

THE Round Table

Winter
1985

"...a path from where we are to where we should be." --Peter Maurin

LABOR



WHY THIS ISSUE?



"You need to start looking for a job." How many times have I addressed these words to a guest, my feeble and somewhat shamefaced delivery belying the urgency of my words? For I know full well that this fifty to sixty year old woman is virtually unemployable. With no other choice, she has worked hard all her life raising children and has now either outlived her husband or separated from him. Perhaps she has never worked for pay, since her husband supported her, or perhaps she has only worked at low-paying "pink collar" jobs. Now with her children grown, her husband gone, and no income--she is homeless. Yet she has worked hard all her life; why must she now suffer the hardships of destitution because her work does not pay?

The issue of labor has, from the beginning, been a pressing concern of the Catholic Worker, as the research contained in Mike McIntyre's lead article shows. Tom Jeannot presents a report on a current issue in the church today, the dialogue concerning Marxist analysis as a legitimate tool for liberation theology and as an analysis of labor. As the excerpts from John Paul II's encyclical illustrate, the Pope has created a compelling theory of human labor which contributes to the ongoing "Christian-Marxist dialogue."

The "Easy Essays" we have chosen complement the ideas expressed in these articles. In his own inimitable style, Peter Maurin exposes the ultimate similarity between unionized labor and the owners of production. He also reminds us of the intimate connection between work and art, hearkening back to a time when work was art. Ron Krash conveys his reflections as a "responsible worker", i.e., an artist, one who still visibly "owns" his work.

Lest we become too myopic in our view of labor as industrialized, Mary Ann McGivern, in the Little House article, shares her thoughts on the recent developments in the United Farm Workers' struggle. We have enclosed a UFW grape boycott postcard in each issue and ask you to illustrate your support to the renewed boycott by sending the card back to the UFW. We close with a timely article by Mark Scheu on the relationship between faith and politics.

In this issue, we bring you the theory of labor, and in our houses we daily confront the reality of Lady Poverty. St. Francis' appellation appropriately points to the overwhelmingly female face of unpaid labor in our country. I hope for a time when the Catholic Worker vision is fully realized and I no longer must urge our guests back into the system which has victimized them.

*Cover drawing by
LARRY NOLTE for
The Round Table*

-Ellen Rehg

WE ARE NOT TAX EXEMPT

All gifts to the Catholic Worker go to a common fund which is used to meet the daily expenses of our work.

Gifts to our work are not tax-deductible. As a community, we have never sought tax-exempt status since we are convinced that justice and the works of mercy should be acts of conscience which come at a personal sacrifice, without governmental approval, regulation or reward. We believe it would be a misuse of our limited resources of time and personnel (as well as a violation of our understanding of the meaning of community) to create the organizational structure required, and to maintain the paper-work necessary for obtaining tax-deductible status. Also, since much of what we do might be considered "political," in the sense that we strive to question, challenge and confront our present society and many of its structures and values, some would deem us technically ineligible for tax-deductible, charitable status.

WORK and THE WORKER

by Michael McIntyre

This, then, is the task: to gather together enough of the diverse material which constitutes the legacy of the Catholic Worker Movement to distill a coherent social philosophy of labor. We must attempt this through an examination of the questions Catholic Workers asked themselves, questions both practical--"How do we relate to the workers?" "How does our support of labor relate to the rest of our work?"--and theoretical--"What is the fundamental nature of labor?" "How shall labor be socially organized?"

Such a task presents peculiar difficulties. The Catholic Worker Movement corpus is diverse, and not easily accessible. Catholic Workers never wrote with one voice, and rarely attempted to abstract theory from immediate concerns. That abstraction will be the work of this paper, an attempt to catch sight of a social theory "on the fly," a philosophy in flux.

The method shall be to aim for breadth rather than depth. The raw material for this essay has been the collected edition of the Catholic Worker from 1933 to 1961. This source limits the scope of this essay in a number of ways. Obviously, the collection stops before my historical memory of the Catholic Worker Movement begins. Moreover, the Catholic Worker is the voice of the New York Catholic Worker houses, not the movement as a whole. Nevertheless, this collection may allow us to grasp the initial and middle development of a social philosophy of labor at what has always been considered the "motherhouse" of the Catholic Worker Movement.

At the outset, it must be recognized that the Catholic Worker began as an organ of solidarity with the progressive wing of organized labor, and constantly championed militant labor struggle. Consider the following headlines, all from the first page of the first year of the Catholic Worker: "Negro Labor on Levees Exploited by U.S. War Department," "Less Child Labor Due to Present Low Wage Scale," "30 Hour Week," "School Pupils Strike,"

"Women in Industry," "Strike Methods of Farmers Hastening Relief Legislation," "Textile Code Hearing Reveals Extensive Child Labor in U.S.," "Pennsylvania Miners End Bitter Strike--Await Coal Code," "New York Milk Strikers Ask for Greater Share of Profits," "Violence Imminent in 21-State Strike; Farm's Doom Seen." Current readers of the Catholic Worker will certainly realize that those kinds of stories just don't see the light of day any more. In short, the purpose of the paper has changed since Dorothy Day wrote in June, 1934: "If our stories this month are ominous in tone, and if our friends would wish that we concentrated more on the joy of the love of God and less on the class strife which prevails in industry, we remind them of the purpose of this paper. It is addressed to the workers and what is of interest to them is the condition of labor, and the attitude of the Church in regard to it." This change may be more easily understood if we remember that during the Great Depression, the workers were the poor. Today, our solidarity with the poor takes different forms as today's poor are not workers, but an underclass of the sporadically employed.



During this early period, labor reporting in the Catholic Worker tended to be of two sorts. There were the straight labor stories of the sort headlined above. Alongside these, usually occupying large amounts of space on the inside pages, were distillations of Catholic teaching on "the labor question." These articles were usually based on the encyclicals "Rerum Novarum" and "Quadragesimo Anno", and were designed to support the Worker's position of labor solidarity as firmly in line with papal teaching.

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One episode from this period is particularly enlightening. The high point of Catholic Worker solidarity with labor struggles came during the seafarer's strike of 1935-36. The workers of the National Maritime Union launched a grass roots strike which had as its object not only the betterment of working conditions and wage scales, but also the overthrow of a corrupt and conservative union bureaucracy. The strike was won with no little help from the Catholic Worker house in New York. Consequently, the National Maritime Union became a sort of model for the Catholic Worker vision of a union: controlled by its members, a high degree of commitment (its slogan was "every member an organizer"), militant in its quest for a better life for its members, and independent of communist control. The strength of this attachment was shown in a series of articles from October, 1949 to February, 1950 recounting the then occurring purge of radical elements from the NMU and its take-over by conservative trade-unionists.

