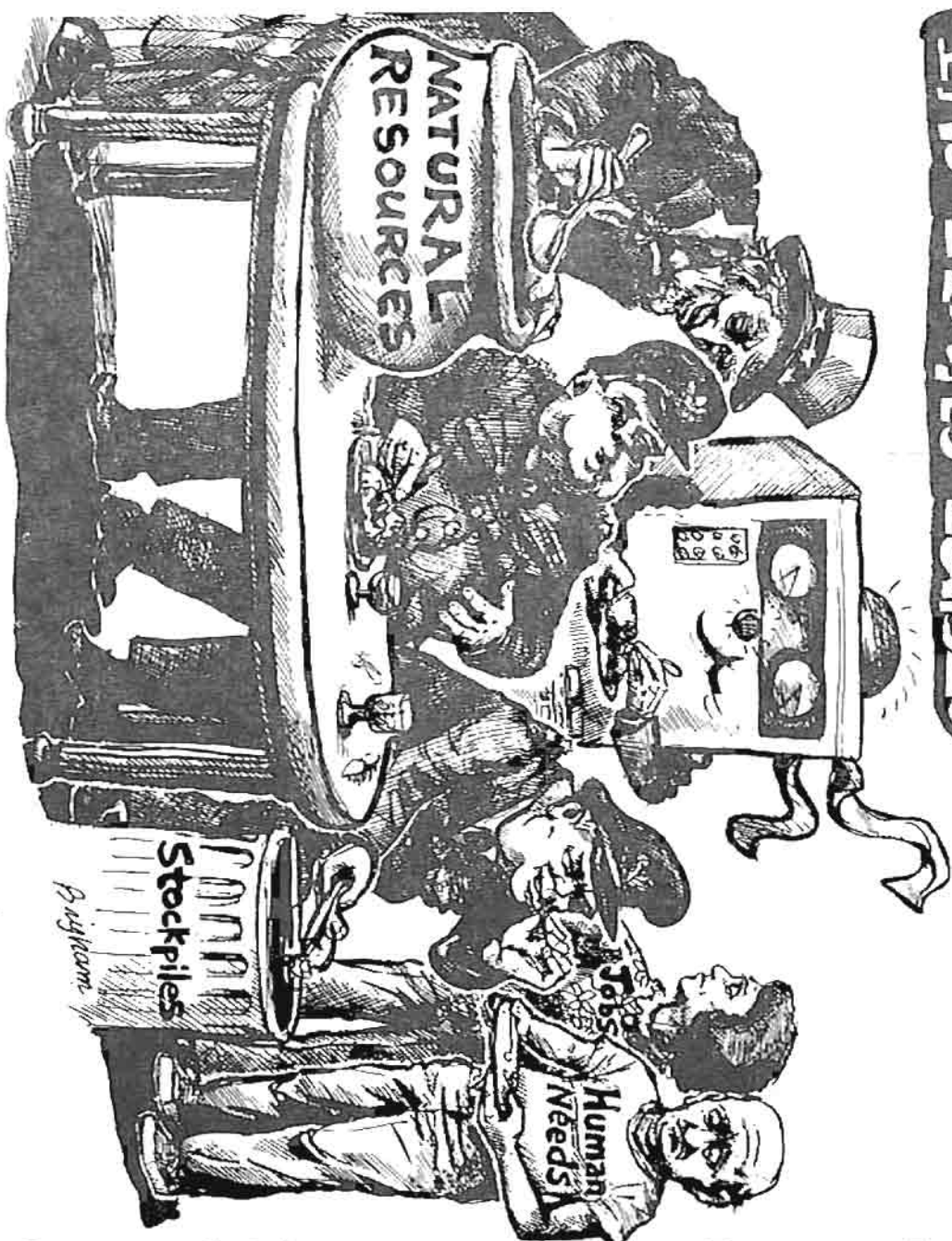


The Round Table



ECONOMIC CONVERSION

FROM KAREN HOUSE By Bob Corley

The area around Karen House has improved in appearance during the year or so that I have been coming here as a volunteer. Many of the derelict houses have been razed, the rubble bull-dozed into a semblance of neatness. There is much open space. As one looks northward from the office window across North Market Street one can see just two houses standing in the adjacent block. There is sadness here, and a mystery.

