

Sixth Class
University Essays

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CLASS OF NONVIOLENCE

On the Duty of Civil Disobedience

Henry David Thoreau

I heartily accept the motto, "That government is best which governs least"; and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe – "That government is best which governs not at all"; and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have. Government is at best but an expedient; but most governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient. The objections which have been brought against a standing army, and they are many and weighty, and deserve to prevail, may also at last be brought against a standing government. The standing army is only an arm of the standing government. The government itself, which is only the mode which the people have chosen to execute their will, is equally liable to be abused and perverted before the people can act through it. Witness the present Mexican war, the work of comparatively a few individuals using the standing government as their tool; for in the outset, the people would not have consented to this measure.

Unjust laws exist: shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once? Men, generally, under such a government as this, think that they ought to wait until they have persuaded the majority to alter them. They think that, if they should resist, the remedy would be worse than the evil. But it is the fault of the government itself that the remedy is worse than the evil. It makes it worse. Why is it not more apt to anticipate and provide for reform? Why does it not cherish its wise

minority? Why does it cry and resist before it is hurt? Why does it not encourage its citizens to put out its faults, and do better than it would have them? Why does it always crucify Christ and excommunicate Copernicus and Luther, and pronounce Washington and Franklin rebels?

If the injustice is part of the necessary friction of the machine of government, let it go, let it go: perchance it will wear smooth – certainly the machine will wear out. If the injustice has a spring, or a pulley, or a rope, or a crank, exclusively for itself, then perhaps you may consider whether the remedy will not be worse than the evil; but if it is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then I say, break the law. Let your life be a counter-friction to stop the machine. What I have to do is to see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn.

As for adopting the ways of the State has provided for remedying the evil, I know not of such ways. They take too much time, and a man's life will be gone. I have other affairs to attend to. I came into this world, not chiefly to make this a good place to live in, but to live in it, be it good or bad. A man has not everything to do, but something; and because he cannot do everything, it is not necessary that he should be petitioning the Governor or the Legislature any more than it is theirs to petition me; and if they should not hear my petition, what should I do then? But in this case the State has provided no way: its very Constitution is the evil. This may seem to be harsh and stubborn and unconciliatory; but it is to treat with the utmost kindness

and consideration the only spirit that can appreciate or deserves it. So is all change for the better, like birth and death, which convulse the body.

I do not hesitate to say, that those who call themselves Abolitionists should at once effectually withdraw their support, both in person and property, from the government of Massachusetts, and not wait till they constitute a majority of one, before they suffer the right to prevail through them. I think that it is enough if they have God on their side, without waiting for that other one. Moreover, any man more right than his neighbors constitutes a majority of one already.

I meet this American government, or its representative, the State government, directly, and face to face, once a year — no more — in the person of its tax-gatherer; this is the only mode in which a man situated as I am necessarily meets it; and it then says distinctly, recognize me; and the simplest, the most effectual, and, in the present posture of affairs, the indispensablest mode of treating with it on this head, of expressing your little satisfaction with and love for it, is to deny it then. My civil neighbor, the tax-gatherer, is the very man I have to deal with — for it is, after all, with men and not with parchment that I quarrel — and he has voluntarily chosen to be an agent of the government. How shall he ever know well that he is and does as an officer of the government, or as a man, until he is obliged to consider whether he will treat me, his neighbor, for whom he has respect, as a neighbor and well-disposed man, or as a maniac and disturber of the peace, and see if he can get over this obstruction to his neighborliness without a ruder and more impetuous thought or speech corresponding with his action. I know this well, that if one thousand, if one hundred, if

ten men whom I could name — if ten honest men only — ay, if one honest man, in this State of Massachusetts, ceasing to hold slaves, were actually to withdraw from this co-partnership, and be locked up in the county jail therefore, it would be the abolition of slavery in America. For it matters not how small the beginning may seem to be: what is once well done is done forever. But we love better to talk about it: that we say is our mission. Reform keeps many scores of newspapers in its service, but not one man. If my esteemed neighbor, the State's ambassador, who will devote his days to the settlement of the question of human rights in the Council Chamber, instead of being threatened with the prisons of Carolina, were to sit down the prisoner of Massachusetts, that State which is so anxious to foist the sin of slavery upon her sister — though at present she can discover only an act of inhospitality to be the ground of a quarrel with her — the Legislature would not wholly waive the subject of the following winter.

