

# Conferees Propose an International BPF

A group of sixteen Buddhist leaders and scholars, meeting last June in Honolulu, called for the creation of an International Buddhist Peace Fellowship patterned along the lines of our national Fellowship. The IBPF, as envisioned by the group, would serve primarily as a clearing-house providing information and assistance to Buddhist action groups.

Caucusing during a conference on "Buddhist-Christian Renewal and the Future of Humanity", the sixteen agreed that existing world Buddhist organizations are not responsive to peace, social, and environmental concerns. The IBPF was seen as supplementing, rather than duplicating, the intentions and activities of the current, largely fraternal institutions.

Though the caucus was small, it brought together representatives from quite diverse circles and, perhaps on that account, was charged with enthusiasm. The participants included Dr. Masao Abe, leader of the FAS Society in Kyoto; Sulak Sivaraksa of the Asian Cultural Forum on Development and the Coordinating Group for Religion in Society; Bishop Yoshiaki Fujitani from Hawaii Honpa Hongwanji; and Dr. Taitetsu Unno of the American Institute for Buddhist Studies in Amherst. BPF members Linda Brown, Robert Aitken, Al Bloom, John Cooper (Australia), and Nelson Foster were also present.

As the conference setting posed stringent time constraints, it proved impossible to schedule a follow-up meeting to move from ideas to implementation. Yet the group constituted an excellent foundation for IBPF organizing, and the intervening months have seen the tentative beginnings of an IBPF network.

The Honolulu caucus also formed a subcommittee to draft a statement

## The Buddhist Peace Fellowship NEWSLETTER

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### A WORD ON THIS ISSUE

In lieu of our usual feature section, we are running a special report on genocide in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and on BPF's efforts to halt that violence.

**IN THE NEXT ISSUE**, we will return to our customary format with a feature section devoted to "Exemplars of Engaged Buddhism"—sketches of Buddhists who have pointed the way for us by their work outside the temple walls. We invite two- to four-paragraph contributions on individual Buddhists—lay or clergy, famous or unknown. We hope that sketches will include enough background data to place the figure in context but that emphasis will lie on the anecdotes and biographical details which illuminate any character.

Please direct questions and contributions to Nelson Foster at 2085 Makiki Place, Honolulu, HI 96822. Sketches should be in Nelson's hands by March 1st if possible.

Any ideas for future feature topics or for improvements to the Newsletter would also be very gratefully received.

## International BPF (continued)

on the world's predicament, and the text so produced was warmly received in concluding sessions of the conference. Many conferees departed with copies of the text for circulation in their home institutions.

The statement expressed alarm "at the self-destructive course of world affairs, the perpetration of suffering of the many by the few, and our own thoughtless complicity in this process." It urged "a renewed commitment to planetary survival, an awakening of compas-

sion for all life, and reverence for nature's balance" and stressed specific need for a world-wide weapons moratorium, refugee aid, and eradication of human oppression in both its brutal and subtle forms.

The conference as a whole, hosted by the University of Hawaii Dept. of Religion, was quite provocative and successful. Many conferees were particularly pleased by its mix of scholarly discussions, social concern, and opportunity for personal religious discovery.

## Conscientious Objection & the Buddhist

Jim Osgood, a BPF member and longtime anti-war and prison activist, is laying the groundwork for a flyer treating the question of conscientious objection from a Buddhist perspective. With two million nineteen-year-olds scheduled to register for the draft during the week of January 5th, and with ongoing registration for eighteen-year-olds thereafter, this project needs and deserves all the support we can muster.

The flyer is planned to include basic information about CO laws and procedures as well as material delineating the Buddhist view of war and violence in general.

Jim requests our help in assembling the latter section of the flyer. He is looking for appropriate passages from the sutras, commentaries, or other texts and would be especially grateful for assistance with the literature in Pali.

