

'Widening the web'

Greenham Common, the CND and the Women's Movement:
the rise and fall of women's antinuclear activism, 1958-1988.

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Abstract

Between 1981 and 1988, the Greenham women would protest against the installation of US cruise missiles at the British airbase RAF Greenham Common. Through using the gender theories of Nancy Fraser and Kimberle Crenshaw in conjunction with Pierre Bourdieu's *theory of practice* this thesis reintegrates the women's antinuclear movement into the broader study of gender and protest movement history. Taking a chronological approach, this thesis focuses on two key aspects of the movement. Firstly, in extending the analysis of the women's antinuclear movement to the late 1950s, it identifies the movement's close ties to both the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and the wider-women's movement. Rather than presenting a unified field of protest, this thesis suggests that inter- and intra-movement conflict proved crucial in shaping the practices of the women's antinuclear movement. Secondly, it explores the impact of the women's antinuclear movement upon the wider field of protest. The Greenham Common protest should not only be viewed as a product of earlier protests but also as a producer of new forms of protest. Over the course of the protest the Greenham women would develop a spatially and conceptually robust understanding of antinuclear activism that encompassed a wide range of campaign platforms placed within a transnational context. In turn, these practices would be adopted by the CND and incorporated into the organisation's increasingly professionalised mode of campaigning. By taking a holistic approach towards female activists' agency this thesis serves as an elaboration on the current understanding of post-war feminism and a reinterpretation of the role of women in the development of the modern protest movement.

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Any errors or omissions in this thesis lie solely with the author.

James McDonald

22 October 2017.

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Introduction

On 12 December 1982, 30,000 women encircled RAF Greenham Common, the proposed site for the installation of 96 US cruise missiles. In a protest that lasted over six hours, the women danced, sang and hung decorations on the perimeter fence of the base.¹ Reminiscing upon the ‘Embrace the Base’ protest, the veteran antinuclear campaigner, James Hinton, noted that the demonstration represented ‘the most effective single action undertaken by the peace movement in the 1980s.’² Rather than comprising of an isolated event, the December 1982 protest was symbolic of a far broader protest movement. Between 1981 and 1988, the ‘Greenham women’ as they referred to themselves, camped outside the base, breached the perimeter fence, faced criminal charges, attracted media coverage and disseminated a transnational message of nuclear disarmament.

While standing as a major example of popular protest, the remarkability of Greenham lay neither in its high rate of protester mobilisation or the longevity of the protest. In a 1984, joint memoir reflecting upon their time protesting at Greenham Common, Barbara Harford and Sarah Hopkins observed that: ‘Over the months, Cruise has become a symbol of nuclear terror, male domination and imperialist exploitation. Our oppression is no longer abstract and that’s why the protest has led so many people into new realms of analysis and action.’³ Through linking nuclear proliferation to a feminist and anti-imperialist discourse, the Greenham Common protest site came to represent not a singular, antinuclear protest but rather a point of interaction between various protest movements. The process of colliding interests often resulted in tumult. In a 1983 interview, Joan Ruddock, Chairwoman of the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) would brand the Greenham women as an ‘extreme wing’ of the antinuclear movement.⁴ Simultaneously, the Greenham women drew criticism from some members of the Women’s Liberation Movement (WLM) who perceived their actions to be a ‘symptom of the loss of feminist principles and processes— radical

¹ For a useful account of the ‘Embrace the Base’ action see *You Can’t Kill the Spirit* (Wakefield: Bretton Women’s Book Fund, 1983).

² J. Hinton, ‘The second wave: settling in for the long haul’, *Sanity*, February 1988, 11.

³ B. Harford and S. Hopkins (eds.), *Greenham Common: Women at the Wire* (London: The Women’s Press, 1985), 1.

⁴ ‘Something to Say— Joan Ruddock’ in *Woman’s World*, July 1983, 10.

analysis, criticism and consciousness raising.⁵ However, as the Greenham protest not only endured but also expanded both the antinuclear and women's movements were forced to adopt an increasingly central position within the women's antinuclear debate. The interaction between the Greenham women, the CND and women's movement would not only define the contours of women's antinuclear activism but would in turn change the protest models of the wider antinuclear and women's movements. The purpose of this thesis is twofold. Firstly, it aims to *identify the conditions, factors and actors that created a women's antinuclear movement in the early 1980s*. Secondly, it aims to *assess the relationship between the women's antinuclear movement and the broader protest field, charting the movement's impact, incompatibilities and ultimate limitations*.

Over the course of the last half century, the study of protest movements has made considerable advances and is now well established in the humanities and the social sciences. The drive towards this enquiry stems from two disciplinary traditions. In Germany and the USA, historians have taken an increasing interest in the idea of 'peace history.'⁶ The study of peace history obtained institutional status with the foundation of the American Peace History Society in 1964 and German *Arbeitskreis Historische Friedens- und Konfliktforschung* in 1984. Subsequently, there has been a steady profusion of monographs and articles placing emphasis on peace history. Notable examples include Lawrence S. Wittner's three-volume study of the global nuclear disarmament movement and Holger Nehring's comparative study of British and West German peace movements during the early Cold War.⁷ More recently, protest movements have garnered the attention of British social historians interested in the topics of voluntarism and the history of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Often concerned with wider societal implications of protest movements than their peace history counterparts, historians such as Matthew Hilton and James McKay have charted the interaction between civil society and NGOs in the post-war era.⁸

⁵ *Breaching the Peace: a collection of radical feminist papers* (London: Onlywomen press, 1983), 5.

⁶ B. Ziemann, 'Peace Movements in Western Europe, Japan and USA since 1945: An Introduction', *Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für soziale Bewegungen* 32 (2004), 5.

⁷ L.S. Wittner, *The Struggle Against The Bomb: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement*, 3 vols. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995, 1997, 2003); H. Nehring, *Politics of Security: British and West German Peace Movements and the Early Cold War; 1945-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2013).

⁸ M. Hilton and J. McKay (eds.), *The Ages of Voluntarism: How We Got to The Big Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); M. Hilton, N. Crowson, J. Mouhout, J. McKay (eds.), *A Historical Guide to NGOs in Britain: Charities, Civil Society and the Voluntary Sector since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012).

If the study of protest movements has blossomed in recent years, there still remain significant theoretical and chronological gaps that are worth exploring. Through using the women's antinuclear movement as its point of focus this thesis will address three shortcomings within the current state of the field. Firstly, although earlier studies have sought to expand their analysis to broader sections of society, the role of gender within protest movements remains poorly defined. The existing efforts to incorporate women into the history of protest movements have produced two results. Wider surveys of the peace movement are often content with 'adding women' to the peace movement, with their agency warranting little more than an additional footnote.⁹ When the role of women is addressed more explicitly, as in Lawrence S. Wittner's 'Gender Roles and Nuclear Disarmament Activisms, 1954-1965', there is a predisposition to treat female agency in essentialist terms that replicate a narrative of women's inherent peacefulness and mothering qualities.¹⁰ Given the centrality of female actors in the Greenham Common protest, the current approach of peace historians proves unsuitable for studying a movement that was simultaneously women and antinuclear oriented.

Secondly, studies of protest movements often underestimate the role of tension and conflict within the respective social movements. In describing the post-war emergence of NGOs, Hilton, McKay, Crowson and Mouhot suggest such organisations enabled 'an increasingly affluent and educated public to opt in and out of a tremendous range of political concerns.'¹¹ Through defining collective mobilisation as an 'opt in, opt out' procedure, the authors forgo an analysis where numerous actors are excluded from group participation due to conflicting beliefs or incompatible identities. In place of conflict, the existing literature places a greater emphasis on a relatively unified civil society. When conflict is explored it is framed in terms of the protest movement versus the wider state and society. This critique also applies to the study of the women's antinuclear movement. For instance, Alison Young's research explores the tension between the Greenham women and the British media.¹² Contrary to this position, this thesis will privilege the inter- and intra-movement conflict between the CND, Greenham women and the women's movement.

⁹ Nehring, *Politics of Security*; Wittner, *The Struggle Against The Bomb*.

¹⁰ L.S. Wittner, 'Gender Roles and Nuclear Disarmament Activism, 1954-1965' *Gender & History*, 12/1 (2000).

¹¹ M. Hilton, J. McKay, N. Crowson and J. Mouhot, 'Introduction: The Privatization of Politics', M. Hilton, J. McKay, N. Crowson, J. Mouhot (eds.), *The Politics of Expertise: How NGOs shaped Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1.

¹² A. Young, *Femininity in Dissent* (London: Routledge, 1990).

Thirdly, the thesis will attempt to bridge a chronological gap. Although there has been a growing interest in the study of protest movements, existing research has placed a predominant emphasis on the 1960s and 1970s protest field and the emergence of the New Left.¹³ This tendency also applies to the study of the British antinuclear movement. The majority of studies on the British antinuclear movement focus on the early CND, neglecting the movement's later mobilisation in the 1980s.¹⁴ While these studies have proved highly informative in defining the early characteristics of the antinuclear movement, this thesis hopes to extend an analysis of the antinuclear movement into the late 1980s. In broadening the temporal framework of analysis this thesis does not only aspire to demonstrate how the 1960s antinuclear movement strongly informed the later women's mobilisation, but also how the 1980s women's antinuclear movement changed the protest practices of the CND. Between the late 1970s and the early 1990s, Hilton *et al.* suggest that professionalisation morphed NGOs into 'massive non-profit enterprises with CEOs, marketing directors, campaign officers, publicity machines, and brand-name recognition.'¹⁵ As the chronology of this thesis runs concurrent to the analysis of *Hilton et al.* it is possible to assess what role the women's antinuclear movement played in the process of NGO professionalisation.

In order to provide a partial corrective to the aforementioned shortcomings within the study of protest movements, this thesis reconsiders the phenomenon of women's antinuclear activism from a different theoretical perspective. To better apply a gendered analysis to the study of protest movements, it is necessary to recall the key tenets of gender theory. From its emergence in the 1970s, gender history has sought to integrate itself within the broader framework of historical analysis. In her seminal article 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', Joan Scott called for future inquiries into gender to provide 'new perspectives on old questions...redefine the old questions in new terms... [and] make women visible as active participants.'¹⁶ In turn, gender history has made some inroads into the study of the Greenham Common Peace Camp. Sasha Roseneil has written extensively on the

¹³ C. Hughes, *Young Lives on the Left: Sixties Activism and the Liberation of the Self* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015); C. Hoefflerle, *British student activism in the long sixties* (London: Routledge, 2013).

¹⁴ F. Parkin, *Middle Class Radicalism: The Social Bases of the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968); J. Mattausch, *A commitment to campaign: A sociological study of CND* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989). For a more recent study of the early CND see J. Burkett, 'Re-defining British morality: "Britishness" and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament 1958-68', *Twentieth Century British History* 21 No.2 (2010).

¹⁵ Hilton, McKay, Crowson and Mouhot, 'The Ascent of the Expert: Professionals and the NGO career', Hilton *et al.* (eds.), *The Politics of Expertise*, 54.

¹⁶ J.W. Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *The American Historical Review* 91 No. 5 (1986), 1075.

sexuality of the Greenham women while Anna Feigenbaum has studied the performative actions of the protesters.¹⁷ While informative, both researchers hold a tendency to promote the exceptionality of Greenham, separating the protest site from the wider antinuclear movement. Taking heed of Scott's clarion call, this thesis seeks to implement a broader gendered analysis of the women's antinuclear movement, linking Greenham to the CND and the wider women's movement. I have therefore chosen to utilise theories that adopt a more holistic approach towards gender.

Of particular relevance to this thesis is the work of the American critical theorist Nancy Fraser. In *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis*, Fraser traces the arc of post-war feminism. Fraser delineates the progression of feminism into three acts. In its first stage, Fraser describes post-war feminism as an 'insurrectionary force' that emerged from the 'ferment surrounding the New Left.' In its early stage, Fraser typifies post-war feminism as a movement that 'exposed capitalism's deep androcentrism and sought to transform society root and branch.'¹⁸ In its second phase Fraser notes a qualitative change in feminism in which the movement began to move towards 'a new political imaginary that foregrounded 'difference.'¹⁹ At this stage from an advocacy of 'redistribution' to one of recognition', the women's movement shifted its attention to identity politics, which coincided with the point that 'a rising neoliberalism declared war on social equality.'²⁰ In its third stage, Fraser contends that feminism may once again return to an insurrectionary force 'aiming to subject runaway markets to democratic control.'²¹ While stage three of Fraser's post-war model of feminism remains speculation this thesis uses the trajectory from act one to act two as a lens through which to view the progression and transition of the women's antinuclear movement between 1958 and 1988. Building on Fraser's narrative, the thesis asks if we can observe a shift from a 'social' critique to a 'cultural' critique.

Complementary to the work of Fraser, this thesis will also employ the American legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw's theorisation of intersectionality. If one is to accept Fraser's assertion of

¹⁷ S. Roseneil, *Common Women, Uncommon Practices: The Queer Feminisms of Greenham* (London: Cassell, 2000); S. Roseneil, *Disarming Patriarchy: Feminism and Political Action at Greenham* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1995); A. Feigenbaum, 'Tactics and technology: cultural resistance at the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp' (Doctorate thesis, McGill University, 2008).

¹⁸ N. Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (London: Verso, 2013), 1.

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ *ibid.*

feminism's movement towards issues of identity, it is crucial to understand how identity should be conceptualised. For Crenshaw, intersectionality serves as a useful tool through which to reevaluate the concept of identity politics. Crenshaw states that: 'The problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference, as some critics charge, but rather the opposite—that it frequently conflates or ignores intragroup difference.'²² By contrast, the concept of intersectionality promotes the idea that certain actors within groups experience multiple forms of oppression. Applying the concept of political intersectionality to women of colour, Crenshaw notes, 'women of color are situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas. The need to split one's political energies between two sometimes opposing groups is a dimension of intersectional disempowerment that men of color and white women seldom confront.'²³ While Crenshaw explicitly applies her theorisation of intersectionality to women of colour it is possible to extend her critique to the wider identity of peace activists. Not only were female activists oppressed by gender and race but also by the competing political aims of a women's antinuclear movement. Through using the lens of intersectionality it is possible to trace how the multiple components of female antinuclear activists' identities were privileged and oppressed during the period in question.

In addition to a more systematic approach towards gender, it is also necessary to adopt a theoretical approach capable of indicating tension and collision within the field of protest. While gender historians have sought after theorisations that better integrate gender into the broader discipline of history, social movement theorists have attempted to develop a sustained analysis of individual agency within the wider study of social movement structure. Increasingly social movement theorists have turned towards the work of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu as a theoretical base for studying social movements.²⁴ Although Bourdieu does not explicitly refer to social movements and only latterly broached the issue of gender within his body of work, he offers a useful sociological toolkit comprising of *habitus*, *capital*, *fields* and *doxa* which can be applied to the study of protest movements. These

²² K. Crenshaw, 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of Color', *Stanford Law Review* 43 No. 6 (1991), 1242.

²³ *ibid*, 1251-1252.

²⁴ For further instances of the application of Bourdieu's work as a form of social movement theorisation see H.M. Husu, 'Bourdieu and Social Movements: Considering Identity Movements in Terms of Field, Capital and Habitus', *Social Movement Studies* 12 No.3 (2013); N. Crossley, *Making Sense of Social Movements* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002).

conceptual tools are unified by Bourdieu's *theory of practice*, which is summarised by the British sociologist, Nick Crossley:

What Bourdieu is arguing is that social practices are generated through the interaction of agents who are both differently disposed [habitus] and unequally resourced [capital], within the bounds of specific networks which have game-like structure [fields] and impose definite restraints upon them [doxa].²⁵

Of particular interest to social movement theorists who have attempted to align the work of Bourdieu with the theory of social movements, is the concept of the *habitus*. Defined by Bourdieu, the *habitus* represents:

A set of dispositions, reflexes and forms of behaviour people acquire through acting in society. It reflects the different positions people have in society, whether they are brought up in a middle class environment or in a working class suburb.²⁶

As the sociologist Bojan Bilić notes, the habitus is 'both a product and producer of the social— a concurrently structured and structuring entity that embodies an intricate interplay of synchronic and diachronic elements.'²⁷ Therefore, correctly applied, the concept of the *habitus* can be used as a bridging tool, allowing the researcher to transcend the binary assumptions concerning agency and structure associated with traditional theorisations of social movements.

Within the parameters of this thesis, Bourdieu's *theory of practice* provides an incisive schema for defining the relationship between the agency of the women activists and the broader structure of the antinuclear movement. When placed in Bourdeuian terms, the antinuclear movement may be viewed as a field in which numerous actors compete for a position within the protest field. Through interaction within the *field* and obedience to the field's *doxic* assumptions protesters integrate and adapt their *habitus*, a process which can both legitimise existing orders or lead to new forms of practice. Through utilising Bourdieu's *theory of practice* in conjunction with the gender based theorisations of Fraser and Crenshaw,

²⁵ N. Crossley, *ibid* (brackets own), 171.

²⁶ P. Bourdieu, 'The Politics of Protest' (interview), *Socialist Review*, June 2000, 18-20.

²⁷ B. Bilić, 'Bourdieu and Social Movements Theories: some preliminary remarks on a possible conceptual cross-fertilization of (post-) Yugoslav anti-war and peace activism', *Sociologija* 52 No.4 (2010), 380.

this thesis offers an account of the emergence and impact of the women's antinuclear movement that charts not only internal innovations but also examines its bearing on the wider protest movement.

The analysis of this thesis concentrates on Greenham Common, which in the 1980s came to represent the focal point of British antinuclear and feminist activism. Its stature as a protest site has subsequently been reflected in the quantity of secondary literature pertaining to the camp. In addition to the studies conducted by Roseneil *et al.* Greenham has been the subject of several protest memoirs.²⁸ In researching Greenham and its relationship to the wider protest movement, the challenge lies not in a scarcity of sources but rather in selecting sources that most accurately define the relationship between the interconnected protest movements. While earlier accounts of the women's antinuclear movement rely heavily on oral history and memoirs, I have attempted to privilege the use of archival documentation. In late 2008, a large collection of CND archival material was collated at the London School of Economics (LSE) archives.²⁹ Containing both material from Greenham Common activists and the CND offices, documents range from public information leaflets and annual conference papers to internal memoranda and market research survey. I have additionally used archival documentation from the LSE Women's Library. The Women's Library holds a series of diaries and pamphlet produced by the Greenham women. Taken together, the two archives provide not only substantial documentation of both the CND and Greenham women but also evidence of interaction between the two movements. Supplementary to archival sources, I have utilised a series of monthly campaign magazines, most prominently the CND members magazine *Sanity* and the feminist publication *Spare Rib*. The advantage of using archival deposits and protest movement publications lie in their ability to show both public sentiments of cooperation and internal conflicts between actors and movements. In this way, archival sources provide insights beyond oral testimonies that often downplay inter- and intra-movement conflict in favour of presenting a narrative of unified collective action.

The thesis proceeds in a chronological order of events. Chapter one seeks to identify the conditions that made the notion of a women's antinuclear movement conceivable by the early

²⁸ Notable examples of Greenham memoirs include: B. Harford and Sarah Hopkins (eds.), *Greenham Common*; A. Pettitt, *Walking to Greenham: How the Peace-camp began and the Cold War ended* (South Glamorgan: Honno, 2006); B. Junor, *Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp: A History of Non-Violent Resistance 1984-1995* (London: Working Press, 1995).

²⁹ R. Frendo, 'Archival Review: Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament Archives at London School of Economics', *Contemporary British History* 23 No. 2 (2009).

