

Feminism and Peace

ROSEMARY RADFORD RUETHER

THE CONNECTIONS between feminism and peace are deep and long-standing. But these connections have been drawn more often by women's organizations expressing their commitment to peace as part of women's agenda than they have by peace groups. All too often, peace movements run by men have either excluded women from membership or from equal leadership, sometimes motivating women to form independent peace organizations. Almost all of the women's rights organizations of the late 19th and early 20th centuries saw world peace as part of their vision for a new society.

One of the early peace groups to draw a connection between feminism and peace was the Garrisonian wing of the New England Non-Resistance Society in the 1830s, including among its members such prominent early abolitionist-feminists as Maria Weston Chapman, Lucretia Mott and William Lloyd Garrison himself. The group was also responsible for arranging the New England tour of the most prominent feminist abolitionists of the era, Sarah and Angelina Grimke. The Garrisonians based their view on a radical concept of nonresistance as conversion to perfection or holiness. They believed that conversion to radical Christian ideals entailed repudiation of all unjust structures of government, including those which subjugated women or which countenanced the enslavement of Negroes.

Christian perfection demands an immediate rejection of war and social injustice, they taught. There is no difference in this ideal of converted life for men or for women; both sexes are called to the same life of perfection. Thus the Garrisonians both affirmed the connection between nonresistance and women's equality, and repudiated any special gen-

der differences between men and women. Both men and women must be converted to this single ideal, they believed—men from their socialization in patterns of violence and women from their socialization in timidity and acquiescence to unjust social patterns.

The connection of many early pacifists and feminists with Quakerism is not accidental. The Society of Friends offered a congenial environment for both women's equality and nonviolence through a common understanding of a radical Christian ethic of love. The Shaker Society in 19th century America also combined rejection of violence and war with the affirmation of women's equality. For the Shakers, this equality of woman was the revelation of the feminine side of God, or the feminine Christ, the revelation of divine Mother Wisdom. Through this revelation of God's female aspect, woman's full humanity is affirmed and she is able to take her rightful place in the church and in the order of redemption. The leading Shaker eldress of the Mount Lebanon community, Anna White, was an active worker in international peace organizations. She was the vice-president for the state of New York of the International Petition on Disarmament, which White presented to Theodore Roosevelt. For these radical Christians, love and peace were not specifically female qualities, but common ideals for both men and women.

For many 19th and early 20th century women's rights and women's reform societies, the virtues of peace and love were linked particularly with women. These groups believed that men too must be converted to these ideals. But they accepted the current cultural identification of these virtues with women's nature and concluded that the vindication of peace would be linked with the ascendancy of women's influence in the public order. The Women's Christian Temperance Union promoted a department of Peace and Arbitration, headed for many years by Mary Woodbridge. In her oft-deliv-

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ered speech on Peace and Arbitration in National and International Affairs, Woodbridge saw the day of world peace hastening as women's influence in government grew. Women's influence in the establishment of peace would also hasten Christ's reign as Prince of Peace over the world. Women around the world were seen as joining with American women in the establishment of arbitration as the alternative to settling international conflict through war.

THE WOMEN'S organizations of 1880-1915 generally accepted a close relationship between peace and women's suffrage. To be a suffragist was also to be antiwar. The progress of the human species demanded that war be replaced by arbitration and that there be general disarmament. However, in their view, the male had been socialized through his long association with war to seek violent means of resolving conflict. Male socialization thus preserved regressive and antisocial psychological traits. The enfranchisement of women would bring into political decision-making that half of the human race which had never participated in war as a direct protagonist and which, through its nurturing role, was innately against war. As women gained equal rights and were able to enter parliaments and decision-making bodies in equal numbers with men, their influence would be able to sway societies away from war and toward nonviolent political means of solving disputes.

The suffragists realized that most women throughout history had been the loyal supporters of their husbands' and sons' military activities, but they linked this female support for war with woman's unemancipated condition. As women were liberated from passive dependence on men, they would be able to direct their naturally pacific tendencies into the public arena as an independent force for peace and disarmament.

