### JOURNAL OF THE WOMEN IN SCIENCE ENQUIRY NETWORK

# Wisenet

### EDITORIAL

It is the end of another year. WISENET has been in existence for 19 months and has over 150 financial members. Now it is time for stocktaking.

What have we achieved? A great deal, we believe.

We have published four issues of our journal, run regular and very successful Health Group and Education Group meetings, have participated in a number of conferences throughout the year, and have organized joint workshops with other groups. We are currently under consideration for grants from the Office of the Status of Women under their National Consultation and Assistance Program for Women. Most importantly, we believe that WISENET has achieved recognition. Concerned scientists and non-scientists alike, people in Australia and overseas, are appreciating what we are doing and are reacting positively in support of our objectives.

Our WISE NETwork is working!

For 1986 we look forward to both increasing our membership and consolidating our activities. The first Australian Women in Science National Conference will be held in Melbourne; this will form a basis for increased participation by WISENET link teams across the country.

1985 has been a year of hard work, alleviated by a lot of fun, companionship and growth. We believe it has all been worthwhile.

Have a Merry Christmas and a successful, happy and peaceful 1986.

Christa Critchl

# CONTENTS

- 1 Editorial
- 2 Cross Links
- 2 The Power of EEO
- 2 Eco-feminist course
- 3 Women in Science & Technology
- 4 Women in Chemistry Network
- 5 Coming Events in the A.C.T.
- 5 WISENET Alert

- 5 Women Speakers
- 6 Equal Bytes
- 7 Book Review
- 8 Liberation or Loss?
- 9 Scientific Snakes and Ladders
- 10 Alice through the Microscope
- 11 Membership Application Form
- 12 WISENET Objectives

# BOOK REVIEW

Disarmament - a feminist review

Apocalypse No, edited by Rachel Sharp. Sydney: Pluto, 1984, 294 pp.

The book is a collection from Sydney academics, medicos and others, setting out yet again the history of disarmament negotiations, costs of military expansion, medical effects of nuclear war, and so on. We've been exposed to plenty of this in recent years — Suter, Ball, Roberts, Denborough, Falk, Mack, Camilleri and Caldecott — so does Apocalypse No have something new to say?

Yes; it argues the link between western affluence, arms expenditure and Third World poverty; discusses how our macho culture reinforces the arms race; and looks briefly at the emerging field of peace education.

But the authors' stated aim — an in depth analysis of the nuclear crisis to guide the burgeoning peace movement — doesn't come off. Of course peace activism must break its self-defeating single issue focus; and to do this, needs a radical social critique. No comprehensive theoretical stand is offered here however. The book's low key Marxist emphasis does not produce 'an explanation' for the nuclear crisis — an analytic framework that

might help us to digest and integrate its assorted contributions. The relation between peace and ecological struggles is not perceived, nor how both ecology and peace connect integrally with 'the woman question'.

Given the international surge of womens' peace activism since 1981, it's astonishing to find feminism treated to a dismissive half page. This seems schizophrenic, given the chapters detailing how television, boys' toys, sports and video games all manufacture masculine language and identity around competititon, aggression and nationalism. To quote: "The average Australian youngster has . . . witnessed more than 14,000 violent deaths on TV by the time (quote) he enters his teens.' (p. 213)

Apocalypse No states that it is the pursuit of growth in a context of scarce global resources which leads to war: struggles between rich and poor nations for a share of the world product. But if, as UN Secretary General Waldheim has told us, women, half the world's population, get only one tenth its income, and own less than one per cent of all property... then surely, by this same logic, the question must arise — Why is it not women, who are making war?

7

## BOOK REVIEW

The Abolition, by Jonathan Schell London: Picador, 1984, 170 pp.

If Sharp's book comes across as an academic quickie, Schell's The Abolition is tortuous argument, his passionate, evocative Fate of the Earth now matured into close reasoned strategy for disarmament. Schell envisages 'A nuclear-weaponfree but conventionally armed and nuclear capable world of sovereign states ... linked together under an abolition agreement' (p. 160). He maintains that the very capacity to build nuclear weapons is just as deterrent as their actual existence. And so, stability might just as well be arrived at by threat of 'mutually assured construction' (my phrase, not his). Given that we can dismantle arsenals, but will never lose the knowledge of how to build them, a stalemate based on in principle as opposed to actual threat does at least reduce the chance of nuclear annihilation by preemptive strike or accident. At the same time, Schell believes, the development of an antinuclear retaliatory force would cope with non-compliant nations.

Schell sees the peace movement paralysed, both by the contradictory nature of deterrence policy, and the belief of some sections in world government as essential for disarmament. He offers it a provocative challenge; but not one to please radicals. Social and economic aspects of the crisis are bypassed here, and he asserts: 'instead of asking ourselves how, in the light of the peril to all life, we must transform all life, we (should) ask what the best way is to keep everything the same' (p. 111).

The final question also remains the same, it seems: What is *The Abolition*, if not a multilateral treaty? And how are we to arrive at that? Is it yet another gentleman's agreement? History gives little cause for faith in the morality of gentlemen

Ariel Kay Salleh

Reviewed for First Edition, ABC Radio, 28 March

# SCIENTIFIC SNAKES AND LADDERS

Each player rolls one die each turn.

Before beginning, roll a die to determine your sex:
even,male; odd,female.

