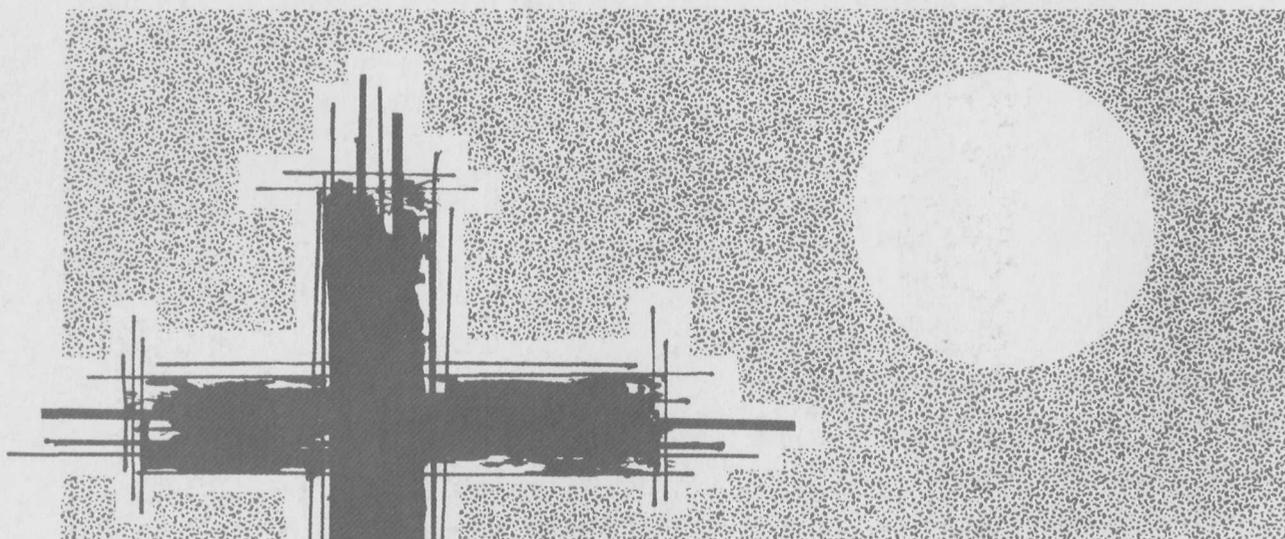


VOLUME • 70 NUMBER • 4 APRIL 1987

THE WITNESS



MICHAEL

EASTER PEOPLE IN A GOOD FRIDAY WORLD

John and Margie Gilbert
Max Surjadinata
Bill Stuart-Whistler

Letters

Kudos for study guides

First, belated commendation on your two books, *Must We Choose Sides* and *Which Side Are We on*. (See back cover.) Over the years I have read many books analyzing private capitalism as to its inherent flaws and the resultant inequities and suffering. Your books are tops in their simplicity and perceptiveness in indicating an unworkable economic system. We are a society that desperately tries to bring relief to the victims of our socio-economic system without any in-depth thought as to the basic reasons for the victims in the first place.

Second, I want to salute THE WITNESS for courageously pleading the struggles of the oppressed in the Third-World countries. This past summer I was a member of a fact-finding group that visited Honduras and El Salvador with the explicit purpose of documenting the feelings of the people themselves. As with one voice they underscored the wrongness and brutality of American policy and military intervention, and that our presence was compounding the torture, the assassinations, and was accentuating the economic plight of the majority. We pledged solidarity with their struggle and are raising our voices loud and clear to bring an end to our nation's murderous intervention.

To combat terrorism is to understand the conditions that evoke terrorism. "Elie Wiesel's Blind Spot" by Norman Solomon in your February issue speaks eloquently, with inescapable impact, to the underlying problem in the Middle East. It is in understanding the struggle of the Palestinians, and their search for justice, that violence in all its forms can best be understood.

**Melford Pearson
Noblesville, Ind.**

Won over to WITNESS

As one who was unhappy with the early issues of THE WITNESS in its latest incarnation because it seemed to have an almost exclusive concern with the place of women in the church, I want now to express my increasing appreciation for the magazine and, in particular, the February issue.

Not only did I find the whole issue interesting from the opening Letters to the Selby article, but I especially appreciated Mary Sudman Donovan's article. What a great group of women she wrote about and what a contribution they made to the life of the church — indeed, to all life. I shall always be grateful for Vida Scudder, Deaconess Colesbury and the host of women who were companions of the Order of the Holy Cross, all of whom were at once concerned about the social gospel and the rich spiritual life of the Church.

The latest issues of THE WITNESS are now laid tenderly beside *Sojourners* as the magazines that speak to me with the deepest religious meaning.

Finally, I just got up from my desk to look at a photograph on my wall of Bill Spofford, Sr. Inwardly, I said to myself, "Bill, you would be proud of THE WITNESS today."

**The Rev. Charles Martin
Canon, Washington Cathedral**

Resource for USSR talks

Thank you for the excellent issue of THE WITNESS on the Soviet Union. It makes a great addition to my resources as I share the story of my 1986 trip there with the NCC peace delegation. I was especially glad to get Paul Valliere's words in print. He reported to a diocesan convention here in Evansville and we had a good visit.

I will be returning in July with the leadership training group and then

again in 1988. This has become a full-time job of interpretation! I am finding it very exciting and rewarding to educate away some of the myths and stereotypes.

I look forward to future issues of THE WITNESS.

**Bruce Naylor
Evansville Council of Churches**

God in U.S.S.R., U.S.?

Recently Phil Donahue hosted a show in the U.S.S.R. with about 100 Russian young people in attendance. At one point he asked, "How many of you believe in God?" Three or four hands were raised slowly. One could almost hear the TV audience in America sigh sadly (and contemptuously): "There you are! What hope is there for world peace with that nation of atheistic barbarians?"

Let's reverse the situation. Suppose Phil would do the show in our country — specifically in the state of Georgia. The audience contains a number of K.K.K.s (or their sympathizers). He asks the same question: "How many of you believe in God?" The result is almost exactly reversed — all hands are raised with the exception of a few. Now — frankly — do you feel better about the hope for world peace?

**The Rev. Eldred Johnston
Columbus, Ohio**

Bill Buckley gets sub

In the 1930s there were some myopic, isolationist church leaders who failed to recognize or speak out against the horrors of Nazism. They counseled restraint, urging that Europeans be allowed to work out their own problems, that America not meddle in the affairs of others.

It seems that history does, indeed, have a way of repeating itself. Today a

third of the world's population is oppressed and brutalized by various Communist regimes. Tens of millions have been murdered. Singled out for special persecution in these countries are our brothers and sisters in Christ, who are being imprisoned, tortured and murdered for choosing to serve God rather than men. And how has THE WITNESS responded to this evil? You have either absolved it through silence, or — in some cases — defended it.

I do not care to subscribe to a magazine that purports to champion justice and human rights, yet steadfastly refuses to condemn a system that is morally equivalent to Nazism. So, instead of renewing my subscription to THE WITNESS, I am extending my subscription to *National Review*, which, although not explicitly a religious publication, presents a more Christian perspective on world affairs than THE WITNESS does.

Grant Macdonald
Kerrville, Tex.

Rationalizing God's law

Remove me from your subscription list. Your magazine is in error with regard to both scriptural authority and with thousands of years of Judaic/Christian understanding regarding homosexuality. It is clear God's intention for the use of our sexual gifts is within the bonds of heterosexual marriage. No other sexual relationship is described with approval in the Bible. Just because we have a problem in certain areas (lying, stealing, sexual promiscuity) does not mean God's laws and intention is changed — His commandments remain our standard to live by and the church is in danger of "giving in" to popular opinion here, where we need rather to stay true to the

revealing of the Holy Spirit in the Word.

I know your staff is sincere, but I do hope you will pray fervently for God's leading in this and study the Word asking for His revelation in this. It is too easy to rationalize around God's perfect laws.

Kathryn Master
New York, N.Y.

Analysis thoughtful

The January WITNESS is very good. Being one of the "hardcore" unemployed of Appalachia, I do like to see what people are thinking about and doing in our region. I especially liked the article, "Appalachia: U.S. Third World" by Jim Sessions, and the thoughtful analysis of the whole issue. We are too often the victims of hastily put together government and church policy/analysis.

Bob Rossi
Morgantown, W.Va.

Prisoner seeks prayers

A few months ago a very dear brother in the Lord subscribed to have THE WITNESS sent to me. I am a prisoner.

I am also a minister of the Gospel here under the most adverse of circumstances. My "boys" are all unique — unified only in the fact that we are all in prison and lacking seriously in hope in some instances.

This is a request for *prayer* and not on any small scale. You see prison is a crime in itself. It is common knowledge that prisons are supported by tax dollars. Every time a taxpayer turns around he/she is informed it will cost more to keep society safe from these incurable criminals. The costs continue to rise year after year and there seems always to be little or no progress in relation to the criminal justice system.

The system itself is the greatest con-

tributor to what is called the criminal mind. Men are crowded into a prison with little or nothing to stimulate character building, the greatest need for bringing change to the fallen one. I am not talking about sophisticated processes which entail elaborate scientific answers — simply establishing a policy of common courtesy, with some role models capable of showing an example of what it feels like to rest at night because the day was useful in establishing positive results.

Next we face the fact that nothing happens to change the ever-growing problem of crime. It is a fact that most people who enter prison become recidivists. The possibility of successfully staying out of prison for ex-prisoners is slim to none. What does this say to you?

I see very young men sexually abused, innocent men slain for no good cause, officials as corrupt as any prisoner here, and it tears at my heart that support of this comes from the working taxpayer. My work here is that of intercessory prayer and I ask you to support this work by joining me in this prayer for the prisons and prisoners. Maria Cueto and Steven Guerra are the freshest resource right now because they have tasted the poison of this well and know I tell the truth. Ask your readers to make a sincere commitment to pray for the lives that are destroyed within the system as we know it. *Please!*

David Hannah
Jefferson City, Mo.

Prophetic alternative

What a joy to receive a subscription to THE WITNESS, that fine periodical of the "alternative" press which speaks prophetically to us all.