The Catholic Worker did not change from a "labor paper" to a "peace paper" overnight or in a long smooth fashion. Throughout the thirties, the paper was largely devoted to the labor question. As one might guess, the question of peace became dominant during the Second World War. After the war, however, the labor question once again received substantial attention from the paper, in large part through the labor reporting of Robert Ludlow and Michael Harrington. During the late 1950's, however, the labor question receded once again, replaced by reportage on the growing civil rights movement, anti-colonial struggles in Africa and elsewhere, the fledgling anti-nuclear movement of the late fifties and early sixties with its contributions to the theory and practice of nonviolence, and of course, later on, the Vietnam War and the resurgent anti-nuclear movement of the seventies and eighties.

One exception to this decline of labor solidarity was the very active support given to the United Farm Workers in the late sixties and early seventies. The reasons are fairly obvious: the UFW was and is a militant, grass-roots union, the population among whom the UFW recruits is overwhelmingly Catholic, and the UFW actively solicited support from Dorothy and the Catholic Worker Movement. A little digging even reveals that the paper had published an article on working conditions of Cali-

fornia lettuce workers in May, 1940, a series of articles on the conditions of farmworkers in late 1948, and another series of articles on the horrors of the "bracero" program in the late fifties.

I must apologize if I have given the impression that this synopsis of writings on the labor question is complete; it is not. Another sort of essay on the labor question existed in the paper during these years, one which concerned itself with questions of the philosophy of labor more than solidarity with labor. Here the burning concern was how to find a third way between capitalism and communism, how to find in Catholic social teaching a doctrine of labor which could pose a viable alternative to a capitalism which ground the faces of the poor and a communism which would lure the proletariat away from the Church. In the same 1934 article earlier cited, Dorothy wrote: "If we attempt with undue optimism to minimize the crisis, if we do not recognize their [the workers'] plight, we are forcing them to turn to sheets such as the Daily Worker [the official Communist Party newspaper] which does take cognizance of their condition."



The Catholic Worker's more theoretical writings exist alongside and in tension with the articles whose concern was practical, immediate solidarity with labor's struggles. It will be my claim that these articles evinced a coherent social philosophy of labor. Moreover, it will be seen that this philosophy came from outside the Catholic Worker Movement itself.

The name of that philosophy is distributism. Distributism, little known in this country, was the philosophy of a number of British Roman Catholic critics of industrialism: Eric Gill, G.K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, Fr. Vincent McNabb, O.P. It flourished in Britain in the 1930s, and was formally embraced by the Catholic Worker in the late 1940s. Its elements included an anti-materialistic philosophy of the nature of human labor, an emphasis on the need for widespread ownership of property (especially land), promotion of cooperative arrangements for production and distribution of goods, and an unrelenting hatred of industrial production and the huge urban agglomerations it spawned.

The Catholic Worker first gave serious explicit consideration to distributism in a series of articles penned by Dorothy Day for the June through October, 1948 issues of the Catholic Worker, "All the Way to Heaven is Heaven, or, Articles on Distributism". These celebrations of Gill, Belloc, Chesterton, et al, included the following definition: "The Distributist, or Proprietary State is defined as a society in which the determining number of citizens are owners of productive property." The distinct Catholic Worker variety of distributism was spelled out in greater detail in the sole editorial of February, 1954: "...we favor the establishment of a Distributist economy wherein those who have a vocation to the land will work on the farms surrounding the village and those who have other vocations will work in the village itself. ...We believe in worker ownership of the means of production and distribution...to be accomplished by decentralized cooperatives and the elimination of a distinct employer class."

Dorothy's late embrace of distributism may be seen as an attempt to integrate radical concern for the working class (cf. "worker ownership of the means of production"--a socialist formula) with the theoretical articles on labor which appeared in the Catholic Worker in the thirties. A close look at those articles makes it apparent that all the elements of distributism were there, waiting to be uncovered, named, and claimed.

The tone may be set by an article in the paper's second issue, "Maurin's Program", written by none other than Peter Maurin. He states: "People will have to go back to the land. The machine has displaced labor, the cities are over-

crowded. The land will have to take care of them. My whole scheme is a Utopian, Christian Communism. I am not afraid of the word communism. I am not saying my program is for everyone. It is for those who choose to embrace it. I am not opposed to private property with responsibility. But those who own private property must never forget that it is a trust."

*"Labor is a means of self-expression,
the worker's gift to the common good.
There is so much depression
because there is so little expression."
--Peter Maurin*

Maurin was not a distributist; he was a sympathizer with parts of the distributist program. But a look at other writers for the paper during the thirties reveals that the diverse program promoted in the Catholic Worker during those years constitute the elements of a distributist society which was explicitly embraced years later.

The foremost distributist influence during those years was Eric Gill. An English craftsman of repute in a number of fields, Gill's writings focused on the radical discontinuity between what industrialism makes of the labor of both worker and artist and the essential nature of labor as defined in Thomistic philosophy. For Gill, human labor must be purposeful, artful, and ennobling. Otherwise, it is in conflict with its essential nature, and that conflict plays itself out in the havoc wreaked upon workers by industrialism. Maurin's own definition of labor could have been taken straight from Gill: "Labor is not a commodity to be bought and sold--/Labor is a means of self-expression, the Worker's gift to the common good."

An emphasis on the necessity of widespread ownership of land first appeared in the pages of the Catholic Worker in September 1933 in an article by Henry J. Foley, "Exploitation by the Land Monopoly." Foley was quite clearly a disciple of Henry George, believing profits were ultimately a form of rent, and that the back of plutocracy could be broken by a single tax on land. Said Foley, "The laws of the land bar every human being from the right to make a living unless he is a land owner.

This writer advocates a union of forces to urge the government to take over the land as it has taken control of the gold situation."

The Worker's better-developed position on the question of land ownership, however, leaned in a much less statist direction. In practical terms, the Worker embraced the establishment of small, decentralized farming communes ("agronomic universities") as a key element in its program to make a revolution from below. In 1935 and 1936, banner front page headlines cried out, "TO CHRIST, TO THE LAND". The January, 1936 issue devoted the entire back page to details of plans for the opening of the first Catholic Worker Farm. From 1938 to 1940, the back page of the Catholic Worker always bore the title "The Land" and carried a number of smaller articles detailing small, individual efforts to make a "green revolution". Here we can clearly see the practical basis of the later call for an economy based on decentralized agricultural production and village craft economies.

