

CATHOLIC PEACE ACTION

February 1989
No. 22

7 Putney Bridge Road
London SW18 1HX

Dear Friend,

Peace be with you.

The Ash Wednesday witness of repentance and resistance will continue on 2 March. As we are still in the season of Lent the symbols and theme used on Ash Wednesday will still apply. We invite you to come and lend prayerful support to the renewed marking of the Ministry of Defence with blessed charcoal and the scattering of ashes. We will meet in the Victoria Embankment Gardens, inbetween the Embankment tube station and Horse Guards ave, for a liturgy at 9:15am. The liturgy will continue at the MoD during which Ray (and others?) will mark the Building with Christian words and symbols. If you would like to risk arrest in this way contact Ray immediately on 627-1618. Otherwise your prayerful support and presence (if possible) would be appreciated.

1989 began with a flurry of activity. After a ten month wait, Carmel received a final warning notice from her local court relating back to nonpayment of costs and compensation for her part in the Ash Wednesday 1988 witness. She was eventually sentenced to five days in prison but was soon out. (see enclosed article.)

January also saw the final planning for Ash Wednesday this year. You will remember that we had evolved, with the other organisations supporting the witness, a set of guidelines to help everyone taking part maintain a spirit of nonviolence. A great deal of effort and thought was put into the day. About 500 people took part in the service at Westminster Cathedral hall where charcoal and ashes were blessed for later use at the MoD. Sr. Doreen, co-ordinator of the Fellowship of Reconciliation in England, preached the homily which is also attached with this letter.

The witness at the MoD was very controlled and prayerful. Without barriers it was relatively easy for affinity groups to make their way to the wall and mark the building. The police had been briefed to keep a very low profile and while they were present in large numbers only made three arrests (and these people were released without being charged). Instead, they removed charcoal from people as they marked the building and then left groups to pray as they wished. In parallel to the acts of marking that were going on all around the building, a vigil was maintained from 12:15 to 4pm on the river side of the building. Over 200 people took part in the vigil which took for its focus nine miracles of healing in a nuclear age. Friends in Liverpool and Aldermaston engaged in similar activity and were dealt with in the same way by the police.

If you attended the Witness in whatever capacity you are invited to an evaluation on Saturday 4 March at Heythrop College, Deans Mews, Cavendish square, London W1, from 11-4pm. A reflection and proposals for the way forward is attached.

After 2 March our next witness will be the Low Week, 72 hour, prayer and fast and vigil at Westminster Cathedral and the MoD. You are invited to join us in anyway you can. There may also be civil disobedience on 6 April, to conclude the prayer. Contact Dan (928-9742) or Pat (735-9047) for more details. If you would like to consider risking arrest ring a.s.a.p.

Over the weekend of 19-21 May we invite you to join us for prayer, gospel reflection, and discussion. (Being involved in civil disobedience is not a criterion for participation!) We haven't found a venue yet but it will be in London and cheap, that we can assure you.

Another great Summer School is planned for 27 August-3 September. Jim and Shelly Douglass from the Ground Zero Centre for Nonviolent Action in Washington will be the main speakers. Washington is also the Pacific home-base for the U.S. Trident fleet.

Thank you for your continued support.
Peace and love,
Catholic Peace Action

Catholic Peace Action

Ray Towey
Pat Gaffney

Sarah Hipperson
Fr. David Standley

Carmel, Dan, Daniel, Sean
and Clare Martin

A BUSY WEEK IN JANUARY by Dan Martin

'I am not interested in your conscience.' Thus spoke the magistrate. She could have easily added: 'only your money and obedience,' such was her tone of voice and demeanor as Carmel tried to explain why she would not pay the £18.45.

But the magistrate was having none of it. 'Either pay the £18.45 or in seven days you will be arrested and imprisoned for five days.' This was two days less than the maximum Carmel had expected so she was a little relieved, but not much!