Suffragists and peace activists saw a connection between women's rights, peace and a new concept of citizenship and nationalism. Jane Addams said in *Newer Ideals of Peace*, published in 1907, that the old concepts of citizenship were based on the society of males as warriors. Citizenship was related to the ability to bear arms in war; thus women, excluded from bearing arms, were also excluded from citizenship. Citizenship based on bearing arms fostered a hostile, competitive, chauvinistic concept of patriotism, which precluded international solidarity between national groups. The giving of citizenship to women would demand a new definition of citizenship based on nonviolent political methods of resolving conflict.

These links between feminism, peace and a new internationalism were developed in the Women's Peace Party founded by Jane Addams in 1915; the group later became what is still the oldest women's peace organization, the Women's International

League for Peace and Freedom. The Women's International League, after its founding congress in April 1915 in the Hague, soon gathered national sections throughout Western Europe and began to reach out to found groups in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and the Far East. Much of that small but heroic generation of women who entered their national parliaments or were sent as delegates to the League of Nations in the 1920s and '30s were members of the Women's International League.

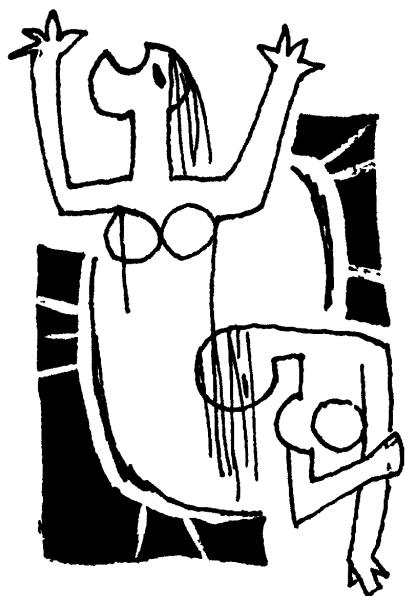
The league saw itself as modeling a new internationalism through the relationship of its national sections to each other. National sections of the league were expected to transcend a chauvinist concept of nationalism. Instead, each national group was expected to be the foremost in criticizing the unjust and war-making tendencies of its own national government. American women would take the lead in criticizing the American government, etc. A model of arbitration was set up in which the women from warring sides of a conflict would arbitrate the dispute, with the women from the aggrieved nation defining the situation, while the women from the aggressor nation would accept and announce this criticism of their own government.

The league hoped to present to male statesmen and parliamentarians a new model of arbitration devoted to the international good of the human community, rather than to the narrow advantage of nations at the expense of the whole. Although this model of internationalism became increasingly difficult to practice with the rise of the ideological movements of fascism and communism, even during the darkest days of World War II and the pressures of the cold war, the league has sought to maintain a model of friendly communication and solidarity across national divisions.

ALTHOUGH THE Women's International League maintained the Victorian cultural relationship between women's mothering nature and world peace, the group discarded the identification of this goal with the victory of Christianity or the establishment of the reign of Christ that had been an intrinsic part of this idea in the 19th century. This loss of the predication of feminism and peace on Christian virtue both broadened and narrowed these movements. On the one hand, it allowed these women's groups to shake off what could only be regarded by non-Christians as an expression of religious imperialism. The establishment of a new international order of world peace based on justice was argued on humanitarian grounds, rather than in the language of religious sectarianism. People of all religious persuasions, as well as those inspired by secular humanistic philosophies, could join together in solidarity, while Catholics, Jews and secularists could only be alarmed by the close link which groups such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union made be-

tween women's influence, world peace and such specifically Christian agendas as prayer in the public schools and Sabbath blue laws. Interestingly enough, these conservative Christian agendas of the WCTU today are espoused by Christian groups that are antifeminist and prowar, while the WCTU linked women's rights in politics and economics with the establishment of Christian perfection in the public order.

