

# Catholic Peace Action

A journal of nonviolent resistance at  
the Ministry of 'Defence'  
(and other places)

February 1996

7 Putney Bridge Road  
London SW18 1HX

Dear Friends,

The main invitation is to attend the Ash Wednesday service at the MoD on 21 February, 12:30 Embankment Gardens. Details below. Contact us if you want to be involved in resistance.

The response to the Dan and Carmel's request for a Bailiff loan was very encouraging. Thanks to all who responded with money or prayers. Let us know if you want to attend court in support of Dan when the time comes. A letter to the court is printed below.

One of the many things Ray did during his year back in this country was to write the attached article: 'The Pergau Dam Scandal'. He is back in Tanzania (quite out of reach of the Bailiff!) working hard at a mission hospital. His address is Maryknoll, S.L.P. 1421, Mwanza, Tanzania.

Just received news of the third ploughshares action in this country on 29 January. Three women, Andrea Needham, Jo Wilson and Lotta Kronlid, disarmed a Hawk fighter at a British Aerospace factory in Warton. The plane was destined for Indonesia and was to be used to suppress the people of East Timor. Since Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975 200,000 people have been killed. BAe are due to deliver 24 hawks to Indonesia this year. The three disarmers have been refused bail. For the latest information ring 0171-249 6949. More info in the next issue.

Yours in peace,

Catholic Peace Action

Pat Gaffney, Sarah Hipperson, Ray Towey, Dan and Carmel Martin

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## A Letter to the Court

*(Below is a the letter Dan sent to the local court. He has received two notices to pay up or else. We expect him to be called to account soon. If you would like to be notified of the court appearance send us a note or ring Pax Christi, 0181-800 4612.)*

4 February 1996

Senior Chief Clerk  
South Western Magistrate's Court

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am in receipt of your 'Final Notice', dated 23 January 1996 in regards to a transfer of fines, etc., from Bow Street Magistrate's Court.

My date of conviction was 30 March 1995; The total amount I owe is £329.

I would like to inform you that I have no intention of paying this money. At the time of my conviction I informed the Court of the same. The Court issued a distress warrant which I have also so far resisted.

I am willing to cooperate with a custodial sentence and will attend a hearing for that purpose but I can not in good conscience pay the amount due.

My cooperation with a custodial sentence and willingness to attend a hearing should not be interpreted as agreement with the conviction or a desire for imprisonment but simply a recognition that the court has that power over my liberty.

The background to my case and my reasons for not cooperating with the court or Bailiffs are as follows:

I was found guilty of 'criminal damage', that is, of marking the Ministry of Defence building in Whitehall with blessed charcoal during Lenten peace-making activities by various Christian organisations.

The debt is made up of £54 compensation due to the Ministry of Defence, £75 costs due to the Court for prosecuting me, £100 fine as a result of the conviction, and £100 fine for breaching a conditional discharge of the previous year for a



similar action, a condition which I did not agree to abide by; the condition that I be of 'good behaviour and keep the peace' for 12 months.

Our commitment to peace is founded on the life and teachings of Jesus; the practice of love and nonviolence. Gandhi has also said: 'Non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as cooperation with good.'

We object to the evil of nuclear war preparations. The Trident programme is the most destructive weapon ever. Even if the weapons are not used, the sincere threat to use them is a moral poison which casts a shadow of violence in all our relationships, personal and national.

These weapons also represent a theft from the poor, the hungry and the homeless of this world. Justice to the 'least of our brothers and sisters' should come first before expenditure on such weaponry is even contemplated.

These weapons are not only immoral but illegal according to national and international law. My defense was not taken seriously and hence I was found guilty by the court.

From the above you will see that it would be contrary to my conscience to pay money to the Ministry of Defence, so long as they continue to rely on nuclear weapons; to pay the Court compensation for prosecuting me or pay a fine imposed by the Court, since I should have been found innocent; or pay a fine for not being of 'good behaviour and keeping the peace' since I was only trying to enforce real peace, contrary to the practice of the Ministry of Defence.

Yours sincerely,

Dan Martin

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## Clearing a Path to Resistance

Much has been written over the years in our newsletter about why we break the law in obedience to God's Law, as we understand it. But sometimes God's call is not to do resistance. After serious consideration I have decided not to take part in marking the M.O.D. building on Ash Wednesday. I share with you the reasoning behind this decision.

As a couple, with four young children, we are committed to resisting the threat that nuclear weapons holds for us and all families. The whole family pays the price for the resistance that either Dan or I participate in, though we are supported by friends and relatives.