Throughout the 1930s, the Catholic Worker carried articles in support of the cooperative movement: the establishment of purchasing co-ops, the founding of credit unions and people's banks, and efforts to re-establish the guild as the fundamental unit of economic production. This last cause was championed by Michael Gunn in a regular column, "The Labor Guild". The Labor Guild was to embody, in embryonic fashion, not a mode of production which was devoid of classes, but one in which classes would be purely functional and not carry with them the authoritarian social power which accrues to the propertied classes in capitalism. Goods produced by a Labor Guild would, moreover, be sold at a "just price", and the workers would be paid a "just wage". Thus, the Labor Guild would opt out of the market economy by a self-conscious commitment to the economic categories of classical Thomistic thought.

And so we see that all the elements of a distributist program were present in the early years of the Catholic Worker Movement. In one sense, Dorothy Day's latter-day embrace of distributism provided the movement with the coherent doctrine of labor and social production which it had lacked. In another sense, this embrace solidified the tension between the Workers committed to labor solidarity and those committed to the search for a philosophy

of labor. Catholic Worker activism on behalf of labor, as with the National Maritime Union, always had an implicitly syndicalist base. Syndicalism, like distributism, envisions direct worker control of the means of production and distribution. However, and this is crucial, syndicalism accepts industrial production as necessary and even beneficent. This gulf between syndicalism and distributism cannot be bridged.

Finally, it must be said that the belated embrace of distributism was anachronistic. Distributism's great theorists were dead, and the Catholic Worker Movement stood alone in its call for a distributist economy in the fifties. Had the embrace come in the thirties, the story might have been different. The Catholic Worker might have joined with the agrarian movement in the South and the call for a "green revolution" in the upper midwest to create a lasting agrarian tendency in national life. As it was, these movements had been destroyed by the general mobilization for war in the forties. The embrace of distributism, a high point in Catholic Worker philosophy, was at the same time the kiss of death for Catholic Worker activism in the struggle for a humane organization of human labor.



Robert McGovern

Liberation and Labor

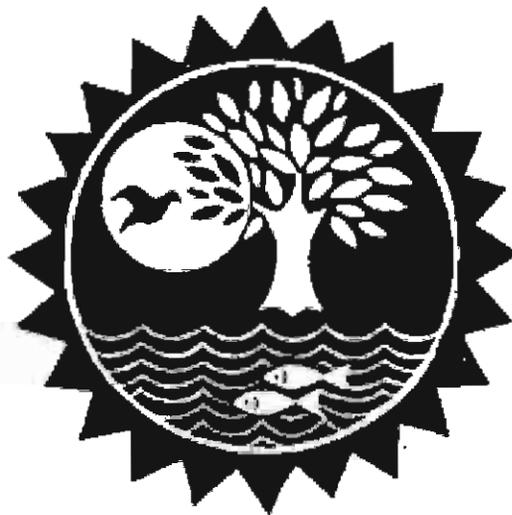
by Thomas M. Jeannot

For obvious reasons, Christianity's dialogue with Marxism is as old as Marxism itself. Each world view shares a common heritage with the other in the fabrics of Judaism, western culture, and eschatological perspective. But during the nineteen-sixties, and peculiarly for Roman Catholics in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, the dialogue assumed a rejuvenated urgency. The nineteen-fifties, McCarthyism and the era of monolithic anti-communism were over in more ways than one.

Besides the matter of generic linkage through common sources, there are more immanent reasons why a spirit of dialogue rather than the sheer antagonism of an earlier generation prevails in the nineteen-eighties. As ecclesiastical authorities have asserted time and again—most recently in Cardinal Ratzinger's "Instruction on Certain Aspects of Liberation Theology"—Catholicism essentially entails a "preferential option for the poor." This means that a perspective on social justice issues expressly identifying with the exploited, oppressed and poor is integral to the Church's life of faith and morals. Fr. John Coleman synthetically summarizes the "massive sea changes" characterizing the Church's social teaching in the tradition of encyclicals stemming from Rerum Novarum(1): from Leo XIII's pro-capitalist assertion that private property is a "direct natural right inherent in persons" to John Paul II's virtually socialist assertion that, regarding the means of production, "they cannot be possessed against labor, they cannot even be possessed for possession's sake, because the only legitimate title to their possession... is that they should serve labor...."(2)

The tradition of social encyclicals and other ecclesial documents supplies one pole for Catholic thinking about issues of social justice, while indigenous theological movements, arising natively from within the context of contemporary Christian experience, supply another pole. The "hope theology" of Europe

gained ground in the nineteen-sixties; but in the nineteen-eighties, the ground has shifted prominently to Latin America and other third-world regions. As always, there are profound, even confusing tensions between the two poles, to which the issue of hierarchical authority is central. Witness the fate of Hans Kung and more recently Leonardo Boff at the hands of the Vatican. Surely orthodoxy is important.



There is a glorious inertia at work in the Church which liberates it from the shackles of faddism and trendiness, with the result that its perspectives seem to achieve whatever transcendence is possible to human institutions (leaving to one side the question of a Church founded by God). The Church is not particularly beholden to any secular form of life, ideology or faction. Its sources antedate by centuries the rise of capitalism, its world, and the mainstream of reaction it has spawned in Marxism. This institutional fact of non-allegiance to any purely secular ideology is the natural basis for the Church's openness to the Holy Spirit. Yet the Holy Spirit works in many places and no one can say whither it blows. The Church has always had its Assisis and Loyolas. At key moments in its history, a sleeping orthodoxy has had to arise to the noon-time challenges of orthopraxis, and often the duel has led to fundamental changes in the Church's self-understanding.

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Just such a duel is presently taking place over the legitimacy of liberation theology, so far as that theology employs Marxian insights and tools of analysis. It is clear that the Vatican is anxious to steer clear of any explicit alignment with Marxism. But it finds itself in a wholly ambivalent position. Especially since the pontificate of John XXIII, the official Church has been steadily "deconstructing" its own ideological identifications with Europeanism and capitalism. Its increasing openness to socialism in the interest of standing with the poor against exploitation is following virtually as a matter of course. Despite appearances to the contrary, John Paul II is not stemming this tide. (3) He is a Polish pope who, despite his failure to expressly acknowledge this debt, seems to be steeped within the ambient of Eastern European, humanist, socialist, and Marxist frameworks, though perhaps more by implicit osmosis than by explicit proclamation. Consider his encyclicals Redemptor Hominis and Laborem Exercens. Consider, too, his recent pilgrimage to Canada. With a voice of authority both stern and stirring, he angrily denounced the exploitation of the southern hemisphere by the northern, choosing in his heavily accented English that ideologically explosive word, "imperialism", to frame his case.