The secularization of the values of peacemaking left groups such as the Women's Peace Party and the Women's International League with only a quasibiological link between these values and women's influence, however. It was presumed that women sought peace because their biological roles



as mothers inclined them to biophilic activities. By contrast, males were thought to have fewer loving and peaceful impulses. Thus the women's peace movement was left with an implied doctrine of split natures and split ethics between men and women. Women were urged to gain power and influence in the world in order to counteract the male tendency toward aggression, but there was no longer a basis for a common ethic of peacemaking to which both men and women were called. By contrast, the forms of pacifism based on radical Christianity had not started out with a presumed ethical split between male and female genders. However much those forms recognized that males were socialized more toward war than were women, they featured an ethic of peacemaking based on Christian conversion to God's will for peace on earth that was directed to men and women equally.

With the rise of the new feminist movements of the late 1960s, new rifts appeared in the earlier connections between feminism and peace. The feminist movements of the 1970s could no longer make the connection which many feminists of the 19th century made between women's rights and Christianity. They found their 19th century forebears in

those anticlerical and even anti-Christian feminists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton or Matilda Joselyn Gage, who suspected that Christianity was basically a religious agent of patriarchy and thus intrinsically hostile to feminism.

In addition, contemporary feminists have grown much less sure about the connections between feminism and peace. Although many feminists continue to believe that males tend toward hostility and violence, they are no longer sure that women's mothering role inclines women to nonviolence. Further, they are not sure that women should pursue a peacemaking ethic as an expression of their true or emancipated humanity as women. Rather, they suspect that women have become pacified through this ideology of woman's pacific nature and thus socialized into being passive victims of male violence. Women must learn to oppose male violence, to fight back by violent means, if necessary. With this assertion of a counterviolence of women against men in self-defense, the last strands in the fabric of the relationship of feminism and peace threaten to become unraveled.

Against this background of militant feminism, which did not hesitate to advocate counterviolence—at least in self-defense—to male violence against women, pacifists in the women's movement were made to feel isolated and defensive. Women who advocated nonviolence as the superior social ethic for dealing with conflict felt the need to defend themselves against the charge of antifeminism by the militants. They had to defend and redefine the links between feminism and nonviolence against a new assumption that female nonviolence promoted their passivity and victimization. Thus Kate Millett in her book *Flying* (Knopf, 1974) describes herself as approaching the podium with great trepidation during a panel at a 1971 women's conference on "Violence in the Women's Movement." Most of the other speakers—such as Flo-rynce Kennedy, Gloria Steinem, Myra Lamb, Robin Morgan and Ti-Grace Atkinson—as well as most of the audience—seemed either to favor female violence or else to look at it with analytical detachment. With fear and trembling, Millett declared that she was about to "come out" as something far less acceptable than a lesbian in the women's movement. She was about to come out as a pacifist. "I wait wondering how they will take it. The word is so hated in the Left. To the hecklers 'all I can do is to ask you to be human to me. To listen.' Finally I have said it. . . . 'I want to speak in favor of and as an advocate of non-violence.' "

Although the links of an earlier feminism between women and peace seemed totally broken in such a gathering of militant feminists of the 1970s, in fact bits and pieces of the old assumptions still survive today in feminist ideology. The connections between patriarchy, violence and war which were first explored by feminist pacifists in the first

decades of the 20th century have been revived today. Although contemporary feminists may champion women's self-defense, few are anxious for women to engage in aggressive violence or to emulate male war-making as a way of proving women's equality. Underneath the rhetoric of militance there still survive presumptions about women's moral superiority—although it is no longer clear on what basis women claim to stand for a superior nature or ethic.

