

Non-violence emerges as draft alternative

By KELI OSBORN
Of the Emerald

Calls from military and political leaders to reinstate either the draft or draft registration are leading many young people, female and male, to consider conscientious objection and other alternatives to military service.

Conscientious objection was a status accorded few during the draft of the Vietnam War years. Gaining it meant jumping through a series of hoops to convince the federal government of true devotion to pacifist principles.

Pacifism, borne of long-standing ethical and moral beliefs, differs from the currently popular tactics of non-violence, a system based instead on political efficacy. In fact, "non-violence can be devoid of the ethical thing," says Doug Barber, a staff member of Eugene's Clergy and Laity Concerned.

In pacifism, the means are crucial to the end, says Nancy McRoberts-Barnes, another CALC staff member. Both pacifism and non-violence can involve illegal tactics, if they are appropriate to the desired end.

Non-violent tactics are used when they prove more effective than violent actions, Barber says. However, the political motivation behind non-violent tactics isn't necessarily Machiavellian convenience, Leslie Gray adds.

Gray, a founder of the McKenzie River Gathering — an area foundation that contributes money to needy, usually active progressive groups — calls non-violence a "tool for a person, or group, in pursuit of justice."

Non-violent tactics will fail if not based on that pursuit, she says. "If the search for justice isn't there, you can't use non-violence as a tool."

Gray thinks humans are basically non-violent, but in a world appearing to grow more violent daily, perhaps non-violence is a trait to be learned and re-learned with diligence.

"People aren't even thinking about pacifism," says Doug

Huneke, a minister with Campus Interfaith Ministry. "We have no non-violent role models — they've all been killed off."

"The status quo is violence," Huneke adds, quoting Department of Energy Secretary James Schlesinger, who recently threatened intervention in the Middle East to "maintain the status quo," or protect U.S. oil interests.

McRoberts-Barnes says non-violence can be learned, but admits that resources are few. Public schools should be teaching non-violence, she says. Barber points out that the United States and other countries have "a wealth of non-violent action history." But the emphasis is usually on wars and not on "the years of non-violent action that led up to the wars," he adds.

Most of us are raised to believe that violence is the most effective way to deal with a situation, Barber says. Kurt Hoelting, another minister with Campus Interfaith Ministry, says wars and other violent activities have an "inevitability about them." War becomes an evil fact rather than an alternative.

Huneke says a non-violent life can be developed consciously, with considerations of "how you approach people, what you read, what you consume, and how and at whose expense you consume. Virtually everything we touch in this society is tainted with oppression."

But he says he would like to think that people could be non-violent, without consciously adopting that stance. Gray calls non-violence a "conscious effort." Mahatma Gandhi called one of his books, "Experiments in Truth," she remarks, adding that others should approach non-violent tactics as experiments also.

"It's making a change that has to be conscious."

Gray insists that to be non-violent is to not violate others or allow others to be violated. McRoberts-Barnes agrees, and adds that one has to stand with other people or the tactics prove meaningless.

Often, both pacifism and non-violence come down to

power. Hoelting notes that power is not always physical, and is often moral. He claims that non-violent tactics won't work unless based on something spiritual, something beyond political efficacy.

The distinction between religiously based non-violence and politically motivated non-violence didn't exist until recently, Hoelting says. Pointing to the last year's upheaval in

spiritual belief of some sort, Huneke admits to a faith in politically motivated tactics.

Barber describes two ways of looking at power. One is the monolith — a giant superstructure controlling lives and destiny. He takes a different view, however. "Power exists because people consent to it. When people withdraw that consent, then there's no power left."

Trojan Decommissioning Alliance and the anti-nuclear movement, which is relying on non-violent tactics to make their point against the building of nuclear plants. Their tactics are unfamiliar to the military and police, and so powerful that both have infiltrated the anti-nuclear movement.

Non-violence and pacifism bring with them many puzzling questions, for their effectiveness is questioned when confronted with powerful violence. Whereas the pacifist would "turn the other cheek" when facing direct violence, the non-violent person might react to save a life.

There are no answers to questions of the extent of non-violent tactics. Both pacifism and non-violence must be developed through reading and talking and thinking. And whether people want to base their approach on political or ethical beliefs (if a difference exists between the two) is the crux of the issue.

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Iran, he says, "I don't think you'd get 4 million people out in the streets — bring the country to a standstill — without some kind of spirit."

Huneke says it wasn't so much a spirit, as it was an outright repulsion to despotism. While Hoelting tends to see nonviolence growing out of a

What happened in Iran was a withdrawal of consent, he says, a non-violent revolution, with large groups of people negating the power of a small, centralized government. Gray says the Iranian revolution shows that violent manners have no strength.

Her favorite example is the

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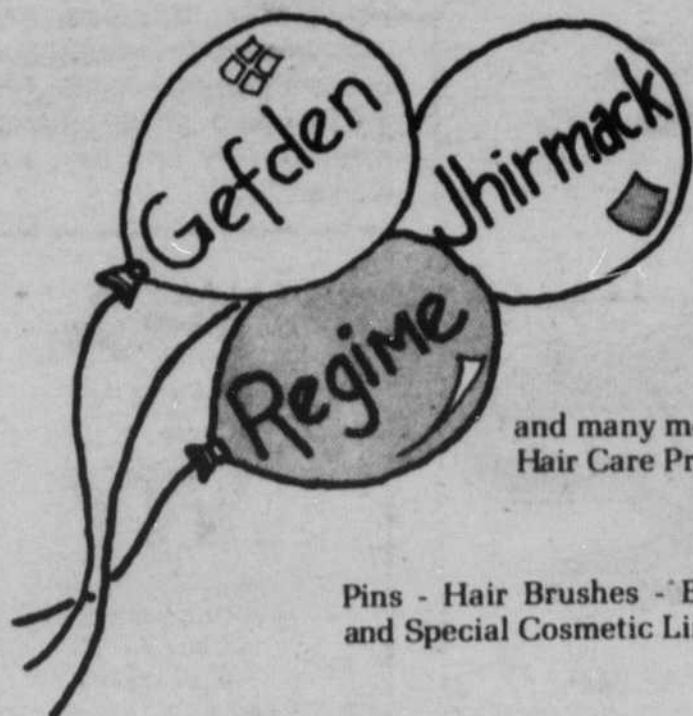
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