

Catholic Peace Action

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

June 1996

7 Putney Bridge Rd.
London SW18 1HX

Dear Friends,

Dan is in court on Thursday, 13 June at 2pm.

We invite your attendance. This will be Dan's third appearance and will probably be his last for this case.

The Court is located at 176a, Lavender Hill, Battersea, London SW11; nearest station is BR Clapham junction.

The previous two appearances have been quite bizarre. After a 1/2^{hr} discussion during the first appearance Dan was sentenced to 14 days. Three hours latter in the cells waiting to be transferred to Wandsworth prison Dan was released with the explanation that there was a legal error. During the second appearance the stipendiary magistrate refused to act because, to everyone's astonishment, Dan's file had been lost. Also taken aback, he learned that Dan had been released without being brought back to court. The letter informing Dan to return to court on the 13th expresses regret for the anxiety caused. But 'the problem has been a change in the law... which was not appreciated' during the first appearance, 'making the first order invalid.' Furthermore, Dan will not get any 'credit' for time served!

Another date for your diary: Friday, 12 July, evening, London Venue, Ciaran O'Rielly, a Catholic, will speak on the links of abortion and nuclear weapons, promoting the seamless garment statement and a consistent life ethic. Sponsored by CPA, Pax Christi, and Respect Life. Phone Pax Christi for further details, 0181-800 4612. Ciaran is from Australia and has worked on these issues there and in the U.S.A. where he has spent over a year in prison for his nonviolent resistance to U.S. militarism.

Yours in peace,

CPA
Catholic Peace Action

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

'GOD FORGIVE US' -- 'TRIDENT = DEATH'

by Sr. Mary Lampard

Continuing a 14-year Ash Wednesday tradition, a group of about 50 anti-nuclear protesters met to pray in the Embankment Gardens on Feb. 21st 1996. they went in procession following a cross bearer to the Ministry of Defence, to continue their scripture readings, songs and prayers there. the Cross was laid on the pavement and the protesters nailed onto it papers on which prayers of penance and peace had been written. All were careful to leave a passage for pedestrians, so that we could not be accused of obstructing public places.

Meanwhile four of us who intended to write on the walls of the building, had made our way ahead of the others, only to be met by three or four rows of police, men and women, in front of the Ministry of Defence, barring our way. The two men had gone ahead. Chris Cole, the well-known activist and Roger Morbey, a "freshman" from the fellowship of reconciliation, slipped up the steps and started writing "Trident = DEATH". I felt a sense of shock when they were quickly grabbed and, in quite an

unnecessary show of force, were handcuffed behind their backs.

As for Pat Gaffney, head of Pax Christi, and Me, we saw no opening to the building. I took part in the prayers, not without continuing detractions. At a given moment, the police moved a little in one direction and were all looking one way. I nipped up to one of the huge stone blocks in front of the MoD and on the top I wrote, "God for", when I was seized by the wrist and pulled away. Pat Gaffney speedily follow-on, writing "give us" before she too was stopped.

While waiting for the police van, we were encouraged by the looks and smiles of our companions. Carmel Martin even complained to the police that the men and women prisoners were not treated equally. Much as I am in favour of women's Lib. I draw the line at claiming the right to be hand cuffed on the basis of equality with men! (Of course, that's not what Carmel meant.)

Once in Charing Cross police station I was, as usual, treated with courtesy and friendliness. A young police woman was called to check on me. She had been to a convent school in Lancashire. Hearing that I was a nun, she made a great to-do about her nuns never acting in such a way as I was doing, and started commenting to another officer on the contents of my bag, rosary, prayer-book etc...

We were left quite a long time in our separate cells; a precious time of reading and meditation. I carry around with me a small book called The Interior Fountain by Michael Day, an ideal book for a police cell, as it fills you with a sense of the presence and power of God within you.

At last I was summoned for an interview, but to my surprise, this interview was taped, as I was duly warned. After answering a number of factual questions, I had an opportunity of speaking about the reasons which prompted my use of what some are pleased to call "graffiti".