THIS QUESTION of the morality of violence or nonviolence was complicated by the desire of feminism to be in solidarity with Third World women. Both black and Third World liberation movements had repudiated nonviolent methods of social change in the 1970s in favor of violent revolution, if necessary. Third World and black women felt their first loyalty was to the black and Third World liberation struggles. First World feminists, in an effort to forge links between feminism and Third World women, wished to demonstrate the connections between the capitalist and racist systems of domination and patriarchy. But this seemed to suggest that the struggle against both patriarchy and war might involve something like methods of guerrilla warfare. The female guerrillas who had fought side by side with men in Nicaragua and other such areas were touted as models of militant womanhood. The peace movement was equally conflicted, since it also wanted to oppose American militarism in Third World liberation struggles. This put the movement in the contradictory posi-

tion of assailing American militarism while advocating revolutionary violence for Third World peoples.

In a recent volume of essays, *Reweaving the Web of Life: Feminism and Nonviolence*, edited by Pam McAlister (New Society, 1982), feminists in the peace movement struggle to find a higher synthesis between the denunciation of patriarchal violence, the advocacy of feminist militancy and a vision of a new humanism that could shape a world without war. For many women in the peace movements of the '60s, feminist consciousness was sparked by increasing recognition of the sexism of the male leadership in the peace movement itself. Women in peace organizations began to recognize that traditional patriarchal assumptions about male and female roles still prevailed in these groups. Women were expected to do the rote work of typing and filing; men, to have the ideas and make the decisions.

One of the most extreme cases was the antidraft movement. Since only males could be drafted, the ritual act of resistance to war, turning in or burning one's draft card, was an exclusively male event. The draft resistance movement cultivated a macho image to counteract the image of the dominant society of draft resisters as cowards. One slogan of the movement, "Girls say yes to men who say no," revealed the sexist insensitivity of the male leadership of the movement. It was assumed that women working in the movement were simply molls of the male resisters. Consciousness of sexism in the peace movement caused women to form networks and caucuses among themselves; many women split with these peace organizations and joined the feminist movement.

Feminists who wished to maintain their connection with older peace organizations struggled to sensitize male leadership to sexist attitudes and to bring about more shared leadership between women and men. One way of drawing the connection between feminism and peace for many of these women was to demonstrate the continuity between male violence toward women in the home or in the streets, and war. For many men, violence in Vietnam was serious and important, whereas violence toward women was merely private and trivial. Feminists argued that both were expressions of the same mentality of patriarchy. The socialization of women to be victims and men to be aggressors is the training ground for the culminating expression of male violence in warfare, they said.

The exaltation of war in male culture has typically been accompanied by a strident sexism. The slogan of the Italian fascist writer Filippo Marinetti in the 1930s, "We are out to glorify war, the only health-giver of the world, militarism, patriotism, ideas that kill, contempt for women," vividly illustrates the emotional and ideological connections between supermasculinity, violence and nega-

Black Lake

Even in sunlight the
surface of the tarn
reflects only the black granite cliffs
that dive down straight to the edge.
So closed in is the lake that
no wind comes near it,
and only the eagle, bearing the carcass
of the spawned red salmon, ventures
so high and far from the milted streams.
But here there is no outlet.
Snowmelt feeds the water.
And in August one can hear, by standing
on the rim, the packed snow crack off
and fall into the black water.
The water's pure, so cleansed of trout
and algae, that angels breed here.
They descend more carefully than snow,
their bodies dense with prayers.
They bear a resemblance to marble,
streaked and mottled with browns,
reds, and the ochre of old ivory.
It is always night when they arrive.

Tom Moore.

tion of women or the "feminine." In macho mythology, women stand for a feared weakness, passivity and vulnerability which must be purged and exorcised from the male psyche through the rituals of war. Feminists have pointed out the close connection between military indoctrination and sexism typical of the U.S. Army's basic training. A key element in the rhetoric of basic training is the

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put-down of women, and, by implication, all that might be "womanish" in the recruit who is being trained. The recruit is shamed by being called a "girl" or a "faggot," thereby inculcating a terror of his own feelings and sensitivities. Through his assault on his fears of weakness, a psychic numbing takes place which is then intended to be turned into aggressiveness toward a dehumanized "enemy."