Mary Luke Tobin
Denver, Col.

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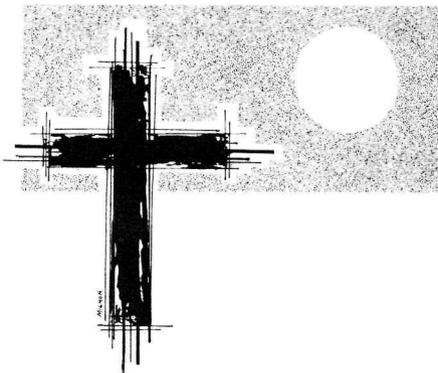


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Auschwitz # B-7815 protests to IRS

WITNESS reader Joel C. Taunton of Seattle came across a poignant letter from Bernard Offen, former inmate at Auschwitz, to the IRS recently and forwarded it to us. We contacted Mr. Offen for permission to print his powerful message:

To Internal Revenue Service:

The guards at Auschwitz herded my father to the left and me to the right. I was a child. I never saw him again.

He was a good man. He was loyal, obedient, law-abiding. He paid his taxes. He was a Jew. He paid his taxes. He died in the concentration camp. He had paid his taxes.

My father didn't know he was paying for barbed wire. For tattoo equipment. For concrete. For whips. For dogs. For cattle cars. For Zyklon B gas. For gas ovens. For his destruction. For the destruction of 6,000,000 Jews. For the destruction, ultimately, of 50 million people in World War II.

In Auschwitz I was tattoo # B-7815. In the United States I am an American citizen, taxpayer # 370-32-6858. Unlike my father, I know what I am being asked to pay for. I am paying for a nuclear arms race. A nuclear arms race that is both homicidal and suicidal. It could end life for 5,000,000,000 people — five billion Jews. For now the whole world is Jewish and nuclear devices are the gas ovens for the planet. There is no longer a selection process such as I experienced at Auschwitz.

We are now one.

I am an American. I am loyal, obedient, law-abiding. I am afraid of the IRS. Who knows what power they have to charge me penalties and interest? To seize my property? To imprison me? After soul-searching and God-wrestling for several years, I have concluded that I am more afraid of what my government may do to me, mine, and the world with the money if I pay it . . . if I pay it.

We have enough nuclear devices to destroy the world many times over. More nuclear bombs are not the answer. They do not create security; they have the opposite effect.

I do believe in taxes for health, education, and the welfare of the public. While I do not agree with all the actions of my government, to go along with the nuclear arms race is suicidal. It threatens my life. It threatens the life of my family. It threatens the world.

I remember my father. I have learned from Auschwitz. I will not willingly contribute to the production of nuclear devices. They are more lethal than the gas Zyklon B, the gas that killed my father and countless others.

I am withholding 25% of my tax and forwarding it to a peace tax fund.
Yours for a just world at peace.

Bernard Offen
Petaluma, Cal.

Resources

Readers wishing information about tax resistance can write to the following:

The National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee, P.O. Box 30084, Seattle, WA 98103, a coalition of more than 90 local and national peace groups, offering support and counseling to those who refuse to pay for a nuclear holocaust and the slaughter of Third World peoples.

Conscience and Military Tax Campaign, 4534½ University Way N.E., Seattle, WA 98105.

Episcopal Peace Fellowship, 620 G St. S.E., Washington, DC 20003 (202) 543-7168.

National Campaign for a World Peace Tax Fund, 2121 Decatur Pl. N.W., Washington, DC 20008 (202) 483-3751.

Confronting the national security state

Moved by an editorial she had read in *THE WITNESS*, Margie Gilbert some time ago submitted a brief article entitled, "Family Life in the National Security State." She identified herself as the wife of a former employee of the National Security Agency, and emphasized that the emotional strain on NSA-connected families was overwhelming, that divorce rates were high, and psychological counseling frequent. Sensing that the story could be further fleshed out, Robert L. DeWitt, senior contributing editor, and Mary Lou Suhor, editor, subsequently interviewed Margie and John Gilbert at their home in Corinna, Maine.

THE WITNESS learned that John Gilbert joined the National Security Agency as a likely place to serve his country. It was almost a matter of coincidence that a friend had sent him application forms for NSA in 1962; he and Margie had wanted to get back to Europe after having spent three years abroad when John was in the Army in Germany. They had felt like social misfits upon their return and could not adjust to life in the "Big PX" as they called the United States. John applied to NSA and was accepted.

Then came an opportunity to go to England in 1967 and the Gilberts resided there three years. He was on an exchange program in which agents in NSA and its counterpart in England switch jobs, for an intercultural learn-



Margie and John Gilbert at their home in Corinna, Maine

ing experience. In England, John found himself as middle man in an internal political squabble during the Czech intervention. The military element in England was fighting the civilian element and John was chosen to come up with a dispassionate answer not colored by British politics.

His solution merited him a promotion and "most favorable performance" ratings, so that when he returned to the United States, he was assigned to a promising, and lucrative area of work.

But Margie was deeply disturbed. The Vietnam War was raging and even

before the couple left for England, she was conducting her own research about what was happening. She began going to demonstrations sponsored by Clergy and Laity Concerned About Vietnam (now CALC). She bought *The Guardian* at newsstands, fearful that to subscribe would jeopardize her husband's security rating. She did subscribe to CALC's *American Report* and the *Post American*, forerunner to *Sojourners*. Although an unlikely Pilate's wife, she began questioning everything about U.S. politics, about John's job, and "that's really what started it," they both agree.

Ex-NSA agent, wife tell of ordeal

Robert L. DeWitt: Can you expand on how you began to question your role with the National Security Agency, John?

John: Two things were going on parallel in time — the intensity of the Vietnam war, rising public consciousness about what was happening, demonstrations — and my deeper involvement and increased responsibility in the NSA. I was caught in a schizophrenic situation because I had uneasy feelings about many government policies. Margie and I would sit at home and talk about what was happening in the war, the lying, the whole works. And I would have one set of opinions about that.

Then I'd go to work and a magic button would push and say, 'O.K., you're at the office now. You don't talk about what you're doing, this is a secure area.' I would become a different person. Suddenly now I am dynamic office manager and I'm doing all kinds of clever things and people are listening to me.

Margie: And I wasn't. When John would tell me that his work was fun, I could never understand it, because all I could see were the consequences.

RLD: What was it that captivated you about working in intelligence?

John: I was always trying to uncover pure facts, digging to find answers. Then I would give those answers to the people who make government policies and they would act on the information, supposedly. My job was to make that information as clean and accurate and unbiased as possible.

RLD: You said policy makers would act on your information, supposedly?

John: I remember a high level briefing with several representatives of Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Pentagon. I gave a detailed report on how the Soviet Union planned to fight a war in Central Europe, if it should happen, based on war games they had played over a period of time. When you looked at the material dispassionately you could see their whole strategy was based on defense. They expected NATO to attack them and they had plans to counteract. This had been so consistently a part of their military exercises that it couldn't possibly be a sham to throw the West off track, because their forces were trained to react along

defensive lines.

When I finished, two of the guys got up and said, "See, Charlie, I told you those Russians are getting ready to attack. Sure, they make it look defensive but you can also turn around and make it offensive just as easy. Charlie, we've got to watch it." And out the door they went. That may have a certain contemporary ring to it. That's when I started thinking I ought to get out of the system.

Mary Lou Suhor: Margie, what did you mean when you said you weren't listening to John?

Margie: Well, at first we were at odds. I kept trying to drag him to meetings and demonstrations where I was hearing things that made me question our policies in Vietnam, and sometimes John wouldn't agree with me. It was only when we went to hear Dan and Phil Berrigan that we both started coming closer together on our questioning. The Berrigans and Thomas Merton were my life raft in those times. We've just seen the movie "Platoon." That seems closer to the Vietnam experience than the propaganda the government was disseminating. One of its themes is that we Americans have to look at our dark side and accept it, forgive ourselves and each other and move on. Otherwise, we'll repeat the war again in Central America.

MLS: John, you used the word "schizo" to describe how you were torn over your role with the NSA. As I recall, the Berrigans were also worried about the mental health of the policy makers you gave your information to, whom they feared were paranoid or xenophobic. Would you comment?

John: Yeah, it seems ridiculous to say all those guys are crazy, but . . .

Margie: Not anymore!

John: In all seriousness, I think there is a psychology that builds up in that closed, cloistered military world. It's the officers club and headquarters and their own quarters — that's about the extent of their social life and exposure to the world. They go from one military base to another on the opposite side of the world but they meet the same people. They might get away for a year or two, then through reassignment they're linked up again. They talk to each other, reinforcing their own opinions. I think under those

conditions it really is possible for a type of mental illness to develop. Instead of functioning rationally and relating to the world as it really exists, they relate on a set of artificial terms of their own manufacture and that's living in a fantasy world. The danger, of course, is that their actions in that fantasy world can obliterate the real world.

RLD: Did you think the peace demonstrations were effective during the Vietnam War?

John: In the beginning I was skeptical that they could have any impact on national policy. But when Johnson decided not to run again, it became clear that the Administration was listening. I was also reluctant to go to demonstrations because of the effect it might have on my clearance status.

RLD: They were taking a lot of photographs out there.

John: Oh, yes. And that wasn't a foolish consideration because when I came up for clearance renewal I had to fill out a personal history. When it was time for the interview and the lie detector test the security guys were primed for me. They accused me of having radical publications in my house. Over past years we had subscribed to *Newsweek*, and suddenly *Newsweek* wasn't on the list any more. Instead, it's *CALC's American Report* and *Post American* and other things.



Then they asked me what demonstrations my wife and I had attended. There was a lot of tooth-sucking going on by those two guys, with nobody smiling much. This went on for 2½ hours one Friday afternoon, and as I drove home I was thinking, was there anything I forgot to include? That's the kiss of death, to hide anything. When I got home I told Margie which demonstrations I had reported. She said I didn't go to that one, I went to this other one, and that one, and I had made a hash of it.

MLS: Margie, how were you reacting to this?

Margie: I was angry they were even questioning what we were doing, and then I became frightened because I wondered where they were getting that information. They must have been checking the mail or phones. Both of us agonized over that weekend.