This is valuable land, but it seems to have no value. It is land for houses. There are sewers, utilities, all ready for use when houses are built. There is a desperate need for housing. But no houses are built.

There are people here who need houses. There is land on which to build houses. There are unemployed people to build them. But somewhere, someone has calculated a bottom line figure called: profit. It has been judged and found wanting. The equation is: no profits equal no houses.

The structures that have survived are old and overcrowded and poorly maintained. Each year the electrical wiring becomes older, the mortar in the flues becomes more brittle. Some of the houses are owned by real estate companies that find it unprofitable to maintain them. Some are owned by the people who live in them, who have no money to

maintain them. North St. Louis is a "high risk" area. Fires and burglaries are frequent. It is a fight for survival. Some of the houses are equipped with burglar bars on all first floor windows. They keep burglars out, but when the house burns they keep people in. When survival is the only attainable goal, options are limited.

At our Thanksgiving vigil for the victims of Trident, someone asked: How can there be victims of Trident, since it has never been used? They are here, sir, in north St. Louis. They are the people who are not living in the houses that are not being built by unemployed people who cannot afford housing because they are unemployed. We cannot afford to build houses because it is necessary to use our wealth to build Trident to protect them. The circle is closed, like a serpent swallowing its own tail. Those who have been left out are out. That is the way things are, sir.

One is tempted by resentment and indignation. Why do they allow this, the men of power who make the decisions that make the system work? But the hypocrisy of this question is too transparent to conceal the only questions one is permitted: Why do I allow this? What am I doing about it? When one asks these questions, and answers them, one knows what Paul meant when he wrote: The good that I would do, I do not,

and the evil I would not do, I do. And one feels fear and awe at the malignant intelligence of the spirit of evil whom Christ called Satan. The web he has spun around us is all but overwhelming. We are enmeshed in evil. We are all victims of Trident. The good that we do not do for others becomes the evil we do to ourselves.

Because Trident is not the real evil. It is a symptom and symbol of the true evil which is in ourselves and which is our refusal to obey Christ's commandment to love one another. The greatest love one can have, he said, is to be willing to die for another. By accepting Trident we do exactly the opposite. We are willing that others should die for us. If the opposite of love is hate, can there be a greater evil?

And because Trident is so apt a symbol of hate and fear (of non-love and non-faith), it is also a symbol of all the non-love and non-faith of our generation: lies, greed, selfishness, exploitation. There is no need for a bill of particulars. We know full well what we are: a generation of vipers.

But this does not need to be. The Kingdom of God is ours by right of inheritance. All we need to do is take it and live in it. We have been shown the way and we need do only what he told us to do: love God with our whole souls and our whole minds and love each other as ourselves. Everything in the Law and the Prophets hangs on these two commandments. These are the

words of Christ.

What is Trident? Chewing gum? No, it is a submarine. It will carry 408 nuclear warheads, each capable of killing so many people that it staggers the mind to think of it. How many? A million each? Who knows? Perhaps someone has studied this question and the answer is written somewhere in a book. I do not care to read it. It makes no difference.

What you do to the least of my brethren, you do to me: these are the words of Christ. When Trident fires its missiles, how many times will we be killing Christ? Of all the generations in the history of humankind, how many have been able to kill Christ 408 million times? How many have been willing to do so? We are not merely a generation of vipers. We are an abomination. We are a generation of Satans.

We are a fearful and timid people. We excuse our failure to love by saying: We are only human. Change the words (but not the meaning) to: We are only of the same nature as Jesus Christ. What nonsense we believe.

Christ said: Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect. We say: it is impossible for us to be perfect. But with God, nothing is impossible. These are the words of Christ. Are we with God? If we are not, it is our own doing because God is with us. These, too, are the words of Christ.

But what is the Kingdom of God? Is it a heaven that we will only know after we die? Or is it Christ with us, here and now? Or is it both? Does it matter? Christ is with us, here and now. But we are not with Christ.