The past summer's registration of men born in 1960 and 1961 produced a large groundswell of registration resistance and tremendous interest in CO law and classifications. The Selective Service System admits that some 280,000 refused to register—a figure several times the normal capacity of the federal courts and penal institutions—and this

is probably a low estimate. An SSS internal memo has predicted, also, that up to 50% of the registrants may seek CO status.

A major change in classification procedures has occurred, however, and could minimize the number of successful CO claims unless the new registrants learn to start developing their CO claims now. SSS is not delivering this information, so it behooves us to do so. Also, there is reason to believe that SSS is redrafting CO standards to increase stringency—another cause for concern.

Those who can assist Jim in preparing the BPF flyer on Buddhism and conscientious objection, please write him at 1426 W. Argyle St., Chicago, IL 60640. Those who would like to join community anti-draft activities should contact Ms. Sue Hadley at FOR headquarters (Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960/ph. 914-358-4601) for referrals to the groups doing work in their area.

# Lending a Hand to Buddhist Refugees

As Indochinese refugees enter the country in increasing numbers—and even more seek to do so—American Buddhists are offered the opportunity to assist victims of U.S. foreign policy and, at the same time, to lend support to the Buddha sangha. Several individuals and organizations have already stepped forward to help meet this need, but a great deal remains to challenge us.

The most ambitious effort we know of is that launched by the Buddhist Refugee Rescue Council, headquartered at the City of the Ten Thousand Buddhas in Talmadge, California (zip 95481). According to BRRC executive director David



Rounds, response to initial action has been enthusiastic, both from Buddhist organizations and from U.S. government agencies involved in refugee resettlement. Among the organizations responding have been the International Buddhist Meditation Center, Buddhist Churches of America, Vajradhatu, Buddhist Association of the United States, Sino-American Buddhist Association, Kagyu Dharma, Zen Studies Society, Lamaist Buddhist Monastery of America, Zen Center of Los Angeles, and Diamond Sangha.

BRRC is gobbling through the red tape involved in resettlement and offers its assistance to any group or family interested in sponsoring refugees. Please note that such sponsorship does not entail the financial support of a refugee family; government resources meet all basic economic needs. Sponsors

act simply as guides and friends, helping refugees find their way in American society—welcoming them on arrival, helping them get settled, introducing them to the subway system and supermarket, etc.

Beyond direct sponsorship of refugees, we as American Buddhists may assist valuably in "religious resettlement" efforts. As the Reverend Ryo Imamura has worked to explain to government officials, the temple plays the central role in Indochinese life, providing the "glue" of S.E. Asian societies.

Reverend Imamura, a BPF member and priest in the Buddhist Churches of America, is endeavoring to clear the way for immigration of Indochinese clergy and has called on fellow American Buddhists to join in efforts to meet the spiritual needs of the new refugee communities.

Other projects in this area have also been reported. Stephen Young, a professor at Harvard, has undertaken to preserve the sole extant copy of the Khmer Tripitaka. Others like Jack Kornfield of the Insight Meditation Society and Don Swearer (Swarthmore College) have also been active in U.S. refugee concerns.

In Thailand, where approximately 100,000 Kampuchean refugees are temporarily camped as "illegal aliens", Buddhist activist Sulak Sivaraksa has worked to furnish religious leadership in UN. holding centers. Under Khmer Rouge rule (1975-78), religion was outlawed, so these Kampuchean refugees have responded with great joy to the monks sent by Sulak and his coworkers on the Thai Refugee Committee.

# BPF Elections Complete, Board at Work

In June, BPF members elected Michael Roche, Nelson Foster, and Bob Aitken to the first BPF board. Michael and Nelson, students of Tibetan Buddhism and Zen Buddhism respectively, trace their activism to anti-war work of the '60s. Aitken Roshi, a Zen teacher with the Diamond Sangha, has a history of pacifist endeavor dating back to his days in a World War II internment camp.

