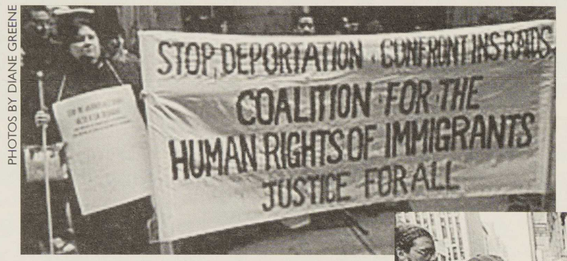
How Fiscal Sponsorship Helps Activist Groups

One of the A.J. Muste Memorial Institute's important and expanding programs is providing fiscal sponsorship to organizations working for peace and social change. What does it mean for a group to be sponsored by the Muste Institute? It means that we make a contract with a group to assist in its fundraising and financial management, and that we agree to accept contributions from individuals, foundations, trusts and estates for those groups. The projects we sponsor must fall under the Muste Institute's general purpose to promote education about and the use of nonviolence to effect social change. Donors who wish to make tax deductible contributions to these sponsored groups can do so by making their gifts through the Institute.

Why would a group or project become sponsored? In most cases, the organization is small or the project is for a limited time. It just doesn't make sense to use financial or time resources in pursuit of a charitable status. This is the reason why the **Nicaragua Solidarity Network** and **International Nonviolent Initiatives** are sponsored groups. In other instances, the group's larger purpose may not qualify for this status, but part of its work may. This the case with the **War Resisters League**. Because part of WRL's program involves organizing civil disobedience actions and promoting tax resistance as a means of protest, it is not eligible for charitable exempt status. But its educational work is permitted under Internal Revenue Service (IRS) rules and conforms to the Muste Institute's charter, so we sponsor that aspect of WRL's efforts. Organizations that operate outside the United States, like **War Resisters International** and **International Peace Bureau**, maintain sponsored status because they raise some money here, but not enough to sustain the expense of creating a US-based charitable division. The Institute charges a small fee (usually five percent) for sponsorship service.

Donors who wish to support these groups, and receive a charitable deduction, can do so through our sponsorship. We hope it encourages people to make larger contributions, as well as allowing them to make gifts other than cash, like appreciated stocks or property. This way donors can avoid capital gains taxes or receive a greater deduction than if they sold the items and donated the proceeds.

A bequest to the Muste Memorial Institute for a sponsored group (or for the Institute's own programs) can help reduce the taxable basis of an estate. A long-time supporter who died some years ago left a sizable bequest to the War Resisters League. However, because he and his attorneys were not aware of how to utilize WRL's status as a sponsored group, taxes took out a big bite out of his estate and the League ended up with $450,000 instead of what would have been over $700,000! We hope that by informing people about the uses of our fiscal sponsorship, we can avoid this situation in the future.



PHOTOS BY DIANE GREENE

November 13, 1997: Members of the Coalition for the Human Rights of Immigrants take part in an informational picket at the site of a November 6 immigration raid in Manhattan's garment district, to call for the release of seven detained workers and to demand respect for immigrant rights.

In addition to the groups already mentioned, the Muste Institute has recently expanded its sponsorship program to new groups and projects including:

- **Coalition for the Human Rights of Immigrants:** This new alliance of labor, solidarity and immigrant rights groups in New York City seeks to build public support against immigration raids and deportations, and to educate immigrant workers about their rights [see photos]. The Coalition is not planning to seek its own charitable status, so it expects to be an ongoing sponsored project of the Institute.
- **Paper Tiger Television:** This tenant group in our building lost its previous fiscal sponsor literally overnight in December 1997 when the sponsoring organization closed up shop. Paper Tiger has been producing alternative news programs and promoting media democracy for over ten years. They will now be seeking their own charitable status. Our sponsorship will allow them to continue to seek foundation grants and large contributions for the next year until they receive their 501(c)(3) ruling from the IRS.
- **Service for Peace and Justice (SERPAJ):** Our sponsorship of a special large one-time grant from an anonymous donor will provide crucial funding to this Latin American network of grassroots peace groups. The sponsored funds go to the SERPAJ Latin American coordinating center in Ecuador and local SERPAJ groups in Mexico and Costa Rica for their work promoting active nonviolence for social justice.
- Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific for the **Turaga Economic Self-Reliance and Sustainable Development Project**: This program received a one-time grant for educational work on issues of peace and economic justice in the indigenous communities of the South Pacific island nation of Vanuatu.