What would our lives be if all of us, everyone, were to live the gospel of Christ? If we loved each other -- all of us, Americans, Russians, Chinese, Africans, all of us -- would we build weapons to kill each other? Would we exploit each other? Would we build fences and borders around ourselves to keep the poor and hungry from getting to our wealth? Would we need laws to punish thieves if we shared with each other and there were no reason for anyone to steal, or would anyone steal from those he or she loves?

If we were with Christ, as Christ is with us, we would need no law, no state, no armies, no police, no prisons. We would live in the anarchy of Christ, with no need to rule others because each would rule himself or herself in the light and grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We are told that this is not possible. And the men who tell us this are correct. It is not possible because we are not with God, but with God all things are possible. And because we do not believe what Christ told us we do not live in the anarchy of Christ but in the anarchy of terror.

And I am afraid of the things I know and of the things I suspect. I am not afraid for myself. The

things that I know, I know, and where there is truth, there is God. And if the things I suspect are blasphemy, Christ will show me my error, because I want to know only the truth and Christ can not and will not deceive me. If Christ should show me the truth, and I reject it, I will receive exactly the consequences I deserve, no more, no less. So what have I to fear for myself?

I am afraid for the Church and for the people. I am afraid of two questions I find myself asking, and which I must answer:

Why does it seem to me that the Church is not preaching the gospel of Christ, but is concealing it?

And if the Church is in fact concealing the gospel, then what is the Church?

Bob is a regular volunteer at Karen House and is actively involved with St. Louis Clergy and Laity Concerned (CALC).

FROM CASS HOUSE

BY KATHY DERBY

Special Spring greetings from Cass Catholic Worker House. It's been a few months since you have heard from us. The house here is steadily growing. As you know, our soup-line serves the neighborhood daily with a good hot supper. And our numbers have grown. Some days we serve 50, and other days up to 85. Can you imagine the food preparation? And Maureen has it under control. She coordinates lots of volunteer cooks who produce lots of good nutritious food.

We have been blessed by lots of volunteers who have come to help us clean, cook, and renovate parts of the house in readiness for women and children coming within the next few months.

Our overnight hospitality for men is in full swing. We have

been offering overnight hospitality since December. We have 15 beds and during the cold months we had a few extra mattresses for emergencies. It has been really enriching to serve transient men. They have brought a real wealth to our community. We have volunteers who come to stay overnight occasionally with the men.

We are now a community of seven people. Added to Sue Lauritsen, Carol Donohue, CPPS, Luanne Schinzel, OFS, Phyllis Gilbert (and her four children), Kathy Derby, and Maureen Filter, CSJ, is Scott Hussey. We welcome Scott, he's a great addition to our community. We are all doing well, and welcome you to come visit anytime. Come for supper!! And have a blessed Spring. May it be a time of rebirth for all of you.



Economic Conversion: An Overview

By Mary McClellan with thanks to Mary Ann McGivern

Economic conversion has become an increasingly important concept in the peace movement in the last few years. This stems from the realization that disarmament will have economic repercussions which, in justice to our own people, must be addressed. We hope these articles are a helpful overview of the issue as it now stands nationally and locally.

In mid-October, I had the privilege of attending a lecture by Dr. Helen Caldicott, Australian pediatrician and author of the book, Nuclear Madness. What she said chilled me to the bone: that we have two years to turn the nuclear arms race around before it is too late; that it was only the grace of God--there is no human explanation--that there was not a meltdown at Three Mile Island. Hearing her added an urgency and a reality factor to the Gospel mandate to be a peacemaker. Working on economic conversion has become for me a nitty-gritty response to this urgent (if seemingly unreal and absurd) nitty-gritty situation.

As a Christian urgently calling for an end to the arms race, I've come to understand that I must be willing to work on the concrete aspects of what that means. I believe it is irresponsible as well as naive to call for an end to military production without planning sound economic alternatives. It seems to me I should not merely cry, "Stop! Stop!" but should take practical steps to bring about useful employment, rather than unemployment, when military production ceases. Peter Maurin's idea of building

the new within the shell of the old strikes me as applicable here, as does the Gospel injunction not to merely cry, "Lord, Lord."