Five days prior to her meeting with the magistrate on 23 January, Carmel received another final notice to pay £15 court costs plus £3.45 compensation for cleaning the MoD after Ash Wednesday 1988. A year later, the slow arm of the law finally reached out and nabbed her. The notice said if she didn't pay up by 23 Jan. an arrest warrant may be issued. The thought of the police knocking on the door at anytime and arresting her in the presence of the children who also would be taken into custody until I returned from work to fetch them was too much to bear. To prevent that, Carmel began packing her bag for a seven day stay at Holloway. The seven days leading up to 23 Jan were full of anxiety, turmoil and fervent prayer to be give the strength to carry through with her initial act of nonviolent resistance, and thereby preserve its integrity and meaning. It was a difficult wait.

Carmel said to the magistrate: 'I would like the matter to be dealt with now. I've made arrangements for the care of my children and my decision will be the same in seven days time.' 'Very well,' the magistrate said, 'I sentence you to five days beginning now.' In the middle of court room I handed Carmel her Holloway bag, we gave each other a quick kiss good-bye, then she went one way and I another.

But alas! someone else was to have as much regard for Carmel's conscience as the magistrate. Just before going into the court Carmel told a 'friend': 'Do not pay.' As soon as the sentence was passed this same person went immediately down to the fines office and paid. Within an hour Carmel was out, barely enough time to finish her cup of tea and conversation with jailers.

While it was good to have Carmel home so soon it would have been better if the friend had taken her, her action, and the need for peace more seriously. True there was a difference in motivation. The magistrate acted in the best interests of the State. The friend acted in Carmel's best interests. But I can't help thinking of a quote from Thoreau who was released from prison early because someone had paid his tax bill.

'If others pay the tax which is demanded of me, from a sympathy with the State, they do but what they have already done in their own case, or rather they abet injustice to a greater extent than the State requires. If they pay a tax (fine) from a mistaken interest in the individual taxed, to save his going to jail, it is because they have not considered wisely how far they let their private feelings interfere with the public good.'

This same week in January was also memorable by two more public events, one bad and one hopeful. The day that Carmel received the notice to pay up was the same day that a 100 police broke down several doors of the Church in Manchester which was a sanctuary for Viraj Mendis for two years. They cut telephone lines and dragged Viraj out and down to London in three hours. In three days he was back in Sri Lanka. The government showed as much regard for his safety as the magistrate did for Carmel's conscience. As 23 January loomed closer mercy was not expected.

The hopeful event occurred on the day Carmel appeared in court. Liz Yates, Stephen Hancock, Jean Dreze and others occupied a long disused hospital near the Oval. They invited homeless people to join them. Our friends soon made themselves redundant. At last count over 100 formerly homeless people are living there, making their own decisions, organising their meals and other living arrangements, pooling resources and relating well with the locals.

A good friend who works with homeless people said she dropped by there for a visit, to say hello to some friends. She met one man who she had never heard speak before. To her amazement and joy, he came up to her, with a smile on his face, and said, 'Hello, let me show you my room.' Off they went. In his room they had a great chat, he was so happy. He then offered her what little bread he had. When he broke the bread, dirty hands and all, and gave it to her she said it was as powerful and meaningful as receiving the Eucharist.

The theme of this week in January could be 'Home'. One person was forced to go home, a home he didn't want to return to; another was surprisingly allowed to return home early, a home she loves but was willing to be absent from for awhile; and many scores left their cardboard homes for a more real home, allowing one person at least to find his voice, to smile, and offer hospitality and food to a friend.

HOMILY, ASH WEDNESDAY, FEB 8th 1989, WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL HALL

Ashes....Charcoal....marking the forehead...Repent and believe the Good News. Simple symbols, simple actions, and simple words to begin a season of repentance.

Ashes are a symbol of both repentance and mourning. It seems they more spontaneously remind us of mourning than repentance. The burnt city is left in ashes. The loss is mourned. But for the prophets, such mourning was also a call to repentance. From the ashes of mourning, the prophet called Israel also to repentance. In biblical times, disaster was so easily seen as a punishment from God, and so the ashes of disaster were vivid reminders of Israel's deviation from God's law. The response was repentance and conversion to God.

Today we do not so easily make the connection between mourning and repentance, because we consider it both psychologically and theologically bad, to interpret disaster and loss as a punishment from God. To move from ashes of disaster as a symbol of mourning to the ashes of repentance and conversion is not so clear to us.

