the ICRP, it *cannot* be causing the increase in leukaemia. This is like saying that if Newton declared the law of gravity to operate in the opposite direction, apples would have had to fall upwards, and those that fell to the ground didn't count.

Even if there is never an accident involving a radioactive leak, the transport of spent fuel adds a little to the background radiation levels in London, and so adds to the likelihood that we will become less healthy, less fertile. Now that we have started 'modernising' our nuclear weapons, building the Trident submarines, and stockpiling Cruise missiles at American bases, making new strategic weapons, such as the land-mines that can be carried in a back-pack, bullets and shells 'enhanced' with radioactive explosives, the amount of radioactive material being transported secretly by the MoD must increase. It also means that the spent fuel from the power stations will be reprocessed at an earlier stage in the operation of the reactor, when the weapons-grade plutonium is available. Windscale is storing fuel imported by British Nuclear Fuels Limited from Europe and Japan, in the hopes that they will be able to build a new plant for reprocessing the oxide fuel. What makes it so difficult for them to give up on a technology that brings more problems than benefits? Do they see their work as so valuable in terms of status and power that they blind themselves to the dangers to the planet? I suppose these are silly questions, really, when thousands of workers are willing to spend their lives making weapons that can destroy the earth.

The Sizewell Inquiry has been dragging on for a year, and they have just started the second phase, dealing with Safety. Although the main area of discussion is safety in Reactor design, the GLC will be presenting evidence to show that another reactor at Sizewell will have an effect on the safety of Londoners, especially because it will increase the nuclear traffic through the city. This evidence is based in part on the international conference held on April 14/15/16 1983, when 'experts'

from the nuclear industry stood up on a platform with their heads outlined above a reading-desk draped with crimson cloth, and read very long and abstract papers on the subject of waste transport, and the public attitude to risk, which they seemed to think unreasonable. There was very little time or opportunity for questions from the audience, who were mainly officials from local authority councils, or health and safety officers. The conference was held in the Masonic headquarters, the Connaught Rooms, and although the intention was good, the whole exercise was horrendous. I do not think the men putting together arguments on behalf of the GLC would recognise an eco-feminist perspective if they fell over one. They represent one bit of the patriarchy trying to get another set of fellows to behave a bit better.

What can we do about it? I suppose the first step is to find out as much as we can, and then act locally in whatever imaginative way is open to us. We still have tonnes of spent fuel to deal with, even if all transportation stops immediately, but we can tell our councillors that there is a technique for storing the fuel at the power station in dry vaults until our grandchildren can work out a way to make it harmless.

We must make sure that at least they know how to stop transporting spent fuel, while we work out ways of breaking down the power structures that keep our voices unheard, and our wishes ignored.

- Janice Owens

1. Sir John Hill. Speech marking 25th anniversary of UKAEA, 1979 quoted in *Carrying the Can*, p. 71 (pub. Ecology Party 1980)

2. *Understanding Electricity*, 1983 catalogue (pub. The Electricity Council).

3. *The facts about nuclear energy* (pub. UKAEA July 1983)

Most of the materials listed are free, but there are no less than 16 new slide/tape packs from the UKAEA costing about £2.40 each, aimed at A-level students.

4. *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, p. 25 (Boston Women's Health Book Collective, pub. Penguin 1978)

5. Advertisement in *ATOM* April 1983 giving details of dry storage at Wylfa.

plutonium to cause damage to cells in a lung, that could be the trigger for cancer.

I think that the effects of a high dose of radiation all at one time are recognised. Hiroshima taught us that. But I would like to make a few brief points. Firstly, that very often all we are thinking about is gamma-radiation, like x-rays, that go straight through the body, albeit causing some damage as they go. But what we are talking about when we think about the nuclear industry is the kind of emissions that are taken into the body, that are inhaled in the dust we breathe in the air, or taken in through the water we drink, or the food that we eat, so that radiation is affecting us from the inside and is there as long as we live. And many of these radioactive particles have very long half lives. A question that is not being considered seriously is what the effects are of a low dosage radiation over a long period of time.

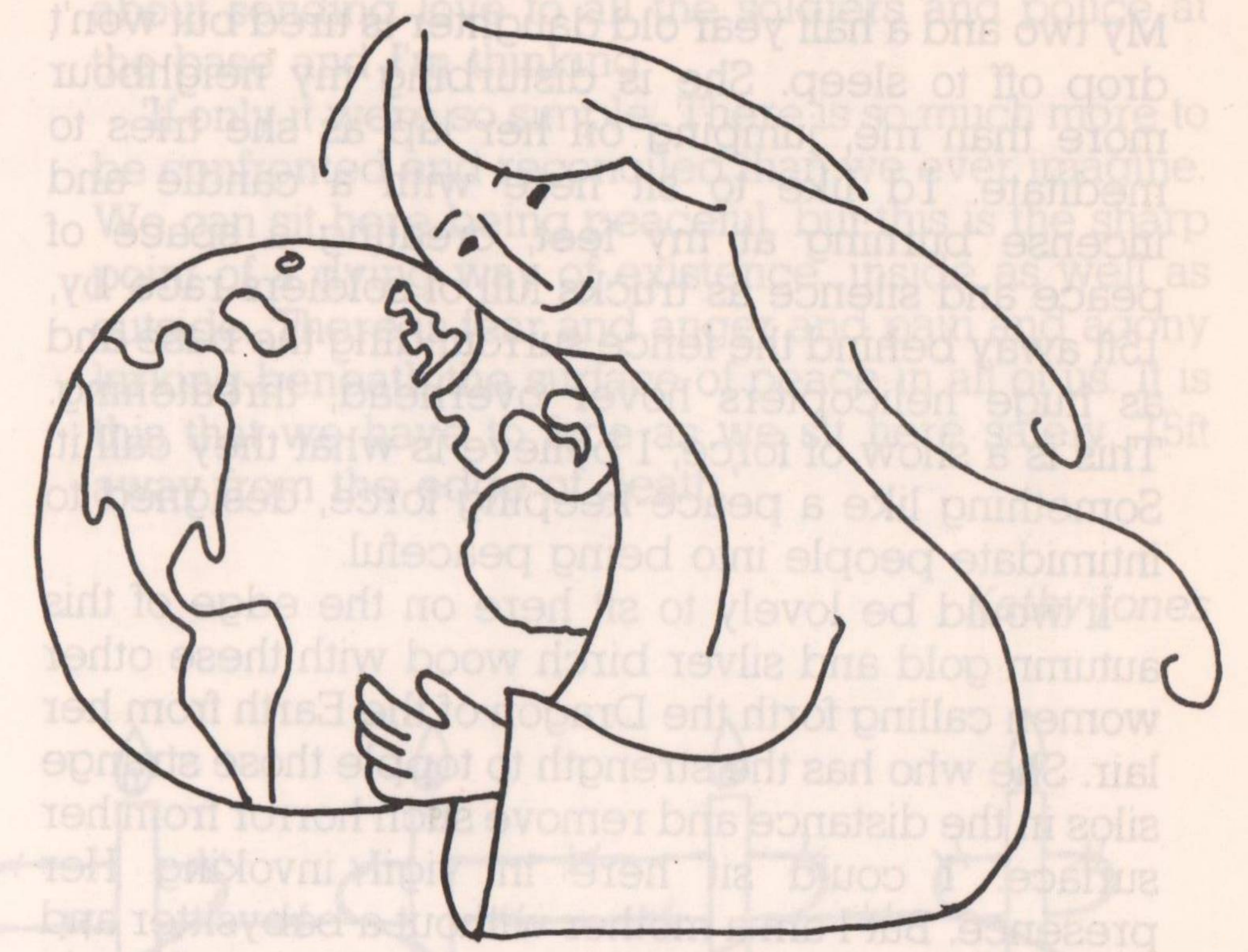
We have not properly taken into account the fact that these doses are cumulative, that each dose – the effects of the exposure – adds on to the next time you are exposed.

During the 1970s a number of independent studies were done which revealed findings that were not at all pleasing to authorities. In 1977 a study by the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard showed that the incidence of leukaemia among the workforce was double the national average. A little closer to home in 1978, around the Lingar reactor in Germany, a survey was undertaken by the Brema Institute. This survey was carried out in the ten years prior and the ten years after the reactor was started up. It was found that the number of leukaemia cases jumped in the local community from 30 to 230, 130 of these were in children under the age of 15. A little closer still, in 1975 around Windscale, we saw a massive increase in the number of leukaemia cases in a Lancashire town.

So, what we are talking about now is damage to the health of not only the people who work in these industries, but among the communities nearby. It has become evident that there is, in fact, *no safe dose of radiation*. When the authorities talk about the safe dose what they really mean, and what they often call it, is a 'permissible' dose of radiation; that is, permissible taking into account social and economic criteria. I think we just need to look briefly at what happens once radiation has been released into the environment. We are told that it is being diluted – that there's only a small amount in the Thames or the Irish Sea – but the fact is that radiation concentrates in the life forms and with each step up the food chain it is concentrated a little more. A simplification of this is that if one compares a glassful of water from the Irish sea with the flesh of a fish caught in that sea, one would find that the level of radiation is one thousand times higher in the fish than in the glass of water – and of course it is the fish that we eat, not the water that we drink.

As we go higher up the chain we find that it is most highly concentrated in human breast milk. What we are doing in effect is feeding the most polluted form of nourishment to our most vulnerable, the young, whose cells are still rapidly dividing.