1980s. Although women's antinuclear activism would find its ultimate manifestation in the early 1980s at Greenham Common, its origins can be traced to the earlier antinuclear movement in the late 1950s. The advancement towards the women's antinuclear movement is a story in three acts, which will be told in the first chapter. In act I, women rallied around the British CND. While included within the campaign many women were left marginalised and discontent with the early experience of antinuclear protest. With the decline of the early CND, antinuclear protesters gravitated towards the New Left protests of the 1960s. Act II will chart women protesters' association with the New Left protest movements. Although female inclusion within the protest field remained contested, the transnational and anti-hierarchical characteristics of New Left protests would provide a training ground for the nascent Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) of the 1970s. In act III, a growing WLM would return to the issue of nuclear disarmament, this time approaching the issue through a feminist framework of understanding.

If a women's antinuclear movement appeared theoretically viable by 1980, the practicalities of such a protest remained to be tested. Through analysing the initiation of the march to Greenham and the establishment of the protest camp, chapter two charts how the theory of women's antinuclear movement competed with the practicalities of establishing a permanent protest site. The camp faced hostility not only from the media and the Conservative British Government led by Margaret Thatcher but also from other protest movements. In its fledgling state, the protest camp at Greenham simultaneously experienced criticism and attempted co-optation by both the CND and WLM. Although at times impeding, it was the interaction between Greenham and the wider protest movement that allowed the women's antinuclear movement to remain both antinuclear and women-oriented in intent. By the end of 1983, the Greenham Common protest had successfully constructed a form of women's antinuclear activism that remained interconnected but sufficiently independent of both the CND and wider WLM.

Having been afforded relative independence by the mid-1980s, the women's antinuclear movement invented new forms of protest which in turn would be impressed upon the wider protest movement. Chapter three details the nature of these innovations and assesses the extent of their proliferation. From the mid-1980s onwards, the Greenham protest proved pivotal in expanding the contours of antinuclear activism, both conceptually and geographically, introducing critiques of racism and imperialism into the debate concerning

nuclear proliferation. Furthermore, the chapter demonstrates how an insurgent Greenham simultaneously persuaded and co-opted the CND to introduce new forms of practice. Impressed by the dynamism of Greenham and fearful of a usurpation of its own support base, the CND increasingly moved away from its model of achieving unilateral disarmament through parliamentary means. In its place the CND adopted a model of practice similar to that of Greenham whereby it increasingly privileged multilateral disarmament and highlighted the associated issues of racism and imperialism. Not only would the adoption of Greenham practices provide a new audience for the CND but it would also help the organisation overcome the perceived impasse of campaigning on a parliamentary basis.

By the late 1980s, the CND would embark on the process of incorporating aspects of the women's antinuclear movement into the framework of a highly professionalised marketing drive referred to as Extended Public Information Campaign 3 (EPIC 3). However, at the point where Greenham and the CND began a process of further alignment in terms of practices of protest, emerging tensions placed the concept of a women's antinuclear movement in jeopardy. Chapter four delineates the source of the tensions and assesses the limitations they placed on the women's antinuclear movement. In 1987, the racial and imperial critiques deployed by the Greenham women were redirected towards the antinuclear protesters themselves. The transition of the women's antinuclear movement during the late 1980s corroborates with both the work of Fraser and Crenshaw. During this period many female antinuclear protesters moved away from a critique of nuclear proliferation based upon concepts of redistribution. In its place the women's antinuclear movement began to challenge the identity of fellow activists, placing a greater emphasis on what Crenshaw would refer to as intersectional difference. The ensuing accusations of racism amongst Greenham women and the CND proved insurmountable. Although both protest movements would endure beyond the 1980s, the continuation of a women's antinuclear movement appeared infeasible. While some facets of women's antinuclear activism remained visible in future CND campaigns, without an assertive Greenham protest, the link between feminism and antinuclear activism would swiftly deteriorate.

Chapter 1— Towards Greenham: the elision of the antinuclear and women’s movement, 1958-1980

The decision I took was that I would organise a march to a place not many people had then heard of, the US base at Greenham Common, Berkshire. I wanted it to be a march of women, but to begin with I couldn’t find anyone else to come on it, or share it with me, so I thought, ‘If I have to, I’ll do it on my own.’ After that, after I made up my mind that I really would do it solo, if it came to it, I soon found other women to share the organising and thinking of it, and still others to come on it.

Ann Pettitt, *Walking to Greenham*³⁰

In a study of (post) Yugoslav peace activism, Bilić notes that activists hold a tendency to view their actions with a high degree of inevitability and originality.³¹ So too, when Ann Pettitt recounted the planning of a women’s march to Greenham Common in spring 1981, her language placed emphasis on an unprecedented immediacy of the actions of the Greenham women. Through using a Bourdieuan framework this chapter attempts to re-interpret the origins of the Greenham protest. While I will later suggest that events at Greenham helped to construct new practices of protest, the genesis of a women’s march to Greenham was rooted in a shared experience of both the earlier antinuclear and women’s movements. It was the creation of a collective habitus in the two decades prior to Greenham that made a women’s antinuclear march conceivable.

Women and the early Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, 1958-1965

Twenty-three years prior to Pettitt’s proposed march to Greenham, an earlier generation of protesters took to the road on what became an annual march from the Aldermaston Atomic Weapons Research Establishment to London’s Trafalgar Square. Under the organisation of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), the protesters called for British unilateral nuclear disarmament. The CND was formed in 1958 in response to Britain’s acquisition of

³⁰ Pettitt, *Walking to Greenham*, 2.

³¹ Bilić, ‘Bourdieu and Social Movements Theories’, 383.

the hydrogen bomb. Given its singular demand of unilateral disarmament, the campaign held together a diverse array of often-unlikely actors. Such was the perceived incongruity of actors that the early CND campaigner Freda Ehlers would comment, 'In CND I have to mix with so many odd people that the sooner we ban the bomb the better.'³² Nonetheless, from 1958 onwards academics, communists, New Left activists, Christians and pacifists gathered together under what the CND General Secretary, Peggy Duff described as the CND 'umbrella'.³³

Of the various factions of the CND it was the organisation's Christian pacifist tradition that created space for women to participate within the organisation. In her broad survey of British women's anti-militarism, Jill Liddington points to the role of Gertrude Fishwick and the Golders Green Guildswomen as key to CND's establishment.³⁴ Comprising of predominantly middle class and metropolitan women, the guildswomen would participate in activities such as discussing political topics, organising picnics and visiting sick friends. By the mid-fifties, minutes from Guildswomen meetings showed an increasing preoccupation with nuclear armament and the health risks associated with radiation.³⁵ The topic would have remained within the realms of polite conversation if it were not for the efforts of the regular Guildswomen meeting attendee, Gertrude Fishwick. Perturbed by the consequences of nuclear proliferation, Fishwick, a retired civil servant, embarked upon a campaign to raise awareness of the hazards of nuclear weapons. Drawing upon her connections to the Labour Party, the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship and the Quakers, Fishwick helped align political and faith groups that would culminate in the formation of the CND. As Christopher Driver noted in his early study of the CND: 'If any single person can be said to have triggered off the chain reaction which ended in CND it is Miss Fishwick...'³⁶

With 'her health broken by the strain of her work for the cause', Fishwick died on 15 February 1958, two days before the CND was formally launched at a meeting in central London.³⁷ In spite of her death Fishwick and the Guildswomen were crucial to the inclusion

³² Freda Ehlers cited in P. Duff, *Left, Left, Left: A personal account of six protest campaigns, 1945-1965* (London: Alison & Busby, 1971), 126.

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ J. Liddington, *The Long Road to Greenham: Feminism & Anti-Militarism in Britain since 1820* (London: Virago, 1989), 178.

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ C. Driver, *The Disarmers: A study in protest* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964), 31.

³⁷ H. Greer, 'Tremble Dammit!', *The Spectator*, 11 April 1963, 13.

of women and constructing the terms through which women would engage with the movement. The early CND's Executive Committee meetings were notable in their inclusion of prominent women. Early minutes account for the presence of the archaeologist Jaquetta Hawkes, author Dora Russell and seasoned Labour activist, Peggy Duff who held the position of CND General Secretary from 1958 to 1965.

Although the CND Executive Committee boasted a high rate of female inclusion, participation should not be conflated with influence. Anecdotes from early CND meetings indicate a prevalence of traditional gender norms. In his memoir the Anglican Canon, L. John Collins (CND Chair, 1958-1964) recounted heated exchanges with Duff:

I suspect she [Duff] hoped for someone more easy-going as chairman and was disappointed to find instead one who liked to get his own way, even sometimes, I fear to the extent of obstinacy; and there were, I know, the occasions in committee when I rather brusquely used to bark her into silence.³⁸

The ossified gender relations within CND were held in place by two doxic assumptions within the field. Firstly, it is necessary to account for the early CND's preoccupation in garnering the support of the British Labour Party. As Richard Taylor and Jodi Burkett note, from its inception, the CND was committed to ensuring that the British government would unilaterally pledge to drop its nuclear weapons programme.³⁹ For this to be achieved it was deemed paramount to gain the parliamentary support of the Labour party. Mapping out the pathway for parliamentary unilateralism, Collins noted: 'I believed that one of our first aims should be to win a majority for CND policy within the Labour Party [...] a Labour Party committed to our policy could be returned to power.'⁴⁰ In more succinct terms, the CND activist Ian Mikardo stated: 'The battleground was the Labour Party. It was the only arena in which the campaign could ride.'⁴¹ Any attempt to accommodate female supporters was based upon a belief that they too could further the CND agenda of parliamentary unilateralism. An early CND pamphlet titled: 'Appeal to Women', urged 'responsible women' to 'work for a Better World for your child' and argued that 'The testing, spread and build up of Nuclear

³⁸ L.J. Collins, *Faith Under Fire* (London: Leslie Ferwin, 1966), 314-315.

³⁹ J. Burkett, 'Re-defining British morality'; R. Taylor, 'The Labour Party and CND: 1957-1984', R. Taylor and N. Young (eds.), *Campaigns for peace: British peace movements in the twentieth century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987).

⁴⁰ Collins, *Faith Under Fire*, 326.

⁴¹ Ian Mikardo cited in Taylor, 'The Labour Party and CND: 1957-1984', 100.

weapons [...] uses money, material and intelligence that should be used to feed the hungry, prevent and cure disease, house the homeless and educate the children.⁴² As opposed to consulting the grievances of women supporters, the CND was more inclined to use women's symbolic capital as a means to encourage the Labour party to incorporate unilateral disarmament into its party manifesto.

Secondly, was the failure to link women's inclusion within the CND to feminist precepts. Martin Pugh has suggested that the 1950s have been framed by historians as the 'nadir' of British feminism.⁴³ While Pugh considers this assumption to be an over exaggeration he contends that when set against the backdrop of a combination of welfare reform with increased economic opportunity and political rights, the women's movement was deprived of any major target to aim at.⁴⁴ This ambivalent position was voiced by the British journalist Marghanita Laski: 'I was born too late for the battle. Older and nobler women struggled that I should be free, and did so well that I've never even bothered about being bound. Rights for women, so far as my generation is concerned, is a dead issue.'⁴⁵ The sentiment of a feminist *fait accompli* was also echoed by Duff. In her memoir of campaigning for the CND, any mention of feminism or the women's movement is notable only by its absence. Duff's aversion to feminism is supported by her obituary published by the women's magazine *Spare Rib*. The author remarked that: 'Peggy had little time for the women's movement and feminism. Partly this was related to her 'impatience with theory' as one obituary put it and she certainly enjoyed provoking her feminist friends.'⁴⁶

The inability of the CND Executive Committee to adequately address the position of women within the CND led to an ambiguous experience for women within the CND's wider network. Detailing the wider experience of women associated with the CND is problematised by their exclusion from contemporary research. Given the prominence of the CND it was subject to multiple sociological studies however they provide minimal analysis of women's agency.⁴⁷ Revealingly Frank Parkin's *Middle Class Radicalism* omitted a sample of women

⁴² *CND Appeal to Women: work for a better world for your child* (London: Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, 1962).

⁴³ M. Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain since 1914* (London: Palgrave, 2015), 236; For a useful overview of the 1950s women's movement see D. Spender, *There's always been a Women's Movement this Century* (London: Pandora Press, 1983).

⁴⁴ Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain since 1914*, 237.

⁴⁵ Marghanita Laski cited in V. Brittain, *Lady into Woman* (London: Fontana, 1953), 77.

⁴⁶ Elaine Capizzi, 'Goodbye to Peggy Duff', *Spare Rib*, June 1981, 17.

⁴⁷ J. Mattausch, *A commitment to campaign: A sociological study of CND*; F. Parkin, *Middle Class Radicalism*.

respondents on the basis that they ‘classified themselves as housewives or part-time workers.’⁴⁸ The information that can be ascertained regarding women’s agency divides women’s experience along a generational line. Older women played the same role under the CND as they had within women’s fellowships and guilds. Duff provides a telling account of a CND women’s meeting held in 1958. The event boasted an impressive array of speakers including: Jill Balcon, Peggy Ashcroft, Margaret Lane, Iris Murdoch, Jacquetta Hawkes, Annabel Williams-Ellis and Diane Collins. Duff, however, concedes that most of the meeting was spent reading letters, poems and ‘a series of statements by politicians and the press.’⁴⁹ If the meeting was a success, the CND failed to capitalise on formally creating a ‘Women’s CND’. The group would sporadically meet again throughout the early 1960s but Duff commented: ‘In between, the group rested on its laurels and never met unless there was a reason— commendable restraint.’⁵⁰

It was the perceived ‘commendable restraint’ of the CND that became an increasing source of discontent for the CND’s young, women activists. For the new generation of protesters the orthodox tactics of the CND translated into an impression of condescension and micro-management at the expense of efficiency. Young women did join the annual CND march to Aldermaston but the CND Executive Committee was dismissive of their position. In her memoir, Duff derisively noted that one of the buses transporting Aldermaston marchers was nicknamed ‘the brothel’, because [...] it was usually full of all the young girls from St. Pancras Youth CND— most of them, probably, virtuous.’⁵¹ Sam Carroll’s study of female university students provides a useful insight into the exasperation of younger women who participated in CND activities. One woman, Jay Ginn, complained: ‘I felt CND was holding back the anti-nuclear movement because they were trying to be respectable and establishment all the time.’⁵² Another activist, Marion Prince, commented: ‘If we just go on marching Aldermaston, it’s almost becoming an institution. Next minute it’ll be like a fun fair. If we go on doing that nothing’s going to change.’⁵³

⁴⁸ Parkin, *ibid*, 181.

⁴⁹ The average age of the speakers was 47; P. Duff, *Left, Left, Left*, 157.

⁵⁰ P. Duff, *ibid*, 157.

⁵¹ *ibid*, 134.

⁵² Jay Ginn cited in S. Carroll, “‘I Was Arrested at Greenham in 1962’: Investigating the Oral Narratives of Women in the Anti-Nuclear Committee of 100”, *Oral History* 31 No.1 (2004), 42.

⁵³ Marion Prince cited in *ibid*, 43.

By 1960 the tension between an orthodox CND Executive Committee and a younger more radical faction of protesters who went by the name of the ‘Committee of 100’ generated a fissure in CND support. Founded by Bertrand Russell in response to the perceived inaction of the CND, Russell and fellow ‘Committee of 100’ activists called for the use of non-violent direct action (NVDA) in the fight for nuclear disarmament.⁵⁴ In a *New Statesman* article, Russell urged protesters to take a more active form of protest: ‘If all those who disapprove of government policy were to join massive demonstrations of civil disobedience they could render government folly impossible and compel the so-called statesmen to acquiesce in measures that would make human survival possible.’⁵⁵ Given Russell’s advanced age of 88, it could be assumed that his initiative had little appeal to the CND’s young and disenchanted female supporters yet Carroll’s research suggests otherwise. The process of engaging in direct action, confronting the authorities and the risk of being arrested proved a highly formative experience for the young women who participated. Expressing a zeal for the movement, one respondent, Barbara Smoker noted:

The Committee of 100 really gave us an insight into politics and everything else. I think it was the most important— it only lasted for, you know, just a very short time— but it was the most important thing in life for a large number of people. We all say so. Everybody who was active in the Committee of 100 says that was the time, you know.⁵⁶

Faced with shifting practice within the field of protest the CND chose to stay its course. Following Russell’s resignation, the CND Executive Committee published a resolution reaffirming its objection to NVDA, a position it would maintain throughout the 1960s.⁵⁷ As disillusion grew with the CND’s practice of protest, bewilderment befell the CND’s Executive Committee. Even by the turn of the decade the exodus of support for the CND baffled its long-suffering General Secretary, Peggy Duff. In her memoir published in 1971, Duff penned a withering acknowledgement:

⁵⁴ Russell acrimoniously left the CND in the same year that he founded the Committee of 100.

⁵⁵ B. Russell, ‘Civil Disobedience’, *New Statesman*, 17 February, 1961, 6.

⁵⁶ Barbara Smoker cited in Carroll, “‘I Was Arrested at Greenham in 1962’”, 47.

⁵⁷ Collins, *Faith Under Fire*, 324.

[To] all the committees I suffered;
the anarchists who always shouted ‘Stuff Duff’
but most of all for the Aldermaston Marchers, whom I
loved— I wonder where they’re gone?⁵⁸

Diversification of the protest field and the rise of the Women’s Liberation Movement, 1965-1980

Exasperated with the practices of the CND, younger protesters departed from the CND fold and turned towards the escalating conflict of the United States’ intervention in Vietnam. In a study of British university protests, Ronald Fraser deftly summarises the shift that occurred within the protest field during the mid-1960s:

Unlike the Americans, they [the British] did not have to face their own war machine or the draft [...] The student activism of the CND and the New Left had been sunk by the Labour Party machine in the sands of the unilateral disarmament battle, leaving them no credible model of organisation [...] It was thus mainly in the single issue Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (VSC), originated in 1966 by a small Trotskyist group, and in university that the “common ground” of student activism was rediscovered.⁵⁹

Although there lies a temptation to assume that the protest field had simply switched focus from one single-issue campaign to another, the move towards opposing the Vietnam War ushered in a radical shift in the practice of British protest. Most notably, anti-Vietnam activism transnationalised protest movements. Despite the global implications of nuclear warfare, the CND remained staunchly in favour of unilateral disarmament. More than being a tactic of political pragmatism Jodi Burkett’s research suggests that the CND’s commitment to unilateral disarmament represented a legacy of British colonialism. Burkett concludes that the CND’s worldview became increasingly anachronistic and through asserting an ethos of ‘Christian morality, hard work, moderation and willingness to sacrifice’ the CND would have fit more easily into ‘a description of the 1940s than the ‘swinging sixties.’⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Duff, *Left, Left, Left*, i.

⁵⁹ R. Fraser, *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1988), 111.

⁶⁰ Burkett, ‘Re-defining British morality’, 205.

By contrast, the VSC was strongly internationalist in its conceptualisation of peace. The desire to galvanise a transnational activist network lay beyond the geographic practicalities of protesting a war fought in South-East Asia. The VSC protests were imbued with the rhetoric of anti-colonial internationalism. In his autobiography, Tariq Ali, a Pakistani-born, Oxford-educated activist described his growing involvement in the VSC:

The war in Vietnam [...] had become an obsession [...] it dominated my thoughts and actions... What made matters worse was the complete sense of powerlessness that one felt... I often thought about the possibilities of organising international brigades from Europe, Americas, and South Asia, which would enable some of us to fight side by side with the Vietnamese [...]⁶¹

Corollary to the development of a transnational network of protest, the anti-Vietnam protests were less hierarchical than their CND predecessor. Although the anti-Vietnam protests had their spokesmen, including Bertrand Russell and the New Left historian E.P. Thompson, they did little to claim ownership of the protest field. The vacuum of power within the protest field gave way to a multitude of actors. Alongside the more entrenched tactics of the Left, anarchist politics saw a resurgence amongst university protesters. For the poet, painter and anarchist sympathiser Jeff Nuttall, the new contours of the protest field were tinged with both a sense of remorse and exhilaration. In his memoir, *Bomb Culture*, first published in 1968, Nuttall describes the pity evoked in the act of observing a CND march:

Bright autumn day. A CND march going by, almost like hard sunlit ghosts, a passing dream. Incalculable remoteness, now, after Aldermaston. A kid gave me a handout and I stopped myself wanting to cry. Stop. Definitely. Just like that. Stop.⁶²

In mourning the loss of regimented protest, Nuttall found solace in the anarchistic, counter-culture movement. Instigated by the work of American 'beatnik' writers such as Jack Kerouac and William S. Burroughs and disseminated through the establishment of a transnational underground press, the counter-culture movement was pivotal in diversifying the tactics of protest. In a lexicon that would have been incomprehensible to the CND's Executive Committee, Nuttall described the growth of the counter-culture movement in 1966:

⁶¹ T. Ali, *Street Fighting Years: An Autobiography of the Sixties* (London: Fontana, 1987), 14.