Cardinal Ratzinger has recently insisted that the Church has its own mission on behalf of the poor and in the interest of liberation. But he has deployed this insistence in order to denounce wholesale, and in my opinion, with egregious simplism, any role Marxist insights might play in a determination of just who the poor are and in a systematic analysis of the specifically modern causes of their condition(4). Ratzinger's brand of simplistic analysis is endemic among polemical writers against Marxism. Even Leszek Kolakowski, a Polish academic who should know better, indulges in oversimplification in a commentary recently reprinted in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch (25 November 1984). For example, he writes without the slightest effort of textual documentation, "As to the commitment to the cause of the poor, this is not Marxist at all but is, in fact, purely Christian." Why this antinomy? Does the Church ever compete with secular ideology, or is it not rather the case that, following St. Augustine's example of "taking gold



from Egypt," the people of God, still in Exodus, strive to utilize secular perspectives, insights and intellectual contributions insofar as they illumine and clarify our own self-understanding and mission in the world? The Church, beholden neither to capitalism nor to socialism nor to any other economic or socio-political form, and keeping the distance of its own eschatological vision, need not fight a losing battle with Marxists over who are the true champions of the exploited poor. The critical question for Catholics is how to read the signs of the times so as to leaven the world with the message of the gospel. But to treat the gospel as though it were a secular ideology is to make a profoundly dangerous "category mistake".

Tertullian, who wanted to isolate the Church from the world with the formula Crede quia absurdum (I believe because it is absurd) was finally condemned as a heretic. But Augustine and Aquinas actually knew better; their implicit formula was Fides quaerens intellectum (faith seeking understanding), and they knew how to live creatively within both the tensions and the complementarities of revealed truths of faith and the native human capacity to understand, analyze, and critically reflect on the world and what we are to do in it. Hence Augustine could make use of Plato, Aquinas could appropriate Aristotle, and, in the twentieth century, Bernard Lonergan could negotiate with Kant and Karl Rahner could reap the speculative benefits of an encounter with Heidegger.

Granting the treacherous waters of dialectical materialism and Marxist-Leninist militant atheism, there are obviously many unresolved difficulties and complexities about which Christians ought not to be naive. But to assert that, prima facie, there are no grounds for dialogue and rapprochement would be both false and hypocritical.

Laborem Exercens sets a very important example, indicating that just the opposite is the case. Among several novel elements in that encyclical is John Paul's admission that "human work is a key, probably the essential key, to the whole social question..." At the very least, there exists a "family resemblance" between this assertion and Marx's labor theory of value. Production is to serve and benefit the human person, the worker, and to express her essential dignity. Therefore in virtually Marxist nomenclature, the pope exorcises the notion "that human work is solely an instrument of production, and that capital is the basis, efficient factor and purpose of production." He names this "a reversal, whereby the life of the worker is integrated into and rendered subordinate to the imperatives of capitalist production, instrumentalized and reduced to a thing-like, machine-like status, which Marx displays in the opening chapters of the first volume of Capital, the doctrinal heart of Marxism. This is not the place to develop in full detail the summer in which Catholic thinking may fruitfully appropriate the labor theory

of value, as it seems to be doing. My intention has been rather to indicate one fertile direction on which the official Church, without as yet owing up to it, seems to be embarking. And Ratzinger's obfuscations aside, it seems clear that the dialogue of Christians with Marxists will proceed, with the full urgency of history on its side.



"One can get isolated from people if one is in a 'movement'... I have never wanted to be far away from the ordinary working people I sit beside in church."

Barbara Bay

NOTES

1. See John Coleman, S.J., "What Is an Encyclical? Development of Church Social Teaching," in Origins, 11, no.3 (4 June 1981). Coleman does not, however, take account of Laborem Exercens, which appeared after his article.
2. John Paul II, Laborem Exercens, included as an appendix to Gregory Baum, The Priority of Labor (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), pp. 122-23.
3. I have written on this issue at greater length in "The Dialogue Advances: On Human Work and Marxism," Logos 5 (1984).
4. See especially sections VII and VIII of Ratzinger's "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation," in Origins 13, no.13 (13 September 1984).

"There is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem."—Booker T. Washington

EASY ESSAYS

By PETER MAURIN (1877-1949)

Capital and Labor

"Capital," says Karl Marx, "is accumulated labor, not for the benefit of the laborers, but for the benefit of the accumulators." And capitalists succeed in accumulating labor, by treating labor, not as a gift, but as a commodity, buying it as any other commodity at the lowest possible price. And organized labor plays into the hands of the capitalists, or accumulators of labor, by treating its own labor not as a gift, but as a commodity, selling it as any other commodity at the highest possible price. And the class struggle is a struggle between the buyers of labor at the lowest possible price and the sellers of labor at the highest possible price. But the buyers of labor at the lowest possible price and the sellers of labor at the highest possible price are nothing but commercializers of labor.



Industrialism and Art

Eric Gill says:
"The notion of work has been separated from the notion of art. The notion of the useful has been separated from the notion of the beautiful. The artist, that is to say, the responsible worker, has been separated from all other workers. Factory hands have no responsibility for what they produce. They have been reduced to a sub-human condition of intellectual irresponsibility. Industrialism has released the artist from the necessity of making anything useful. Industrialism has also released the worker from making anything amusing."



Excerpts From John Paul II's Encyclical "ON HUMAN WORK"