There are hundreds of types of radioactive elements and all of these concentrate in different parts of the body. The body is an instrument with little immunity to radioactive elements. We have no way of sensing radiation – can't smell it, touch it or see it. Many of the elements are analogous to other chemicals, such that the body can replace calcium with Strontium 90, which is taken into the bone and bone marrow and quite possibly is the cause of certain cancers. Similarly, plutonium is an iron analogue which can be taken into the reproductive system where it can cross the placental barrier.



So we hear about the radiation protection agencies, but what are they protecting? Are they in fact protecting our health? It is important to realise that every single member of the ICRP, the International Commission on Radiological Protection, has been brought up within the nuclear industry. They will continue to tell us that the proof of evidence is in the deaths and in the cancers. They continue to ignore other indications of ill health.

I would like to end by citing the work of a very remarkable woman called Rosalie Bertell. She describes the cancers and the leukaemias as the *secondary* effects of radiation. What she sees as the primary effects are those effects equivalent to the ageing process, and says that we are finding that more people are contracting what are normally considered 'old age' diseases earlier. Children are being born with allergies, with asthma; diabetes and heart disease are occurring more frequently in people in the prime of life or at child-bearing age. She describes it as a form of species death and suggests that we won't necessarily see the end in a nuclear war. It may be that in producing these weapons to protect ourselves, we are in the process of – and this is the supreme irony – killing ourselves.

Finally, I would like to say that since we have no instinct in our bodies to tell us where radiation is, or what we shouldn't be eating or drinking, or the places to avoid which are contaminated, then we have somehow to develop a new awareness and have to take responsibility for this. Again, in the words of Rosalie Bertell, workers fought for their health and safety in the work space one hundred years ago – now we have to take it upon ourselves to fight for health and safety in our living space. Thank you.

Claire Ryle



## Radiation – No Safe Dose

The issue I am going to speak about right now is that of radiation – I think this is an issue that, above all others, brings into sharp focus the interconnectedness of life on our planet. The interconnectedness of ourselves as human beings and our dependence on the life support systems that the planet provides – the air we breathe, the water we drink.

You may have heard of an incident last year at Pangbourne, where radioactive material was being dumped directly into the river Thames from Aldermaston, the weapons manufacturing facility. I think what shocked me about that incident was less the fact of the incident itself, than that it is only just now coming into the news, despite the fact that this leaking has been going on over the past 20 years. This is just one small incident among a whole series of others.

And what do the Ministry of Defence continue to tell us? 'There's nothing to worry about'. They'll tell you that

because there is background radiation, 'natural' radiation, already on the planet, that what the nuclear industry is producing doesn't add much more – it is diluted. And so they continue to dump 6,000 Curies of plutonium, legally, into the Irish Sea every year. The fact is, we do have natural background radiation, but over the last five thousand million years it's been decaying away so that the planet is now a place fit for humans to live. We have the ozone layer to protect us from the ultra violet radiation of the sun, and at the same time we are adding massive pollution to the earth (and from this we have no protection). In just these last several decades, something like five tonnes of plutonium has been released into the atmosphere as a result of the Hiroshima bomb, the bomb tests and from all that the nuclear industry is doing. Each one thousand megawatt nuclear reactor, produces between four to five hundred pounds of plutonium every year. You only need to inhale a microscopic amount of



# Vigil of Peace, Greenham Common

My two and a half year old daughter is tired but won't drop off to sleep. She is disturbing my neighbour more than me, jumping on her lap as she tries to meditate. I'd like to sit here with a candle and incense burning at my feet, creating a space of peace and silence as trucks full of soldiers race by, 15ft away behind the fence surrounding the base and as huge helicopters hover overhead, threatening. This is a show of force, I believe is what they call it. Something like a peace-keeping force, designed to intimidate people into being peaceful.

It would be lovely to sit here on the edge of this autumn gold and silver birch wood with these other women calling forth the Dragon of the Earth from her lair. She who has the strength to topple those strange silos in the distance and remove such horror from her surface. I could sit here in vigil invoking Her presence. But I am a mother without a babysitter and we shall have to go for a walk and leave the others in peace.

We set off with the pushchair around the open space encircling the perimeter fence. Every hundred yards or so outside the fence there are two or three policemen sitting with a small fire, reading the Sunday papers and listening to Radio One. Their helmets are hung on trees or on the fence.

'Hello' with a smile.

'Hello' with a wave.

'Lovely day'.

We are all so friendly to each other in this place of alienation. Inside the fence there are groups of 10 and 12 soldiers tying more rolls of barbed wire to the fence. We joke with each other, but they are less relaxed than the police. They all look very young.

As we walk round the edge of the base, my daughter falls asleep in her pushchair, peaceful amidst the continuous loud noise of engines on the ground and in the air.

'Best way to be', says a policeman pointing at her.

'What a weird thing to say - here', is what I'm thinking.

'Aren't most people anyway?' is what I say.

I decided to walk round the perimeter to the silos - just to see and maybe to beam some energy there directly. At one point they are very near to the edge of the base. Last time we camped near here there was only a fence with a few strands of barbed wire on top, now there are large coils of barbed wire above and below and more inside. But also in this long stretch there are beautiful scars - holes cut in over four miles of fencing last week and hastily patched over by teams of soldiers working through the night.

As I steer the pushchair over the bumpy ground there aren't so many women here. Only one or two with police still dotted every hundred yards or so and soldiers with walkie-talkies on the inside. It doesn't feel so good to be so far away from other women. A helicopter comes and hovers over us, checking us out, presumably taking photographs.

Does she have a bolt cutter or is that a bomb in her buggy?

After a while we arrive at the silos. Although there are trees and bracken here, it is very desolate so close to the silos. Here the full horror of it begins to sink in. Outside the fence there are about ten women sitting or standing with candles just watching, looking with eyes closed or open at the silos. Some of them are friends and it's good to see them.

Inside there are five rows of fencing between us and the silos - one behind another behind another behind another, all close together. Between each of the rows of barbed wire, some with razor edging, are soldiers. All of them seem to be wired up with walkie-talkies and bits of equipment stuck to their bodies. Which ones are carrying guns? Is that bulge in the jacket a gun or a packet of sandwiches?

As we arrive one of them talks into his machine. Another woman to be added to the lists. As I stand with my child fast asleep in her pushchair a soldier comes up directly opposite us about five feet away through the fence. He takes out his polaroid camera and snaps our picture through the fence. I hear myself saying with bravado:

'Oh do let's see the picture. Do we look lovely?' as he strips off the chemical backing and puts our photograph away in a wallet. Another face for the files. Another subversive to be watched.

I suddenly feel incredibly vulnerable with my baby. They could just come and take all of us - just like that. Out here in this lonely stretch of woods, 11 women and a child could just disappear and no-one would know. There's no-one here to see or report what happens. Those men protecting their weapons of death and their power are not so different from the men of Argentina, Russia or Chile.

They could separate me from my daughter calling me an unfit mother because I want a life for her, because I am here. I hear her screams as they lead me away in one direction and take her in another. I hear my own screams. It's an intolerable feeling.

A soldier begins to count us. Above a certain number they are impelled to act. The atmosphere suddenly grows very tense. I can't bear it and like an animal in danger I turn the pushchair without saying goodbye and hurry away. Away from this terrible place and tears begin to pour down my face.

I have to get away, to take my baby away from this awful place. Here they hold the bombs that can kill a million people in a few minutes, that can destroy our beautiful planet. How they can even think of using such a weapon I cannot imagine. How anyone ever contemplated making such a weapon is beyond my comprehension.

I stumble, half blind with tears, back through the woods, past policemen still sitting reading their Sunday papers, listening to Radio One. Now I want to scream at them, shout and harangue. No more pleasant 'Hellos' and the understanding 'It's not your fault really, you are just victims too'. Now I want to

shout at them.

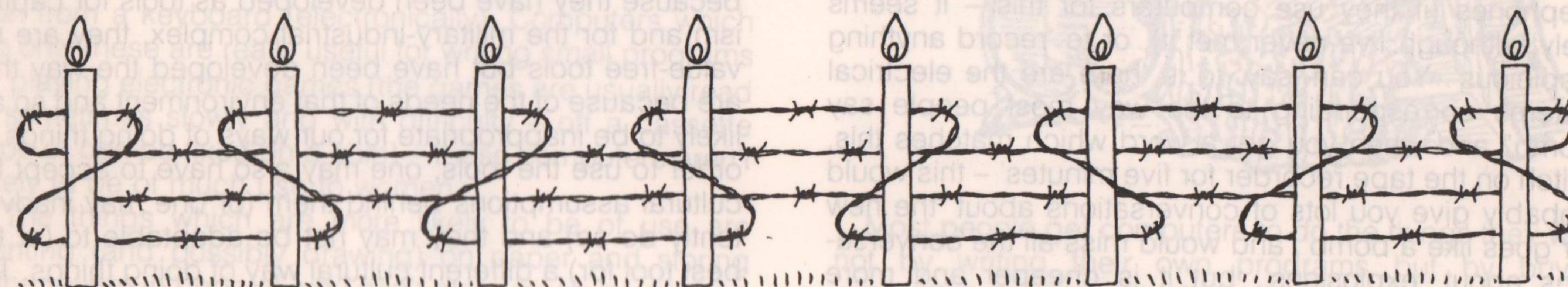
'It is your fault. You who sit there without thinking. Who do nothing, who are just doing a job, who build the fences, who build the missiles and the silos and the death camps!'

At last we get back to where the women on the peace vigil are still sitting peacefully meditating in the setting sun. My tears dry as I cry in someone's arms.

'It won't happen', she says.

'I know, I know, but that's not the point', is what I'm thinking.