⁶² J. Nuttall, *Bomb Culture* (London: Paladin, 1972), 140.

The Provos had erupted in Holland, giving a pattern for the Berlin Commune I, the New York anarchists and the New Orleans Copkillers with their recruiting station happenings. The Beatles made *Revolver* with all that it implied regarding the change of attitude (LSD again), and Timothy Leary, having been arrested on a pot charge, gained access to every conceivable publicity organ and spread the word at colossal speed. The badge movement spread, the sticker movement spread, the poster movement spread.⁶³

If the freneticism of the counter-culture movement significantly altered the structure of the protest field, it did little to further encourage active female participation. Amidst the bustle of New Left protest and the anarchist printing press, the experience of women activists was often one of isolation and conflicting emotions. Celia Hughes' research on young Left activists charts these tensions through a series of interviews with New Left activists. One respondent, Wisty Hoyland, recounted her experience of mixing in Left university groups:

I mean I arrived at university, at London University with fairly passionate feelings about all these things, about justice, etcetera... but then there was also this conflict because there was this sort of feeling that, you know, when I was exposed to men at university, this feeling that somehow you weren't sort of looked upon as an equal. You were looked upon... I remember one guy saying, oh well we judge women in terms of their fuckability.⁶⁴

Cloaked in the language of emancipation, the new social movements of the 1960s seemed only to replicate the gendered, doxic assumptions of the earlier protest movement. However, the innovations of practice within the field, both in terms of transnationalism and anti-hierarchical structure, indirectly started to benefit female activists. At the same time as activists like Nuttall turned towards the US 'beatnik' writers as a source of inspiration women found new modes of expression in the increasingly transnationalised Women's Liberation Movement. With the distribution of feminist texts such as the American author Betty Friedan's *The Feminist Mystique*, British women tentatively drew the connections between political activism and feminism. In a 1978 issue of the feminist magazine *Spare Rib*, a 42-

⁶³ *ibid*, 186.

⁶⁴ Wisty Hoyland cited in Hughes, *Young Lives on the Left*, 128.

year-old Audrey Battersby recounted attending a 1969 short-course titled; ‘The Role of Women in Society’ where she read the work of Friedan, Hannah Gavron and Shulamith Firestone. Battersby remarked:

Then the bells rang and the connections were made and there was that feeling of excitement a dawning sense of militancy that I’d never experienced before despite involvement in various left-wing groups. I was no longer alone, but part of a movement which was primarily political but could be personal to me.⁶⁵

The tentative steps towards a renewed feminist movement during the 1960s showed a feminist appropriation of anti-war and anti-racism rhetoric. As Anna Coote and Beatrix Campbell note in their study of the British Women’s Liberation Movement, the language of anti-colonialism and Black Liberation were cribbed by British feminists in an attempt to express their position as women. While the phrase, ‘racism with roses’ was substituted with ‘sexism’, the term ‘chauvinism’ morphed from a critique of US action in Vietnam to a pejorative term for the male oppression of women.⁶⁶

While the early British Women’s Liberation Movement derived a considerable amount of inspiration from a Left, anti-war tradition, by the late 1960s, it had become increasingly critical of its socialist origins. In 1969, fuelled by the perceived neglect of women within Left-wing circles the English academic Sheila Rowbotham wrote the pamphlet ‘Women’s Liberation and the New Politics’, stating:

Unless the internal process of subjugation is understood, unless the language of silence is experienced from inside and translated into the language of the oppressed communicating themselves, male hegemony will remain. Without such a translation, Marxism will not be really meaningful.⁶⁷

For Nancy Fraser, it is the sentiment expressed by the likes of Rowbotham that put in motion a critical shift within the feminist movement. By the late 1960s, the feminism that had been intimately tied to precepts of socialism had begun to gradually slip its moorings. Although

⁶⁵ A. Battersby, ‘Nine Years Together: A history of a Women’s Liberation Group’, *Spare Rib*, April 1978, 44.

⁶⁶ A. Coote and B. Campbell, *Sweet Freedom: The Struggle for Women’s Liberation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 6.

⁶⁷ S. Rowbotham, ‘Women’s Liberation and New Politics’, *Spokesman Pamphlet* 17 (1969).

Fraser retrospectively questions the merits of such a shift, she herself acknowledges contemporary sense of jubilation during the 1970s:

Second-wave feminism thrived in these new conditions. What had begun as a radical countercultural movement was now *en route* to become a broad-based mass social phenomenon. Attracting adherents of every class, ethnicity, nationality and political ideology, feminist ideas found their way into every nook and cranny of social life and transformed the self-understanding of all whom they touched.⁶⁸

The 1970s marked a high tide for the British Women's Liberation Movement. Increasingly unbound from the restrictive doxa of Left-wing activist groups, women set about developing their own practices of protest. Reflecting the anti-war movement, feminism of the 1970s was also marked by anti-hierarchical tendencies. Although the movement was broadly categorised as the 'Women's Liberation' movement, the term referred to no particular actors or institutions. The lack of structure of the Women's Liberation Movement greatly contributed to the proliferation and diversity of feminist thought over the course of the decade. The medium through which feminist thought was transmitted also shifted. In addition to the emergence of academic journals such as *Women's History Review*, *Gender and History* and *Feminist Review*, a series of women's magazines were also published: *Women's Report* (1972-9), *Red Rag* (1972-1980) and most enduring, *Spare Rib* (1972-1993). As Martin Pugh notes, testament to a move away from the Left, *Spare Rib* adopted a non-sectarian approach, deliberately publishing in a format similar to conventional women's magazines in a bid to attract less-committed women.⁶⁹ This tactic proved highly successful, by the mid-1970s sales of the magazine had reached 30,000.⁷⁰

With both a movement away from its socialist base and a plurality of channels through which feminist thought could be disseminated, the Women's Liberation Movement had found a position from where to tackle myriad women's issues. Campaigns ran the gambit from violence against women to access to contraceptives to equal rights in the workplace. By the late 1970s, some women's groups started to engage with issues previously unbroached through a feminist paradigm. Spurred on by American environmental protests, British women

⁶⁸ N. Fraser, 'Feminism, Capitalism and the Cunning of History', *New Left Review* 56 (2009), 107-108.

⁶⁹ Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain*, 269.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

began to draw a link between feminism and environmentalism. One year before Ann Pettitt proposed the march to Greenham, *Spare Rib* launched its ‘Take the toys away from the boys’ campaign. Formulated in response to the 1979 government agreement to place 160 cruise missiles in Britain, *Spare Rib* asked its readers:

What has nuclear war got to do with women? It certainly wasn’t our idea. Yet however peacefully most of us— Margaret Thatcher excepted— want to live our lives, we will all be targets if there is a nuclear war. Even so, isn’t it really a human issue, not intrinsically connected to feminism?

I think there *is* a connection. Like a lot of other feminists, I am convinced that nuclear weapons and nuclear power are in fact the most brutal manifestation yet of the murderous patriarchal system which has brought about so much misery throughout recorded history.⁷¹

The article concluded with a ‘What we can do section’ encouraging women to join the CND and attend meetings of the newly-formed Feminists Against Nuclear Power and Women Oppose the Nuclear Threat (WONT) groups.⁷² In its embryonic state, the feminist antinuclear argument required nuance and refining but through an engagement with the wider field of protest, a shared antinuclear, feminist protest field was now conceivable.

⁷¹ L. Whitman, ‘Nuclear Weapons: Stay Home and Die’, *Spare Rib*, November 1980, 50.

⁷² *ibid*, 51.



Figure 1 (above) and **Figure 2** (below): By 1980 *Spare Rib* would draw the connections between nuclear proliferation and patriarchal oppression.



Chapter 2— Whose Greenham? A mixed protest to a women-only space, 1981-1983

If a women's march to Greenham appeared conceivable to Ann Pettitt by the late summer of 1981, the contours and ramifications of a feminist antinuclear movement were yet to be decided. It was only at the protest site of Greenham that the practicalities of a feminist antinuclear movement would be tested and carved-out through experience. What in theory seemed feasible proved chaotic in practice. The purpose of this chapter is to delineate the tensions that emerged both between and within the CND and Women's Liberation Movement and to show how such clashes constructed new practices of protest.

Constructing a peace camp

Given the rapid development and diversification of the protest field since the Aldermaston marches of the 1960s, the modest origins of Greenham appear historically incongruent. Rather than speaking in the rhetoric of the Women's Liberation Movement, Pettitt's account of the choice to march to Greenham was more in keeping with the language of the female protesters of the early CND. Dissatisfied with perceived inaction of their local CND branch and fearing a 're-run of the CND campaigns of the sixties', Pettitt gathered three friends and CND activists, Karmen Cutler, Lynne Whittmore and Liney Seward in Cutler's home in Bettws, Newport, and began the process of planning a march to the proposed location of the cruise missiles, RAF Greenham.⁷³ As the parents of six young children, the language of Pettitt, Cutler, Whittmore and Seward was steeped in maternal allusions. Indeed, Pettitt's stated reason for organising the march of Women for Life on Earth (as they now referred to themselves), emphasised the notion of maternal responsibility:

The big-brush facts were these: men, overwhelmingly, made decisions about wars, how to fight them and what weapons to own and use to threaten real or illusory enemies. Civilians, overwhelmingly, suffered the consequences, and of those

⁷³ Pettitt, *Walking to Greenham*, 26.

civilians, women and children would always be predominant and would if they were to survive a nuclear war, be the ones to give birth to deformed babies.⁷⁴

While Pettitt and her collaborators stance emphasised the centrality of women's agency in protesting nuclear proliferation, there was little suggestion in 1981 that men should be explicitly excluded from the protest. This decision derived from two factors: Firstly, a sense of ambivalence towards feminism existed amongst the women. If 1970s feminism had drawn links between nuclear weaponry and women's rights, many women were still wary of explicitly associating with a feminist movement. Pettitt expressed concern in advertising the march as a women-only event: 'We were worried we might be giving off mixed messages and alienating not only men, but also women who might associate us with the simplistic, anti-men style of feminism that so obscured and distorted the facts of women's inequalities.'⁷⁵

Secondly, the decision was based on pragmatic reasoning. In its embryonic state, the Greenham protest was in dire need of funding. Although Pettitt and her collaborators were disgruntled with the CND's reaction to the placement of cruise missiles in Britain, they required grants and access to CND supporters' facilities as a means of accommodation for marchers. A too radical break from the norms of past protest would jeopardise the march before its commencement. Despite a period of subsistence during the 1970s, the CND had maintained a functioning Executive Committee throughout the decade and remained the 'go-to' organisation for any protest that fell under the purview of antinuclear activism.⁷⁶ After repeated attempts to engage the CND's Executive Committee, the Women for Life on Earth received a cheque for £250 to cover advertising and leafleting. With funding secured, on 27 August 1981 a group of around fifty advert respondents and CND members set off on the 180km march from Cardiff to Greenham Common.

In contrast to the micro-managed CND Aldermaston marches of the 1960s, the Greenham march had little in the way of structure. Accommodation was arranged *ad hoc* and marchers joined mid-route. The air of spontaneity gave way to the carnivalesque, a brass band joined the march in Bath and marchers smoked 'west Wales home-grown marijuana' en route to

⁷⁴ *ibid*, 41.

⁷⁵ *ibid*, 40-41.

⁷⁶ For a succinct account of the CND during the 1970s see J. Minnion and P. Bolsover (eds.), *The CND Story* (London: Allison & Busby, 1983), 68-80.

Melcham.⁷⁷ In the evenings the marchers discussed the aim of the protest. In a collection of interviews edited by Greenham protesters Barbara Harford and Sarah Hopkins, Jayne Burton, the youngest protester on the march discussed the sense of liberation associated with talking in a women's space. After joining the march upon reading an advert in *The Guardian*, she noted: 'I didn't really get the fuss at the time— but I do now, and thank goodness for all the women who boldly speak out for their sisters. Special space and consideration for women doesn't just happen, it has to be worked for.'⁷⁸

The impromptu meetings of the march not only had an emancipatory effect on the marchers but were also important in shaping the objectives of the protest. Free from the bureaucratic tendencies of the early CND meetings, new ideas regarding the practice of protest were given greater consideration. The initial objective of the march was that upon reaching Greenham, the protesters would demand a televised debate with Margaret Thatcher's Defence Secretary, John Nott.⁷⁹ However, faced with the prospect of dwindling media coverage, Whittemore and Seward proposed a more radical approach. Invoking the protest tactics of the suffragettes, they proposed that the marchers should chain themselves to the fence of the airbase.⁸⁰

Indicative of the non-hierarchical structure of the march, the plan encountered little dissension and one day before the march would formally reach Greenham, a group of four women set off to chain themselves to the base. Eunice Stellard, a Welsh grandmother described the action in the same maternal terms as Pettitt's given reason for marching:

I hadn't slept much on Friday night. I imagined myself chained to the gate with guards with wire-cutters and dogs around me. I was positive I was going to be hurt. Then police cells and court and jail! I was glad to see dawn break, to get going, to get it done with and see it through. My grandson's sunhat and my granddaughter's sleeping bag and snapshots of my other grandchildren made me feel they were near to me.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Pettitt, *Walking to Greenham*, 57.

⁷⁸ Jayne Burton cited in Harford and Hopkins (eds.), *Greenham Common*, 13.

⁷⁹ D. Fairhall, *Common Ground: The Story of Greenham* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 5.

⁸⁰ Pettitt, *Walking to Greenham*, 57.

⁸¹ Eunice Stellard cited in Harford and Hopkins (eds.), *Greenham Common*, 14.

Although the march would still formally deliver its demand to the commander of the base, the perceived success of the first action pivotally changed the practice of the Greenham protesters. With a decision made to start camping at the air base, NVDA became the *modus operandi* of the protesters. The continued presence of protesters at the base was marked by hardship and growing popularity in equal measure. More permanent structures were erected, harsh weather was endured, women were arrested and in late December 1981, the camp faced a large-scale eviction.

The first major shift in camp practice came in February 1982. After a group meeting, it was decided that the camp would become a strictly women-only endeavour. In keeping with the protocol of the march, the decision held little formality. Sarah Green, a woman from Sheffield who had previously worked in mental healthcare before moving to the camp, noted: ‘When we had our first women-only meeting it was unanimous that we wanted the camp and the actions to be women only [...] but we didn’t think of the practicalities. We got carried away with the idea that this was what we wanted to do.’⁸² Once again, the assertion would be made that the decision to exclude men was based upon pragmatic grounds. Although Pettitt was not present at the time she recounted that the decision for the remaining men to leave occurred as ‘they [the male protesters] seemed to have overstayed their welcome and had not endeared themselves by attracting more young men from the town and by showing the usual aversion to housework, albeit open-air housework.’⁸³

Whose feminism? The relationship between the women’s movement and the early protest camp

With the decision to make Greenham an exclusively women’s peace camp, it became increasingly difficult for the Greenham women to de-couple the protest from the Women’s Liberation Movement. Although magazines such as *Spare Rib* saw the potential of Greenham as a feminist protest site from the outset, its contributors remained wary of its mixed status. One woman, Connie Mansueto, writing on the topic of Greenham in the November 1981 edition of *Spare Rib* noted: ‘Personally, I’m in a women-only antinuclear group because I think atom bombs are an expression of male violence [...], Despite the differences I felt inspired by the [Greenham] camp, and I admire their intention to live out there until we

⁸² Sarah Green cited in *ibid*, 32.

⁸³ Pettitt, *Walking to Greenham*, 143.

refuse cruise.’⁸⁴ After the decision to expel men from the camp, *Spare Rib*’s rhetoric altered from a position of cautious encouragement to one of general support. The March 1981 edition of *Spare Rib* published a lead article titled ‘Greenham Common Women Camp On’. Over the spread of a page, *Spare Rib* reiterated the announcement that the Camp was to be women-only, reported on the geo-political consequences of nuclear war and printed a statement by Greenham women calling for *Spare Rib* readers to ‘support us either with your presence or vociferously in the media.’⁸⁵

The nexus between Greenham Common and feminist magazines such as *Spare Rib* proved crucial in fostering feminist presence at Greenham. Over the course of 1982 and 1983, *Spare Rib* devoted an increasing amount of column space to the peace camp. Requests by Greenham women for blankets, transport, food and shelter inundated the letters section of *Spare Rib* and in turn, the magazine frequently issued reports from the camp detailing trials and tribulations and accounts of sisterly camaraderie between the protesters. Further drawing the connection between feminism and antinuclear protest, the January 1983 *Spare Rib* published a survey showing that the majority of female respondents (64%) favoured banning cruise missile.⁸⁶ Alongside issues of domestic abuse, workplace discrimination and fertility rights, antinuclear activism became a recurring theme within *Spare Rib*’s media repertoire.

Although feminist magazines became the popular mouthpiece of the Greenham protests, they did not represent a unanimous consensus within the Women’s Liberation Movement. Just as Pettitt held reservations about the motives and efficacy of the 1970s Women’s Liberation Movement, some feminists held a reticence towards the Greenham Women. For those who still viewed feminism within a socialist rubric, feminist antinuclear protest ran the risk of solipsism. In 1982, the *Anti Nuclear Action* magazine went into publication. Labelled as a ‘discussion magazine for socialists & feminists in CND’ the magazine directed most of its criticism at the CND’s ‘soap-sud’ tactics which ‘generally is fighting shy of discussing the politics behind the campaign.’⁸⁷ In addressing the issue of Greenham, the magazine was largely supportive of the camp but it stressed the need to link any antinuclear protest to an ‘internationalist, anti-imperialist, anti-sexist, anti-capitalist agenda.’⁸⁸

⁸⁴ C. Mansueto, ‘And men too?’, *Spare Rib*, November 1981, 9-10.

⁸⁵ A. Tunnicliffe, ‘Greenham Women Camp On’, *Spare Rib*, March 1982, 16.

⁸⁶ Manny, ‘Whose Security’, *Spare Rib*, January 1983, 15.

