

War and injustice rooted in prejudice

Peace breaks out at Dal

by Scott Randall

with help from Michele Thibeau

Only the end of prejudice and acceptance of diversity among the people of earth will lead to world peace.

That was the message of a peace conference held by Metro Youth for Global Unity Sept. 15 to 17 in the McInnes Room of the Dalhousie SUB. Prejudice of any form was singled out and participants discussed how the attitudes of society could be changed especially among the youth of today, the leaders of tomorrow.

Equality of men and women was pointed out as one of the prerequisites for peace. Conference speakers referred to a metaphor from Baha'i teachings which says humanity is like a bird with two wings, one male and the other female. If the two wings are not equal, the bird cannot fly.

The elimination of prejudice and the celebration of the diversity of humanity was also pointed out as a prerequisite for peace. This was compared to the image of a garden with many types of flowers being more beautiful than a garden with one type of flower.

The conference was organized by Khosrow Farahbakhsh, Rachel Farahbakhsh, Leslie Hennen, Nemat Sobhani, Sharam Sobhani, Elizabeth Kilvert, and Nitra Samei, as well as many others who helped out. Although organizers were disappointed with the turnout, about 80 people participated, including members of the Baha'i community and high school students from the area.

The conference opened Friday night with a benefit concert for UNICEF with performances from Tony Law and Sadesa. Tony Law sang songs of peace and justice such as "Roots and Wings," "No Boundaries," and "White Man's Burden." He accompanied himself on guitar, banjo and accordion and was well received by the audience. He had voice problems during the performance caused by a hectic schedule during the previous week doing work for the natives of Labrador, but he managed well under the circumstances. Law is also involved in the "Our Planet in Every Classroom" project. Their goal is to put a picture of the Earth viewed from space in every classroom in Nova Scotia.

Sadesa is a group of young people from South Africa who sang and danced to traditional African songs and were also well received by the audience. They have performed in many of the high

schools in the area.

Fran MacLean of UNICEF then spoke of the things her organization is doing, including the oral hydration program that is saving many children from dying of thirst and has been called the medical breakthrough of the century. She discussed how a glo-

Smith quoted from Baha'i teachings which say humans are born noble and good-natured and it is natural for us to be peaceful. We are not born with a violent nature. This contradicts many people's view of humans as innately violent animals that have no hope of ever living with-

else and everyone has to be observant of prejudicial attitudes and stereotypes in the media and in society in general.

The discussion that followed focused on how people should not make generalizations about people from other cultures such as "all whites are liars." People were encouraged to look for human relationships and other things common to all other humans.

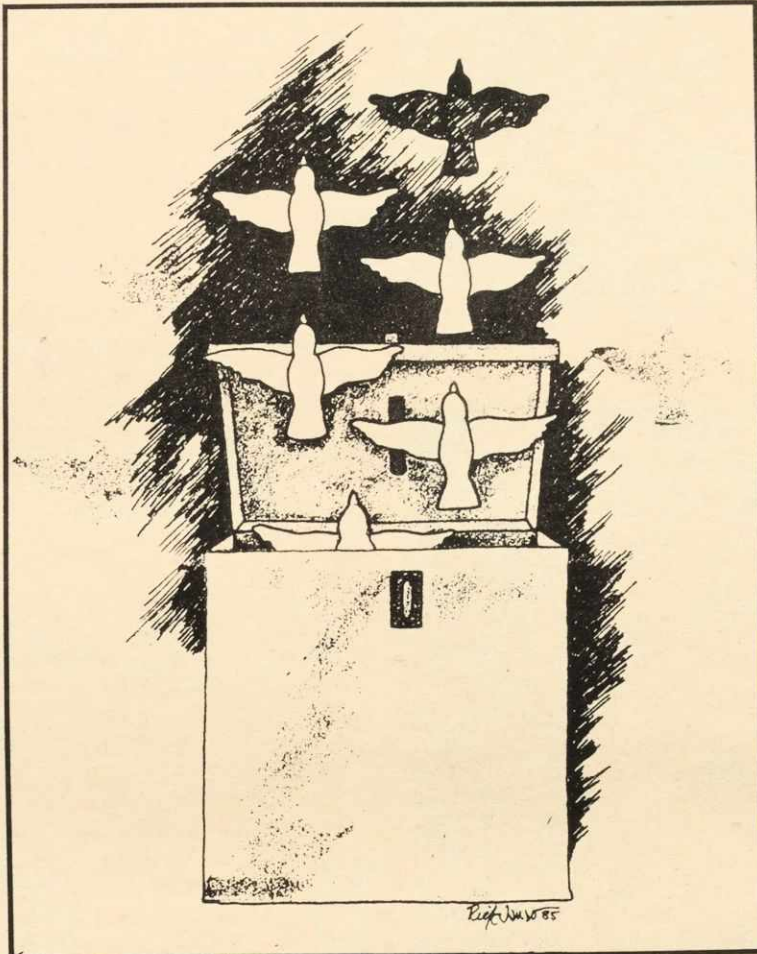
The conference continued Saturday night with films from the National Film Board of Canada "The Man who Planted Trees" was about a man who single-handedly planted a forest of trees in France, oblivious to the passage of two world wars. "Russian Diary" was a pre-Glasnost film detailing conditions in Soviet Russia and the Russians desire for peace.

The conference finished Sunday morning with another talk by David Smith. He said that many groups are working for peace by

seeking to ban the 'tools' of war such as nuclear weapons. Although their efforts are admirable, a lasting peace cannot come from the banning of weapons unless the root causes of war are eliminated. He emphasized that peace is possible and inevitable.

Smith used the European community as an example of peace. These countries were at war with one another 40 years ago but now are united. He added that young people should devote their careers and lives to building a peaceful society. In whatever career young people choose, they can build a society based on unity and cooperation instead of competition and this will lead to a world of peace.

The conference concluded with a discussion on what future action to take. The group decided to give talks in high schools and to distribute surveys encouraging discussion on peace. They also decided to find positive alternatives to war and war industries.



bal morality toward children is forming and the rights of the child are now being taken seriously.

Dr. David Smith, an ophthalmologist at the Sick Children's Hospital in Toronto, said people who believed in peace and work for it are often viewed as 'bubble heads.' He added that there were more and more bubble heads and, if there were more people who believed in peace, maybe it would become a reality. He mentioned how people once believed in a flat earth but were eventually proved wrong. Perhaps the idea that peace is impossible will be proved wrong as well.

The conference continued on Saturday. Participants discussed equality of men and women in the morning and prejudice between ethnic groups in the afternoon. David Smith began by saying that peace does not have to be a boring state of serenity and contentment but could be dynamic and exciting. There are no experts on peace, he added, because the earth has never really had peace, just pauses from war.

out violence.

Glenda Redden of the Nova Scotia Department of Education gave a talk on multicultural education Saturday afternoon. She said factors such as sex, religion, age, ethnic background, and geographic area can affect how one interacts with society and how a child learns in school. The education systems in Canada and the United States are based on middle class western European traditions. This can pose problems for children from other areas of the world or even from atypical backgrounds in our country. Despite the concept of a 'melting pot' where all new immigrants conform to traditional North American ways of living, there are many people that don't want to conform or who can't because they are members of a visible minority.

Redden says the solution lies in understanding the differences between groups in society and in using as many different teaching methods as possible to reach children in different ways. Redden added that racism takes place in Canada as much as anywhere

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