The Bailiff order against Dan for the last nine months has had consequences for all of us. The possibility of a 28 day prison sentence for Dan is much on our minds especially after a recent threatening letter from the local court (threatening more bailiffs and immediate arrest).

Should Dan go to prison the responsibilities of family life which we share become wholly mine. Visits to prison are important for us both, and support from friends enables that to happen. If I

were to take arrestable action during this period and should I have a court appearance or even a prison sentence which coincided with Dan's imprisonment the burden of responsibilities for family, parish and school would be too great for me to sustain.

Dan and I have always avoided taking action simultaneously because of our wish to provide security for the children by the constant presence of one of us at home. Resistance can wait but the children will not. There is a time for everything and the nurturing of a family is as much a part of being faithful to God's call as resistance.

I have not taken action for a couple of years and do not do so easily or without much heart searching. At present my path to resistance is obscured by the prison sentence Dan may soon face. When that has been dealt with I will re-examine my motives and fears and God's call to resistance and faithfulness.

As spring awakens, may all our paths to resistance become clearer.

Carmel Martin



# The Pergau Dam Scandal

## A Victory For The World's Poor

Ray Towey

In November 1994, the Foreign Secretary Mr. Douglas Hurd was found by a High Court Judge to have acted contrary to English law when he authorised funds to be given from the British aid budget to assist in the building of the Pergau Dam in Malaysia. When interviewed on the BBC Radio following the ruling Mr. Hurd said that he had considered the possibility of resigning.

This most remarkable turn of events was a battle of David and Goliath proportions where a small pressure group known as the World Development Movement challenged in law the policy of the British Government and won. The World Development Movement campaigns for a change in Government policy to make the overseas aid budget more effective in assisting the poorest people in the poorest countries and it opposes the arms trade.

In 1994 they bravely initiated a High Court Judicial Review on the governments policy to spend overseas aid money in support of the Pergau Dam project and were completely vindicated when Lord Justice Rose concluded that Mr. Douglas Hurd had acted illegally when authorising money from the overseas aid budget for this project because it did not conform to proper development criteria. Millions of pounds of aid money has been prevented from being wasted on a project that Sir Tim Lankester, the Permanent Secretary to the Overseas Development Administration, described as uneconomic and not a sound development project.

However for very dubious and sinister reasons the views of this senior civil servant were over-ruled in 1991 by the Prime Minister John Major and Mr. Hurd. At that time the argument put forward by Britain's High Commissioner to Malaysia and the Minister for Defence Procurement was that if Britain did not support the Pergau Dam Project it, 'would have an adverse impact on UK relations with Malaysia in general and on the defence sales relationship in particular'.

Despite the judicial ruling the Government still intends to give financial help to build the dam but now the money cannot come out of the aid budget. The story really starts in March 1988 when the then Defence Secretary, Sir (now Lord) George Younger, signed a defence export

Protocol with Malaysia to the value of £1 billion which included the wording: 'The UK undertook to bring to bear the resources of its MoD (Ministry of Defence) in order to grant certain facilities, including aid in support of non-military aspects under the programme.'

George Younger agreed that Malaysia would receive 20% of the value of the arms sales in the form of aid. Any link between British aid and arms sales to Malaysia (or elsewhere) was officially denied for years. However, Sir Tim Lankester's evidence to the Public Accounts Committee in January 1994, forced the Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, to admit to a 'brief entanglement' between the two from March to June 1988.

That entanglement, he claimed, had been ended by

George Younger's letter of June 1988 to the Malaysian Finance Minister saying that, 'the linking of aid to projects' would not be possible. Yet on the same day, the British High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur wrote to the same Finance Minister offering up to £200 million in special aid and export credit support for future contracts (an amount remarkably similar to the

aid expected from the £1 billion of arms sales agreed under the Protocol).

In short the Pergau Dam Scandal is the use of the British Aid Programme as a 'sweetener' for arms sales and wider political UK interests, a cynical exploitation of the needs of the world's poor and the British tax payer's money. In English law there is still nothing to prevent the linkage of aid to arms sales and the legal ruling on the Pergau Dam in favour of the World Development Movement was based on the fact that the Pergau Dam in itself was uneconomic and not a sound development project.

We must congratulate the World Development Movement on what they have achieved with such limited resources but there is still much to do to make the British Aid Programme a more effective service to the world's poor and not just a tool of political expediency. The World Development Movement needs all the help it can get to continue its valuable work.