⁸⁷ ‘A Magazine for Activists’, *Anti Nuclear Action* issue 1 (1982), 1.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

For other feminists, Greenham represented something more pernicious than unfulfilled potential. On 10 April 1983, a group of self-proclaimed ‘radical feminists’ attended a London workshop called: ‘The Women’s Liberation Movement versus The Women’s Peace Movement or How Dare You Presume I went to Greenham?’ The workshop resulted in a collection of essays published under the title *Breaching the Peace*. In an argument closely resembling Fraser’s retrospective critique of post-war feminism, Frankie Green’s opening contribution to the collection, ‘Not Weaving But Frowning’ sets out an overarching argument against a women’s peace movement. Green’s explanation is worth quoting at length:

I don’t feel I ought to need to explain myself to other feminists about this. But the issue of guilt creeps in here because there does seem to be an assumption floating in the air that Greenham is where it’s at, and there’s an element of unquestioning acceptance of this that I think makes it hard to discuss it critically, which makes me uneasy and angry. I see the current development of the ‘women’s peace movement’ as it’s come to be called, not as a widening out of feminist struggle but in context and as part of the liberalisation of feminism and the decline of the Women’s Liberation Movement over the past few years. Women are now doing many things together, but this of itself, is not necessarily feminist— whatever it is, the mere fact that it’s women doing it is not enough, if it does not have feminist analysis, process and aims.⁸⁹

Through framing Greenham within the teleology of feminist protest Green *et al.* constructed a twofold criticism of the peace camp based upon precedent and practice. Despite the resurgence feminism experienced during the 1970s, some feminists were highly circumspect of the position the Women’s Liberation Movement had achieved and all too aware of the movement’s fragility. In an essay ‘Is Greenham Feminist?’ a group of conference attendees noted the co-option and collapse of the British feminist movement during the inter-war period:

Historically, feminism has always been co-opted and diffused once it has appeared to achieve some of its immediate aims. Between 1914 and the Second World War the energies of many militant feminists were redirected into the ‘greater threat’ of

⁸⁹ F. Green, ‘Weaving not Frowning’, *Breaching the Peace*, 7.

impending war (as pacifists or pro-war nationalists). The achievement of legislative changes led some women in the 1920's to believe that they had achieved the goals of feminism. These women called their retreat from feminism the 'new feminism' and poured their energies into 'human' as opposed to feminist campaigns. It could be that a similar situation is developing now.'⁹⁰

The second criticism of the Greenham women spoke less to the precedent of feminist protest but more to the perceived practices of those outside the base. For the contributors to *Breaching the Peace*, Greenham represented a highly essentialist representation of women. In an article originally published in the magazine *Scarlet Woman*, Lynn Alderson expressed consternation at the conservative notion of femininity reproduced by the Greenham women:

I was disturbed to see a picture in the newspaper [...] of a Greenham Common woman giving her blessing to the statue of 'Peace' outside the G.L.C. [Greater London Council headquarters]. The statue looks like a 60's model, young, thin woman in shorts with long, straight hair (obviously white), holding a dove. The airforce base is "embraced" and covered with (mostly) baby clothes and pictures. All this is precisely the kind of protest that is expected of and allowed to women. It is the traditional voice of the poor woman left at home who can only use emotional appeals (on *others'* behalfs) to influence those that do have power.'⁹¹

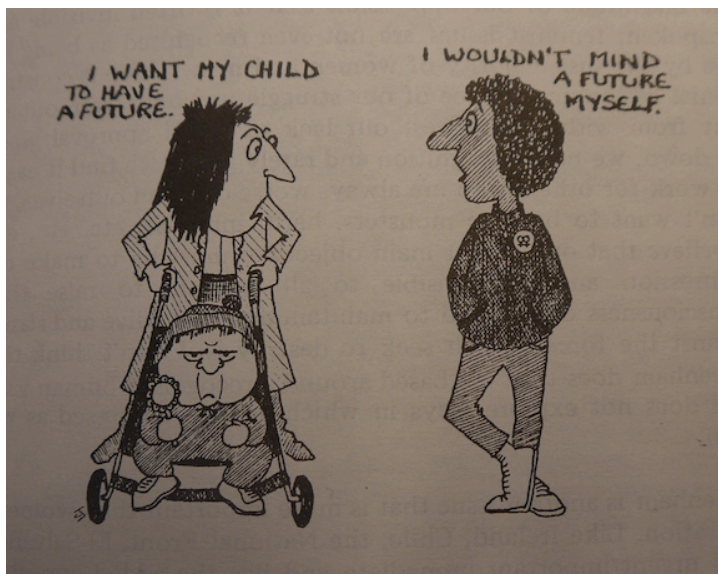


Figure 3: Cartoon from *Breaching the Peace*. The authors of the collected essays expressed concern towards the ambiguous feminism of the early Greenham protests.

⁹⁰ L. Bellos, Carolle Berry et al., 'Is Greenham Feminist?', *ibid*, 19.

⁹¹ L. Alderson, 'Greenham Common and all that... A Radical Feminist View', *ibid*, 11.

Although the concerns held by the contributors to both the *ANA* magazine and *Breaching the Peace* were well grounded in socialist and feminist discourse they purvey a sense of helplessness in response to a rapidly emerging new form of feminist protest. Any attempt by socialist factions to control the protest space at Greenham Common were quickly rebuffed. In a letter published in the May 1983 edition of *Spare Rib*, a woman referred to as Janet from Coventry detailed the presence of male Socialist Worker Party activists at Greenham. She noted: ‘Their behavior has outraged and exhausted us. They showed total contempt for the spirit and nature of the picket outside the court and for the Greenham Womens’ action generally. Yet by the looks of their posters and leaflets they seem to be supporting (read exploiting) the events at Greenham. Women be warned.’⁹² In no uncertain terms the missive made clear that Greenham would not be an exclusively socialist feminist project.

In conjunction to the dismissal of socialist support, the Greenham women increasingly resisted the assertion that Greenham was not feminist. Shortly after the publication of *Breaching the Peace*, a rebuttal titled *Raging Womyn* was penned by Jane Freer, a Greenham protester.⁹³ Freer, who moved to Greenham in March 1982, argued that instead of ‘sniping at our peace sisters’, the Women’s Liberation Movement must ‘show the political realism we are so often accused of lacking and participate in these groups or at least in some of their actions, bringing a sense of sisterhood and a feminist analysis with our suggestions about group structure and process.’⁹⁴ Freer’s argumentation for a feminist peace camp is one that derives more prominently from experience than theory. Having lived at the peace camp for over a year at the time of writing, Freer noted, ‘More womin pass through Greenham than any women’s centre I’ve ever known, and feel a strength that such centres in their cliqueiness and defensive unfriendliness often lack [...] I have recently begun to wonder if feminist politics are isolationist. Greenham has shown me another approach— more open-handed and understanding.’⁹⁵

Not only does Freer’s *Raging Womyn* provide an insight into the Greenham protester’s understanding of feminism but its also suggests a shift in camp demographics between 1981

⁹² Janet, ‘Greenham— Anger and Cynicism’, *Spare Rib*, May 1983, 23.

⁹³ J. Freer, *Raging Womyn: A Reply to Breaching the Peace* (1984); The alternate spelling of ‘woman’ which can include ‘womyn’, ‘wombon’ and ‘wommon’ was typically used as an expression of women’s liberation and stood as a rejection to the male norm associated with the word ‘woman’. See D. Spender, *Man Made Language* (London: Pandora, 1998).

⁹⁴ Freer, *Raging Womyn*, 4.

⁹⁵ *ibid*, 5.

and 1983. Freer self-identified as a ‘radical lesbian’ and while she suggested that ‘many of the women who marched from Cardiff and established the early camp were and remain male identified and anti-lesbian’, by 1983 their presence was in decline.⁹⁶ Freer observed that ‘Lesbians at the camp were openly affectionate’ and even went as far to suggest that ‘Greenham is at the moment the most vigorous force for lesbian liberation in the world that I know of.’⁹⁷ Freer’s statement is also supported by the research of Roseneil. In a study of 35 Greenham activists, Roseneil observed that of those who joined the camp in 1981, only 10% identified as lesbian. In contrast, this figure rose to 42% and 67% in 1982 and 1983 respectively.⁹⁸

Whose antinuclear protest? The relationship between the CND and the early protest camp

Although Freer’s observations were directed towards the Women’s Liberation Movement, the introduction to the pamphlet highlights another tension that had emerged between the camp and external actors. In a moment of anger, Freer recounted setting fire to 5,000 CND published Greenham newsletters.⁹⁹ Dissatisfied with CND editing, Freer decided to rectify the issue with an act of arson. While Freer claimed to have been chastised by other Greenham women for her behaviour, her actions constituted one of several incidents that indicated friction between the peace camp and the CND.

By 1983 Greenham had become an increasing source of frustration for the CND. What had once been a promising protest site had quickly turned into a battleground of conflicting opinion and dissension. Central to the organisation’s position towards Greenham in the 1980s was the movement’s acute awareness of past failure. Acknowledging the shortcomings of the 1960s, the CND’s Executive Committee were influenced by a profound sense of retrospection. Consequently the CND of the 1980s invested a significant amount of capital into analysing past mistakes and strategizing methods of inclusion. Studies were published, forward planning meetings were held and market research was commissioned. The unifying theme of the organisation’s effort to modernise was an expansion of its support base. While the Labour Party and Trade Unions would still remain a key demographic for the CND’s

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, 4.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, 7.

⁹⁸ Roseneil, *Disarming patriarchy*, 173-174.

⁹⁹ Freer, *Raging Womyn*, 2.

Executive Committee, the sentiment prevailed that support must be supplemented by the inclusion of other civil society actors. The CND commissioned publication, *The CND Story*, acted as a handbook for how the organisation envisaged its future role in British society. In addition to the opinion that it must not be viewed as an acolyte of the Labour party, the chapter ‘Many allies-we need them all’ provided policy suggestions for how the CND may foster support within the Church, the environmentalist movement and amongst Welsh and Scottish nationalists.¹⁰⁰

Market research sought to target potential CND supporters at the individual rather than the group level. In early 1982 the CND Executive Committee commissioned market research detailing media representation of the CND. The report went to great lengths as to how the campaign might garner the support of youths, ethnic minorities and most notably women. Acknowledging the inherent gender bias of the British press, the report suggested how the CND might navigate such obstacles:

These ubiquitous, culturally acquired and constructed beliefs about masculinity and femininity can be mobilised both for and against a position/argument. Awareness of these possibilities gives some ground for manoeuvre to CND. Firstly there is potential for change; as these stereotypes acquire meaning only through use, changing the use (e.g. feminising strength, masculinising empathy) can also change the meaning. Secondly, it should be possible to safeguard against a hostile reporter setting CND events/arguments within a framework that mobilises feelings of normality and self-identity against CND.¹⁰¹

In the early 1980s the CND’s attempt to expand its collective and individual support base appeared to be paying off. Between 1979 and 1982, membership surged from 4,287 to approximately 50,000 members. Corollary to the rise in individual membership was an increase in organisations affiliated to the CND, growing from 274 to approximately 1000 organisations in 1982.¹⁰² A cautious sense of optimism circulated amongst the CND’s higher echelons. In 1981 CND General Secretary Bruce Kent, a Roman Catholic priest, reported to the CND annual conference that the CND had become ‘a household word again and a very

¹⁰⁰ Minnion and Bolsover (eds.), *The CND Story*, 124-138

¹⁰¹ Media Group, ‘Media Representations of CND’, 24 October 1981, CND2008/7/6/18.

¹⁰² For a comprehensive list of CND membership 1970-1982 see Minnion and Bolsover (eds.), *The CND Story*, 150.

considerable influence which cannot be ignored in this country'.¹⁰³ Kent's assessment in 1981 was accurate, but the new structure of the CND came at a cost. The widening of the CND's support base could only be maintained with a continual forfeiture of control over the antinuclear movement. The Greenham Common Peace Camp would test the durability of the CND's new resolve to its very limits.

As Pettitt suggested, the Women For Life on Earth march to Greenham elicited little interest within the CND's Executive Committee. The ambivalent attitude of the CND towards the Greenham march and early camp reflects less of a gender bias than the overwhelming administrative burden placed on the CND. In 1981, the movement had 11 employees and an intake of 15 000 members.¹⁰⁴ Early CND support for the camp was limited to symbolic gestures. In November 1981, the CND Chairperson Joan Ruddock made a visit to the camp showing what one camper, Caroline Taylor described as the 'first hint of CND approval' while later in December Kent would cursorily praise, the 'now famous' peace camp at Greenham during the CND annual conference.¹⁰⁵

With the camp in a clearly subordinate position to the CND, the status quo of the antinuclear movement was maintained. However, as Greenham acclaimed more prestige within the protest field, the CND faced a dilemma. During 1982, events at Greenham escalated quicker than the highly bureaucratic structure of the CND could keep pace with. In February 1982 the camp became women-only and by 12 December, 30,000 women would encircle the base as a symbol of solidarity. Reflecting upon the event, *The Guardian* journalist, Paul Brown noted: 'While the highly organised CND suffers from brushes with bureaucracy, the leaderless women's peace movement uses bush telegraph and keeps on growing.'¹⁰⁶ Although the CND remained nominally the voice of antinuclear activism, it was Greenham that seized the public imagination.

Forced to act or face further accusations of irrelevancy, in 1983 the CND opted to incorporate the Greenham protest into a large-scale Easter demonstration. Symbolically, the event would incorporate the new image of antinuclear protest with the old, creating a 22km, 70,000 person human chain from Greenham Common via Aldermaston to the Burghfield ordnance factory.

¹⁰³ Bruce Kent, 'Opening address to CND conference', 13 November 1981, CND2008/5/19.

¹⁰⁴ Minnion and Bolsover (eds.), *The CND Story*, 150.

¹⁰⁵ CND annual conference report, 13-15 November 1981, CND2008/5/19.

¹⁰⁶ P. Brown, 'Leaderless peace movement keeps law at arms length', *The Guardian*, 31 March 1983, 5.

Although a CND memorandum predicted that the event would give ‘rise to some controversy’, the furore that ensued the march far exceeded expectations.¹⁰⁷ In the months following the march, the CND received a slew of letters criticising its handling of the situation. While some marchers chastised the CND for condoning the women’s action at Greenham, others accused the CND of sabotaging the Greenham women’s initiative.¹⁰⁸

Pushed into a corner, the CND approached various media channels in an attempt to rectify the issue. As the most prominent female member of the CND, its Chairperson Joan Ruddock gave an interview with the popular women’s magazine *Women’s World*.¹⁰⁹ In the interview Ruddock played the precarious game of appearing progressive enough to appeal to feminist readers yet sufficiently cautious as not too perturb a more conservative audience. While Ruddock claimed to be suspicious of ‘generalisations about women somehow having a deeper understanding of the need for peace’ she professed that ‘women have greater imaginations. They can visualise vividly the pain and suffering that would follow a nuclear attack.’¹¹⁰ When alluding to Greenham, she noted:

The press is always trying to smear the movement by concentrating on its more extreme wings. Take the Greenham Common women: they are just a small, though significant, part of the campaign and I don’t think there are many who would doubt their sincerity and courage. The media seizes on one tiny group like this and sensationalises it out of all proportion. They ignore all the thousands of men and women who work for disarmament in more orthodox ways. It just doesn’t make a good enough “story”.¹¹¹

The CND also used its official publication *Sanity* as a means to quell dissent between pro- and anti-Greenham, CND supporters. Presented as a ‘debate’ within the CND community, the magazine ran three opinion pieces between March and May 1983. Although the April issue of *Sanity* detailed the advantages of a women-only peace camp, the March and May editions struck an admonishing tone. In an attempt to return Greenham to the CND fold, Annie

¹⁰⁷ CND Executive Committee internal memorandum, undated, CND2008/8/5/25.

¹⁰⁸ Barbra Beneyk letter to CND, 31 January 1983, CND2008/8/5/25.

¹⁰⁹ Much to the irritation of the Greenham women, Ruddock referred to her position by the gender-neutral term ‘Chairperson’. See C. Cockburn, *Anti-militarism, Political and Gender Dynamics of Peace Movements* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 42.

¹¹⁰ ‘Something to Say— Joan Ruddock’, *Woman’s World*, July 1983, 10.

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

Tunncliffe's 'Let's get on with it together' and Sue Spiller's 'Now is the time to reclaim Greenham' fused a critical interpretation of feminism with a clear message of CND proprietorship over the Greenham protest site. Reminding the readers of Greenham's mixed gender origins, Tunncliffe lamented that 'over the past year I have sometimes felt there was more sisterhood in a bus queue than in the women's peace movement and more compassion generally.'¹¹² Subsequently Spiller noted: 'What [...] concerns me is that because the Greenham Common campaign is a women-only action, it is seen by press and public as being a separate campaign from the mixed CND one. As a result, the public may imagine that there are splits and conflicts within the peace movement, and this weakens our overall case.'¹¹³

For the editorial board of *Sanity*, the contributions of Tunncliffe and Spiller had sufficiently constructed consensus within the antinuclear movement. An editorial comment in the 'letters' section observed: 'Annie Tunncliffe's first shot in our three part debate on Women and the Peace Movement (*Sanity*, March) gave us our biggest mail bag for years. Nine out of ten letters supported what she had to say.'¹¹⁴ Although *Sanity* presented a resolution carved out through democratic consensus to its readers, it bore little reflection to the reality of the situation. The opinions of Greenham women within the magazine's debate were notable only by their absence. The optimistic rhetoric of the CND's publications became increasingly divergent from the confusion and consternation expressed within the CND Executive Committee's internal memoranda.

Towards the end of 1983, CND communication with the camp at Greenham had almost broken down. In a desperate attempt to restore relations between the camp and CND, Bruce Kent visited Greenham on 25 October with the proposal of a mixed, torch-lit vigil at the base on 10 December 1983.¹¹⁵ However, the women rebuffed the proposal and on 22 November, the CND's Executive Committee acknowledged the impossibility of the situation. The committee noted that, 'The now painful disputes regarding the claims that only exclusively female actions should take place at Greenham have escalated into an area of confusion and have resulted in the present impasse regarding our national response as a wide-spread movement.'¹¹⁶ Lacking any further initiative, it was decided to settle the issue at the CND

¹¹² A. Tunncliffe, 'Let's get on with it together', *Sanity*, March 1983, 10.

¹¹³ S. Spiller, 'Now is the time to reclaim Greenham', *Sanity*, May 1983, 14.

¹¹⁴ 'A Letter Special: CND and feminism', *ibid*, 27.

¹¹⁵ Bruce Kent, 'Direct action thoughts', 26 October 1983, CND2008/8/3/9.

¹¹⁶ Projects Committee briefing, 22 November 1983, CND2008/8/1/37.

annual conference. After a final plea from Kent to the conference attendees to not allow ‘divisions to grow’, the conference voted in favour of supporting the independent actions of the Greenham women.¹¹⁷ In passing the resolution, the CND finally acknowledged the actuality of an autonomous women’s antinuclear movement.

The early 1980s proved a formative period for the women’s antinuclear movement. In resisting the women’s movement, socialist intervention and the CND, the Greenham women not only endured but in doing so justified a protest that simultaneously held feminist and antinuclear aspirations. While some activists within the CND and women’s movement would continue to remain sceptical of Greenham’s position within the wider protest field by 1983, even its staunchest critics were forced to accept Greenham as a key feature in the landscape of popular protest.

¹¹⁷ List of annual conference resolutions, 2-4 December 1982, CND2008/5/29.

Chapter 3— Constructing a feminist peace? Innovation at Greenham and CND reform, 1984-1987

The relative independence that the Greenham women had achieved by the end of 1983 was hard won. While their insistence upon maintaining distance from both the CND and the broader Women's Liberation Movement put the camp at risk of marginalisation, the decision was twinned with a profound sense of liberty. Detached from the wider protest field, the Greenham Common Peace Camp became a crucible for new practices of protest. This chapter will chart how such practices developed and how in turn they were incorporated into the wider antinuclear movement.

Although the number of women present at the camp fluctuated significantly during the 1980s, ranging from well over a 1,000 women campers to only a handful at low points, the period between 1981 and 1985 was marked by a notable increase in camp infrastructure. As the camp grew from 1981 onwards, sub-camps were erected around the additional gates of the airbase. By 31 December 1983, the final gate to the base was camped, marking a complete encirclement of RAF Greenham Common.¹¹⁸ Demarcated by different colours, each of the sub-camps developed their own focus of protest. An annotated map of Greenham from Greenham protester Lyn Barlow's collected papers shows the different campaigns each sub-camp adopted (see Figure 4). While antinuclear activism remained the camp's *raison d'être*, the Greenham women's critique of nuclear patriarchy had come to incorporate myriad concerns. The issues included: violence against women and women in prison (Yellow gate); a nuclear free and independent Pacific; nuclear dumping, transport and testing (Green gate); animal liberation, anarchism, veganism (Blue gate); Christian vigil (Indigo gate); Eastern Europe and U.S.S.R dissidents (Violet gate); and food, aid and development (Red gate).¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Harford and Hopkins (eds.), *Greenham Common*, iv.

