

# Peace: A Necessity for an Equal Society

by Ursula Franklin

Before discussing the relation between peace and an equal society, two items must be mentioned. The first is the problem of social structures. We work in social and political structures that are very often not of our making. We have to understand more about how these structures operate and ask ourselves, "Do we want to be in these structures? Do we want to be part of them? Do the structures themselves so determine not only *what* is being done, but *how* it is being done, that the things that we need to see done cannot be done with them?"

The second item is the question of technology. Not only do we live with other people — men, women and children — and with institutions, but increasingly we live with technology — technology that takes the place of people, that replaces the work of people, and that makes human relationships and social structures profoundly different.

I want to illustrate these two ideas as we talk about peace. As I looked at the subject I had chosen (because I felt it was necessary to talk about peace as the absolute necessity for an equal society), I also thought about how I would define equality as we move from the particular Canadian background to a wider background of an even more unequal World. I think one of the definitions of equality, which is sometimes operationally helpful, is to say when we talk about equality, or about an equal society, we mean a society in which all the members of the society "matter" equally — that all members of the society matter to the same extent; that the well-being of

women or children, the well-being of blacks or small countries must matter as much as the well-being of the powerful; that the well-being and fate of the fat cats and of the small people must enter with equal weight into decision-making.

*That means that in an equal society, everybody matters.* We may want to keep this in mind because the needs of people are different, their stations in life are different, their perspectives are different. But the information we need to ask from the client community is, "In what way do you matter? What is your stake in this and how do you wish to be taken into account?" Long before we will have equality in the true political and material sense, we can achieve an equality of caring. The real bridge that makes inequality temporary is that assurance of caring and that assurance that people "matter."

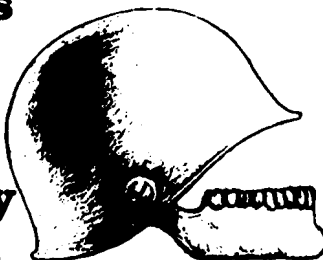
You may remember Fritz Schumacher, who wrote a book *Small is Beautiful*, with the subtitle, *Economics: As If People Mattered*. I used that phrase once, and was corrected because I said, "as if people matter." Somebody pulled out a copy of Schumacher's book and said, "Schumacher was much more cautious." I *assume* people matter. And I approach my government, my university, my students and my life not in the sense *as if* people mattered, but on the assumption that the prime platform of all activity is that people matter and that we want a society in which all people matter equally.

Such a society, of course, has two requirements. One is peace and the other is justice. There is no way in which those two requirements can be divided: at home we have a sign that says, "If you want peace, work for justice." But what is

peace? In the first place, to all of us, peace is a commitment to the future. There is no future without peace. In more specific terms, peace is not so much the absence of war as it is the absence of fear. That definition joins us with our sisters and brothers who have to fear the knock at the door at night, who have to fear for the survival of their children, who have to fear hunger, and also with those who fear unemployment, who fear that their children will never get a fair share. In this country there are people who fear for their land, people who have reason to be afraid of the next day. Not everyone has the luxury to worry about nuclear war, but all of us know that there is fear. And fear means being afraid of things that one has no

**The money required to provide adequate food, water, education, health and housing for everyone in the world has been estimated at \$17 billion a year. It is a huge sum of money**

**... about as much as the world spends on arms every two weeks.**



power to change. An equal society is a society in which people have control over their own lives. For that reason I consider that freedom from fear is the very definition of peace.

If we talk about an equal society, about equality and about technology, we realize that in a peculiar way the greatest equality that exists across this earth today is the equality of destruction. The technology of war has made the distinction between those who are combatants and those who are bystanders less and less discernible. Nuclear war involves the globe and it does not matter anymore that 94% of the people who live on this earth are neither citizens of the Soviet Union nor of the United States.

There is a horrible equality which means that everybody is going to be a victim. There is no way to maintain a special status unless you are a military person who sits somewhere in a bunker. It is that knowledge of the equality of being victimized that is at the base of the peace movement. Anyone who is concerned about equality and about the future must realize that the most urgent agenda item is peace.

