

CATHOLIC PEACE ACTION

CPA, 7 Putney Bridge Road
London SW18 1HX

Newsletter No. 4
December 1984

"CPA is an affinity group who believe that the policy of nuclear deterrence is incompatible with the will of God. In regards to nuclear war preparations civil disobedience is Divine obedience."

Dear Friend,

Peace be with you! May the coming celebration of the birth of Jesus fill your heart with peace, joy and hope for the future. Since our last letter some important developments have occurred which we wish to share with you and also invite you to a number of our future activities.

Just after we sent to you our last Newsletter (August 1984) Linda, Patricia and Patrick spent time in prison for refusing to pay fines. Linda and Patricia were sentenced to 14 days for not paying two fines totalling £75. Fifty pounds was for violating a conditional discharge of May 1983 following our first act of civil disobedience/Divine obedience, and a £25 for obstructing an officer in May of this year following our fourth peace witness at the MoD. (See CPA letters no. 1 and 3 for more details.) The magistrate found them "culpably negligent" in not paying the fines. They spend most of their time in Cookham Wood Prison, Kent. Patrick refused to pay a £50 fine and was sentenced to seven days and served 5 in Pentonville prison. This fine resulted from our Ash Wednesday action where Patrick and three others wrote the word 'Repent' on the pillars of the MoD and spread ashes on the steps.

In September we had a successful conference at London Colney on the theme of Faith and Resistance. In November we had a retreat for ourselves and few others to plan our next acts of witness and resistance. Following our last action (May 3) and these two weekends three people have joined CPA--Sara Grayson, Tim Bussell, and Dee Levy.

In thanksgiving for the growth of the group and the support we receive from you and other supporters we would like to invite you to a social/party on December 30 at the above address beginning at 4pm. (We are located inside St. Joseph's Primary school, so if the main gate is closed just ring the bell on the outside wall.) We hope you can come so we can meet you in a more relaxed setting. The steps of the MoD on our days of unconventional liturgies do not provide much opportunity for getting to know each other! Bring a bottle and some food to share. And if you have children, of course, bring them along; Daniel and Sean (ages 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ and 2) would enjoy the company of other children.

Our twice a month communication with the workers at the MoD continues. On 21 December, in addition to handing the workers a personally written Christmas greeting we plan to sing Christmas Carols. We did this last year and it was well received by all the workers. If you want to join us in song we will be at the entrance of the MoD on Horseguards avenue at 8:15 am. Dress warmly!

As you probably have heard 16 more cruise missiles were deployed at Greenham last month. Also RAF Molesworth, the second site for cruise, is being prepared. NATO and this government (and all governments who possess nuclear weapons) are determined to ignore the majority of the peoples desire for peace and the end of the arms race. Which means that our desire for peace needs to be stronger so that protests are louder and resistance greater. As the nuclear idols increase so also does the danger of idolatry. There is however one beneficial result: the choice for Christians becomes ever more clearer. By our words and actions who do we worship?

Our work of communication and resistance at the MoD will continue, so also does our support for a feeding programme and day centre for homeless men near London Bridge. Regarding our communication efforts we hope to involve more people so that a different leaflet can be distributed each week rather than only twice a month.

Also/

Also, we could use a few people to hold placards so that those who refuse a leaflet will not be able to avoid receiving a message from us. This increase in communication will only be possible if we receive more help from our supporters. A rota can be established so that the burden does not fall too heavily on too few people. If you are willing and available on Friday mornings from about 8:15 - 9:30 please contact us at the above address or ring Ray Towey at 627-1618. Regarding our work with the feeding programme, if you would like to help out, contact us or Nanette French at the Manna Centre (403-1931).

After a brief rest to reflect, pray and discuss amongst ourselves what we as a group have done and experienced, the call to civil disobedience as Divine obedience will be answered again on January 15, the birthday of Martin Luther King, jr., and on February 20, Ash Wednesday. We invite you to join us in whatever capacity you feel called. If you wish to be involved to the point of arrest please contact us immediately. If you wish to be with us on January 15 for prayer and song here are the details: At 12 noon, sharp, a liturgy will begin in the Victoria Embankment Gardens in between the Embankment Tube station and Horseguard's avenue. After beginning the liturgy in the gardens we will walk to the entrance of the MoD where some people will pray in a place and manner which will make their arrests almost inevitable. Your prayerful presence would add to the witness for peace. Details of the Ash Wednesday prayers will be sent in the next letter. If you are unable to attend please say a prayer for us and for peace.