John: It was the most miserable couple of days in my life. I was worried I had given them false information, unwittingly, and was I in trouble. We sat down and tried to

sort it out. Then I thought, this is still a sort-of free country. This is crazy! So the next morning I told them I had mistakenly given them wrong information and my wife and I had made a correct list. "But damned if I'm going to give it to you," I said, and put it back in my pocket. "It's none of your business. All you have to worry about is whether I'm selling or giving away secrets, and I'm not doing that. You guys have a sticky job, especially since Ellsberg released the Pentagon papers, but you either have to take my word that I'm not giving away secrets or fire me." Then I got written up and put into security files.

RLD: Did you find that out through the Freedom of Information Act?

John: Not through the FOIA. A separate act covers government employees. When I inquired, this guy gives me a big pile of stuff but says, "I have to tell you that certain documents have been taken out, and all I can say is who controls them and the dates." I ended up with two pages of documents which had been removed by the Navy Department, the Army, a whole bunch of investigative organizations, all various dates, and obviously some of them dealt with attendance at demonstrations.

MLS: Were there files on you, too, Margie?

Margie: I wrote to the NSA but they said they didn't have anything, so I didn't pursue it. But what I did write for was transcripts from the Congressional hearings about government infiltrations into groups like Clergy and Laity, the American Friends Service Committee, and other peace groups which had been spied upon even though they were conducting perfectly legal activities. Have you ever seen it? It's inches thick.

RLD: In retrospect, would you say that in your case the system worked? The procedures in screening and surveillance?

John: That's right. I'm not working for them anymore. And I was careful to burn all my bridges behind me so even if I wanted to, there would be no way I could ever go back. But another aspect of it was although I could look at my security file and see I was a "bad guy" in their terms, when I looked at my personnel file which dealt with how I did my job, the two seemed to be about different people. I consistently got outstanding performance ratings and early promotions.

But the whole thing kept building in my conscience. I still have that picture of Oppenheimer. He was the key man in building the atomic bomb and he ended up saying, "What have I done? I've created a monster!" I was getting

that feeling. The everyday work was fun, the task of analysis and organization and discovery. It was like doing a crossword puzzle. But the significance hit when I went to my other life. On my way home, the moral judgments began to bother me about what I was doing. It was as though I was trying to serve two masters.

RLD: Let me change the subject a bit. Margie, you wrote *THE WITNESS* that there was a sense of conflict between things about your native culture, the United States, and those where you were temporarily residing. Could you elaborate? What kind of attraction in German or English culture did you feel was running athwart of what you were about? When John was studying Russian war games what were you doing?

Margie: Well, John couldn't tell me anything about the work, whether we were here or overseas. But early on I became curious about Russian culture. I began reading their famous authors, including some of Karl Marx and Lenin. Then I turned to music. I became fascinated with the beauty of their culture, and began to see the Russian people as human beings. I couldn't feel towards them as an enemy. Then I started studying Chinese. I took a course at Catholic University on Chinese philosophy. We later asked the teacher if he would teach us the language. I kept thinking how much better it would be if we were exposed to different languages and music and literature. It's so senseless to be fighting over our little boundaries, saying we're better than you are.

And living overseas gives you a different perspective of what's happening in your own country. Just being exposed to British news media was interesting because they had fewer axes to grind in reporting about Vietnam. Some of the Americans there were angry. They thought the British media were biased in reporting the war.

MLS: You also wrote that it was difficult to be in touch with your friends abroad. Why was that?

Margie: When we were in Germany our landlady's daughter used to babysit for us, and we became good friends. She could speak English and I wrote to her and our landlady too after we got back. They called John in to Security and suggested we stop corresponding.

John: I told them my wife was the letter writer, that our babysitter had married and sent pictures of her husband; it was on that level. They said, "Well we can't make your wife

stop corresponding with them, but we can make you wish that she did."

MLS: Have you read James Bamford's book about the NSA, *The Puzzle Palace*? The book indicates that it's such a secret operation that NSA means No Such Agency.

John: I read it with great interest because it mentions some of my contemporaries, but it doesn't come across with the exciting aspects of NSA — what attracts people to work there. Quite clearly he tapped into people who knew the agency well, many of the descriptions are what I remember. But he also might have been consciously spoon-fed information to present a picture that things aren't as bad as they seem, to diffuse the problems.

MLS: What about the book's description of civilian and military struggle for control?

John: There was for a number of years civilian/military conflict about who would dominate, but now, to a large extent, civilians are working harmoniously alongside the military. There will always be a certain tug-of-war because the military believes that martial things are incomprehensible to civilians because they haven't been to West Point, which is sheer rubbish. But the military and civilian elements in NSA and the Pentagon have buried the hatchet. They have found that cooperation helps them to achieve higher levels — in budget and overall goals. That merger is frightening.

Eisenhower used to talk about the military-industrial complex, but now there is no separation between the two. What drives the two together to a great extent is the size of contracts.

MLS: Are you referring to the so-called "revolving door" between them?

John: Right. Civilians in the government and military officials administer the contracts and upon retirement they step into a \$100,000 a year job in industry because they have the contacts in government and the Pentagon. And civilians have moved from NSA to the industrial side and back again. The revolving door works constantly.

RLD: You have no fear of saying these things publicly now?

John: Well, I think we've both reached the point where, to a large extent, we don't care. Our convictions have become stronger.

Margie: The fear is gone and a sense of humor has come back.

John: Today there seem to be many people questioning the system. Things are challenged routinely now that would never have been dreamt of, say, 25 years ago or in the



McCarthy era. People can understand better what's happening in El Salvador and they spot the softness in an alibi, as when General Haig said, "Maybe those nuns were running a roadblock, and that's why they got shot." Some years ago, people might have bought that, but now it's seen as ridiculous. I think that's very promising.

Margie: Looking at recent events, it seems as though the government has not changed. Our leaders are still playing 'gate' games. Watergate, Contragate, Irangate. But I see hope in people-to-people exchanges. Here in Maine Samantha Smith's visit to Russia was a poignant time for us. How refreshing to see the Russian people through the eyes of a child! There are now plans for an exchange program between University of Maine students and Russian students. And I attended a seminar in September sponsored by Physicians for Social Responsibility where I heard Soviet scientists and doctors who had treated the victims of Chernobyl share their experience. Ironically, another speaker on the program was Admiral Noel Gayler, former director of the NSA.

RLD: What is your denominational background?

John: We were brought up Catholic in Milwaukee. We were high school sweethearts.

Margie: We were influenced by the Young Christian Workers movement, in which you applied the Gospel and principles you were studying to daily work.

MLS: Where do you get your courage to speak out?

Margie: I love reading the Gospels, ever since I was a child while I used to read them during Mass when I became bored. That's pretty much where I center all my thoughts and feelings.

John: Most of my strength comes from Margie. I'm not saying that to flatter her. She seems to delve more into things. She'll be vacuuming and come talk to me about something she was thinking about. When I'm out there tuning up the car, I'm not thinking about El Salvador or nuclear weapons. Or when I'm working in the garden, I'm thinking about putting in seeds, pulling weeds, not about where this world's going.

I have to admit I probably would have continued in the NSA for a long time. The pay was good. I was virtually assured of continuous promotions, there were lots of perquisites. It was a tremendous relief after having had to struggle with family budgeting and keeping little envelopes with totals written on them about how much we had for what. With NSA if I wanted to buy something I simply laid down dollar bills.

RLD: Where do you work now?

John: At the woolen mill. I work as director of personnel. I've also been a bobbin stripper, a weaver, a percher, a lab technician and a dyer.

Margie: Several of us have worked in the mill at one time or another. I was spinning, our son was weighing yarn.

John: For a while we were back to those little envelopes, but now the future seems a little brighter, economically. In a way, talking about leaving the NSA is like watching old home movies. Looking back, it pales in comparison to some of the things we've been through since. It might sound like a dramatic decision to some, but for us it was only an inevitable step on a path of growth. ■

The assassination

Surveys say that most Americans who were alive at the time can remember exactly where they were when they learned President Kennedy was shot.

I grew up Republican.
I was for Nixon in 5th grade.
My best friend was for Kennedy.
We'd argue. "Kennedy's so liberal,
he'll give America to the Russians."
He'd scream, "Nixon needs a shave."
Kennedy won, I was told,
because he was slick, handsome,
and his father had money.
Nixon lost because he needed a shave.

Shortly before Thanksgiving,
as we sat in 6th period English,
the principal came on and asked us all
to go to our homerooms.
There, he told us the president had been shot.
A girl in front of me began to cry,
and turned to me and said, "I can't believe
someone would do this. Can you?"
I stared at my knuckles and shook my head.
At 2:00, the principal told us he had died.
The bus was quiet that day.

A week later, someone told me
the thing we should remember
is how peacefully power was transferred
from Kennedy to Johnson.
"It doesn't happen that way in Russia,"
he said.

I remember trying to tell myself
that was what mattered.

— Mark Littleton

The story of Ahinoam

Based on the Book of Samuel

by Sharon Swedean Muhlenkort

It's time for me Ahinoam, wife of King Saul, to raise my voice. My husband and my sons are dead. Killed on the battlefield on the same day. Enough mourning. I will keep silent no longer! Too many women have mourned quietly. For us who lose our children there are no borders. We are all sisters and brothers. My name, Ahinoam, means lover of my sister and brother.

All this fighting and for what? Because different people live differently. And now I am left with my daughters Merob and Michal, and my son-in-law David.

I spoke with my husband on many occasions about all this fighting. And I said to him, "Saul, why is it that whenever Samuel, priest and judge, comes to you with an order, he begins 'Thus says the Lord' and then you take whatever he says as the word of God? The only word of God. Did it ever occur to you that the voice that Samuel hears is not the voice of the Holy One? What kind of a God is it that would say 'Do not spare anyone. But kill men and women, children and infants, oxen and asses.' Samuel tells you to kill children and you do it! . . . I know he's the priest. You keep telling me that, but Saul, God

speaks to you too. What voice do you hear?