Under a government which imprisons unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison. The proper place today, the only place which Massachusetts has provided for her freer and less despondent spirits, is in her prisons, to be put out and locked out of the State by her own act, as they have already put themselves out by their principles. It is there that the fugitive slave, and the Mexican prisoner on parole, and the Indian come to plead the wrongs of his race should find them; on that separate but more free and honorable ground, where the State places — those who are not with her, but against her — the only house in a slave State in which a free man can abide with honor. If any think that their influence would be lost there, and their voices no longer afflict the ear of the State, that they would

not be as an enemy within its walls, they do not know by how much truth is stronger than error, nor how much more eloquently and effectively he can combat injustice who has experienced a little in his own person. Cast your whole vote, not a strip of paper merely, but your whole influence. A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority; it is not even a minority then; but it is irresistible when it clogs by its whole weight. If the alternative is to keep all just men in prison, or give up war and slavery, the State will not hesitate which to choose. If a thousand men were not to pay their tax bills this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood. This is, in fact, the definition of a peaceable revolution, if any such is possible. If the tax-gatherer, or any other public officer, asks me, as one has done, "But what shall I do?" my answer is, "If you really wish to do anything, resign your office." When the subject has refused allegiance, and the officer has resigned from office, then the revolution is accomplished. But even suppose blood shed when the conscience is wounded? Through this wound a man's real manhood and immortality flow out, and he bleeds to an everlasting death. I see this blood flowing now.

The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right. It is truly enough said that a corporation has no conscience; but a corporation on conscientious men is a corporation with a conscience. Law never made men a whit more just; and, by means of their respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents of injustice. A common and natural result of an undue respect for the law is, that you may see a file of soldiers,

colonel, captain, corporal, privates, powder-monkeys, and all, marching in admirable order over hill and dale to the wars, against their wills, ay, against their common sense and consciences, which makes it very steep marching indeed, and produces a palpitation of the heart. They have no doubt that it is a damnable business in which they are concerned; they are all peaceably inclined. Now, what are they? Men at all? or small movable forts and magazines, at the service of some unscrupulous man in power? Visit the Navy Yard, and behold a marine, such a man as an American government can make, or such as it can make a man with its black arts — a mere shadow and reminiscence of humanity, a man laid out alive and standing, and already, as one may say, buried under arms with funeral accompaniment, though it may be,

*"Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
As his corse to the rampart we hurried;
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot
O'er the grave where out hero was buried."*

The mass of men serve the state thus, not as men mainly, but as machines, with their bodies. They are the standing army, and the militia, jailers, constables, posse comitatus¹, etc. In most cases there is no free exercise whatever of the judgment or of the moral sense; but they put themselves on a level with wood and earth and stones; and wooden men can perhaps be manufactured that will serve the purpose as well. Such command no more respect than men of straw or a lump of dirt. They have the same sort of worth only as horses and dogs. Yet such as these even are commonly esteemed good citizens. Others — as most legislators, politicians, lawyers, ministers, and office-holders — serve the state chiefly with their heads; and, as the rarely make any moral distinctions; they are as likely to serve the devil.

War Tax Resistance: One Story

By Andrea Ayvazian

The single most significant statement I have heard about war tax resistance was made confidently and in simplicity by Alan Eccleston at a 1981 workshop: “When you are ready to engage in war tax resistance you know it.” I was slightly skeptical at the time because someone had given me the same advice about marriage and it had not proven correct.

But now, five years into the process of war tax resistance, I believe Alan was absolutely right. When you are ready to become a war tax resister, you know it deep inside with little doubt or fear. I knew it—almost suddenly—on a visceral level in 1982 and, since that time, nothing that has unfolded due to my resistance has been too great a burden to carry; nothing has been too frightening or overwhelming. Once I was ready, I was ready—and I have welcomed all of it.

War tax resistance for me has involved always owing the government money in April—several hundreds of dollars in fact. As April 15th draws close, I meticulously complete my 1040 form, calculate exactly what I owe and mail my form in on time with a detailed letter explaining why my 1040 does not have an accompanying check. Everyone who is engaged in any aspect of tax resistance does it in her or his own way—there is no one way, and certainly no correct or incorrect way. Withholding money every April has worked for me, and my story has its difficult, funny and touching moments, as any tax resister can confirm.

The first year I engaged in war tax resistance, I happened to owe almost \$ 1,000.1 withheld the entire amount, sent it to an escrow fund, wrote an impassioned letter about war, peace, social injustice, Quakerism, feminism, nonviolence, and everything else I

could fit on two typed pages, and settled back to see what would unfold.