The new board brings considerable energy to its work, and we urge them on with gratitude. We would also like to thank Mariquita Platov and Jim Osgood for standing for election.

In its first "meetings"—conducted by telephone—the new board has divided its time between organizational matters and development of programs. A summary of key decisions follows. (Full minutes are available on request.)

Board responsibilities established: Bob will serve as BPF spokesperson, representing the Fellowship in its public functions. Michael has accepted responsibilities both as board secretary and as coordinator of BPF's Chittagong Hill Tracts project. Nelson will act as BPF treasurer and will continue to edit the Newsletter.

BPF office relocated: For reasons of centrality and accessibility, the BPF address has been shifted from Makawao, Maui, to Berkeley—P.O. Box 4650, Berkeley, CA 94704. Please note the new address for future reference.

Help sought: The board hopes to build a budget which permits BPF expanded programs and publications. To this end, it is seeking a volunteer FUNDRAISER to explore the resources available to us. This individual would need fundraising experience and, preferably, some training in grantwriting. Anyone?

Nelson also requests assistance

## PROPOSED: A BUDDHIST TEAM FOR SOCIAL SERVICE

We relay with excitement the following proposal from BPF member Jim Larick. Jim has devoted 30 years, professionally and otherwise, to human service projects throughout the Western hemisphere. His proposal:

Why doesn't a small group of western buddhists get together and mount a team endeavor to accept contracts in developing countries dealing with technological research, education, and development in the field? Too often those that do go have secondary motives that considerably limit their effectiveness. I feel we have sufficient discipline(s) to do a job and get out, without getting involved in sectarian/political/jingoistic pettiness. Our work would be our example. I do not see this at all as being proselytism.

I can imagine work in various alternate technology, literacy, etc. At this time there is a desperate need for literacy teachers in Nicaragua, but the living conditions would be tough--on the campo level. Contracts, which would give living (BARELY) wages, are available.

*Anyone interested in this possibility, please contact Jim as soon as possible at 1047 Northwood Blvd., Ft. Wayne, IN 46805.*

## Board at Work (continued)

with the Newsletter. He'd welcome GUEST EDITORS interested in preparing feature sections; a job which entails establishing a theme, contacting potential contributors, editing the contributions, and writing introductory notes. GRAPHIC ARTISTS are also needed to spruce up the Newsletter. And anyone who could provide CLIPPING SERVICE--clipping news to improve Newsletter coverage of BPF-related events--please start snipping today. All Newsletter correspondence should go directly to Nelson (2085 Makiki Place, Honolulu, HI 96822).

Chittagong Hill Tracts Project:  
BPF's first international program is an effort to protect the tribal people of the Chittagong Hill area of Bangladesh. An impromptu task of scattered BPF members until it received board approval, the project now will develop under Mike's direction, drawing funds from the BPF treasury. (Mike, who will be visiting Bangladesh next spring, has provided a current report on the project's status; see the final pages of this Newsletter.)

Publications: Besides continuing the Newsletter, the board endorsed the concept of a pamphlet series addressing issues of war and peace, violence and nonviolence from the perspectives of various Buddhist traditions. As well as enhancing our own sense of the doctrinal and historical roots of Buddhist activism, the pamphlets would serve as "talking papers" which BPF may carry to American sanghas as a way of stimulating discussion and action. The board envisions pamphlets for each sect well represented in the United States. Please send a brief note to the BPF office if you would be interested in participating in the pamphlet project.

Decision on public statements: It was the consensus of the board that the BPF rules of governance permit the board to issue public statements in the Fellowship's name as long as such statements are clearly consistent with BPF aims ratified by the membership. The board felt also the increased awareness of BPF would be, at this point, a welcome spin-off of public witness. (See "BPF Steps into the Light" for a related story.)

Revision/expansion of BPF goals:  
After reviewing the proposed amendments to the BPF statement of purpose, it was decided to forego a referendum on the issue until amendment proposals and language can be clarified. Some of the proposals seem to describe programs BPF might undertake as contrasted to overall BPF goals. The board will consult authors of the proposed amendments before proceeding with the referendum.