As a Catholic Worker, I feel special affinity for economic conversion work because its thrust is concern for workers who suffer the impact caused by modification of military production. I feel an appreciation of the Worker's traditional respect for labor when I see William Winpisinger, President of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW), in the forefront of the conversion movement. His stance on conversion, as well as his leadership position in SANE (a peace organization), seem to me to validate the Catholic Worker understanding that the people who do the concrete labor in a particular endeavor often have a more profound grasp of what is going on than do those who sit back and abstractly speculate. (One of the extra added attractions of working on economic conversion is getting to see Catholic Worker types reading publications like Business Week and The Wall Street Journal.)

Further, Winpisinger's defi-

nition of conversion is one of the best I've heard to date: "economic conversion means planning now to avoid unemployment and loss of income and employee benefits in the future for those workers affected when a defense plant or program is cut back or terminated. It means converting idle defense and military plants and equipment to civilian and socially useful production. It means the possi-

"...as a Catholic worker, I feel special affinity for economic conversion work..."

bility of building railroads, mass transit systems, houses and solar energy systems, rather than redundant missiles, bombs and nuclear warheads. It would provide real employment, rather than unemployment, when defense work stops." (My Christian hope especially likes his use of the word "when" rather than "if.")

Economic conversion is not a new concept. Since before the Civil

War, when the United States entered a war, civilian industry converted to military production. At the end of the war, that industry converted back to peacetime production. Since 1953, however, there has been a change.

Instead of conversion back to peacetime production, industries and bases have proliferated and have altered the structure of entire communities. Major military contractors like Lockheed, Martin Marietta, Boeing and United Technologies produce airplanes, ships, missiles and guidance systems and have become the largest employers in their regions. By relying on subcontractors for everything from nuts and bolts to cafeteria service and office furniture, such contractors have built a network of economic interdependence that has made entire regions defense-dependent. A striking example of this interdependence occurred in Seattle some years ago, when Boeing's economic difficulties wreaked havoc on the entire local economy.

In addition to the military bases and defense production contractors, industries with strong research departments, (particularly those that participated in the Manhattan Project since 1942, like Monsanto, Union Carbide and Du Pont), hold contracts with the Department of Energy to manage nuclear weapons production and research sites for the federal government. Again, these plants are often the largest regional employers, and the companies that manage them exert

significant local political power.

The military expansion of the past twenty-five years has created this new economic phenomenon of defense dependency. South-eastern Connecticut, the Santa Clara Valley, the St. Louis metropolitan area and the whole of Long Island are examples of defense-dependent regions. In these areas, the network of large defense contractors, their subcontractors and military bases generate, it is estimated, up to 63% of the area jobs dependent on contracts from the Department of Defense or Department of Energy.

Neither the military nor the private industry segments of our military production system has an interest in planning for the impact on workers or the local economy caused by a modification of military needs. The bases are, of course, "wholly owned subsidiaries" of the Pentagon, and it is absurd to speak of the Pentagon planning conversion to peacetime production. The industry-owned and industry-managed production and research sites are profit-making enterprises for the corporations; and chief executive officers such as James Bingham (Honeywell), James McDonnell (McDonnell Douglas), and David Lewis (General Dynamics), have said they will continue producing military goods as long as the profit remains. These corporate heads have said they see no need for economic conversion and that it is both naive and impossible to execute. And neither they nor the Pentagon take any responsibility



ity to plan for the prevention of the disruption of the lives of workers and the local community when layoffs occur or bases close.

Union officials and local politicians, on the other hand, have had to face that economic disruption with their members and their communities. Recently, churches have also involved themselves in these economic issues, for, as Presbyterian leader Dick Fernandez says, suicides, divorce rates and cases of severe depression increase drastically as a result of job layoffs. Economic disruption demands a pastoral response. Finally,

He will wield authority over the
 nations
 and abjudicate between many peoples;
 these will hammer their swords
 into ploughshares,
 their spears into sickles.
 Nation will not lift sword against
 nation,
 there will be no more training for
 war.

