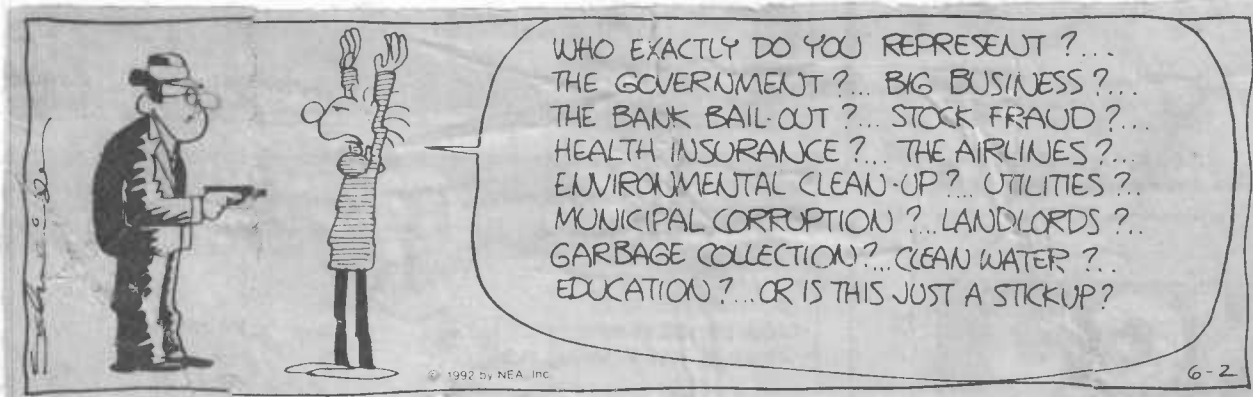


"JUSTICE AND PEACE" BEFORE PEARL HARBOR

Dear Bob,

Thanks for this "Personal Memoir" of a turbulent time we lived through together. We old ones must neither live in the past nor fail to share with the youngers whatever light it may shed on present & future--so I do not apologize for making my response to your enclosed letter in open-letter form.... Your memoir combines memory with research; my piggyback on it combines memory with rereading of my rather extensive diary of the time. (I've been reliving that time by reading, each day, the diary entry of a half-century earlier.).....Patience, man: because it's an open letter, I must include for others some material you need no reminding of. And your copy will come to you with a personal letter included.

1 In this morning's Cape Cod daily, Howie Schneider's "Eek and Meek" well pictures the put-upon feeling of the American public today. Note that the first stickup artist listed is "the government." The voters feel like pulling any lever that says NO. That was how you pacifists felt before Pearl Harbor, some of you even after. "The war system is an evil part of our social order," said the



statement of the 20 Union Theological Seminary students, eight of whom 16 Oct 40 refused to register for the military draft & went to Danbury prison, where pacifist president of CTS Albert Palmer visited them, five then transferring to CTS the next September, matriculating with you. (As you spoke the names of these half-radicals, + a few others associated with them, the faces appeared on that wonderful inner screen God gave us long before television: Bill Lovell, Don Benedict, Meredith Dallas, Dave Dellinger, Geo. Houser, Howard Spragg, Dick Wichei, Joe Bevilaqua, James Farmer, Abe Akaka, Howard Schomer, Serge Hummon, others.)

2 Why "you pacifists" & "half-radicals"? I've never been a pacifist, & I was a full radical (so much so that many years later, the first-mentioned Howard fired me). You pacifists were perfectionist (said statement have, Bill Lovell confesses [in the addendum to your memoir], an "absolutist spirit"): I was a Niebuhr-ian realist. For me, it wasn't just "the war system" that was evil; the system was evil. I would have, & would, revise the UTS students' statement from "The war system is an evil part of our social order" to "War is a part of our evil social order." I was as radical as the Lord's Prayer, praying for the coming of an alternative social order by a divine action that would (to use a Mark Twain figure) make modernist-liberal "kingdom-building" look like a lightning bug in comparison with lightning. Was I, also, perfectionist? Yes, but mine was a transcendent perfectionism, not an historical one.

3 I loved & admired you guys, & still do. My spirit in this letter is reflective, not critical. I'm humbly agnostic as to who chose the better part back in those days, & I can't even figure out whom to vote for in November. Dumb me, I'm just trying to get through the world doing as little damage as possible, + some good. So please reflect on me to your profit, as I'm trying to do on you.

