A TIME TO RESIST

The renewal of draft registration is a clear indication that the United States government is gearing up its military machine. This preliminary step toward mobilizing a fighting force could bring back the draft as early as this November.

In response to the government's war obsession, a national anti-draft campaign has been sparked into action. The anti-draft movement has also revived the work for which Resist was originally founded. Resist was established in 1967 to oppose the war in Vietnam and the draft. Since its inception, Resist has focussed on the issues of imperialism abroad and repression at home. The issues remain the same; the need for resistance is even stronger. Now that anti-draft organizations are appearing all over the country, Resist is anxious to respond to their widespread efforts. Several of these groups have appealed to us already. Community organizations have committed themselves to local educational projects, and joined in city-wide actions. Many individuals and groups have become involved in counseling. Parents and veterans are forming their own organizations and their numbers are growing.

We are calling on you to continue your support of Resist and to help strengthen the anti-draft movement. We not only need to encourage young people to make a choice about military servitude; we must also put a stop to Carter's war hysteria and defeat militarism. The threat of nuclear destruction makes our response more urgent than ever before. If you have not sent a contribution this year, we encourage you to do it now. Or support Resist by becoming a monthly pledge, support that we can count on so that anti-war organizations can continue to count on us. We need your help.

What Next for the Anti-Draft Movement?

It was Saturday morning, and in Cambridge the anti-draft movement felt they had won. In a demonstration capping two weeks of intensive picketing, sitting-in, and leafletting at post offices—the site picked by the government in an attempt to give a non-military appearance to draft registration—the demonstrators had succeeded in completely blocking access to the Cambridge post office. When local police refused to interfere, federal officials were forced to concede the struggle by locking the post office themselves. Meanwhile, demonstrators did a brisk business selling stamps; and after the final moments of the official draft registration period were counted down, a victory parade marched through Harvard Square.

It will be several weeks before it is possible to measure the success or failure of the government's draft registration measures, but preliminary indications are that the government did not come close to its announced goal of 98% registration. In Greater Boston, for example, only 32,600, or 65% of the approximately 50,000 19- and 20-year old men in the area registered. Preliminary reports from other cities indicate a similar trend: Atlanta, 56%; Chicago, 68%; Seattle, 66%; and Phoenix, 80%. Of the four million men required to register for the draft, perhaps a million did not.

The government's plan to bring back draft registration, and eventually the draft, now confronts some difficulties; and what started as a move intended to signal U.S. resolve to the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the invasion of Afghanistan has instead become an effective rallying point for the anti-war forces in this country. For example, nearly a million young men are now in violation of the draft registration law. Except for those resisters who publicly announced their intention to refuse to register, none of these quiet refusers can be prosecuted until November, for that is the earliest that the time-consuming process of computerizing the registration records and mailing receipts to registrants can be completed. Moreover, the government faces the strong possibility that the full Supreme Court will uphold the Philadelphia court's finding that the Selective Service law is itself unconstitutional because it excludes women from its scope. Though the Court is expected to hear arguments on this issue in the fall, it is likely to be sev-

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eral months before a decision can be handed down. In the meantime, as the New York Times noted on August 1, "Some legal scholars and lawyers have asserted that registration is not mandatory because the constitutional question is unsettled." Thus the government, which has indicated that it plans to initiate some exemplary prosecutions to re-establish the level of fear and compliance necessary to make draft registration work, will find itself in a legal tangle which is likely to remain unresolved by early January, the time that draft registration is scheduled for those men born in 1962. Thus the anti-draft movement will be in a position to argue that their claim that there is safety in numbers has been born out, and that the safest and most effective way to oppose war and the draft is to refuse to register for it. Finally, if the Supreme Court upholds the Philadelphia decision, the government may find itself in the position that if it wants to register anyone for the draft it will have to register both men and women. Given the unexpectedly close vote in the House of Representatives on draft registration last spring, combined with the horror with which the New Right views the prospect of "women in the trenches," it is possible that a majority of Congress will not be willing to vote for peacetime draft registration.