As a person, one is therefore the subject of work. As a person one works, one performs various actions belonging to the work process; independently of their objective content, these actions must all serve to realize one's humanity, to fulfill the calling to be a person that is one's by reason of one's very humanity... However true it may be that people are destined for work and called to it, in the first place work is "for people" and not people "for work". ...Both the original industrialization that gave rise to what is called the worker question and the subsequent industrial and post-industrial changes show in an eloquent manner that, even in the age of ever more mechanized "work", the proper subject of work continues to be people.... However, it is also a fact that in some instances technology can cease to be humanity's ally and become almost an enemy, as when the mechanization of work "supplants" the person, taking away all personal satisfaction and the incentive to creativity and responsibility, when it deprives many workers of their previous employment, or when, through exalting the machine, it reduces people to the status of its slave.... /Furthermore, / the danger of treating work as a special kind of "merchandise" or as an impersonal "force" needed for production (the expression "work force" is in fact in common use) always exists, especially when the whole way of looking at the question of economics is marked by the premises of materialistic economism.... In all cases of this sort, in every social situation of this type, there is a confusion or even a reversal of the order laid down from the beginning by the words of the Book of Genesis: A person is treated as an instrument of production, whereas one--one alone, independent of the work one does--ought to be treated as the effective subject of work and its true maker and creator. Precisely this reversal of order, whatever the program or name under which it occurs, should rightly be called "capitalism". ...Christian tradition has never upheld this right /ownership/ as absolute and untouchable. On the contrary, it has always understood this right within the broader context of the right common to all to use the goods of the whole of creation: The right to private property is subordinated to the right to common use, to the fact that goods are meant for everyone.... The only legitimate title to their possession is that they should serve labor and thus by serving labor that they should make possible the achievement of the first principle of this order, namely the universal destination of goods and the right to common use of them.... Therefore, while the position of "rigid" capitalism must undergo continual revision in order to be reformed from the point of view of human rights, both human rights in the widest sense and those linked with people's work, it must be stated that from the same point of view these many deeply desired reforms cannot be achieved by an a priori elimination of private ownership of the means of production.... Merely converting the means of production into state property in the collectivist systems is by no means equivalent to "socializing" that property. We can speak of socializing only when the subject character of society is ensured, that is to say, when on the basis of one's work each person is fully working with everyone else. A way toward that goal could be found by associating labor with the ownership of capital, as far as possible, and by producing a wide range of intermediate bodies with economic, social, and cultural purposes; they would be bodies enjoying real autonomy with regard to the public powers, pursuing their specific aims in honest collaboration with each other and in subordination to the demands of the common good, and they would be living communities both in form and in substance in the sense that the members of each body would be looked upon and treated as persons and encouraged to take an active part in the life of the body.

We recommend that Pope John Paul II's encyclical On Human Work be read in its entirety.

A Musician's Labor

by Ron Krash

Folk music in its learning and performance is work. To convey its beauty, meaning, and simplicity takes concentration, effort, feeling, and practice. For me it is of course much more. It is a link with all of those who lived before me. I find in its richness the strength of people as they sought to express their struggle to survive, to celebrate and understand the forces within them and around them. It gives me a sense of community and continuity which is difficult to obtain and hold onto in the modern world.

"We build our cities of stone and steel
the shops, the factories, the lonely
mills,

no longer to ply Cape Horn and her gales,
no longer to try, no longer to fail."

Many of the ballads I sing, as well as those I write, celebrate the dignity of people as they struggle in the face of ultimately overwhelming forces. The people portrayed in the old ballads are real people with strengths and weaknesses. They make mistakes; they love unwisely but sometimes well and faithfully; they fear but sometimes show courage. Wealth, possessions, and position are only the trappings which disguise what is our essential common nature. The old ballads cut to the heart of that common bond and do not hesitate to show the king to be coward, or the peasant prince.



Folk music as it exists today has almost no role in contemporary society. Once, in Celtic society, it played a central role. They valued their music as almost sacred, while the musician was the secular "priest", celebrating and interpreting the past and chronicling the present. Traditional folk music forms were essentially simple and straightforward, conveying common wisdom.

Only a performer of folk music can know how far we have drifted from a time when these forms were valued. You can sing a song that is 500 years old, the product of so many unknown people who over the centuries have nurtured it and been nurtured by it, yet in a room of a hundred people perhaps only a few hear it or are touched by it. It is like witnessing a dance on the graves of our ancestors; a ritual casting off of our ties to the past as we would a used match book cover. The artist is left angry, sad, and empty. Each time you perform you try to prepare yourself for the ritual. You try harder, you study longer, and you practice more.

Music today is largely background—just another consumer product. When folk music is listened to, it is sometimes admired as a piece of antique furniture or as a childhood memory of Christmas. The things of yesterday are of little interest to us and have little meaning for our lives. Mostly we seek to escape from jobs we can't stand, from a world we can't control, and fears we can't face. We seek distraction. We are conditioned to want a constantly changing menu—new sounds, new songs, new faces and new places. Folk music, whether modern or traditional, does not measure up well to these needs. Folk music is a journey inward. It seeks to capture and retain. It seeks to hold one blade of grass and know it.

Efforts are still being made to communicate human values. It is found in unexpected places. Bruce Springsteen has written many powerful lyrics depicting the lives of ordinary people. But it is the power of the rock beat and his dynamic and dedicated performance which attract many to him. His songs would be just as powerful unaccompanied, but they would no longer be heard without the rock beat which has the strength to stir the emotions yet blur the message.

Given all that I have said, why then would anyone choose work whose product is largely ignored or unwanted? One might well ask the same question of a Catholic Worker. Somewhere among the multitude of our answers would be, to help keep humanity alive.



RON KRASH has endeared himself to Karen House through the gift of folk music, welcomed by guests and community alike. It is the form his radicalism has taken in his life, a form which nourishes us all, we thank him for it.

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From Little House

By Mary Ann McGivern, S.L.



I went to hear Cesar Chavez speak at Webster University last week. A rush of tears filled my eyes in the middle of Virginia Nesmith's introduction. This small man believes so earnestly in justice for farm workers that he touches us all, in all our issues. The United Farm Workers is committed to nonviolence and many of us who struggle now against the military machine learned our nonviolence on picket lines in front of supermarkets and liquor stores. The UFW members include Mexicans, Filipinos, Arabs, Africans, Koreans, Punjabi, and Vietnamese, as well as every kind of hyphenated American plus all the ordinary poor folk. So the Union's opposition to racism, cash cropping, global terror, and the economic structures that crush the poor is rooted in experience.

I owe Cesar a great deal for what his Union has taught me--as well as the food they have provided me. I cannot refuse to boycott grapes once more, not when the UFW asks.

**"The UFW is asking us
to boycott grapes..."**

The California Labor Relations Act has been in effect since 1975; and while only a minority of farm workers are represented by collective bargaining, wages and working conditions for farmworkers have improved throughout the state. However, since his election in 1982, California governor George Deukmejian has systematically cut the Labor Relation Board budget, withheld settlements to workers, fired the enforcement staff, and delayed hearings. On Deukmejian's first day as governor there were less than 100 farm labor cases pending in California. Today there are more than 1200.

**"The life expectancy of a farm
worker is still 49 years..."**

The United Farm Workers is asking us to boycott grapes to put pressure on the growers. Then they will put pressure on the governor to enforce the law. (The growers gave over a million dollars to the Deukmejian campaign. So he will probably listen if they ask him to reverse his farm-labor policies).

The life expectancy of a farm worker is still 49 years--here in the United States. Malnutrition is ten times the national rate. Infant mortality is 300% higher than the U.S. average. Eight hundred thousand children work in the fields in our country. We pay more to store our excess than we pay the workers.