Tim bussell and 41 other people were arrested in Parliament square for obstruction in protest to the new cruise deployments. His trial will be on 17 January at Horseferry road magistrates court, 10 am.

Sarah Hipperson entered Holloway Prison on November 22 and will be released December 19. Her 'crime' is refusing to pay fines incurred due to her peace work at Greenham Common. Sarah began a fast on the 22 and was still fasting on the 29th. Whether or not she will fast until her release is not known at the time of this writing. She has been transferred and if you wish to send her a message of support her address is: Sarah Hipperson, no. D23117, HM Prison Cookhamwood, Rochester, Kent.

Attached to this letter is a short piece by Ray Towey on the nature of mission, witness, and the Church which we would like to share with you.

We hope our activities and communications help and encourages you in your work for justice and peace. We thank you for your prayerful support and this Christmas we wish for you the joy and hope found in the birth of Jesus.

In peace,

Catholic Peace Action

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Tony Bartlett
Sarah Hipperson
Linda Frewin
Carmel, Dan, Daniel
and Sean Martin
Pat Gaffney
Patrick Harty
Ray Towey
Dee Levy
Sara Grayson
Tim Bussell

MEANS AND ENDS

The nonviolent resister must often express his protest through noncooperation or boycotts, but he realizes that these are not ends themselves; they are merely means to awaken a sense of moral shame in the opponent. The end is redemption and reconciliation. The aftermath of nonviolence is the creation of the beloved community, while the aftermath of violence is tragic bitterness.

At the center of nonviolence stands the principle of love. The nonviolent resister would contend that in the struggle for human dignity, the oppressed people of the world must not succumb to the temptation of becoming bitter or indulging in hate campaigns. To retaliate in kind would do nothing but intensify the existence of hate in the universe. Along the way of life, someone must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate. This can only be done by projecting the ethic of love to the center of our lives.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

CHRISTIAN CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

by Ray Towey

"Efforts to stop the Nuclear Train illustrate the paradox of non-violent change: non-violence takes more time and it gives us more time.... The question is not whether but how we stop the train." Jim Douglass

(Jim Douglass is a Christian peace activist in the United States who is currently serving a jail sentence for a non-violent act of civil disobedience in the campaign of resistance to the trains which carry the nuclear bombs from where they are assembled in Amarillo, Texas, to the Trident base in Seattle, Washington.)

An act of civil disobedience for me is a very sacred time, a time when the possibility of committing violence to others is one of the most ^{remote} in my life. Maybe this needs to be said for others to fully understand my own act of civil disobedience. I recall other times in my life when I have placed myself in a vulnerable situation and allowed the powers that be to exercise their power over me. In such circumstances I have known in my heart where I stood and that whatever the outcome the presence of God is more powerful than any earthly authority.

Having travelled in the developing world as a mission hospital worker and been stopped by the authorities at customs or traffic checks I have felt at times very vulnerable. The temptation to avoid the possible delays and frustrations to my work by offering money is an option to consider. On these occasions I had to decide the real importance and purpose of my journey and what compromises I was prepared to make. If I paid a bribe, even in order to do more efficiently, good and necessary work, what Christian witness would I have made? In these situations and also in Christian civil disobedience in my own country I have faced the authorities knowing that a Christian witness must be made; in this sense Christian civil disobedience is a missionary act.

Seen in this way the non-violence of Christian civil disobedience is fundamental. But Christian civil disobedience must involve not only the tactics of non-violence but the spirit of non-violence as well. A non-violent tactic may produce in those we confront a temporary change in behaviour by our physical presence. But Christian witness is an appeal to the heart so that a permanent change of behaviour may result. Christian civil disobedience is about conversion not coercion. It is not so much about embarrassing those who disagree with us but about enlightening them. It is not about winning over them but about winning them over. It is not about political power or our own power but about expressing the power of a loving God to free us all. It should give dignity also to our opponents from which we too can learn truths.

If I can stop the Ministry of Defence functioning for a few minutes by just a tactic of non-violence I may make some sort of apparent progress and I may temporarily get my way. I may demonstrate the weakness and fallability of my opponents and I might choose to denounce them. But such actions and attitudes would not fundamentally change anything.

Ironically only a nuclear war can physically destroy our ability to build nuclear weapons. No special tactic of non-violence in itself offers us any permanent hope.

The mission of all Christians is to announce the Good News. What Good News can Christians offer if by the possession of nuclear weapons the bad news (our ability to destroy all of God's creation) is so evident? The issue of nuclear deterrence threatens the missionary life of the Church and when the missionary life of the Church is in peril so inevitably is the life of the Church itself.