The emotional identification of the male sexual organ and the gun is a recurring theme in basic training rhetoric. The U.S. Army training jingle "This is my rifle [slapping rifle]; this is my gun [slapping crotch]. The one is for killing; the other's for fun" makes the psychological connection between violence and sexual dehumanization of women clear. The role of rape or the capture of women as part of the spoils of war can be illustrated by virtually every war in recorded history, not the least of which was the Winter Soldier Investigation of combined rape and violence toward captured Vietnamese women in the war in Southeast Asia. Patriarchy turns the sexual relationship into a power relationship, a relationship of conquest and domination. Women are the currency of male prowess, to be protected and displayed on the one hand; to be ravished and "blown away" on the other. The linking of male sexuality to aggression is the root of both patriarchy and war.

For many contemporary feminists, the response of women to male violence cannot simply be a contrary assertion of feminine values of love and nurture. These qualities themselves have become distorted in female socialization into timidity and vulnerability. Women are not so much peacemakers within the present order as they are repressed into passive "kept women." They acquiesce to male violence in the home and accept it in society. The first step for women, therefore, is to throw off these shackles of fear and lack of self-confidence. Feminists have pointed out that, although most women are of slighter build than most men, physique does not mean that women need be passive victims to every random male assault. Training in martial arts could equip women to defend themselves in many situations. Women who have gone through

such training find that the greatest gain is a new sense of self-esteem. They no longer feel helpless before the possibility of attack. In the very way they now carry themselves, they signal to the male world that they are no longer an easy prey.

ALTHOUGH FEMINISTS wish to achieve a new sense of self-esteem that can fend off male violence, few want to move the whole way toward an emulation of male aggressive violence. Rather, they seek a new mode of human selfhood that could transcend both aggressive dehumanization of others and timid acquiescence or support of individual or collective violence. For some feminists this idea suggests a new appropriation of the ideal of nonviolence itself, not as passivity but as a courageous resistance to violence and injustice which reaches out to affirm rather than to negate the humanity of the other person.

True nonviolence must be based, first of all, on a secure sense of one's own value as a human being. Violence toward others, far from being an expression of self-worth, is based on a repression of one's sense of vulnerability which then translates into hostility toward others. The most violent men are those with the deepest fears of their own impotence. Training in nonviolence must be based on spiritual or personal development and empowerment of the self. An empowered self will not accept its own degradation, or that of others.

At this point, it becomes possible to forge new links between feminism and peace. Feminism fundamentally rejects the power principle of domination and subjugation. It rejects the concept of power which says that one side's victory must be the other side's defeat. Feminism must question social structures based on this principle at every level, from the competition of men and women in personal relationships to the competition of the nations of the globe, including the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. We seek an alternative power principle of empowerment in community rather than power over and disabling of others. Such enabling in community is based on a recognition of the fundamental interconnectedness of life, of men and women, blacks and whites, Americans and Nicaraguans, Americans and Russians, humans and the nonhuman community of animals, plants, air and water. Nobody wins unless all win. Warmaking has reached such a level of destructiveness that the defeat of one side means the defeat of all, the destruction of the earth itself. Feminism today sees its links with the cause of human survival and the survival of the planet itself.

Biophilic values, therefore, cannot remain the preserve of women or women's supposed special "nature" or ethics. As historic victims of violence and repression, as well as those socialized to cultivate supportive roles—but in a disempowered sphere—women may have a particular vantage

point on the issue. But they are not immune to expressions of hostility, chauvinism, racism or war-mongering, even if their role has more often been to be the backup force for the main fighters. Conversion to a new sense of self that wills the good of others in a community of life must transform traditional women as well as traditional men.