But there is a connection, for repentance can be the response to mourning if we know that the loss or disaster could have been prevented. We can learn from the past to change our behaviour toward the future. When death and destruction are the results of something we could have prevented by changing our behaviour, then repentance is called for.

Repentance does have to do with the prevention of destruction. When we remember the ashes of Hiroshima we have cause to repent for what was done. When we imagine the destruction contemplated in deterrence, we have cause to repent. We need to be able to see the ashes before they are produced. Then we might repent of what is intended and change our behaviour, i.e. stop making the weapons. When we see our reality in this way, the message of the prophets is as valid today: Repent. 'Turn to the Lord your God again, for God is all tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in graciousness and ready to relent.'

...We mark the walls with charcoal as we mark our foreheads with ashes. Charcoal is but ashes that are less completely burned. It is like ashes we can write with. By marking the building with charcoal we transfer the sign of repentance from our forehead to the place that is likewise called to repentance. Our personal act of repentance is carried to a public place, to the house of death. In this way, we unite our personal act of repentance to the more general call to repentance. Those who call to repentance are themselves marked with the sign of repentance. 'Repent and believe the good news.'

In Joel, the trumpets sound and an assembly is called ^(2:12-18). Must we wait till the weapons are used to sound the alarm? And has not the destruction already been caused by the lost resources, by the poor who starve, by living on a planet held in hostage, by creating enemies to support a profitable arms trade? Food is taken from the mouths of the poor to put into the voracious jaws of the war machine..

'Come back to me with all your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning. Let your hearts be broken, not your garments torn.' The external sign is to be measured by the heart. It is the heart that is marked by ashes. Where is the heart? Is it broken at the realization at what we are constructing in the name of defense and security? Weapons that destroy what they feign to protect?

How clear does the trumpet sound for Christians? Do we waffle and wobble, or is there a clear 'No' to death and a clear 'Yes' to life? How can we who confess to life continue to abide in a world of death images and images of hatred. The Reformed (Church) Alliance of the Federal Republic of Germany wrote in its confessional statement: 'The confession of our faith is incompatible with all life-threatening enmity between people and all hostile images of others...In obedience to Jesus Christ we declare: Means of mass destruction are not appropriate or necessary instruments with which a state is entitled to frighten off potential military opponents or, in the event of war, to join battle against them...They deserve on the part of Christians an unconditional "No" spoken out of a confessing commitment to God the Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer, a "No" without any kind of "Yes".' This Christian Church has proclaimed a clear carion in its response to weapons of mass destruction and war-making. Should we be less clear?

As Christians, we seem gradually to have shifted so far from what Jesus had in mind that the abnormal begins to look normal. We normalize the abnormal so that the normally abnormal looks normal. Christians are called to resist the normalization of the abnormal and see the Emperor in his bare nothingness. The role of prophecy is to continue shouting as did the prophets before, that what is accepted as normal is quite not so.

It is the communal call to repentance that leads us to move from here, from our enclosed moment of prayer and reflection, to mark not only our foreheads but also the commonly held property that cloaks the abnormal as normal--that acts and plans and intends the possible mutual annihilation of human beings, as though it were

normal to do so.

For, to borrow the reflection of Daniel Berrigan, what is the property of the Ministry of Defence? Who is it proper to? Is it proper in any human sense of the word to plan and prepare tools of mass destruction? To mark the building is to call public attention to the fact that the building is not real property, because it is not proper to any human being. It is a non-property.

By moving the liturgy from here to the streets we invite those who pass by to become a part of the collective vigil. The communitarian mourning becomes public. The ashes are spread on common ground.

If in the process we are jailed it should not seem strange, if we remember the Acts of the Apostles. Christians do not seek to be in jail. We look to affirm life and call attention to the House of Death. We enter the House of Death to affirm life.

Everyone who attends this liturgy in some way expresses his/her affirmation of life. Some will carry the message in writing to the walls of the Ministry of Defense and experience bodily their witness not only today but in the days, weeks, and months to follow. The follow-through on the call to repentance is more than today. Ash Wednesday is the beginning of the season of Lent. This initial act of repentance is the announcement of a season of repentance.

