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From: **Scott Schaeffer-Duffy** <theresecw2@gmail.com>

Date: Mon, Jan 1, 2018 at 5:58 PM

Subject: Responses to Tom Cornell

Dear Michele, Ciaron, Joanne, Frank, Art, and Mark,

Peace! I have really appreciated all the sharing that has gone on regarding the questions of property destruction and nonviolence. I especially appreciated your reflection, Michele, because it was written in a humble "I could be wrong" approach, which I think is more invitational than blunt propositions. I felt hurt and anger in your response Ciaron. Given how much you have devoted to the Plowshares movement, I am not surprised. I can understand your feelings in many ways. When I was sent to jail for a year, I received a letter from a friend criticizing my presentation of nonviolence. This friend has not been jailed or been in a war zone. Similarly, those of us who went to Bosnia with Mir Sada took quite a bit of criticism in *Year One*. We only saw the articles while we were en route to a campaign, which might well have cost us our lives. In both instances, some good criticism and some that was faulty was raised, but I wasn't in the space to hear either at that time.

I think we all can agree that it is better to take action, even if it is flawed (as every action ultimately will be), against injustice than to do nothing. I think we all can also agree that every action should be evaluated and, if possible, improved in the future.

The Plowshares, like Catonsville, were deeply spiritual actions with the destruction of property integral to the taking of lives. The actors took responsibility for their actions and did all in their power to prevent harm to others. They, as Michele pointed out, moved many people in court and in jail. I especially recall, as Michele did, Judge Lord's comments.

For me, today's question of the relationship between property destruction and pragmatism: We all want to see lives saved, but, as Catholic Workers, I hope we do not want to compel our opponents. Ideally, our actions and the spirit in which they are undertaken will move hearts and minds closer to peace. If we do maximum destruction and use the language of pragmatic change, disparaging other actions of nonviolence as lesser, ineffectual, or cowardly, we risk tearing apart the peace community and alienating those we hope to reach.

From my experience, the question of effectiveness is best left up to God. I have seen some actions bloom into huge affairs and others make no apparent impact at all. Sometimes those actions have been just a letter or an article or a talk and at other times they have been acts of civil disobedience after months of outreach, vigils, and fasting. Sometimes those actions have taken place in war zones or in jails. The results have been so varied that I have given up calling any action in advance anything other than what seems to need to be done at a given time. God sorts it all out. In one instance, I met a woman who worked in a nuclear plant where we vigiled every Friday for 8 years, who is now a peace activist who comes to our weekly vigil. She says it was the slow drip, drip, drip of our presence in all weather. We had no idea at the time if anyone in the plant was moved at all.

Like all of us, Tom Cornell writes out of his experience. He is plagued by a belief that his draft card burning led to Roger Laporte's self-immolation. I think he is too hard on himself and he's making too big a leap, but he is entitled to his view and could be right. Like all of us, his experience color his reaction to property destruction.

Jessica and her co-defendant are passionate about the urgency to see change, to achieve results. They disparage other actions, they have employed and others continue to employ, as ineffectual. They have raised the question of whether or not peacemakers should do maximum destruction and even do so without remaining at the scene to be arrested. They are facing very serious consequences for their actions. In that context, they, as I was, might resent criticism.

Nonetheless, I think Catholic Workers need to weigh in on what nonviolence means to them and whether or not various tactics are good for our movement. If we share our views as our views and not Gospel truth, maybe we can gain from each other.

Some of Jessica's ideas were raised years ago by Peter Lumsdaine, a Plowshares activist who felt we should do maximum damage, leave the scene, and do the same thing over and over in other locations. Phil Berrigan strongly disagreed with him, but that doesn't make it wrong per se. Arguments could be made that such an approach would lead to more governmental oppression, violence from the opposition, and a public perception that we are terrorists rather than peacemakers. Whether or not such tactics would achieve the speedy results Jessica and all of us hope for is far from as clear as she believes

I am curious to know if any of you have concerns about Jessica's approach. I respect you all and value your opinions.

Tom's article in the NY CW objected to all property destruction. I think he went too far. Dorothy may have had misgivings (like Thomas Merton and a lot of people in the 60's, she had well-placed concerns about the prospect of violence), but she did speak in support of Catonsville and did not condemn The King of Prussia. The Catholic Workers who removed the sword from the statue of Christ in Australia, like those who hammered on the side of the Trident submarine, conveyed to me faithfulness more than pragmatism. The actions spoke to me of hope. Jessica's statements speak to me of fear, anger, and anxiety. Those of you who know her personally have a different take I'm sure. We should not disrespect each other. Although some of you may not have taken it this way, I know that Joanne makes a conscious effort not to use the NY CW paper to tell other CW communities how to or not to act. At the same time, the NY CW and each of us has to do our best to present how to or not to apply CW principles, the Gospel, and inspiration from the Holy Spirit to new challenges and times.

In any event, I hope we can all continue to exchange ideas and inspire each other to redouble our own efforts to be faithful followers of the Prince of Peace. Let's discuss tactics, philosophy, and theology, but refrain from personal attacks. We are not and will never be a community of absolute conformity, and, as far as I'm concerned, we shouldn't be. Our strength is our diversity. I don't want to cast anyone out and couldn't even if I tried.

Onward friends, ever onward!

Scott Schaeffer-Duffy