"I hear voices. I hear the voice of a gentle, loving God. Do you remember Saul when Michal was born and how you held her in your arms — so precious — and you said, 'Blessed be the Name of the Holy One . . . who creates such wonder!' That's the God that I worship, Saul. Can you hear the voice of that God?"

"Why do you only see God as something like yourself, a King, a warrior, someone who kills! Might God be something like . . . myself? I know it sounds crazy, but might God be something like me? One who knows the pain of losing one I love . . . and who can hold another tenderly . . . and who knows anger, but anger for needless death . . . Can you hear the voice of

that God, Saul?"

I said these things to Saul on many occasions and he said to me, "Ahinoam, if anyone knew that I, King Saul of Israel, allowed my wife to speak to me in this manner!" And I said to him, "Saul! Don't be talking to me like that, I'm your wife!" And he would laugh at me. But he would not listen. And now it's too late for him or for my son Jonathan.

We're waiting for a new King to be anointed — David — whom my son loved as he loved himself. I remember when I first saw David. It was before he married my daughter Michal. He was brought into our house because Saul was tormented by an evil spirit. David came and played his harp — so beautifully! He comforted my husband. I had never seen a man have that kind of an affect before. He brought peace into our home. And my son Jonathan and he became as brothers. And David held his love for Jonathan more precious than his love for women. Now David and I grieve the death of Jonathan together.

This makes me feel there is something special about such a man; that through his music or through his grieving or in the voice of his wife Michal he too will hear the voice of a tender God. And through listening to such a voice, David son of Jessie of Bethlehem would be for all a King of peace! ■

Sharon Swedean Muhlenkort is a free lance writer based in Berkeley, Cal., where she is working on her master's degree at the Franciscan School of Theology.



Easter people

How can we be an Easter people in a Good Friday world? The biblical readings during Easter week reveal that many of Jesus' disciples hid themselves and were afraid of the consequences of Calvary. Similarly, I believe that many of us are held back by fear as we try to witness in a pastoral way to the risen Christ.

For example, an ecumenical group of Canadian clergy got together recently in Calgary to meet with a representative from Nicaragua. In the past, our churches had given humanitarian aid as well as moral support to that besieged country.

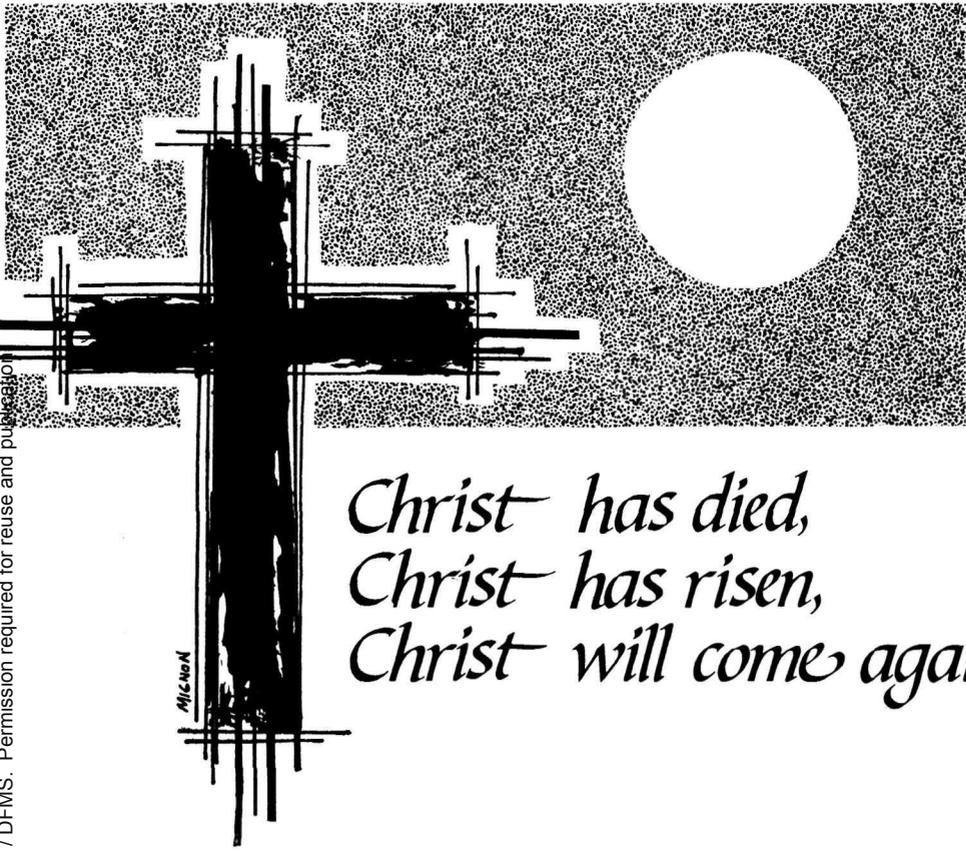
At one point, one pastor spoke up: "I really don't know if I should preach on those prophetic, social themes that Scripture calls me to preach about; to say to my congregation that God has a 'preferential option for the poor;' to say that churches throughout the world are recognizing the inseparable connection between justice and spirituality; to say that God is with the oppressed. Most of my members are very conservative, part of the status quo."

Another pastor, from a prestigious church, replied: "Of course you can — if you're ready to move on to another congregation!"

Everybody smiled.

The incident has stuck in my mind. During the fat years there is a hardening of the spiritual arteries. During the lean years, we're skinnier in accoutre-

The Rev. Max B. Surjadinata is coordinator of social ministries for Calgary Presbytery of the United Church of Canada. He was a Proctor Fellow at Episcopal Divinity School in 1982.



*Christ has died,
Christ has risen,
Christ will come again.*

"During the fat years there is a hardening of the spiritual arteries. During the lean years, we're skinnier in accoutrements, but perhaps we're dealing with real human needs."

in a Good Friday world

by Max Surjadinata

ments, but perhaps we're dealing with real human needs.

The church is confronted with a choice, just like Moses. Moses could have chosen to live in Egypt, like a prince, with all the benefits, or to live in the desert with the people.

I have begun to inquire of my colleagues why there is such reluctance among us to speak out prophetically. One common response is that most pastors are simply overwhelmed with congregational demands. These "pastoralia" perhaps unwittingly, force them to adopt a managerial role, that of keeping a plant running smoothly. I was uneasy with this response, although it is certainly understandable.

As pastors we do have a pastoral and prophetic role. Prophets were heirs of the religious tradition, rich and full of theological insights, as well as of moral values and social relevancy. The central concern of the prophets was God's relationship and dealings with people. The characteristic prophetic words, "*Thus says Yahweh*" have their origins in the speech form used by a messenger carrying out the master's commission, rather than simply trying to comfort and please the recipients.

And I thought about those who, as Jeremiah describes them, "heal the wound of my people lightly, saying 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace" (*Jeremiah 6:14*).

Drawn to the Bible for answers to my questions, I was especially caught by the scene described by Ezekiel (33:30-32) where God says: "As for you . . . they come to you as people come, and

they hear what you have to say, but they will not do it, for with their lips they show much love, but their hearts are set on their gain. And behold, you are to them like one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument, for they hear what you say, but they will not do it."

Why are we such that, as Reinhold Niebuhr once cynically remarked, we "look and act for all the world like cute altar boys who have no idea that the mass in which they are participating is a dramatization of tragedy"?

As clergy, do we fear *people* more than we fear the One who commissioned us to lead? Do we depend more on those who provide our "bread" than on the One who provides, sustains, and nurtures our life?

Are we not called to follow Jesus, and like him to embody his words and emulate his deeds to people around us, so as to convince them that as Jesus was God's love personified, the church ought to be God's love organized?

In all this ruminating, I recalled words from Karl Barth that I have kept close to my heart since my heady studies in systematic theology years ago at Episcopal Divinity School: "The pastor who does not believe that in this congregation . . . including those men and women, widows and children, Christ's own congregation exists, does not believe in the existence of the church. *Credo ecclesiam* means that I believe that here, at this place, in this visible assembly, the work of the Holy Spirit takes place."

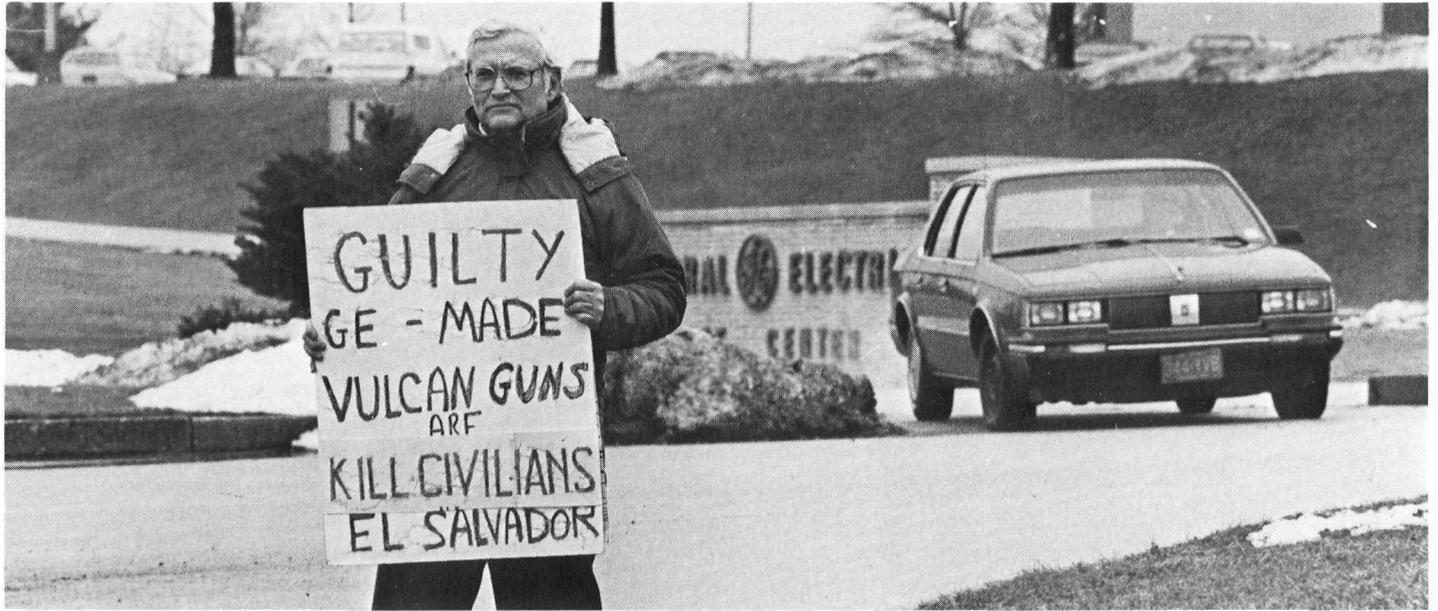
Then I knew. Though called to edu-

cate and lead the people, to elicit faith among those to whom we are charged, we often lack faith ourselves. I remembered how Peter, walking on the water to meet Jesus, was overcome with doubt and fear, and sank. I thought of how his name in our time has been used for phrases like "petering out" — running dry, giving up.