What to boycott? TABLE GRAPES. Some of the early California grapes are picked under labor contract, but the Union tracks where they are shipped, and none seem to come to St. Louis. The rest of the California grapes are scab. Don't eat them. (Five year old Matthew Cook was sure they all had scabs on them and couldn't understand why anyone would want to eat them). The winter grapes come from Chile and Cesar reminded us we shouldn't be eating them either.

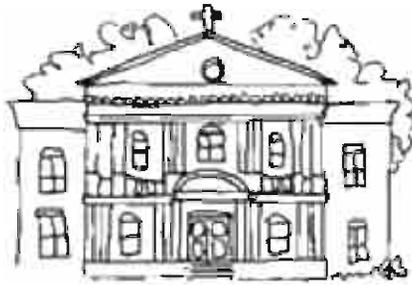
And don't forget to keep on boycotting Campbell's Soup. Soup is not good food when it's brewed with poor pay and working conditions.

About our own small plot of land, are there any volunteer gardeners out there? The pay is terrible and so far the big harvest is in glass and bricks (both broken); but working conditions are pleasant and there is hope we may make building foundations bloom.



MARY ANN MCGIVERN cut her sharp organizing teeth on the original UFW grape boycott. Her teeth won't be cutting into anymore grapes for awhile, however. We hope our readers join her in the boycott.

From Cass House



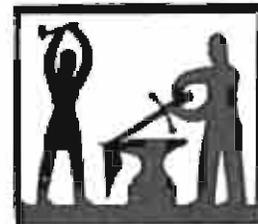
As I write, it is less than three weeks before Christmas. Would that life here come to a halt for three weeks so we could thirst properly for the arrival of the Holy Infant. Entrusted with the stewardship of this historic landmark of the Cass House Building, however, such a simple life is just not possible. There are beds to be made. There is linen to be washed. There is food to prepare. And all these things must be done especially now, during Advent, lest we be condemned to repeat those words which must have stung the Christ-bearing Virgin and her husband: "No room at the Inn." With no time for a proper waiting, our prayer will have to be a meditation on the importance of each infant who appears at our door during this time. These, too, are God's children and anointed by God for a special purpose.

We celebrated the American secular holiday of Thanksgiving with a lot of fervor. Sisters of Mercy came, some even in Puritan dress, to prepare a worthy feast. Special attention is given to satisfying (read: stuffing) the guests on that day, hoping that we might be able to induce in them a small feeling of thanks for having been led to this country which remains a frightening wilderness for them. A heavy-duty brunch gave our eating a seven hour headstart.

What a joy it is to see the Ross family finally settled in a house in East St. Louis. Bobbie, who is expecting a child in January, and her five children, Catherine, Oliver, Mary Elizabeth, Patricia and Stephanie are especially loved by us.

It was anguishing to see them adrift for so long, due in no small part to the irresponsibility of Bobbie's former landlord. The school-aged children still attend the St. Nicholas School (at 18th & Lucas) and they have managed many visits to us already. And then former guest Lisa McDuffie and her genuine Gerber-babies have moved into the dwelling that adjoins the Ross's. I predict that many of us will be killing two birds with one stone and visiting that address with frequency.

After a month of "checking us out", Tim Pekarek, the pride of Joplin, Missouri, (as far as we're concerned), has decided to join our community. One candidate you might have missed on your November ballot is Becky Hassler, two-day-a-week volunteer. She's running for Sister of Mercy and she gets my vote every time she rescues me from a scary morning of house-taking. The Mercy novice time slot on Thursday is being capably filled by Srs. Tina and (yet another) Becky. Their predecessor, Sr. Liz Duckworth, is causing an outbreak of schoolboy crushes at an Oklahoma City grade school. We gave her a Ronayne's send-off the night before her solemn vows-taking in August.



We see less of Sr. Carol since she has increased her responsibilities with St. Nicholas School, but she is still climbing the grade to our back parking lot to pick up the kids for school every morning, stopping by the kitchen for perhaps a moment to snatch a half-dozen messages off the refrigerator. Our guests continue to rely on Carol for placement services. Her notoriety in the near north side can be illustrated by a local landlady I was talking with the other day who kept referring to us as "Carol House".

EMMETT McAULIFFE was trained as a lawyer, is a member of the Cass community, and moonlights as a waiter in a Central West End restaurant.

If I slip, it's to say "Zack House", since Mr. Davisson, as maintenance director, is the one whom "without which not". Zack's response to a bleak-painted feasibility study on restoring our front porch was to calmly announce that he was going to raise \$100,000. Zack will be plying his teaching talents at Judevine Center next semester. Stanley is enduring his job teaching for the Tri-A Outreach Center at Matthews-Dickey Boy's Club with patience and humor.

Virginia Deuhe, our resident role model for prayer, is forsaking her urban hermit role here to join the Witness for Peace in Nicaragua. We will add her name to that of Mary Dutcher and many others whom we remember in our prayers for their important work in this area. We celebrated this year's

feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe with zeal in anticipation of her pilgrimage to the meaning of Guadalupe: God's love for the Latin American church. Adios and may God be with you, my fellow traveller!

The guests that have been staying with us since we reopened in September must surely have been the best possible. I have made many new friendships from among them. Yet in January we are facing the prospect of having to limit our number slightly because of a shortage of volunteers to be on duty during the daytime. I encourage each member of our support community to consider taking a shift. Come and witness the beauty of our guests who never fail to show us why our Lord said "blessed are you poor." Blessed are we that have known them. 

From Karen House

by Lee Carter

As I sit here thinking back over the past year, the changes that have taken place and the people who have passed through the doors of Karen House, I wonder what the New Year will bring.

We are preparing for Christmas. It is kind of sad that Pete and Tom aren't with the community any more. But Pete comes by quite often, and I'm sure she will be here for Christmas. Maybe Tom, too, for a visit. Mary is still in Nicaragua. So we will have to say a prayer for her.

Clare and I have been baking cookies. Teka joined our cookie baking today, while Sharon's doing her baking at the Little House. Hope there's some left for Christmas. We have so many willing samplers. (Mark never did spend so much time in the kitchen as he has since the cookie baking started).

Mark and Pat are putting plastic up at the windows to keep out the cold winter wind which will soon be howling around our heads. Wedding bells will be ringing for Joe and Clare in early Summer. We are all very happy for them and wish them much happiness.



Ron and Toby, the "Shady Grove" folk singers were here and entertained our guests and several of our wonderful volunteers. We are always glad to see Ron and Toby. They have been here several times, so it seems they are part of our family.