The personal act of receiving ashes on the forehead is extended to the community of believers here, but it is also extended to the community of our fellow human beings at the Ministry of Defense and fellow Christians elsewhere. It extends also in time, through the season of Lent and in the follow-through in court or in jail for those who are arrested. There are different ways in which we are called to repentance and how we express our response to that call. The total liturgy moves from prayer, reflection, and song in this location through the procession and action at the Ministry of Defense and the consequences that follow through the year. It is a liturgy shared by all, each walking at a different pace or in a different way, but all called by the same Spirit to speak the Truth in a bodily form and act publicly to express our hearing of the words: Repent and believe the Good News.

Sr. Doreen Hudson-Tobin
(Co-ordinator of the Fellowship of Reconciliation in England)



Stalemate

Fritz Eichenberg

REFLECTIONS ON ASH WEDNESDAY 1989 AND PROPOSALS FOR 1990

by Dan Martin

What does it mean when Christians are allowed to publicly mark the main Ministry of Defense building in Whitehall, just a short walk away from the Houses of Parliament and across the street from No. 10 Downing street, and not be arrested? (Well, three people were arrested but later released without charge. Their arresting officers must have been a bit more zealous for the law than their comrades were.) The police have ignored such activity in Liverpool the last two years and again this year. The road was partially blocked at Aldermaston AWE as nine Christians knelt and prayed amongst sack cloth and ashes, and again no arrests were made.

Could this be what the police are thinking: 'It is simply not worth the expense and paper work to arrest over forty people for doing something as harmless as using charcoal and ash on the building. Last year we arrested over 60 of them and all but one pleaded 'not guilty'. And even when they were convicted many refused to pay up and eventually spent time in police cells and prison. We, the courts and prisons have better things to do than to pander to the offended consciences of a few Christians. So let them have their day of daubing and graffiti. And probably if we refuse to arrest them, we will reduce, if not eliminate, their publicity which is why they engage in such antics anyway. They measure their success and are encouraged in direct proportion to the column inches that appear the next day. Pull the publicity rug from under them and they will soon get bored and go on to something else.'

Without knowing for sure why the police changed their approach to us I would like to believe that what occurred was of greater significance than perhaps even they realise.

Our work of twice-monthly communication and periodic resistance at the MoD since 1983 can be described in two words: fidelity and conversion. We cannot predict nor programme conversion. Our hope, however, is that through our efforts to be faithful peacemakers the Spirit will lead us all including those who may disagree (e.g. the police, courts, etc.) into a deeper understanding. In other words we always hope that the police, among others, will recognize the legitimacy of our activity and cooperate with us.

For example, the police could cooperate by not arresting us when we challenge the laws which protect the smooth, daily working of the MoD. In effect, we did achieve this on Ash Wednesday 1989.

Now I can't say that conversion has taken place, but some significant change has occurred. Since we began our work at the MoD we have met police, prosecutors and even a magistrate who have expressed their cooperation and agreement with our message and activities in different ways, though all stopped short of risking their jobs. The decision to avoid arresting people was a major change of policy. There can be no question that what we did was illegal. It has been illegal for the last five years and found so by magistrates.

Friends who are sympathetic with our work but not in full agreement describe it as ineffective. 'What you do is good for your own conscience but not practical, not effective.' Well who knows for sure what is effective (whatever that means) but last Ash Wednesday is evidence that we have had an effect, on the police at least. Has the State recognized the Ash Wednesday witness as a legitimate Christian witness? Hardly. Though the behaviour of one part of the State has changed a little there is no evidence of agreement or change of behaviour from the military and politicians who will still push the button. The police are on the front line protecting them from the likes of us. So perhaps they are just making their job easier, thinking at the same time we will just go away eventually.

When considering a way forward it is important to not let the police or anyone else interpret where we have been or why. To respond in their terms would deny the spirit and reduce our peace work to merely political and tactical considerations. A way forward needs to be rooted in the concepts of fidelity and conversion.

In a spirit of friendship we should welcome what cooperation the police showed on Ash Wednesday 1989, apparently it is now acceptable for Christians to mark the MoD on Ash Wednesday. I believe that we now need to create other opportunities for the front line of the State to cooperate with us. The police have moved the perimeter closer to the centre which leaves us more freedom of movement and expression. The extent of State control has been reduced. They have stepped back and so we must step forward, always mindful of the need to nonviolently challenge and confront a legal system which protects nuclear war preparations. By a policy of not arresting people, the State defines what is acceptable protest, or what is acceptable Christian activity. But what is permitted is not a challenge.