Alan had told me that it could take the IRS two weeks to catch up with me, or two years, or nothing might ever happen. I returned from work one day in May to find a discreet little card stuck in my apartment door, saying that an IRS agent had been to visit and he would be back. Actually, I was delighted. I thought: “Why wait for him to return and find me gone again? I’ll just call him on the phone and find out what’s cooking.” So I did, and that began what has been a long, tumultuous, fairly intense relationship with Bob, “my” IRS agent.

Bob came to my apartment the next week and I explained with great emotion why I could not pay for the weapons of war, how I dreamed of and worked for a world of peace and equity. I carried on at great length, with Bob nodding and actually looking sympathetic. At the end of my monologue he asked if I was interested in hearing about their easy payment plan.

Bob and I do not see eye-to-eye. After several threatening letters, another visit, and an audit in Springfield, Bob visited my bank and withdrew the \$1,000 I had withheld, plus, 5% penalty and 15% interest (this is now reduced to 9%). The bank wrote me a cursory note informing me that my account was reduced by almost \$1,500.

The years since 1982 have been full of tax resistance adventures, and I have had the opportunity to see a good deal of Bob. The pattern each year has been generally the same. After I write my letter explaining why I am withholding part of my federal income tax,

I receive a series of computer letters. The first is fairly benign-informing me that I owe the IRS some money (as if my withholding were simply an oversight on my part). The letters escalate with increasingly threatening language until the “ten-day notice” arrives saying that decisive action is about to be taken. About six weeks after that letter arrives, they actually do something. Every year Bob has called, and, most years, he has visited. He has tried to talk me into simply paying the IRS what he says I owe so that he can “close my file.” Every year, money has been taken from my bank account—the amount withheld, plus interest and penalty.

In 1984, when Bob went to my account, I did not have enough money there to cover what he said I owed. He emptied and closed my account and called me to review my next options. We actually decided to meet over breakfast (he paid the bill) and, told me directly, the next step was to put a lien on my paychecks so that the IRS would begin receiving a large portion of each check until my “debt” to them was covered. This made me feel very insecure—I live paycheck to paycheck—so I asked him instead to take my car.

Following that meeting, I called for a Clearness Committee with some Friends from Mt. Toby Meeting. With their help, I decided to sell my car immediately to a friend who needed a reliable vehicle, give her a good bargain, put the money in the bank and let Bob take it. He called wondering what happened to my car. I told him I had sold it, so he went directly to the bank for the money.

Probably the most touching moment came in 1985 after my account had been ravished or closed so many times that I finally went to see the president of my bank. At eight o’clock one morning, the president met me

at a side door and led me through the dark, deserted bank to his office. I sat across from him and told him why I was a war tax resister. I told him I was not there to convince him of anything, to defend myself or to make a case; I simply had a story that I found I needed to tell him. During the 45 minutes that we spent together, his whole body language changed. His posture eased, his voice softened, he leaned forward and asked me probing questions—and he let me tell my whole story.

Before leaving, I said: “I want to ask your forgiveness for being compelled to engage in a protest that is a nuisance for you and your staff.” He stood up, shook my hand and said: “And I want to ask your forgiveness for my being compelled to comply.”

People have asked me why I let the IRS seize money from my account. In my mind, I am never willingly paying the military portion of my federal income tax due in April—the IRS must come find me and take the money from me. I have chosen to live my life as I wish, with them responding and reacting to my behavior, not the other way around. I do not move my money around or close my account when I know they are coming because I do not wish to be further consumed by this process. Also, I know that, if they do not find the money in the bank, they will come after my paycheck or what little property I own, and I have always found those options more frightening. I believe that the IRS spends all the money it gains from the interest and penalties simply to track down and seize assets from resisters like me. The benefit to them is negligible.

Every war tax resister has her or his tales to tell; mine is not unusual or heroic. Like others, I keep on with this noncooperation because I believe it is a powerful teaching tool, because I think it makes my other work

for peace and justice more credible, because it gives me a forum to talk to bank presidents and IRS auditors, because it helps make congruent my beliefs and actions, and mainly because I could no longer force myself to write that check in April believing it would buy bullets, tanks and nuclear warheads.

I believe that by each of us taking the small steps that we individually can, we will quietly, but most effectively, transform the world.

The Judge & the Bomb

by Judge Miles Lord

The following is a statement by U.S. District Judge Miles Lord at his sentencing of two persons convicted of destroying war-related computer equipment at a Sperry plant in Minnesota.

