



DRAWINGS BY ASTORIA ARTIST ROGER HAYES

# FLOWERS FOR ALL

At the end of May the United States gets sentimental about its citizens who died in its wars. Graves of American war dead, who are buried all over the world, are smeared with flowers and tears. Hundreds of thousands more remain unfound and unburied and have provided nutrients for warblasted soil or meals for undersea life.

The dead are not remembered as the terrible cost of the wars that killed them. They are used instead to recruit fresher crops for planting underground.

Memorial Day has from its beginning (just after the Civil War) been a rallying cry for war, however unusual it might seem for the specter of death to be a successful recruiter. The war dead are praised by the country's leaders who extol their lifeless co-conspirators to sound the warcry for more wars and suggest to newer generations that only such acts of sacrifice justify the lives of able citizenry. Families and friends lay flowers on the graves, and though they grieve, they seldom question the rightness of the loss.

Each modest gesture toward peace is buried underneath official contempt and scorned by a war mentality that, like weapons technology, is vividly self-perpetuating. Harsh religious and military values are imposed on our society, which seems indifferent to its ideals of freedom and equality. War and the worship of wealth and power are substituted for human rights. Our most cherished values serve as warcries to commit horror, and we choose leaders who offer us nightmares disguised as dream worlds.

The only purpose for the existence of armies, despite claims of righteousness and deceptions of pageantry, is the destruction of other human beings. Soldiering is big business, the first order of every empire as it has always been for generations of warmen sent out to kill and die by every culture and society, but soldiers themselves are little more than expendable pawns, readily discarded. Paeans of glory, duty and patriotism are perhaps a greater treachery than the hoax of original sin.

Much emphasis upon heroic sacrifice will undoubtedly be the official piety this Memorial Day in the aftermath of a questionable war. Perhaps the showy pageant of mourning over the few American deaths in Iraq is to mask its shaky premise and also, more ominously callous, disregard the probably large toll of innocent Iraqi civilians killed in the war.

Americans might wish to take stock of what they are being led into before steadily increasing numbers of coffins of American dead regularly arrive for interment in the homeland as a consequence of protracted wars. With the principal political policy of the United States interminably militaristic, we can expect more stacks of body bags of American soldiers.

Arguments for war are as stale as the bones beneath the flowers. The world has changed. Humanity has seen it from space, small and frail; the same technical mastery that sends rockets to the stars is also capable of sending them on a much shorter, final journey of obliteration. The most fundamental struggle in history is between advocates of world suicide and those who oppose it, which is the real war of our era. If we do not reverse direction we will all probably be among the war dead, and there will be no one to provide us graves or bring us flowers.

-MICHAEL McCUSKER



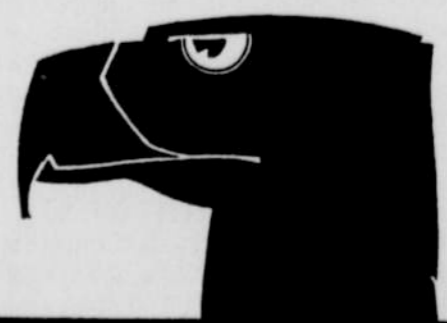
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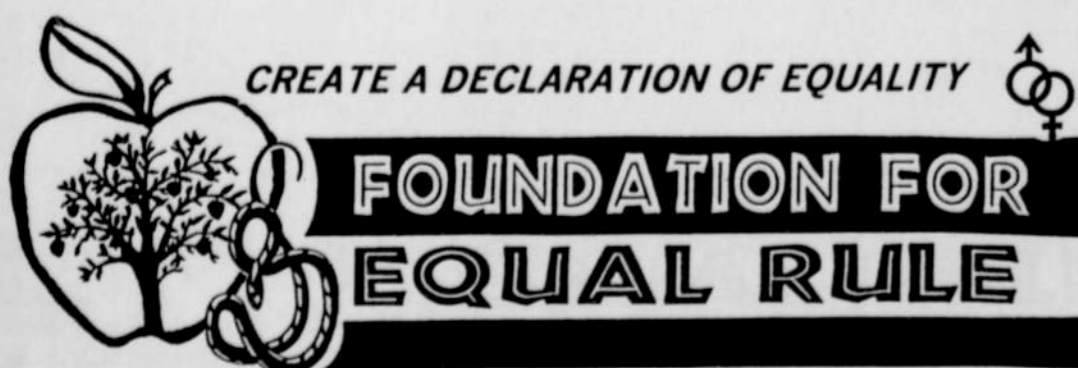


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