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THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF AUSTRALIAN PEACE MOVEMENT DEMANDS

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The Australian peace movement in the 1980s has emphasised a number of demands for change in government policy or action. Some of the most important of these are

- * the Australian government should take a stronger international stand against nuclear war;

- * visits by nuclear-powered or nuclear-armed ships and aircraft to Australia should be banned;

- * U.S. military and intelligence bases in Australia should be removed or internationalised;

- * uranium mining and export should be halted;

- * the Australian government should establish a more independent foreign policy in relation to defence;

- * there should be a nuclear-free zone in the Pacific region and a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean region;

- * programs in peace education and research should be established.

Many people assume that these demands are the self-evident and 'natural' avenues for rhetoric and action for members of a peace movement. This is by no means the case. Peace movement demands, like other parts of social reality, are socially constructed. That is, they reflect the prevailing social, economic and political structures, and also the social position of peace activists.¹

There are a large number of possible peace movement demands and activities, but only a small fraction of these actually become the focus for mass attention. This can be seen by listing some of the areas which have received less attention from the peace movement:

- * ending Australian military collaboration with repressive Third World regimes;

- * establishing a defence system based on nonviolent community resistance to aggression (social defence);

- * disarmament of Australian military forces;

- * conversion of Australian military production and labour to socially useful purposes (peace conversion);

1. This is a standard view within the sociology of knowledge. See for example Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann: *The Social Construction of Reality* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966).

- * pursuing social justice, including reduction of inequalities in wealth and of oppression of women and ethnic minorities;
- * challenging major institutional frameworks, such as capitalism and the state, and replacing them with more participatory and democratic alternatives.

Some of the areas on this second list have received more attention than others. In particular, there has been considerable opposition to Australian military aid to the Philippines. Also, the women's peace movement has emphasised the links between patriarchy and the war system. But this does not affect my basic point that the priority demands of the peace movement are selected out of a considerable range of potential demands.

The key question I want to address in this article is, why does the Australian peace movement focus on some demands and not on others? I assume that there is more to the question than simply a rational assessment that some issues are 'better' than others. By delving into the social factors influencing the choices of peace movement demands, some insight may be provided to improve peace movement effectiveness. To address the question, I will first look briefly at the nature of the Australian peace movement and its recent history. Then I'll examine some of the implicit themes underlying peace movement demands. In this examination, some attention will be placed on the social origins of different sections of the peace movement. Finally I'll mention a few alternative directions for the peace movement. To avoid misunderstanding, I should emphasise that I support the major demands of the Australian peace movement such as removing U.S. bases. But I see major limitations in the range and type of initiatives taken by the peace movement, as I will describe later.

What is the Peace Movement?

To speak of 'the peace movement' can give a false impression of the social dynamics of activity on peace issues. Before proceeding further, I will outline some of the features of participation and support for peace initiatives and demands in Australia. To begin, what is a peace issue? This has varied historically. The issues typically taken up under this banner have involved either opposition to particular wars (such as the Vietnam War), opposition to particular types of war (such as nuclear war) or opposition to all war. Groups with such aims are conventionally called peace groups, although it would be more accurate to refer to them as antiwar groups — especially since everyone, including the military, speaks out in favour of 'peace'.

What then is the peace movement? At the core of things are the key activists and spokespeople. This includes those who hold top positions in the larger peace organisations, those who frequently give public talks and make statements to the media, and many of those who devote a large fraction of their time towards peace movement activities. A few of the latter group are paid full-time or part-time, though usually at only a nominal salary. The next layer consists of active members of peace groups. Being 'active' can range from occasional attendance at meetings to regular efforts towards raising funds, organising meetings and rallies, writing letters and articles, circulating petitions and raising the issues in a diversity of forums. Also in this layer might be included those who participate in major direct actions, such as the women's action at Pine Gap in November 1983. Defining a 'peace group' is a problem. Many peace activists act within churches, trade unions, professional groups, political parties, artistic groups and schools. They may not be members of any formal peace groups, yet it seems reasonable to include them in the peace movement. A third layer can be called occasional participants. This includes those who sometimes attend films, talks, rallies or other functions organised by peace groups. It also includes many of the less active members of peace groups — those who attend a few meetings now and again — and perhaps those who write letters to the paper or to politicians, or make regular donations to peace groups. A final layer consists of passive supporters: those who do not take part in organised actions but who support the goals and efforts of the peace movement. Some passive supporters may keep their opinions to themselves, but many will discuss or argue the issues with their friends and neighbours, sign petitions or vote for 'peace'



candidates'. Thus there is a range in the degree of 'passivity' of these supporters. I have used the imagery of 'layers', as if the peace movement were like an onion, but the actual dynamics are more fluid and changing. A person's level of activism can change markedly from time to time, and often does. There is also a considerable complexity to the type of involvement. Aside from participating in formal peace groups and activities, there are for example many 'independents' who act in their own personal way towards the goals of the peace movement, perhaps by writing letters, providing professional services to peace groups, introducing ideas into classrooms or withholding taxes, with little or no connexion with the organised peace movement.

