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Public demonstration against the payment of taxes

Ammon Hennacy

1965

Why do you, a sensible person, now believe that war and the Atomic Bomb are necessary? Why are poor Oriental peasants who have seldom eaten a square meal in their lives choosing to fight us? Why does Communism appeal to so many people? Is it because we have failed as Christians? Why are we in this mess? Because you have sought security outside of yourself instead of accepting responsibility. Because you left matters to the politicians, took their bribes of pensions and subsidies, and their impossible promises of prosperity.

My guilt — For seven years I have refused to pay income taxes for war and bombs. I am fasting for these five days as a penance for not having awakened more people to the fact that the way of Jesus and Gandhi is not the way of the atom bomb. This war [Korea's war], like the last two will not bring peace and freedom. What can you do now? We made a revolution against England and are not free yet. The Russians made a revolution against the Czar and now have an even stronger dictatorship. It is not too late to make a revolution that will mean something — one that will stick; your

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own one-man revolution. It is not too late to be a man instead of a pipsqueak, who is blinded by the love of money.

Are you a producer or a parasite? Why not cease voting for all politicians? Why not refuse to make munitions or to go to war? Why pay income taxes for your own destruction?

I had made a hinge in the middle of the handle of the larger sign so I could carry it on a bus. Jack and I had stayed at Rik's the night before. As we left for the bus-stop a carpenter going to work stopped and gave us a ride most of the way downtown. Jack took the signs and waited in the cool of the Greyhound station while I went to St. Mary's to mass. I asked for guidance and light.

I had a small quantity of leaflets, CW's, and folded tax statements in the back pocket of my Levi's. I had walked the three sides of this block three other times when I picketed against payment of taxes, so the ground was familiar. Shouts of "Go back to Russia, you Commie" were frequent. One Catholic lady who said she had bought CW's from me at St. Mary's cordially took a slip. When I walked on, a man shouted for me to go back to Russia. The lady turned to him and said "Go back to Russia yourself!"

Those who fast do not stop to eat so I kept on during the noon hour. A few now and then greeted me kindly, but most were fearful to be seen speaking to me, and many shouted insults. About 3 p.m. a news reporter and photographer stopped me for an interview. A crowd gathered around. One man was especially noisy, his finger in my face and shouting, "Russia", "the boys in Korea," etc. One big man said that back in his state, they took fellows like me and threw them in the river. "Where do you come from Buddy?" I asked. From Ohio, long the Ohio River," he replied. "So do I, and I was acting like a radical there when I was 16 and no one threw me in" I answered quickly. The crowd laughed. Another big fellow said that if I came back tomorrow with my "damn Communist papers" they would take me out in the desert and throw me up against a cactus and I would stick there. In a very quiet voice, but firmly I said: "You are not really as mean a man as you make out to be." At this the

crowd melted away, although my two interrogators insulted me as I passed by with my sign again. But they could find no one to back them up. Jack had been on the outside of the crowd and a lady told him, not knowing that he was my friend, that I was not a Commie for I picketed here every year.

After 4 p.m. Mr. Schumacher, my tax man, came up and handed me a card which read: Seized for the account of the United States on 8-7-50 by virtue of warrant for distraint issued by the collector of internal revenue, district of Arizona. Deputy Collector.....One poster for picket line.

Actually there were three posters but I handed them over saying that I would get some new ones made and picket the next day. I continued handing out leaflets and CW's without my signs until Rik met me at 5:30 p.m. Rik made new signs that night and marked them "This sign is the personal property of Joseph Craigmyle" but the tax man did not try to take them. The ARIZONA REPUBLIC had a good picture of myself and signs on the page opposite the editorial page. The picture showed my large sign which read:

75% Of Your Income Tax Goes for War And the Bomb

And on the reverse side

I Have Refused to Pay Income Taxes For the Last Seven Years