

stances where both seem to me necessary. The authority given to the captain of a ship enables him/her to make a vital quick decision. In my experience consensus decision-making breaks down in groups which are not small, well-bonded and trustful; society will have to change beyond recognition before we can avoid working in big un-bonded groups altogether.

At a deeper level, I find it hard to see anything inherently violent in hierarchy, provided that the individuals who endow X with authority can hold X accountable and have workable humane ways of subsequently removing X's authority.

The Dossier begins with the following words of Theodore Roszak: "People try nonviolence for a week, and when it 'doesn't work' they go back to violence, which hasn't worked for centuries."

It is none too clear to me that violence 'hasn't worked'. Violence among humans has a long history. It seems that Papua New Guinea's many tribes preserved their autonomy at the price of enduring low-key inter-tribal warfare; similar evidence exists for nomadic societies in Saudi Arabia and Central South America. On what basis do we say that these societies didn't work? Are we to say that their people were spiritually deficient because they rejected the ultimate unity of humanity?

I need no persuading that violence on the scale that we confront it today does not work for anyone. But I do need persuading that we either can or should root violence out of the human experience altogether.

This of course raises the ancient but still vital debate over violence, nature and nurture. I would have liked this Dossier to address this issue rather than to dismiss it with a glib quotation.

Conclusion

As you can see this Dossier gave me plenty to think about. Read it; it will do the same for you.

StJohn Kettle
NVT

Building a Peace System

Robert A. Irwin, (Washington, DC: Ex-Pro Press, 1989), 322 pages, US\$14.95. Distributed by The Talman Company, 150 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011, USA.

Have you ever felt like getting together with a group of friends and getting stuck into some challenging readings about peace and war, strategies and all that sort of thing? If so, this is an ideal book for you. It is a manual for developing a study programme, with a strong orientation toward activists.

Irwin has long experience with nonviolent action, for example having worked in Philadelphia with Movement for a New Society on nonviolent action training for seven years. He has also written extensively on peace issues, especially nonviolence.

The book is best used as a manual for designing study programmes. It includes thirteen chapters each with a carefully chosen set of readings, on topics such as arms control, envisaging and designing a future of peace, and considering strategies. In each chapter, Irwin introduces the topic and the readings. His voluminous footnotes provide intriguing sidelights and references for those who want to follow up particular issues.

If you want to set up a study group, Irwin provides detailed instructions. You need his book, plus copies of the readings, for every member of the group. Also here is all the additional guidance you might desire, such as the principles of macroanalysis seminars (an egalitarian approach to studying) and where to order the readings. There is a long section on 'information resources', including recommended periodicals and a valuable annotated bibliography. In fact, there is so much space devoted to notes, group study resources and so forth that the thir-



teen core chapters take up less than half the length of the book.

In terms of content, the title is a good guide: building a peace system. There is analysis of the war system, but the main focus is on various alternatives and ways to bring them about. The focus is broad, including areas such as male domination, environment and psychology.

Although the emphasis is on learning in voluntarily organised groups, the material can readily be used by an individual or even (with complications for group dynamics) university courses.

The book has a very nice feel about it. It is clearly and attractively laid out, and filled with numerous accessible ideas for beginners and experienced peace researchers alike.

One limitation is a predominance of materials by US authors. Actually, Irwin cites considerably more non-US material than ever mentioned by most US writers, but Australians may prefer to substitute local readings - from *Social Alternatives* or *Nonviolence Today*, among others - for some of the US readings.

Building a peace system is not a short term affair. In the long struggle, developing and improving understanding tied to activism is essential. Irwin's book provides an excellent way to proceed with this task - except that he makes it seem more an adventure than a task.

Brian Martin
NVT