



Bunker debunked by women at Debert

by Ken Burke

Outside the several-foot-thick walls of the bunker at CFB base Camp Debert, outside the entrance gate with several sentries looking stolidly on, the women are beginning to chant again.

*"We are the old women
We are the new women
We are the same women
Stronger than before."*

From literally all over the Maritimes, on Wednesday, Feb. 29, about 80 women and some men serving as support travelled to the village of Debert, Nova Scotia, where a bunker lies in wait for a nuclear war. In the event of a war, or threat of

"War is menstrual envy"—a sign at the protest.

war, it will house the "Regional Emergency Government Headquarters" under the Federal Continuity of Government Plan. And on this particular wet, cloudy Wednesday, the Federal government has called a rehearsal for nuclear war.

The women were there, as their buttons, signs, and shouts said, to "Debunk Debert". From university students to several grandmothers, women of all sorts were there.

"They're far removed from reality at the

bunker," says Bonnie, a participant in one of the peace actions. "We wanted to bring closer to home the reality and horror of what nuclear war was."

The rehearsal on Feb. 29, the first since 1966, was intended as a dry run for the media representatives who are on the list of pre-scheduled bunker-dwellers. There are 329 people the bunker is meant to safely house, including representatives from the government and 150 members of the military. Of the 329 selected for "survival", only 11 are women.

For the women gathered at Camp Debert from 9 am to four in the afternoon, there were many different ways to protest the nuclear war preparations.

Before noon, seven women limped to the main gate, their clothes in tatters, hands and faces covered with bloody radiation burns. In their arms were bodies of other nuclear war victims—children with outstretched arms, a man still kneeling as if from the eruption of Pompeii, and other women. Blood ran from some of the bodies' eyes—others had no head. The ghastly figures wept and wailed as they lay the bodies at the entrance to the gate, and the other women joined in the mourning and wailing for nearly ten minutes before the victims walked back from the base, leaving the dead behind.

While the bodies were made of plaster

and stuffed clothes, and the burns from food colouring and burnt cereal, the mourning was genuine, says participant Bonnie Bobryk. "We didn't have to force anything or greatly act because we felt that emotion and grief," she says.

"In a real nuclear war, there'd be people out there dead or wounded. What we represented is not nearly as hideous as the reality would be," says Bonnie.

*"The safer you feel in there,
the more frightened I am out here"—a sign at the protest*

On every hour, the women gathered to "create" a tree of life in a communal ceremony. As a woman would say something, a ribbon was tied to a dead branch. There were four branches—one to mourn, one for rage, one to defy, and a final branch to reclaim.

"We mourn indifference," said one; "We

mourn the money spent on bombs," declared another. "We mourn that people would go here and pretend they'd leave their families alone," an older woman said, her voice cracking with emotion.

They stomp their feet and hoot as their rage is cast out at the Base's entrance.

"I rage for the fact that if you prepare for war you're a patriot."

"I rage because war is employment."

"I rage for all the children we're afraid to give birth to."

Near the end of the day, back at the Debert Fire Hall, three of the men sit and take out violin, tin whistle, and hand drum. In a half an hour, their music will be quick and happy, and the hall will be filled with women laughing, talking, hugging, and dancing with joyous abandon. But for now, the tune the men play is a slow, lingering ballad, as they wait for the women to return from a day spent fighting for peace.

Alumni association enters eighties

by Susan Fullerton

Advocates of advancement based solely on merit, take heart.

After two years of vacillating, the Dalhousie Alumni Association has started the process of changing an outdated bylaw which states that of the three representatives elected to the Board of Governors each year, two must be male, one female. Originally supposed to provide guaranteed female representation, the bylaw was, in practice, self defeating. As the percentage of women increased to its present level, over 45 percent, the bylaw took on a negative connotation.

With an approximately equal male/female

ratio, it seems unfair that the representation on the Board consists of twice as many men as women, says Susan McIntyre, Dalhousie Student Union V.P.

Last year, McIntyre, then women's committee chair, brought the bylaw to the attention of student council who passed a motion asking the Alumni Association to drop any distinction on grounds of gender.

This, along with other bylaws, is in the process of being rewritten, says Alumni Director Heather Sutherland. These bylaws, presented to their board for the second time this week, will be voted on by Alumni members in May, 1985.