World Development Movement, 25 Beehive Place, London SW9 7QR

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A summary by Sarah Hipperson of :

***'GREENHAM COMMON WOMEN'S PEACE CAMP :  
A HISTORY OF NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE  
1984 ~ 1995' by Beth Junor.***

On the 14th November, 1983, the first of the consignment of 96 Ground Launch Cruise Missiles were flown into the United States Airforce Base at Greenham Common, Berkshire. This was a critical time in modern history when all of our lives were threatened by two nuclear super-powers; the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. Aggressively facing each other with their policy of Mutually Assured Destruction, enforced by the siting of the SS20 in the Soviet Union, the Pershing in West Germany and the Cruise missile in Comiso, Italy and Greenham Common, they dragged the whole world to the precipice of nuclear confrontation and the prospect of inevitable annihilation.

This book tells of the response to this policy by the women of Yellow Gate Peace Camp and how they challenged both these protagonists at every opportunity by articulating and practicing a resolute, non-aligned stand against their nuclear threats - whether directed at military personnel inside the Airforce base or at government officials in the conference halls of Moscow.

The book details how the women of Yellow Gate set about undermining the military establishment by using methods of non-violent, direct action against the Cruise missile convoy and its manoeuvres in southern England and how they disrupted the political attempts to keep these movements secret from the general public. The imaginative and inspiring incursions into the base at Greenham and on the land at Salisbury Plain are chronicled as is the work that is continuing now at the Camp directed at the on-going threat to peace from the Aldermaston and Burghfield Atomic Weapons Establishment.

Also recorded is the staggering amount of non-violent direct action resistance by the women of the Camp and the many prison sentences served as a result of their refusal to be intimidated by the courts. When the reader examines this documentation of the work done by Yellow Gate they will understand the last paragraph in the introduction of the book which states, "The truest history of the Women's Peace Camp work is to be found in the Criminal Records office".

Although the circumstances and events are recounted in a serious manner, the book contains humorous aspects of the times. Photographs give the reader an impression of life at the Camp and illustrations by the artist Katrina Howse (who has lived at the Camp since 1982) show the spiritual aspects of working for peace that have been such a mainstay for the women involved. The interweaving of all the recorded work, together with the national and international news items and events of the time, gives the reader a perspective over this period of political history and an understanding of the historical importance of this unique venture by the women of the Camp. It can also be recognised as the precursor for subsequent grassroots political empowerment elsewhere in the country.

The most important aspect of the publishing of this book is summed up in a statement by the author, Beth Junor; "After years of being observed from an almost anthropological viewpoint and of being examined by academia, at last we've been able to tell our own story and to project our own image of ourselves".

The book can be purchased from **DEPT. GCWPC, 15 SYDNEY ROAD, WANSTEAD,  
LONDON E11 2JW. Price £8.50 plus £1.50 postage.**



## A VISIT TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

On 17th January, 1996, I went to demonstrate outside Parliament. I was with three other women from the Women's Peace Camp on Greenham Common. In November 1995, at a conference in Libya, two women from the Camp had been alerted to the fact that during the Gulf War uranium-tipped shells had been used by the Allied forces. They were shown slides of children born with genetic malformations as a result of this use. Dr. Gunther, the Austrian geneticist, had revealed this information. The women from the Camp had also been given details about children dying of disease and starvation and they had promised to do some shouting outside Parliament on behalf of the Iraqi people.

On January 16th this year we had a phone call at the Camp asking if we could support some Iraqi children and their carers who intended petitioning Parliament on behalf of their cousins in Iraq. We agreed to do so and altered our own plans so that the children would be safely away before we started our own demonstration. The children needed an M.P. to receive them into the Commons to deliver their message, but this proved extremely difficult to arrange. The children had been waiting patiently and politely from 12.30pm until 3.30pm when Dale Campbell Savours, Labour M.P., (himself not agreeing with our protest and supporting sanctions against Iraq) sent Alice Mahon, Labour M.P., to speak with the children.

When our group and the tourists queuing for the Gallery were the only ones left, we carried out our action. We were careful to see that the children's action stood on its own, separate from ours. We had a large 'Stop the Sanctions' banner and started singing a collection of adapted songs; 'Were you there when they bombed Bagdad?', 'No more Sanctions', 'I am a witness to your War Crimes' and others. We sustained our singing and keening for one and a half hours until we ended up being dragged into the Commons where we were charged under an ancient law protecting Parliament. We were reported to the Master of Arms who ordered that we be locked in a cell until he cared to release us; this, not surprisingly, would be when the House 'rose'. We were told that we could be held until the end of the present session or until 8.00pm, 10.00pm or even 3.00am the following morning. As it turned out, we were released at 8.00pm. I made a complaint against one of the policemen who seemed to be trying to break my arm when I was arrested ~ I don't expect they will do anything about my complaint. When we were in the cell we wondered if the suffragettes had been held there in the past. An interesting discovery was that you cannot have anyone informed that you are being held inside Parliament, unlike in an ordinary police station; we felt a little uneasy about that and were relieved when finally released.