If the past is any indication of the future, however, neither Congress nor the Courts can be relied on to oppose Carter's war drive. The Democratic leadership in both the House and the Senate succeeded in passing draft registration with only the most minimal of hearings; and Supreme Court Justice Brennan's last-minute decision lifting the Philadelphia court's injunction on draft registration was based on the Government's unsubstantiated claim that a list of registrants would be essential in a national emergency, and the Court's historic unwillingness to interfere with Presidential interpretations of military necessities. Both Congress and the Courts in fact see the issue of draft registration very nearly the way that the anti-draft movement sees it—not as a question of abstract rights or the establishment of equity in defending the country, but as part of an administration-inspired drive to put the lessons of Vietnam behind us, to prepare the nation to accept the necessity for military intervention in the third world once more, and to risk the possibility of conflict with the Soviet Union.

In short, we are engaged in a dangerous business, and can count only on ourselves. Yet preliminary reports indicate that the anti-draft movement around the country is quite different than the campus-based movement of the Vietnam era. In Boston, for example, the most active anti-draft organization is the Boston Alliance Against Registration and the Draft (BAARD), which worked in conjunction with the American Friends Service Committee, Mobilization for Survival, and the Cambridge Friends Meeting. Though there had been a network of campus anti-draft organizations in the spring, only a few students were active in the campaign against draft registration this summer. BAARD members are mostly in their early 20s, white, and an even mix between men and women. Founded in April, 1979, BAARD has worked not so much to enlarge itself as to encourage the formation of other anti-draft organizations in the colleges and communities of Greater Boston. Membership in BAARD requires a fairly high level of commitment and activity; and by the beginning of draft registration week, with more than a dozen demonstrations under their belt and a year of intense work behind them, the members of BAARD had formed a tightknit organization crisscrossed with friendship ties.

The strategy of the anti-draft forces for the two weeks of registration were worked out in the preceding months, and had three parts. The first was a series of demonstrations, coordinated by BAARD and the Clamshell Alliance, at registration sites. Monday's demonstration in downtown Boston brought two dozen arrests and a small amount of police brutality, as well as extensive media coverage. Tuesday's "occupation" of a Cambridge post office was almost uncontested by the authorities; and a number of local demonstrations, a spectacular guerilla theater in Somerville (a working-class community adjoining Boston), and a rally on Boston Common put draft registration in the news on Saturday. The following Monday saw another two dozen arrests when the main post office in Somerville was blocked, and the demonstrations climaxed with the Cambridge blockade described earlier. The impact of all these demonstrations was to keep opposition to registration before the public eye, and to heighten the awareness of potential registrants that there were many people opposed to draft registration.

The other components of registration week strategy were equally important. Building on the decentralized nature of the registration process, teams of leafletters were formed in 60 towns and districts of Greater Boston. While in some communities these "teams" might be only one or two people, in others the nucleus of a community anti-draft organization was formed. The goal, only partially realized, was to leaflet all potential registrants at the post office, and to encourage them to put off registering while they thought over the issues involved. Thus the third component of our strategy was counselling, whether over the phone at BAARD; AFSC, or Mobe, or at the continuous counselling sessions held by the Cambridge Friends Meeting. In this way, several thousand potential registrants were brought in contact with the anti-draft movement. While many decided not to register, many others did; but our goal was to establish in the minds of even those who registered that there are people opposed to war and the draft who are available to help them if the draft itself is brought back.