¹¹⁹ Greenham map, undated. Collected papers of Lyn Barlow, 7LBA.

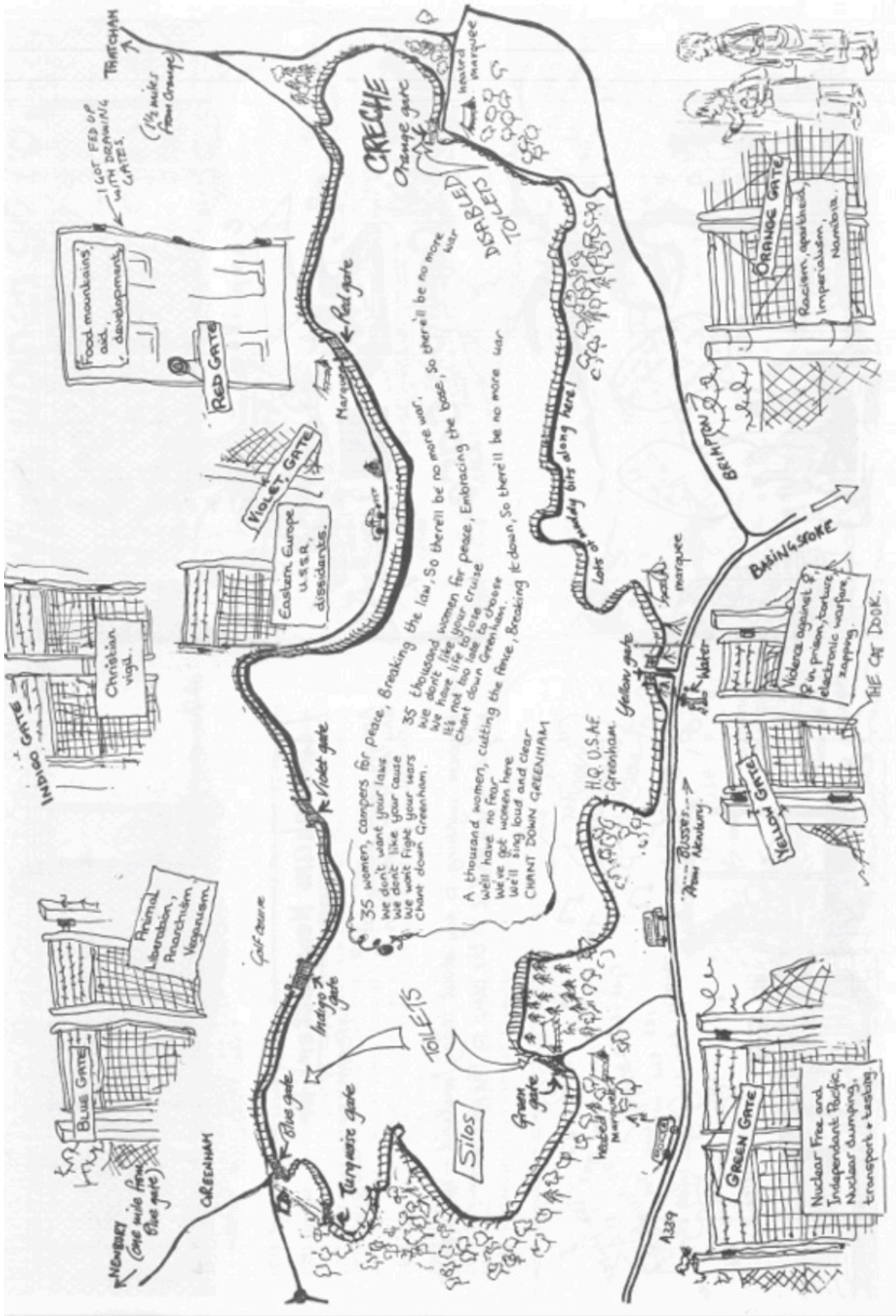


Figure 4: Annotated map of Greenham Common Peace Camp

While the isolated composition of Greenham and its sub-camps nurtured new elements of feminist thought, the campers increasingly attempted to present their ideas to a wider audience. Relying less on the CND for the coverage of events at Greenham, the Greenham women devoted more efforts to producing their own news sources. Ranging from handwritten pamphlets to cartoons to songbooks, by the mid-1980s the camp residents had developed a robust communications network to the outside world. Most notably, in 1983 and 1984 respectively, *Lysistrata* and *Women for Life on Earth* went into circulation. Printed outside the camp, both magazines were largely devoted to covering camp activity and campaign progression in a similar format to that of the widely circulated *Spare Rib*.

The anti-hierarchical structure of the protest site, combined with a well-developed communications repertoire, permitted Greenham to become not only the focal point of antinuclear activism but also a testing ground for British feminism. The protest at Greenham played a central role in promoting the concept of 'ecofeminism'. As Noël Sturgeon suggests in her broad survey of ecofeminism, '[the movement] articulates the theory that the ideologies that authorise injustices based on gender, race, and class are related to the ideologies that sanction the exploitation and degradation of the environment.'¹²⁰ Inhabiting the juxtaposed setting of a nuclear airbase surrounded by British countryside, the Greenham protesters were all too aware of the fragile balance between nature and technology. Between 1983 and 1984, *Women for Life of Earth* and to a lesser extent *Lysistrata* devoted a significant amount of column space to drawing the link between environmentalism, feminism and technological advancement. Discussions ranged from the development of alternative sources of energy to the patriarchal origins of the meat industry, as well as the dangers of computer technology.¹²¹

Although the ecofeminism of the Greenham women seems prescient to a 21st century audience, it was the Greenham women's attitude towards sexuality which captured the contemporary imagination. From 1981 onwards, lesbian women were a core demographic of the camp. Sasha Roseneil who has written extensively on sexual practices at Greenham notes, 'For much of its [Greenham's] history, very large numbers of women who called themselves lesbian and/or women who engaged in practices commonly called 'lesbian', lived and spent

¹²⁰ N. Sturgeon, *Ecofeminist Natures: race, gender, feminist theory and political action* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 23.

¹²¹ *Women for Life on Earth*, issue 1, Autumn 1984; *Lysistrata*, issue 1, Winter 1982.

time there. Greenham was a hotbed of lesbian activity, where women fell in love, had sex, rowed and broke up, not necessarily in that order, sometimes slowly, sometimes with great alacrity.¹²² While many homosexual women such as Jane Freer saw Greenham as a refuge where one could ‘take a rest’ from the public scrutiny associated with being homosexual in 1980s Britain, as the camp’s protest aims diversified some women took the opportunity to incorporate lesbian rights into the growing list of the Greenham women’s demands.¹²³ By the mid-1980s, Greenham associated magazines were printing roll calls of women of Greenham and non-Greenham women subjected to homophobic attacks.¹²⁴

The more active assertion of lesbian rights at Greenham was coupled with a notable shift in the representation of the Greenham women by the British media. During the camp’s early years, the Greenham protesters were deemed by the press to be eccentric but ultimately benign. Newspaper articles employed an essentialist interpretation of femininity to justify the women’s actions. Reflecting upon the December 1982 ‘Embrace the Base’ protest the *Daily Mail* referred to the actions of the women as ‘moving but misguided.’¹²⁵ However, by the mid-1980s, the ambivalent albeit condescending depiction of the Greenham women gave way to a vehement attack on their alleged sexual and moral transgressions. In *Femininity in Dissent*, Alison Young observes how the British press constructed a representation of Greenham women oppositional to the values of polite society. Deploying a discourse of purity, tabloids juxtaposed the concepts ‘grotesque/classical, low/high, dirty/clean, [and] health/disease’ in an attempt to de-legitimise the protest.¹²⁶

In an instance highly reflective of Young’s theorisation of the media representation of the Greenham women, a series of 1986 tabloid articles purported that key Greenham women had become disillusioned with the ‘squalor’ of the camp and had returned to family life. In an interview with Ann Pettitt and Fran De’Ath titled ‘How Greenham Killed My Dream: Loony lefties let the missiles in’, *The Sun* documented the remorse of “reformed” protesters: ‘Anne still feels responsible for what happened. “Although I initiated it I couldn’t control it. Sitting in the mud on a main road was futile— I’d never do it again’. In addition De’Ath commented: ‘The camp became an unhappy, uncompassionate place... The women were

¹²² Roseneil, *Common Women, Uncommon Practices*, 279.

¹²³ Freer, *Raging Womyn*, 4.

¹²⁴ ‘Policing the Peace’, *Lysistrata*, Spring 1984, 3.

¹²⁵ ‘Moving but misguided’, *Daily Mail*, 13 December 1982, 6.

¹²⁶ Young, *Femininity in Dissent*, 99.

supposed to be peacemakers, but they were rowdy, lawless and petty... I am now a Quaker and a Conservative.'¹²⁷



Figure 5: The *Sunday Express* cartoon reprinted in *Spare Rib* was representative of the high level of media vitriol directed towards the Greenham women.

Pettitt was left dismayed at her tabloid portrayal. While she expressed some moderate consternation concerning the Camp in a self-authored article, 'Greenham in Winter', she perceived the mainstream media's representation of Greenham to be a gross distortion. In a letter to CND General Secretary Meg Beresford, she expressed 'disgust' at being portrayed in such a manner.¹²⁸ Although Pettitt fell foul of the British tabloids, women who had endured a

¹²⁷ J. Kelly, 'Loony lefties let the missiles get in', *The Sun*, 9 July, 1986, 5.

¹²⁸ Ann Pettitt letter to Meg Beresford, 11 July 1986, CND2008/8/3/16.

longer period at the camp had developed new practices for counteracting negative media attention. Over the course of the 1980s, feminists supportive of Greenham had become increasingly adept in deconstructing media representation of the camp. In a 1984 special edition of *Spare Rib* on 'Peace Not Quiet' Ruth Wallsgrove devoted an article to the media construction of Greenham. She noted, 'the way the papers have treated Greenham is surprisingly predictable. You could use it as a pocket guide to the British Press— liberal, decent *Guardian* and *Daily Mirror*, pseudo-objective *Times*, snobby *Telegraph* and absurdly reactionary *Sun*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express*.'¹²⁹ Equally disparaged was the British Defence Secretary, Michael Heseltine. The protesters perceived Heseltine and the wider Thatcher government to be engaging in a propaganda campaign against the Greenham women.¹³⁰

Media literate, the Greenham women and their broad support network were able to deconstruct their media representation and invert it. In turn the process of inversion led to the construction of innovative forms of practice. In a re-working of the popular 1983 *Police* hit 'Every Breath You Take' the camp protesters ridiculed the media for their hostility:

Every note you take
Every tale you make
Every film you fake
Every muck you rake
We'll be watching you¹³¹

Alongside songs, the Greenham women also appropriated the symbolism of witchcraft as a means to subvert the media image of Greenham. Invoking the historical persecution of women at the hands of society, some of the Greenham protesters viewed their own situation as akin to that of witches. As Greenham women were brought before the courts on charges of trespass and public disorder, a newsletter circulated the camp titled, 'The Witch Trials 15th/16th/17th Centuries and all centuries all over the world.' Reminding women of past

¹²⁹ R. Wallsgrove, 'Press Coverage', *Spare Rib*, May 1984, 21.

¹³⁰ For a useful analysis of the relationship between the Greenham women and the British Government see Fairhall, *Common Ground*, 59.

¹³¹ Greenham songbook, September 1988. Collected Papers of Jill Truman, 7JTR.

oppression it called for the ‘witches’ of Greenham to remain unified against the authorities.¹³² The defiance of the protesters was replicated in the chant ‘We are Witches’:

We will rise up from the flames, higher and higher and higher
Fires strength we will reclaim, higher and higher and higher
We are the witches who will never be burned
We are the witches who have learned what it is to be free.¹³³

The witch became a valuable motif for the Greenham women and their daily struggles. Their pariah status stemmed from the enduring desire for society to cast out women who transgressed social norms. While an understanding of witchcraft offered some solace it was coupled with the acknowledgement of isolation. By the mid-1980s the Greenham women had few vocal British allies. Support from the CND remained tacit, so as not to disgruntle its wider membership, while feminist concerns that Greenham remained a maternal project lingered on and media vitriol persisted. However, rather than withering into obscurity, the isolation of the Greenham protesters brought with it an innovation in practice that would not only change Greenham but shape the wider antinuclear movement.

Acutely aware of a lack of national support, the Greenham women sought to create a transnational network of women sympathetic to their cause. Commonly referred to as the process of ‘widening the web’, Greenham women travelled to Europe and the United States, encouraging others to unite against nuclear proliferation. The practice of ‘widening the web’ proved highly efficient. As early as 1982, a group of American women established the Seneca Women’s Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice in upstate New York. The camp handbook firmly stated the inspiration derived from Greenham Common: ‘The idea of a Women’s Peace in this country in solidarity with the Peace Camp movement in Europe and the Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp, in particular, was born at a Conference on Global Feminism and Disarmament on June 11, 1982.’¹³⁴ A further section of the handbook provided an interview with Toni and Theresa, two Greenham women who participated in a two month speaking tour of the US. Having noted the advice of the two protesters, ranging

¹³² Katrina Howse, ‘The Witch Trials 15th/16th/17th Centuries and all centuries over the world’, *News from Greenham Common Womens’ Peace Camp*, Summer 1985, 5GCW/D.

¹³³ Greenham songbook, September 1988. Collected papers of Jill Truman, 7JTR.

¹³⁴ *Women’s Encampment for Future of Peace and Justice: Resource Handbook* (1983) (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B2gP3BpuQxH2UnVQOFk3dmRhY3c/view>). Accessed 20 October 2017.

from engaging in NVDA to resisting police brutality, the American interviewer concluded: ‘And so the [Greenham] peace camp continues, season after season, providing insight and inspiration for people all over the world.’¹³⁵

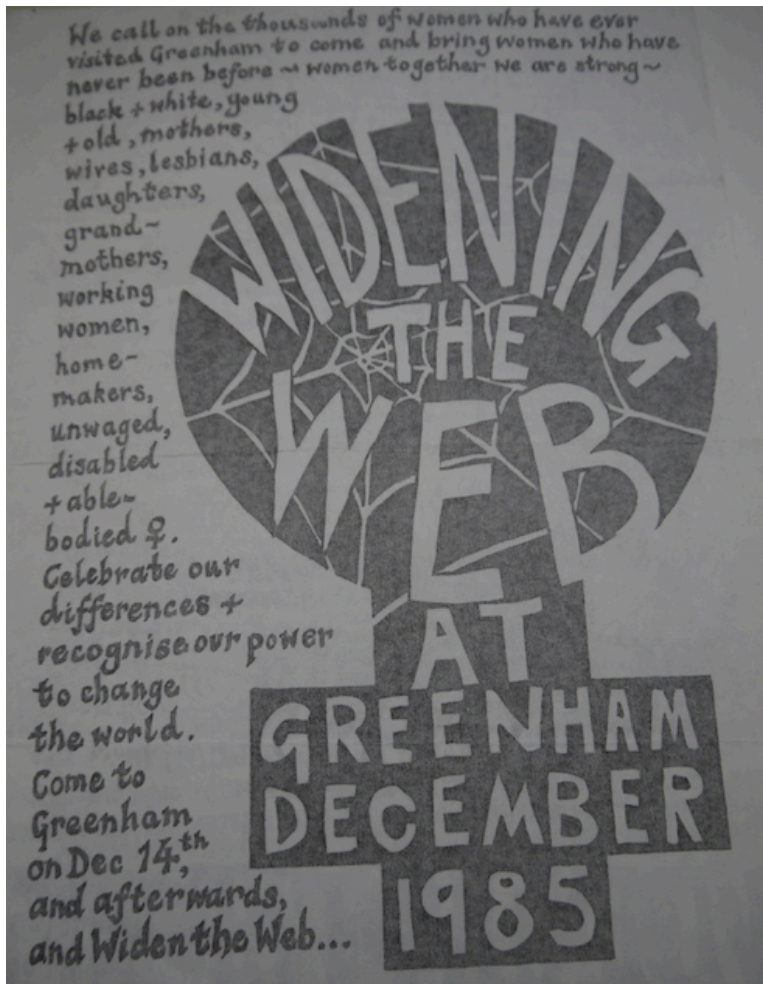


Figure 6: During the Greenham protests the ‘web’ became symbolic of the national and transnational communication network constructed by the Greenham women.

The Greenham women also endeavoured to forge links with continental Europe’s antinuclear movements. Greenham protesters attended European women’s conferences in the Netherlands, Germany and the Scandinavian states. In the same year as the camp in Seneca Falls was established, Sicilian women mobilised to form a camp at Comiso airbase. Referring to themselves as the ‘Coordinamento dell’ Autoderminazione della Donna’ (Coordinating Committee of women for the Right to Determine their own Lives), a *Lysistrata* article noted how the women were inspired to take action by events at Greenham.¹³⁶ When news of the

¹³⁵ *ibid.*

¹³⁶ Gill, ‘Comiso’, *Lysistrata*, Winter 1983, 20.

Sicilian Peace Camp reached Greenham, a newsletter circulated the camp proclaiming, 'The Web Widens.'¹³⁷

By the mid-1980s, the Greenham women's commitment to a transnational, women's antinuclear network had paid off. What the Greenham protest lacked in national approval, it made up for in American and European support. In 1985, the US publication *Mother Jones* ran a twelve-page article on Greenham Common. The article systematically rebuffed the accusations made by Greenham's detractors and praised the protesters' 'endlessly refreshing [...] logic, clarity and independence.'¹³⁸ Other international supporters of the Greenham women were prepared to go one step further; directly challenging those perceived to have not displayed sufficient loyalty to the campers. In one instance, Berit Ås, an associate professor in social psychology at the University of Oslo and member of Norway's Women for Peace, wrote to the CND criticising them for their neglect of the Greenham protest.¹³⁹ The CND refuted the professor's allegation yet the incident remained an example of the diffuse network of supporters the Greenham women had established.

Greenham's transnationalism not only provided a defence against those who held reservations towards the protest site, but it also acted as catalyst for new modes of practice. In 1984, a group of Greenham women, among them Deborah Law, a US citizen residing in London and two US Congressmen, filed a lawsuit against the Reagan administration. The suit stated that the missiles sited at Greenham heightened the risk of nuclear war and contravened 'the United Nations Charter regarding the threat of use of force, the right to survival, crimes against peace, laws of war and the crime of genocide.'¹⁴⁰ The case failed to rise beyond the Southern District of New York Court, being dismissed on the grounds 'that the suit presented a nonjusticiable political question not appropriate for judicial resolution.'¹⁴¹ Irrespective of success, the Greenham women's lawsuit represented a new form of activism. The women branded as indolent, dirty and disorganised by the British media had taken the antinuclear debate directly to the US judiciary. The lawsuit further illustrated a developing ability to raise publicity for the cause. A brief for lawyers noted that regardless of the ruling, the women

¹³⁷ 'Cruise missiles in Comiso' pamphlet, undated, 5GCC/C.

¹³⁸ A. Snitow, 'Holding the Line at Greenham', *Mother Jones*, February/March 1985, 47.

¹³⁹ Berit Ås letter to CND, 5 February 1984, CND2008/8/3/11.

¹⁴⁰ M. Leigh, 'Greenham Women against Cruise Missile v. Reagan. 591 F.Supp.1332', *The American Journal of International Law* 79, No.3 (1985), 746.