At the point where the atmosphere grew tense by the silos, the soldiers apparently unrolled a 100ft long by 10ft wide curtain of hessian and hung it on the barbed wire so that the women couldn't see through



## A week with the missiles in mind

The missiles are on their way over.

They're in my head already.

In a Japanese gift shop I handle a shiny red Christmas bauble of wheatstalks. It feels precious. I cup it in my hands and hope.

I'm on my knees in the kitchen cleaning the U-bend of the sink. On the radio there's an advert for Ambassador Class airline travel. The executives are up in the clouds and I'm down here with disinfectant and lino. I think about imbalances of power and clean away the muck with purpose.

He sits opposite me on the Piccadilly Line, slumped and crumpled between stations, reading 'Conan the Conqueror' in paperback and playing with his dandruff. In a ripped Slazenger bag lying open at his feet, a board game invites players to 'Defend justice and smash evil with your superworld heroes'.

'Take the toys from the boys', sing the women of Greenham.

He turns another page of the well-worn paperback ego and slouches further into the seat.

I go to the CND shop in Seven Sisters Road, get WFLOE's address, a white wooden dove badge and a copy of Spare Rib. I'm bouncing along in the dark lights of London, glowing with hope and energy and renewed survival instinct.

I fall in step with Mother Nature and we celebrate our potential with flourishes of life.

I'm outside a cinema advertising 'The Omen'.

A child's face with a black crow hint of lurking evil flitting across the naive eyes.

I respond with a theory: we fear we have contamination buried deep within us. Anxious not to expose it, we harbour mistrust, deceit, suspicion, not daring to let defences down.

In the fortress of harboured fear we keep the enemy alive.

I go to a performance at the National Theatre, given by mentally-handicapped adults.

It's triumphant!

The weak, voiceless people are getting stronger. And, in their strength, there's joy. A wholeness inside me rises with approval. We applaud loud and long.

I'm walking along the South Bank of the river. Echoes of last week's Peace March resurrect themselves through my footsteps as I pass Jubilee Gardens and cross Westminster Bridge.

Statues of heros and horses commemorate the glory of victory by force.

My brain floats in the depths of the Thames, ebbing and flowing and restoring its balances.

I'm still walking, with air and lights and friendship around me.

Hope rises, fear subsides and the current goes on.

~ Christine Gomersall

to the silos. Apparently and ludicrously they wanted to hide the silos from the prying eyes of the women (witches?).

A little later one of the women says something about sending love to all the soldiers and police at the base and I'm thinking:

'If only it were so simple. There is so much more to be confronted and reconciled than we ever imagine. We can sit here being peaceful, but this is the sharp point of a dying way of existence, inside as well as outside. There is fear and anger and pain and agony lurking beneath the surface of peace in all of us. It is this that we have to face as we sit here safely, 15ft away from the edge of death.'

Kathy Jones



# Computers – to use or not to use?

## That is the eco-feminist question

When we met at the WFLOE Weekend in October '83 we asked Penny Strange of the Women in Computing network if she thought computers a useful tool for feminist organising. In reply, she wrote the following article:

Computers *can't* think. Computers can store and retrieve lots of information very quickly and can program arithmetic operations and greater than/less than sorts of comparisons. Computers can't perform value judgements but they can perform actions based on tests if the test is defined in terms of arithmetic operations or comparisons. For example, you *can't* program a computer to tap telephones (if they use computers for this – it seems likely, although I've never met it), or to 'record anything suspicious'. You can 'say' to it: 'here are the electrical patterns corresponding to the way most people say "bomb" and when you get a word which matches this, switch on the tape recorder for five minutes' – this would probably give you lots of conversations about 'the new car goes like a bomb', and would miss all the conversations about 'explosions', but it is cheaper and more predictable (in that the computer would follow the instructions to the letter) than a room of people taping every conversation, and what's more it's potentially a way of taping every phone call in the UK – which people with headphones is not. The other point from this example is that a computer is only as good as its program – all those bills for zero weren't the computer, they were caused by the programmer who forgot to write 'If amount owed = zero, don't print bill'.

A long time ago (like about 20 - 25 years), computers came only in one size – very big. They had to be kept in clean, air-conditioned rooms and tended to get their instructions ('program') or information ('data') on punched cards. They did calculations mainly, e.g. for billing or payroll and printed their results on paper. And they were expensive. Since then, due to improvements in electronics, big computers have become more powerful and small ones have been developed which are much cheaper. In many ways, these small computers are more sophisticated than the large ones of 20 years ago in that the ways you can get information into them and out of them are easier for people to deal with than punched cards. And they no longer need to be kept in clean conditions or handled with excessive care (although they don't respond positively to coffee or being dropped – in many ways they are comparable to televisions or videos in the amount of tender loving care needed). The other thing that has happened over the last 15 - 20 years is that it has become possible for computers to pass information to each other, or for people to use computers from far away via cables or telephone lines or, to a small extent, satellites. This use of telephone lines has, to a certain extent, been slowed down by the fact that telephone lines are designed for people, not computers, to communicate by and they are also difficult to get hold of quickly (it takes a long time to get a phone installed). Cable and satellites may have an impact in this area as they get more common. One of the reasons for the interest in this area is because most companies are not corner shops and have more than one office. Often they need to get information both between offices and from offices to a central head office. And most computers are used by companies!

There is a debate among feminists interested in technology about whether it is possible to use computers in non-capitalist, non-authoritarian and non-bureaucratic ways. There are two schools of thought: one that they are a valuable tool and we can benefit from them to remove much of the drudgery associated with things like producing and distributing newsletters, and the other is that – because they have been developed as tools for capitalism and for the military-industrial complex, they are not value-free tools but have been developed the way they are because of the needs of that environment and so are likely to be inappropriate for our ways of doing things. In order to use the tools, one may also have to accept the cultural assumptions behind them (or one may inadvertently do so) and they may not be adaptable to (or the best tool for) a different cultural way of doing things. The two views are, of course, not totally incompatible – to some extent it's a question of degree. I certainly think that

1. computers were built to meet first military and then big business needs – small business and leisure has been a side effect.
2. they don't come without cost to the people who make them – and the documented evidence that we have is that the people who suffer most in the making of computers are the women working in the free trade zones of East Asia making chips – western feminists involved with technology have never really known what to do about this connection – and it's not just what we think of as computers, but electronic washing machines, digital watches, etc.
3. there is so much glamour about computers now that it is very easy to think 'they must be an advantage to us' rather than thinking about more creative uses of things like duplicators and photocopyers, or what else could be done with the money computers cost, or the impact on the power differences in a group between those who can use or have access to the computer and those who don't; and
4. they are an advantage for big stable name and address lists.

Anyway, I'm getting away from the facts.

Basically computers can (to varying degrees) do the following:

- Calculate numbers
- Perform logic, e.g. If bill total not zero, Print bill, Otherwise don't.
- Print information, using numbers, letters and common typewriter symbols on paper.
- Draw pictures on a TV screen.
- List information on a TV screen.
- Draw pictures on paper with plotters.
- Receive information typed on a keypad.
- Receive information from various other places, e.g. reading the magnetic stripe on a bank cash card.
- Storing information on cassette tapes, floppy disks or bigger disks (like stacked up gramophone records which you can write on).

- Reading information from all these places.
- Searching for information, e.g. reading all the information on a disk looking for particular words (this is a combination of reading and logic).
- Provide security for their operations in various ways, e.g. requiring passwords before you are allowed access.
- Transmit or receive information via telephone lines, etc.

In general, things which are done electronically have got very much cheaper in the last few years and things which are mechanical or are related to storing things have got less so but are catching up a bit. (Also things which are mechanical are more likely to break and need fixing!) Therefore the cheapest sorts of small computers will be those which calculate (electronically) and send information to a TV screen (electronically) and receive information from a keyboard (electronically). Computers which do only these are really useful for writing small programs or playing electronic games (the games are usually read – sometimes slowly and with difficulty – off a cassette tape or can be fixed on a chip) – these computers aren't likely to be of much use to women.

The things which are more likely to be of use are printing (and possibly drawing) on paper and storing information. In general, you can't store much information on cassette tapes (programs – yes, but you'd get so few names and addresses or text for word processing that it would probably be easier to do by hand or with a duplicator). So that means floppy disks and printers, and printers mean a need for computer paper with holes in the sides which is often not cheap.

There is no single answer to these questions any more than there is to 'what is the best washing machine?' – the key questions are probably software and reliability (and cost!). This probably all sounds rather obvious and I can't say things like 'Wordstar is the best word-processing package and Visicalc the best spread sheet' because I don't really have that sort of knowledge. Frances Monte at the GLC (Room 97) will have contacts for that sort of thing, as I believe part of her job is to help community groups in computer use, or I could put you in contact with people or collect some opinions for you when I get back.

Prestel, which I mentioned at the conference, is like a public information bank run by British Telecom. You have to buy a special adapter into it and pay for the phone line and some of the information, but you can store information on it (for use by everyone or just by your group) and take information off it. There are also information banks like this being set up by other telephone authorities and by private companies. The general name for such services is *Viewdata* or *Videotex*. It is potentially quite expensive and there are questions like 'Do you trust the security of British Telecom?'

I have seen Prestel sets (I think) in Camden libraries but not in Tory Croydon, so I don't know to what extent they are accessible as a public resource.

If you are using computers for communicating information otherwise the options are really

- by telephone computer to computer where this is possible
- floppy disks through the post (N.B. not all types of computers can read floppy disks created by different types of computers – it's like video tapes, but worse!)
- printing on paper and post the paper!