In thinking about the future of the anti-draft movement, we can safely predict a number of developments that will force the anti-draft movement to make some kind of response in the next few months. First, we can expect that the government will attempt to initiate some kind of exemplary prosecutions of non-registrants, and
possibly of anti-draft activists or counselors, in order to retrieve some of its losses from the summer registration period and work toward a higher registration rate in 1981. As was stated earlier, such prosecutions will be uncertain of success until the Supreme Court rules on the constitutionality of the Selective Service law; but we will nevertheless have to figure out a way to aid in this defence without abandoning other kinds of work. Second, the anti-draft movement has already reached the point where it is the likely nucleus of the next anti-war movement. As a recent Evans and Novak column pointed out, there is a high expectation in Washington of some kind of military adventure to solidify (or create) support for Carter between now and the election. Given that the Carter administration has recently rattled sabres in many parts of the globe, there is ample opportunity for some kind of conflict to develop. This will both spur interest in the return of the draft itself among its perennial supporters in the Congress, and call on the anti-draft movement to oppose whatever military intervention is in the offing. Third, while it is unlikely that the draft itself will make much progress in Congress before the elections, we can expect that the House and Senate Armed Services Committees to hold hearings on bringing back the draft as soon as Congress reconvenes after the election. Though both Carter and Reagan are on record as opposing a peacetime draft, the forces in Congress supporting the return of the draft are sufficiently powerful to make this a serious issue in spite of Presidential opposition. Thus we must anticipate a renewed Congressional focus to our work, attempting to persuade legislators to vote against the return of the draft.

How can this be done? In Boston many anti-draft activists, particularly those in the Boston Alliance Against Registration and the Draft, hold the view that the most effective way to prevent the return of the draft will be to organize a highly visible, broad-based movement whose activities include non-violent disruption and confrontation, as well as lobbying and educational work. The reasoning here is that the natural inclination of Congress and the political elite at this time is to support all forms of anti-Soviet mobilization, to persuade our “enemies”, allies and clients abroad, and our citizens at home, that the United States has regained the will to effectively dominate the world’s peoples and resources. Rightly or wrongly the Carter administration

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A Statement by Resist on Registration and the Draft

Ten years ago and more, resistance to the draft formed a vital part of a broad movement to turn the U.S. away from being a terror among nations. Many of us were among those who then supported young men resisting the draft—or ourselves were draft resisters. We helped organize the “Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority”, draft card turn-ins at the Justice Department and at selective service offices, networks to provide counselling and to support resistance. In the years between we have continued to support hundreds of efforts to achieve fundamental social change in the United States, and genuine human rights and equal opportunity around the world.

Then the U.S. government was engaged in an illegal, immoral, and ultimately futile war on Vietnam. Today, in a new decade, much has changed. But one thing remains absolutely clear: the power to conscript IS the power to make war.

Whether one talks of the U.S. invasion of Cambodia or the Chinese invasion of Vietnam, intervention in Afghanistan or in the Dominican Republic, or myriad other examples one could cite, history makes clear that, whatever the system of government, providing an army is encouraging its use. Many of us who are not pacifists can conceive circumstances, as during World War II, when a war seemed necessary; but we understand the particular dangers conscription presents, especially to a democracy. Indeed, it is likely that when a government cannot persuade the people that a war is worth fighting, it isn't.

In the United States (about which, as American citizens, we must primarily speak), peacetime conscription has invariably contributed to heightening social conflict and undermining democratic processes at home and to encouraging military adventures abroad. The reasons are not hard to find. To justify the anti-democratic practice of conscription, policy-makers have had to exaggerate fears of a real or potential enemy; they have had to try silencing domestic opposition by characterizing it as duplicitous or disloyal. They have invented specious rationalizations for taking over the lives of youth—like the assertion that two or three years of control by a rigid military bureaucracy is "good for" young people.

And once control over a conscript military was achieved, an executive could proceed to use it essentially free from Congressional or, for long periods of time, even popular opposition.