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*

would undertake an extensive speaking tour of the US, using the documents produced by the court as the ‘basis of their argument to the American people.’¹⁴²

A transnational outlook not only served to broaden Greenham’s support network, but also helped to widen the precepts of antinuclear activism. Departing from CND’s moral insistence for British unilateral disarmament, the Greenham women viewed disarmament as a necessarily multilateral endeavour. In addition to acknowledging the potential catastrophe of nuclear apocalypse, the Greenham women drew attention to those already harmed by the proliferation of nuclear weaponry. By the mid-1980s the Greenham protest had firmly incorporated both the extraction of uranium from Namibia and testing of Nuclear weapons in the Pacific Atolls into their protest repertoire. The Greenham women’s interest in the wider damages of nuclear proliferation stemmed from a convergence of two prominent discourses within the British protest field. The campaign for Namibia and the Pacific Atolls partially derived from the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign’s anti-colonial rhetoric of the 1960s. In a *Lysistrata* article condemning the South African occupation of Namibia, the author noted, ‘personally I think the male politics of it [nuclear proliferation] are about Colonialism— Is the U.S. & U.S.S.R, to be the better imperialist, to control most third world countries, to have the most puppet rulers and spheres of influence, to have most sources of raw material.’¹⁴³

The Greenham women’s reiteration of the New Left’s anti-colonial rhetoric was supplemented by a growing interest in the connection between race and gender. During the early 1980s, Women’s Liberation Movement paid increasing attention to the racial contours of feminism. The pages of feminist magazines such as *Spare Rib* charted the experience of non-white feminists, engaging with what Crenshaw would term the intersectional experience of ‘women of color’. Issues published in the mid-1980s included articles on Indian feminists, young women immigrants and the social position of African women in old age.¹⁴⁴ Greenham’s focus on Namibia and the Pacific atolls represented an extension of the race and feminism inquiry within the context of antinuclear activism. Gendering the colonial debate, the author of the *Lysistrata* article on Namibia noted: ‘I find it such an irony that people who are so matriarchal, so peaceful, should find themselves living on Uranium— the ultimate

¹⁴² Greenham Women Against Cruise v. President Reagan, outline of case for lawyers, 1984, END/19/31.

¹⁴³ J. Grant, ‘Nuclear Links’, *Lysistrata*, Spring 1983, 8.

¹⁴⁴ Manny, ‘Madhu interviewed’, *Spare Rib*, August 1984, 6-8; M. Bishop, ‘Life after immigration’, *Spare Rib*, November 1984, 14-15; T. Bevhan-Selasie, ‘Growing old in Africa’, *Sanity*, May 1985, 42-43.

symbol of death, violence and exploitation.’¹⁴⁵ The dual origins of the Greenham women’s inquiry into the transnational effect of nuclear proliferation represents a notable watershed in the trajectory of British feminism. While the women’s anti-imperialist critiques signify the continued impact of the New Left, the increased recognition of racial difference mark a rising preoccupation with identity based issues. This period of transition serves to support Fraser’s narrative of post-war feminism whereby the women’s movement gradually shifted from a social based critique to a position that foregrounded the differences of identity.

Greenham and CND reform

During the first half of the 1980s, Greenham not only persisted, but it also succeeded in developing a transnational antinuclear network. Although the camp marked a triumph for antinuclear activism, its success perturbed the CND’s Executive Committee, who felt increasingly marginalized within the protest field. Even if the CND remained at the centre of the antinuclear ‘umbrella’, it was Greenham that held the cultural capital of antinuclear protest. A poll published in 1984 reported that only 6% of the British populace had not heard of the peace camp at Greenham.¹⁴⁶ Adding further complexity to the matter was the level of divisiveness that Greenham inspired within British society. A market research project commissioned by the CND in 1984 clearly illustrated the Greenham dilemma. While the test groups who identified as ‘sympathetic’ to the CND cause ‘deplored the media distortion of the women at Greenham’, those who defined themselves as ‘unsympathetic’ ‘displayed a very strong prejudice against the Greenham women.’¹⁴⁷ The enduring hostility towards Greenham was not limited to the general public, but was also expressed amongst CND members. Lambasting the CND for its perceived pandering to ‘ultra-feminism’ one member wrote to *Sanity* magazine: ‘The women of Greenham have become our biggest liability— as far as the general public are concerned we could hardly do worse if we offered Sinn Fein group membership.’¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Grant, ‘Nuclear Links’, 9.

¹⁴⁶ E.H. Hastings and P.K. Hastings (eds.), *Index to International Public Opinion, 1984-1985* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1985), 323.

¹⁴⁷ New Perspectives, ‘Public attitude towards the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament: Report on Some Exploratory Research’, October 1984, CND2008/7/6/24.

¹⁴⁸ S.C. O’Hogan, ‘Being realistic’, *Sanity*, April 1984, 10.

Despite the CND's formal exercise in distancing itself from Greenham at the 1983 annual conference, the public response of 1984 indicated that few were willing to differentiate between the CND and Greenham protests. The growing synonymy between the two social movements prompted some members of the CND's Executive Committee to call for a more assertive approach towards Greenham. Through an appropriation of Greenham women's practices it would be possible to re-orientate the British public's focus back towards the CND as the principal authority on antinuclear activism. The early attempts of CND appropriation focused on the protest site of Greenham itself. Although the CND had conceded direct access to the site, the CND Executive Committee saw the potential of using the countryside surrounding the base as a means to reframe the antinuclear debate within the CND's terms of practice. In March 1984, the CND formed 'Cruisewatch' in response to the missile training exercises in the area surrounding the base. Seeking to challenge Secretary of Defence Michael Heseltine's assertion that upon deployment the missile convoys would 'melt into the countryside', the CND 'Cruisewatchers' set up an intricate communication network in order to track and broadcast the location of the missile convoys as they went out on exercises.¹⁴⁹ By not operating in the immediate vicinity of the base, the CND overcame the issue of the 'women-only' protest. An early pamphlet appealing for people to join Cruisewatch clearly stated the inclusivity of the campaign. A testimonial from one 'Cruisewatcher', 'Martin' stated: 'It's something everyone can be part of, actively.'¹⁵⁰

During its six years of active operation Cruisewatch proved to be remarkably successful, tracking every missile convoy that was deployed from Greenham. Most significantly the 'Cruisewatchers' provided the CND with an important media victory, showing that contrary to Ministry of Defence protestations, the missiles could be tracked with the most rudimentary equipment. While Cruisewatch marked an innovation in CND practice, its ability to divert attention from the Greenham women was minimal. The CND relied wholeheartedly on the goodwill of the Greenham women to ensure the maintenance of Cruisewatch's communication. In turn, the goodwill of the Greenham women was tested. Many women viewed Cruisewatch as a usurpation of Greenham's capital within the protest field and complained of the preferential treatment the CND displayed towards Cruisewatch activists. In her memoir, a Greenham protester Beth Junor noted that CND behaviour led further to her

¹⁴⁹ J. Nordheimer, 'First U.S. missiles arrive by plane at a British base', *New York Times*, 15 November 1983, 14.

¹⁵⁰ Cruisewatch briefing pamphlet, 1985, CND2008/4/56.

understanding that ‘We [the Greenham women] were regarded within the hierarchy of the ‘peace movement’ as tokens to be cashed in when needed, but more symbolic than real.’¹⁵¹

While Cruisewatch helped the CND to promote an alternate version of the Greenham protest, towards the end of 1984 a more ambitious plan to reinvigorate the CND’s public image was put into motion. In Autumn 1984, the CND launched its Molesworth pledge campaign, placing its support behind a small, mixed-gender, Christian peace camp that was formed in response to the construction of a cruise missile silos at RAF Molesworth. The peace camp at Molesworth offered two key opportunities to the CND. Firstly, it enabled the CND to present the battle against nuclear proliferation as on-going. For those sceptical of the CND’s objectives, its failure to prevent the housing of cruise missiles at Greenham marked a victorious *fait accompli* for the militarists. Re-directing attention towards the yet to be constructed silos at Molesworth was designed to reignite the antinuclear zeal of the disenchanted and those suffering from protest fatigue. The opening line of the CND’s Molesworth pledge pamphlet read ‘Molesworth— the second Greenham?’¹⁵²

Secondly, the CND’s support for Molesworth also opened up the possibility to construct a new Greenham within the realms of accepted CND practice. Notably, the Non-Violent Direct Action of Greenham was firmly incorporated into the Molesworth campaign. During the Easter 1985 protests at Molesworth even the CND’s General Secretary Bruce Kent attempted to cut through Molesworth’s perimeter fence in the clear view of the police assigned to oversee the protest.¹⁵³ In spite of the veneration of Greenham radicalism, the Molesworth protest owed much of its structure to the CND’s earlier tradition of the Aldermaston marches. In a CND document titled ‘Molesworth: Tactics for Mobilisation’ the CND Executive Committee stated: ‘And the greatest mistake of all, would be to think that we as individuals do not make any difference. The truth is that if EVERYBODY goes to Molesworth, we will win. EVERYBODY is nothing more than all of us, every INDIVIDUAL one of us, making that difficult personal decision and then coming together to demonstrate and take action for peace.’¹⁵⁴ The document proceeded to call for regional CND branches to reach out to Trade Unions, Labour Party members, Liberals and Quakers. Through Molesworth, the CND

¹⁵¹ Junor, *Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp*, 86.

¹⁵² Molesworth pledge pamphlet, 1984, CND2008/8/3/17.

¹⁵³ ‘Molesworth’, *Sanity*, May 1985, 10-11.

¹⁵⁴ Molesworth briefing pamphlet (emphasis original), 1985, CND2008/8/3/17.

sought to reinstate its position as the moral and organisational authority on antinuclear protest.

During 1985 and 1986, the CND's shift away from Greenham and towards Molesworth Peace Camp achieved its desired effects. The Molesworth campaign granted the CND both a renewed sense of urgency towards disarmament and a greater control over the antinuclear protest field. Such was its perceived success that during the CND's 1985 annual conference, a resolution was submitted to 'make Molesworth the main focus for CND's campaign against nuclear weapons during the following year.'¹⁵⁵ However in its optimism, the CND overlooked the deterioration in gender relations at Molesworth. While the CND deemed a mixed gender composition as the basis of Molesworth's success, many female activists felt increasingly threatened within a highly masculine environment. In Autumn 1985, a female camper alleged she was raped by one of the men at the camp. The following year two further accusations of rape were made by women at Molesworth.¹⁵⁶ Initially, the news of the alleged rapes at Molesworth spread slowly. Coverage of the accusations were limited to bulletins produced by Molesworth campers.¹⁵⁷ However, as further information pertaining to the alleged rapes was circulated, the CND was forced to acknowledge the situation. In October 1986, *Sanity* published an editorial comment written by CND General Secretary Meg Beresford. In seeking to absolve itself from the alleged attacks, *Sanity* reminded its readership that while the CND condemned 'unequivocally all acts of violence [...] Peace Camps are and always have been autonomous [...] It has always been our policy that it is up to the people living at a peace camp to determine the nature of the camp.'¹⁵⁸

If *Sanity's* acknowledgement of the "Molesworth rapes" (as they became referred to) was hoped to be an exercise in damage limitation, it had the opposite effect. In the wake of the publication, the CND was perceived to be both callous and solipsistic. Furthermore, the CND's response had provoked the ire of the Greenham women. In her memoir, Junor noted that the accusations of the victims at Molesworth were repeatedly rebuffed by the 'the National CND politicians', reflecting one of the several 'clashes with the mean minded

¹⁵⁵ List of annual conference resolutions, 15-17 November 1985, CND2008/5/37.

¹⁵⁶ Only one of the several allegations was reported to the police and no charges were pressed. For a comprehensive analysis of the Molesworth Rapes see J. Held, 'The British Peace Movement: A critical examination of attitudes to male violence within the British Peace Movement, as expressed with regard to the "Molesworth Rapes"', *Women's Studies Int. Forum* 11 No.3 (1988).

¹⁵⁷ *The Molesworth Bulletin*, July/August 1986, CND2008/8/3/17.

¹⁵⁸ M. Beresford, 'Molesworth', *Sanity*, October 1986, 5.

bureaucrats of National CND.’¹⁵⁹ What began as a localised incident developed into a wide scale crisis within the peace movement. In January 1987, *Spare Rib* ran an article titled ‘Utopia is Dead’ firmly challenging the viability of a mixed gender peace camp. The author noted:

For many women in the peace movement, feminism and peace politics are interchangeable, and direct action is seen as a way of challenging patriarchy as well as cruise. While this seems a fairly straightforward position when voiced by the women’s movement, it is more precarious for feminists who work with men in mixed peace movements.¹⁶⁰

The pressure from women’s groups did not subside. If the CND was unwilling to voluntarily broach the issue of gender within the peace movement, it would be forced to do so. Met with further silence, a group of women from Molesworth and Greenham took matters into their own hands. On 16 March 1987, 22 women stormed *Sanity*’s office demanding that, the CND devote three editions of the magazine to the “Molesworth rapes”. *Sanity*’s editors capitulated and in *Sanity*’s May 1987 lead article ‘Shame on the Peace Movement’ a full testament of the rapes and the CND’s failings were published.¹⁶¹ In a reversal of the relationship between the CND and the fledgling women’s antinuclear movement of the early 1980s, it was now the women’s antinuclear movement that possessed sufficient capital to challenge CND practices.

Although the “Molesworth rapes” and the subsequent response stand as the most visible example of the Greenham women challenging the CND, the incident was emblematic of a change in relations within the wider field of protest. During the latter half of the 1980s, the Greenham women and those sympathetic to the Greenham cause would begin to alter the contours of CND practice. While significant proportions of the Greenham protesters were characterised by a marked suspicion towards CND and vice versa, by the mid-1980s a growing number of women were willing to operate within both CND and Greenham carrying forwards Greenham practice into CND policy. In an early example of CND willingness to incorporate Greenham practice into the CND, Meg Beresford issued a forward planning report to the Executive Committee listing Greenham as a key inspiration to the movement.

¹⁵⁹ Junor, *Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp*, 70.

¹⁶⁰ ‘Utopia is Dead’, *Spare Rib*, January 1987, 41.

¹⁶¹ ‘Shame on the Peace Movement’, *Sanity*, May 1987, 22-23.

Beresford lauded the Greenham women for ‘their successive acts of intransigence, bravery, persistence, [and] sheer bloody mindedness.’ She further added that ‘In [the] UK research shows that the Greenham Common Women’s camp has done more than any other activity to awaken public concern about Cruise’ and the women have been ‘a mobiliser and inspiration for women in UK, Europe and worldwide.’¹⁶² In the following year, 1985, Beresford would be elected as General Secretary of the CND.

Beresford’s remarks and subsequent elevation to the position of General Secretary of the CND were representative of a growing faction within the organisation who were willing to accommodate rather than appropriate the practice of the Greenham women into the existing format of campaigning. At the same time as the CND maladroitly orchestrated its Molesworth pledge campaign, a more nuanced debate concerning the implications of Greenham and the future of the CND were circulated via internal memoranda and opinion pieces in *Sanity*. In another 1985 forward planning meeting, a paper by Margret Miller, a representative of the Women’s Peace Alliance was submitted. Written at the request of the forward planning committee, the paper detailed how women’s groups may be better included within the CND. Miller’s remarks were highly ambitious, stating that for the CND to drive towards inclusion, it must ‘consider first social change.’¹⁶³ For Miller, this change entailed not only addressing the issue of nuclear disarmament, but also required holistically broaching gendered issues such as female inclusion within politics an objective that necessitated, ‘radical changes in women’s career structures, in child-care and so on.’¹⁶⁴

While Miller’s recommendations may have appeared unconscionable to earlier CND Executive Committees, the 1984-5 publications of *Sanity* suggest that senior members of the CND were already in the process of adopting a broader platform of antinuclear campaigning. By 1984, the magazine launched ‘The Way Forward for the CND’ in which it called for readers to ‘make clear connections between the arms race and other areas of our lives—health cuts, third world famine, unemployment so that we can show the social benefits that would come from disarmament.’¹⁶⁵ A further alignment of CND campaigning with the protest practices of the Greenham women was made with the editorial decision to publish a July 1985 special edition of *Sanity* titled ‘Inspiration, Innovation Urgency: Women Working

¹⁶² Meg Beresford, ‘Thinking Ahead: Looking back’, 19 July 1984, CND/2008/6/52.

¹⁶³ Margret Miller, ‘Suggestions from Women’s Peace Alliance’, 28 March 1985, CND/1993/3/12.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ ‘The way forward for the CND’, *Sanity*, February 1985, 12.

For Peace'. The lead article featured an edited transcript of a round-the-table discussion with women who had participated in the Greenham protests. In sharp contrast to the aloof approach the magazine had taken towards the Greenham women only two years earlier, the transcribed discussion placed the women at the forefront of antinuclear activism. Testament to the magazine's desire to present Greenham as a force of innovation, one interviewee purportedly said: 'If it hadn't been for the women at Greenham, I don't know what would have happened to CND.'¹⁶⁶

While the CND's decision to place focus on women activists could cynically be interpreted as yet another attempt of what Beth Junor described as 'cashing-in' on Greenham, concurrent campaign drives suggest a genuine conviction in the importance of learning from the Greenham protests. During 1985 multiple *Sanity* articles not only engaged with similar social issues as to those addressed by the Greenham women but also directly accredited the protest camp, who the authors saw to be a source of inspiration. In January 1985, *Sanity* published an article on the parities of the antinuclear movement and the miners' strike. The article centred around an interview with Betty Cook, a miner's wife and one time Greenham activist. Speaking of how she was inspired to protest by the Greenham women she hoped that miners and antinuclear activists could join forces because 'as long as we have nuclear power, obviously miners' jobs will be at risk.'¹⁶⁷ Further replicating the Greenham model of practice, from 1985 onwards, the CND's campaigns also featured a growing international dimension. In late 1984, CND sent a delegation to China.¹⁶⁸ In February 1985, *Sanity* reported on the exploitation of Aboriginal Australians within the context of uranium extraction in the Northern territories of Australia and on the 40th anniversary of the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima, the magazine ran a special edition on the Japanese peace movement.¹⁶⁹

The CND adoption of Greenham practice, through both a diversification and tranationalisation of campaigning held two benefits for the organisation. Firstly, both innovations had the potential to significantly broaden the CND's support base.¹⁷⁰ In

¹⁶⁶ 'Inspiration, Innovation Urgency: Women Working For Peace', *Sanity*, July 1985, 13.

¹⁶⁷ B. Cook, 'Perspectives: The Miners Strike', *Sanity*, January 1985, 8.

¹⁶⁸ 'CND in China', *Sanity*, January 1985, *ibid*, 7.

¹⁶⁹ R. Holder, 'Australia— Yellowcake before black rights?', *Sanity*, February 1985, 18-24; 'Japan after forty years', *Sanity*, August 1985.

¹⁷⁰ CND reached a peak level of support in 1984 with a membership of 100,000. By 1985, this figure had declined to 92,000. For an overview of CND membership 1967-2009 see University of Birmingham, British NGO dataset (http://www.ngo.bham.ac.uk/appendix/Campaign_for_Nuclear_Disarmament.htm). Accessed 17 October 2017.