(Isaiah 2:3-5)

groups that object to military spending, to nuclear proliferation, and/or to foreign arms sales that make the United States the number one arms merchant in the world--these people have come to understand that it is irresponsible to call for a decrease or an end to military production in the United States without addressing the issue of economic conversion.

And planning for conversion, it is beginning to be discovered, makes good economic sense. (Peter Maurin's idea that the Gospels provide a good social blueprint comes to mind here: straying from them seems to have

produced a negative economic impact.) People are beginning to understand the relationship between weapons production and inflation: we can't continue to pour our economic resources into making a product we hope we'll never use and expect the economy to remain healthy. And because we have spent our technological expertise on weapons rather than on more practically useful products, we find ourselves outstripped by "foreign" producers of such items as radios and automobiles.

Further, it is now generally accented that tax monies will generate more jobs when spent almost anywhere than on military production. This is patently clear when we speak of health care, education and social services, where less capital must be spent for each job created, than in manufacturing. But it is also true of manufacturing--and these are the jobs military production workers need if economic conversion is to be accomplished. Contrary to the old prevalent myth, a large defense budget does not provide more jobs: it provides progressively fewer. In the last ten years, while the dollar amount of McDonnell Douglas' military contract has doubled, its union employment has dropped from 27,000 to 9,000 jobs: and over-all employment has been cut just about in half.

The experience of layoffs such as those at McDonnell

Douglas in St. Louis is common to every defense-dependent community in the country, and it is this experience that has sparked the call for conversion planning. Rep. Dodd of Connecticut has held hearings, introduced federal legislation and supported state legislation in an effort to deal with the pro-



blem of defense dependency.

There does exist a federal government agency for conversion, the Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA), which is charged with preventing economic upheaval when bases are closed or contracts cancelled. But it must be invited into a city or region and is underfunded and underutilized. The OEA also places the burden of economic conversion on the taxpayer instead of on industry. Even more important, the OEA is only called into a region after the fact, perhaps long after the fact, when politicians have gained all the political mileage available for fighting big government. The OEA does not do con-

version planning.

Conversion planning develops ideas for job retraining for the workers who are presently employed, and plant retooling for the space presently being used--in case defense contracts are cancelled. Conversion planning can be done by the workers themselves with management and local business.

According to Business Week, October 23, 1978, James McDonnell "has always worried that a single big military contract cancellation could wreck the company." Therefore, the company has diversified by purchasing Douglas Aircraft and developing computer and electronics technology. Diversification, however, is not the same as conversion. Diversification is good protection for the company entity and for stockholders. But it does not protect defense workers or defense-dependent communities and leaves them vulnerable to the vagaries of foreign military sales and the fluctuations of Congress. Economic conversion, on the other hand, calls on the company to engage in planning with its employees and the surrounding community.

One piece of proposed federal legislation, The Defense Economic Adjustment Act, (H.R. 1545 and S. 1031), calls for a committee of labor, management and community to engage in conversion planning. Church shareholders have begun to file resolutions at annual meetings of large defense contractors formulated in the same terms as the proposed federal legislation.

To summarize the basic problem, when a contract is cancelled, the employees are laid off, the surrounding community's economy is negatively impacted: but the corporation still makes a profit. This happens because the standard defense contract with the federal government, whether for U.S. defense needs or foreign arms sales, insures that the corporation will be paid at a profit-making rate through the last day of production. So a defense contractor never need fear being left with unsold merchandise on the company hands; the government will pay for whatever has been produced to that date. McDonnell Douglas did not lose money when Iran cancelled its orders for F-4 reconnaissance planes. But

11
the workers were out of a job. The workers' risk is greater than the risk of civilian workers, but military industry is protected.

Coming full circle, the pattern of church shareholders, researchers and disarmament experts joining with local conversion planners and union leaders to call for more responsible employment structures is a hopeful sign. All have come to realize that only by grappling with the local economic impact of the military budget can we alter that budget. Such coalition building is peacemaking in itself, not to mention necessary, in view of Dr. Caldicott's warning that the time is short.



