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Maine Statewide News Letter No. 1 (February 1980)

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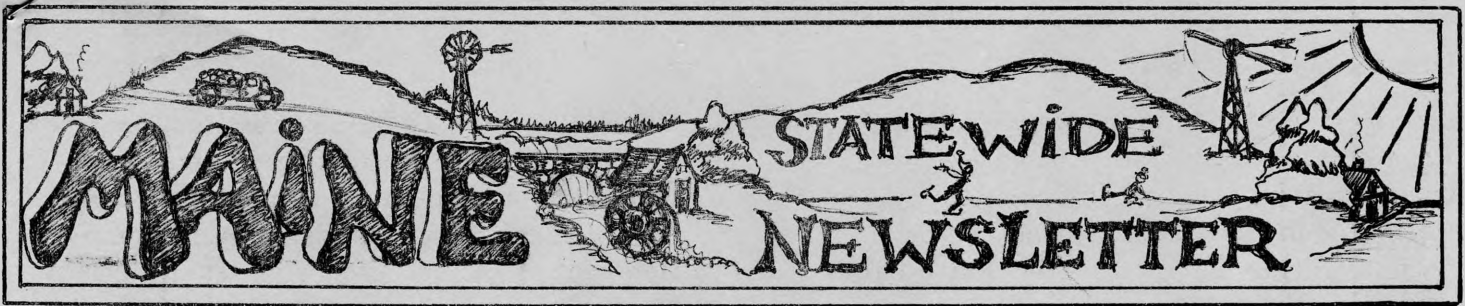
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A Statewide Town Meeting for Maine

Usually town meetings are in March, but this year there will be one on February 2-3. It won't be the usual one with local officials and issues. This one will focus on statewide and national issues and feature presidential candidates of several political parties. It will be held all day Saturday and part of Sunday at the USM Gym.

The meeting, organized by over 25 groups representing a wide range of interests (from the AFL-CIO to the Maine Civil Liberties Union), will carry a warrant with forty questions of statewide and national relevance. Each of ten categories--inflation, foreign affairs, energy, taxes, environment and economic development, agriculture, civil liberties, education and welfare, health care, and the role of government-- will have four questions for consideration.

Those attending the town meeting will first consider in workshop sessions their views on these questions. (Two such questions are: Should the Nation subsidize organic agriculture? Should the state get more tax revenue out of its forest resources?) Following the workshops, ten questions (one from each group) will be read and decisions reached on each. On Sunday, presidential candidates will debate each other and consider the forty warrant questions.

The State Town Meeting will give citizens a chance to educate themselves about relevant issues and to question presidential candidates about them as well. It will give Maine a kind of primary election.

A large turnout by persons concerned with economic, social, and political change will give a loud, clear message to state politicians and presidential candidates that they can't continue with business as usual.

No Nukes Deadline Approaches

The Maine Nuclear Referendum Committee is winding up the first phase of its campaign to prohibit nuclear power in Maine. With less than two weeks to go in the scheduled petition drive, MNRC has already presented some 33,000 valid signatures to the Secretary of State's office.

The Referendum effort was born out of the accident at Three Mile Island and nurtured by Ray and Pat Shadis, who live with their six children just two miles down wind of Maine Yankee. Petitions were handed out to people from every county in the state on July 4th at a rally that followed a 30 mile march from Wiscasset to Augusta. Since then the drive has grown to include more than 1,000 petition circulators, a network of county coordinators, a referendum steering committee, and a paid full-time coordinator.

The deadline for petitions to be in to the committee is February 7th and county coordinators are asking that petitions be returned to them at the beginning of that week. Coordinator Pat Shearman will be working to insure the final gathering of petitions and certification necessary to complete the drive.

The Media Committee, headed by Bob MacLaughlin, is working to ensure broad-based, accurate publicity. They are supplying materials and assistance to local groups and setting up a system to monitor statewide media coverage.

Once on the ballot, the second phase will begin: to develop the resources and organization which can educate a majority of Maine's 400,000 voters to the fact that a sane energy policy, without nukes, can exist in this state. (See the calendar for contact people)

Join the Citizens Party

If you've given up on the Democrats and Republicans, maybe the Citizens Party will appeal to you. Two organizing meetings were held in Portland in January in the hope of getting the party on the Maine ballot next November. The effort will pick up steam in early February when Barry Commoner, the undeclared presidential candidate of the party, comes to Portland and Bangor/Orono (see Calendar).