‘Successful Failure: An Alternative View on Organizational Coping’, the German sociologist Wolfgang Siebel notes that *in lieu* of success, organisations are able to continue the mobilisation of supporters and marshal resources through a diversification of campaign goals.¹⁷¹ In linking third world poverty, imperialism and state welfare to nuclear disarmament, the CND opened new campaign fronts that in turn offered the potential to attract new supporters. Secondly, Greenham-inspired innovations presented the opportunity to avert perceived political impasse. As noted by Burkett and Taylor, since its establishment, the CND held a strong commitment to unilateralism achieved by parliamentary means. However, by the mid-1980s a growing scepticism of this process emerged. In 1983, Margaret Thatcher and her Conservative government were elected for a second term in office, dispelling future hopes of a Labour driven initiative for unilateral disarmament. The pessimism of the CND is reflected in a series of internal memoranda circulated at CND Executive Committee meetings. In a paper on unilateralism submitted to the CND forward planning group, CND stalwart James Hinton conceded that: ‘unilateralism... is hard to sell even in theory.’¹⁷² If a continued pursuit of unilateralism was characterised by a sense of futility, the 1985 CND’s relationship to parliamentary efforts for disarmament was one of ambivalence. In another report submitted to the forward planning group, Neville Pressley noted that through allying itself to the Labour Party, the CND risked further polarising perceptions of the CND. Therefore the ‘CND should not extend this role and we should work towards a consensus on defence that is detached from party policy.’¹⁷³ At the point where the political climate for disarmament appeared to be at its lowest ebb, the protest practices of the Greenham women simultaneously offered an escape route from political stagnation and a new audience for antinuclear activism.

¹⁷¹ W. Siebel, ‘Successful failure: An alternative view on Organizational Coping’, *American Behavioral Scientist* 39 No.8 (1996).

¹⁷² James Hinton, ‘Campaigning for unilateralism: a Defence Charter?’, 23-24 March 1985, CND1993/3/12.

¹⁷³ Neville Pressley, ‘Forward planning group: Working with Political Parties’ (underlining original), April 1985, CND1993/3/12.

Chapter 4— Race, incompatibilities and the limitations of a women’s antinuclear movement 1986-1988

The British antinuclear movement of the mid-1980s was simultaneously characterised by contention and convergence within the protest field. While the CND’s Cruisewatch and Molesworth campaigns attracted criticism from the Greenham women and wider feminist movement, the ire surrounding these incidents obscured a broader structural change in the CND’s practice of protest. With the perceived success of the Greenham women’s protest, those sympathetic to the women within the CND increasingly sought to adopt a similar model of practice. This chapter seeks to question the reformed model of the antinuclear movement in the late 1980s and assess the implications of the growing issue of race within both the CND and Greenham Common protests.

While the Greenham women’s practices were pivotal in distancing the CND from its deep-seated commitment to unilateral disarmament achieved by parliamentary support, a further incorporation of the Greenham model of protest into CND practice proved problematic. Concurrent to the CND broadening its international focus on nuclear disarmament in line with Greenham practice, the CND of the mid to late 1980s became increasingly preoccupied with the identity of its domestic supporters. Encouraged by both the need to overcome a political impasse and the perceived success of the Greenham’s women-oriented practices, identity-focused proposals such as the paper submitted by Miller steadily became a central theme of CND campaigning. The ultimate manifestation of this trajectory was the 1986 launch of the CND’s Extended Public Information Campaign (EPIC) 3.¹⁷⁴

EPIC 3 was remarkable in not only its scale but its extensive use of market research. For the campaign, the CND Executive Committee contracted two London-based market research companies, Creative Sales Advertising and Consumer Connection to produce an initial survey and campaign summary report respectively. The reports offer a highly insightful perspective as to how the CND attempted to reorient its campaign model during the latter half of the 1980s. Realising the potential of a wider women’s antinuclear movement, the Creative Sales report suggested that the CND should target ‘the sympathetically uncommitted, but

¹⁷⁴ Timeline of EPIC campaigns, 1986, CND2008/8/1/15.

now with a strong emphasis on i.) women and ii.) a broader socio-economic base.¹⁷⁵ Further promoting the idea of a shared identity within the antinuclear movement, the report stated that sympathetic groups should be targeted with a strategy that would ‘show the broad base of “people like us” who endorse CND and its aims, and put the arguments in their mouths.’¹⁷⁶



Figure 7: A proposed poster for the EPIC 3 Campaign. Representative of the growing professionalisation of the CND, the Consumer Connection report considered the poster ‘fairly crude’ and akin to ‘student propaganda’.

If EPIC 3 was bold in its orchestration, it was underwhelming in its desired results. The follow-up report produced by Consumer Connection noted that the CND had struggled to find a market in an ‘increasingly competitive’ charitable field and while EPIC 3 ‘affirms the sympathetic,’ it ‘does little to make any impression on the non-sympathetic.’¹⁷⁷ Despite EPIC 3’s minimal impact, it represents an important link between the women’s antinuclear movement and the growing professionalisation of NGOs observed by Matthew Hilton *et al.*¹⁷⁸ Although the strategy of Epic 3, replete with focus-group-tested proposals and marketing jargon, superficially bore little resemblance to the grassroots, protest practices of the Greenham women; it marked a profound shift in the CND towards a women-oriented,

¹⁷⁵ Creative Sales, ‘EPIC 3 publicity proposals’, 22 December 1986, CND2008/7/6/33.

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ The Consumer Connection, ‘EPIC 3— some key points to emerge’, 1987, CND2008/7/6/33.

¹⁷⁸ Hilton, McKay, Crowson and Mouhot, ‘The Ascent of the Expert: Professionals and the NGO career’, Hilton *et al.* (eds.), *The Politics of Expertise*, 55.

identity-focussed method of campaigning. Through privileging female identity as a key component of the antinuclear movement, the CND Executive Committee framed women's agency in increasingly comparable terms as to those of the Greenham women. However, this shift in CND practice came shortly before a period where female antinuclear activism became subject to one of its greatest challenges.

Racial identity and Greenham Common

As noted in Chapter 3, racism and colonialism were issues that both the Greenham women and CND attempted to broach. As early as Summer 1983, the Greenham women erected the 'Orange gate' camp dedicated to fighting racism, apartheid and imperialism.¹⁷⁹ Additionally, by 1984 the CND had assembled an anti-racist working group headed by Greenham woman and CND member Wilmette Brown.¹⁸⁰ Despite attempts by both movements to engage in a dialogue concerning race, in mid-1987 an incident amongst several Greenham women enlivened questions of racial tension across a broad section of the British antinuclear movement.

On 23 June 1987, a delegation of Greenham women attended the World Conference of Women held in Moscow. Titled 'Towards the Year, 2000— Without Nuclear Weapons! For Peace, Equality, Development!', the conference was designed to discuss non-aligned disarmament. However, by the third day conversations digressed and tensions frayed. In an account by the long-serving Greenham protester Jean Hutchinson, when Wilmette Brown took the floor to speak, a number of Greenham women exited the room and after the event Brown was allegedly subjected to a series of racist comments.¹⁸¹

Internal conflict was nothing new on Greenham Common. On the contrary, as earlier chapters have illustrated, disputes at Greenham were integral to fostering the often innovative and anti-hierarchical character of the protest site. However, altercations were short lived and in their most extreme cases precipitated the departure of specific individuals from the camp. The incident in Moscow and subsequent fallout proved different. When the Greenham delegation returned to the UK, the dispute that started in Moscow was carried into the protest

¹⁷⁹ Harford and Hopkins (eds.), *Greenham Common*, iii.

¹⁸⁰ Newsletter of the CND Anti-Racist Working Group, issue 1, Spring 1985, CND1993/9/6.

¹⁸¹ Jean Hutchinson cited in Beth Junor, *Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp*, 89.

camp itself. In a quick escalation of events, a bitter argument concerning race and black representation at Greenham enveloped the camp. A diary entry by Lyn Barlow, a Greenham woman who challenged the credibility of those who accused the movement of racism offers a useful elaboration of what the argument entailed. On 8 July, Barlow recounted that for almost three days there was evidence of ‘a huge split, division forming between ‘Beth [Junor], Katrina [Howse], Sarah. H. [Hipperson] and Janet [Tavner] and almost everyone who lives, works, spends time at Greenham.’¹⁸² While the pretext for the attack was a continued accusation of racism espoused by the Greenham women, Barlow contended that the dispute was provoked by an insurgent group attempting to derail the protest. For Barlow, the group in question went under the name King’s Cross Women’s Centre (Wages For Housework). Established in the UK in 1975 and led by Wilmette Brown, Barlow suggested that Wages for Housework was merely a front for ‘twenty such groups with ‘current interest’ names i.e. ‘Women against Rape’ She concluded that the purpose of the group was ‘solely to systematically destroy left wing groups, campaigns.’¹⁸³

The dispute provides a telling insight into the state of the Greenham protest by the late 1980s. Firstly, the incident illustrated that the nature of the racism debate within the peace movement had undergone a significant qualitative shift. The notions of anti-racism advocated by the Greenham women prior to 1987 strongly owed their intellectual provenance to the New Left proponents of anti-colonialism such as Tariq Ali. As Greenham’s Namibia and Pacific Atoll campaigns demonstrate, racism was conceptualised as a force of subjugation wielded by nations with colonial aspirations. The allegations made by Brown *et al.* represent an internalisation of the concept of racism, directing it towards the identity of the Greenham protesters themselves. Secondly, the incident revealed the growing antipathy some activists who associated with the broader women’s movement held towards the political Left. Barlow partially attributes the disagreement to have originated from the perception that Greenham was a ‘Left-wing’ protest. In turn, in her memoir Beth Junor stated that the decision to confront the issue of race at Greenham ‘incurred the wrath of the pro-Soviet networks within the British peace and women’s movements.’¹⁸⁴ In making her allegation Junor echoed the sustained practice of Greenham women condemning Leftist intervention at the protest site. However, like the accusation of racism, this critique once directed at those outside the camp

¹⁸² Lyn Barlow, ‘The Beginning of the end. Is Greenham Over?’, 8 July 1987. Collected papers of Lyn Barlow, 7LBA.

¹⁸³ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ B. Junor, *Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp*, 82.

now targeted fellow campers. The eruption of the race dispute at Greenham further corroborates with Fraser's narrative of post-war feminism. Through challenging the anti-racist identity of the Greenham women, the accusers further privileged a critique of recognition over one of redistribution.

Towards the end of 1987, the dispute escalated. The different gates at Greenham (demarcated by colour) which had once permitted varying campaign focuses to develop in relative autonomy, now served only to entrench growing factionalism at the protest site. Women who deemed the camp to have acted ineffectually regarding the issue of racism aligned with the women of Yellow Gate while other women allied themselves to the remaining gates, collectively referring to themselves as 'Greenham Women Everywhere'.¹⁸⁵ During this period the women of Yellow Gate published increasingly provocative pamphlets, restating the legitimacy of their grievances. One such pamphlet featured the image of an eye with the caption: 'We are the eye of the world: Yellow Gate, the **ONLY** 24-hour-a-day, truly **NON-ALIGNED, ANTI-RACIST, WOMEN-ONLY** verification of the removal of Cruise missiles.'¹⁸⁶ The following folio proceeded to mock the excuses of women at the camp who attested to not being racist. Excuses included: 'I've done soooooo much work for the women in the pacific! and 'I don't really see colour, I just see people!'¹⁸⁷ With the excoriating wit that had long been used to dismiss authorities and the unsympathetic now deployed against fellow protesters, many women became disillusioned with life at camp. In her final entry to her Greenham diary, Barlow wrote that following the "split" at the camp, a large number of women whom I had lived with since 1984/85 left to forge new paths.' Barlow signed off: 'Greenham Women are, and will continue to be everywhere.'¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ The phrase 'Greenham Women Everywhere' was developed as early as 1983. See A. Cook and G. Kirk, *Greenham Women Everywhere: Dreams, Ideas and Actions from the Women's Peace Movement* (London: Pluto Press, 1983).

¹⁸⁶ Yellow Gate newsletter (emphasis original), 1987-1988, 5GCW/D.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ Lyn Barlow, 'What I think I gained from Greenham', 1987. Collected papers of Lyn Barlow, 7LBA.

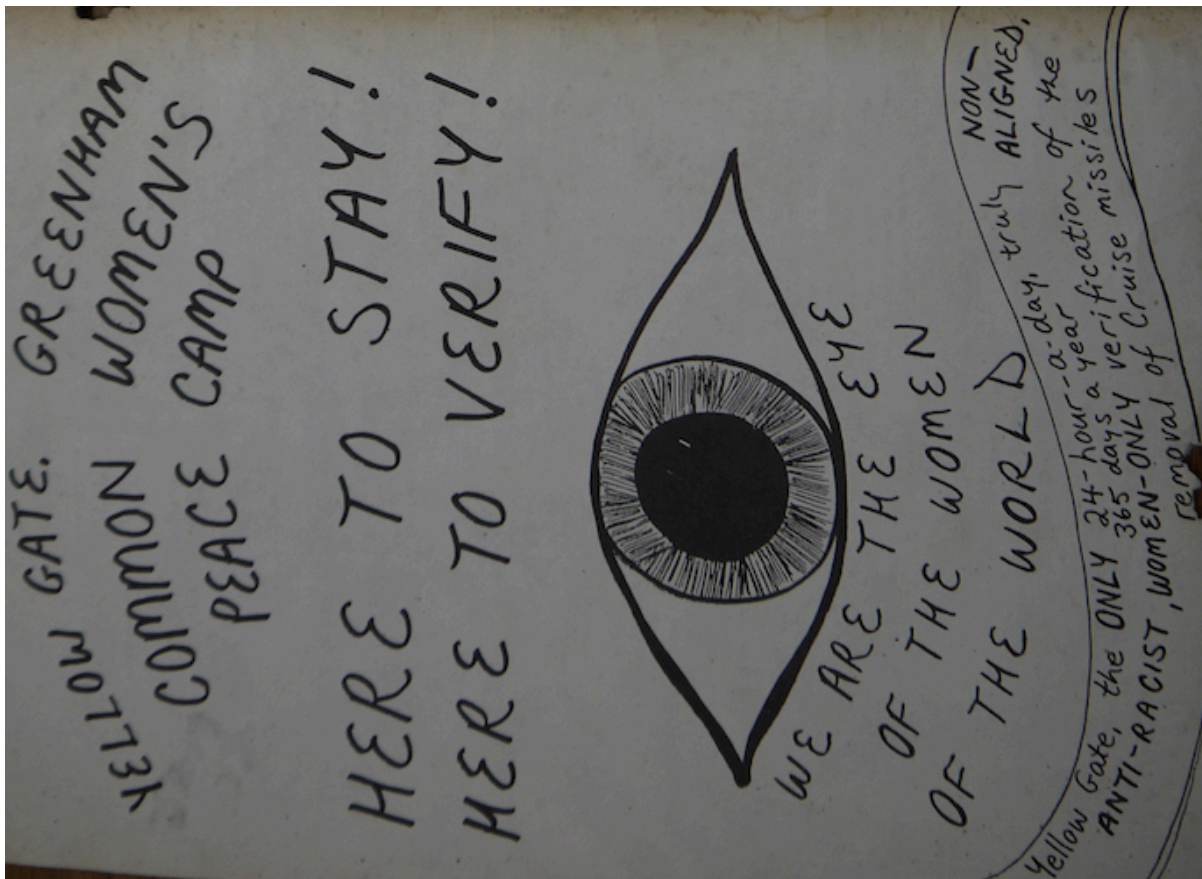
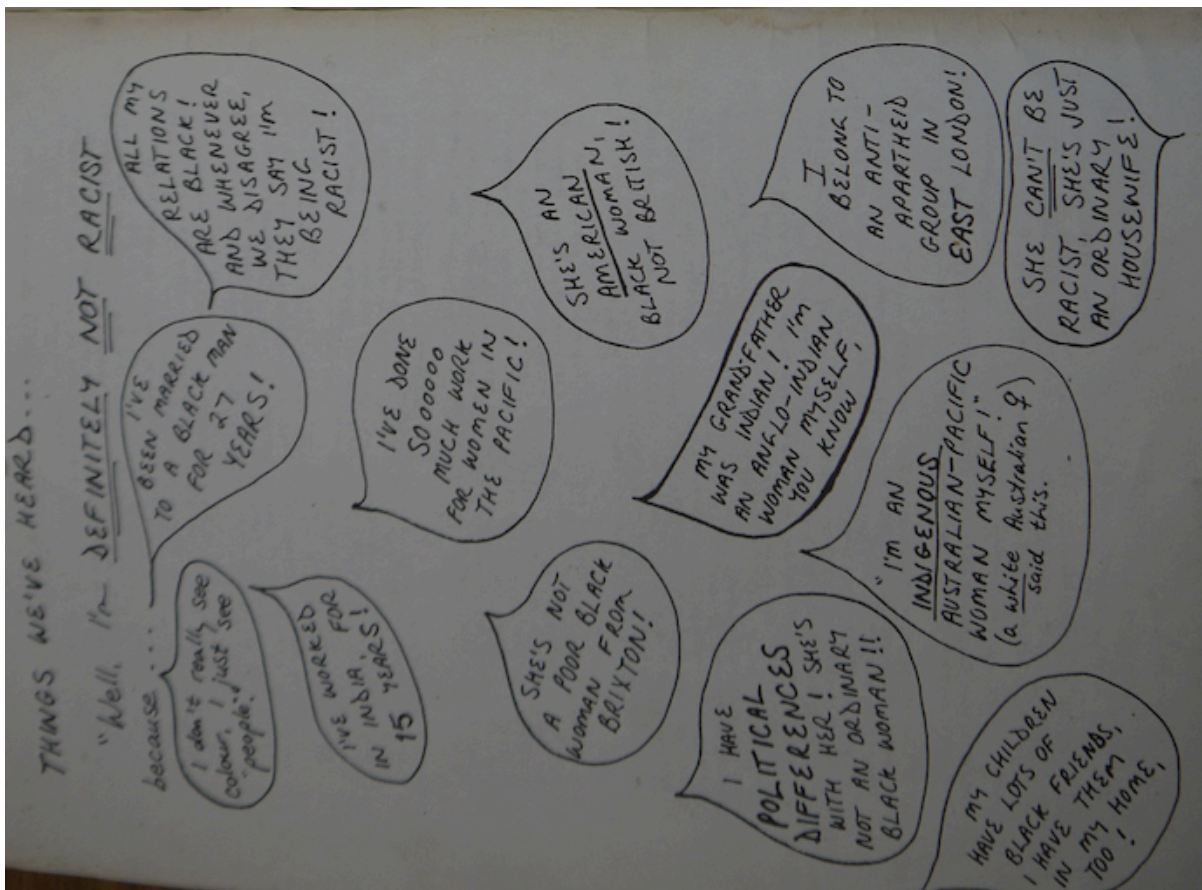


Figure 8 (above) and **Figure 9** (below): The Yellow Gate women's newsletter served as a strong rebuke of the other protesters perceived racism and an assertion of Yellow Gate's legitimacy within an increasingly divided camp.



Racial identity and the wider protest field

Despite having endured arrest, imprisonment, media vilification and gruelling winters it was the internal accusations of racism that proved most detrimental to the Greenham Women. While the incident caused most damage to the camp itself, the invocations of racism held far wider implications. Testament to both the strength of the communications network that the Greenham women had developed during the 1980s and the alignment of the antinuclear and women's movements, various actors felt compelled to comment upon the issue. The allegations of racism placed women's magazines such as *Spare Rib* in an untenable position. During the 1980s, the magazine had devoted increasing column space to the subject of black women's rights. Lead articles from 1987 alone included: 'Escalating Racist Attacks', 'African Women count the cost of economic crisis in Africa' and 'Black Girls in Education.'¹⁸⁹ Given that these article often ran concurrent to effusive praise of the Greenham women, addressing the issue of racism at the Camp, required a high degree of journalistic tact. In September 1987, the magazine chose to broach the incident by tacitly aligning itself with the women of Yellow Gate. Reporting upon a Greenham Women protest at the offices of the socialist newspaper the *Morning Star*, the article condemned any attempt of a socialist takeover, noting that Greenham 'is a vision of peace that makes links with many international struggles, particularly Black struggles [...] Luckily it is a force that refuses to be appropriated.'¹⁹⁰

The following month, *Spare Rib* published a stern rebuttal to the article. In 'Setting the Record Straight', Sarah Gasquoine the National women's organiser of the Communist Party stated that 'the Communist Party has never tried to change the non-aligned position of Greenham.'¹⁹¹ Other Left-wing publications were more assertive in their refutation of the accusation of appropriating Greenham for the purpose of their own agenda. In November 1987, *Marxism Today* published an article by Fiona Shand titled 'Peace Camp War'. Dismissing the accusations of racism 'based on a spurious incident at a conference in Moscow in June', Shand took aim at Wages for Housework. Stating that while 'the organisation tries to give the impression of having left-wing sympathies [...] any serious

¹⁸⁹ Y. Kureishi, 'Racial Violence: Black Women Bear The Brunt', *Spare Rib*, January 1987, 8-11; G. Natoolo, 'African Women Counting the Cost', *Spare Rib*, March 1987, 38-40; R. Chigwada, 'Not victims— not Superwomen', *Spare Rib*, October 1987, 14-18

¹⁹⁰ 'Voices of the non-aligned', *Spare Rib*, September 1987, 45.