It should be clear that 'the peace movement' can be defined in a variety of ways. It seems to me that the most useful boundary will include active members and exclude passive supporters. Occasional participants can be considered members of the peace movement when they participate — as at a rally — but not otherwise. I will use this definition here. But the important thing is to remember the complexity and diversity of activity on peace issues — and the diversity of what are considered peace issues. My concern here is with the priorities for goals and actions by those active in the peace movement. Some of these priorities are reflected in formal demands, such as the contents of the Australian nuclear disarmament declaration. But in other cases the priorities are found in the personal views of the individual members of the peace movement. At this stage it is only fair that I mention my own involvement in the peace movement. In the early 1970s in Sydney I was an occasional participant in moratorium marches. In 1979 I helped to set up Canberra Peacemakers, a small activist peace group. Since then I have remained an active member of that group. Until 1982, Canberra Peacemakers was the only specifically peace group in Canberra, but since then many new groups have been established. Canberra Peacemakers mainly works on social defence as part of an overall emphasis on challenging and replacing the institutions underlying the war system. These experiences of course influence my perspective on the peace movement and my analysis in this article.

Recent Peace Movement History²

The large size and strength of the Australian peace movement in the mid-1980s is unusual. For most of the time in the past, peace movements around the world have been small and inconspicuous. However, there have been times of peace movement strength, such as the World War One anti-conscription campaign in Australia, the antiwar movement in Britain and the U.S. in the 1930s, and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in Britain in the late 1950s to the early 1960s. The last time the Australian peace movement had a major public profile was during the Australian military participation in the Vietnam War. In the late 1960s and early 1970s the Vietnam moratorium movement generated mass involvement, most visibly in a series of major demonstrations. The moratorium movement drew considerable strength from involvement of university students and major trade unions. It was strongly supported by large sections of the Labor Party. The Australian government's military participation in the Vietnam War was never more than a token one, designed to provide legitimation for the U.S. military role in Vietnam. Even so, by 1972 the Liberal-Country Party government had withdrawn almost all Australian troops from Vietnam.³ Because the moratorium movement focused almost entirely on Australian military participation in the Vietnam War, it had little staying power as a general antiwar movement. After 1972 the organisational base of the peace movement dwindled to a small core in the major cities, mainly in Sydney and Melbourne.

The moratorium days left a strong stamp on peace movement demands in the decade 1972 to 1981. Many of those most active in the moratorium movement had supported the National Liberation Front and North Vietnam in the Vietnam War, and were very much anti-U.S. and anti-capitalist. Hence, demands for removal of U.S. bases, ending or renegotiating the ANZUS treaty and establishing a non-aligned foreign policy were high on the priority list for key peace movement activists. Because the



2. Ralph V. Summy: 'Militancy and the Australian peace movement, 1960-1967', *Politics*, volume 5, number 2, (November 1970), pp. 148-162; Malcolm Saunders and Ralph Summy: 'Salient themes of the Australian peace movement', *Social Alternatives*, volume 3, number 1 (October 1982), pp. 23-32; Harry Redner and Jill Redner: *Anatomy of the World: The Impact of the Atom on Australia and the World* (Melbourne: Fontana, 1983), chapter 11. Also of relevance, though I have not seen it, is a major two-part article by Malcolm Saunders and Ralph Summy on the history of the Australian peace movement, to be published in *Peace and Change* in 1985.

3. Malcolm Saunders: 'Australia's withdrawal from Vietnam: the influence of the peace movement', *Social Alternatives*, volume 1, numbers 6/7 (June 1980), pp. 56-62.

movement was so small, peace movement demands closely reflected the views of key activists. There was also a strong pro-Soviet minority in the Australian peace movement who supported criticisms of capitalist militarism and opposed any criticisms of state socialist militarism. Aside from the pro-Vietnam and pro-Soviet figures in the peace movement, the other major voice was simply antiwar. In this latter group fell for example many of the church-based peace activists. But the pro-Vietnam and pro-Soviet voices discouraged many possible initiatives. Moreover, the financial base of the movement was largely provided by trade unions, whose leaders held pro-Vietnam sentiments, hence much of what was done was compatible with a pro-Vietnam stance and a non-hostile stance towards the Soviet Union. All this helped to make opposition to U.S. bases, questioning of ANZUS and support for a non-aligned foreign policy into priority issues for the peace movement. These were areas on which almost all activists in the movement could agree, and for which a political base for implementing the demands seemed to exist — namely the left wing of the Labor Party.