Both feminism and peacemaking need to be grounded in an alternative vision of the authentic self and human community that was once provided by radical Christianity. This alternative vision

must be clear that we are children of one mother, the earth, part of one interdependent community of life. On this basis we must oppose all social systems that create wealth and privilege for some by impoverishing, degrading or eliminating other people, whether they be the systems of domination that repress or assault women, or the systems that plan nuclear annihilation in a futile search for security based on competitive world power. Only on the basis of such an alternative vision can men and women join together to rebuild the earth. ■

A Labor Day Reflection on the Work Ethic

WILLIAM H. WILLIMON

“IF I WERE a *workaholic* like you, then I might . . .,” he said. And I tried to look appropriately penitent. He had sniffed out one of my chief sins. I knew what he was referring to, that alleged malady diagnosed and treated in Wayne Oates’s popular *Confessions of A Workaholic* (Abingdon, 1971).

Oates describes the workaholic as one who has an uncontrollable need to work incessantly, a work addict, an idolater who, due to certain insecurities in his or her psyche, has an obsessive need to work. For more than two decades the term has been trotted out to describe people otherwise labeled “type A” or “high achievers,” victims of what Oates calls the “Puritan” preoccupation with work, coupled with a sinister capitalist system which glorifies hard work and long hours as virtues.

“Of course, my church would be growing as fast as hers,” said a fellow pastor the other day, “but, unlike her, I am not some *workaholic*.” No, a workaholic he is not. What he is, in my estimate, is an unmotivated, lazy, self-righteous snob who would be happier working at a window in the U.S. Post Office than knocking himself out for an Episcopal Church.

Enough of this perpetual put-down of

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honest, engaged labor, I say. The time has come to blow the whistle on those who, with their pop-psychological epithets, pigeonhole, stereotype and demean people who have something worthwhile to do and don’t mind doing it.

“The Christian community has paid little attention to work as a religious issue,” wrote Richard Gillett in a recent *Christian Century* article, “The Reshaping of Work: A Challenge to the Churches” (Jan. 5-12). But this isn’t altogether true. You know how the typical reasoning goes. When God foreclosed on Eden, Adam and Eve were condemned to go to work. It’s been hell ever since. But this is not what the Yahwist says. Human beings are created to share in the Creator’s work. They are put in the garden “to till it and keep it” (Gen. 2:15). It is their later rebellion and sin which degrade their vocation into the drudgery of life, in a hostile environment where humanity and the earth are at odds with one another. Far from being punishment, work is the gift of a beneficent Creator who invites the man and woman to join in the act of creation.

Then there were those nasty Reformers who gave birth to “the Protestant work ethic.” A vast literature continues the argument about the origins of this ethic—whether it can be laid at the feet of Luther and Calvin and their heirs, whether it was a peculiarly Protestant phenomenon or not (“To work is to pray” was a *Benedictine* motto), whether the capitalistic spirit was aided by religion or

vice versa. Unfortunately, Oates kept calling the “Puritans” the first peddlers of work-addictive ideas. This can easily be disputed by reference to the words of the Puritans, who, at least in their theology, masterfully kept work in its place. For them, work was much like sex: dangerous when engaged in for selfish ends; otherwise a delightful way for the redeemed to celebrate their redemption.

I EXPECT one could make a better case for the notion that the church has usually been the foe of hard work rather than its friend. At first, the Reformers sundered the order of creation from the order of redemption, stressed grace more than works, and made human labor suspect. Surely there is more than a half-truth to Michael Novak’s assertion that the church did not give capitalism a fair break in the beginning because the church had a stake in the preservation of the old aristocratic order, whereas capitalism’s laws of competition and achievement were inherently innovative and disruptive of the status quo. The current theological denigration of work and condemnation of an earlier linkage of job and vocation are the latest attempt to provide ideological undergirding for the status quo of a new leisure class—a theology of play, narcissism and unashamed self-enhancement without cost, risk or effort.

The laziest people I have known, as well as the hardest workers, are clergy and professors. I have had firsthand



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