¹⁹¹ Sarah Gasquoine, 'Setting the record straight', *Spare Rib*, October 1987, 4.

examination of its methods is met by howls of “communist” in the best “reds under the bed” tradition.’ Shand concluded that: ‘The risk of washing dirty linen in public is seen to be outweighed by the trail of destruction. There is an increase in determination to inform as many women as possible, so that [...] they may avoid becoming the victims of the future.’¹⁹²

Doing little to ameliorate the situation, the continued allegations of racism and socialist takeover coupled with the vociferous rebuttal by Left-wing groups served only to further distance some factions of the women’s movement away from the political Left.¹⁹³ By late 1987 the CND was drawn into the dispute. While the CND was marked by an unwillingness to publically broadcast dissent within the wider-antinuclear movement (as with the “Molesworth rapes” incident), the growing alignment between Greenham and CND made silence an infeasible approach. The CND’s position was further complicated by the composition of its National Council. Two Greenham women, Rebecca Johnson and Wilmette Brown, representing both sides of the opposing factions at the camp had been elected to the CND National Council the previous year.¹⁹⁴ Faced with division in its own ranks, the CND chose to back Johnson and discredit Brown. In November 1987, *Sanity* ran a lead article titled ‘Crisis at Greenham?’ by Beatrix Campbell. Framed as a report, the article criticised the women of Yellow Gate who purportedly subjected Johnson to a ‘seven hour attack for “refusing to accept the leadership” of Wilmette Brown.’¹⁹⁵ Referencing the work of Shand, the article went on not only to criticise Brown in her position as spokeswoman for Wages for Housework but also in her capacity as member of CND National Council. Citing her failure to deliver policy drafts, Campbell asserted that Brown was more interested in pulling the CND out of the ‘International Year of Peace’ Convention an issue deemed to be ‘of little or no concern to most people in Britain, Black or white.’¹⁹⁶

While Campbell’s article constituted a comprehensive *ad hominem* attack on Brown and those supportive of Wages for Housework it did little to address internal accusations of racism within the antinuclear movement. In lieu of a dialogue concerning racism within the movement, Campbell castigated Brown for failing to acknowledge the efforts of ‘Black and

¹⁹² F. Shand, ‘Peace Camp War’, *Marxism Today*, November 1987, 7.

¹⁹³ This interpretation is supported in Pugh, *Women and the Women’s Movement in Britain since 1914*, 284.

¹⁹⁴ List of elected candidates. CND annual conference, 14-16 November 1986, CND2008/5/25.

¹⁹⁵ B. Campbell, ‘Crisis at Greenham’, *Sanity*, November 1987, 19.

¹⁹⁶ *ibid*, 20.

white women to establish the links between nuclear militarism and racism.’¹⁹⁷ Campbell’s article was emblematic of the growing tension in the CND regarding the position of women in the movement. While the organisation proved increasingly amenable to foregrounding female identity, it was prepared to do so only when female activists’ demands ran concurrent to the CND’s agenda. Campbell’s article made clear that the CND held little desire to play host to an on-going discussion of racial identity within the antinuclear movement.

On 20 November 1987, the CND assembled at the Hackney Empire for the organisation’s annual conference. Despite a decline in membership since the CND’s highpoint of 1984, the mood of the conference was outwardly optimistic.¹⁹⁸ Noting the promising talks between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev and the expected finalisation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty, CND General Secretary Meg Beresford proclaimed that ‘internationally, the prospects for nuclear disarmament are brighter than ever.’¹⁹⁹ In spite of a buoyant atmosphere, the convention was unable to escape the engulfing dispute regarding racism. On the second day of the conference, a number of women including Brown delivered a series of speeches condemning their perceived marginalisation by the CND. In addressing a resolution pertaining to ‘Public Information Campaigning’, Janet Tavner, a Yellow Gate activist, informed the auditorium: ‘You are quite pleased to be able to refer to us, and include us in your achievements, but when we actually appear at your conference and express our anger over how we have been treated by CND, you would rather that we weren’t here. Well we are!’²⁰⁰ Brown’s speech refuted the *Sanity* article written by Campbell and maintained that her ‘purpose was to make CND’s activities and ways of working more accessible and more accountable to Black, Third World and other working class women and men, and thereby more effective in fighting for nuclear disarmament.’²⁰¹ Despite the intervention of the women of Yellow Gate, Brown was not re-elected to the CND National Council and the convention was met with the retort ‘CND National Council is all White Again.’²⁰²

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ CND membership stood at approximately 75,000 in 1987 compared to 100,000 in 1984. University of Birmingham NGO dataset, (http://www.ngo.bham.ac.uk/appendix/Campaign_for_Nuclear_Disarmament.htm). Accessed 12 October 2017.

¹⁹⁹ Meg Beresford, ‘Opening address to CND conference’, 20 November 1987, CND2008/5/25; The INF agreement pledged the eventual removal of cruise missiles from Greenham and other British airbases.

²⁰⁰ Yellow Gate newsletter, 1987-1988, 5GCW/D.

²⁰¹ *ibid.*

²⁰² *ibid.*

While the CND hoped to use its annual conference to reinvigorate a fatigued public with the promise of the imminent INF treaty, the media response focused on the internal dispute. *The Guardian* ran with the headline ““Yellow peril” splits meeting.”²⁰³ Regaling the now well-defined contours of the dispute the article concluded with a comment by one conference attendee, Lyn Brackley who stated ‘I feel ashamed at a conference where we talk about working together and we have a problem in this room and we are not even prepared to confront it. If we can’t sort out our differences here today, then we don’t deserve to go on to the streets and tell people what they should think.’²⁰⁴

1988 and beyond— the fall of women’s antinuclear activism?

The Greenham women’s intervention at the CND’s 1987 conference would prove a decisive moment for the women’s antinuclear movement. While the women of Yellow Gate were able to carry their grievances to the forefront of the CND’s agenda, the escalation of the dispute came at a heavy price. In placing their anger before the lens of the national media and the wider-antinuclear movement, the protesters critically divided the women’s antinuclear movement. From 1988 onwards, attendance at the camp was reduced to a handful of ardent protesters. Despite the camp’s significant decline, the site would not be completely abandoned until 5 September 2001. Upon the RAF airbase being returned to common land, the sole remaining protester, 73-year-old Sarah Hipperson finally left the protest site. While Hipperson would attest to the continued relevance of Greenham in her memoir, beyond 1987 the reported actions of the Greenham women were notable only by their absence.²⁰⁵

Although less destructive than its effect on Greenham Common, the 1987 conference incident also had a notable impact on the CND. After years of fractious relations with the Greenham women, the late 1980s marked a turning point. Through both recognition of the success of the Greenham protest and the persuasion of CND women sympathetic to the Greenham cause, the CND began to embark on a model of campaigning constructed towards privileging women’s agency. However, at the point where a further alignment of practice between the CND and Greenham women appeared most tangible, the issue of race placed the nascent

²⁰³ S. Boseley, ““Yellow peril” splits meeting”, *The Guardian*, 23 November 1987, 4.

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*

²⁰⁵ S. Hipperson, *Greenham: Non-Violent Women –v- The Crown Prerogative* (London: Greenham Publications, 2005).

project in jeopardy. In the year following the conference, CND victories and landmarks would be tarnished by a growing anxiety over the future direction of the CND. In December 1987, Reagan and Gorbachev signed the INF treaty. The gravity of the treaty's signing was further embellished by it roughly coinciding with the CND's 30th anniversary. However, events that should have stood testament to both the CND's success and tenacity were met with decisively understated self-congratulation. In January 1988, *Sanity* responded to the news of the treaty with a highly circumspect article titled 'The INF Agreement— Dead end or open door?'²⁰⁶ A similarly cautionary tone was adopted in *Sanity's* 30th anniversary edition. In an overview of the past 30 years of CND activity, James Hinton called for CND members to prepare for 'settling in for the long haul.'²⁰⁷ Privately, the CND's concerns of finding a new platform of campaigning gave way to pessimism. In an internal memorandum circulated amongst the Executive Committee, one member lamented that despite the INF treaty and the CND's anniversary, the public will have perceived the CND to be 'passing away... not with a bang or even a whimper.'²⁰⁸

Though the decline of Greenham Common twinned with a shifting geopolitical climate left many CND members dispirited, 1988 did not constitute the end of the CND. Despite facing diminished support, the organisation continues to maintain an active membership to the present day. Neither would this period mark a total collapse of the women's antinuclear movement. Although the movement had lost its symbolic epicentre with the departure of the Greenham women, a legacy of the protest was retained within CND practice. Amidst consternation for the future of the CND, there remained an appreciation of the role women activists played within the British antinuclear movement. Notably, in his article assessing the history of the CND, Hinton observed that 'the presence of women's politics in the second wave has been as important to its character as the relative absence of youth.'²⁰⁹ Furthermore, Helen Clark, a New Zealand politician claimed in the January 1988 edition of *Sanity* that the CND represented 'the only movement in Britain in which feminist argument and practice has become integrated into the mainstream of analysis.'²¹⁰

²⁰⁶ J. Cox, 'The INF Agreement— Dead end or open door?', *Sanity*, January 1988, 19.

²⁰⁷ J. Hinton, 'The second wave: settling in for the long haul', *Sanity*, February 1988, 11.

²⁰⁸ John Moreland, 'Proposal for marking CND's 30th Anniversary', 7 January 1988, CND/2008/6/3.

²⁰⁹ J. Hinton, 'The second wave: settling in for the long haul', *Sanity*, February 1988, 11-12.

²¹⁰ H. Clark, 'Mainstream Disarmament', *Sanity*, January 1988, 12-13.

While Clark's interpretation of the CND's relationship to feminism was more radical than that of the organisation's broader membership, it represented willingness amongst members to acknowledge the success of the women's antinuclear movement and a support for a continued implementation of similar policies within the CND's framework of practice. The desire for the greater involvement of female agency within the CND was aided by a change in CND leadership. Although the 1987 conference was eclipsed by the intervention of the women of Yellow Gate, it would prove a record year for the number of women elected to the CND's Executive Committee. Out of the six available positions, four were filled by women. Notably, Greenham activist Rebecca Johnson was elected to the position of Vice-Chair. While stating that she was no longer affiliated to the Greenham camp her election pledge promised to develop 'non-violent action and non-hierarchical, feminist ways of working against injustice, racism, sexism, exploitation and war preparations.'²¹¹

In turn, the desire for continued women's agency within the CND coupled with the election of female officials helped set the agenda for the 1990s antinuclear movement. In particular it was the transnationalism and diversification of protest issues advocated by the women's antinuclear movement that would find greater voice in the CND's 1990s protests. In the closing years of the twentieth century the CND would campaign for non-intervention in the Gulf War, lowering the British defence budget and reducing global poverty.²¹² Indeed the transnational and wide-ranging model of protest of the women's antinuclear movement provided an operational framework for the CND with which to recruit new supporters and subsequently endure beyond the cessation of the Cold War. However, if the women's antinuclear movement proved crucial in shaping the modern practices of the CND, members were quick to forget the movement's legacy. At the CND's 1993 annual conference, the writer and ant-war activist Milan Rai would note: 'As a movement we must accept and digest the fact that British nuclear weapons have been used and continue to be used to threaten third world countries... Our campaign's particularly against the new generation of British nuclear weapons must be based on this new understanding.'²¹³ In privileging the 'newness' of linking nuclear proliferation with imperialist ambitions, Rai failed to observe the longstanding aspirations of the women's antinuclear movement. This sentiment is reflective of a broader solipsism within the CND. Without an active Greenham linking feminism to antinuclear

²¹¹ List of proposed officers. CND annual conference 20-22 November 1987, CND2008/5/25.

²¹² For a good overview of the 1990s CND see K. Hudson, *CND— Now More Than Ever: The Story of a Peace Movement* (London: Vision, 2005).

²¹³ Milan Rai 1993 conference speech cited in K. Hudson, *CND— Now More Than Ever*, 185.

activism, the innovations of the women's antinuclear movement were subsumed by the CND with little accreditation to those who changed the field of protest. And so what remained in practice was lost in name.

Conclusion

In charting the interactions between the Greenham women, the CND and the wider women's movement, this thesis has attempted to achieve two objectives: firstly, it aimed to *identify the conditions, factors and actors that created a women's antinuclear movement in the early 1980s*. Secondly, it sought to *assess the relationship between the women's antinuclear movement and the broader protest field, charting the movement's impact, incompatibilities and ultimate limitations*. In framing the women's antinuclear movement in a broader context my thesis has also addressed three gaps within the existing literature on protest movements. Firstly, through the use of Fraser and Crenshaw's theories of gender, I have attempted to more firmly integrate a gendered analysis into the study of post-war protest movements. Secondly, this thesis has challenged the notion of a relatively unified protest field. Through utilising Bourdieu's *theory of practice* I contend that innovation within the field stemmed from inter- and intra-movement competition. Finally, by focussing on the 1980s antinuclear movement I have extended the temporal parameters of existing research, which have predominantly focussed on the earlier protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

Key to understanding the women's antinuclear movement of the 1980s is its shared history with both the early CND and Women's Liberation Movement. Through its large-scale mobilisation in the late 1950s, the CND brought women into the field of antinuclear activism. The experience of female participation was divided amongst generational lines. For older women the CND largely catered to their expectations of mobilisation. However, for younger women the protests were marked by condescension and marginalisation. With the decline of the early CND, young female protesters increasingly associated with the New Left protests of the 1960s. While, female New Left activists were subjected to the same rates of gender bias as under the CND, I suggest that the New Left's transnational and anti-hierarchical practices would play a central role in the formation of the Women's Liberation Movement. As typified by Fraser, the New Left inspired women's movement went forwards to challenge myriad social issues. By the late 1970s the movement would set their sights upon nuclear proliferation, approaching antinuclear activism through a feminist perspective.

If Greenham illustrated the convergence of women's and antinuclear activism the settlement of the protest camp by no means represent a *fait accompli* for the women's antinuclear

movement. In the early years of the camp, the Greenham women would experience the critique and attempted co-option of both the CND and women's movement. Rather than a representation of a unified civil society in protest as conceptualised by Hilton *et al.*, the protest of Greenham closer resembled Crenshaw's model of intersectionality whereby protesters were torn between competing identities and objectives. Between 1981 and 1983, the Greenham women competed to produce a protest movement that was simultaneously antinuclear and feminist in its ambitions.

While exchanges between Greenham, the CND and the women's movement often led to notable incidences of conflict, they did not derail the Greenham women's protest. On the contrary, the Greenham protest not only endured but innovated through adversity. During the mid-1980s, the Greenham women would expand the spatial and conceptual boundaries of antinuclear activism. The women's antinuclear protest against cruise missiles would come to include patriarchal, imperial and ecological critiques understood within a transnational framework. Although the CND would continue to attempt to co-opt the protest site, the persistence of the Greenham women coupled with the wider protest network they had established made further CND intervention increasingly infeasible. Instead, allured by Greenham's new modes of practice and fatigued by the perceived ineptitude of the British Labour party, members of the CND increasingly turned towards the Greenham women as a source of inspiration. In adopting Greenham practices, the CND began to move away from its long held objective of unilateralism obtained by parliamentary means.

Towards the end of the 1980s the CND would look to further incorporate Greenham initiatives of women-oriented protest through the large-scale marketing drive EPIC 3. Although ultimately unsuccessful, EPIC 3 exemplifies the trend of the increasing professionalisation of NGOs as observed by Hilton *et al.* However, at the point where Greenham generated the most significant changes in the wider protest field, the protest camp entered a critical period of conflict. With the eruption of racial accusations at the camp, the intersectional concerns that had once driven innovation within the movement now lead to a breakdown in camp relations. The ensuing identity conflict aligns with Fraser's narrative whereby towards the 1990s, feminism would place an increased focus on identity politics. The shifting character of feminism proved incompatible with the women's antinuclear movement and by the end of 1987 only a fraction of the Greenham women would remain at the protest site.

While escalated racial tensions would force Greenham into a state of rapid decline, it did not constitute a total collapse of the women's antinuclear movement. Though embarrassed by the intervention of the women of Yellow Gate at the 1987 annual conference, the CND continued to employ facets of the Greenham model of protest beyond the 1980s. Driven by both willingness amongst CND supporters and a higher proportion of women on the CND Executive Committee, a growing international outlook and diversification of campaign issues would form the cornerstone of CND practices in the 1990s. While the CND would fail to draw the same links between feminism and antinuclear activism as witnessed during Greenham's heyday, the women's antinuclear movement left an indelible mark on the future practices of British antinuclear activism.

The protest at Greenham Common was remarkable in its ingenuity, theatricalism and longevity. It should however not be classed as exceptional. At its core, this thesis has sought to reintegrate the women's antinuclear movement into the existing study of feminism and post-war protest movements. In this spirit, it is pertinent to outline the broader findings of this thesis and to suggest further inroads of investigation. Firstly this thesis stands as an extension and elaboration of current theories of gender. Analysis of the women's antinuclear movement confirms Fraser's narrative of a transition in feminism from a social critique of redistribution towards a critique of identity based upon recognition. Furthermore, Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality adds nuance to Fraser's observations. While intersectional differences initially served as a force of innovation within the women's antinuclear movement, a growing examination of identity amongst protesters revealed incompatibilities that would ultimately result in the demise of the Greenham Common Peace Camp. Secondly, this thesis has integrated a broader gendered analysis into the existing studies of protests movements. Rather than studying women's movements as isolated phenomena, this line of enquiry views women's movements as innovators within the wider field of protest. Both the professionalisation of the CND and its move towards a diversification of campaign platforms can only be partially understood without acknowledgement of the Greenham women. By drawing the link between the agency of women's movements and the wider protest field, this thesis contributes to the current narrative on the rise of modern NGOs as postulated by Hilton *et al.*

In framing the women's antinuclear movement in 'unexceptional' terms, this thesis does not aim to impede upon its own originality but rather suggests the fruitfulness of further incorporating gendered analysis into the history of protest movements. While the relationship between Greenham and the CND offers a good example of the interaction between the women's movement and the broader protest field, the antinuclear movement represents but one of myriad protest movements that gained prominence in 1980s Britain. Only cursorily touched upon in this thesis, a study of the interaction between the women's movement and the women of the British Miners' strike would serve to further develop our understanding of how the women's movement influenced and was influenced by concurrent protest movements. Furthermore, while this thesis has outlined the transnational implications of the British women's antinuclear movement, research could be supplemented by a shift in national focus. A comparative study on the role of the women's movement in the West German and US peace movements would add geographical breadth to the endeavours of this thesis. Such approaches hold the potential to simultaneously elevate the position of both gender and protest movement history, further fulfilling Joan Scott's call to 'redefine the old questions in new terms.'²¹⁴

²¹⁴ Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', 1075.

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