I told the police about the people I had met at the Hague who gave witness before the judges of the world court of the justice on the question of nuclear arms. One woman from the atoll in the South Pacific told the court that the fall-out from a nuclear test had caused all the inhabitants to be covered with sores. Future generations are effected too: she has had seven miscarriages and, more terrible, has given birth to a "Jelly-Baby", that is a infant without

One woman has had seven miscarriages and, more terrible, has given birth to a "Jelly-Baby", that is a infant without bones, whose skin was so transparent that the inner organs could be seen.

bones, whose skin was so transparent that the inner organs could be seen.

Nothing, I argued, absolutely nothing could ever justify nuclear weapons, neither their use nor their testing nor even their possession. Writing on the walls of the Ministry of Defence, where such horrors are planned, was but one way of protesting against my country's

involvement in such evil. I was prepared to face the consequence of causing a tiny little damage to a building, if that could lessen the likelihood of such appalling damage being inflicted on human beings.

The two policemen themselves looked quite appalled as I spoke to them. Perhaps they at least have had a change of heart.

I was released with an injunction to return in a fortnight. Later, the appointment was cancelled: it had been decided to take no further action.

On release, faithful friends were waiting for us in the police station lobby. I can never say enough how much value I attach to the friendship, fun, support and prayer of my peace-colleagues.

(Sister Mary is a Missionary Sister of Our Lady of Africa. She worked 25 years in Africa (Uganda and Kenya) and has marked the MoD. She is 81 years of age and this is her fourth act of civil disobedience.)

Homily, Ash Wednesday, 21 February 1996

Ministry of Defence, Whitehall

By Dan Martin

Reading

The wolf will live with the lamb, the panther lie down with the kid; and the calf, lion and fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The sucking child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea.
Isaiah 11:6-9

Homily

Recently I have read some classic fiction, War and Peace and A Tale Of Two Cities. The role of good fiction is to prepare the heart and soul

for a truth which may not be understood if stated outright, or explicitly like doctrine or dogma. And I realize why I have not read fiction for almost 25 years. The reason being, that despite these truths which are conveyed there is sadness, and the sadness is that every story, even great stories, come to an end.

A good story involves the reader and doesn't let the reader go. The relationships, drama, details are so engaging you don't want to put the book down.

Which made me ask myself if there is a good story which doesn't end?

Which is another way of asking is there a relationship which doesn't end?

The stories, dreams, visions, and metaphors of the Bible serve the same purpose of a good story: To translate something of the nature of God's love, peace and justice in a way that we can understand.

The vision as presented by Isaiah is a message about the true harmony which God desires for all of creation: the animals, people, earth, sea and sky.

Through the rest of the liturgy today we will hear details of the story of Jesus, and for those who are in a relationship with Him or seek a relationship with Him, that great story will never end because He lives.

One of the themes of the Biblical story is that tyrants and tyrannies will come to an end. Peace and harmony will have the final word.

Among Christians the belief in the final victory of Christ over evil and injustice is not disputed. What is in dispute is the role to be played by the Church.

For us here today change will occur by the way of self-sacrificing--and at times, confrontational--nonviolence.

London has been reminded recently that not all people struggling for social change are committed to nonviolence. (Ref to bombings by the IRA.)

But the way of Jesus is peace through peaceful means and necessitates an engagement with the world, a nonviolent struggle with the powers and principalities.

We are part of the 2,000 year old story of that nonviolent struggle. Many others, and not all Christian, are also involved.

I think here of the four women recently involved with the latest ploughshares action, the persistent 14 year witness of the women at Greenham, and of course the membership of the sponsoring organisations of this event.

Our peace work today is part of the Gospel story.

And the price of making peace in the Gospel sense is explained by the Cross which is a symbol of suffering and sacrifice.

In the Gospels the Cross is treated at different levels.

In St. Luke's Gospel we are urged to take up the Cross daily in following our Lord. This says to me that in our personal lives often great sacrifices are required and are known only to God but they are, nonetheless, important. At another level 'taking up the Cross' also means the real possibility of martyrdom.

What we celebrate and support today and what may happen again during Lent is a kind of taking up of the Cross; and prison is just one possible price that may be paid for such activity.

And like the Cross, nuclear weapons are both fact and metaphor. Fact in that one Trident submarine, fully armed could destroy the world, and this Government wants four. And Should Labour form the next Government we are assured they will only commission three Tridents. Nuclear weapons are metaphor in that for me

they symbolise the extent to which violence dominates our lives. They are a moral poison which attacks and affects all our relationships.