We see such a process beginning today. President Carter, wildly exaggerating the reprehensible Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as the "greatest crisis since World War II," proposes reinstating conscription as one response. In turn, he links renewed draft registration (which is only a first step to conscription) to a new Carter Doctrine, describing the vast expanse of the Middle East as an American preserve and threatening to send American troops to counter any interference with what he defines as U.S. interests in the area. And predictably, certain of his advisers are already questioning the patriotism of those who oppose such militarization of U.S. policy.

Many Americans, frustrated by Iranian seizure of U.S. hostages, angry over obscene oil company profits, and fearful about losing fuel needed to heat their homes and run their cars, may well be inclined to sign the blank war check a renewed draft represents. Such a response is encouraged by those who say we must now "overcome the trauma of Vietnam" and reassert American military power in the world—as if we could simply turn the clock back to the days of Dwight Eisenhower, or perhaps Teddy Roosevelt, pretend that the world has itself not changed, and that sabre rattling and gunboat diplomacy will actually solve the problems that trouble us all.

The following principles seem to us clear and compelling:

—American military power should not be used to shore up hated dictatorships in client states; people around the world have come to see that they have as much right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" as we, and they will oppose the U.S. so long as we stand in the way of such goals.

—Given the resources of a registered population, an American President will be tempted to pursue foreign military adventures.

—Excessive concentration of resources and energy on overseas adventures immediately diverts attention and money from the achievement of equality and stability at home, whether one is talking about ending inflation, providing opportunities for equal education and jobs for all Americans, or so changing the economy that young people, especially from poor and working class families, are no longer forced into the military as the only alternative to permanent unemployment.
We are committed to acting on these principles. We will work against the renewal of draft registration and the conscription which would inevitably follow. But should peacetime conscription be reestablished, we will renew our Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority, once again supporting young men and women who refuse conscription. We will help in reestablishing anti-draft groups and centers. We will encourage efforts to disrupt whatever "selective" service mechanisms may be set up. In short, we will aid and abet direct and unequivocal resistance to registration, conscription, the militarization of American society, and the waste of a new generation of American youth.

We hope that such actions will not be needed, and that the social disruption an effort to reinstitute the draft will inevitably produce will be prevented—by dropping the idea. But if the administration presses forward with its plans to conscript the youth of America, we will not blink at the consequences of an absolute opposition to that effort.

STATEMENT SUPPORTERS

Elaine Allen M.D.       Paul Faler          Scott Laughton
Benedict Alper          Michael K. Ferber    Paul Lauter
Ethel Alper             W.H. Ferry          Dick Lavine
Warren Ambrose          Gregory H. Finger    Brenda Lazin
Pamela J. Annas         Martin Fleisher     Harold Levine
Barbara Apfelbaum       Norm Fruchter        Renee Levine
Steve Arnold            Rev. Robert W. Gardiner Arthur MacEwan
Paul Avrich             Kathleen Gilberd    Jane Malone
Samuel L. Baker         Sherna B. Gluck      Dorothy Martin
Harald Bakken           Mitchell Goodman     Linden P. Martineau
Carl Barus              James R. Green       Rosa M. Martinez
Philip L. Bereano       David F. Greenberg  Helen McCormick
Jacqueline Bernard      Kenneth Hale          Andrew McLaughlin
John Brattin            Thomas W. Harris, Jr. Gloria J. Miller
Frank Brodhead          Franklin J. Hart     Steven C. Miller
Gary Brown              Hilde Hein          Nancy Mitigny
Frieda J. Burke         Nancy M. Henley     Stanley Monroe
Jim Campen              Frank Hoffman        Vicki Monroe
Ron Capling             John Holt           Jean Pauline
Jean S. Cherevas        J. E. Humphreys     Robert O. Morris, II
William B. Cherevas     Ray Jackendoff      Rosemary C. Morris
Noam Chomsky            Vicki Dello Joio    William C. Morris
Jean Christie           Donald Kalish        William C. Morris, II
Amanda Claiborne        Louis Kampf          Elizabeth Murray
Rev. James Counahan     Byron J. Koekkoek    Barbara L. Myers
Constance G. Cutter     Herbert Kohl         Janet N. Neuman
William C. Davidson     Judith Kohl          Bob Nichols
John Demeter            Ellen Kolegar        Jim O'Brien
Margery Davies          James H. Koplin      Wayne O'Neil
Thelma C. DuVinage      Burton Lane          Carlos Otero
Phyllis Ewen            Lynn Lane           Michelle C. Otto