Among the goals of the party are: (1) Public control of energy industries and multinational corporations, (2) Price stability for necessities like food, fuel, housing, and health, (3) No nuclear power, (4) Reversal of the arms race, and (5) Jobs for everyone. Jeff Faux of Whitefield is the national chairperson of the party.

To get more information about the party or to join, contact Russ Libby at 622-5863 or Craig Brown at 774-3089 or write to P. O. Box 2041, Augusta 04330.

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Peak Mountain Amoeba Divides

Starting as a one-day-a-week food coop in the Wilcox's small shed, Peak Mountain Coop expanded to include over 160 families and households. Now, overgrowing its facilities, it has spawned Main Street Cooperative Market, a new, five-day-a-week coop opening in February in Unity. With financial support from Pearl and Bel Smith of Unity, an excellent facility (an old grocery store), and much of the Peak Mountain membership, the Main St. Coop should definitely serve the Unity area well.

The change has also been good for the Dixmont delegation, who have found a location in Dixmont Corners (Routes 7 and 9/202). They will continue a once-a-week store, but now it will be much closer to home.

For information on starting up small coop food stores or on dividing of assets, contact Ariel and Ben Wilcox, RFD 1 Box 74, Dixmont 04932 or Ron Reed, Star Route, Unity 04988.

Nuts and Bolts

In putting out this first newsletter, we tried to solve as many potential problems of the newsletter as possible. Some things were firmly decided for this issue--a subscription rate of \$4/year (more or less), article deadline for the next issue of Feb. 20th, and production on the weekend of Feb. 22-24 at the Palmyra Dome (near Newport). We want a broad variety of articles on different issues and a focus on resources available and things happening in Maine. The newsletter will not be a propaganda tool of any group or idea but will seek to present various perspectives on issues and a lot of useful factual information. Two articles were edited only for length and a few gendered words were changed to make them non-gendered.

Although two meetings were held before this issue to discuss the newsletter, some questions which are still unanswered are: What will it be called (our present title is very bland)? Can decisions already made be changed? If so, how? Should there be an editorial board to set policy? What should the format be (we definitely need more graphics)? Feedback on this would be much appreciated, either on the subscription form or separately.

We need articles, graphics, resources, and events notices by Feb. 20th. Please send them to INVERT, RFD 1, Newport 04953 or call 938-2219. If you can help with production for any part of the Feb. 22-24 weekend, call or write for directions. Some of those who helped with this first issue are: Sheila Garrett, Pat Haynes, Melody Chadbourne, Nancy Button, and folks from the Palmyra Dome.

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Food for Thought

The 1980 Farmer's Almanac reports that undertakers have noticed that bodies are decomposing more slowly lately, due, they say, to the many preservatives said bodies ingested during their lives.

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"Don't agonize, organize."

Upcoming Highlights

Jan 31--Rob Rowse speaks on alternative Energy. UMF Commuter Lounge, Farmington.

Feb. 2-3--State Town Meeting, USM Gym, Portland. Workshops all day Saturday and a Presidential Candidates Forum on Sunday. Contact: Common Cause, 72 Winthrop St., Augusta 04330, 6225798.

Feb. 2-3--Clamshell Alliance Congress at Boston Univ. Contact Clamshell Alliance, 39 Congress St., Portsmouth, N. H. 03801.

Feb. 3-4--Barry Commoner speaking Sunday at State Town Meeting and at Fund-Raiser for Citizens Party in Portland. Contact Craig Brown, 462 Cumberland Ave., Portland 04101, 774-3089. He will speak Monday at 12 Noon, Hauck Auditorium, Univ. of Maine, Orono. Contact Doug Allen, 81 Main St., Orono 04473, 866-7782.

Feb. 7--Deadline for signatures for Nuclear Referendum. Contact county coordinators or Pat or Ray Shadis, Box 346, Edgecomb 04556, 882-7801 or Pat Shearman, Box 243, Kennebunkport 04046, 967-4043 to help out.