*Anyone wishing to place an item on the board agenda should write the board c/o the Berkeley address.*

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## PRES. NIWANO ENVOY TO TEHRAN

Invited to attend last June's International Conference on U.S. Interventions in Iran was Nikkyo Niwano, founder and president of the Rissho Kosei-kai. While expressing his deep sympathy with Iran in its past exploitation and recent troubles, President Niwano asked Iranian leaders to disavow revenge and, "through exercise of the religious spirit, to lead America toward more godly ways." In this context, he urged release of the U.S. hostages.

# BPF Steps into the Light of Day

At the behest of the board, spokesperson Bob Aitken has added BPF to the large group of organizations and prominent individuals sponsoring a nationwide "Call to Halt the Nuclear Arms Race."

## LITERARY NOTES

BPF member Joanna Rogers Macy published an excellent piece titled "Shramadana—Giving Energy" in the spring, 1980, issue of *CoEvolution Quarterly*. The article provides an overview of Sri Lanka's active Sarvodaya Shramadana movement, described in the last issue of this Newsletter. The piece is warm with the experience of Joanna's own participation in shramadana.

*Kahawai, a Journal of Women and Zen* is published by women of the Diamond Sangha (2119 Kaloa Way, Honolulu, HI 96822). Low-keyed and personal, this journal is bringing the best insights of feminism to study of traditional Buddhism and is showing the way to a practice which fulfils women and men both. Write for a sample.

Gary Snyder's *The Real Work*, a collection of interviews, contains many gems for those of us interested in meditation and action. Wide-ranging and far-sighted, it is available from New Directions.

Ken Jones, of Leeds Buddhist Group in England, published "Buddhism and Social Action" in the summer, 1979, issue of *The Middle Way*. Worth looking up. He is now soliciting contributions to a book titled *Studies in Buddhism and Social Action* and welcomes inquiries (8 Huby Park, Huby, Leeds LS17 0EE Great Britain).

The Call urges a freeze on the development, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons and outlines unilateral steps the United States can and should take toward this goal. Board members agreed that the Call, endorsed also by FOR, is an appropriate expression of BPF's commitment to peace and nonviolence.

Those interested in reading or circulating the Call may order copies from FOR headquarters (Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960) at ten cents per copy.

BPF also entered the civic arena in July when Bob Aitken, speaking in an unofficial capacity, testified before the U.S. Commission on Proposals for a National Academy of Peace and Conflict Resolution. At the Commission's two-day hearings in Honolulu, Bob spoke largely in favor of the Peace Academy proposals, which ultimately seek to found a new professional school in the model of the military academies.

Bob's testimony warned against founding a Peace Academy as an arm of the federal administration or as an empty symbolic gesture. He called instead for its protection from governmental or corporate intrusion and for guarantee of its role in training public servants and in the development of public policy.

Though short notice prohibited preparation of a formal BPF position on the matter, Bob formulated his statement in concert with fellow board member Nelson Foster and noted his board post in introducing himself.