Resist asks your help in publicizing this statement and supporting the growing anti-draft, anti-war movement. If you would like to add your name to this statement, please fill out the coupon below and mail it to Resist, 38 Union Square, Somerville, MA 02143.

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and the Joint Chiefs of Staff believe that draft registration and (implicitly) the draft play a key part in this mobilization. In the absence of an effective liberal opposition, the most powerful weapons in the hands of the anti-militarist movement is to resurrect the spectre of the dissent and disruption of the Vietnam era. We must let the government know that they will have to pay a very high price if they pursue their present path, and attempt to persuade liberals and moderates that this price is too high.

It would be unrealistic to ignore the current mood of “public opinion”, and to act as if the organized anti-war forces today were not a small minority. At the same time it must be admitted that intensive anti-draft work provides the most likely path to turn this minority into an effective majority. For the draft is visible and coercive, requiring the active participation of citizens, and not merely the quiet and automatic paying of taxes. The complexities of the issues and their insulation from popular pressure make it extremely difficult to launch effective campaigns against the MX missile or the collapse of the SALT talks, for example, and it is unrealistic to expect tax withholding campaigns to cripple the military budget. The draft is a different matter, and a massive campaign against the return of the draft would have to include a broad range of issues, including U.S. foreign policy, the politics of oil and alternative sources of energy, and issues of race, class and sex discrimination. What support there is for the draft among young people is generally based on their agreement that the United States is now being threatened by the Soviet Union, and that the economic well being of the United States requires that “we” control the oil of the Middle East by any means necessary.

Anti-draft work in the fall will thus amount to an intensive, grass roots campaign of peace education among many constituencies for whom the draft has suddenly made the issue of war and peace one of personal commitment. In Boston the anti-draft movement intends to focus its work for the fall on helping these constituencies organize themselves to oppose the draft and war. For example:

**High School Students—**Those born in 1963, generally high school seniors, will have to register for the draft around the time of their eighteenth birthday. This means that anti-draft work in high schools will have a kind of reality principle to it that has been missing so far. Because so much anti-draft organizing has been done on a community basis, one next step will be to focus our energy on high schools, demanding that responsible draft counseling by non-military personnel be given space in high schools, and encouraging high school students to organize themselves to discuss the issues.

**College Students—**The anti-draft movement so far has included students organized on their colleges for only a brief time, early February to early May, 1980. Though some commentators expressed disappointment that the student anti-draft movement did not approach the level of militancy of the late 1960s, the proper comparison should be to the mid-60s, when the anti-war movement was just getting under way. In this light the student anti-draft movement, at least in Boston, was far more advanced in numbers and political sophistication than the beginnings of the anti-Vietnam War movement (remember “Part of the way with LBJ”?). In part this has to do with the accumulated experience of the anti-apartheid, women’s liberation, and anti-nuclear movements; and in part I think a certain amount of the student response has been an attempt to shake off the image and self-image of an allegedly self-centered generation by seizing on the dimly remembered activities of the “we won’t go” movements of the Vietnam era. But with draft registration this will certainly change. A fair proportion of undergraduate men will have refused to register for the draft, and they will provide a nucleus for anti-draft work on campus, attempting to broaden their base of support and encouraging college freshmen—those born in 1962—not to register in January.