This narrow base for the organised peace movement in the 1970s then saw the rise of the mass-based anti-uranium movement⁴ which paralleled the rise of other anti-nuclear power movements around the world in the mid-1970s. While the base of the 1970s peace movement was provided by trade unions, the new anti-uranium movement depended to a far greater extent on middle class radicals, often connected with the left of the Labor Party. In the peak years of the anti-uranium movement, 1976-1978, there was major participation from the labour movement, students and unemployed, professions, churches and other groups. As in other countries, opposition to uranium cut across usual party-political lines. But unlike most other countries, where the movement had some of its strongest roots in rural or middle-class communities — often with conservative politics — the anti-uranium movement in Australia came to include a strong working-class involvement. There were also strong links with the Aboriginal land rights movement. Because Australia's role in the nuclear fuel cycle was solely as an exporter of uranium, the issue of proliferation of nuclear weapons via the 'peaceful' nuclear fuel cycle became a major issue. Thus, much more than in most countries, the issue of nuclear power was strongly linked at an early stage to the issue of nuclear war. However, the links between the anti-uranium movement and the peace movement took a while to develop. Traditional peace movement activists saw that the anti-uranium movement was where the popular strength lay, and tried in the late 1970s to use that strength to promote their own issues, such as opposition to nuclear weapons and to U.S. bases. At that time, for example, Hiroshima Day focused almost entirely on uranium mining and nuclear power rather than on traditional peace issues. Quite a few anti-uranium activists did not want to 'contaminate' the anti-uranium message with traditional peace movement demands. Like many single-issue groups, they preferred to use their strength for specific and narrow ends.

Ironically, by 1982, the relation between the anti-uranium and peace movements was reversed. The peace movement was now the stronger. For a year or two the anti-uranium movement tried to get uranium discussed at major peace movement functions, while some people in the peace movement preferred just to talk about nuclear war and not to 'confuse' the discussion with the uranium issue. But this resistance to including opposition to uranium mining on the peace movement agenda did not last long. The continuing strength of the anti-uranium movement, and its continuing influence especially within the labour movement, has meant that opposition to uranium mining has become one of the main demands of the peace movement.

The 1979 NATO decision to deploy cruise and Pershing missiles was a crucial factor which stimulated the enormous expansion of the Western European peace movement. This movement gradually spread to other Western countries, and to a limited degree has penetrated state socialist and Third World countries.⁵ The infectious explosion of the Western peace movement reached Australian cities in 1981 and 1982. The immediate consequence was the formation of new groups and the organisation of large rallies. The process has continued with the formation of many suburban and occupational groups, and with the initiation of direct action

4. Jim Falk: *Global Fission: The Battle Over Nuclear Power* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982); Brian Martin, 'The Australian anti-uranium movement', *Alternatives*, volume 10, number 4 (Summer 1982), pp. 26-35.

5. See especially the journal *Disarmament Campaigns* for an ongoing account of worldwide peace movement activities.

(notably the women's action at Pine Gap in 1983). The existence of a strong movement has enabled much more frequent and favourable news coverage of peace issues.

The rise of the 1980s peace movement caught the old peace activists largely by surprise. In the 1970s there was no planning of avenues for involvement and action should there be a quick upsurge of interest in peace issues. The 'old guard' from the 1970s has largely been swamped by new members and new groups. However, since a large fraction of the new participants have been completely new to political action, they have brought few new ideas and demands to supplement or replace the traditional demands of the earlier peace movement. The new people have largely accepted the stand against U.S. bases and ship visits, but they have brought a change of emphasis. There is now more ritual declaiming against nuclear war. As a demand, this often translates into requests that the Australian government take a stronger line for nuclear disarmament in world forums. The other new emphasis has been on peace education, which is partly a consequence of the large number of teachers and academics who have become active in the movement, and also the more active and prominent role of women in the 1980s movement.

Themes

The effectiveness of social action groups can be judged on two levels. One level is external impact: making changes in policies and practices which are causing harm. The other level is encouraging the development of skills, understanding and commitment among the members of the movement. Both these levels are important.

Most peace groups seem to act in an expressive way: they act in ways which help to express the moral outrage or social concern of the group members.⁶ Such actions — which include demonstrations, letters to newspapers and civil disobedience — can be quite powerful. But in many cases they are not effective in actually affecting policies or practices concerning war, and indeed external effectiveness is often not a major consideration. Quite simply, there is little analysis and little strategic thinking about how to achieve even those peace movement goals which are clearly articulated.

While external effectiveness has not been a strong point for peace groups, in the past the development of capabilities of members has not been either. Many groups have been strongly task oriented. They have done little to try to develop patterns of group interaction that are satisfying, and devoted little effort towards spreading skills and knowledge and the opportunities to apply them. For example, public speaking or group representation at conferences often is left to the same experienced activists. There has been some change in the past few years towards emphasising the development of talents and commitment of group members. This is often termed 'empowerment'. This has been especially important in the women's peace movement, many of whose members have been alienated by patterns of male dominance and internal power hierarchies in the mainstream groups.

To return to analyses of the war system: although only a few members of peace movements have developed a coherent analysis and strategy, nevertheless there are implicit analyses and strategies underlying a great number of peace movement activities. Because these analyses are mostly implicit, it is not easy to examine them. What I will do here is describe some themes which seem to me to be common in the implicit analyses behind the approaches taken by many active members of the peace movement. I use the word 'themes' to suggest that approaches to the problem of war are organised around particular guiding images. The six themes I will discuss are:

- * nuclear weapons are the primary danger;
- * war is due to elite decision-making;
- * Australia's military alliance is the basic problem;
- * capitalism is the root of war;
- * patriarchy is the root of war;
- * the war system is a complex social system tied into major social institutions.