4 You guys **inhabited** justice-&-peace issues, as an evangelical I only **vis-**

ited them. I prayed for peace & did some demonstrating toward opening public facilities for blacks. You & I were in pastoral work in "lily-white" Woodlawn, the black ghetto being close by, just across Cottage Grove Av. You were a professed Social Gospeler, "simply concerned with application of Jesus' teachings and lifestyle to problems in society that made for injustice and conflict." I was not unconcerned about justice-&-peace issues, but my focus was on interiority ("out of the heart are the [private & public] issues of life," Pr.4.23). I concentrated on personal conversation: my diary of today $\frac{1}{2}$ c. ago reports that a certain PhD student "told me how his whole outlook had been changed by a recent conversation with me....now he sees everything in the light of the service of Christ." I was against redlining & restrictive covenants, but ambivalent about it: white Woodlawn was a human community with high social sanctions & low crime--so low I could make pastoral calls any hour of the day or night up the back stairs of row-houses. You & I know that not long after we left, that community lost its homogeneity & was destroyed....At Woodlawn Baptist Church I thrived, converting sinners, edifying saints, witnessing according to my lights for justice & peace: at Woodl. Methodist Church you got fired for your pacifism. God know which honored him more.

5 You'll remember, too, that Saul Alinsky soon brought to Woodlawn his Industrial Areas Foundation, to enrage the people toward social change. Not much good came of it. Woodlawn was-is a lab for questions of human community--what it is, what its strengths & vulnerabilities, what its social (people) & political (government) sanctions for in- & ex-clusion, what its economic base. As the Rio "sustainable development" conference begins tomorrow, all the human-community issues will be writ as large as possible, with the globe as lab. Every way of stating a question contains a situation definition & thus tilts toward answer(s). Eg, since Haitian soil cannot sustain the Haitians, how reduce their number? Or, since earth's soil could not sustain the tripling of the human population by 2090, or perhaps even its doubling by 2040, how reduce the conception rate & (by abortion) the birth rate? Impossible to state any question without antagonistic response from some group or groups.

6 The gospel is transideological, proposing no particular processes or programs or philosophies. American pacifism persuaded Hitler that the U.S. was a sleeping dog that would stay asleep: oh, that law of unintended consequences! A Christian should be free of ideological moralism, which fixes "good" & "evil" nonremovable stickers. Is war evil? I must answer by a question: which war? which of the 32 now in process? Is violence evil? I reply, which violence? Watts I (1965), no (though Howard Spragg, a lifelong nonviolentist, said yes). Watts II (1992), probably. (In 1965, we needed burning cities to get federal civil-rights legislation; it's improbable that the 1992 L.A. rioting-looting will lead to commensurate advances in social justice.) Violence & war are means that, in particular cases, are or are not justified by the event, the "ends" (in both senses: purposes & results). Down also with simplistic absolutes vis-a-vis racism, classism, sexism, imperialism (vs. "the self-determination of peoples"), right-to-life-ism, rights, entitlements, oppression, liberation. On all these, I have predispositions (open to options), but not prejudices (ideological commitments to react in certain ways regardless of the particular circumstances). You can understand, then, that I find offensive most of our UCC's official pronouncements on eco-socio-political issues..... Multiculturalism & ethnic fragmentation are further dissuasives against ideology. The current cover of NEWSWEEK: "Whose justice? Whose morality? Whose community? Whose family? WHOSE VALUES?" While ideally & eschatologically justice & peace are lovers, historically & existentially they are usually enemies, alternatives--a tragic fact the "justice & peace" slogan, & "j. & p." churches, obscure.

7 Working on my U. of C. PhD, I was living at CTS when you pacifists arrived, seven of you soon to move out of our beautiful buildings & into a bug-mouse-ridden apartment over a bar across the street from the black ghetto. I felt no call to any divestment, but rather the call to make the best use I could, for the glory of God & the good of humanity, of my privileges (white, male, clergy [no draft], & \$-unworried [on a fat fellowship]). Pearl Harbor hit the year after my ordination, but my eyes prevented my becoming a chaplain....Through the years, my life has diverged from & converged with all of yours. Praise be to God!