As clergy, we too often fall captive to our fears. What if the Gospel promises actually come true? Would we still have our jobs? If people truly believed and acted out their belief in faith and practice, would we not become obsolete?

Do we really dare risk ourselves for the sake of the Gospel, dying to selves in order to be resurrected in the lives of all the people? Suppose we took seriously the words of the late Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador in his final homily before he was assassinated: "One must not love oneself so much as to avoid getting involved in the risks of life that history demands of us, and those who try to fend off the danger will lose their lives, while those who out of love for Christ give themselves to the service of others will live, like the grain of wheat that dies, but only apparently."

Clergy are called to be those who remember the promises. We are accompanied by the God who promised to be with us, beside us, and ahead of us, as well as within us, the God who said that "Those who put their trust in God shall never be put to shame." Our words and lives should incarnate the life of the one who is "the Word made flesh," the one who showed us that "perfect love casts out fear." ■



Bill Whistler pickets GE. at a peace demonstration

Former employee haunts GE

by Susan E. Pierce

Why did Bill Stuart-Whistler give up a secure, well-paying job at General Electric Corporation to join the struggle against the arms race?

“Because saying ‘I do a little defense work’ is like saying ‘I have a little cancer,’” Whistler said. For 28 years, he had worked as an engineer at GE, designing guidance and tracking systems for the military. But one day in 1980, he left, feeling he could no longer in good conscience work on military contracts. He now does non-military research for the University of Pennsylvania, and has devoted much of his time to protesting his former employer’s policy and practices.

General Electric is the fourth largest military contractor in the United States. More than any other contractor, GE is involved in the research, development and production of weapons components for every nuclear weapons system either currently deployed or planned for deployment. GE consumes about \$13 million of the public treasury each day in war preparations.

That is why each week, Bill Stuart-Whistler and fellow

members of the Brandywine Peace Community maintain a vigil at GE’s Philadelphia offices. Whistler feels it is a “moral imperative” to protest GE’s involvement in the arms race. “Many, many millions will die if this madness is carried to its logical conclusion, which is to blow up the world,” he said.

Whistler’s resignation from GE was not a spur-of-the-moment decision. He had thought, prayed, and wrestled with the conflict between his growing belief in disarmament and the work he did for the military. Several experiences influenced his journey toward peacemaking. One such was after he witnessed a nuclear bomb test in the South Pacific. The power of what he saw disturbed him, as did a story he heard afterward. A worker went on to the bombed and devastated island-target after the blast. Not expecting to find anything living, he found a pack of rats that had taken refuge in a storage bunker. The rats were crazed with fear and had been completely deafened by the explosion.

That eerie report summed up the unpredictable power of nuclear weapons, Whistler said. “It indicated to me that it’s impossible for man to think everything out.”

During the Vietnam War years, in the late ‘60s and early

Susan Pierce is a free-lance journalist based in Philadelphia.

'70s, Whistler became increasingly involved in the anti-war and anti-nuclear movements. He became more personally engaged when his brother-in-law was arrested during a raid at a draft board in Camden, N.J. in 1971, and Whistler raised money for the defense. Issues raised by the trial, as well as events surrounding Daniel Ellsberg's release of the Pentagon Papers also served as a catalyst toward his resignation.

In 1978, Whistler went to a memorial at the United Nations marking the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. "What I saw there led me to realize the effects of nuclear bombs on people. I was then in the satellite business at GE's King of Prussia, Pa. Space Division. From 1974 until 1977, there was a strong push for commercial satellite work. Then things changed. GE started bidding for military contracts, and was heavily involved in defense work by 1979."

The final mental alchemy which motivated him to leave was effected when, in 1979 he was asked at a meeting of the Brandywine Peace Community to donate blood that was to be used in a protest action at GE. "Then I witnessed five friends of mine from Brandywine arrested for chaining shut the doors of Building 9, for which they were later sentenced to 30 days in jail. The act of giving blood, seeing my friends arrested, these things came together and that was when I decided to leave.

Still, Whistler admitted, he struggled with it.

"I had a conversation with a friend that went like this:

'I can't leave.'

'Why not?'

'I'd have no money.'

'Why can't you get another job?'

'I guess I could.'

Then I did find another job."

Even though he no longer works at GE, he is a stockholder and continues to attend meetings where he patiently tries to persuade the company to get out of the weapons business. "We receive a polite reception from the Board of Directors, less from the stockholders, and we get about 2% of the vote," he said.

He also sent an open letter to his former GE colleagues, pointing out:

While many GE products do indeed "bring good things to life," there is at least one aspect of GE's manufacturing that in no way can do this. It is the production of neutron generators at the Pinellas, Fla. plant. These devices are used as triggers on every H-bomb made. In this way, the GE logo is placed on every nuclear device in the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

This fact may be new to you and distasteful to you.

Many faiths have declared it is a sin to build a nuclear bomb. Now you find that your own company is a nuclear profiteer: what can you do?

His letter then outlines possible action alternatives within and outside the company.

Reaching people is difficult, however, Whistler admitted. "I have friends of 25 years from GE who are absolutely convinced of the 'Peace through Strength' philosophy. For most people it comes down to maintaining life styles, and it's hard to unsell that."

But he doesn't condemn his former co-workers. "A distinction has to be made. People are good. It's the company and its policies that are immoral."

The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) or "Star Wars" particularly disturbs him. "GE's Star Wars headquarters are at Valley Forge. In fact, GE's recent moves in the marketplace, like the acquisition of RCA, are designed to put GE in a better position to bid for Star Wars."

At a recent stockholders meeting, Whistler introduced a resolution asking that GE expertise and talent not be used for the militarization of space and called for the company to get out of the Star Wars business. GE responded that though the arms build-up is a matter of concern, "the national interest requires the production of weapons."

Whistler feels otherwise: "One of the reasons this country is no longer competitive in commercial markets is because 50% of all research money is going to defense work. When there is a technological breakthrough in private industry, it's sold to the military."

Bill Stuart-Whistler also draws connections between the effect the arms race is having on this country and how it has shaped U.S. foreign policy. As a member of Witness for Peace and EPICA's North-South Dialogue, national groups opposing U.S. involvement in Central America, he has made two trips to Nicaragua which made him realize that Central America "is a microcosm of the arms race."

In Nicaragua, he said, the situation is clearer. "It's not global, therefore more focused. It's easier to understand the direct effect of a misguided U.S. program. Reagan battered down Congress to get aid for the Contras. In light of the Iran-Contra affair, you can see the chicanery very clearly. When the CIA wasn't allowed to aid the Contras, the National Security Council took over."

"Killing is going on in our name in Central America," said Whistler, and there is another kind of "institutional" killing going on in the arms race. "It's two-edged," he said, because not only are the weapons themselves capable of causing death, but "the money robbed from social programs for arms is killing. Most defense industries are not labor-intensive, so there's high unemployment. And it's

taking money from the programs for the old, the young and from education.”

Constantly active as a peacemaker since he left GE, Whistler has been arrested numerous times in non-violent protests. He says he draws his strength from his involvement in various peace communities. Besides being a member of Brandywine, he is on the board of the Ploshares Committee, is a member of the Montgomery Alliance for Nuclear Disarmament and the Montgomery County Center for Peace and Justice, and, as an Episcopalian, on the Peacemaking Task Force of the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

He has one mission concerning his former employer that he especially hopes to accomplish. “If there is anything I would strive for, it would be to get GE out of the business of making hydrogen bombs in its Pinellas, Fla. plant. Nuclear energy is like a genie gone mad. Look at Chernobyl. Some little valley in Norway got a total overdose of radiation even though it was hundreds of miles away. It should be a warning to everyone that no one is safe from nuclear weapons. If nuclear arms were used, those who would die would be people who had no part in the decision. The world would be ruined. We’ve got to find another way. It’s a moral imperative.” ■

Why INFACOT boycotts GE

Occasionally, a peace activist asks me, “Why should we support a campaign to boycott General Electric? Of course, GE is involved in the manufacture of all kinds of nuclear weapons. We know they make neutron generators or triggers essential to a nuclear warhead and they make parts for the MX, the Trident submarine, the B-1 bomber and others. But after all, policy is made by the President and Congress. Contracts are then awarded by competitive bidding to companies whose responsibility is to carry out policy, not make it. GE is just doing business in the ordinary American way and is not a cause of the arms race.”

Unfortunately the modern method of doing business is to sell products to Congress and the Pentagon. GE’s permanent staff in Washington works full-time to persuade Congress, the Administration and the Pentagon to purchase services and contracts from GE.

Evidence for this comes from various sources but is summed up in the *Washington Post*: “With a staff of 120 housed in offices that cost \$1.3 million a year to rent, GE’s Washington Headquarters has established corporate beachheads in almost every branch of government . . . to lobby on aircraft engines, aerospace radar, electronics, flight simulators and weapons systems.” (5/13/85)

Robert Welch, GE’s Chief Executive officer, told a stockholders meeting in April, 1985 that “GE spends millions of dollars every year working hand in hand with the government to establish policies which are good for the nation and good for the company.”