Feb. 8-10--Findhorn: Planetary Awareness in Our Daily Lives. Conference at Birdsong Farm, Box 143, N. Berwick 03906, 676-4038.

Feb. 9--MOFGA (Maine Organic Farmers & Gardeners) Annual Meeting, 10 AM to 4 PM, Old South Congregational Church, Second St., Hallowell. Contact MOFGA, Box 188, Hallowell, 04347, 622-3118.

Feb. 10--Democratic Party caucuses throughout the state.

Feb. 16--MAGIC (Maine Clamshell) meeting at 11 AM at Sheila Garrett's in Wellington. (It will be MAGIC's first wind-powered meeting.) Contact Sheila, Star Route, Wellington 04990, 683-2892.

Feb. 16-17--Women's Retreat Weekend in Strong. Contact Maine Lesbian Feminists, Box 125, Belfast 04915.

March 1--Conference on Marketing Maine Produce, Jewett Hall, U. of Maine, Augusta. Contact Karen Charles, USM, 246 Deering Ave., Portland 04102, 780-4423.

New Alternative in Wilton

A new alternative school is being formed with a tentative location in Wilton. It will be dedicated to teaching children the basics while moving within an environment rich in stimulation and activity. Children will be encouraged to use their own creativity and curiosity to generate the energy for gaining knowledge.

An introductory organizing meeting for the school, scheduled to open in Sept., 1980, for grades K-6, is scheduled for Friday, Feb. 1st at 7 PM at the People's Bank near Mt. Blue Shopping Center. Contact Carol Scribner, Gen. Delivery, Wilton 04291, 645-3078.

And Another Alternative

And if you think any school at all stifles learning, then you may prefer no school at all. If you would rather see an option of education outside any school building, you can get help from Growing Without Schooling, John Holt, 308 Boylston St., Boston 02116. One of many Maine contacts for GWS is Carol and Willy White, RFD Box 112, Charleston 04422.

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March 1-2--Cambodia Benefit Concerts in Portland and Bangor (?). More info next time.

March ?--Forum on Public Power in Portland. Contact Harlan Baker, 74 Deering St., Portland 04101, 772-9640 for details.

March 5--Debate between Pat Garrett of Safe Power for Maine and John Randazza of CMP/Maine Yankee at 8 PM in Given Auditorium, Colby College, Waterville. Contact SPM, Box 774, Camden 04843.

March 21-23--Maine Gay Symposium VII, Bangor Community College. Contact Gay People's Alliance, 92 Bedford, Portland 04102, 780-4085.

April 19--Statewide Conference on Fund-Raising and Financial Management for coops and grass roots social change groups. Contact Sandy Kaplan, 103 Ledge-lawn, Bar Harbor 04609, 288-5426.

Appropriate Technology is "In"

The U. S. Dept. of Energy Small Grants Program for Appropriately Technology, 150 Causeway St., Boston, Mass. 02114, has made a number of small grants to Maine groups and individuals to do A. T. projects. Among them are cogeneration on Isle Au Haut, Solar (Searsmont), solar greenhouses (MOFGA and Penquis CAP), hydro (Machias and Camden), wind (Easton), and wood (Bath). Contact the above address to find out what is being done and how to apply to do a project yourself.

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"If your only tool is a hammer, you tend to see all your problems as nails."

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Own a Piece of Maine Yankee

You too can become a stockholder in one of Maine's largest and most prosperous companies. That company is CMP (Central Maine Power). Too large and prosperous? It doesn't deserve the \$35 million rate increase it's applying for? It endangers our lives with radiation from Maine Yankee? Why buy stock with them?

One reason is to demonstrate the errors of these policies from the inside as well as outside. Successful pressure tactics by stockholders worked in the 60's to end or reduce discrimination (racial) within several large companies. Having 100-200 concerned, critical stockholders at the annual stockholders meeting in May might temper the blind, full-speed-ahead attitude of CMP executives.

Judy Barrows, Box 774, Camden 04843 is organizing a stock buying so that safe energy and consumer advocates will have access to CMP reports and the annual stockholders meeting. One share, plus broker fees, will cost \$15-20. If you send her \$20 plus name, address, and social security number (for tax purposes), she will send you the stock plus any money left over. But do it today, because the purchase deadline is February 5th.