It had been a full day and we were all very tired, but we felt good that our work had enabled the children to be received by Parliament and avoided them becoming disillusioned about democracy at such an early stage in their lives. We were also pleased that we had disturbed the Parliamentarians who have no shame about tucking into their subsidised haute cuisine while they condemn the poverty stricken people of Iraq to disease and starvation through their continued support of sanctions.

One other thing happened whilst at the Commons. During the long wait to find an M.P. willing to help these children, I noticed an elderly woman standing at the barricade near the entrance. She was leaning on a walking stick and holding out two copies of the Jehovah's Witness magazine 'Awake'. She looked so centered and at ease with herself that I wanted to talk to her. I learnt that her name was Henrietta, she was 83 years old and came from the Caribbean, and that she had come to the House of Commons to, "...tell those inside the building that they got their authority from Jesus and that they shouldn't forget that. They should remember that Jesus loved everyone and so they should look after everyone, not just some, but everyone". I admired her initiative and innocence and we became instant friends. We had our photograph taken together, each of us holding a copy of 'Awake' in our outstretched hands. As she left she told me to 'stay sweet', gave me a hug, then walked over Westminster Bridge leaning on her stick.

On a day when one had expected to meet others willing to censure the Parliamentarians, and had found them missing, Henrietta was both a wonderful consolation and a reminder of where all authority truly derives from.

*Sarah Hipperson*



## NUCLEAR WEAPONS ARE STILL WITH US

### CHRISTIANS CONTINUE TO REPENT AND RESIST

#### AT THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

- ☐ Britain's commitment to maintaining a 'minimum nuclear deterrent' was affirmed by the Queen during her speech at the opening of Parliament in November 1995. At the Party Conference in October, Labour voted to keep the Trident programme. This was hailed as 'a new maturity' in the party's attitude to defence.
- ☐ In the face of protests at French nuclear testing, the British Government has offered its support to France and is working towards nuclear cooperation with France to "strengthen deterrence whilst retaining the independence of our nuclear forces" (John Major, October 1995)
- ☐ The International Court of Justice met in October to consider whether the use of nuclear weapons would violate international law. Britain has made it clear that it will ignore any ruling by the court that questions its right to hold nuclear weapons. Sir Nicholas Lyell, representing Britain said: *"To call into question the system of deterrence...could have a profoundly destabilising effect. It is nonsense to suggest that States which have relied on nuclear weapons for fifty years have implicitly agreed to a ban on them."*
- ☐ These recent positions point to a self-consciousness and defensiveness on the part of politicians. A new energy is needed to bring the issue of nuclear deterrence to the forefront.

'Deterrence' is a euphemism for the sincere intention to use nuclear weapons under certain circumstances. But this Lent Christians say **NO** to a concept of security based on the destructive power of nuclear weapons. **NO** to the impoverishment of millions as financial resources and skills are poured into the research and development of nuclear weapons. **NO** to the exploitation and destruction of God's creation in pursuit of nuclear superiority. During Lent, we reflect on our own need for repentance. This also means looking at our relationships with one another, with the State that acts on our behalf, and with God.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

Catholic Peace Action, 7 Putney Bridge Road, London SW18 1HX  
 Christian CND, 162 Holloway Road, London N7 8DQ  
 Fellowship of Reconciliation, 40-46 Harleyford Road, SE11 5AY  
 Pax Christi, 9 Henry Road, London N4 2LH  
 Tel 0181 800 4612

**JOIN US ON ASH WEDNESDAY, 21ST FEBRUARY  
 AND ON OTHER DAYS IN LENT TO REPENT AND RESIST  
 BRITAIN'S NUCLEAR WAR PREPARATIONS**

- ☐ Be with us at the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall from 12.30 to fast, pray and keep vigil. (We will meet in Embankment gardens, between Embankment Station and the MoD at 12.30)
- ☐ Prepare now for nonviolent civil disobedience on Ash Wednesday and other days in Lent. This civil disobedience/divine obedience will take the form of marking the MoD with blessed charcoal and ash, traditional Christian symbols of repentance.
- ☐ Attend an evening of preparation and discussion for those who wish to take direct nonviolent action on Thursday 8th February at 7.30, Kennington. (ring 0181 800 4612 for details and RSVP)
- ☐ Wherever you are on Ash Wednesday remember us in your prayers and send a message of support. Organise a local service or vigil on Ash Wednesday and other days in Lent.

#### ACTS OF REPENTANCE AND RESISTANCE HAVE BEEN TAKING PLACE AT THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE SINCE 1984