6. Bob Overy: *How Effective are Peace Movements?* (London: Housmans, 1982); Frank Parkin: *Middle Class Radicalism: The Social Bases of the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968).

There are other analyses of the causes of war. One, for example, is that war results from a biologically rooted drive for human aggression.⁷ This belief is widely held among the general public, but also has some currency within the peace movement, especially among new members. Nor are the themes discussed here entirely independent either logically or in terms of individual beliefs. Theme 6, for example, overlaps with themes 4 and 5. In terms of personal beliefs, some people would see nuclear weapons as a primary danger, but also recognise the role of capitalism or patriarchy in promoting the nuclear threat. The significance of the six themes is that they try to encompass the rationales behind the major public demands and actions of peace activists.

Theme 1: Nuclear Weapons Are the Primary Danger

It is evident that the majority of antiwar campaigning in the 1980s focuses on nuclear war. This is obvious from reading literature produced by peace groups, or indeed from the daily press. The major umbrella peace organisation in Australia is called People for Nuclear Disarmament. A recent political manifestation of this emphasis is the Nuclear Disarmament Party. (Incidentally, it should be mentioned that the Nuclear Disarmament Party did not grow out of established peace groups, and at the December 1984 election was not endorsed by most of the major peace groups. It therefore cannot be considered to be the political wing of the peace movement, though it is certainly part of that movement by the definition I have adopted.)

Many of the demands made by the Australian peace movement link closely with this analytic theme: opposition to nuclear ships and aircraft; pressure for a stronger Australian government stand against the nuclear policies of the superpowers; support for genuine nuclear-free zones; and opposition to uranium mining, which is seen as a contributor to the risk of nuclear war. Looking more closely at policies of major peace groups, one will find explicit opposition to other types of war, in particular chemical and biological war and outer space war — though not so often conventional war. But the bulk of campaigning focuses on nuclear war.

The alternative vision associated with this theme is of a world without nuclear weapons, but otherwise basically the same. To be fair, many peace activists would want to do much more than remove nuclear weapons. But for many, removal of nuclear weapons would eradicate the primary evil. The major group of people who respond to this theme are from the middle class, the great mass of people newly involved in the peace movement since 1981, such as housewives, public servants and professionals. Many people join the peace movement because they read about nuclear war and become concerned, for themselves or their children, about the terrible looming disaster. Many of those who stay in the movement then discuss, read and think more about the issues and develop more sophisticated perspectives. Others continue to focus entirely on nuclear war, or drop out. In any case, there are a large number of people in the peace movement who subscribe to the analysis that nuclear weapons are the primary danger, and this strongly influences the demands made by the movement.

Theme 2: War Is Due to Elite Decision-Making

The underlying idea here is that national leaders are ignorant, misled (for example by their military advisers) or tied to vested interests. It is a widespread belief within peace groups that if elites only came to understand the true danger, and realised that war is counterproductive for all humans, then they would change national policies. However, some elites are too tied to vested interests to be convinced to change

7. For a refutation of this view, see Ashley Montagu *The Nature of Human Aggression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

policies; it is thought that these elites need to be pressured to change their actions or, alternatively, outnumbered and replaced. This analysis leads to an emphasis on demands made on the elites themselves. Removal of U.S. bases, stopping of uranium mining, or establishment of a nuclear-free zone are all seen as initiatives which need to be implemented by governments. This theme thus underlies the whole conception of making demands, namely demands for government action.

In terms of political practice, an emphasis on disseminating information and on lobbying is the usual approach used to convince elites. If the elites are too tied to vested interests to be convinced then the approach used is to apply pressure on governments via letters, media coverage and demonstrations, or to work through the Labor Party to 'get the numbers'. Finally, there is the alternative of replacing the elites, which means electing sympathetic politicians and promoting anti-nuclear political parties. Even direct action is often seen as a way of applying pressure on elites or of replacing them, as in the case of the Southwest Tasmania blockade. There are some other themes related to this one, for example that war is due to evil elites, or that war is due to powerless elites who will not confront their own bureaucracies. The basic orientation is the same: the making of demands for altered action by the elites, or for replacement of the elites by others.

The solution to the problem of war from the perspective of this analysis is rational elites, achieved either by conversion of present elites to rationality or by outnumbering, outflanking or replacing present elites by rational ones. As in the case of the first theme, social structures would remain basically the same. Also as in the case of the first theme, the major group involved here is the middle class, and especially members who are relatively new to the peace movement.

Theme 3: Australia's Military Alliance Is the Basic Problem

The idea here is that Australia's military alliance, notably the connexion with the U.S., ties the country into the system of military spending, confrontation and dependence on power bloc politics. It is thought that if the Australian government could break free of the alliance and establish a non-aligned or neutral foreign policy, then this would contribute to the weakening of the hegemony of the dominant military powers — especially by providing an example to other countries — and provide the freedom to take independent initiatives in many areas relating to disarmament. New Zealand's stand against nuclear ship visits is seen as a welcome step in this direction.

