

Strike Reports

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 another 20 newsmen. Just before 1 p.m. a double column line of 41 people began walking slowly toward the barricades the police had set up in front of the AEC entrance. We could see the AEC employees standing at windows all the way up to the 10th story.

As we approached the AEC entrance the police formed a line at the open end of the barricaded area. Those of us in the front of the line walked up to the police and asked to pass. At the same time those behind walked to the sides and started crawling under the barricades. A number of people, including two from the CW, were kicked, dragged and flipped over in their attempts to sit down. There was at no time any outbreak of violence on the part of the demonstrators and by 1:10 we were sitting quietly around the building's front door. There we remained until the end of the day when the employees had all left—around 5:15. There were no arrests for the sit-downers though one person, Mike Graine, who stood at the front door of the building waiting to be let in to talk to some of the AEC employees, was eventually knocked down by a policeman and dragged away with a charge of assault which was certainly not true. A group of older, well dressed men, about 8 of them, left late in the afternoon, choosing not to use the side entrance, and shocked all of us by their brutality—kicking, gouging and so on. One torn tendon resulted, some cuts and bruises and one person was hospitalized briefly. Probably the greatest discomfort, though, was the cold rain that lasted about half of the demonstration.

The demonstration ended leaving us cold and hungry, but I think it had quite an effect on the AEC. Perhaps we helped in reaching some of the people there.

Jean Morton, Nelson Barr, Bob Kaye, Charlie Butterworth, Elin Paulson, Mark Samara, Carol Kramer and I had come from the CW to the demonstration. We received George Johnson's continued support throughout the afternoon—including his gloves.
 Jim Forest

Every night during the Strike I picketed the U.S. Mission to the U.N. (45th St. & 1st Ave.) from 10 p.m. to 1 or 2 a.m. Walter Kerell joined me every night at 11 o'clock, and a couple of times Bob Steed picketed for a while. The first night Lucille joined us, and the last night Arthur Lacey came. Usually others were there before and after us, and sometimes with us. Monday through Thursday nights it was bitterly cold and we picketed on 45th St. to get out of the wind, thus constantly passing in front of the night entrance to the Mission, where a guard was seated at a desk. One of the guards was friendly and twice walked me to the corner when he went off duty, chatting and wishing us well.

We met few people, as it is a lonely spot at that time of night. Some people walk their dogs between 10 and 11, a few others walk by later on, the cleaning women come out of the Mission after midnight, and lone policemen walk by fairly often. Quite a few cars go up 1st Ave., and many taxis and news trucks. Once on my way to get coffee I met some union members picketing their firm, also on a 24-hour vigil. I gave them one of our leaflets and said we were on strike for peace. "We're on strike for money," one of them said.

Walter and I talked with a policeman on Friday night. He started by asking us if we didn't think we were wasting our time! He had been the night before to a meeting of a group that wants to abolish the House Un-American Activities Committee. The meeting was picketed, and the people going in called the picketers

"fascists." This shocked the policeman, and we agreed that name-calling is always bad. There is no more reason to call them fascists than to call us communists. I mentioned Carl Braden and we spoke of the South. The policeman said he thought integration was fine but should not be forced. Still, he was all in favor of the sit-ins. He said finally that true conservatism was the best thing, and Walter said yes, together with true radicalism. The policeman didn't see that. He offered Jefferson as a true conservative, and when I said that in his day Jefferson was called a Jacobin and rabble-rouser he threw up his hands and went on up his beat, laughing a little in friendly disagreement.

Saturday night Arthur and I had a long talk with two young couples in a car. They knew of the C.W. and the Living Theater and had many questions about the Strike. Later that night, about 12:45, a truck of the N.Y. Mirror drew up. The driver turned out to be a member of CNVA and was a very lively fellow indeed. When I said we were from the Catholic Worker, he danced all around in his enthusiasm, especially when I mentioned Ammon. He entertained us for about 20 minutes and then leaped in his truck and disappeared!