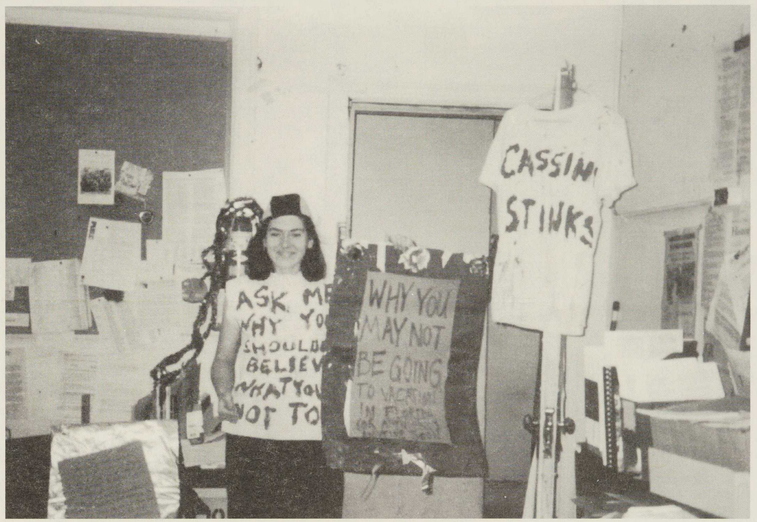
To support one of our ongoing sponsored projects with a tax-deductible contribution, make your check payable to the A.J. Muste Memorial Institute but mail it directly to the group you want to support. To ensure that your donation is properly handled, it's best to include a note; please also indicate the project you want to fund on the memo line of your check. We cannot accept miscellaneous contributions for special one-time sponsored projects like SERPAJ or the Turaga Project unless an arrangement is made in advance. In the case of large gifts, or donations of stocks, property or bequests, please contact the Muste Memorial Institute's Executive Director Murray Rosenblith for details at 212-533-4335.

Grantee Profile:
Women Insist: No Nukes in Space!

In October 1997, the Muste Institute granted $1,225 to the New York Metro branch of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) for the Women Insist on Nuclear Disarmament campaign.

"Why you may not be going to Florida anytime soon!" was written on a tinsel-covered slogan board that WILPF-NY Metro volunteer Jennifer Wells used to draw people's attention to literature warning of the dangers of the Cassini Space Probe. Wells and Sally Brown were tabling outside New York University, asking people to add to the 5,000 signatures on a WILPF-NY Metro petition requesting Congressional hearings on the Cassini mission and 12 future plutonium carrying space missions.

Cassini was launched on October 16th from Cape Canaveral even with a one in twenty chance that the Titan IV launch rocket might explode, spewing 72.3 tons of deadly plutonium-238 into the atmosphere. WILPF-NY Metro is now part of a growing movement of activists and scientists who state that the Cassini should be diverted from its planned fly-by maneuver, scheduled for 1999, during which it is to pass only 312 miles from earth. If Cassini reenters the Earth's atmosphere during this maneuver, even NASA itself has stated that there could be as many as 30-40 million fatalities. As WILPF-NY Metro states in its latest fact sheet, "Luck is not on our side," considering that nine out of 63 known plutonium-powered space missions have met with accidents.



WILPF volunteer Jennifer Wells shows off the signs and t-shirts that she used to get people's attention while tabling at NY University against the Cassini nuclear space mission.

As WILPF-NY Metro coordinator Tina Bell told listeners on *WBAI-Pacifica Radio* on August 6—the 52nd anniversary of the US atomic bombing of Hiroshima—"What is a great concern is that the military and weapons corporations are viewing space as a new market that they can profit from." Bell urged WBAI's listeners to "call the President to cancel Cassini on Hiroshima Day" and to attend a rally against Cassini censorship happening outside the *NY Times* building.

This work is all part of WILPF's Women Insist on Nuclear Disarmament (WIND) project. As part of this project WILPF-NY Metro is organizing talks in colleges on disarmament issues. As Bell points out, "Part of college education should be teaching how the US nuclear posture impacts on everyone's lives, including having less money for education and unknowingly taking in low-level radiation daily from nuclear reactors." WILPF-NY Metro is continuing its commitment to community education by undertaking this program to make people more aware of the deadly effects of the US nuclear policy, and to INSIST on nuclear disarmament.

The A.J. Muste Memorial Institute makes small grants to groups doing nonviolent organizing for social change. If you know of such a group, please encourage them to apply to us for funding. Write the A.J. Muste Memorial Institute, 339 Lafayette St., New York, NY 10012 or call us at (212) 533-4335 to receive a copy of our grant guidelines and our latest roster of grants. Our next deadline for proposals will be May 11, 1998. Our guidelines and grant rosters are also available on our web site, located at http://www.nonviolence.org/ajmuste

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