The Peace Pentagon: a Hub of Activism in New York

It's been a while since we last published an update on the comings and goings in the Peace Pentagon, our three-story building in downtown Manhattan. Since then, some things have changed and some have stayed the same, but more than ever the building is bustling with activity.

We're very pleased to welcome Salvador Suazo as the Muste Institute's new building superintendent. Salvador has already begun making improvements to the building's condition and appearance. We look forward to working with him for many years.

The building's largest and most active office, **War Resisters League**, has had a frenzied few weeks. Staffers Chris Nye and Malkia M'Buzi Moore have been especially busy: Chris just wrapped up organizing around Day Without the Pentagon (October 24), a day to draw attention to the social costs of military spending; and Malkia is in the midst of coordinating International YouthPeace Week (November 28 to December 6), a week of education and action around issues of youth and militarism (see box).

All that hard work pays off. Thanks to WRL's national organizing, "Day Without the Pentagon" actions ranging from leafleting to guerrilla theater to vigils, marches and civil disobedience took place in at least 53 cities in 22 states. As we go to press, International YouthPeace Week is also shaping up to be a great success, thanks to the intensive efforts of Malkia and volunteer Patricia Ríos, an attorney from Argentina who is coordinating international work for YouthPeace. (Patricia has translated International YouthPeace Week materials into Spanish, and is also helping the Muste Institute with some translations.)

This semester's Freeman intern, Timothy Forman, has his hands full with work on YouthPeace and a myriad of other WRL projects. City as School intern Justin Denmark has also been a big help around the office, and Sera Bilezikian, who interned at WRL last semester, still comes in on Fridays to help with YouthPeace. Sera also helped out with leafleting on Day Without the Pentagon in New York (see photo).

The **Libertarian Book Club** has been busy, sponsoring a series of forums on various topics relating to anarchism, including a slide-show and presentation on the Haymarket martyrs in mid-November. LBC also sponsored a very successful "Anarchist Cabaret" at nearby ABC No Rio cultural center to honor the Haymarket martyrs, raise money for the forums (and for their rent!) and breathe new life into their organization.

PHOTO BY ED HEDEMANN

Oct. 24, 1997: Sera Bilezikian takes part in the New York action for WRL's Day Without the Pentagon at the Armed Forces recruiting station in Times Square. Activists handed out thousands of $100 bill leaflets, explaining what kind of social benefits could be paid for with the money spent in one day by the Pentagon.

The New York metro office of **Women's International League for Peace and Freedom** (WILPF) has hired a part-time staffperson and is stepping up its activities. The staffperson, Tina Bell, has already succeeded in getting some funding for the group's educational work—including a grant from the Muste Institute (see "New Grants," page 4). WILPF will soon complete a report for the UN on the Cassini probe and other plutonium-powered space missions; the report will also be available to the public. WILPF-NY is working with Abolition 2000 on a series of presentations at colleges about the deadly space missions, and is participating in WRL's Stop War Toys campaign. Other plans include a Dec. 13 public meeting to take an international look at so-called "welfare reforms" and how they affect women.

Through its Internet service to activists, **NY Transfer News Service** provides subscription newsfeeds dealing with such areas as the environment, feminism, justice, race and class and sexual politics, as well as regional interests. In addition, NY Transfer brings US activists in touch with news direct from Cuba, through a web site and Internet link for Radio Havana Cuba and Prensa Latina, Cuba's wire service.

REPOHistory has some sad news to report: the death of treasurer and longtime arts activist Ed Eisenberg on August 31 of this year. He will be missed. REPOHistory's members ran a memorial notice for him in the *Village Voice* in late October. Despite this loss, the REPOHistory artists collective is moving forward with its work. An upcoming installation called "Civil Disturbances: Battles for Justice in New York City" will highlight significant legal struggles that have shaped the physical, social and political order of everyday life in New York, through a series of 24 text and image street signs to be placed around courthouses in lower Manhattan.

PHOTO BY NEW YORK FREE MEDIA ALLIANCE

Oct. 16, 1997: Demonstrators "Tour the Terrible Mogul World" in a protest march through midtown Manhattan, stopping for speakouts at six different corporate media monopoly headquarters along the way. Several hundred people took part in the march, which was sponsored by the New York Free Media Alliance, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) and Paper Tiger TV.

