

# the catholic peace fellowship

*An educational service conducted by Catholic members of the Fellowship of Reconciliation*

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Dear Tom:

Well, it looks as if they have done it. Reports are that this is the second day of bombing of Hanoi. According to pre-arranged plans some of our fellow-workers are preparing for a manifestation of civil disobedience somewhere in New York. I promised Dorothy that I wouldn't get myself in jail in the reasonably near future, so I am going to sit this one out and keep to the job here in the office.

I have owed you a letter for a while. I should have told you right away, knowing how difficult it is for you to have access to the means of mass communication, that my co-defendants and I received six months sentences from Judge Murphy. We were very grateful. The newspaper photographers and the TV cameramen seemed rather perplexed to see us in such good humor as we emerged from the Court House. All the men clapping our backs, the women beaming and the children chirping away. But we had been prepared for two-or-three-year sentences and therefor six months seemed like something we could do standing on our heads. We won't know whether we will have to serve the six months until the Supreme Court hears the case or refuses to. It will probably take a year. If we win in the Supreme Court, all the better. We will have changed the structure of the law just a tiny bit. If we don't, well six months is just long enough to just learn what a prison is all about, and is not so long a period of time that would cause any serious dislocations in our family life.

Jim Wilson's is another story though. Jim received a three-year sentence last week from Judge Robert Shaw, at the Federal Court House in Newark, New Jersey. This upset me quite a lot. Jim is a very tender young man, 22 years old. He is recently married and his wife is expecting a baby. She also is very young, and very tender. I fear much more for a sensitive soul like Jim than I would for a mean, old hardened pacifist like me. Everyone at the Worker loves Jim, and so everyone is quite upset. I wasn't able to make it to the sentencing, but my wife went, with our baby. There were three nursing mothers there as well. After the sentencing was over, one of the Marshalls went up to a bystander who was not associated with our group and asked whether he knew what was the meaning of the demonstration in the Courtroom. "What demonstration?" "All those women with their tits sticking out!" It seems so unnatural to see nursing mothers in a Courtroom. It didn't seem unnatural to us, but that is the way the world is. The Marshalls had thrown my son out of Court much earlier, because he persisted in reading aloud to his mother. We are keeping the press clipping that said that Tom Cornell's



21-month old son had to be taken out of the Courtroom because he persisted in reading aloud to his mother. He was actually pointing to pictures in a little booklet and shouting out words like egg.

I am meeting with Dr. Mark Stern tonight, and some other people, to see if we can figure out something to do for Jim. One of the Catholic Worker girls is living with his wife, Raona, and as far as we know Jim has just been moved to Danbury, Connecticut. We will be able to get Raona to see him without much difficulty, but at this point it seems that it might be appropriate to write letters to Judge Shaw at the Federal Court House in Newark asking him to reduce the sentence. It doesn't seem to serve any reasonable concept of justice to imprison Jim Wilson, that he would be of much more service to the community right where he was at the Catholic Worker, and as the father of his child who will be born in just about four months.

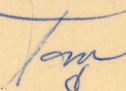
You may remember that Jim burned his draft card with me and the others and that he pleaded guilty. He was given a suspended sentence on that. But he also refused induction last year, and he pleaded guilty to that, and received the three-year sentence. Jim would qualify as a conscientious objector if he had sought that classification. His sincerity is transparent. His claim is based on religious belief, and it is radically pacifist, against participation in any form of war. Therefore, he would clearly qualify. But he did not want to avail himself of the protection of a law which does not protect other men of equally good conscience who because they might not be traditionally religious or because they do not object to all forms of war are not covered. So perhaps letters that stressed this to Judge Shaw might result in a shortening of the sentence.

Beyond that I don't know what we can do for Jim at this point. Perhaps at the meeting at Dr. Stern's tonight we will figure some way of starting an amnesty group for prisoners of conscience, to keep the public aware of what happens to men in Jim's position. It seems to me that we have really fallen down on this aspect of the job in past years. There was never a time even at the height of the McCarthy era that the Communists had even half the number of men in jail as the peace movement had. And yet they caused such a furor over their persecution that everyone was well aware of it. Perhaps we shouldn't let our men go off to jail so quietly.

We have been having very good times with Lanza del Vasto and his wife, Chanterelle. They will be going back to Spain the day after tomorrow. He was out at Immaculate Heart College and at the Commonweal Club in California. The two of them went to Detroit and Boston and here to New York together. I went to Boston with them. He has been drawing very enthusiastic crowds though rather upsettingly small. He is used to attracting far greater numbers. But then again he hasn't been published in English as he has been in French and Spanish, so there isn't too much to build on. He wanted very much to be able to get down to see you. But I guess we will have to wait until another time around.

Best wishes for this Christmas season, and for a grace-filled New Year.

Faternally,



Tom