Most people get computers to do the things they want not by writing their own programs but by buying pre-written programs ('software'). So the way to choose a computer is probably like this:

1. What do I want to use it for?
2. What does it therefore need to have in general? e.g. for producing mailing lists, you need a goodish printer but it doesn't need to be able to control the colours on a colour TV, but to play electronic games you want the colour but don't need the printing. (N.B. The quality of printing varies a lot, e.g. 'dot matrix' printers print characters in dots, and daisy-wheel printers print whole characters).
3. What doesn't it need to have? (so that you can ignore that in the sales descriptions and hopefully not pay for what you don't need).
4. What functions or processing do I want it to do (sorry, jargon – e.g. mailing lists, word processing).
5. Which of the *software packages* available do these the best way for me and which don't have errors in them, etc. (this is the bit that needs investigation).
5. Which computers will run these software packages and have the sort of general things I listed in (2), and are these general things used by the software packages I have chosen on this computer (e.g. a computer may allow you to use floppy disks on it, but a particular package may work only with a cassette recorder on that sort of computer – this is not a lot of use!).

So, in general, the golden rule is to start with the software and come up with a list of possible computers from that. The most common software will run on lots of computers and it's not worth choosing a computer which doesn't run software you want.

6. You may have a list of possible computers to choose between. Questions to help you choose might be:
  - Reliability (how often will it go wrong?)
  - Ease of getting it fixed.
  - Does it go fast enough, e.g. printing?
  - Is it easy to use? Does it do unexpected things?
  - Can I understand the instruction book? (some are very bad – if you can't understand it, it won't be you who's at fault).



- Will it become obsolete quickly so that I can't get it fixed?
- Will the manufacturer go bust? (so I can't get it fixed).
- How does the price compare with the others? Am I paying for lots of things I don't need?
- What is the basic cost? What is the cost for paper/floppy disks/getting it fixed?
- Will it work reliably, *simply*, or will I have to fiddle with it?
- Does it have enough disk space or printing speed for next year as well as this year?
- Will I be able to use it for other things when I think of them (basically, are there lots of available packages for this computer?)
- Do I understand what it is doing?
- Is it under my control?
- Is it better than the non-computer ways of doing the job that I can think of?
- Do I like the 'feel' of it? Do I feel comfortable with it? Do the people in the shop make me feel that I can go and ask them questions if I have problems, *and* will they know the answers? etc.

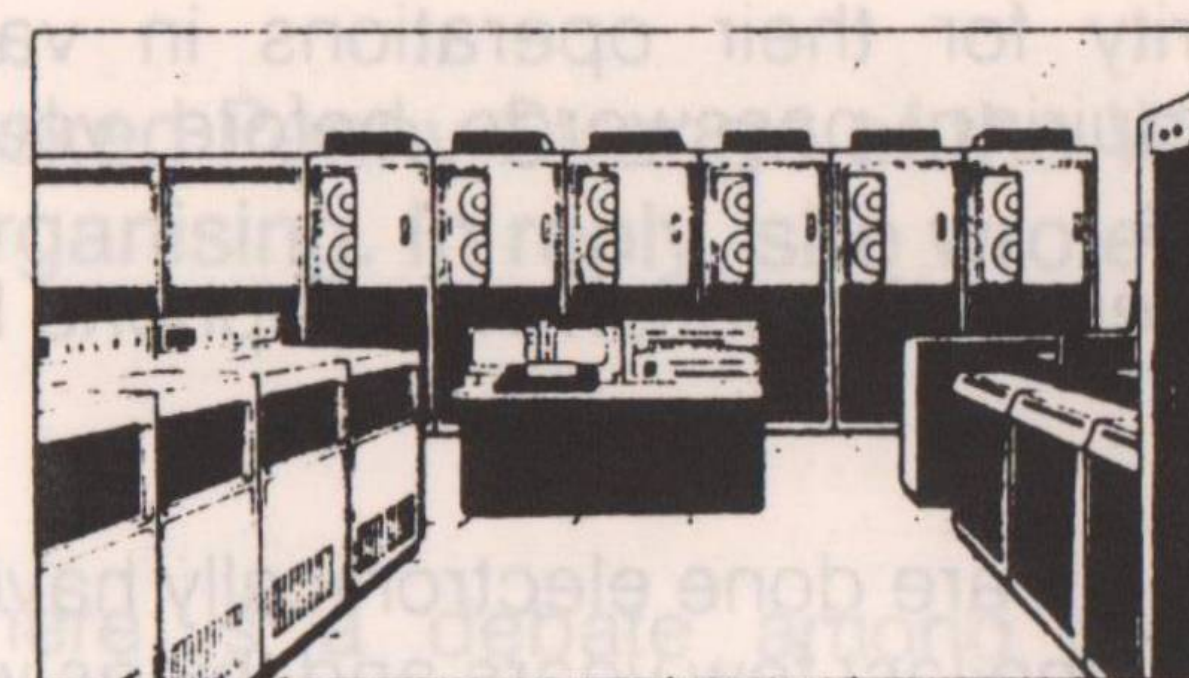
In my job I find that the most useful means of communication are being able to send written messages to people at the speed of telephone messages (and leave these messages in their 'postboxes' if they aren't there), and being able to search automatically through libraries of document extracts for particular words, but I'm not sure that these are really possible options for feminist networks yet.

What may be useful for ecofeminism is finding out about already existing information banks and which of them can be accessed by the public for research. For example, there is an information bank about speeches of MPs which was developed for the House of Commons library but is, I think, now or about to be publically available for a fee, e.g. to lobbyists (according to one of the recent Sunday papers). This will give you quick answers to questions like – which MPs have made speeches about road transport or nuclear power this year. There may also be legal or scientific information banks.

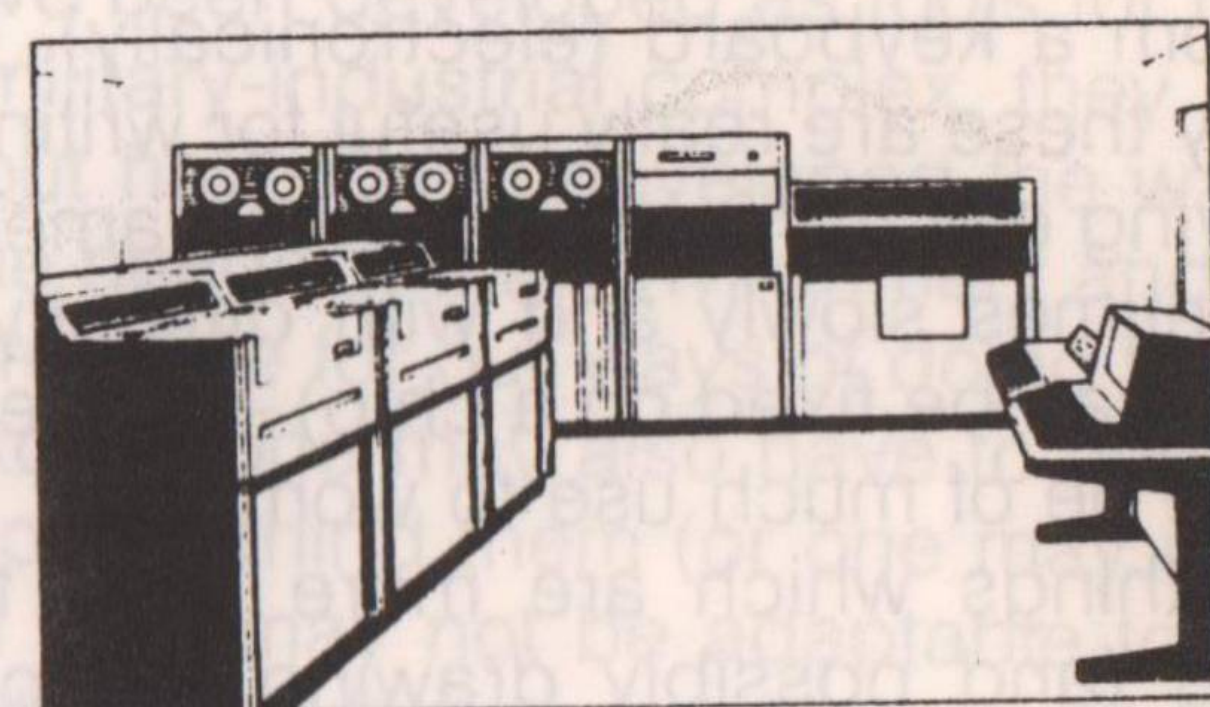
As far as community groups are concerned, I believe there are two useful ways of looking at the use of small computers: firstly as a wordprocessor or mailing list processor, or accounting machine on its own; and secondly, for entering information into information banks or getting it out and communicating it. This latter area is not one that's been much explored by community groups other than computer hobbyists (i.e. ex-train set fans) as far as I know – but if they've done anything it's probably been on Prestel. The former is fairly common ground in that places like alternative bookshops often use small computers for stock control.

Since computers are expensive to buy and possibly out of financial reach for small groups, it might be worth looking to your local council for grants, to charitable trusts and even to the manufacturers themselves, as it has been known for them to give one away. Also look into other local community groups, bookshops etc. and find out how they have managed to obtain a computer. It may even be possible just to borrow time on someone else's computer if you already have, or are prepared to acquire, the necessary skills to do this – *Women for Life on Earth* magazine is now being typeset by us on a portable microprocessor, thanks to the help of a friendly local businessman!