Arthur left soon after, then at 2 o'clock Walter, Alfred Chester and I ended our vigil, leaving two others to go on into the night.
 Judith Gregory

The AEC Vigil

The past four mornings have found me trudging cross-town to the Atomic Energy Commission at the dark hour of two to carry on the vigil there until six. The vigils took place at nine points in Manhattan twenty-four hours a day for the strike week. At the AEC the first morning there were three of us—Jim Forest, Ina, a waitress from one of the Village's coffee houses, and myself. Ina is over here from Holland and told us of various demonstrations she helped with in Holland. Snow and bitter cold greeted us the second morning so that we vigiled in shifts, between coffee shop and the AEC. About five the friendly guard let us in to warm up. Saturday morning Jim was too tired so I went alone, a bit late, to find Frances Witlan talking with a passerby. About a half hour later, after admitting she had only eight hours of sleep through the week, she left and Pete Giffin continued the discussion with our curious friend. None of them thought they had made any headway with the persistent man but maybe they did. It was fairly warm and much better than the night before, although our feet got soaked from the snow. Pete left about 4:30 and we were joined by a skin-diver from Miami, a friend of Ina's, who stayed till we left at 6:30. When I left the coffee shop two fellows from a nearby plant who had just finished work came over with me and joined the picketing until we left, taking a bunch of strike leaflets to give to their fellow workers. They said they knew a lot of people who worked with them would be interested in the peace movement. Several times Ina ran out to trucks and cars which stopped at the red light and offered leaflets which they took. Our last morning it was warm and there were quite a few of us. Vivian Neuman, who sat in with us at the AEC Tuesday and is active in the Student Peace Union, came with us and others came and went during the four hours—a Living Theatre actor, a fellow from Wall Street, and Milt somebody who kept telling us how wonderful his new hammock was to sleep in. Two fellows stopped by in their car and talked to Jim for quite a while and brought coffee back to us. At 6 Jim and I left while two other fellows stayed on.



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The vigiling, I think, was one of the most effective parts of the Strike. Everyone the vigilers came in contact with was impressed with the fact that people cared enough to stand out in the cold for hours for peace.

Elin Paulson

Civil Defense Protest

During the Strike week, the two fallout shelters at Grand Central Station and Penn Station were picketed. The shelters are modernized, cozy little box cottages which can be paid for on a twenty year installment plan—taking the optimistic outlook. At both railway stations the two people assigned to distribute leaflets were forcibly removed by police and later returned with a group of picketers to demonstrate non-violent protest. In both instances the police permitted the picketers to demonstrate and distribute leaflets near the fallout shelters. Many commuters stopped to speak to the picketers. There was more sympathy than usual toward this phase of the strike demonstrations since the awareness of shelters as a big business hoax seems to have caught on among the general public.

Jean Morton

Times Square Sit-down

From 750 to 1000 of us concluded the activities of the General Strike in a walk from our party in the Village to a silent vigil in Times Square. The walk was full of singing; it was not cold; there were many young teenagers. And in the huge masses of New York and in our own huge mass, there were now the familiar beautiful intense faces come together and walking. There were shouts of "Ban the bomb" and to most of us it had a harsh sound, of violence. But there was also the song that has been so much a part of the General Strike—We shall overcome—we shall live in peace—we shall brothers be—deep in our hearts we do believe. In Times Square we sat for fifteen minutes in silence in a large intersection. The mammoth neon signs completely surrounded and towered over us, holding back the peace of the real night, but lighting the beautiful faces.
 Carol Kramer

Nuclear War

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 thousand miles of forest fire.

St. Augustine, for instance, agrees with Tolstoy that the causes of war are as close to us as human politics, human economics, and human morals.

Because neither our political entities nor our economic organization has been built upon the concept of the real unity of the world, it has followed that our moral attitudes have reflected only too surely our economic myopia and our political unbalance. For what, after all, can be more absurd than this small planet of ours should be relegated into armed groupings each bent on its own economic aggrandisement while paying lip-service to the need for a just distribution of the world's wealth?

We must again quote St. Augustine, who states with marvellous

prescience: "The society of men, scattered throughout the world in countries most diverse, is nevertheless bound together in the union of one and the same nature." That a world order is as natural a human unit as the family, the saint makes clear again: "The first circle of human society is the home, the second is the city, and after the state or city, comes the world—the third circle of human society."