Irving Amen

Economic Conversion: ST. LOUIS

BY VIRGINIA DRUHE

The St. Louis Economic Conversion Project grew out of the American Friends Service Committee study group on economic conversion. After that introduction to the harmful effects of relying on military production to stimulate and sustain the local economy, we decided to form an action group that would meet for an hour and a half every week to explore the military dependence of the St. Louis regional economy. The obvious focus of St. Louis military dependence is McDonnell-Douglas, since it is the area's largest employer and the work done at the St. Louis plant is predominantly military. We also chose to operate from the model for conversion planning which is set forth in proposed federal legislation. In this model, company management, employees and the local community participate equally in planning the conversion of a plant to socially useful production in the event military contracts fail to produce jobs. Research indicates that even our rising defense budget produces progressively fewer jobs.

Since McDonnell employees are those most immediately affected by conversion planning and are also in the best position to do that planning, they were the first group we approached. We are fortunate that at McDonnell vir-

tually all organized employees are represented by one union. That is the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace workers (IAM). About one-third of McDonnell's St. Louis employees are unionized.

In September of 1978 the Conversion Project met with Cassell Williams, the district president who represents all IAM workers at McDonnell. Mr. Williams was encouraging, basically taking the position that he supports economic conversion because it means



more jobs for IAM members. Union employment at McDonnell's St. Louis plant has been cut by two-thirds in the last ten years, from 27,000 to 9,000. Overall employment has been cut just about in half in the same time period, while the dollar amount of military contracts has doubled.

The main item we discussed with Mr. Williams was union participation in a shareholder resolution and proxy solicitation. This project was the bulk of our work last winter and spring. For the past ten years members of the

Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) have been filing shareholder resolutions with major corporations in which they own stock, challenging corporate practices in various fields. Owning subsidiaries in South Africa, strip mining, and redlining have become issues in shareholder resolutions. The filing of a resolution often leads to solicitation of the proxies (vote) of other shareholders, speeches on the floor of the company's annual meeting, discussions with the company and local or national publicity on the issue. Changes in corporate policy have been effected using these methods.

There is in St. Louis a local affiliate of the ICCR, which is the Midwest Coalition for Responsible Investment (MCRI). Last year MCRI had filed a shareholder resolution with McDonnell calling for conversion planning. The Planning Committee was to have equal representation from management, employees and the surrounding community. Since one of the conversion project members is the local MCRI staffperson, it was very convenient to combine the two efforts. MCRI filed the resolution and The St. Louis Economic Conversion Project did much of the proxy solicitation process. McDonnell has a stock purchasing plan that involves nearly all of its employees. Thus, McDonnell employees became the main target of proxy solicitation.

In November of 1978 Mr. Williams agreed to assist us in the process of soliciting the proxies

of the members of his district. We were given permission to contact the president of each of the five local lodges and with their permission to address each of the two monthly meetings of their lodges. We did this, bringing copies of the resolution to each

"...Union employment at McDonnell's St. Louis plant has been cut by two-thirds in the last ten years, from 27,000 to 9,000. Overall employment has been cut just about in half in the same time period while the dollar amount of military contracts has doubled..."

of these meetings and explaining that in effect we were asking the company to plan civilian work for employees when defense work became unavailable. (The issue was timely. Over 800 union members were laid off during the winter. --We don't know how many non-union jobs were lost, but the number was large.) At these meetings we also explained that we were planning to leaflet the entire plant with information on the resolution and asked for people to help in that process. More than twenty union people carried two thousand leaflets to workers inside the plant the day before leafleting was done outside.

A general leafleting of all McDonnell employees took place on April 4. Between 6:30 and 8:30

on that cold, wet morning, employees at all thirty gates of the main McDonnell plant received leaflets from 85 members of the religious and peace communities in St. Louis. In all we passed out 20,000 leaflets among the 32,000 employees.