Wednesday Night is Energy Night

"The Wednesday Night Energy Group." Someone snickered. It was not suggested very seriously. But the name has stuck, a compromise between those who wanted the group to be formalized and have, of course, an official name and those who wanted it to be a collection of friends from groups with a mutual interest in safe, renewable energy sources for Maine.

People from about 15 groups, such as Sensible Maine Power, Natural Resources Council, Clamshell Alliance, and Citizens for Utility Rate Reform have been meeting every few Wednesdays to talk with each other, trade information, and work on safe energy projects. Such projects included support in getting the Maine Nuclear Referendum Committee off the ground, energy papers on alternative/renewable sources (to be released soon), legislative bills, and participation in the upcoming State Town Meeting (see article).

The Wednesday Night Energy Group meets again on Wednesday (of course), February 13th at the Common Cause office, 72 Winthrop St., Augusta. Anyone involved in safe energy issues throughout the state is welcome.

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CASHing in

In Waldo County CASH means not only money but also Community Awareness for Self Help. Sponsored by Waldo County Committee for Social Action, CASH is holding town meetings throughout the county to develop energy plans and energy conservation projects. From now until the end of February, residents of each town will gather one evening for three hours for workshops and to decide what changes to make in the energy policy of their town.

Is this what every town should do? To find out how you can do it in your town or county, contact Tim Crane at WCCSA, Belfast 04915 333-4658.

Pests in the Department of Conservation

The Maine Dept. of "Conservation," with the corporate interests (who own over 50 percent of Maine land), is planning the 25th annual Emergency Spruce Budworm Suppression Program. The largest aerial spraying program in the U. S. (2/3 of the total) is geared up to dump hundreds of thousands of gallons of petroleum products and toxic chemicals into the air and water of northern and eastern Maine. A public hearing was held January 11-12 in Orono by the U. S. Forest Service on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which recommended no federal funds for the 1980 budworm program.

As was expected, many forest industry workers and their bureaucratic/academic flunkies (with their expense account glow) criticized the USFS. Predictions included massive academic catastrophe, should no public funds be used for this massive boondoggle, a prediction which runs counter to actual experiences in Canadian provinces which don't spray.

A large turnout of spray opponents, however, stated their support for the USFS no-fund stand and opposed the spray program on both health and economic bases. Testimony cited the carcinogenic, mutagenic, fetotoxic, and viral enhancing properties of the chemicals used, the spraying of watersheds, lack of control of toxins once released (rendering the idea of "buffer zones" meaningless, and the fact that spray zone residents are guinea pigs in a long term biochemical experiment against their wills.

Several speakers expressed the outrage much of Washington County is feeling where budworm protests of three years, including last year's events (civil disobedience over inaccurate blueberry spraying, the St. Regis spraying of over 125 gardens in the Dennysville area) has resulted in increased public awareness. The fact that their children's air/water is being contaminated is mobilizing many people. This writer would welcome reader response of creative, nonviolent ideas or other supportive energy to aid in this struggle.

To support the USFS (the draft EIS is available at most libraries or from the USDA/USFS, 370 Reed Rd., Broomall, Pa. 19008,

Rural Women Get Together in Piscataquis

Woman Care/Aegis is women working to support women in family crisis situations. Support and shelter are provided to those in need. It is encouraging to see such projects springing up in even the most rural parts of the state. Contact Cindy Freeman at the Dept. of Human Services (800-432-1641) or Pat Willey at Penquis CAP (564-7627), both in Dover-Foxcroft, for more information on how the group got organized.

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Listen and Learn

In an attempt to demystify the law a little, Pine Tree Legal in Machias has set up Tel-Law, a series of 39 5-minute tapes on various legal questions--unemployment insurance, utility shut-offs, divorce, repossessions. (Unfortunately there is no tape on rights for pesticide spray victims.)

Although the tapes were meant for Washington County residents only, persons from any part of Maine can call 800-432-1662 and ask to hear any tape. (A large volume of requests from other parts of the state might cause them to change this policy, however.)

