NATIONAL MINISTRIES FOR PEACE

INTRODUCTION

Not enough detailed attention has been given by academics and peace activists as to how the peace perspective can be institutionalized within government. The peace perspective will not suddenly emerge within government; it has to be worked at. Creating such Ministries is a very practical way of working for peace.

The Ministry proposal is based on a principle of organizational change: can an old institution create and implement new policies? Such institutions are often too locked into the past to adopt new worldviews. They have too much invested in justifying their previous policies. Therefore, a new quest for peace requires a new institution.

Similarly, national governments are often structured on the basis of competitive bidding between ministries. This gives rise to a pecking order of ministries, usually with treasury at the top, environment at the bottom and peace virtually non-existent. Thus, a response to a country's problems is usually fragmented. There is no overall national ministry working for a country's long-term peace interests. A Ministry for Peace would provide an institutional focal point for a country's peace policies.

This chapter begins with the six components of the concept of a Ministry for Peace. It then looks at what the Ministry would do. It concludes with an overview of the campaign to create a Ministry. Once one country has set the pattern, others will follow.

THE CONCEPT OF A MINISTRY FOR PEACE
A Ministry for Peace would have six components.

Non-Violent Resolution of Conflict

First, a Ministry for Peace would emphasize the importance of the non-violent resolution of conflict in international politics. Some progress has been made in domestic politics in some countries but a great deal remains to be done in international politics.

Such a Ministry would provide an avenue for the expression of people's desire for the peaceful resolution of conflict. It would be the institution with which they could identify their legitimate aspirations for a peaceful international society. All people should have the inherent right to be assured that no armed force is invoked until every means of achieving a non-violent resolution has been explored. It is necessary to give peace a chance.

The Peace Perspective

Second, such a Ministry would institutionalize the peace perspective in the government. In politics, where you stand depends on where you sit. This helps explain why ministers change their views when they are moved from one department to another.

There are various perspectives already in government. There is, for example, a distinct treasury perspective in all government deliberations (usually to the extent of opposing as much proposed expenditure as possible). There is a distinct social welfare perspective (usually in favour of extending the government's mantle of care over its citizens). However, there is not a distinct peace perspective. There is no cabinet minister specifically engaged on peace building activities. In other words, put a person in a military department and that person will absorb that perspective. A Ministry for Peace will likewise mould the outlook of its personnel.

Consequently, the Ministry should be recognized as a senior Ministry and its Minster should be a member of the inner Cabinet. The military-industrial complex has long been represented there - which is why it has no need to organize rallies. The military-industrial complex's perspective needs to be balanced by the peace perspective.

The creation of the Ministry will not mean that the peace movement will become redundant. The movement will be very important until global peace breaks out, with or without Ministries of Peace. The establishment of Ministries for the Environment around the world has not made the environment movement redundant. Instead, the ministries have enabled the