**Parents—**One of the surprises of anti-draft work in the Boston area has been the large amount of support received from the parents of draft age children. Our experience during the Vietnam War was that draft resistance was part of a generational conflict as well as an anti-war movement, and at least at the outset of the war parents were generally invisible and often not supportive. Vietnam and Watergate have done a lot to change this, and anti-draft workers in Boston received many calls from parents who wanted to know how their children could avoid the draft, expressing their determination to defend their children’s lives by any means necessary. Organizations of “Parents Against the Draft” have sprung up in Boston and many other places around the country, and they will be able to intervene in debates about the draft in schools and community organizations with a perspective that could be extremely powerful.

**Veterans—**In the Boston area, and I believe elsewhere, the shabby treatment of veterans and particularly the government’s stonewalling attitude on compensation for Agent Orange poisoning has led to a revival of the Vietnam veterans’ movement. The return of draft registration and the growing threat of war has brought at least a small portion of these veterans into contact with the anti-draft movement. The most effective refutation of the government’s rosy pictures about life in the Army can come from Vietnam veterans; and it is likely that at least some vets will find a supportive atmosphere in the anti-draft movement. To be sure there will be problems, as it is likely that many vets who come together around government mistreatment and Agent Orange will disagree about the Vietnam war and the draft. In New Hampshire and Boston, chapters of a new organization Veterans Against Foreign Wars, are underway, and it is likely that similar organizations will spring up in many places.

**Women—**The inclusion of women in draft registration is potentially explosive. In general, women have taken a more active part than men in the Boston anti-
draft movement: they are better organized, more politically experienced, and not encumbered with the baggage of masculinity which pushed many young men into mindless support for aggressive military measures and obedience to patriarchal authority. The severe setbacks to both equal rights and the pro-abortion movement have served notice to feminists that the Courts and the Congress are not on their side. And the extremely antifeminist arguments used by the Congress in excluding women from the current draft registration have placed many women in the dilemma of demanding inclusion into the military on the basis of democratic rights (e.g., NOW, NAM, the Guardian position, etc.), while opposing the draft for anyone. A Boston organization, Women Opposed to Registration and the Draft (W.O.R.D.), has been at work for the last six months, opposing draft registration for both men and women while challenging the arguments inside and outside the anti-draft movement that women should be excluded from the draft because of their “nature”. Women in the anti-draft movement are well aware that when the Supreme Court hears arguments on the constitutionality of the Selective Service law, their most obvious choices are to find that Congress must include women in any draft registration, or that women must be protected from sufferings of military service. In either case the future of the anti-war and women’s movements will be at least momentarily linked, with unforeseeable consequences.

The most difficult task confronting the anti-draft movement is to transform itself into a multi-racial movement. The facts are that the anti-draft movement so far has been far more inclusive of white working class people than the early years of the anti-Vietnam war movement, at least in Boston, while at the same time remaining almost completely white. Moreover, while there are grounds for optimism in the fact that the anti-draft movement has broken loose from the campuses, and particularly from the elite campuses, there is clearly a long way to go. This is particularly true considering the very high rate of non-registration in poor and minority communities. High school and veterans’ work will help to overcome this in part, but perhaps more important is active participation in issues of particular concern to the black community. In Boston, for example, people in the black community have taken several anti-draft initiatives; and anti-draft activists have participated in demonstrations against the closing of the predominantly black Roxbury Community College, and against the police murder of a black teenager. But we must also be more outspoken, I think, in supporting non-registration, rather than concentrating exclusively on the winning of conscientious objection status. And if we are to encourage conscientious objection status at all, we must make every effort to train enough draft counselors so that this status is not reserved for those who have the money and time for long legal proceedings.

In conclusion, it seems to me that the movement against the draft is the most important part of the broad based peace movement that is essential to our survival. The anti-draft movement will put the issues of war and peace on the street corner and at the dinner table, and it will transform the peace movement by drawing in new constituencies that have so far been untouched by our work. The Carter administration is trying to bring back the draft because the military policy that it, or a Reagan administration, will give us cannot live without it. Stopping the draft is the first step towards dismantling the corporate and military interests that wish to rule us and the world.