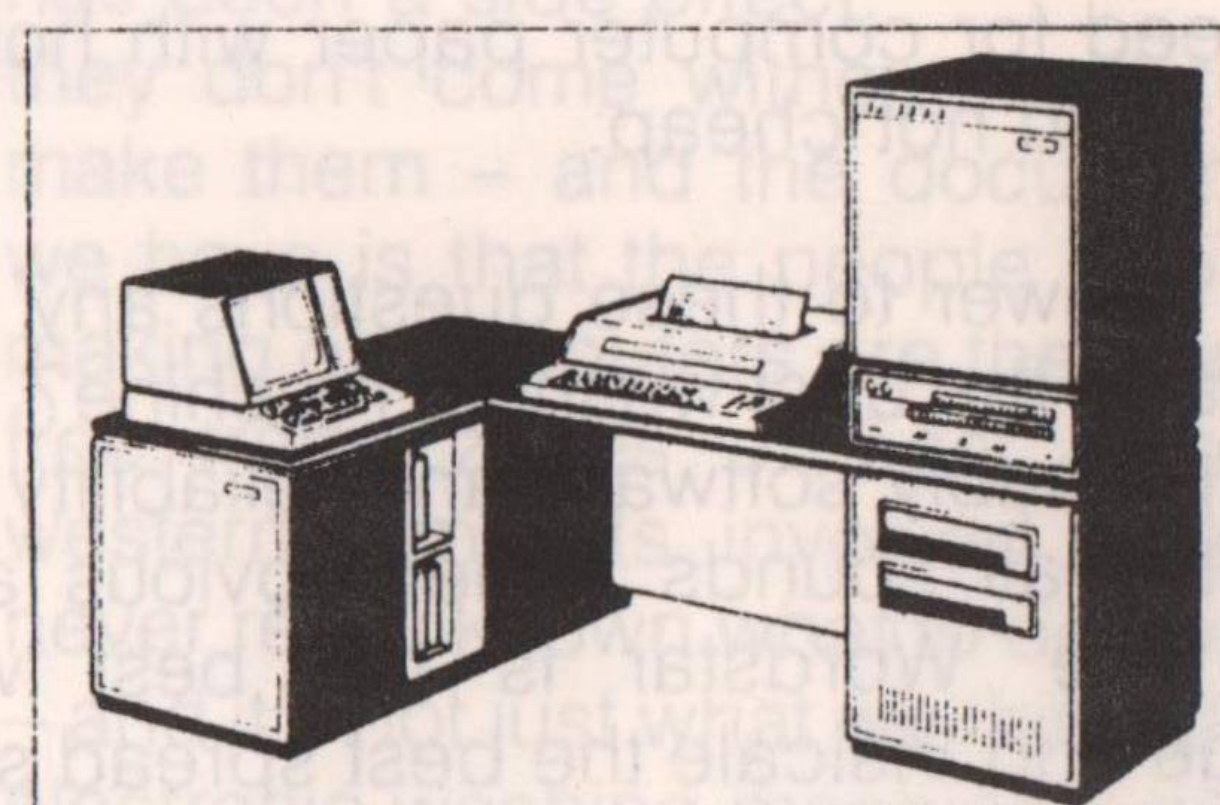
The cost of computing



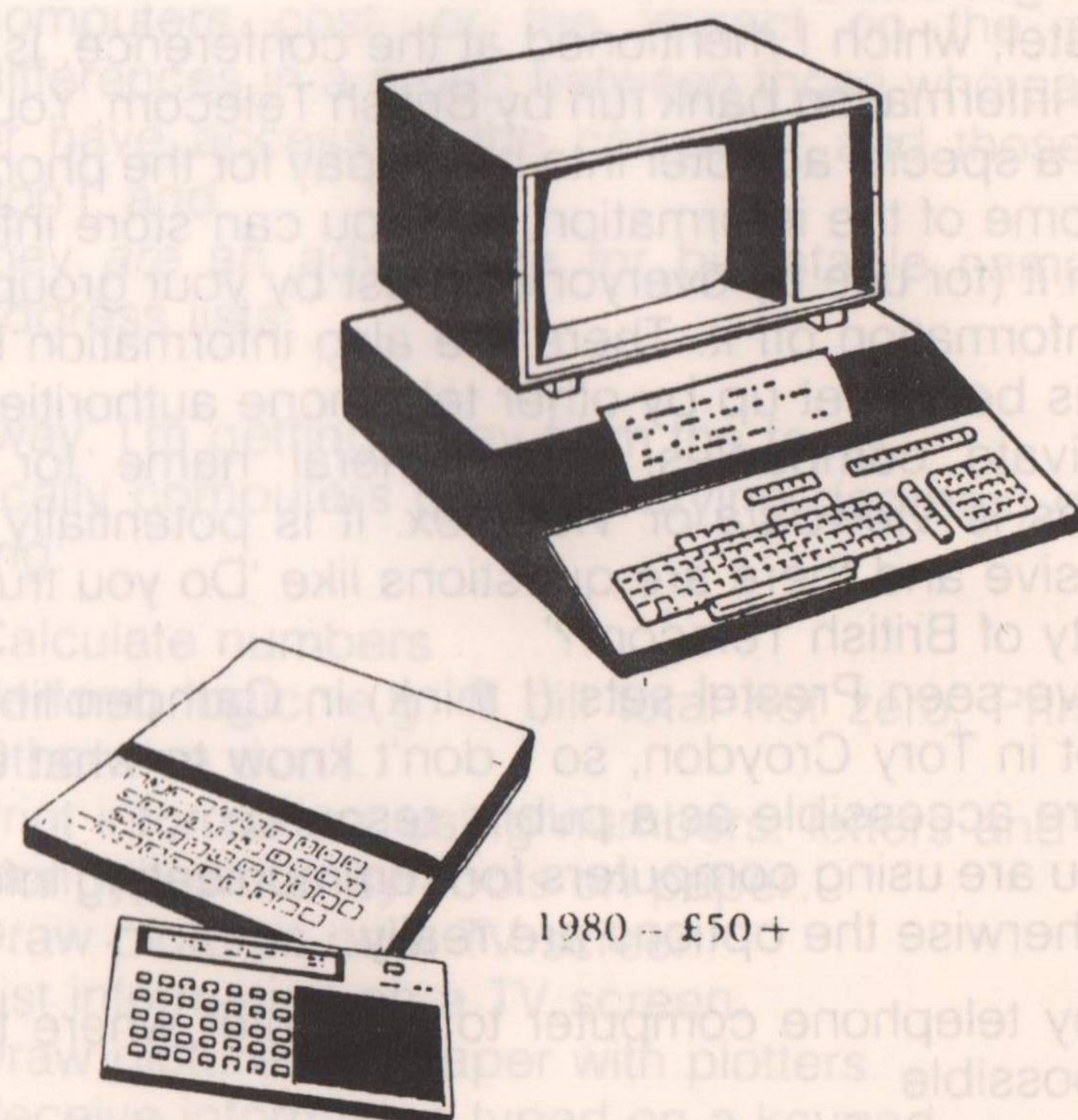
1950 -- £1,000,000



1960 -- £100,000 +



1970 -- £10,000 +



1980 -- £50 +

Illustration from  
The Computer Book, an  
introduction to computers  
and computing, published  
by the BBC

## The Health Hazards of Video Display Terminals

In the previous article we considered the usefulness of computers for women organising. In the following article Rosalie Bertell introduces us to the radiation related hazards of VDT technology. Although this was originally published in the March 1982 issue of the Environmental Health Review, Ontario, Canada and therefore written for people accustomed to using scientific jargon, it is valuable information for those of us without a technical background.

In order to understand the human health effects of VDT's, one needs to address three basic questions: (1) the physical nature of electromagnetic radiation; (2) the human biological response to that electromagnetic radiation; and (3) how to deal rationally with the VDT problems so as to preserve worker health and keep the best technological gains of the VDT's. For the third point one has to examine society's attitudes towards health and mechanisms for a workable check and balance system to monitor risk/benefit trade-offs.

The wave motion which is most familiar is technically called mechanical radiant energy, or more popularly, vibration. Examples of this type of radiant energy vary from earthquakes, the rumble of heavy trucks, ripples in still water, caused by the dropping of a stone, or the gently sound of soft music which pleases our ears. This type of energy is characterised by a cyclic motion – above and below the resting level, or backwards and forwards with respect to some direction. A cycle can be timed, and the wave can be characterised by a Hertz measurement, where 1 Hertz (Hz) means one cycle per second. The range of human hearing is between 100 and 18,000 Hertz. These waves can vary in energy or speed, making higher peaks and troughs within the cycle, but maintaining the same number of cycles per second, the Hertz measurement. This energy or amplitude is measured as decibels. When decibels are too high, damage is done to the human ear. An earthquake is a vibration in the lower Hertz range (not audible) and its intensity is measured in points on a Richter scale rather than decibels. The Richter scale measures intensity or amplitude of the vibration.

Humans are now using energy outside of the naturally occurring range of the ear. Ultrasonics in the 20,000 (20Mkz) to 10,000,000 (10MHz) range and supersonics ranging above 2 billion (2,000MHz or 2GHz) are used commercially. The higher frequency (higher Hz measurement) low intensity waves are used for medical diagnostic and therapeutic purposes. They have a heating effect on human tissue because they cause mechanical vibration. Higher power intensity and lower frequencies are used for welding and cleaning purposes. The force of a wave motion is dramatically demonstrated along the ocean shore.