This theme is part of what lies behind opposition to U.S. bases and to visits by nuclear ships and aircraft, and is the immediate rationale for pushing a more independent foreign policy. The alternative to Australian military alliance with the U.S. is a greater degree of independence. Some activists would like a neutral foreign policy, similar to that of Sweden or Switzerland, which rules out any military alliance or collaboration. Others would prefer non-alignment, which does not automatically rule out military or political collaboration on specific issues or for specific purposes. Yet others would simply wish to redefine the ANZUS agreement or the ongoing military collaboration between Australia and the U.S. in order to give the Australian government more autonomy and independence. One common feature of these alternatives is continued reliance on Australian military forces. Indeed, less dependence on U.S. military capabilities might well imply greater Australian military expenditure. Hence it is to be expected that many Australian military and political elites might support this alternative, at least once it mustered more political strength.

Within the peace movement, a primary focus on the alliance is not nearly as common as focus on nuclear weapons. Yet there are a number of key figures who have raised the issue of the alliance for many years, and many activists focus on this theme, though seldom exclusively. Quite a number of those who emphasise this theme are involved with the left of the labour movement.

Theme 4: Capitalism Is the Root of War

This theme is closely related to the previous one. But here the emphasis is not on the alliance per se but on the system of private production for profit. Military spending in the West is seen as a means by which states protect their exploitative economic systems against threats from inside and outside. Military spending in state socialist countries is seen on the other hand as a necessary — if unfortunate — response to Western military threats. (Alternatively, state socialism is conceptualised as state capitalism, which necessarily engenders militarism.) This theme also lies behind opposition to any connexion with the U.S. military or U.S. foreign policy. The alternative, from the perspective of this theme, is a socialist Australia. This might be either socialism in the social democratic mould (such as Sweden), or in some other mould. Undoubtedly the typical vision would be of a specifically Australian socialism. But in any case there would probably be a need for an Australian military, if only to prevent capitalist military threats.

The left of the labour movement, plus a number of Marxist groups, form the main force linked to this analysis. This theme was quite prominent within the peace movement in the 1950s and 1960s and, to a somewhat lesser extent, during the 1970s. With the wave of new participants in the 1980s, it has become very much a minority view.

Theme 5: Patriarchy Is the Root of War

Growing out of the feminist movement and the feminist analysis of social institutions, this view sees warfare as closely linked to domination of and violence against women by men. Many feminists see male domination as predating and as more fundamental than domination associated with capitalism, the state or the military. The extreme male chauvinism fostered in military training is seen as a manifestation of male violence against women used to sustain other institutions. Also important is the role of rape as a means for domination both in peace and war.

There are a number of different views about alternatives to patriarchy. One is that of a world in which women are treated like men, and occupy an equal share of positions in all spheres, including elite positions. But many feminists in the peace movement would take a more radical position, seeing the necessity to reconstruct or abolish many social institutions entirely — such as the military, which cannot be reformed simply by an influx of women soldiers and generals. The feminist analysis of war has had little overt impact on the normal list of peace movement demands. Its greatest impact has been on the actions undertaken: in particular, attempts to join Anzac Day marches, and the civil disobedience actions at Pine Gap and Cockburn Sound.

Theme 6: The War System Is a Complex Social System Tied Into Major Social Institutions

The idea behind this theme is that militarism is deeply embedded in a number of institutions such as the state, capitalism, patriarchy and the military. The theme as a whole is one which does not trace war to a single cause, but rather looks at a set of social institutions which have ramifications throughout society, for example in the education system, in individual psychology, in centralised economic production, and in the use of soldiers and police for repressing threats to the dominant social order. For example, some feminists might begin with a focus on the link between patriarchy and violence. There are connexions with patriarchy involved in the way military forces mobilise masculinity for the purpose of violence, and the direct support that women provide to the military as wives, prostitutes, nurses and



workers. But in looking at war feminists might also examine the role of the state in organising military forces and the role of capitalism in military production. For example, state bureaucracies are controlled by men, and operate on the bureaucratic principles of hierarchy and the division of labour, thereby structurally downgrading characteristics such as co-operation and emotional support which are conventionally assigned to women. Bureaucracies foster the instrumental rationality which enables social resources to be allocated to the development of weapons of mass destruction and enables business as usual to be conducted with (or within) repressive regimes. The role of ideology might also be examined: the mobilisation of mass support for the state in wartime via propaganda, peer group pressure, schooling and cultural traditions. Conventional gender roles apply at all these levels. Pursuing such an analysis can lead to the conclusion that patriarchy is tied to the war system in a multitude of ways — and also that patriarchy is not the only important institution linked to the war system. A similar conclusion might be reached by beginning the analysis with the state, capitalism or the military rather than patriarchy. Examples of this theme include some of the initiatives for peace education, and some of the motivation for civil disobedience actions.

The alternative vision in this case would be institutional reconstruction. For example, this might include decentralisation of power to local communities via more local economic production and local political control. Male domination would be removed, and this would undercut the mobilisation of male violence in the military and elsewhere. Involved here are portions of the feminist movement and the environmental movement, some members of left groups, some radical Christians, and a miscellany of others.