Myrrah is getting to be a big girl, and Kane is still greeting everyone who comes in the back yard. Mark Sweetin came by for Mass. Mark used to be a volunteer here, and we were all delighted to see him. He will soon be going to Korea as a lay missionary. Good luck, Mark.

Christmas will soon be here, and as usual I'm not ready. Oh, well! Maybe I'll do better next year.

We wish our many friends who have helped us in so many ways a very merry Christmas and God's blessings the coming year. 

LEE CARTER, known respectfully as Miss Lee among our guests, is one whose inconspicuous presence is essential to the day-to-day operation of our house of hospitality. Often first to volunteer to fill the gaps which arise in our work, to many of our guests Lee's willingness to sacrifice embodies the spirit of Karen House.

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Casting My Ballot For God's Reign

by Mark Scheu

This election year I took what for me is an irrevocable step. For the first time I purposely chose not to vote for any presidential nominee, nor for any federal Congress person. This was a very painful decision for me. I came to understand it as an expression of the maturation of my understanding of the relation of faith to politics, as influenced by the Catholic Worker.

I know many who voted for Mondale. He had at least "endorsed" the Freeze, chosen a female running mate, and represented "less evil" than Reagan. Yet I could not bring myself to vote for Mondale, nor any candidate. Admittedly, I was embittered by the treatment the Democratic power structure had accorded to Jesse Jackson, who alone had heroically advocated a progressive vision. I felt that it was somehow wrong to give away my vote to Mondale, a candidate who did not deserve it and who had done little to earn it, apart from being the only practical alternative to Reagan. A powerful argument can be made that the "lesser-evil" option often ensures the ultimate victory of the greater evil. But this in itself was not the determinative factor in my decision.

I need hardly add that I, like others, have great concern about our policies in Central America. For some this was the decisive issue, and I, too, felt the pull of this priority. But in examining Mondale's pledges about Central America, I did not discern that great a difference. It spoke more of a vain hope. Have the Democrats proved fruitful in this regard in the past? Was it not Kennedy who inaugurated the counter-insurgency program in South America and approved the invasion of Cuba? Was it not Johnson who waged war in Southeast Asia? Was there any evidence to suggest that Mondale would have the gumption to plot a new course? Indeed, by voting for Mondale, would I not be endorsing the shift to the right that he

had taken over the last several months of the campaign? For it is clear that this shift only made the use of force in Central America, the willingness to tolerate human rights' violations for the sake of misguided political objectives, more acceptable to the electorate. How could I in good conscience be part of this by saying yes to this candidate?

I have also borne in mind that those who formed the Catholic Worker tradition, namely Dorothy Day, Peter Maurin, and Anson Hennacy among others, did not condescend to vote in such elections. This in itself was not given too much weight in my deliberations. I would not allow myself to be over-influenced by the behavior of others, even those I greatly respect. Still, I asked myself, had anything changed since their time to make it more meaningful to participate in such elections now?

To my mind contradictions abounded in this campaign. Mondale pledged himself on the one hand to a freeze on nuclear weapons and on the other hand to the Trident nuclear submarine program--the deadliest component in this nation's first strike arsenal. He denounced Reagan's cutbacks in social services but failed to commit himself to restore any. Deceit, too, was omnipresent. Reagan disavowed previous remarks exposing his incompetence, dissembled his transparent policy of conquest through force in Central America, and pretended to invest himself in serious negotiations with representatives of the "evil empire". Each time throughout the campaign that a lie was too blatant to be overlooked or dismissed, it was termed a "misstatement" and grudgingly corrected. Bush seemed to excel at this.

Issues were lost as the candidates fell over one another in the attempt to project a positive and attractive image through slogans and poses. The best and most successful was "America is back and standing tall." The so-called debates epitomized the further commercialization and trivialization of the entire electoral process. There was no substantive discussion of issues. What of the impoverishment of over five million people in this country in the last four years? What of the administration's support of the racist government of South Africa? What of the further

MARK SCHEU, Librarian and Karen House Community Member, was seen leaving the ballot box on election day with a furtive sort of smile gracing his face.

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growth in the militarization of our economy? In the end, one's choice was reduced to either an annual increase in the defense budget of 3-4% or 9-10%. One felt somehow debased by the slightest participation in this tawdry show. If it was not relevant to vote in the 1930's, 40's, and 50's, it could hardly be of greater significance now.



Still, the overriding concern for me grew out of more personal considerations, which were nonetheless inextricably linked to the world at large and my commitment to it. Every four years at this time a struggle takes place within me. I yearn for justice, as do many others. I so desire to see the weapons denied and the poor cared for. At my best, I want so much to participate in the breaking in of the reign of God. Each election year I am lured to believe that the President of the United States or the Congress will somehow play a positive role in this process. If only one can get the right person in office conditions will improve, God's will may be more approximated, peace might break out. The enthusiasm which always accompanies a presidential campaign--the hopes aroused, the idealism which surfaces, the polemics which engage the mind and the promises which engage the heart--all are so wonderfully seductive. There seems to be so much at stake, how can one refuse to be involved?

But it is all a great delusion. Worse, it is a temptation to grasp a key which promises to open a door onto the Reign of God. Yet only hell lies behind that door. When we look to Washington and the powers of this land for salvation we are turning to the power of evil shrouded in the garments of a bureaucrat. It is the same temptation that Jesus refused when Satan offered him all the kingdoms of the world.

A vote for Mondale would foster in me such delusions: that strength can bring peace; that the power of God issues from demonic principalities, not humble people; that our course can be reversed by the same means with which it was launched and endures. To pull a switch in the voting booth would only trigger all these false expectations, it would only serve to open the way into a false reality. For the lure of this world of political machinations is denied by the greater reality of a God who entered creation as a helpless infant, the child of two people who were unremarkable in all but the utmost simplicity of their devotion to God. That child saved the world. To participate in the election is to assert that the power to destroy the world can save it. Such power demands only absolute renunciation.

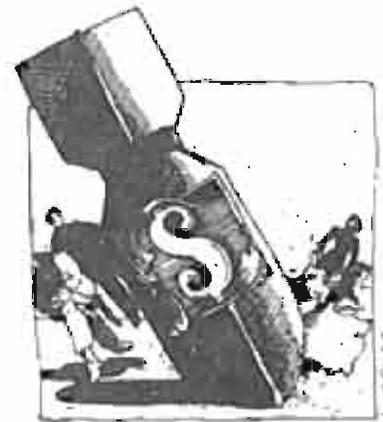
This power of destruction did not develop as an accident, nor did it come as a gift of God, as Phyllis Schlafly contends. It grew out of the very nature of the powers and principalities of this world. The state as a fallen power will always stand in opposition to the coming of the Reign of God. The state knows only power, coercion, violence, hierarchy, and wealth. Yet God's Reign is denoted by submission, peace, unity, and sharing. No more explicit a repudiation of the agenda of the state exists than the Beatitudes, which lie at the core of the Gospel, as well as at the heart of the Catholic Worker tradition.