# BPF Seeks End to Genocide in Bangladesh

by Michael Roche

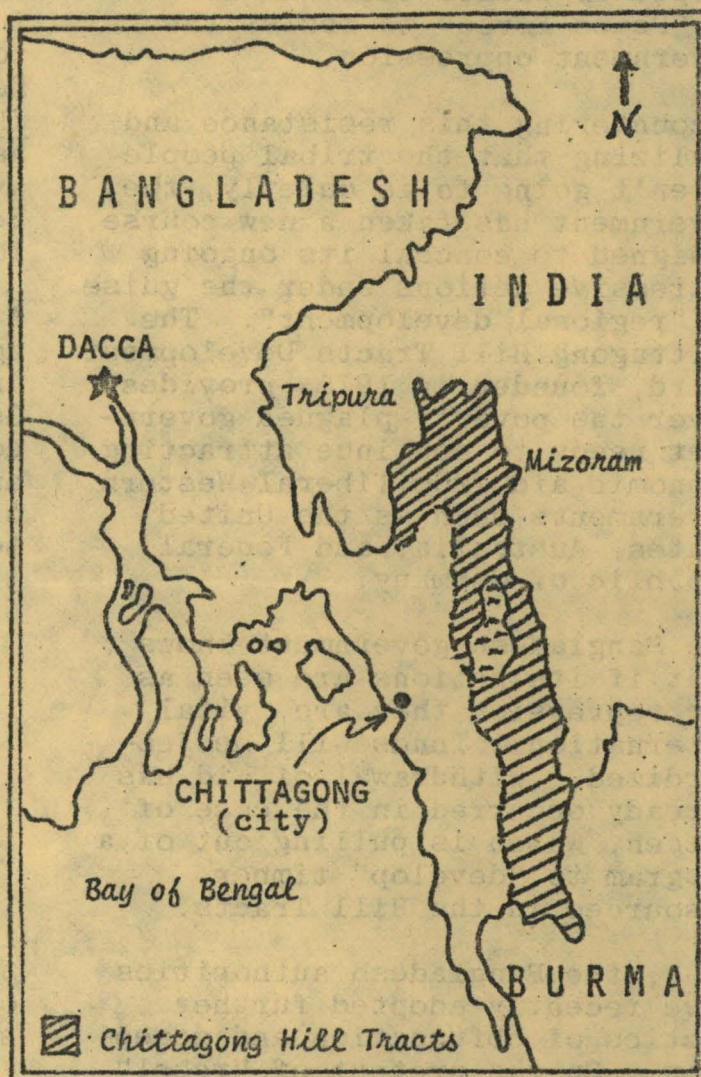
In July the BPF board of directors made official response to the message brought in April by a brave emissary from Bangladesh: it adopted the task of alleviating the plight of the peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts as its first major project. In doing so, our young organization became one of the few concerned groups standing between some 600,000 tribal people and what appears to be certain genocide.

Briefly, the tribespeople of Chittagong Hill Tracts are culturally and ethnically distinct in Bangladesh. Having maintained a tradition of Theravada Buddhism since the 15th century, they constitute an island of Buddhists in a sea of Muslim hostility.

Their longterm isolation from the mainstream of S.E. Asian Buddhist history makes them a unique cultural-ethnic entity, and for that reason they have been studied by such Western anthropologists as Claude Levi-Strauss. Even the British colonizers recognized this cultural uniqueness and, in 1900, instituted the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation, making the Hill Tracts area largely autonomous. This regulation has not since been officially abrogated, even by the present government of Bangladesh.

Since the 1960's, the Muslim majority of what is now Bangladesh has escalated efforts to appropriate the Hill Tracts and to destroy the tribal culture. With the Kaptai dam project, located squarely in the Hill Tracts, they flooded 350 square miles and displaced upwards of 100,000 tribespeople. This project employed no native people and has supplied them with virtually no electricity.

The harassment of the 1960's did not end when, in 1972, the Bangladesh independence movement succeeded. Tribal people had aided in the independence effort in hopes that the new regime would respect their cultural and territorial heritage. But soon after independence, the persecution began anew, as the government sought to consolidate its



## Bangladesh effort (continued)

authority. An effort led by a member of Parliament to ask the government to respect the Chittagong Hill Tract Regulation of 1900 was answered by charges of secessionism, massive bloody reprisals, and the burning of hundreds of villages. In response, the tribal people organized the Shanti Bahini or "Peace Force" to resist the government oppression.

Encountering this resistance and realizing that the tribal people weren't going to go quietly, the government has taken a new course, designed to conceal its ongoing repressive actions under the guise of "regional development". The Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board, founded in 1975, provides cover the poverty-plagued government needs to continue attracting economic aid from liberal Western governments such as the United States, Australia, and Federal Republic of Germany.