It is the allegation of these young people that they committed the acts here complained of as a desperate plea to the American people and its government to stop the military madness which they sincerely believe will destroy us all, friend and enemy alike.

As I ponder over the punishment to be meted out to these two people who were attempting to unbuild weapons of mass destruction, we must ask ourselves: Can it be that those of us who build weapons to kill are engaged in a more sanctified endeavor than to see who would by their acts attempt to counsel moderation and mediation as an alternative method of settling international disputes? Why are we so fascinated by a power so great that we cannot comprehend its magnitude? What is so sacred about a bomb, so romantic about a missile? Why do we condemn and hang individual killers while extolling the virtues of warmongers? What is that fatal fascination which attracts us to the thought of mass destruction of our brethren in another country? How can we even entertain the thought that all people on one side of an imaginary line must die and, if we be so ungodly cynical as to countenance that thought, have we given thought to the fact that in executing that decree we will also die?

Who draws these lines and who has so decreed?

How many people in this democracy have seriously contemplated the futility of committing national suicide in order to punish our adversaries? Have we so little faith in our system of free enterprise, our capitalism, and the fundamental concepts that are taught us in our constitutions and in our several bibles that we must, in order to protect ourselves from the spread of foreign ideologies, be prepared to die at our own hands? Such thinking indicates a great deal of lack of faith in our democracy, our body politic, our people, and our institutions.

There are those in high places that believe Armageddon is soon to be upon us, that Christ will soon come to earth and take us all back with him to heaven. It would appear that much of our national effort is being devoted to helping with the process. It may even be a celebration of sorts. When the bombs go off, Christ won't have to come to earth—we will all, believers and nonbelievers alike, meet him halfway.

The anomaly of this situation is that I am here called upon to punish two individuals who were charged with having caused damage to the property of a corporation in the amount of \$33,000. It is this self-same corporation which only a few months ago was before me accused of having wrongfully embezzled from the U.S. government the sum of \$3.6 million. The employees of this company succeeded in boosting the corporate profits by wrongfully and feloniously juggling the books. Since these individuals were all employees of the corporation, it appears that it did not occur to anyone in the office of the Attorney General of

the United States that the actions of these men constituted a criminal conspiracy for which they might be punished. The government demanded only that Sperry pay back a mere 10 percent of the amount by which the corporation had been unlawfully enriched. Could it be that these corporate men who were working to build weapons of mass destruction received special treatment because of the nature of their work?

I am now called upon to determine the amount of restitution that is to be required of the two individuals who have done damage to the property of Sperry. The financial information obtained by the probation officers indicates that neither of the defendants owes any money to anyone. While Ms. Katt has no assets, Mr. Laforge is comparatively well endowed. He owns a 1968 Volkswagen, a guitar, a sleeping bag, and \$200 in cash.

The inexorable pressure which generates from those who are engaged in making a living and a profit from building military equipment and the pork barreling that goes on in the halls of Congress to obtain more such contracts for the individual state will in the ultimate consume itself in an atomic holocaust. These same factors exert a powerful pressure upon a judge in my position to go along with the theory that there is something sacred about a bomb and that those who raise their voices or their hands against it should be struck down as enemies of the people, no matter that in their hearts they feel and know that they are friends of the people.

Now conduct of this sort cannot be condoned under the guise of free speech. Neither should it be totally condemned as being subversive, traitorous, or treasonous in the category of espionage or some other bad things. I would here in this instance take the

sting out of the bomb, attempt in some way to force the government to remove the halo with which it seems to embrace any device which can kill, and to place instead thereon a shroud, the shroud of death, destruction, mutilation, disease, and debilitation.

If there is an adverse reaction to this sentence, I will anxiously await the protestations of those who complain of my attempts to correct the imbalance that now exists in a system that operates in such a manner as to provide one type of justice for the rich and a lesser type for the poor. One standard for the mighty and another for the weak. And a system which finds its humanness and objectivity is sublimated to military madness and the worship of the bomb.

A judge sitting here as I do is not called upon to do that which is politically expedient or popular but is called upon to exercise his calm and deliberate judgment in a manner best suited to accomplish and accommodate and vindicate the rights of the people acting through its government and the rights of those people who are the subject matter of such actions. The most popular thing to do at this particular time would be to sentence them to a 10 year period of imprisonment, and some judges might be disposed to do just that. [Thereupon, sentence was imposed: Six months in prison, was suspended, six months on probation.]

I am also aware of the thrust of the argument which would say this would encourage others to do likewise.

If others do likewise, they must be dealt with at that time.