Episcopal Churchpeople for a Free Southern Africa (ECSA) continues its work getting information out and building links between people in the US and southern Africa. Director Bill Johnston puts in more time here at the Peace Pentagon than just about anyone else: he's here seven days a week, including holidays, from early in the morning until well into the evening—clipping newspapers, compiling information, sending faxes, making phone calls and filing articles.

The **Nicaragua Solidarity Network of Greater New York** is expanding distribution of its popular *Weekly News Update on the Americas*, and is working locally to build coalitions around sweatshop and immigration issues with such groups as CISPES (Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador), Latino Workers Center (a former Muste Institute grantee) and the UNITE Garment Workers Justice Center. Through the Campaign for Real Equitable Economic Development (CREED), another coalition effort, the Network also produces a weekly local calendar of activist events.

Paper Tiger Television and Deep Dish TV both did some extensive cleanup and reorganization of their offices, just in time for October's hectic activities around the Media and Democracy Conference. While the conference itself was organized by the Institute for Alternative Journalism, activist groups—including Paper Tiger and Deep Dish—worked hard to bring issues of media ownership and media activism into the debate, most notably with an Oct. 16 march through midtown to "Disarm the Moguls and their Weapons of Mass Distraction" (see photo). For nearly a week our building was swarming with media activists from New York and beyond, running around with video cameras, planning activities and painting signs and banners in the hallway.

The 12-hour Deep Dish video series "Bars and Stripes: Doing Time Inside the Prison Complex" was shown recently at the Virginia Film Festival. At this year's Margaret Mead Film & Video Festival in New York City, a segment on grassroots media included showings of the Gulf Crisis TV Project—produced in 1991 by members of Paper Tiger and Deep Dish TV—and "Low-Power Empowerment," a Paper Tiger video on neighborhood radio; the segment also featured presentations by the Paper Tiger and Deep Dish collectives.

The Muste office itself is used regularly for the meetings of the East Timor Action Network (ETAN), the Atlantic Anarchist Circle and a number of other groups. Our office was also recently used for a meeting with visiting peace activists from Japan, organized by Muste Institute board member and longtime WRL staffer David McReynolds. A.J. the cat was there as usual to charm the Japanese visitors; he is doing fine, as plump and furry as ever. He's getting on in years but hasn't yet retired from his job as rodent control officer—just last week he caught a mouse, and we forgive him for not dispatching of it nonviolently. After all, he's a cat.

Every day interesting and inspiring people come through this building to visit, meet and work. The best thing about the Peace Pentagon is seeing the way that activists here communicate and support each other's projects. We're proud to have our building serve as an incubator and instigator for active nonviolent resistance.

1998 Nobel Peace Prize for Gandhi?

The International Peace Bureau (IPB) and its individual council members are among those who are entitled to propose candidates for the Nobel Peace Prize. The time limit for proposals for the 1998 prize is Jan. 30, 1998—exactly 50 years after Gandhi was murdered.

Gandhi himself will never receive the Nobel Peace Prize, because the prize cannot be awarded after death. But IPB is asking activists to consider whether they know of a person or organization who in 1997 has been working in the Gandhi tradition, or has done something important or spectacular that can be seen as inspired by or symbolizing the Gandhi legacy to the world, to recommend for a Nobel Peace Prize nomination.

Proposals—with relevant documentation, details and arguments—should be sent preferably by December 20 to the IPB secretariat in Oslo: Fredrik S. Heffermehl, IPB-Oslo, N. Juels g. 28 A, N-0272 Oslo, Norway; fax +47-2244-7616; email <fredpax@online.no>. The Muste Institute is a member of IPB, and serves as its fiscal sponsor in the US.

INTERNATIONAL YOUTHPEACE WEEK

NOVEMBER 28 – DECEMBER 6, 1997

Celebrate the resilient spirit of youth during a week of education and action.

For information please contact:
YOUTHPEACE/WAR RESISTERS LEAGUE
339 Lafayette Street, New York, NY 10012
Phone: (212) 228-0450 Fax: (212) 228-6193
Email: wrl@igc.apc.org 1-800-WRL-YOUTH (1-800-975-9688)

MAKE PEACE AND JUSTICE A GLOBAL YOUTH PRIORITY.