This does not mean that everybody has to participate in demonstrations against testing the Cruise Missile, although I wish they would. But it does mean that we have to refuse the use of threats and the instilling of fear as means to achieve a peaceful future. We cannot be less fearful if others, because of our individual or corporate actions, become more fearful. Just as at the workplace people cannot be secure when others are being threatened, we know that it is counter-productive to be part of a situation where workers, clients or different segments of the population are played off one against the other. We know that every measure that is presented to us as assuring the future and assuring peace, but that entails making others fearful, is a measure towards war, and is a step towards destruction.

We must keep in mind, each and every one of us, every day, as we work for equality, that one of the great barriers to

achieving justice and equality is the inappropriate use of our natural, our fiscal, our human and technical resources. And such inappropriate uses are — more often than not — directly related to international threat systems. When my students cannot find jobs except in the military or in doing research into things which kill, and when I know that they could build devices to monitor pollution and do other good and constructive work, I am afraid.

Some of the tasks which each of us has to do if we have a commitment to the future may not look as much like peace work as others. One example is a task that is very easy for women: to consider the practice of equality. It means that people must be judged as human beings and that they should not be labelled. We know from the discrimination we see, and experience in our own lives, that being labelled a "woman" often predetermines the course of an interview, the job we get, and the pay too. And so, since we know what labelling entails, we must object to the practice, wherever it occurs.

One of the most persistent labels is the label of the "enemy." I want to dwell for a moment on what "having an enemy" does to a society. Not only can that society never be an equal society, but it means that the enemy has to be dealt with. The society has to put up the means to deal

with the enemy and whether one builds prisons or maintains an army there is the need to demonstrate the reality of the "enemy" in various daily manifestations — to produce the crime, to produce the disloyalty — in order to justify the resources that are used to combat the enemy.

Such efforts take up a good deal of time and money. This in turn delays many social changes because "we cannot do it just now — we have to battle the enemy." Both the Soviet Union and the United States have been served very well by the enemy concept. It provided the glue that held together a society which otherwise would have had to reform itself quite drastically.

All this does not mean that there are not people with whom we fundamentally and strongly disagree, that there are no people and countries between which there are serious conflicts. But none of this should be permanent. Both on social and religious grounds one must refuse the premise that things cannot be changed, that people cannot be redeemed, that any enemy is there permanently.

Let us now look for a moment at the resources that the fixation with "the enemy" steals from socially important tasks all over the world — tasks that, if accomplished, would bring us closer to an equal society everywhere.

Every year Ruth Savard prepares a comparison of the military and social budgets of the world for publication by the United Nations. Her figures compare what is spent on schools, on health care, and on the military. The emerging picture is dismal, as you will know. In Canada we are pointing up the same comparison in yet another way: our Quebec brothers and sisters have engaged in a disarmament campaign by asking the Prime Minister to spend the cost of one fully-equipped F-18 fighter plane (about \$62 million) on socially useful work such as day care centres, health care, and the opportunity for young men and women to work constructively for and in their country.



To put this amount in perspective: the total amount of money that the University of New Brunswick gets from the federal and provincial governments is \$60 million. And the great upset at the National Research Council about cut-backs in the funding for basic science deals with something less than the price of one F-18 fighter. Is the future really well served by such military expenditures, or are there better ways to assure an equal society and a future for all? These are the questions that we should ask, if we believe that preparations for war are incompatible with striving and working for an equal society.

I want to use my last paragraphs to comment on structure and feminism, because I am (as I am sure you are) very frequently asked, "Is there something so special about women that we need equity and equality and if we get it will everything be automatically better? What about Margaret Thatcher and similar symbols of peace, equality and kindness?"

I usually reply that there are essentially two ways in which society organizes itself. There are the hierarchal structures that we have inherited from the church and the army in which there is always somebody clearly identifiable at the top of a ladder or pyramid-type structure. All these structures have certain things in common, regardless of whether they are designed for the army, the church, the university, or similar institutions: for instance, they equate rank with competence, in spite of the obvious practical experience to the contrary. If you have two buttons on your shoulder pads or a larger rug on the floor you are considered to be more competent than the one button, small rug person. However, the more insidious part is that people are ranked with respect to each other. Everybody is either above or below somebody; consequently such a system has no place for equality, and because of this there is also little place for friendship. It took me a long time to understand why it is that there is so little friendship among men and so much friendship among women — but I will come back to this point.