To 'step forward' is not to seek arrest for its own sake but to say, 'Okay, State, you've come this far with us after six years of our activity, and for that we rejoice, but we will not stop there. We will keep coming

forward/

forward until we reach the weapons, and even further until we reach the enmity that supports these weapons. Let us enter the work places where the nuclear bureaucracy neatly files, organizes and computes nuclear war. Let the police stand aside completely. We are a disarmed people and by our persistence and willingness to suffer in challenging injustice we will, with God's help, convert a nuclear armed nation.'

During Ash Wednesday at the MoD I thought of a scene from the film Gandhi. In setting out on his great march to the sea to launch the salt tax resistance campaign a reporter asked him: 'What if the government does nothing and lets you pick up the salt and distribute it?' Gandhi replied: 'The initiative is always with the nonviolent resister.' I forget the rest of what he said but the sense of it was that the possibilities of creative nonviolence are so immense there can be no dead ends for those guided by the spirit of nonviolence.

To paraphrase Sr. Doreen who preached the homily: As Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent let it also announce a season of resistance. Catholic Peace Action suggests that the Ash Wednesday witness become a Lenten campaign of public repentance and resistance. We propose that the witness be expanded in time and place.

In regards to time--In London for the last two years 400-600 people attended a prayer service and over 60 and 40 people risked arrest. Surely we can arrange things so that during every week of Lent, if not every day, a group of Christians will appropriately pray at and mark that Building. A major service can still be part of the Ash Wednesday event and also include the marking of the MoD. All the charcoal used during Lent could be blessed then. The weekly or daily witnesses could begin with a liturgy using symbols which link with the Ash Wednesday service. These could be organised by different affinity groups and/or by each of the sponsoring organizations. The support of the London-based people and organisations would be there to help provide what may be needed (e.g. overnight accomodation, liturgical space, materials, press work, etc...)

In regards to place--we encourage resisters to act locally, at their near-by war establishment. People in London would be available to help coordinate a national Lenten campaign.

There are so many possibilities. Finally we (CPA) hope that the guidelines accepted this last year would still be acceptable to all participants.



Peace

Ernesto de la Vega

LETTERS

7 December 1988

Carmel!

Thank you for the latest newsletter, especially the account of what you said at the Pax Christi conference which I wish I could have gone to. But I couldn't do that as well as the CCND one and actually it was just as well I didn't try as I have had Morris ill practically since the end of September.

I was going to take issue with you where you say that in conscience it is not right to pay fines. Then you said you did sign a 'bind over', just before Christmas--and my head went out to you! I could not do what you do if I had three small children, but children (your children at least!) do have a loving father and grandparents. Elderly husbands are another problem!

On All Saints Day, I left Morris in bed, very ill, and thundered off to Huntingdon to stand trial for our Alconbury adventure on 6 August together with Maire Collette, John Rudman, Mick Scott, Dave Pybus and John Hutchinson (Jean's husband). We were fined plus costs and damages, a total of £134 each. I had no money and at that moment had no prospect of getting any--but I couldn't go to prison and leave an old man alone--and yet I know we were right to do what we did that Hiroshima Night-- We re-possessed that air-base for the Holy Spirit--I have no doubts of that.

Time since then has been a nightmare. On the way home, the sliencer fell off the car, seven miles from home--and I was delayed at least two hours! I got home to find Morris worse, chaos everywhere and so went on for most of November until he went into hospital on 23 November. Many prayers (aren't affinity groups wonderful?!) and four pints of blood later he is a new man, and was able to come to Biggleswade Means Court with me on Monday morning last when I refused to pay my Ash Wednesday fine (£90) and he paid out of the £300 I had raised in one pound coins!