The Bangladesh government knows that if its actions are seen as the repression they are, vital international funds will be jeopardized. Withdrawal of aid has already occurred in the case of Sweden, which is pulling out of a program to "develop" timber resources in the Hill Tracts.

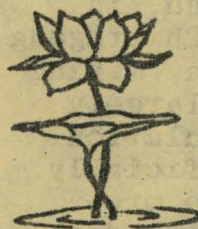
Thus, the Bangladesh authorities have recently adopted further tactics of obfuscation and deception. On the pretext of "rebel" violence, the government has sealed off the Hill Tracts so tightly that even U.S. State Dept. representatives are forbidden access. A ban has been placed on travel by the Hill people, and news is thoroughly censored.

A first step to dispel ignorance of the situation in Chittagong Hill Tracts was taken jointly by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation and BPF last

spring, as they sponsored the international tour of a tribal representative. Contacting leaders of the nations supplying aid as well as members of the United Nations, the speaker—unnamed for reasons of his safety—graphically described the plight of the tribespeople.

Information from this tour has been consolidated and updated by Ulrich Henes in an excellent article in IFOR Report. Titled "The Secret War in Bangladesh," this article is available from the BPF office in Berkeley. (We ask a 50¢ donation to cover xerox and postage costs.)

A second step in this project, again jointly taken by BPF members and interested friends such as Mike Gabel of IFOR, has been follow-up contact with the State Department and members of Congress, asking use of America's aid-generated influence to persuade the Bangladesh authorities to reverse their course in the Hill Tracts.



To date, this second phase has achieved only mixed results. Sen. Charles Percy, soon to chair the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has taken active

interest in alleviating the situation in the Hill Tracts, and several other members of Congress express similar intent.

But all are hampered by a paucity of documentation and the Department of State's apparent desire to steer clear of controversy. The administration position, repeated with a dismaying regularity both to BPF members and interested Congressmen, can be summarized as follows: Since the Chittagong Hill Tract people are ethnically and religiously different from the people of lower Bangladesh, and since there is a greater density of population in the lowlands, the



## Bangladesh effort (continued)

government opened the Hill Tracts for settlement in order to make opportunities equal and to put valuable resources to use.

This policy, if in fact it can be called a policy, has no moral or legal defense and is comparable to the violent plundering of land belonging to Native Americans. The State Department, however, seems to accept at face value both the Bangladesh government's "development" concern and its claim that the violence in the area has originated with the tribespeople. The Dacca government insists that it has made conciliatory gestures to the tribespeople and that it has cancelled the resettlement program, despite mounting evidence to the contrary.

The next phase in the Chittagong Hill Tracts project must be to dispel the cloud of ignorance and secrecy which surrounds the Hill Tracts. To this end, under joint sponsorship of BPF and IFOR, I'll visit Bangladesh next spring. My itinerary there is problematic, as the country is essentially a police state and travel is extremely restricted even outside the Hill Tracts. It should be possible, however, to reach members of Parliament who have spoken against the atrocities in the Hill Tracts and also to the American ambassador. It may be possible as well to interview tribespeople who no longer reside in the Hill Tracts.

We hope the results of this fact-finding trip will be increased documentation of past and present conditions in the Hill Tracts and secure avenues of communication with people in Bangladesh who can keep us abreast of events there. Particularly we would like to put members of the Bangladesh Parliament in touch with sympathetic U.S. representatives, produce a few articles, and generate some

some news coverage.

Finally, in returning by way of India, Thailand, and Japan, I hope to knit at least a limited support network for our friends in the Hill Tracts. My return trip may also serve to sow the seeds of the International Buddhist Peace Fellowship already proposed.