A brochure listing the 39 tapes is available from PTL, 146 Middle St., Portland 04101 or from most any PTL office.

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written comments accepted until Feb. 19th), write to our congresspeople, especially Sen. Muskie, to counteract pressure from big business. Also, you can contact state legislators by mail or phone (800-452-4601) to oppose state participation in the spraying (specifically, oppose appropriation of state funds and support meaningful protection of spray area residents.

A resource, "The Case against Aerial Insecticide Forest Spraying," a reprint of a position paper prepared by Canadian Non-Governmental Organizations for the Canadian Dept. of Fisheries and Environment, is available from me for \$3. Write to Bo Yerxa, PEST, Pocomoonshine Lake, S. Princeton 04668 or call 427-3459.

Important Notice!

Elsewhere in this issue you will find a page asking if you are interested in subscribing to this newsletter. Attached to the form to fill out is a pre-addressed envelope for your convenience.

Yesterday we looked at the envelopes and saw they were already sealed shut. So last night, using secret methods rejected by the CIA as utterly impractical and ridiculous, I unsealed 1,200 envelopes. In most cases you should be able to tell at a glance that the envelope has already been opened. I won't say it was a traumatic experience, but I woke up this morning trying to unseal my pillow.

We stamped 500 of the envelopes with "INVERT" before the ink on the pad ran too low. Some of these are faint in spots, and the "I" in "INVERT" is missing because it somehow fell out of the stamp. So I typed the address onto the remaining 700 envelopes.

Now that you know all the extra work we went through to include that bedraggled envelope, could you really just throw it away?

The above is a shameless attempt to guilt-trip you into filling out the subscription form and mailing it back to us.

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Portland Women's Yellow Pages

"The Women's Pages" is a publication listing services, organizations, and information for women in the Portland area. Although a year or so old, it is still relevant and worthwhile. Available for \$1 from the Univ. Women's Forum and Growth Center, 94 Bedford St., Portland 04103, 780-4086.

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"She who waits for the knight in shining armor must clean up after his horse."

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Are you starting to worry about Big Brother now that 1984 is only four years away? If you recalculate the calendar remembering that Christ was actually born in 4 B.C., then January was actually the beginning of 1984.

Who REALLY Makes the Laws?

Do you know how laws are made? A lot of them are made by lobbyists. In the Lobbyist Disclosure Report for 1977-78, the largest employers of lobbyists were International Paper, heading the list, followed closely by CMP, Maine State Employees Assn., Maine Central Railroad, Maine Teachers Assn., Union Mutual Life Insurance, and Boise Cascade. The report provides interesting facts and figures about who influences the legislature. (Did you know that Norman Temple of CMP once took state Sen. Minette Cummings out to Breakfast?) Copies are available from the Secretary of State, State Capitol, Augusta 04333.

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But on the Other Side of the Chambers

Recognizing this inequity, Maine women organized the Maine Women's Lobby last year. This year it has a paid lobbyist, Maureen Connolly, and a VISTA worker, Eloise Reitman. There is very little legislation pertaining specifically to women this session, but they would like help in getting bills introduced for future sessions. Contact the MWL at Box 15, Hallowell 04347 or call Eloise at 443-4660.

A few more lobbying groups dealing with statewide issues might balance out the dominance of wealthy corporations and interest groups. How about it?

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The Nerva of Money for Minerva

Ever wonder about priorities? During the past months new carpets and paint were put in the State House chamber at a cost to taxpayers of about \$35,000. In addition, Minerva, the woman on top of the dome, got a \$3,700 paint job. Last June the legislature killed umpteen small appropriation requests including, to give one example, a \$25,000 request for job training of displaced homemakers.

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"My karma ran over my dogma."

Nukes Means Weapons Too

I have come to feel that nuclear weapons pose a far, far greater danger to all of us than does nuclear power. While the two are connected, I have not been satisfied that by fighting nuclear power I was also helping to stop the growth of nuclear weapons.

Therefore I, and many others, responded with alacrity to the Conference on Arms Limitation in Bangor last November. The conference was addressed by William Sloane Coffin and Ed Muskie, among others, and was excellent. Hard-headed thinking combined with dynamic faith that humankind must have a future--we are called to be prophets and peacemakers.