I wish I could go to prison. It would be so much easier than all this money-raising and newspaper publicity! (We do live in the Tory constituency with the biggest majority in the country--and John Carlisle lives in this village!) What I am trying to say is that for you in conscience it is wrong to pay fines. I hate paying fines but I know I will be right to mark the wall of the MoD on Ash Wednesday as I did last year and as I did to the Alconbury run-way. But in conscience I cannot leave an ill man alone. We each of us have to find our own way. (I have paid £50 of my Alconbury fine, M.C. and John Hutchinson are refusing to pay; Mick has done a week in prison; and John is paying the fine like me.)

May God keep you in His hands, whatever happens. Much love and a very happy Christmas to you all.

in peace,

Barbara Sunderland

Dear friends,

Please don't cut off my lifeline to sanity! I know that my actual involvement with CPA has been slight, 'due to family commitments, but my love and prayers go out to you all, as you make your public witness on my behalf, and the newsletter is always an inspiration to me.

Thank you,

Jakki Gillett

I am old, deaf and living on a pension so not much good except for praying and spreading the news. No support at my local church. I would like to have the newsletter.... Have a blessed Christmas giving time and love to your own families.

Joanna Judd Fisk

6 December

Dear Dan,

I've just read the latest CPA letter, and wish to offer one comment: I do worry about how peace and justice groups appeal to the Bible. You know this from previous conversations. My particular worry here is with Phil Berrigan's quoting of Galatians and Cor.2. The law St. Paul refers to is not Caesar's, but the Jewish law of the Torah. This is fundamental and rather upsets PB's conclusions about opposing the law of Caesar. Paul's whole wrestling is what to do and say about the law of the Torah in the light of Christ, because as a Jew he believed that the Torah was given by God as was Christ. But this is another discussion.

Not that I am against opposing the law of Caesar as an expression of faithfulness. As you know I support that--though only so far with prayer and solidarity of presence on the day....

see you soon,
Alan Race

3 January

Dear Carmel and Dan,

It gives me great pleasure to write my first letter of the new year to you both. May I wish you every blessing and joy this year as your family life develops and also your exemplary peace work and action.

My sole reading in English over Christmas has been the biography of Francis Thompson by Boardman which my sister gave me. You will not be surprised to know that in Thompson's last work, Ode 'To the English Martyrs' there is, in his draft, a distinctly prophetic view of a world dominated by the fear of nuclear warfare. Unfortunately, Meynell, his literary executor, thought the theme inexplicable except as a suggestive of opium delirium (Thompson was addicted to opium) so it can only be found in his draft and not his published works. Still you may find it interesting to glance through the Ode if you have Thompson's works to hand. I had intended to write his biography some ten years ago but frankly got bogged down in his imagery.... Let me leave you with one of my favourite pieces from Thompson: An Arab Love Song

The hunched camels of the night
Trouble the bright
And silver waters of the moon.
The Maiden of the Morn will soon
Through Heaven stray and sing,
Star gathering.
Now while the dark about our loves is strewn,
Light of my dark, blood of my heart, O come!
And night will catch her breath up, and be dumb.

Leave thy father, leave thy mother
And thy brother;
Leave the black tents of thy tribe apart!
Am I not thy father and thy brother,
And thy mother?
And thou--what needest with thy tribe's black tents
Who hast the red pavilion of my heart?

Love and peace,
Veronica



DIRECT ACTION - A CHALLENGE TO THE STATE

A WAY OF LIVING OUR LIVES FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

Taking on direct action against the State, should not be taken on in any spirit other than, the commitment to a full examination of the consequences. If the full consequence is not part of the reflection and discernment then the preparation is inadequate for this very serious challenge to the State.

I believe that Dorothy Day stated clearly that 'The State is the enemy' so when you take on the State you have to be that clear. This is not an easy option - it means the full consequences will take you through arrest, police cells, court and prison and therefore each stage has to be developed in the full spirit of commitment. If the action is not followed up by a court appearance and well prepared submission and defence statements, to the magistrates, then the action may appear as an act of wanton vandalism and cast doubt on the real work of Resistance, and indeed hinder that work. If, on the other hand, the action is followed by well reflected reasons for the action to the court, with biblical references - reference to conscience, responsibility to creation and humanity, a voice speaking for the poor etc, then where does that all go when a deal is made to pay fines and compensation? Prisons are full of people who cannot pay for their particular challenge to the State. They cannot produce cheque books, credit cards or well off friends to buy them out of prison. Part of the discomfort for me in prison, is meeting the powerless, who the State and society just roll over, and feeling powerless myself, I am unable to help. The least I can do to take a stand with the powerless is not to opt for privileges that would relieve me of my time in prison.

