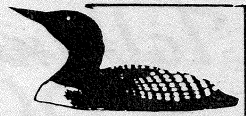


# North Country Notebook



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## Words Of Peace

With Veterans Day coming up this Sunday, it's a good time to remember that while a lot of folks are working hard to head off the possibility of World War III, other folks have thrown up their hands and said it's inevitable.

As a matter of fact, some folks have not only given up hope, they've given up their lives.

"We are all painfully aware," Studs Terkel observed recently, "of the alarming rate of suicides among our young people these days. I submit it has to do with their fear of nuclear holocaust.

"Though they seldom talk about it, a profound fatalism possesses them. It is so overwhelming you can taste it.

"A young girl I met recently told me quite casually: 'I worry about my little niece. She's only three and so lively and beautiful. I'd like to see her live out her life. I don't worry about myself so much. After all, I've lived 17 years.'"

Studs said that's understandable because the young people—and the rest of us, too—have a dim sense of the present, let alone the future. We have no sense of the past. We have lost our sense of history.

"We all know," Studs said, "that George Washington was the father of our country. But do we know what he said in his farewell address of 1796? He said: *The nation which indulges toward another an habitual hatred is in some degree a slave. It is a slave to its animosity, which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty and its interest.*"

The woman who called herself Peace Pilgrim never lost her sense of history. She crisscrossed this country seven times—on foot, for the most part—between 1953 and 1981, carrying the message: *When enough of us find inner peace, our institutions will become more peaceful and there will be no more occasion for war.* After her death in 1981, her writings were gathered together in the Peace Pilgrim Collection at the Swarthmore College Peace Library.

"The basic cause of all our difficulties," she wrote, "is immaturity."

If we were mature, she insisted, war would not be possible and peace would be assured.

"In our immaturity," she said, "we do not know the laws of the universe and we think evil can be overcome by more evil. One symptom of our immaturity is greed, making it difficult for us to learn the simple lesson of sharing."

"I'd rather feed a hungry child," Studs Terkel said, "than overstuff a Pentagon welfare bum any day."

In the pockets of her blue tunic, Peace Pilgrim carried the words of the hardest-headed realists around: the men who made war.

General Omar Bradley: "Wars can be prevented just as surely as they can be provoked

and we who fail to prevent them must share in the guilt for the dead."

Dwight D. Eisenhower: "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who are hungry and not fed, those who are cold and not clothed."

John F. Kennedy: "Mankind must put an end to war or war will put an end to mankind. War will exist until that distant day when the conscientious objector enjoys the same reputation and prestige that the warrior does today."

Lyndon B. Johnson: "The guns and the bombs, the rockets and the warships, all are symbols of human failure."

Hermann Goering, at the Nuremberg Trials: "Why, of course people don't want war. Why should some poor slob on a farm want to risk his life in a war when the best he can get out of it is to come back to his farm in one piece? Naturally, the common people don't want war: neither in Russia, nor in England, nor for that matter in Germany. That is understood. But, after all, it is the leaders of a country who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it's a democracy or a fascist dictatorship or a parliament or a communist dictatorship. Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy."

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Peace Pilgrim said that the Vietnam era—the war, the protests, the demonstrations—was an amazing time.

"The people of this country," she wrote, "stopped the war in Vietnam in spite of the government. It just shows the power of the people of this country."

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November 11 may well be one of our most significant American holidays, just as the Vietnam Wall in Washington has become one of our most significant memorials. This Sunday evening we will gather in the Capitol Rotunda to remember the young men who had to die for the mistakes the old men made. If Peace Pilgrim could be there, she would ask the old men for an accounting of their stewardship. We will ask for the accounting in her name:

*I want to know the books you read.  
How many hungry do you feed?  
How many have you forced to bleed?  
How many sent down to the grave?*

*I care not for your battalion flags.  
How many children are left in rags?  
How many young men in body bags?  
Why are you called Home of the Brave?*

*Do you speak peace and yet wage war?  
Do you lock the poor outside your door?  
You are not to mock them anymore.  
Now, show me the things you expect  
to save.*