Oligarchy and Democracy

With the 1980s resurgence of the Australian peace movement, there have been large numbers of new activists who have had no previous involvement in social action. Most of these people have no particular sympathy with the anti-U.S. and anti-capitalist analysis underlying much of the opposition to U.S. bases and the Australian-U.S. alliance. Their initial concern — often stimulated by media accounts of the horrors of nuclear war — is with nuclear weapons, and hence the analysis that nuclear weapons are the primary danger seems to be a common one. Those who have a sophisticated anti-U.S. and anti-capitalist analysis are greatly outnumbered, and yet their orientation remains strongly influential, if not dominant. Partly this is historically rooted in the social location of the 1970s antiwar movement, as described above; and partly it derives from the continuing presence of the U.S. bases, the U.S. alliance, and visits by nuclear vessels and aircraft. But, as I have argued here, the 'obviousness' of these targets is to a considerable degree socially constructed. There are other possible targets, such as Australian military forces, which in physical terms are at least as 'obvious', but which have not become the target of significant peace movement activity.

It can be argued that the reason for emphasis on U.S. bases, on visits by nuclear ships and on the U.S. alliance is the new perception that they are part of a first strike strategy by the U.S. military which has been coming into being for some years. But the U.S. bases and alliance were a primary focus in the 1970s, well before the first strike analysis became widely touted. As I see it, the first strike analysis was used to justify and sustain an emphasis which had already been established. I am not saying that analyses of the 'real threat' are irrelevant to the development of peace movement focuses, simply that they are only one factor, and not so often the dominant one.

The way peace groups are organised can also help to maintain the hegemony of certain demands and orientations. Let me broach this delicate topic by making some general comments about social action groups. Many groups have been and are dominated by experienced activists, are hierarchical in de facto if not official ways, and are heavily task-oriented rather than convivial and participatory in their style. What this means is that much of the running in such meetings is made by the

experienced and politically sophisticated 'heavies'. When there are full-time staff, they are usually prominent among this core of influential activists. Quite a few people who are new to the issue feel alienated and unwelcome in such groups. Often they feel that they are being used for the purposes of others rather than being genuine participants. While the 'heavies' are undoubtedly sincere, concerned, and hard-working, the style of their commitment discourages many others who might otherwise become involved.

Who are these experienced activists? Many of them are also the people who prefer to work through the Labor Party, or to work to apply pressure on the Labor Party. Indeed many are experienced Labor activists. It is their political savvy in the cut and thrust of party politics that informs their analysis and shapes their political styles, and this is what often alienates newcomers. In this way the orientation of social movement demands towards top-down solutions by governments can be sustained by elements of a top-down organisation of the social movement itself.

This critique has often been made of 'left' groups. One stimulus behind the development of the 1960s feminist movement was the hierarchy and manipulation within many left groups, and in particular the exploitation and marginalisation of women in those groups. Since then, portions of the feminist movement, the nonviolent action movement and the environmental movement have consciously fostered egalitarian group dynamics, consensus decision-making, the sharing of tasks and skills, and the development of campaigns designed to encourage participation.⁸

In the period of quiescence in the Australian peace movement in the 1970s, the features of hierarchy and de facto domination by 'heavies' were common. This reinforced the priorities of key activists: in particular, the anti-capitalist emphasis. Since 1981, with the large influx of new people, a decentralisation of activity has been forced on the movement: lots of independent groups have sprung up and done their own thing. Furthermore, many of the major groups have decentralised their operations and organisations, thus providing opportunities for new members via relatively unthreatening avenues.

Nevertheless, actual and de facto hierarchies still play a significant role. This especially applies at 'peak' councils and other key decision-making meetings at state and national levels. While decisions made at state meetings or national conferences are not binding on peace groups, many of the decisions strongly orient local action, such as plans for national rallies or signature drives. In as much as key figures play a disproportionate role in the decision-making process, this helps to sustain and promote certain emphases in peace movement demands. The major effect is twofold. First, there is an emphasis on the more 'radical' demands — for example, opposition to U.S. bases rather than rhetorical concern about nuclear war — but only the more radical demands drawn out of the reservoir of standard demands. Second, many of the major actions are oriented towards pressuring government in one way or another. For example, one of the principal goals of mass rallies is to show the government that people are concerned.

Both of these emphases help to sustain the influence of key activists within the movement. The key activists are the ones more knowledgeable about the more radical demands. But only radical demands that are 'on the agenda' provide opportunities for these activists to influence the directions for action by large numbers of people. Second, the orientation towards pressuring government implies the need for centrally decided-upon, large-scale actions, such as national rallies. This also gives the key activists more of a say about movement directions than would an orientation more towards decentralised and independent actions.

Is the disproportionate influence of the 'heavies' harmful? It is when large numbers of potential new activists feel unwelcome. But to be fair, there must be a balance between catering for new members at the lowest common denominator, and developing campaigns with a cutting edge. In addition, there are many experienced peace activists who make every attempt to democratise the movement while at the

8. See for example Virginia Coover, Ellen Deacon, Charles Esser and Christopher Moore: *Resource Manual for a Living Revolution* (Philadelphia: New Society Press, 1981).

same time arguing for their own favoured lines of action. Compared to organisations such as the military or corporations, the peace movement is a model of participation, decentralisation and democracy. Indeed, in some circles there is strong antagonism towards any form of overt hierarchy, and a distrust of some experienced activists who are spokespeople for the movement.

