

PREFACE

Recent events have caused many of us to recall, and to hope to revitalize, the long association between feminism and the cause of international peace. With the Iranian hostage crisis and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as a backdrop, the U.S. Congress took steps to reestablish a peacetime draft and debated for the first time whether women should be conscripted into the armed forces. The Pentagon received President Carter's support for a military "preparedness" plan predicated on the assumption that "limited" nuclear war is militarily feasible. Meanwhile, the lethal insanity of those who pretend control over atomic power was exposed when an accidental turn of a worker's wrench exploded a nuclear missile in Arkansas. Then, the conservative sweep of the U.S. election gave a "mandate" to a president and Congress elected on platforms that combined militant nationalism with antifeminism. While these threatening developments provoke U.S. feminists to reevaluate soberly our political prospects and priorities, women around the globe, and most visibly in Central America, are participating in armed resistance struggles. It is appropriate, therefore, that this issue of *Feminist Studies* presents a series of essays, poems, art work, and international reports that remind us, sometimes painfully, of women's special interest in matters of war and peace. These concerns, as well as the family reform movements discussed in another article, are the urgent *personal politics* of 1981.

Another theme, the problematic notion of female role models, is raised in a review essay in this issue and echoes through several other articles. We encounter a variety of female lives in the pages that follow, each of which illustrates how complex are the lessons that must be drawn from female biographies. Emma Goldman appears before us in a human rather than a heroic guise, more a sister than an idol. We also are introduced to Goldman's less renowned contemporary, Lucy Sprague Mitchell, the founder of the Bank Street School, whose life was not as flamboyant as Red Emma's, but demonstrates the more routine ways in which individual women who maneuvered for autonomy in the early twentieth century quietly expanded the opportunities for their sex. Nor can the anonymous women who participated in the family reform movements of the 1960s and 70s, also described in this issue, serve as simple role models. All are "strong" women; all strive to maximize their dignity and power as females; yet some are feminists, others outspoken opponents of the Equal Rights Amendment. These women, the Phyllis Schlaflys as well as the

Emma Goldmans, require scrutiny, not emulation. Their lives and these articles challenge us to refine the art of feminist biography.

The review essay that raises this critique of female role models also represents a genre of writing that *Feminist Studies* is particularly eager to publish. Although we cannot provide the extensive book review section that would do justice to the current volume of high-quality literature in women's studies, we welcome essays such as this which interpret major developments in feminist writing or alert us to intellectual or political trends of general interest to feminists. The editorial process that culminated in the publication of this particular essay could itself serve as a "model" for others. Berenice Fisher recommended these books for review and sent *Feminist Studies* a detailed proposal along with a sample of her writing on a related topic. The editors found her idea exciting and commissioned the article that appears here. We hope that our readers will submit comparable proposals and, thereby, assume an active role in this aspect of our editorial process.

Mary P. Ryan and
Judith Stacey,
for the editors