In order to understand electromagnetic waves one needs to build on what one knows about mechanical waves, recognising the cyclical phenomenon, but also noting some important differences. Electromagnetic radiation reaches the earth daily from the sun, and the eye, rather than the ear, is the instrument which receives and interprets it. The ear recognises mechanical waves as sound, with the musical pitch perceived as higher when the number of cycles per second is increased. The eye recognises electromagnetic waves as colours, with the colours changing in a rainbow regularly as the number of cycles per second increases, or, to say it in another way, the wave length shortens.

Visible light waves have between 380 and 770 trillion cycles per second (a trillion cycles per second wave is measured in tera-Hertz, THz). If the intensity of light is too high or too low it can cause eye strain and eventually serious eye damage. High intensity light can actually heat the eye to a measurable degree, causing cataracts and other damage. Glare can cause temporary blindness and serious accidents. Used properly, one's eyes should function well for a normal lifetime.

This brings us to one of the first problems with VDT's, glare. The user is looking directly at the light source. There are two ways of reducing glare and protecting the eyes: polarisation or optical translation of the image.

If the VDT screen were designed to polarise the light in one direction and a secondary screen designed to cross polarise was placed beyond that (between the first screen and the worker) there would be no glare. Even better from an operator health perspective, would be an optical transference of the image from the VDT screen to a neighbouring surface, perhaps one with a non-glare soft green background tilted to a comfortable angle. This would require maintaining good image resolution and clarity. Looking directly into the VDT cathode ray tube seems unnecessarily primitive with today's technological capability.

Electromagnetic light waves differ from mechanical sound waves in more ways than the vibrational frequency as measured by cycles per second. With mechanical energy, one observes matter move – air, liquid or earth – as the 'wave passes'. Sound waves cannot pass through a vacuum. The energy wave, the vibration, results from actual physical contact: a violin bow on the string, voice to air to eardrum, etc. The velocity of a sound wave averages about 350 metres per second. Electromagnetic radiation, on the other hand, daily traverses interstellar vacuums and does not require a medium in which to travel. The velocity is also much greater, 186,000 miles per second. This is about one million times faster than the velocity of sound. Because electromagnetic radiation has wave properties and also particle properties, i.e., it actually traverses a vacuum, we describe the emission as a photon – an extremely small entity which travels at the speed of light, moves in a regular wave pattern and can impart energy to an object which lies in its path.

Visible light lies in the centre of a whole spectrum of electromagnetic radiation known and used by modern technology. When we characterise the radiation by the number of cycles per second of the wave emitted, moving from 3Hz to 3 x 10<sup>23</sup>Hz, the following familiar types of radiation are noted:

Induction heating	Ultraviolet Light
Navy and Loran Radio	X-ray
AM Radio Transmission	Gamma Rays
FM Radio Transmission	Cosmic Rays
Radar and Microwave	
Infrared Heat	
Visible Light	Solar Rays



The TV display screen on a Video Display Terminal is part of a cathode ray tube. Phosphors within the tube are lighted by an electron beam which sweeps the surface, forming the image on the screen. The electron beam produces x-ray and the phosphors produce visible light and ultra-violet. The electrical components, called defectors, which direct the scanning beam produce various kinds of microwave and radio wave transmissions. They also produce static electricity, that is electricity which is not moving or flowing as a current, but which produces a charged field in the vicinity of the terminal.

Although one does not 'see' all of this emitted radiation, the whole body can be exposed to it on a chronic daily basis, and no one is really sure what the combined effect of exposure to all of these types of electromagnetic at one time will do to the health of the worker.

The health effects of radiant energy (visible, ultra-violet, and infrared) will be considered first; then the effects of radio-frequency exposure; and finally the X-ray exposure. There is also some ultrasonic radiation emitted from the computer terminal. This measures at a maximum of 68 decibels for a 40,000Hz vibration, above the level heard by the human ear. An effort to quantify and document the combined effect of this radically changed work environment on the human body needs to be attempted.

**Visible and ultraviolet** radiation are absorbed by the surface layer of the body. **Infrared** and high energy **microwave** penetrate a few centimetres into the body, with a general heating effect.

Visible and ultraviolet light are measured in radiance units (watts per square centimetre). Ultra-violet radiation can produce damage to the eyes, skin and lips. It can increase ozone ( $O_3$ ) in the air, and at about one part in 25 million this causes irritation of the mucous membrane of the upper respiratory tract. The ozone problem might be aggravated in an office by use of germicidal lamps or ultra-violet purification of air-conditioner ducts. As a rule of thumb, if the odour of ozone is detectable in the workplace, increase ventilation.

The intensity of the ultra-violet light can be measured by a photoelectric uv meter in microwatts per square centimetre ( $\mu W/cm^2$ ). The American Conference of Governmental Hygienists (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1980) have suggested levels be kept lower than 1000  $\mu W/cm^2$ . The maximum level estimated for a VDT (not measured) is 5  $\mu W/cm^2$ , which gives a theoretical aura of safety when compared with the recommendation. However, the Council on Physical Medicine of the American Medical Association recommends a limit not exceeding 0.5  $\mu W/cm^2$  when exposure is seven hours a day or less, and not exceeding 0.1  $\mu W/cm^2$  for exposures of more than seven hours a day duration. The AMA recommendation is meant to prevent skin and eye injury.<sup>2</sup> By this standard, VDT's may be routinely emitting sufficient uv radiation to cause burns and cataracts.<sup>3</sup> The Canadian Devices Act sets the limit for uv radiation at the higher 1000  $\mu W/cm^2$  level. Adequate screen cover with glass can eliminate most of the uv radiation.

Damage to humans from microwave radiation is proportional to the total amount of energy received - power ( $\mu W/cm^2$ ) x exposure time x exposed area. Reducing power, time or area of the body exposed reduces the damage. There are no standards internationally for microwave exposure. The US allows up to 10,000  $\mu W/cm^2$  while the USSR allows only 10  $\mu W/cm^2$ . This difference reflects a value judgment as to what types of health effects are of concern to the worker. Canadian levels for worker or general public exposure to microwave radiation is set at 1000  $\mu W/cm^2$ , or one tenth

of the US standards, but 100 times higher than the Soviet standard. The Canadian standard is not a maximum, however, but an average emission over a one hour period.

The US standard was based on military uses of microwave and observed health effects such as cataracts, damage to reproductive organs causing sterility in males, and blood changes which might eventually result in leukaemia. The military is not noted for being conservative, and one may safely assume that the standards favour the use of technology at the expense of the health of personnel. The standards in the USSR are based on reports of headaches, nausea, dizziness, drowsiness, fatigue, aches, changes in EKG, slowing of the heart-beat, neural disturbances, depression of mental functions, involuntary motor functions, etc.

These effects may be different for different people and for exposure of different parts of the body or for different times in one's life cycle.

In general, one can say that the microwave and radio-frequency emissions are most likely to affect body rhythms such as the sleep and the menstrual cycles. It is also safe to say that the human body is a more sensitive indicator of whether or not the electromagnetic radiation is harmful than is any mechanical measuring device or arbitrary standard. If one experiences any of these adverse health symptoms the working conditions must be changed.

The longer microwaves, radio frequencies, TV and radio radiations can penetrate entirely through the human body causing electrical and thermal effects on internal body organs, including, of course, a developing foetus. These effects occur between the 150,000Hz and 100,000Hz (1 GHz) microwave frequencies.

The range of potential VDT X-ray emissions is 10 to 15 kV. This is below the 20-150 range characteristic of medical diagnostic X-ray. The X-ray is probably not able to penetrate completely through the body, but deposits its energy in the cells and tissues near the surface. It is not clear whether or not the VDT at times exceeds this average kV level.

X-ray possesses enough energy to displace an electron from an atom, causing an electrically neutral molecule to split into two charged parts - a negatively charged remainder of the atom - each called ions. For this reason, X-ray is called ionising radiation. All of the other radiation emissions from VDT's are classified as non-ionising since they usually lack sufficient energy to dislodge an electron.

Ionising radiation at low dose levels causes chaos in the cellular chemistry. When an electron is lost from an important chemical bond, the bond can break, causing changes in cell functions. For example, the cell may become unable to produce an enzyme needed to digest food or enable one to tolerate pollen, or a hormone produced by the cell may be slightly changed. Of course, the most serious change which can be caused by ionising radiation is either cancer, a run away growth or, if it penetrates deeply into the body, damage to the ovum or sperm which produce a child. Small cumulative cell damage brings about premature ageing in the person exposed. The cancers, miscarriages and defective children are personal and societal tragedies.<sup>4,5</sup> risked by unnecessary exposures.

The standards for X-ray exposure from TV's and VDT's in Canada is 0.5 millirem per hour at 5 centimetres from the surface of the screen. A millirem is a unit of biological damage. A chest X-ray gives the whole body dose of about 29 millirem, a dose which could be accumulated by someone working at 5 cm. distance from the screen for 58 hours (at 6 hours a day on the machine this is

about two weeks and two days). For a person 10 cm. from the screen it would require 240 hours (at 6 hours a day, about eight weeks) to receive a dose comparable to a chest X-ray. This assumes the VDT is operating right at the standard limit.