Salesmanship has changed with the com-

plexity of modern technology. The simple sales pitch has been superseded by a system of subtle contracts with everyone from the military engineer who actually understands the system in question up through the chain of command to elected representatives. Pentagon brass must make recommendations to Congress and the President about high-tech systems which they do not fully understand themselves so they depend on briefings that come from the contractor recommending the system. The contractor who can provide the best answers to tough questions asked by Congress has the inside track. That is how Welch can say, “General Electric works hand in hand with the government to *establish* policies . . .”

Efforts to move this country toward a policy of life and peace rather than suicide cannot ignore the President and the Congress, but if we think we can achieve our goal without tackling the industrial side of the military-industrial complex, we are as naive as our critics sometimes call us.

Since President Eisenhower’s warning over a quarter of a century ago, the military-industrial complex has developed to the point that no decisions on purchase of new weapons are made by government without the input of industry.

The U.S. military is so dependent on companies such as GE that even criminal convictions such as those that occurred in 1985 result in a minor and temporary slap on the wrist. Not a single contract is lost by the offending company.

Some might say, “Why single out GE? Aren’t there other companies who contribute

equally to the nuclear madness?” The decision to start with GE is tactical, not moral. At present, GE is the one company with a huge volume of nuclear weapons work that also has a large consumer division. With a successful advertising campaign, the company has created a positive image: “We bring good things to life.” That image gives us something to aim at. It is at best a half (quarter?) truth and the boycott campaign is an effort to set the record straight. Further, GE is recognized around the country as a well-run company. If we persuade them to refuse nuclear weapons contracts it will set the example for many others.

INFACOT is an acronym for Infant Formula Coalition, an organization founded 10 years ago when large numbers of people in the Western world became concerned that Third World mothers were being persuaded by Nestle to use infant formula though they did not have access to clean water nor the income necessary to insure a regular supply of the formula. Nestle’s salesmanship included free samples of infant formula distributed by women dressed in uniforms to mothers who had experienced the skill of uniformed nurses but knew nothing of the consequences of temporary interruption of breast feeding.

INFACOT’s recent successful boycott forced Nestle’s to stop unsavory sales practices in Third World countries. This action gave INFACOT valuable experience in altering the policies of a major corporation which can now be used in the campaign to boycott GE.

— Irving Hollingshead
Boyertown, Pa.

Short Takes

Institutional greed deadly

Our nation has allowed the so-called "military/industrial complex" to take over the direction of our national destiny. There is no other explanation for the proliferation of nuclear warheads to the point where we can now destroy the world many times over. There is no other explanation for the manufacture of a useless weapon like the MX. There is no other explanation for the overreaction to a leftist government in Nicaragua.

The war machine has its own momentum and the real engines are the defense industries and the military. Time and time again their "experts" have been proven wrong, but time and time again the government has been afraid to stand up against them. The greed is not exactly greed on the part of individuals who lead these giant corporations. Rather, it is institutional greed, which, like institutional racism, is hidden but deadly — perhaps more deadly than overt greed. When I talk about institutional greed, I am talking about the solemn responsibility of management to make as much money as possible, within the law, for shareholders. If they do not fulfill this obligation, they are relieved of management. However, some corporate leaders cannot help but go beyond legitimate profit-making and become infused with a lust for power.

The military also are greedy in behalf of their own services — Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps. They may consciously feel that they are doing things because their country needs this defense, but in fact the evidence is quite clear that they, too, are on a "power trip."

The Rt. Rev. Paul Moore, Jr.
Bishop of New York

Sought after society

What is the society we seek? We seek a society that affirms the values of democratic participation, of the equal value of all persons as the basis for their civil equality and their equal access to the educational and work opportunities of the society... a society that dismantles sexist and class hierarchies.

Rosemary Radford Ruether
Sexism and God Talk



"Hey, I'm sure it has lots and lots of peacetime applications!"

Women and AIDS

Unlike gay men who have been alerted to the issues and can learn about safe sex practices, many women at risk of getting AIDS are unaware of its ability to cross lines of sexual preference or gender. The women most at risk are those with the least resources. Black and Hispanic women in urban areas are in the highest risk group. There are, for example, 757 women with AIDS in New York City. The AIDS mortality rate for Black and Hispanic women is four times that of white women according to the NY City Dept. of Health. For all women between the ages of 25-29 in New York City, AIDS is the leading cause of death.

Women who are exposed to the AIDS virus receive the fewest social services. Generally speaking, they have no safety net. They often have poor nutrition and little or no access to health care. The lack of information about risk behaviors may lead to more cases of AIDS. Women with AIDS, like all AIDS patients, are likely to be ostracized from work, school or jobs, but unlike gay men, a straight woman won't have the support of a whole subculture.

Kathleen Gavin
New Directions for Women 2/87

Quote of note

Security is mostly superstition. It does not exist in nature. Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.

Helen Keller

2 bishops in FBI files

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has admitted to the *National Catholic Reporter* that it has been keeping files on two prominent U.S. Catholic "peace bishops."

The FBI stated in a Feb. 2 letter, "Reference is made to your pending Freedom of Information-Privacy Acts requests pertaining to (Detroit Auxiliary Bishop) Thomas Gumbleton and (Seattle Archbishop) Raymond Hunthausen. Documents pertaining to your request have been located; however, before release can be made, they must be reviewed to ascertain if they warrant classification under current standards."

The FBI's letter was a response to NCR's Freedom of Information Act requests, filed in September 1986 (with the approval of the bishops concerned), that sought to establish whether the FBI was spying on Catholic bishops who have spoken out against the U.S. nuclear arms buildup. NCR is awaiting replies to other FOI requests.

Jim McManus
National Catholic Reporter, 2/20/87

Case for divestment

The Rev. Kingsley Smith, of Towson, Md. sent the following item for the Short Takes column. It is excerpted from a letter he sent recently to John R. Opel, chair of International Business Machines:

Dear Mr. Opel,

On Feb. 12, 1986, I wrote to report to you that the Vestry of Trinity Church had sold our Endowment Fund shares of IBM as "a protest against our participation in the present unjust racial policies of the South African government."

Last fall IBM withdrew its operations from South Africa. Accordingly, on Jan. 9, 1987 the Vestry has purchased shares in your company in recognition of your change of policy.

Now it happens that we sold the shares at 138 and 1/8 in 1986 and purchased them at 122 in 1987. We had been prepared to accept a loss of value, but "God works in mysterious ways." Our net gain on the transaction was \$1,712.50, money which we will use to enlarge our program of outreach and benevolences.

Kingsley Smith, Rector

To Ricardo, with love:

Requiem for a priest with AIDS

by Lu Stanton León

Many times I've been embarrassed for my church, cringing at acts of intolerance, angry when fear and ignorance fly in the face of love and compassion.

Those emotions faded in the memory of Nov. 18, 1986, when the Rev. Ricardo Dominguez Palomares was buried. The intensely emotional event gave me a permanent picture of the church at its best, a reminder of why I'm proud to be part of the Episcopal church, proud of Ricardo and what he taught me.

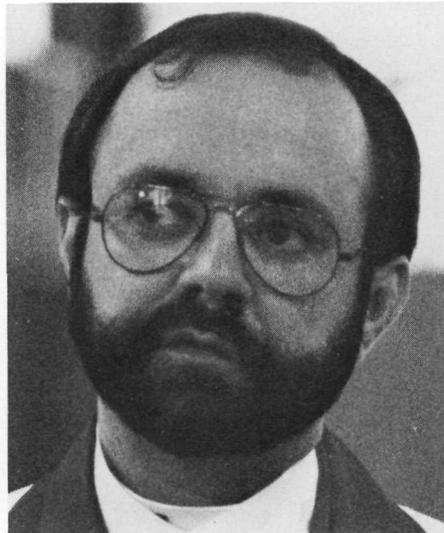
Ricardo died from AIDS. It was nine months from diagnosis to death, a time that poignantly overlapped the nine months from conception to birth of our daughter, Sofia.

Ricardo was my husband's cousin, but that doesn't adequately describe their relationship. They were more like brothers, confidants. Both Luis and Ricardo were Episcopal priests, and they turned to each other for support, guidance, and laughter.

As children they had lived beside each other in Cuba. Both immigrated to the United States in 1961 with a group of Cuban children who were sponsored by the Episcopal church. As adults they visited often and spoke by phone — in Spanish and English — at least once a week.

We never considered the possibility that Ricardo would develop AIDS, which shows our incredible naiveté. He was gay and therefore in the high risk group; but AIDS was still an unknown demon to us. Now we know it too well.

Lu Stanton León is a reporter for *The Record*, Hackensack, N.J. The above article is reprinted with permission from the 2/11/87 issue of *The Record*.



Ricardo Dominguez Palomares

It's the cruelest of diseases, because it deceives you into thinking that you beat it. Although we knew it always culminated in death, more than once we were tricked into believing that maybe just this once . . .

"I think we're praying for more than grace here," I remember one friend saying when Ricardo was having a particularly good week.

We never heard Ricardo say that. He had made his peace with death. Throughout his sickness he lent support to distraught friends. He listened as they worked through their grief.

When Luis visited him at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore shortly after the diagnosis, he came back terribly depressed. Not just about Ricardo, whom we didn't think would live until the end of the week, but because Ricardo was the only patient in the AIDS ward with visitors. The other rooms were filled with young men, alone and dying.

No cards, no flowers, no hope.

Ricardo was rarely alone. Visits were frequent from friends and members of his congregations at Chapel of the Holy Evangelists and La Mission Episcopal Hispana in East Baltimore. And then there were his friends from the University of Maryland in Baltimore County, where he was a professor, and his friends from General Theological Seminary in New York.

The nurses finally had to start screening visitors, so he could get some rest. No one, it seemed, shut him out. None of his friends pulled away in fear. Everyone touched, hugged, laughed, cried.

He continued his work at his English- and Spanish-speaking congregations, struggling, blue-collar parishes that gave him loving support. Members of the hospital staff spoke to them about AIDS, how you get it and what to expect as the disease progressed.

Because he was rapidly losing stamina and energy, many of Ricardo's church visits and counseling sessions were done by phone. Out of consideration for those in the congregation who quietly may have feared contracting the disease, Ricardo led the eucharist on Sundays but let someone else pass out the bread and wine.