So today in our presence and with our participation the Gospel story

continues.

I encourage all of us to recognise our part in the story and with our lives add our own few, but necessary, chapters.

We will each write our part of the story differently but what is common for us all is that we allow our Lord to write the Good News deeper and deeper into our hearts so that we are not incapacitated and overcome by the evil in the world.

In a few minutes some other kind of writing will take place.

And for what that writing means for my children and all the other children in the world we give thanks to God.

For us here today, change will occur by the way of self-sacrificing--and at times, confrontational--nonviolence.

Dear Dan and Carmel

Thanks for the CPA newsletter and message of support for our ploughshares action. What's happening with your fines? Have they put you behind bars yet? After 2 months here being behind bars now feels almost normal, which is rather alarming. Life flies by, with every day the same and no outside events by which to measure one's life. But we're doing fine, feeling strong, and receiving support from all over the world, including from a Timorese prisoner who'd heard about the action from his Indonesian prison cell. It gives me hope that together we can stop this terrible deal.

Love and peace, Andrea (27 March, HMP Risley)

(Andrea's statement below was issued on the eve of her disarmament action of 29 January, as reported in our last newsletter. She and Lotta Kronlid, Jo Wilson, and Angie Zelter have been charged with conspiracy; Andrea, Jo and Lotta are also charged with criminal damage. The Prosecution estimate the damage to be £2.4 million. Contact for more information: 55 Queen Margaret's Grove, London N1 4PZ; tele: 0171-923 9511.)

'I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore, choose life.

Deuteronomy 30:19

For over three years, I have been trying to stop the sale of Hawk fighter aircraft to Indonesia. It is my belief that these aircraft will be used to continue the campaign of genocide which Indonesia has been waging against the people of East Timor for the past twenty years. I have written letters to the government and British Aerospace, held vigils and street stalls, signed and asked others to sign petitions, talked at public meetings, carried out acts of peaceful resistance to the sale, and asked the police to investigate British Aerospace for contravening the Genocide Act. Thousands of other people have also been campaigning to stop the sale.

Despite this, the sale is going ahead and the first planes are due for delivery very soon. I believe that this sale is not only immoral, but also contravenes both British and international law. The threat to the people of East Timor is real and imminent.

I, therefore, feel that I have no option but to disarm these planes myself in order to prevent them from leaving for Indonesia. Inspired by the Biblical injunction of Isaiah to beat swords into ploughshares, I intend to disarm them using a household hammer and with the hope that my action will be the start of a conversion process. I hope that this will be the conversion not only of these swords into ploughshares, but also of the hearts of those for whom business, profit and strategic interests in Third World countries are of more importance than human lives.

I believe that above all else in life, we are called to love and to be human. I can therefore not stand aside and allow the Hawks to be delivered without doing all that is in my power to peacefully resist. I believe to be silent in this situation is to be complicit with injustice.

I pray that what we do today in disarming these planes will be a small ray of hope for our sisters and brothers struggling for peace and justice in East Timor.

Dear Dan and Carmel, Pat, Sarah and Ray,
In the aftermath of the release of the Scott Report, when we heard of such statements as, '...sometimes one needs to be economical with the truth', and '...truth is a difficult concept', I thank God for people such as yourselves who do not compromise the telling of the truth.

The truth we witness to will make us and our children free. Future generations will have much to thank Catholic Peace Action for. You are fulfilling so well the role of the prophet today. As Martin Luther King said 'Truth crushed to the ground will rise again!'

In solidarity and prayer,
Fr. Bert White, Cranbrook

Dear Friends,
I can not join you on Ash Wednesday, as I am too old (89) and almost house bound. But I can and will pray for you

all and for resistance to Britain's nuclear war preparations. You have my wholehearted support.

Mary Swann

Dear Carmel,

As I've been visiting my relations in New Zealand, I've only just received the Ash Wednesday mailing. I want to say how much I admire the decision you have prayerfully taken not to court arrest for the time being. For you and Dan, there has always been both the negative of resisting evil, and the positive of building the peaceable Kingdom in your own family life with your children. In both, you are an example to us all.

May God bless you.
love,
Mary Ann Ebert