Helen Woodson, in an earlier letter sent out from prison when being 'persuaded' to appeal her 18 year sentence said, and I paraphrase her words here. 'Jesus wanted out when he was in the Garden of Gethsemane - but he didn't! ' We are all in that dilemma when we take on the State.

When people pay fines and compensation, they don't 'break the law', they merely dent it. The law remains intact - even when that law protects the keeping, for intended use, of nuclear weapons.

When asked for my opinion on 'whether to pay or not to pay a fine' I always say. "I never support the paying of fines" and always that stance has been demeaned and downgraded by the pat answers, "not everyone is as strong as you Sarah". How do they know how strong I am? How do they know what the cost has been to those who have chosen not to pay fines? Prison is difficult for everyone. Women who are in prison are not in there to test their strength or endurance - they are there not out of choice but because the state has imposed its authority on them.

When we are serious about taking on the State we must 'take them on', on every issue that creates injustice. Many in the 'Peace Movement' pretend otherwise they confine their activity to the anti-nuclear protest, by-passing all the other issues of racism, sexism, poverty and immigration. By doing this there is no need to change our personal lives. The protest can be kept at a social level, under control and out of the real struggle for justice. The socialization of protest, denies resistance which is the root of all serious protest, and is an instrument of corruption, which modifies and reduces commitment to non-violent direct action, both as a tactic and a way of living our lives as part of the struggle for peace and justice.

When others decide to pay our fines for us, they have to know that their action props up the State, and authenticates the policies, on the issue that we found so abhorrent when we embarked on our protest and challenged the state in the first place. Those who decide to keep us out of prison by paying fines, even if done anonymously, deny us the right to our resistance to evil through the full consequences of the protest. All the preparation, all the reflection and discernment, the time spent on overcoming the fear that rises up in us, when we are taking action, time in the cells, the court preparation and presentation

which should be a challenge to all in the court 'for the enshrinement of nuclear destruction' by the protection of law, all become invalid, we become powerless .
We have been neutralized and the State is strengthened.

Sarah Hipperson

ASH WEDNESDAY ACTION - 1989.

For Father David and I the day began where our roots are, here in St John Vianney, and bearing with our ashes our own need to "turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel" we travelled to Westminster Cathedral Hall.

Here we joined about three hundred others, many famous for their involvement in Justice and Peace Issues, in a service of repentance and dedication, when the ashes and charcoal we were to use at the Ministry of Defence were blessed.

Our own small group after a time of silent prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, led in and out by a small girls sturdy footsteps, began our walk to Whitehall through crossed streets both in warm sunshine.

At the MoD we found many of our familiar friends, the police, ringing the building, but greeting us with smiles, and except at the main entrance, no barriers. There were already many motifs on the walls - 'Peace', 'Father Forgive', small crowds around people kneeling, praying on the grass - but no sense of confrontation. And so it was that we also walked quietly to the wall and wrote our sign, until the police stopped us and took away our charcoal - but allowed us to kneel in a small circle on the grass beneath our signs to pray and sing together ending by sharing the sign of Peace with the police men and women standing near us.

Then round to the Embankment side of the building, where on the lawns, more than two hundred people had gathered to support us in a Vigil, nine stations of prayer which lasted until 4.30pm. It was good to be standing in the sunshine part of the Vigil instead of being processed in the Police Station. Good too, to have the police with us, watchful still, but joining, many of them, in the songs we sang and the prayer we offered.

Ash Wednesday was a day of signs - the ash crosses on our foreheads, our motifs in charcoal on the walls (acceptance by the police and MoD authorities that Christians have the need and right to say these things and can be trusted to do so in a peaceful way?) of the value and witness of Christians praying publicly about evil in the world, particularly on this day, of the evil that would reduce creation to ash and charcoal, nuclear weapons.

God's sunshine seemed everywhere, in smiles and greetings between friends, between police and protestors, and above all, having been willing to risk our personal liberty, the freedom to return home to friends and family, and to continue the campaign.

Freda Bourke