

# Imagine a world without weapons

## Peace crusade

continued

tries to come to grips with the meaning of extinction, and comes up against an insolvable dilemma. One cannot describe the end of humanity as good, bad, unjust, ugly or wrong, as all of these qualities derive from the human observer in the first place.

*The Fate of the Earth* culminates in a near-religious call for reckoning. Accepting that an 'end' is at all possible, and according to Schell that possibility exists, robs humanity of its purpose which is to progress for the benefit of future generations.

Working to abolish the nuclear shroud that threatens to drop will restore creativity, spirit and hence life back to humanity.

Schell ends with a stirring call to action, "Two paths lie before us. One leads to truth, the other to death...."

As Schell's themes were repeated at the numerous activities organized the week preceding the New York rally, a common thread emerged.

For example, a statement put out by a group of architects and city planners was read at one academic conference. It said, "The problem with living and working as an architect in the world now, is that buildings are held up by the tenacious belief in the future." In other words, without the security of a future, it would seem pointless to design a building to last a hundred years. Struggling with this dilemma, they proceeded to found Architects Against Nuclear War.

Similarly, a biology teacher was surprised when his junior high class wanted to talk about nuclear war after he introduced a discussion on how radiation affects reproduction. "Nuclear war didn't seem to be an appropriate topic to take up in class time," he explained to a seminar. But he changed his mind, rationalizing that there was little worth in understanding genetics in a world that had ceased to reproduce.

And so, the architect and the school teacher became the latest recruits in the peace movement.

The common thread, underlined so dramatically in *The Fate of the Earth*, is that - in this issue - everyone is touched.

## June 12, New York City

The rallying of close to a million peace marchers in New York last June, the biggest demonstration in that city's history, was the work of perhaps the largest grass-roots coalition ever seen in the U.S.

June 12 will be remembered as an important day for the global peace movement. It upstaged the United Nations second Special Session on Disarmament, the event around which the march was planned. But being there was something else.

The New York subway system looked more like Cat Stevens' Peace Train. The usually empty Saturday trains were longer and filled to the brim with smiling people in running shoes carrying placards. It seemed like hours waiting for the march to begin, feeling like a needle in a hay stack. So it was important to keep in touch with developments on the live radio coverage.

"They're going into the overflow plan!" the radio announced. "Now back to John Fraser, who's keeping an eye on things from the WBHC helicopter. John?"

"It's just incredible, Sue. The police are expecting 600,000 people. 47 to 52nd Street are full and more people are still coming!"

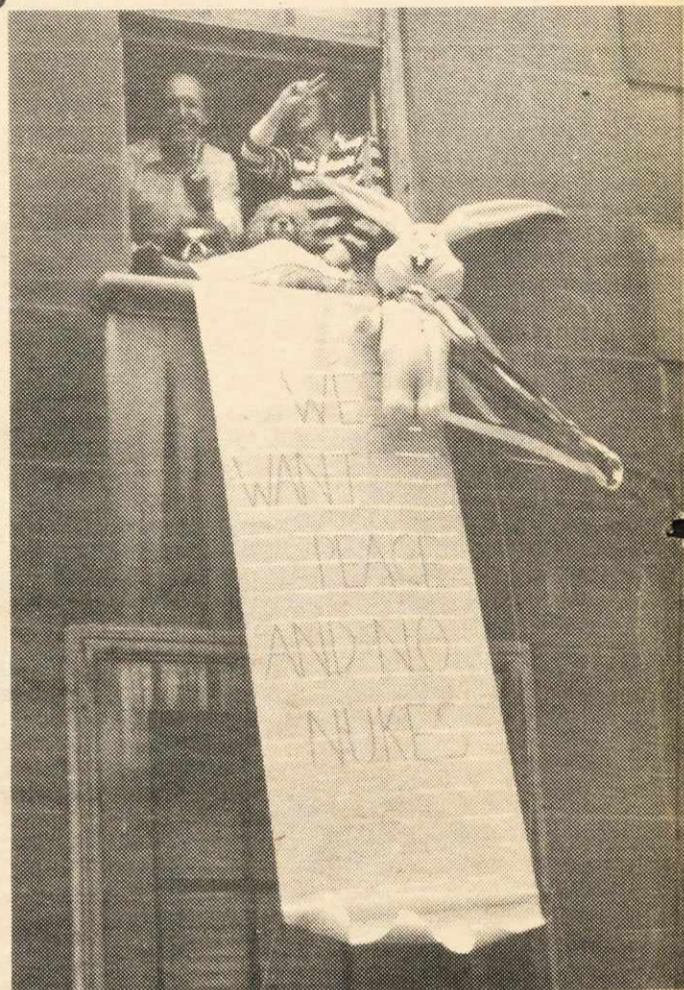
"Taking it to the streets!" sang a theatre group as they walked, jazzing it up with a brass band while bystanders cheered and boogeyed.

And if anyone thought the march was communist-inspired, they'd be happy to know free enterprise was alive and well and cashing in on junk food and T-shirts.

Armed with a map, marchers could choose from start-up positions A to Z, depending on their identification with a particular country, with labour, feminists, lesbians, performing artists, lawyers, environmentalists, computer technicians and others, or simply categorize themselves as Unaffiliated Concerned People.

