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• Maine Peace Action Committee

MPAC extends efforts to end violence and inequality

By Robert Creutz
Special to the *Campus*

At 4 p.m. every Wednesday, a group gathers to develop methods in which it can promote exactly what its namesake implies: Peace.

The Maine Peace Action Committee was founded in 1974, with a focus on working to end the war in Indochina. Today, the group extends its efforts to all who seek an end to violence and inequality. MPAC's adviser, Professor Doug Allen, is out of the country, but his absence has done little to hinder this able-bodied cooperative.

"Peace activism is important because the public needs to know about the issues in order to bring about change," member Pam Werner said.

MPAC's allure has much to do with the personalities of the individual members. Each is eager to volunteer his or her help to any cause that works to build a more peaceable society. The group is open to any question, comment or gripe. Gripes, however, appear uncommon. The members are all full of positive energy, and when together, create an atmosphere of optimism and hope. Within MPAC, the focus on peace is well maintained. In a recent meeting, one problem arose regarding the time of a special Friday meeting. Schedules were somewhat conflicting, as one of the members had planned a pot luck supper. The solution: hold the meeting at the pot luck.

MPAC's abilities to work together are evident in their vast range of activities and involvement. Their apparent camaraderie only aids in their unending efforts to work for peace, efforts that would seem overwhelming to many.

On December 8, the group is sponsoring a special guest speaker at the university. Harry Wu, a Chinese dissident and human rights activist, will lead a discussion entitled

"Troublemaker: One Man's Crusade Against China's Cruelty." Wu has been trying to raise public awareness of human rights abuses within the Chinese prison system, where he spent 19 years for criticizing the government.

MPAC's sponsorship of Wu's discussion is only appropriate. Wu's ideals are representative of the group's.

"Our local purpose is to increase campus awareness," member Kate Cibelli said. "It's hard in a big community, but we want to get people talking."

Harry Wu, however, does not begin to show the commitment of MPAC. Recently, two members of the group traveled to Bath Iron Works. The two activists poured their blood over the BIW sign and joined others in chaining themselves to the sign. The blood poured was to symbolize the blood shed through the ships built at BIW, as well as the blood shed all over the world at the hands of the U.S. military.

Both MPAC members were arrested and spent a stint at the Cumberland County Jail, but in the quest for peace, drastic measures often have the greatest impact and meaning. One of the basic facets of the group is opposition to militarism. MPAC believes that militarism discourages the development of a free and creative society.

Most of MPAC's activities are less drastic, but the purpose remains. The group is currently helping to petition against repealing the tax credit for shipbuilding facilities. They are also petitioning support to criminalize pesticide use. Aside from military discontent, MPAC also has environmental concerns.

The group has difficulty identifying a specific focus, citing that with so much to do, the opportunities are endless. MPAC, however, shows no signs of giving up hope.

Next semester, the group will continue its work. One of the larger projects is a film series.



Anna Allocco facilitates at Wednesday's MPAC meeting. (Kyle Parker photo.)

The films will range from "El Salvador: Not for Sale," a documentary about sweat shops, to "Inside Castro's Cuba," a film revealing the truths about the people of the country. Other projects on the table include an anti-paper cups

campaign and the distribution of recycled notebooks. But remember that the opportunities are endless. MPAC's continued involvement is assured, and a number of further activities are anticipated.