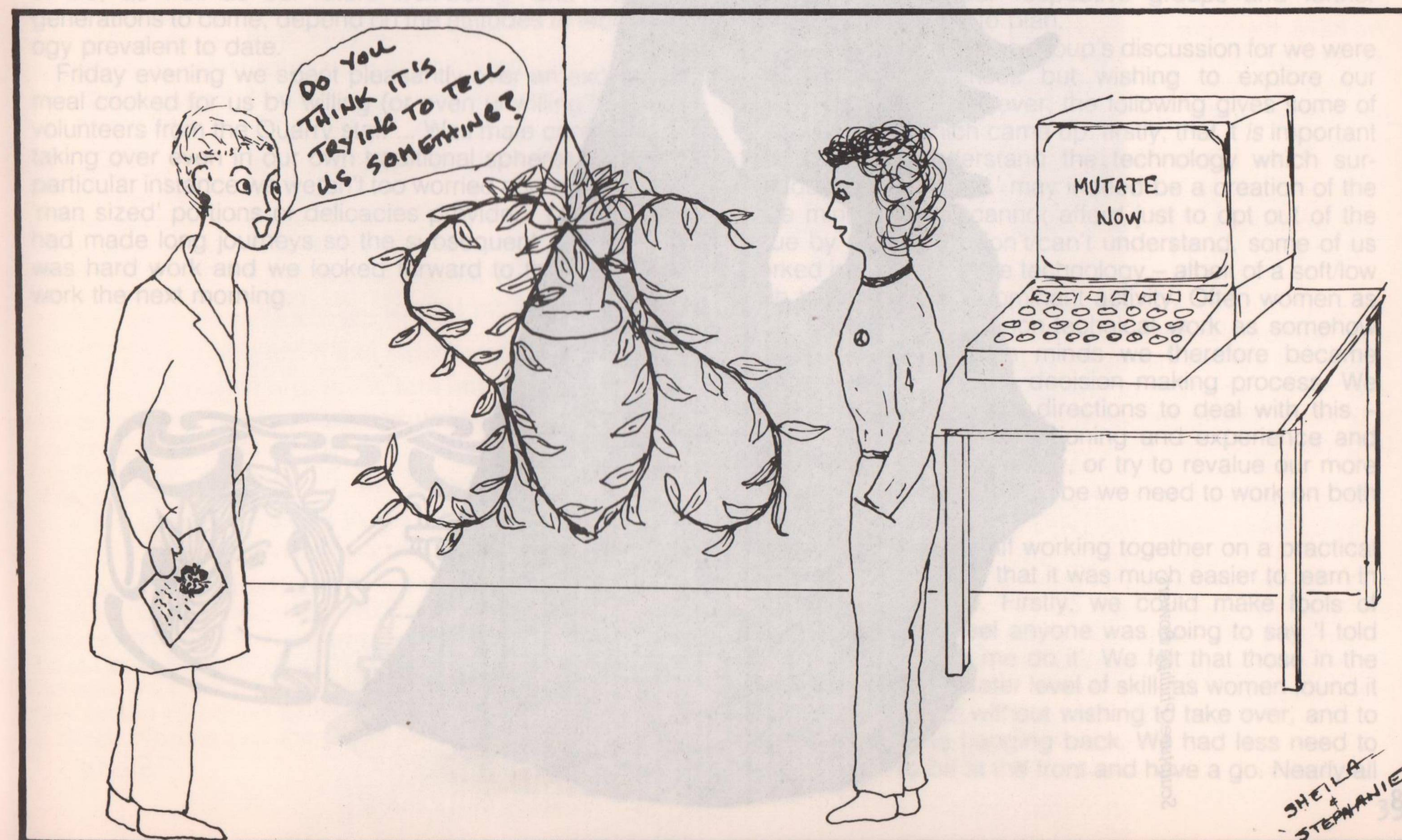
In a recent test of 125 VDT's conducted in the States by the Food and Drug Administration, Bureau of Radiological Health, 10 machines were found to emit X-ray above the 0.5 mrem per hour limit. These models were corrected or removed from the market. Not every VDT is tested and there is no guarantee that each one will operate below the standard for its entire useful life. One can reduce X-ray exposure by staying a greater distance from the VDT screen, or by optical projection of the image onto a nearby surface.

As a point comparison, naturally occurring ionising radiation in the human environment ranges from about 0.0003 to 0.0005 mrem per hour. The 'safe' rate recommended for VDT's is more than 100 times greater than the human body normally experiences from natural ground.

The last problem to be addressed is that of synergism. It is irrational to assume that protection standards can be separately set for microwave, radio waves, ultra-violet, X-ray and ultra-sound, and that these standards will hold when all radiation types are experienced at one time. This practice ignores the known enhancement of X-ray effect by heat. There is every reason to believe that the non-ionising radiation will heat tissue, increasing the damage done by the X-ray in the VDT work environment.

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# Women of My Land

Frankie Armstrong



Sculpture: Philippa Bowers

## Solar Panels in the Rain

'Women and Appropriate Technology' - 7 - 9 October, 1983, National Centre for Alternative Technology, Machynlleth, Wales.

A weekend in October - cold wind and water sweeping around the scattered buildings at the 'Quarry' (National Centre for Alternative Technology) as we all piled into the draughty, gently dripping workshop, eager yet apprehensive to embark on our many handed construction of a solar panel.

'We' were a small group of 10 or so women from various Appropriate Technology and similar working groups: National Centre for Alternative Technology, Machynlleth; Northumberland Energy Workshops, Hexham; Birmingham FOE; Urban Centre for Appropriate Technology, Bristol; and the Bristol Women's Workshop.

Our reasons for being there varied of course with the individual, but the overall intention of the weekend was to explore women's particular role in A.T., and to try to understand the apparent blocks which most women have over practical and technical work. Most of us came from working groups where such ideals as equality between sexes, skill sharing and so on were much spoken of, but in most cases, little practised; men on the whole doing the practical, technical work, women doing admin, general office work, catering, books and so on. We recognised at the outset that our own lack of confidence and inertia meant that we often hesitated to try something new. Although obviously conditioning and education played a part initially, we do even now 'buy' the language of male dominance: 'practical skill' excludes in our own minds dress-making, cooking, knitting etc. It is our responsibility to see ourselves as skilled and to understand why it is we hang back from this particular area which seemed to all of us to be of paramount importance, when so much of our day to day experience of life, as well as our future well-being, and that of generations to come, depend on the attitudes to technology prevalent to date.

Friday evening we spent pleasantly over an excellent meal cooked for us by willing (or even unwilling?) male volunteers from the Quarry staff ... Was male confidence taking over even in our own traditional spheres? In this particular instance we weren't too worried and stuffed the 'man sized' portions of delicacies provided. Most of us had made long journeys so the subsequent discussion was hard work and we looked forward to the practical work the next morning.



Our task was to build a solar panel using a new clip fin DIY design to be part of an NCAT exhibition on energy at Dorset County Museum, Dorchester, from December 3 for two months, and subsequently join the display at NCAT. We divided ourselves into two groups - one to do the plumbing work and one to make the box to contain the solar panel. Our experience ranged from Alice from the Bristol Women's Workshop, engaged every day in handing those very skills on to other women, Jean from the Quarry who had done all the background preparation work and therefore at least understood what we were supposed to be doing, to Chris from UCAT who *maintained* she'd never even held a saw before ... well hardly ever.

By the end of Sunday morning we were tired but vaguely victorious. Despite mishaps: mis-communication between the two groups on various vital measurements and sundry other little molehills to surmount, the box was made and lined with insulation and the plumbing structure adorned with its black painted fins. We were able to assemble it temporarily to show a visiting third world group what could be done in even a limited time, but had to leave the stalwarts at the Quarry to paint and finish off the box and do the final assembling.

Sunday afternoon we huddled together round a wood stove in one of the site cottages and tried to draw together the various threads of the weekend: the actual practical task and our reactions to it; the special problems of working together in what was quite a large group for the task in hand; the film *Rosie the Riveter* we had shared on Saturday night; the few but significant male intrusions from unsuspecting men on site; the future - going back to our respective groups and further activities we wanted to plan.

It is hard to sum up the group's discussion for we were not seeking consensus but wishing to explore our different feelings. However, the following gives some of the main ideas which came up: firstly, that it is important for women to understand the technology which surrounds us. 'Hard tech.' may indeed be a creation of the male mind, but we cannot afford just to opt out of the issue by saying we don't/can't understand. Some of us worked in groups where technology - albeit of a soft/low tech type - was the dominant activity. Often women as well as men, saw our non-technical work as somehow secondary. In our own minds we therefore became unequal partners in the decision making process. We could take two possible directions to deal with this - either overcome our conditioning and experience and involve ourselves technically, or try to revalue our more traditional female roles. Maybe we need to work on both fronts.

After a day and a half working together on a practical project, we all agreed that it was much easier to learn in an all female group. Firstly, we could make fools of ourselves and not feel anyone was going to say 'I told you so', or 'here, let me do it'. We felt that those in the group who had a greater level of skill, as women found it easier to share that without wishing to take over, and to be aware of those hanging back. We had less need to *push* in order to be at the front and have a go. Nearly all



of us had felt very daunted by the task and had had to confront that – there were no 'experts' to relieve us of the responsibility. On the whole we felt that many women were less willing to make mistakes and had to feel that they had all the necessary skills and information before taking even the first step. In an all women group, with women tutors, very underconfident women were more likely to be able to develop skills and therefore confidence, and women tutors would tend to be more sensitive to these problems. We also felt that exactly the same course, if advertised for men and women, would probably not attract many women who would immediately assume it was too difficult or 'not for me'.

However, some of us still felt that in the long run we also needed to learn *how* to learn from men. For some of us experience showed that many men were quite able to be sensitive to our learning needs if we were prepared to articulate them. For example, if we were to combat men's assumption that we couldn't do certain things, then we ourselves had to be more sure and confident that we could. We often needed to make them realise that we had little or no prior background and not feel ashamed to ask very basic questions (names of tools, etc.), and also make sure they gave us the necessary time and energy. We were often guilty of playing silly feminine games: 'I don't think I can', relieves us of the risk of failing or even finding something difficult; practical tasks invariably include unforeseen hiccoughs and we needed to learn not to give up at the first hurdle in an unfamiliar field.