Then there is the other system which is non-hierarchal. It is cooperative and comes out of the places that are mostly in the women's realm — the family, the farm, the school — in which rank is pretty pointless. You know when you have a

screaming kid at 2:00 a.m. that it is fairly useless to put on a uniform and say "salute." You try to find out what is the matter. Even in that apparently great inequality between an adult and a small child there is communication on which the next step is based. In the non-hierarchal realm there are many important experiences not related to rank but to life and these experiences are transferable.

When somebody has brought up twins or coped with an alcoholic boss, you know they can cope. And if you have a difficult job to be done, you turn to them and say, "O.K., they will manage. They have experience in coping." Women value experience and consider it transferable.

On the other hand, in a hierarchy, if you have not been the left sub-chief in division 7, you are really unfit to be the right sub-chief in division 7. That transferability of experience on which women build much of their strength is usually missing in a hierarchal system.

It is also the equality in a cooperative situation that makes for friendship. Women know that what each contributes may be different, but that there are very few people who have nothing at all to contribute in a given situation. This, of course, is another face of equality.

In the hierarchal system — traditionally occupied by men — everyone looks at everyone else as a potential threat, as a

potential competitor for their place. However, women in a non-hierarchal situation look, until proven otherwise, at other women as a potential source of support. You only have to look at a typing pool or an office where women, who initially may have nothing in common, can work well together. They work on the basis of an equality that comes from knowing that there is hardly anyone who does not have something to contribute. Skill and wisdom are needed to make each contribution count.

If you now look back at my two models you will see that there are women, such as Margaret Thatcher, who opt into the hierarchal system and work in what is essentially a male mode. And there are also men who find it more and more interesting and stimulating to work in the cooperative mode.

We should be quite clear that it is the values and practices of the non-hierarchal structures that hold the key to equality and peace. And the experiences of working and adapting non-hierarchal structures are found among many women.

Outside the cooperative mode there is no way of dealing with the impending destruction. If the world does not get away from the mode where private or national gain is the main motivation and adopt the strategy of the women's world, which is mostly aimed at minimizing the disaster, there is no way to the future.

And so I say to you, consider all that you do in the light of your commitment to the future. Consider that the achievements that women must make have to be attained by means that assure that others do not suffer from our success. Keep in mind that there is a component of caring in the notion equality and that as we move towards a practical, social and economic equality and towards our own decision-making, we must make sure at all times that people matter, that all people matter equally. And as we so proceed, we have to refuse to condone activities, expenditures and structures that are basically anti-people, that are destructive and misapply the very resources that women and men bring to the future.

*A version of this paper was presented at a conference, "An Equal Society: Into the Year 2000," presented by the Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues in November 1986.*

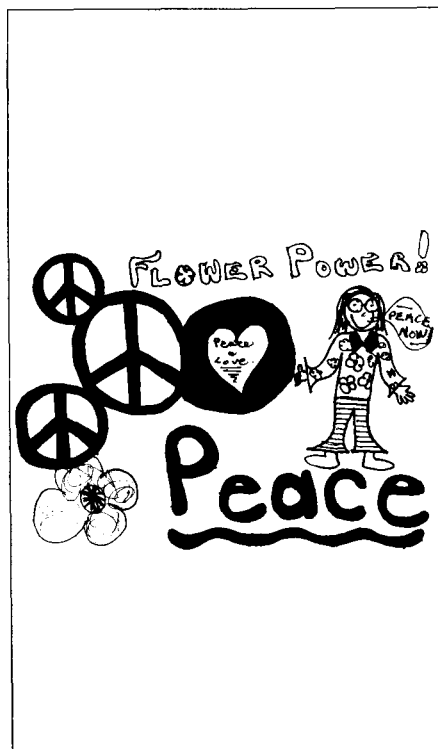


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