He was in and out of the hospital throughout the summer. But when he reentered in November, he knew he'd never go home. Luis received a call from Ricardo on a Wednesday saying this was it, come say goodbye. My husband caught a train that day and spent the afternoon with Ricardo before catching the night train back. Ricardo died the next day. He was 42.

With goodbyes said and death such an obvious relief from the suffering that Ricardo endured, I didn't look forward to the funeral as anything but a necessary ritual. We had mourned for so long.

I certainly didn't expect to be comforted by the funeral service. I never dreamed it would help crystalize what the church means to me.

But it was Ricardo's party, and he was always quite the host. During the last months of his life he had planned every detail — who would preach, who would read what from the Bible, the songs that would be sung, who would carry the casket.

Eighty-two priests, including three bishops, filed into the Cathedral of the Incarnation in Baltimore that day. (The bishops in the procession were A. Theodore Eastman of Maryland; his assistant, Barry Valentine; and his

predecessor, David K. Leighton.) In a building that seats hundreds, people were standing in the aisles.

And as Ricardo had wanted, it was a celebration of life, not death.

As the Rev. Canon Edwin G. Bennett so eloquently put in his sermon, "If this service is nothing but a celebration of Ricardo's life and does nothing for our own, we have missed the point.

"I said earlier that we gathered here as the church to make absolutely clear again the truth of God by which we live. And that truth is the gospel we proclaim, enshrined in the promise we heard — the love and care of God for *all* his people, no matter who, no matter what."

He continued: "And I know that many in this cathedral today live in fear of the plague that afflicted Ricardo — the fear of getting sick, the fear of being rejected because of your sick-

ness, the fear of being alone when you most need the love of friends.

"But let this service this morning be witness to the fact that you need not be afraid — we have heard the gospel message — and as you are not excluded from the love of God, so you are not excluded from the love of those who love and serve the Lord."

Of the hundreds gathered in that cathedral, not one hesitated to drink from the common cup.

I often think of that service and Ted Bennett's words. I often think of Ricardo, picturing him not sick, not in his clerical collar, but leading a conga line during a cookout in our Paterson home.

I miss him. He died as he lived, with dignity, grace, and faith. As my husband said in a letter to his parish shortly after Ricardo's death, for us the world is a dimmer place without him.

Trinity welcomes homosexuals

by Robert W. Cromeey

Trinity Church, San Francisco, is 60% gay men and lesbian women in membership. Most of these adult Christians have chosen to be Episcopalians in the last five years. They number 90 of our 150 members. We have no children as members right now. Worship on Sundays is at 11 a.m. Adult education takes place on Sundays at 10 a.m. and Thursdays after a 6:30 p.m. potluck supper. In our parish, 130 persons have pledged \$130,000 to the life and work of the church for 1987 — an average of \$1000 a year or \$19.23 a week. A goodly number accept the standard of the tithe as the basis for their giving.

As a straight, married priest and rector I am privileged to be friend and pastor to this congregation. Many, not

all, trust me with the deepest parts of their sexuality, personality, relationships and spirituality. In visiting, dining, and in my office men and women come to me with their wondrous secret, painful, joyous, and delicious lives. Many say they have never talked with a straight person about their personal lives. I am deeply honored that they do that with me.

Richard calls for an appointment. He has AIDS. His parents know and are supportive but they live in the East and do not have much contact. Richard tells me he has been an actor, a male prostitute, a waiter, and a world traveler. He has fear in his eyes. He knows that he is 32 years old but he will not live a lot longer. I feel tears well up in

my eyes as I hear him plan his life as a trip from one treatment to the next. He is thin, bones showing through his face and a gentle smile.

Thomas calls. He has been to a meeting in the large corporation where he works. A management trainer from Atlanta makes a snide remark about gays in San Francisco. Thomas asks to see this man privately and says, "I am a gay man. I have lived with Robert, my beloved companion, for 17 years. You have insulted me and the city in which I live. I am hurt and resent your behavior." The trainer was abashed, apologized and made amends. Other people in the course made it clear to the

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THE WITNESS CELEBRATES



YEARS

1927 to 1931:

The mood in America in the latter half of the 1920s was confident and capitalist. The economic depression that had followed World War I was over; the stock market was booming, with trading and speculation going on at a furious rate.

Technology was changing society radically as well. Europe suddenly became closer when Charles Lindbergh made the first transatlantic flight in 1927. The dominance of the automobile brought into prominence the two major oil-producing states, California and Texas, and was later to alter the destinies of little-known desert sheikdoms in the Persian Gulf.

Communications were becoming much more sophisticated. "Talkies," or sound motion pictures, made their debut in 1927 with Al Jolson's "The Jazz Singer." By the end of the decade, millions of people went to the movies every week, and films along with the media giant of the age, radio, became a major influence on American society.

Women were also making greater strides. New labor-saving devices in the home were giving some women more freedom, and equality of the sexes was given somewhat more consideration, now that women had the right to vote. In 1928, Amelia Earhart showed women could master technology by repeating Lindbergh's feat across the Atlantic. Bessie Coleman, daughter of a Black mother and a father who was part Indian, had already accomplished the remarkable feat of becoming the only licensed Black pilot in the entire world in 1922.

Intellectual and artistic brilliance blossomed. In America and in Paris, American writers, playwrights and poets like Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, Eugene O'Neill and Ezra Pound created a literary revolution.

In the Black community, culture was flourishing. Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, Langston Hughes and others were leaders of the Harlem Renaissance. Bessie Smith and Duke Ellington, to name a few, were spreading the gospel of jazz across America and around the world.

Americans were bursting with pride about their country. Everything looked bright and prosperous. Writer Lincoln Steffens said, "Big business in America is producing what the Socialists hold up as their goal — food, shelter and clothing for all . . . it is a great country this; as great as Rome." And President Hoover proudly exclaimed, "We in

America are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than ever before in the history of any land."

But this prosperity had its price, as social reformers, labor leaders and advocates of the poor knew well. THE WITNESS was one of the voices of protest against the cult of materialism, racism and xenophobia.

In its pages, and through its support of the Church League for Industrial Democracy, THE WITNESS advocated for the rights of working people. The labor movement had fallen on hard times in the late 20s. It was considered un-American to be against big business — the mood of America was conservative and labor unions smacked of "Socialism and Bolshevism." It was during this time that feisty Mary Harris . . . "Mother Jones" — rose to prominence as a leading organizer of the United Mine Workers in West Virginia. She died in 1930. After hard-won gains in the unions, through bitter and bloody battles at steel mills, coal mines and textile mills, the economic slump of 1921-22 weakened the unions as people feared for their jobs.

THE WITNESS was against the often-brutal suppression of labor organizing and strikes by big business. The magazine appealed to its readers to give money and supplies to help the beleaguered textile workers on strike in Marion, N.C., victims of violent strike-breaking tactics, and striking miners in West Virginia.

THE WITNESS deplored the racism and religious bigotry of the era. The magazine pleaded for peace as well, and supported the ratification of the Kellogg Pact, which proposed to outlaw war forever.

Despite voices of caution, by the end of the 1920's, the general mood was that life would only continue to improve. Even Prohibition hadn't slowed the country down, though it had created mob warfare and was at the root of such violence as the 1929 St. Valentine's Day Massacre (THE WITNESS, in good Episcopalian fashion stood restrainedly for the right to have a cocktail.) The stock market was booming — what could go wrong?

In October of 1929, everything went wrong. The stock market, weakened by the over-expansion of credit, unrestrained speculation and wealth concentrated in giant corporations, crashed. Millions of investors lost their savings overnight; businesses failed by the thousands,

From boom to bust

factories shut down and millions of people became unemployed. The economy was headed straight down. President Hoover believed that the economy would recover on its own; he held that relief was the concern of private charity and local government. But his measures were so inadequate that by the early 1930s, the number of unemployed had climbed to over 12 million (out of a population of roughly 124 million). And the news from overseas was equally ominous. The U.S. Depression seriously affected European countries, Germany in particular. Economic disasters were exploited by Hitler and his National Socialist Party as they began to take over the German government. France, facing its own brand of fascism, was worried by a newly aggressive Germany and began construction of the Maginot Line. The Maginot Line, concrete barriers meant to stop the Germans, later became a symbol of inadequacy as the invading German war machine rolled around it and into France.

And in the Far East, the Japanese were invading Manchuria. But if the beginning of the 1930s was a time of empire building, it was also the beginning of the end for some colonial empires. In India, Gandhi launched a major campaign against British rule. And in Vietnam, a

young student named Ho Chi Minh, recently returned from France, joined the revolt against French occupation of his country.

In Central America, the United States was strengthening its hold on Nicaragua. In 1926 Hoover sent in the Marines to suppress liberal opposition to the conservative government in power. The Marines, despite the efforts of liberation fighters like Augusto Sandino, were to stay on into the 1930s.

Blacks suffered under intense racism. The Klan had wide-spread power and influence. In 1929, the year Martin Luther King was born in Atlanta, Ga., there were 10 lynchings in the United States.

By 1931, America had serious problems. Hundreds of hunger marchers descended on Washington, D.C., but were turned away from the White House when they tried to give President Hoover a petition calling for employment at a minimum wage. The byword of the day was, "Buddy, can you spare a dime?" And relief would not come until Hoover's Republican, pro-big business administration was voted out and replaced by Franklin D. Roosevelt and the "New Dealers." Excerpts from THE WITNESS during the Boom to Bust years follow:

Platitudes about peace

"There is still talk about renouncing war, and pious platitudes about universal peace are on every one's lips. But there has been no real progress toward the abolition of war. Locarno agreements and Kellogg pacts are mere eye-wash to bamboozle the people while statesmen carry on their secret negotiations to prepare for the next war. We are back again in the atmosphere of intrigue and suspicion which existed before 1914. Every nation which fought against the Central Powers is busy increasing the effectiveness of its fighting power. There is only one test of a nation's sincerity for peace and that is its willingness to disarm. When they do that they will prove that their paper

agreements to renounce war are something more than a mask to hide their military preparations and their secret diplomacy." (The Honorable Philip Snowden, member of Parliament, Labor Party, quoted in THE WITNESS 1/17/29)

Contra-what?