We discussed men's reactions to our 'women only' groups and tried to understand their feeling excluded and perhaps in some cases rather threatened by our growing skills and confidence in traditionally male areas of competence. We did not feel on the whole that feeling excluded from male activities was sufficient justification for doing the same in reverse, but concluded that for many women an all women learning group was the only acceptable way in. We felt it was very important to give women and girls the option to tackle the whole area of technology and the attendant practical skills. Appropriate Technology is technology for people – and we as women represent at least fifty per cent of the user market. We have, therefore, a responsibility to be involved in how technology develops in the future.

Looking forward for 'Women and AT', we are hoping to run further similar workshops. Enquiries now could be made to:

Alice Elmhirst, Bristol Women's Workshop, Totterdown Centre, 144 Wells Road, Totterdown, Bristol BS4 2AQ (tel: 71162).

We shall hope to advertise any future events. We would also like to investigate the possibility of establishing a register of women interested in Appropriate Technology and the development of practical and technical skills. If you would like to be involved send details of yourself (experience/job/interests, etc.) to:

Jean Welstead, NCAT, Llyngwern Quarry, Machynlleth, Powys, Wales (tel: 0654 2400).

A DIY leaflet on the clip fin solar panel will be printed by the Quarry in due course.

Lastly – a little maxim we picked up over the weekend: cut once, measure at least twice ...! (Well, it was all right in the end).

Sally Eaves – UCAT

## To mind, with love from intuition

*You alert bird  
your quick movements.  
creature of the open spaces  
also confined and adapting  
sometimes timid  
sometimes bold.  
little bird  
will find a nest  
up real home estate,  
up high in the downbelow.  
mountain goat you are a fish  
with wings  
and I bring fire to warm you.*

*it is not enough to say  
i love you  
between those words and letters  
my heart also beats  
and speaks  
a queendom of infinity  
of love  
I am in the birds and creatures  
and the trees and mountains  
and the rivers*

*your eyes  
are twin rivers  
of knowing  
pain and joy*

*I come inside your skin  
see through your twin rivers  
such journeys are not long and hard  
but swift,  
and softly taken*

*you are a dear one!  
you are my mirror  
see all this beauty  
I am turned outside in*

*these words and letters now ...  
behind and above and between  
move beings who  
breathe  
and caress one another  
out of the joy of being.  
each of your cells speaks.*

*I tell you  
I am a well  
and heal-thy self  
and that I  
Sound*

Susan

# Black Women and the Peace Movement

ISBN 0 9508866 0 2 pamphlet 30 pages £1.00

Wilmette Brown's pamphlet is completely rivetting reading for me as a white woman because of the way it opens up previously mystified questions about the Peace Movement.

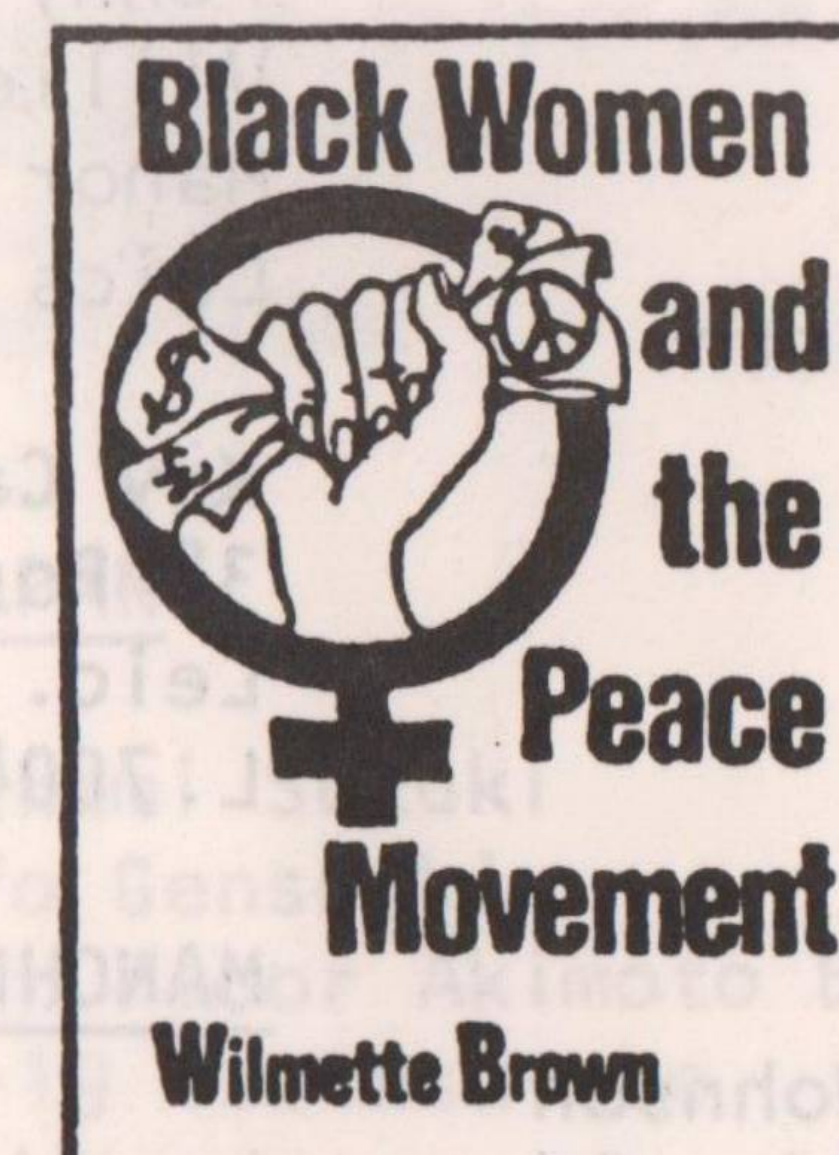
The Foreword is by Janice Owens who starts by saying, 'Let me declare my interest straight away – I am a very average middle aged white woman. But I have three Black daughters, and a vested interest in the kind of world they have to live in.' She makes clear that she feels white people's problems of racism and elitism are in no way secondary to the search for peace and goes on to talk about working with Wilmette Brown in the Peace Working Group of the GLC's Women's Committee and as part of a group of women organising the March 8 1983 International Women's Day Convention on 'Women and Peace'.

The Introduction is by Juliet Yelverton from Molesworth and Greenham Peace Camps and a 'Walk for Life' organiser. She met Wilmette Brown at the English Collective of Prostitutes 12 day occupation of the Church of the Holy Cross in London, November 1982. She says, 'Before the occupation, which was against police illegality and racism towards women in the Kings Cross red light area, I hadn't realised the depth of vulnerability that Black people, especially Black women feel in regard to the police. But listening to Wilmette and the other women inside the Church I began to put my own feelings and experience with the police together with Black women's.' And she goes on to describe her experiences.

For myself the question of where, in a movement that has so dramatically come alive since women took the lead and deals with the inescapably international issue of nuclear war, are the Black and Third World women? How do we organise most effectively around a question which at the same moment is so central and yet so infinitely broad. How do we make our way through this morass? How do we find the line that will ensure that we will win, because our survival depends upon this victory.

**Published by International Women's Day Convention.  
REVIEW COPIES AND MAIL ORDERS (please add 25p for postage) from: 79 Richmond Rd, Montpelier, Bristol 6.  
Kings Cross Women's Centre, 71 Tonbridge Street, Kings Cross, London WC1. 837 7509. 25% discount for bookshops and bulk orders (5 copies or more). Cheques should be made out to Black Women and the Peace Movement.**

My own anger and horror at the arrival of cruise missiles in this country is not so much based upon the fear of nuclear war and how I would cope with it – that situation is too horrific for me to deal with consciously – but as much on what the missiles personify: the State openly showing us its power, making clear it is prepared to use it against us in an overwhelming and profound way. But the British and American State exploiting the working class in Europe is the same State that is using its power to exploit the Third World through the military industrial complex as Wilmette Brown calls it. Third World women already have their holocaust. Their children are already dying from the holocaust of poverty.



In her pamphlet Wilmette Brown deals with these questions for me. Looking at her herstory as a Black woman, she makes clear how we can make the connections between each other. She quotes Martin Luther King, Selma James, Virginia Woolf, Sojourner Truth a former Black slave who lived in the nineteenth century, Tony Benn, Malcolm X.

The perspectives and organisational proposals of this formidable coming together of peoples make clear that this peace movement is not one that has recently emerged and is confined only to Europe and the question of the nuclear arms race.

Wilmette Brown says, 'It is one of the high points of my life to find in

Virginia Woolf, a white middle class English woman, what I know from my experience as a Black welfare rights organiser in the United States. For Virginia Woolf the military was able to thrive because women did not have the economic power to speak out against them. Her response to the male dominated anti-war movement was to call for "a money wage for the unpaid worker" in the home. That's what Black welfare mothers formed a massive movement to gain.'

I found this pamphlet not only extremely moving reading, but it is also clear that every word of Wilmette Brown's is carefully thought out, every sentence reads with a particular clarity and honesty. There was no point in the reading of this pamphlet when I felt I was wasting my time consuming its contents. It is essential reading for anyone who feels the urgency to find ways of winning.

Wilmette Brown must have the last word. '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 at the bottom. Otherwise the peace movement will grow, but it will accommodate war.'

Caroline Baker

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