At the conference several local groups formed to start working on the problem. I joined the Western Hancock County group. We had three short-range foci for our organizing: support for Salt II, opposition to the plan to deploy more missiles in Europe, and opposition to the MX missile. Our scorecard on these issues looks very bad, so far. Perhaps we should concentrate on changing attitudes and on medium range goals.

Be that as it may, our group put on meetings at the beginning of December in Blue Hill (with the Blue Mussel Collective) and Ellsworth (with the League of Women Voters). Another group put on a meeting in Bar Harbor. At all these meetings, a very good film about the arms race was shown, "War Without Winners." Beforehand, we had written letters to the editors so that we were able to encourage people to enclose copies of these letters in their letters to congresspeople--a very good lobbying technique.

Then, just before Christmas, we met with a staffer of Bill Cohen's at Virginia Suyama's house in Ellsworth. We had what the diplomats call "a fruitful exchange of views." We did not agree about much. He claims that his boss really wants arms control, but not Salt II. I wonder.

Since Christmas, I have been trying to learn more about arms control and U.S. - Soviet relations. One important point

is that while the Russians are interested in spreading their power and influence by military as well as other means, they are willing to take only modest risks to do so. They are not at all suicidal. Therefore, arms control is possible.

Coming from Clamshell, this sure is a different kind of organizing. The backbone of the arms control movement is a portion of the churches. People are older and things better organized, while the style is more conventional. I have felt privileged to get to know some of these people, who have been working for peace since before I was born.

Others in Maine have not stopped with organizing conferences, meetings, and letter-writing campaigns against nuclear weapons. Several tried to block the Trident launching last spring. Because arms control issues involve federal government decisions only, conventional lobbying methods are indispensable. But, to build a movement, should we go into direct action as well?

There are similar groups in Lewiston and Portland. We hope to have reports on them soon. For more information on the Hancock County group, contact Rufus Wanning, 39 Main St., Blue Hill 04614.

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"Peace in the world, or the world in pieces."

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Can You Hear This?

There hasn't been much awareness of the particular problems of handicapped people in Maine, but the Portland Public Library has taken a small first step. On the last Wednesday of every month at 6:30 PM, it offers captioned films for people with hearing impairments. The February 27th feature is "Back Street," with Susan Hayward and John Gavin.

Are there other libraries or theaters in Maine that could do this also?

What's This Newsletter All About?

You're probably wondering why you're getting this newsletter and what it's all about. Well, it's being sent to you either because you've been involved in some kind of progressive social change or alternative organization or because someone you knew thought you'd be interested in receiving this. We apologize for sending this to you unsolicited. We'd appreciate a subscription, but, more importantly, we want you to utilize the information.

What kind of information will the newsletter have? There are thousands of people in this state working on issues like local and safe energy resources, decent housing, rights/respect for women, gay men and lesbians, elders and youth, low-income people, minorities, and other living things. They are maintaining our native culture, providing consumer information, organizing food cooperatives, labor unions, alternative schools, and health programs, helping to develop jobs and small businesses, and preserving our land and agricultural sector. They are fighting against dangerous sprays, nuclear power, big business, excessive military spending, and legal injustices, and for a new politics and new attitudes.

Most of this important work goes unrecognized. We don't often read about it in our

newspapers and sometimes don't know it is happening even within our own city or county, let alone in other parts of the state. We are often isolated and need to get support from others involved in similar projects. We need to know information and the experiences of others to do more ourselves. These problems can seem overwhelming, but we can overcome our feeling of powerlessness if we can act to solve them.

The newsletter can be much more than just helping us to do our work better. It can help us to see how different issues are connected--that military spending is a women's issue, that spraying affects the economy, or that the Indian Land Claims case influences our energy policy. It can help people from different parts of Maine to work together and coordinate activities. Many see the need for a statewide force for change, but no such force exists except for a few individual issues. The newsletter could be a first step in creating that potent force.

There is a subscription form attached to this newsletter. Please fill it out and return it. If you can send articles, information, or notices of events to us, we'd appreciate it. Or if you can help us put out this newsletter. It helps make "you" a part of "us."

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