

A CHALLENGING CHOICE

Several weeks ago, I received a letter from a member of the United States Pacifist Party which posed one of the most difficult questions for people associated with the Party. The letter read, in part:

"I think we both agree that having Mr. Reagan as an ex-President in 1985 is a desirable goal. To the extent that there is a political "reality", it would seem to make sense for me and people like me to vote for Mr. Mondale...Then there are the Sonia Johnsons, Jesse Jacksons, etc., etc., all of whom have as much chance of getting elected as Brad Lyttle. Any statements or suggestions of clarification as to how you think I should mark my ballot in November would be sincerely appreciated."

I prefer not to tell anyone how he or she should vote in November (or whether or not they should vote at all), but it does seem to me possible to explain what voting for different candidates and policies means. Most Americans, certainly most people associated with the USPP, seem to believe that preventing catastrophic nuclear war is the most important task of every political party. An understanding of the cause of war therefore is crucial to choosing which party and candidates to support.

War is a conflict between military institutions. Societies create military institutions for one of two purposes, to aggress against others, or to defend themselves against aggression. Once created, armed forces can be used for aggression, even though their main reason for being created may have been defensive. Therefore, military institutions always tend to generate opposing armed forces in other societies. Everyone tends to be suspicious of the armaments of his or her neighbors, and almost no one wants to risk being physically defenseless against attack.

Once opposing military forces exist, they tend to become technologically competitive. It's obvious that the side with weapons superiority has the best chance of winning any war that may break out, and most people believe that if you are "stronger" than your "enemy" there is less chance that you'll be attacked. This is

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BARBARA DEMING (1917-1984)

Barbara Deming, writer and activist in the peace movement since 1960, and prominent figure in the feminist movement since 1974, died of cancer at her home in Sugar Loaf Key, Florida, on August 2nd. Born in New York City, Barbara was the daughter of Harold S. Deming, a lawyer, and Katherine Burritt Deming, a singer. She received a B.A. from Bennington College in 1938, and an M.A. from Western Reserve University in 1941. She was Co-director of the Bennington Stock Theater the summer of 1938 and 1939, a teaching fellow at the Bennington School of the Arts the summers of 1940 and 1941, and film analyst for the Library of Congress film project, 1942-44. Books by her include: Prison Notes, 1966; Running Away from Myself: A Dream Portrait of America Drawn from the Films of the 40's, 1969; Revolution and Equilibrium, 1971; Wash Us and Comb Us (stories), 1972; and We Cannot Live Without Our Lives, 1974. Poems, stories, and essays by her were published in the New Yorker, Partisan Review, Paris Review, the Nation, and the Hudson Review. She was an editor of Liberation Magazine, 1962-69, and in 1967 received the War Resisters League's peace award.

I knew Barbara well, mainly through her work in the peace movement. My earliest memory of her was her participation in a meeting in a rented storefront in New London Connecticut, the summer of 1960. The meeting, which may have been Barbara's first engagement in humanitarian movements, was part of the project Polaris Action, which inaugurated the demonstrations against Polaris missile launching submarines. Barbara said that she lived in Wellfleet, Cape Cod, had heard about the protests against Polaris submarines, and was curious about them. After Polaris Action, she immersed herself more and more deeply in the struggles for peace and civil rights, and, finally, women's liberation, participating in projects, speaking, and writing.

Also, I remember Barbara's many visits to Polaris Action Farm, the Connecticut headquarters of the Committee for Nonviolent Action; her participation in the San Francisco to Moscow Walk for Peace; her great contributions to the Quebec to Miami

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