I'll file future reports as my very full agenda permits and as events unfold. Those who would like to assist in the project should contact the Berkeley office. Meanwhile, I would like to thank those who have already contributed generously, both in time and funds. The future of the people of Chittagong Hill Tracts is not bright, but it is brighter for our efforts.

*Since writing this piece, Michael has departed for India, where he will attend a three-month meditation retreat before proceeding to Bangladesh. In a phone call just prior to his departure, he restressed the difficulties he anticipates in Bangladesh and indicated that it may be necessary for him to spend quite a while there before meeting key people.*

*To increase Michael's chances of success in Bangladesh and in spreading the word once he leaves, the Board is seeking contributions to a special project fund. If you are able to contribute, please make your check payable to the Fellowship of Reconciliation (for tax purposes) and note on it "Hill Tracts Project". Send it to the Berkeley BPF office. Thanks. — Ed.*

## FLASH!

In a release just received, Amnesty International (AI) formally states its concerns regarding events in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Famous for careful study of human rights cases, AI is now investigating various incidents in the Hill Tracts. Involvement of this prestigious agency lends hope much needed in light of other current news. (See item on reverse.)

## Parliament turns disorderly

DACCA, Bangladesh — Parliament degenerated into a melee yesterday during a protest against a "shoot-to-kill" bill.

Opposition lawmakers disrupted proceedings with shouting and some legislators even broke microphones. Young opposition parliamentarians came close to exchanging blows with government officials. And some opposition lawmakers manhandled a government minister in the chamber.

Outside the building, baton-wielding police battled demonstrators opposing the bill.

The government-sponsored measure would give police and military forces a free hand to arrest or shoot on sight, people making trouble in areas where a "disturbance" is declared.

The government said the bill would be necessary to stem the tide of a secessionist rebellion in a tribal area of the country called Chittagong Hills. But the 79 opposition members of the 330-member parliament said the proposal could sanction violations of human rights.

The above report (*Honolulu Advertiser*, 12-11-80) may indicate a serious deterioration in the situation of the Hill Tracts people.

## A New Strategy ...hope it works!

### Psychic Healing

We read in the *Village Voice* that a firm called Karma Construction won the bid and got the job of installing a bathroom in the New York offices provided former President Richard Nixon by the General Services Administration. Karma, according to the *Voice*, is run by "artists, ex-hippies and spiritual seekers" who mainly renovate artists lofts under the motto "We build mantra-filled walls." The workers are said to have started the job with a purification ritual, covered the raw wall with mandalas and other symbols and the sheetrock with mantras in English, Sanskrit and Tibetan. Then they sealed the prayers under handmade Mexican and Italian tiles. "We wanted to give him a Karmic connection, to plant a seed so he can be reborn to help others," said a Karma Construction partner, Barry Bryant. The final word from the *Voice* is that President Nixon is delighted with the work.

## WE WELCOME THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS

John Cooper/Gladesville, Australia  
Todd Feiler/Cazadero, California  
Lori Feinman/New Paltz, New York  
Eliot Fintushel/Rochester, New York  
Cynthia Gillette-Wenner/Pebble Beach, CA  
Paul Hammack/El Paso, Texas  
Marge Hammer/Rochester, New York  
Edwin Hedges/Topeka, Kansas  
Michelle Hill/Honolulu, Hawaii  
John Huddleston, Jr./Mayfield Heights, Ohio  
Sukanya Mach/Rochester, New York  
Gerald McConoughey/Milan, Illinois  
Robert Metters/Rochester, New York  
Motsinger/Kansas City, Missouri  
John Ortega/Los Angeles, California  
Clark Ratliffe/Rochester, New York  
Ken Schulz/Honolulu, Hawaii  
John Spula/Rochester, New York  
Vaughn Swazey/Washington, Pennsylvania  
Susan Tannehill/Bergen, New York  
Ben Taylor/Geneseo, New York

## THE BUDDHIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP

P.O. Box 4650

Berkeley, CA 94704