



**Peace! Peace!
But There is no Peace.**

BY Jackie Anderson

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This pamphlet was produced by National Black Draft Counselors. It is not a position paper, but does pose questions that N.B.D.C. folk think should be raised in the Black community.

Those who are committed to the creation of a new society based on more humane principles have both a political and moral responsibility to fight for peace. The Black community has the least to gain and the most to lose in any military involvement initiated by the United States. Capitalism needs war to expand and increase its domination; Black people need peace to build a strong and viable community able to withstand the current exploitation that is an integral part of this system, and ultimately to build a movement able to destroy it.

Wars are destructive in many ways to the health and welfare of a minority community. The most obvious negative affect is the removal of vital manpower. A people that already suffers from the ravages of racism cannot afford to lose any important resources. The absence of men disrupts the family and in most cases removes two people from the struggle, for the woman must then be both the mainstay and provider for the family. Many Black women are already fulfilling this dual responsibility; it is not to our advantage to increase their number.

The Vietnam war is releasing Black soldiers who recognize the incorrectness of their former roles. This recognition has made many of them willing to become an active part of the liberation struggle, but it has also made them impatient for immediate action. Time must be taken to develop in these brothers an awareness of the basic organizing and educating that must be done to defeat the existing system. This time may not always be available, and many veterans may decide not to use it for this learning process. An untimely move against America can mean the death and destruction of many and the loss of vital manpower.

The kind of training given by the military is not conducive to the development of any politics, correct or incorrect. A soldier is trained to kill on command, and indoctrinated with whatever the current drive is to justify these actions. Many Black soldiers who repudiate the propaganda and develop a disdain toward killing for America, do not repudiate the underlying assumptions of their military training, i.e., once an enemy is identified he must be destroyed. A person who sees killing as a solution to problems may be useful in the event of armed confrontation, and be totally reactionary and destructive afterwards.

The contradiction that exists in society in terms of what is allowable behaviour for a soldier when he is "at war", and what is allowable when he is "at home" is frequently never resolved for minority veterans since for them war is often a perpetual condition. When they return, however, they have something they didn't have when they left, i.e., knowledge in the use of weaponry and military strategy. It is unrea-

sonable to assume that many of them will not choose to use this new information on the domestic front. Their willingness to continue to fight is admirable, even if often involuntary, but this willingness must be based on some clear idea of what is being fought for and what the ultimate goals are lest the result be counter-productive.

A sizeable number of veterans are apparently returning with a drug problem. This is already a problem in the Black community. The addition of any more to the current number of those victimized by narcotics is hardly conducive to the health of the community. Some of these brothers will be permanently removed from the struggle because they will be unable to solve this problem, others will be temporarily out of commission for whatever time it takes for them to solve it.

It is obviously not to the advantage of an oppressed community to lend any of its members to the oppressor for his military. The cost is too high. The only result is that time must be taken to cope with the damage done by the military and that time may not always be in our possession.

The only possible advantage that military service can have is in the training given in the use of weaponry and military strategy. The U.S. military is neither the only, nor necessarily the best place to receive that.

The question of whether a minority community will be a part of an oppressor army, once resolved in the negative, calls for some discussion of American militarism in general. The immediate situation confronting American third world people seems to be that if there are no minorities in the Army, should there be any Army at all? It seems likely that future wars or pseudo-wars supported and/or perpetuated by America will be against third world nations in Asia and Africa. I think it untenable and contradictory for us to speak of self-determination, liberation, etc, here and lend our bodies to be used to suppress these same objectives when our brothers and sisters abroad are struggling for them. This contradiction can only be removed if we stand opposed not only to third-world participation in the military, but to the very existence of a military. A position that suggests only that minorities should repudiate the military is only half of a position, for it is possible for America to have any army without us and that could mean something very ominous here.

A discussion of militarism, however, must go beyond even the existence of a military in America for we know that this country supports

oppressive military actions by other nations. Again, we are confronted with the choice of taking a whole or a half position. The half position leads to the previous contradiction leaving only the other option as viable.

Opposition to American militarism as it is carried out by the U.S. and other agencies does not, however, end the issue for it does not take into consideration the question of whether or not peace should be one of the priorities of the current struggle.

It was stated at the beginning that capitalism needs war to expand and Black people need peace to build. That is only stating an immediate rationale for peace. The need for peace transcends the immediate, however, for those involved in the creation of a new and better society, for, the priorities and methods of that society must be developed now.

Nationalism, racism, and war are inextricable tied together. Their objectives and methods are the same. Each polarizes people and creates an attitude of "us" against "them". The implied proposition always comes out to be, "we are better than they, therefore, we must; A) control them, B) make them more like us, C) conquer them, or D) help them raise themselves to our level." The common denominator, of course, is a feeling on the part of one group that they are superior to the other. The other, and often unspoken, common denominator is that only one group ever benefits from these attitudes.

Those who have been victimized by all three of these are in a unique position to see their basic inhumanity and brutality. If a new society is to be any better than the old this triad must be thrown out in total.

Nationalism can only lead ultimately to conflict because when a nation decides to embrace itself, it has turned inward and made all others outsiders. The conflict arises either from the superior attitudes and xenophobia that self embracing produces, or from a feeling of rejection and hatred that those outside and left-out develop.

Racism is basically no different from nationalism dynamically except that it is based on racial rather than national feelings of superiority. It is interesting to note that those who benefit most from nationalism and racism are usually those at the top and not the bottom of the economic and power scale. This must be kept in mind when considering war.

What makes people war on each other? Did the "people" of the United States declare war on the "people" of North Vietnam? It has rarely, if ever, been the case that people warred on each other without the encouragement or command of their governments. It is usually the case that governments start wars and governed fight them. Now, politically, that suggests that the government has more interest in war than the populace. Governments go to great lengths to stir up the governed to fight for them and the devices they use are always based on some appeal to nationalism and/or racism.

The intrinsic dishonesty of this triad lies in its premises of superiority and xenophobia. It involves a mass appeal to all of the most brutal instincts of the human animal rather than a careful explanation and analysis of relevant issues. Any new society with different aspirations must use different methods. When we again consider who benefits from war, nationalism and racism, we again must consider that a society whose resources are more equitably distributed would not need this triad to perpetuate itself.

The first step toward seriously combatting the disease of capitalism and its by-products is refusing to accept any of its premises, for once we begin to accept the premises we must accept the conclusion and nothing will have really changed. A movement for change must set for itself a totally new concept of nationhood and how it will relate to others. In the past, with a few notable exceptions, the concept of a "just" war has been a joke. Conqueror nations have always been able to justify the conquest of others by using some explanation that satisfied the requirements of nationalism and/or racism initially embraced by their populations. The conquered are now fighting for self-determination.

This objective must be kept vividly in mind and never forgotten once victory is at hand, lest some forget and poison the future with the past.