In a democracy there is greater confusion, because the state claims to represent the interests of its citizens. If the majority of our citizens are Christian, then why not our nation? This is the form that idolatry enters into our life in this country. Instead of directing our attention to God, we are distracted by the pretensions of the state, which gladly accepts the authority which such civil religion yields to it. There is a failure to perceive that our "democratic" society does not coincide with God's Reign. No power of this world does. There is a failure to look beyond the slogans which are associated with our nation: freedom, liberty, justice for all. The degree to which these values have been realized by our nation is problematic. There is a failure to remember that the Lord did not call his followers to become a ruling majority, but only a faithful remnant. For the sake of reform, we are prepared to renounce the Christian calling of suffering love, repentance, conversion, and revolution. All governments remain under the sway of the fallen powers and principalities. The ultimate vision given in Revelation is that of the state as the Beast, whose ambition is to kill or co-opt the saints. The modern nation-states have truly taken on the proportions of the Beast in Revelation. The call to the believer is to abandon the Beast so as not to share in its destruction.

To vote for Mondale, to vote for anyone running for national office, would only nourish the illusion that something divine can emerge from this Beast--this political entity we call the United States. No, I say, no to the political pundits, no to the candidates and their advocates, and no to my companions who lead me to believe otherwise--get thee behind me, Satan. I will not sanction a system that has become so demonic that it threatens to destroy all creation with such insouciance.

**"The Lord did not call his followers
to be a ruling majority, but a
faithful remnant."**



This insight proved invaluable to me in clarifying my approach to the issues of the late campaign. Take for instance the controversy over Ferraro's stance on abortion. I, too, found myself initially struggling over the difficulty of to what extent a committed Christian should expect to work for the embodiment of their values in public law, especially on a national level. Yet by the radical insight of the demonic nature of our political system, I discovered that I was asking the wrong questions. The issue needed to be addressed at a deeper level. Regarding Ferraro and her candidacy, the question should have been reformulated to whether a Christian has any business whatsoever even aspiring toward a high-level position in the federal government. In view of our nation's production of genocidal weapons, gross violations of human rights, and perpetuation of a system which so inequitably distributes the goods of this world, how could one in good conscience want to occupy a seat in the very belly of the Beast? The unprecedented power which our nation has appropriated is in itself blasphemous. To run for office, even with the ambition to introduce reform, severely compromises one's faith. To hold office in the federal government would necessarily condone that government's policies to an intolerable degree.

After all, how can we expect the federal government to put an end to abortion? The profound disrespect for life itself which undergirds so much of our nation's policies, which allows people to go hungry and homeless, upholds the very "value" system which allows abortion to flourish. The federal government cannot overcome the evil of abortion, it is one of the very sources.

Nonetheless, it is fair to ask whether it is self-indulgent and self-serving to deny the validity of participating in politics at a national level so as not to compromise oneself. How will this make the world a better place? The world will be a better place when it is made up of better people. I insist that at our best, we can only strive to live as our minds inform us and as our consciences dictate to us. To aim to do less than that serves only the self we are called to deny, for it frustrates that divine force in each of us which beckons us forward toward Truth and toward God. To sanction the aspirations of any candidate would have been an act of self-denial, a refusal to integrate this stage of my understanding of self, the world, and God. In accordance with Catholic Worker personalism, one must live as if the Reign of God is come. Just as any personal compromise I negotiate with my conscience can only damage my relationship to God, so any concession I make to this nation's claim of "In God We Trust" can only inhibit the coming of God's Reign. We must aim to forge a true and solid bond between our conscience and our conduct.

When done in this spirit, the refusal to vote is not self-indulgent, for it asks more of one, not less. It contradicts the illusion that the shadow under which this nation has fallen is the fault of one person, or one party. The spirit of selfishness, of "me first" and "we're number one" of "live now and care not for tomorrow", cannot be exercised by voting out one person. The responsibility for the reckless and mean-spirited policies of this nation do not lie with one person, but with each and every one of us. By casting the burden of this responsibility on the shoulders of



"A nation that continues to spend more money on Military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death."

Martin Luther King Jr.

one we do him an injustice, and more importantly, evade our own responsibility. Reagan is evoked by the very spirit of this nation. The only way to rid ourselves of him is for each of us to take more seriously our responsibility for who we are on a personal level and what we are doing on a corporate level. Reagan alone cannot build a single nuclear weapon. It requires the skills of thousands, the cooperation of millions, and the tacit consent of all of us through the payment of federal taxes.

"We must be clear and consistent

in the disassociation of our mission

from that of the state."

The more we realize that Reagan is not the source of our troubles, but only a symptom, the less important it becomes to replace him. The less the interests of God are tied to the political structures of this state, the more we realize that our hope lies elsewhere. A withdrawal from the affairs of the world is not what is called for. We must simply be clear and consistent in the disassociation of our mission from that of the state. Christians are not called to rule the state, but to live as communities of love in contradiction to it. We are called, as Peter Maurin was so fond of saying, to build a new society within the shell of the old. Our loyalty is to another Realm, which is not some ideal beyond history any more than not voting is an empty gesture. The Realm of God is the sovereign power of love present and active in history. Not to vote is to refuse to be diverted from its pursuit any longer. Let us carry out our duties as citizens of that Realm.



Community Prayer:

AT KAREN HOUSE:
Tuesday at 9:00 p.m.

AT CASS HOUSE:
Wednesday at 7:15 p.m.

Come pray with us.

-SPEAKERS-

The Catholic Worker Movement is over 51 years old. We have a long and rich tradition of trying to witness to the values of pacifism, voluntary poverty, the corporal works of mercy and racial and social justice. We are eager to share our story with you, our readers. If you would like one of us to speak to your group, please call us at 621-4052 (Karen House) or 621-3085 (Cass House).

-VOLUNTEERS-

We wish to thank those who gift us with support, both volunteers and those who donate money and food. Both Karen House and Cass House need more volunteers to take house and cook meals; Karen House needs someone to help regularly with maintenance. Anyone feel handy out there?

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THE ROUND TABLE

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