Before the annual meeting, where the results of the vote were announced, we were invited to a meeting with management at McDonnell to discuss our concept of conversion planning. The meeting lasted two and a half hours and for more than an hour was attended by James McDonnell--chair of the board and founder of the company. There was a high degree of mutual respect in the dialogue. Disagreement surfaced about the impact on employees and the region caused by McDonnell's heavy dependence on military contracts. We also disagreed about whose responsibility it is to deal with the problems created by McDonnell's military dependence.

The results of the vote were announced at the annual meeting on April 23. The resolution received 4.8% of the votes cast. On shareholder resolutions anything over 3% is considered a "moral victory" and gives one the right to present the resolution again the following year. The company indicated that it realized that our success was of more than

the "moral" order. Hard data are hard to come by, but from the figures available to us, it seems likely that 10,000 of the 30,000 St. Louis McDonnell employees voted their stock with us on the resolution.

The St. Louis Economic Conversion Project will continue and broaden its work this year. The same shareholder's resolution will be filed. Again, we will solicit the support of McDonnell employees. We will continue to work closely with the local union. The St. Louis Economic Conversion Project needs more contact with non-unionized employees at McDonnell, and ongoing on the issue with legislators. We need to continue to do research in order to present the economics of the issue accurately and fairly. We need to expand the understanding of the issue among all areas of the community.

The work of the last year and a half has been exciting, satisfying and productive. If you are concerned about the negative effect of military spending in our economy and how to effect a just change, please contact us and work with us. (Please call Mary at 621-3085, Mary Ann at 621-0435, or Virginia at 621-4052.) It will take the talents of many working together to complete the task.



To participate in the selection process of the new archbishop, we sent the following letter to Archbishop Jadot, papal representative to the U.S. He had asked that such letters include perceptions of the present state of the diocese and the qualities hoped for in the next archbishop. For the people of God to grow in holiness, the work, dreams and prayers of us all need to be shared, which is why we are sharing this letter with you.

Dear Archbishop Jadot,

We of the Catholic Worker Community in St. Louis are happy for the opportunity to express to you our views of the present and visions for the future of the St. Louis Archdiocese as our new Archbishop is being considered.

We find strength and vitality in the church people in St. Louis: generous and ongoing support for our work. We find growing faith that expresses itself in the search for justice, in service and in profession of the Word. We hope for an archbishop whose faith will support, encourage and challenge ours. We look for example in the areas of unity with fellow Christians, in living justice and in responding to the gospel call to poverty. We look for an archbishop who will be approachable, known to many of the people, perceptive of our needs and desires, open and flexible in responding to them and in helping us know and serve each other better.

To be completely frank, there is a crying need here (as everywhere, we suppose) for a Christian challenge to the American way of death--of death through economic exploitation, through militarism, through nuclearism, death in our own hearts and lives. We beg for an archbishop who will speak that challenge in our name and who will aid us in following a life of faith in God and love for all of the human family.

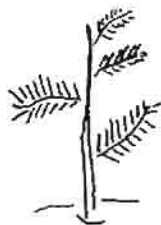
We cannot overlook this opportunity to express to you our pain that our church, whom we love, and to whom we remain faithful, and to whom we gladly give our lives, persists in refusing to grant women full rights and responsibilities as spiritual people. It is difficult to face those who are not served because of this failure. We ask for an archbishop who will facilitate the very fullest possible participation of women in the life and work of the church.

We ask for an archbishop who will challenge us on a personal and institutional level to do justice, to empty ourselves for others in faith and to know more fully the joy of life in Christ. We will be praying for you during this time of decision, and for the whole church.

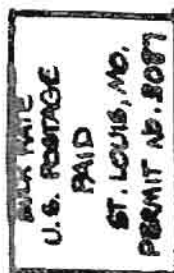
In Peace,

(Signed by the 19 members of the
St. Louis Catholic Worker Community)

We, the editors, very much enjoy the work of publishing this newsletter, and could probably provide an endless supply of words for it ourselves. But we would like even more for the newsletter to represent the thought of many people. We invite and encourage you to share with us your own articles, poems, comments, interests, memorabilia, odds and ends. We like mail.



Bill
Virginia
Bob
Mary
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TO:

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