Nevertheless, the processes I have outlined can play a restraining role on the development of the movement. There is no guarantee that widespread participation in the peace movement will last, and going by past history a downturn is virtually inevitable.⁹ When that process begins to occur, then the organisation of the movement will play a big role in its long-term survival and effect. A movement that is too oriented to government for solutions to social problems, and too dependent on key activists for providing directions and organisational skills, will be vulnerable to both attack and co-option.

This suggests that a high priority for the movement is to increase the opportunities for members of independent groups to develop their skills, understanding and commitment. At the moment, the main demands made by the peace movement and the campaigns to promote them do not provide many opportunities for local groups to act in ways that are both independent of central co-ordination and immediately relevant to peace movement goals. Most major rallies for example require central co-ordination, while organising suburban street stalls is beneficial but hardly sufficient for challenging the war system. Some initiatives, such as the women's civil disobedience actions, satisfy both these requirements. Other such initiatives are needed which can be taken up by different parts of the wide diversity of groups in the peace movement.

The Failure of Theory

The social origins of the peace movement agenda also help explain the failure of most theorising about war and peace to provide any useful directions for peace movement action. Of course, to analyse 'the failure of theory' is to make an analysis from a particular theoretical viewpoint. My own stance falls into this category that 'The war system is a complex social system tied into major social institutions'. In particular, I see war as a manifestation of the power of states within a system of states. States are founded on a monopoly of what is claimed to be the legitimate use of violence. This is used not only to protect against external threats but, just as important, to defend against internal challenges to state power. Power in the modern state also depends crucially on centralised economic management and extraction of resources from the national economy, which sustains the state and in particular the military. The organisational form of modern state power is bureaucracy, which facilitates top-down control, disciplines the work-force (in particular the military), and undermines self-managing alternatives. Patriarchy is closely linked to the state, bureaucracy and the military via a process of mutual mobilisation: men use formal positions, such as in bureaucracies, to maintain male power, while elite bureaucracies mobilise male support for bureaucratic hierarchy by measures such as the gender division of labour. Also tied into the war system are a number of other institutions such as capitalism, racism and the domination of nature.¹⁰

From the point of view of such an analysis, the themes focusing on the dangers of nuclear weapons and on elite decision-making mistake symptoms for causes. Nuclear weapons are the product of the war system, not its driving force. Likewise, the attitudes and actions of elites reflect their position in social systems which are integral to the war system. They are not irrational, but rather behave according to the rationality of the system they serve: a rationality deadly to wider human interests, to be sure, but nevertheless a rationality deriving from the interests of particular social groups. Because elites are constrained by the structures in which they operate, applying pressure on them or replacing them by 'better' elites can go only a limited way towards addressing the structural roots of war. Orientations towards nuclear weapons and towards elites reflect the lack of social critique by large numbers of those in the peace movement.



9. Nigel Young: 'Why peace movements fail', *Social Alternatives*, volume 4, number 1 (March 1984), pp. 9-16.

10. Brian Martin: *Uprooting War* (London: Freedom Press, 1984).



11. Martin Shaw: *Socialism and Militarism* (Nottingham: Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, n.d.).

12. Seymour Melman: *Pentagon Capitalism: The Political Economy of War* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970).

13. Paul Joseph: *Cracks in the Empire: State Politics in the Vietnam War* (Boston: South End Press, 1981).

14. One of the more sophisticated feminist treatments of war is Penny Strange: *It'll Make a Man of You: A Feminist View of the Arms Race* (Nottingham: Mushroom Books and Peace News, 1983).

The themes of anti-alignment and anti-capitalism derive from the dominant analysis used by the orthodox left, which is an analysis of capitalism. Most anti-capitalist analysis does not provide a critique of the state or of the state system as institutions to be challenged, destroyed and fundamentally reconstructed. It is the capitalist state, not the state *per se*, which is the subject of major examination. Indeed, anti-capitalist analysis largely looks to the state as the location for resolution of social contradictions, for example via nationalisation or via redistribution of social benefits. It is for this reason, in my opinion, that since World War One until recently there has been an almost total absence of analysis of the problems of war — not to mention organised anti-militarism — coming from Marxists.¹¹

The problem is that the usual categories used in the Marxist critique of capitalism do not throw much light on the problem of war. Modern war is never a direct battle between classes: it is always violent conflict channelled through the state. (This is not to deny the many bloody clashes between capitalists and workers.) Historically, workers have lined up behind their governments and militaries rather than supporting their class allies in 'enemy' countries. Before World War One the peace movement and the international socialist movement were strong, solidly connected and well organised. Yet both fell to bits with the outbreak of war.

The reason for this collapse can be traced to the underlying driving forces for the war, which — while they involved capitalist competition to some extent — were founded on state rivalries. The organisation and use of military forces depend mainly on the degree and organisation of state power and on the economic resources at the state's disposal. Any economic system that enables a surplus to be extracted by the state for central allocation — and this certainly includes both capitalism and state socialism — is compatible with the creation and maintenance of professional military forces. In short, the military is a feature of the state, not simply the capitalist state. Socialists before World War One did not oppose the state system or their own states to any significant degree; their opposition to war, founded on working class solidarity, collapsed in the face of nationalism.