Eight hundred years after St. Augustine's death in 430 A.D., St. Thomas Aquinas, after epitomising in his Summa Theologica Augustine's principles of justice in war maintains that the lawful Prince has a right to embark upon a just war only if "he has no higher tribunal to which he can go to obtain satisfaction."

—To be continued next issue . . .
 (from Unity, Montreal)

Thomas Merton On the Strike

January 29, 1961

Dear Jim:

It is really quite providential that the Peace article I wrote for the Commonweal Christmas issue was held up by the censors and is now appearing this week, in conjunction with the General Strike for Peace. I do hope it helps even a little bit. Anyway, my heart goes with it, and I am with you all in spirit. I am glad that in that article I explicitly mentioned the point that all people, the ordinary people; the ones who don't want war, the ones who get it in the neck, the ones who really want to build a decent new world in which there will not be war and starvation, these should know the power of their witness against war, and the effect they can have by protest and refusal of cooperation in immoral war efforts.

Of course the tragedy is that the vast majority of people do not understand the meaning of this kind of witness. In their pitiful, blind craving for undisturbed security, they feel that agitation for peace is somehow threatening to them. They do not feel at all threatened by the bomb, for some reason, but they feel terribly threatened by some little girl student carrying a placard, or by some poor workingman striking in protest. Somehow they feel that it is after all possible for people to change their mind and revise their whole attitude towards a setup that has its enormous disadvantages but—at least it is "what we are used to, and please God don't ask us to get used to something else." Unfortunately, the bomb is going to impose a terrible adjustment on those who may be left around to adjust. And it is with this that people want to defend themselves. We have to have deep patient compassion for the fears of men, for the fears and irrational mania of those who hate us or condemn us.

My Mass on February 1st, the Feast of St. Ignatius Martyr of Antioch, will be for all of the strikers everywhere in the world and for all who yearn for a true peace, all who are willing to shoulder the great burden of patiently working, praying and sacrificing themselves for peace. We will never see the results in our time, even if we manage to get through the next five years without being incinerated. Really we have to pray for a total and profound change in the mentality of the whole world. What we have known in the past as Christian penance is not a deep enough concept if it does not comprehend the special problems and dangers of the present age. Hairshirts will not do the trick, though there is no harm in mortifying the flesh. But vastly more important is the complete change of heart and the totally new outlook on the world of man. We have to see our duty to mankind as a whole. We must not fail in this duty which God is imposing on us with his own hand.

The great problem is this inner change, and we must not be so obsessed with details of policy that we block the deeper development in other people and in ourselves. The strike is to be regarded, I think, as an application of spiritual force and not the use of merely political pressure. We all have the great duty to realize the deep need for purity of soul, that is to say the deep need to possess in us the Holy Spirit, to be possessed by Him. This takes precedence over everything else. If He lives and works in us, then our activity will be true and our witness will generate love of the truth, even though we may be persecuted and beaten down in apparent incomprehension.

Thanks for the issues of last month's C.W. Did I thank you for the Christmas letter? The singing outside the Ladies' Jail warmed my heart. I wish I had been there with you. Small things like that have very great Christian meaning, so much more than a lot of more formal and pompous gestures.

I got a beautiful letter from a nun in Haiti, talking about the people there. Maybe they are among the very poorest on the face of the earth. One feels that Christ is almost visible among them, in them, in their poverty; in their abandonment, their destitution; why does no one look to see the face of Christ and to come to Him with help? But meanwhile His Heart has assumed all their sorrow, all the injustice done to them, and while He will comfort them, He will also do what He does, in mystery, to restore the balance, the violated order.

God was seemingly never more absent from the world and yet His Christ, the Word, is walking about all around us all over the face of the earth, and in a terrible hour.

With all affection to Dorothy and to all of you. Thank her for her good letter which I will answer. I am praying for all those intentions, tell her please.

God's love and blessing to all Christ's poor and all who yearn with Him for peace,
 Tom Merton

Note: This letter was delivered at the AEC sit-down the second day of the General Strike for Peace and read by the participants.