One of the amusing incidents in connection with Bishop Furse's sermon was the difficulty in having it broadcasted. There is, apparently, a law against the use of the word "contraceptives." In any case Mr. Hobbs, head of the publicity department, had to get a special permit from Washington to have the sermon on the air because the Lord Bishop had that word in his pre-

pared sermon. And then, after all the bother, the good man omitted from his sermon the paragraph dealing with the subject. (William B. Spofford 9/24/31)

A lesson in economics

There is nothing about the world we live in so important for us to understand clearly as the secret of the kink in the capitalistic system, which throws people out of jobs and makes unemployment and hard times. It is the cause of poverty; it is the cause of crime; it is the cause of competition for foreign markets, and therefore of armaments, and therefore of war — and if there is anything more horrible than modern war as we saw it some 12 years ago, I don't know what it can be . . .

We have today in America every means and opportunity for the production of plenty and comfort for every person in the country who is willing to work. There may be a few idlers, a few defectives who are not willing to work; I am not talking about those. I am talking about involuntary poverty, and I say that we have the means of producing plenty for everybody who wants work. We have enormous tracts of valuable land and we have great agricultural machines and we can produce every kind of food in abundance . . .

This system of producing the world's goods for private profit cannot continue indefinitely. The crises become more severe, and the only reason why they don't become completely unendurable is because of the fact that in between we have wars. It must be made as plain as possible that the peoples' salvation, their peace, their happiness, their chance in life depend upon understanding the system under which we live and acting in concert, politically, industrially and through educational channels to change from a senseless, dog-eat-dog scramble for private gain into planned production for the social good. (Upton Sinclair 9/24/31)

Lynching statistics

A new low record for lynchings was set in 1928, with a total of 11. The previous minimum was 16 in 1924. Forty years ago the number was 175. (2/28/29)

Disarmament deciding factor

"If the nations of the world have been facing bankruptcy, it is time to acknowledge fairly and squarely the enormous folly of military budgets to such propositions as they now exist among the six great powers. These budgets total two billion five hundred million dollars annually.

"If America is to lead as she should in reducing the payments on war debts and in modifying terms of these payments, she should equally take the lead

in demanding that all the nations involved simultaneously and proportionately reduce their military budgets. When the proposed renewal of the moratorium comes up next year, the deciding factor should be, not the renomination of Mr. Hoover, but the promise of definite decisive action by the World Conference on Disarmament to be held in Geneva." (Bishop Stewart of Chicago, quoted in THE WITNESS 7/23/31)

20¢ per baby girl

A woman in China just on the point of throwing a little baby girl into the river was interrupted by a Sister from a Roman Catholic mission, some little time ago. The mother would not desist from her purpose until the Sister in desperation offered her 20¢ for the baby, the whole amount she had with her at the time. The woman took it at once, left the baby and disappeared. Next day several women came to the Convent, with babies for which they asked 20¢, and that has become the standard price at that place. (7/23/31)

Member blacklisted

Judge Florence E. Allen of the Ohio Supreme Court was blacklisted last spring by the Daughters of the American Revolution. In spite of this fact she was a speaker before the Cleveland chapter the other day, being a member of it. (9/27/28)

The miners' strike

Many church people are interested in the plight of the miners of West Virginia. As a result of appeals that have appeared here and elsewhere there has been sent to the relief organization in Charleston the sum of \$2500, raised among church people. Also a great deal of secondhand clothing has been sent to the union headquarters, located in the Old Kanawha Bank Building, Charleston.

At the moment the miners are on strike. Every effort was made by their leaders to arrange a conference with the coal operators to settle their difficulties and work out standards for the industry. The operators ignored these efforts. The miners then walked out. And just that you may know what it means to be a striking miner, or the wife of a striking miner, allow me to relate a story or two . . .

When the infant daughter of Mr. and Mrs. E. H. Gunnoe of Prenter died in a Charleston hospital on July 6, Gunnoe was refused the use of the camp ambulance to come and get the little corpse, though the ambulance was bought by the miners themselves from their burial fund. The superintendent told Gunnoe that the ambulance now belonged to "future employes" of the company.

A medical examination of 150 children in the mining camps at Gallagher and Ward shows them to be grossly under weight and suffering from anemia, skin infections, worms, and all the ills that follow undernourishment, according to Dr. Ruth Fox of the Fifth Avenue hospital of New York City who has been in the field with a corps of assistants. "We haven't had any fresh meat in 11 months and can get so little of what we do eat — beans, potatoes, white bacon, and flour gravy — that we eat only twice a day," one mother told her.

This isn't pleasant reading. But then if Christian people are not to protest over such a situation I do not know who will. Many of you have helped generously. If there are others who are able to do so money sent to the office of the Church League for Industrial Democracy, 154 Nassau Street, New York City, will be forwarded at once to a responsible relief agency in the coal fields. (William B. Spofford 7/23/31)

— Susan E. Pierce

Continued from page 19

trainer that his anti-homosexual remarks were not appreciated in that seminar. Thomas said that three years ago he would not have said a word. But after coming to Trinity where social justice, human rights, and bold speaking are proclaimed, he felt he could not let such narrowness happen without challenge.

Worship in the Holy Eucharist is our central action at Trinity. Immediately after people receive the sacrament, they may if they wish go to the side altar and receive the laying on of hands and the anointing with oil for the sick. They may request it for themselves or in the name of someone they care about. Eight members of our parish have AIDS and many have friends or lovers who have AIDS.

Our worship is a combination of traditional prayer book and liturgical style. We use vestments of the season, incense on occasion, strong preaching, a warm hugging passing of the peace, a sense of joy and lightness combined with seriousness at the Great Thanksgiving and Blessing of the Bread and Wine. Tears are often in evidence. The Prayers of the People are laced with personal intentions for the sick, families, friends, lovers, children absent from us, those in prison, and a healthy regard for the nations of the world and the desire for peace and concord.

Many gay/lesbian people have been driven from the church of their childhood by anti-homosexual prejudice and cruel pastoral judgments from the clergy, the laity and fundamentalist preachers on T.V. They are attracted to Trinity because I talk about sexuality and homosexuality as a gift to us from God. Trinity is a sex positive church. We rejoice in our sexuality in the same way we are happy to be Americans. They are both gifts to us. We did not

earn them. We were given them outright. People do not hear guilt-inducing, anti-sexual sermons or teaching, which deny the basic beauty and dignity of human beings. People say, "I never thought I would hear from a church pulpit that it was a gift from God to be gay/lesbian, or that the church should perform the marriages of homosexual persons to each other." Well, they hear that at Trinity.

AIDS has taken its toll of members of Trinity. Three active members have died. Others have the disease and more will contract it. Men in their mid 20s have lost eight to 10 friends, also in their 20s. They have faced the death of friends before the deaths of their parents or grandparents. There is a fear of intimacy and sex because they may be lethal. "Safe sex" is widely practiced.

When members of the parish do get AIDS there is a great rallying around. Food, clothing, money, love, support and physical company are made available to those struck by the virus. Food is prepared in the church kitchen and delivered to the homes of those patients who cannot prepare their own meals. We presently feed 100 people a day throughout the city. They do not have to be church members to receive this food.

In addition we have "Our Place," a living room for people with AIDS. It

CORRECTION

Jeannette Rankin was mistakenly described in the February WITNESS as serving as a Congressional Representative from California. Rankin, the first woman to be elected to the U.S. Congress, served from 1917 to 1919 as congresswoman at large from Montana. In 1949 she was elected to the House of Representatives for one term. She voted against U.S. participation in World War I, and was the only member of the House to vote against entering World War II.

meets Monday through Saturday from noon to 6 p.m. The choir room is set up as a comfortable lounge. Many people with AIDS cannot work, so afternoons stretch long and lonesome. At "Our Place" patients can come and watch TV, chat, play cards, talk, and have some company until supper time.

No one wants Trinity to be an all gay/lesbian parish. Everyone wants a good mix of people to be in the membership. No one wants to create another ghetto. My own view is that we will welcome all people who come to Trinity. We will take whomever God sends us. A characteristic of churches that grow is that they have a certain homogeneity. Perhaps Trinity will grow and develop with a strong base of homosexual persons. That is O.K. with me.

Eighty percent of the Sunday morning congregation at Trinity is male. That is not the average in the traditional Episcopal churches in the United States. These men and the lesbian women that come to Trinity are on a spiritual search. Some want a set of values different from the ones they have now. Others want to deepen the values they already possess. Many are looking for the intimacy of committed love relationships. Many see that following Jesus is the key to true humanity and intimacy with God. Others want a world where love, forgiveness, and peace are the central values. Money, competition and dominance are often destructive when sought in and for themselves. There is a desire to connect to God and the universe. The Sacraments are important as vehicles to that sense of awe and wonder resting in the hearts of most people. Our members are seeking freedom from the oppression they experience in straight society. We are making a downtown, urban parish grow, pay its own way and care for the people of the city. I am indeed grateful to be the rector of Trinity Church. ■

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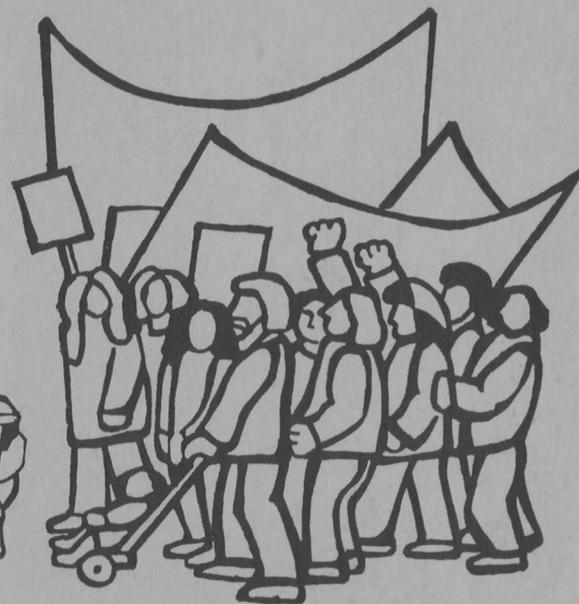
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