Frank Brodhead

Photos by Lana Reeves, courtesy of Somerville Journal Publishing Company.
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GRANTS

Shortly after President Carter escalated the new Cold War with his State of the Union address, Resist received its first anti-draft funding request for 1980. The request came from The Rake, an independent, collectively run newspaper serving the Providence (R.I.) community, to publish a special anti-draft issue. The Resist board complied and 25,000 copies of the paper went out all over Rhode Island.

March was a busy month for anti-draft activists, and Resist gave money to two national projects: the March 22 demonstration in Washington, D.C. which was sponsored by the National Mobilization Against the Draft, and which drew 30,000 people; and the National Anti-Draft Teach-In Project of the United States Student Association, which coordinated a week of nationwide teach-ins. Resist was also pleased to give money for the printing of a special anti-draft broadsheet directed to draft-age and high-school people, “The Draft Is Aimed At You”, published by Common Sense for Hard Times Pamphlets of West Cornwall, Conn. We also gave a start-up grant to the Military Law Task Force (San Diego, CA) which has been very active in initiating and coordinating anti-draft legal work nationwide. Their article, “Perspectives on Anti-Draft Work”, was published in the last Resist newsletter.

In April, we gave money to the Boston Mobilization Against the Draft, the coalition of student and community groups that had organized buses for the Washington demonstration, for their Jackson/Kent State memorial march and rally in May.

In early July, grants went to several New England groups for their activities during the draft registration period. They were: The Boston Alliance Against Registration and the Draft, which sponsored several demonstrations and sit-ins during the two weeks of registration and also coordinated leafletting at post offices in over 60 towns in the greater Boston area; Rhode Island Committee Against Registration and the Draft, for similar work in Rhode Island, including a draft hot-line; and the Upper Valley Committee Against Registration and the Draft, for copies of “Don’t Go”, published by the War Resisters League, for distribution to draft-age men in Vermont and New Hampshire considering the option of non-registration.

Our last grant went to the Military and Draft Law Resource Center (Cambridge, MA), a start-up grant for the center which will be the most important resource in New England in this area of law. The center has the complete files of the now defunct Committee on Military Justice, the center for draft law on the East Coast during the Vietnam War and until 1979.

NORTH AMERICAN CONGRESS ON LATIN AMERICA (151 West 19th St., 9th floor, New York, NY 10011).

For more than a decade NACLA has been a reliable source of information about Latin America. They have recently established a Women’s Project to do research and publishing on women in Latin America. Their goals are “to explain the social and economic structures which create and perpetuate women’s oppression in Latin America; to explore how Latin America’s changing role in the world economy and investments by U.S. multinationals have affected women in the region; and to describe some of the areas where Latin American women are engaged in political struggles on their own behalf, and how these relate to broader struggles for social and economic equality.” Resist’s grant is to support the publication of material on women in Mexico, including information on the women’s movement and the situation of women working in the multinational plants at the Mexican border.

MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR OCCATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH (P.O. Box 17326, Back Bay Station, Boston, Mass. 02116). MassCOSH is a statewide organization that unites working people, unions, community groups, and professional workers to improve job health and safety conditions. Since its founding in 1976, MassCOSH has been conducting workshops and making technical help and literature available to workers in and around Massachusetts. MassCOSH also puts out a bi-monthly newsletter called SURVIVAL KIT, which provides political analyses of job health conditions and news about job health and safety that’s hard to find anywhere else. One of the immediate MassCOSH goals is to intensify outreach, especially to third world and women workers. Long term goals are to help workers organize solid safety committees wherever they work; transfer skills in identifying and coping with work hazards; and help workers define and exercise their rights under the law. Resist helped finance a women’s occupational health conference, Women’s Work-Women’s Health. The conference was a great success, with attendance by nearly 500 working women representing over 30 different unions as well as non-union workers.