Since World War Two, the 'peacetime' role of corporations in war production has become extensive, as analysis of the military-industrial complex has shown. This development reflects the increasingly tight link between economic production and state policy in capitalist societies. But these links in themselves ^{do not} show that capitalism drives the state's military policy. Just as convincing is the argument that the state ties capitalist production to military priorities.¹² For example, Paul Joseph¹³ argues in favour of the thesis that the U.S. state intervention in Vietnam was carried out primarily to serve capitalism. However, his own evidence seems more convincingly interpreted as showing that this militaristic enterprise was neither controlled by nor very much in the interests of the U.S. capitalist class as a whole, much less the global capitalist class. The many wars and confrontations between socialist states in recent decades show that war cannot be attributed solely to a capitalist economic base unless of course existing socialist states are categorised as state capitalism.

These considerations suggest that opposing capitalism is insufficient as a basis for opposing war. But it is also clear that capitalism is tightly linked to the war system, and so opposition to war must include opposition to many if not all aspects of capitalism.

It is only in the past few years that Marxists have begun to readdress the issue of war, in response to the rise of the 1980s peace movement. Their orientation by and large remains one of finding solutions through rather than against the state. Other theoretical approaches have not done much better than Marxism. Liberal theorists seldom provide an analysis of institutions, and even more seldom relate their insights to strategy for social movements. Anarchists certainly have a critique of the state, but have not been able to develop their insights and apply them to practical organising in a major way. Feminists in the 1980s have again begun addressing the issue of war, but the connexion between feminist analysis and political practice is only beginning to be made.¹⁴ Most importantly, most of the non-Marxist theoretical perspectives lack any development of strategy for social movements aside from working to influence policies of the state. They are often as tied to state-based solutions as conventional socialists. (The alternative option of building autonomous

self-managed institutions, often adopted by anarchists and sometimes by feminists, suffers from the problem of not providing a serious challenge to dominant institutions such as the state and capitalism.) This theoretical gap is a reflection of the social factors which have shaped the development of the conventional list of peace movement demands.

Future Directions

The first major limitation I see in the main demands of the Australian peace movement is that they are a limited selection of possible demands. The second major limitation is exactly that they are demands made of the government. If state power is centrally implicated in the war system, then it is insufficient to rely on state elites to implement solutions. Some governments, such as the Swedish and Yugoslav governments, will support limited movement out of the dominant military paradigm. But this path cannot be relied upon, any more than the good will of some 'enlightened' capitalists towards their workers means that capitalists can be relied upon to implement workers' control. The alternative is not to ignore the state, but rather to supplement the conventional demands and the lobbying and pressuring of elites by grassroots initiatives which do not depend on action from above. The following areas provide many opportunities for grassroots involvement.

* Promotion of social defence: dissemination of the idea of nonviolent resistance as an alternative to military defence, and local organising and training in methods and organisations of nonviolent resistance. This can be done, for example, by groups of workers, students or suburbanites. The methods and skills developed and practised can also be used in other campaigns. For example, workers would need to learn how to halt or take over production to be effective in social defence; this same ability clearly could be used in campaigns against employers or the government.

* Peace conversion: promotion of the idea of conversion of military forces and production to socially useful purposes, and local organising with military personnel and workers to develop plans and programs of action to implement conversion. Again, the capabilities developed in peace conversion campaigns could be used for other campaigns, such as conversion of transport or energy systems.

* Links with other social movements: greater liaison and development of joint initiatives with those in the feminist movement, the environmental movement, the Aboriginal movement, the gay movement, human rights movement, the unemployed workers' movement, the workers' control movement, etc.

* International initiatives: development of ways to encourage grassroots antiwar activism in other countries, especially under regimes where such activism is actively repressed, such as Indonesia and the Soviet Union. This might involve distributing information, making personal contacts, and developing radio links. For example, a church group might invite foreign church workers to Australia, and provide them with information and training in struggle against oppression.

* Institutional reconstruction: development of grassroots challenges to dominant institutions which are tied to the war system, such as the system of centrally regulated economic production which provides resources for state-funded military activities, and promotion of alternatives such as community control of decentralised economic activities.

It may sound contradictory to analyse the social construction of peace movement demands and then to advocate a different set of directions, as if a free choice could be made. But social movements are neither fully determined nor entirely autonomous. Individuals and groups are conditioned by their history and their social environment, but within this a measure of choice and opportunity exists. There is quite a bit of room for independent initiative and innovation. Indeed, often it is such initiatives, such as the Greenham women's actions, which enlarge the scope for participation and for further initiative. Furthermore, there has been a gradual increase — though the level is still quite low — in organised analysis and long-term planning within peace groups. This provides some hope that future antiwar initiatives will be less reactive and will be based to a larger extent on awareness of opportunities and limitations. This will not guarantee success, but it may improve the chance of it.



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