



Voice of Women speaks out

by Kirsten Nichols
and Kristin Roberts

Since the late 1800s Canadian women have been active in organizing groups to unify their quest for peace and equality. In the 1890s, the Women's Christian Temperance Union organized educational and religious activities to promote peace. By 1914, the International Woman Suffrage Association had grown into a well-organized group with 11 million members. They, along with other women's groups, were rapidly

growing in size and influence with optimism for the future.

With the beginning of the first World War, peace efforts stalemated and it was not until after the Armistice was signed that the peace movement was revived. In the years following the Armistice, women's groups were actively lobbying to ban military training and militaristic text books from school curriculums. The women continued to educate the public on peace and equality issues. But as with the first World War, the second world war signaled a lull in peace-oriented

activities.

After the second world war and the explosive entrance into the nuclear age, the peace movement was slow to pick up because many people believed they had seen the last war (due to the threat of new atomic weapons). The first women's antinuclear group in Canada was The Mothers Committee on Radiation Hazards, founded in Vancouver in 1958. They were concerned about the effect of radioactive atomic testing/fallout in children's milk. They expressed this concern by lobbying the government for controls and conducting their own research.

Two years later, in 1960, the Voice of Women was established by a group of women who were angry and frightened by the collapse of a summit conference between the United States and the Soviet Union. At the same time nuclear fallout was found to be contaminating food and it seemed the world was on the brink of nuclear war.

Since its beginnings, the Voice of Women has continued on the road towards peace with actions ranging from objection to Vietnam war (especially the use of chemical weapons against the civilians) to networking across the globe with exchanges between various women and peace groups.

Women from across the country came to Halifax for the annual meeting of Voice of Women on the weekend of October 14.

Peggy Hope Simson, a Voicer from the Wolfville area, has been actively

involved in various levels of the peace movement. She identified the three distinct stages in the peace movement. The first is the grassroots movement, which includes a wide range of organizations involving unions, churches, women, and a range of professional groups from Generals for Peace to Lawyers for Social Responsibility. The second stage includes peace researchers who add to a growing pile of knowledge called Peace Studies, which includes courses ranging from the study of alternate defence plans to the study of structural violence — racism, sexism, as well as violence against the environment. The third stage is organizing a political carrier, a political party which will bring about new government directions at the national level. Simpson thinks the New Democratic Party is the party to bring about new directions; this is why she ran as a New Democratic candidate in the last federal election.

For the last few years Simpson has become more involved in peace education, organizing data bases and networking with students and teachers. Recently profs have been calling her in as a resource person for certain courses at Acadia University. She was amazed to be called in as "a controversial resource person." "To think that trying to develop a world without war is extraordinary tells you something about how peace is looked at in this world," said Simpson.

According to Simpson, peace is "a value loaded subject" with various definitions depending on to whom you are talking. "You have to remember that war is a very organized activity with enormous funds at its disposal; peace is extremely underfunded, practically non-funded, and we are the people organizing peace."

Tools for Peace benefit at Pub

by Alison Auld

Last Tuesday night Pub Flamingo hosted three local bands, with the proceeds going to Tools for Peace, a local non-governmental organization which aids war victims in Nicaragua. Performing in the benefit were Trio Amnistad, Henry and the Hamburgers, and the Latin Laddies.

The first of these bands was Trio Amnistad, in the place of Arauco, who were unable to be there. The group was joined by the lead singer and fiddle player of Henry and the Hamburgers in performing traditional Latin American folk songs sung in Spanish.

and the Hamburgers, a local country jug band. The four-member group, comprised of two guitars, a kazoo, and a fiddle, played a variety of songs ranging from authentic jug band pieces to a humorous rendition of "Crimson and Clover". Concluding the benefit was The Latin Laddies, a six-piece blues and jazz band with a sound reminiscent of early Santana.

Although the benefit brought in only a small number of donations, Tools for Peace called it an overall success. A large percentage of the funds raised will be sent to the National Office in Vancouver and the remainder will be placed in an account here to cover group expendi-

Aid to a country does not have to be solely financial

Following Trio Amnistad, Dr. John Kirk, a professor of Spanish at Dalhousie and an active supporter of Tools for Peace, spoke about the war in Nicaragua. He explained the stagnant condition of the revolution, now in its tenth year since the Sandinistas' victory. Although the contras have killed thousands, he stated, there have been recent signs of peace in the region. Nicaraguans continue to support their government, regardless of the scarcity of basic necessities due to heavy expenditures on the war effort and the U.S. embargo. The Canadian government has proposed \$100 million in aid.

A video which gave coverage to some of the projects initiated by Tools for Peace was shown. It was a brief but well-documented report based on the testimonies of Canadians and Nicaraguans working in schools, medical facilities and on farms in Nicaragua. The video conveyed one of the most fundamental premises of Tools for Peace — that aiding a country does not have to be solely financial; that what is most beneficial is that which is scarce and in need.

The evening continued with Henry

tures and shipping costs. The material goods collected in Halifax are also sent to Vancouver, and from there they are transported to Nicaragua by way of boat, truck, or train. They usually arrive shortly after Christmas, but at times it is difficult to find means of transport and the waiting period can extend to several months. Tools for Peace must find boats that are not stopping in the U.S., since goods going to Nicaragua are embargoed.

Tools for Peace was started in 1981 by a group of trade unionists who, upon returning from Nicaragua, sent a shipment of fishing equipment to Nicaraguan peasants. As a "relief organization" the group receives no governmental aid. The group is sustained by private donations, benefits, door-to-door canvassing and lectures. The majority of the material aid is provided by different institutions, ranging from trade unions to schools and hospitals. It is collected throughout the year, with emphasis on the month of November, when the National Campaign is held.

Tools for Peace holds its monthly meeting on the third Tuesday of every month at the Dalhousie SUB.

