

Editorial

by Sharon Froese Nielsen
and Patricia Froese

Women have been active in working for peace for many decades. During the suffrage movement, for instance, women examined the interconnections between equality for women and militarism. They took for granted that peace was a women's issue.

Feminists today are grappling with a number of peace-related issues, including the notion that women, due to our biological capacity to give birth, are natural peace-makers. It seems reasonable to hypothesize, however, that if women are more peaceful, it is due in large part to our socialization and our experiences as women in sexist society. Undoubtedly little girls and boys are raised differently; we know that, as adults, men and women experience the world in different ways. We found in our own research that men's and women's visions of peace are different: women tend to be completely pacifist, while men's pacifism is qualified by pragmatic concerns. It could be said that women focus on peace while men tend to focus more on ways of obtaining peace.

It is important for us all to remember that, while weapons control is connected to peace, it does not constitute the entire activity of working for peace. There are any number of reasons why people frequently involve themselves in "peace work" at this level: nuclear weapons are

horrific and it is imperative that they are not only controlled but completely eradicated; weapons are concrete, real things and an obvious focus of attention; weapons are not abstract — nor is war — but the concept of "peace" frequently is.

Still, when one focuses on controlling weapons, one is looking to stop war. Clearly this is a good and necessary thing. However, working for peace means more than stopping war and controlling the amount or type of weapons. Peace can be defined as involving more than the absence of war — it must necessarily include the absence of fear. Yet peace can also be regarded as something in its own right that is not just defined by absences. Peace is a positive social vision of the world. The process of attaining peace involves a different way of analyzing the world. The product — a peaceful world — is not just one that has no war (or even no weapons). A peaceful world would be one in which equality exists on all levels: personal, communal, regional, global. Working for peace involves working to eradicate that which works against equality: homophobia; the "isms," such as sexism, racism, militarism, capitalism. It involves changes in attitude and behaviour, so that we treat each other as equally valuable. Peace involves changes at the state level, so that some nations or regions are not developing through exploiting others; so that policies such as apartheid are eradicated.

The state has the power and authority to declare war, promote war- and weapons-related research, amass (nuclear) weap-

ons, and find a role for the military. It is a travesty of the concept of peace to have personal relationships based on equality and yet to have a government based on militarism and exploitation.

It is important to be clear and careful in our analyses: a confusion in our reasoning — especially when we are working with terms such as "men" and "patriarchy" — can result in a misdirection of our energies. Certainly men have the advantage in a patriarchal society and those men who are not part of the solution are part of the problem. However, patriarchy does not equal men. Patriarchy involves a male-orientation. The feminist movement must counteract this by providing an alternative vision of the world. We believe, then, that it is important to focus our attention as women working for peace on the two major sources of oppression: patriarchy and class, both of which foster militarism and exploitation.

Women are doing wonderful, innovative work in the area of peace. Barbara Roberts points out that women have always been the core of the peace movement and that feminists' vision of the world has resulted in new and alternative actions for peace (peace camps, creating art work, peace quilts, and so on). Women are working for peace drawing on our own experiences, using our own skills. We work for peace in formal and informal ways, in organizations, in our homes, in our communities.

This issue of *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme* is one way of working for peace.

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