One man's wheelchair was covered in buttons. Everyone was there to take pictures and have their picture taken, for this was a costume party and a celebration.

Finally, the marchers streamed into the Grand Lawn in Central Park, until they stood pressed together, stretching up on tip toes to watch the stage. Orators and singers gave their message, and from where I stood I could just make out small dots moving behind the microphone.



McDonald

From Joan Baez to Linda Ronstadt; Bob Dylan to Gary U.S. Bonds, they played music for peace workers of today and yesterday.

There were people of all ages, punks for peace, babes and senior citizens.

As Linda Ronstadt explained to reporters afterwards, "The sixties was a lifestyle thing. This is a life thing."

## Freezing the arms race

The North American peace movement has been criticized for being too middle class and too white to be a legitimate 'people's' movement. But what is remarkable is the degree of consensus it has achieved in a left-right political sense. This consensus in the United States is focussed on the nuclear 'freeze' campaign.

The 'freeze' is a buzz-word for a proposed arms-control agreement between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. Specifically, it calls for a 'bilateral and verifiable ban on the testing, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons'.

The freeze is an American issue, as it concerns itself solely with an agreement between the two superpowers. And it is popular in that it is not a unilateral proposal; any freezing of arms must by definition include the Soviet Union.

The New York Times reported last June that 385 towns in New England, 125 city councils, 30 county councils and nine state legislatures had passed resolutions endorsing the freeze. And a freeze resolution will be on the ballot (a non-binding referendum) in about a dozen states in this fall's congressional elections.

At this year's graduation ceremonies at Harvard University, a half of the 1500 students receiving undergraduate degrees wore white armbands, symbolizing support for the freeze.

The freeze has made the very difficult link in finding a proposal that has both legitimacy in professional arms control circles, and is easily understood by ordinary people. In fact, since it was drafted in 1979, its popularity has surprised its originators. It was designed by a young radical arms-control specialist, Randall Forsberg, at the request of the Quakers.

Its growth in popularity has, until recently, been at the local level, with towns and cities breaking precedents in taking positions on national security policy.

Inevitably, the freeze has become a national issue in the U.S. On June 9 the Senate Foreign Relations Committee rejected a freeze-type proposal. Then on June 23, the House of Representatives' Foreign Affairs Com-

mittee passed a version of the freeze. Reversing its decision of a year ago, amid hoopla the Democratic Party grabbed the freeze as an issue to get votes in the fall elections.

Aside from being a political issue, respected strategic thinkers have endorsed the freeze, and it has become a subject for debate in more professional circles.

Verification is one issue. The freeze calls for a "mutual and verifiable" ban on arms development. There can never be an agreement without verification, with each side satisfying itself that the other is in compliance, but both superpowers have hedged on allowing on-site inspection of their facilities.

The freeze may be able to bypass this difficulty, supporters say. A ban on testing can be verified without on-site inspection, by using satellite and seismic information, according to Herbert Scoville, a former Central Intelligence Agency official. And without testing, obviously, new arms developments have little use.

There is a question of freezing current inequalities between the nuclear arsenals. Critics point to a Soviet lead in land-based nuclear missiles. However, others claim there exists a rough equality, with the arsenals differing in ways both qualitative and quantitative.

More conservative critics reject any ban on testing outright. This takes away the credibility of weapons, they say, and hence the validity of deterrence.

On the left, critics see the danger of a freeze not going far enough, in freezing weapons development without reducing the already perilously large stockpiles.

One obvious effect of the freeze's popularity is the efforts of U.S. President Ronald Reagan to change his image from that of a hawk to a bonafide peacenik himself.

During the late spring and early summer, Reagan put forward or supported no less than three proposals for arms talks, the first such proposals since he was elected two years ago. All three were perfunctorily discarded by the Soviet Union as highly favouring the United States.

On May 9, Reagan called for deep cuts in the ground-based missiles of both sides, cuts of one third, or even up to a half.

Then, on June 10, in a meeting timed to take attention away from the concurrent UN Special Session on Disarmament, NATO announced it would seek broad negotiations with the Soviet Union to reduce both conventional and nuclear arms. And shortly thereafter, Reagan told the Russians he could agree to ban all medium-range nuclear missiles from European and Soviet soil.

The Soviet Union has its own proposals. It announced in March it would unilaterally stop the deployment of medium range missiles west of the Ural mountains and even dismantle some at a future date. Its more significant statement, at the UN Special Session, was to say that the USSR would never be the first to use nuclear weapons. The United States dismissed this as an "old-hat" propaganda ploy.

And so the rhetoric continues, promoting cynicism and a more urgent call for a freeze.

Veteran peace activists are skeptical about the freeze. The War Resisters League, a radical American peace group, sees danger in a simple idea that fails to educate people of the complexities of an arms industry that has outfoxed arms control agreements in the past. Also, the freeze isolates nuclear weapons as a bad thing, without making the connections to the politics of American imperialism of which arms are merely an extension, says this group.

The War Resisters League warns that a proposal including the word "freeze" would take the momentum out of the current movement, while leaving enough loopholes to compromise its intentions.

But the success of the freeze has tempered criticism. In the final analysis, it has been a long time since the peace movement has had both such legitimacy and broad appeal, with such a powerful focus.



Photos by BENichols