I am also impressed with the argument that this might in some way constitute a disparity of sentence, that you individuals have not been properly punished for your offense

because some others might not be deterred from doing that.

I really wonder about the constitutionality of sentencing one person for a crime that may be committed by another person at another time and place.

It is also difficult for me to equate the sentence I here give you —for destroying \$36,000 worth of property, because you have been charged — with those who stole \$3,600,000 worth of property and were not charged, demoted, or in any way punished.

My conscience is clear. We will adjourn the Court.

Planning for Economic Conversion

By Seymour Melman and Lloyd J. Dumas

It's time to start planning the conversion of America's defense economy to civilian work. By conversion we mean political, economic and technical measures for ensuring the orderly transformation of labor, machinery and other economic resources now being used for military purposes to alternative civilian uses. The political impetus for conversion is gaining momentum as a result of the relaxation of cold war tensions. Another stimulus to action is America's deteriorating competitive position in the world economy.

A major factor in America's decline to the status of a second-class industrial power has been the voracious appetite of the military-industrial complex, which employs 6.5 million civilian and military personnel in more than 135,000 factories, laboratories and bases. From 1947 to 1989 this country diverted to military purposes resources whose value exceeded the fixed reproducible, tangible wealth of the entire civilian economy. Tens of thousands of factories became virtual wards of the Pentagon; sheltered from the discipline of the marketplace, they adopted inefficient and costly methods. An indirect consequence of the larger share of tax dollars funneled into the military establishment was a diminution of public investment in the infrastructure and its resulting decay. The debilitating effect of all those developments on American industrial strength is readily apparent.

Labor productivity, a key indicator of long-term efficiency, has significantly declined. Between 1968 and 1988 labor productivity (measured by the dollar value of output per hour of workers in the nonagricultural

business sector) rose by 24 percent, approximately one-third of the gain between 1948 and 1968.

In every year between 1894 and 1970 the United States ran a trade surplus—exporting more goods than it imported. In 1971 these surpluses turned into deficits. By 1987 the foreign trade deficit had hit a peak of \$170 billion, more than 160 percent above the record level set only four years earlier. “Made in the U.S.A.” once meant well-made, high-quality, reasonably priced goods produced by industrial workers earning the highest wages in the world. Now U.S. trade deficits reflect in part a decline in quality and productive efficiency.

In 1982 the American economy plunged into its worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. By the end of the 1980s, however, the unemployment rates fell to more tolerable levels. Inflation remained well below the double-digit rates of the late 1970s. And the real gross national product grew more than 25 percent between 1982 and the third quarter of 1988, when it passed the \$4 trillion mark. Supposedly, the country is in the midst of the strongest economic recovery since World War II.

But that is an illusion. We have merely pumped up the economy with a huge infusion of public and private debt. This facade of prosperity is not based on the efficient production that drove the economy's remarkable growth throughout much of America's industrial history—an expansion whose benefits were spread among the population rather than going to one small

segment of it at the expense of all the rest. Between fiscal 1980 and fiscal 1989 the national debt more than tripled, from \$914 billion to \$2.8 trillion. In less than three years after 1985, the federal government added nearly \$780 billion in debt, an amount equal to more than 85 percent of the total national debt as of 1980. State and local government debt, and the private debt of households and nonfinancial institutions, soared from nearly \$3 trillion in 1980 to more than \$6 trillion by September 1988. Between 1980 and 1987 the United States went from being the world's largest creditor nation, to whom \$106 billion was owed, to being the world's largest debtor nation, with a net international debt approaching \$400 billion.

All that borrowing served temporarily to paper over deep-seated economic problems, giving us a fleeting reprieve. But it has also created a "bubble of debt" on top of a steadily eroding economic base, adding the possibility of a sudden collapse to the continuing long-term deterioration in American economic performance.

Conversion to What?

What could the 6.5 million employees of the military-serving institutions do for a living beyond their work for the Pentagon? There are three major areas of work that could be done by these people. The first is repairing the American infrastructure. This includes building and repairing roads, railroads and bridges; constructing waste disposal plants; cleaning up toxic and nuclear wastes; erecting new housing to make up for the enormous shortfall in construction and repair during the past decades; refurbishing libraries, public school buildings, university facilities and so on. In New York City alone, there are 1,000 public

school buildings, of which 83 percent require major repairs. Bridges and highways have been crumbling for want of proper maintenance, and the country's rail' roads are more like the Toonerville Trolley of cartoon fame than modern high-speed facilities. The cost of repairing the infrastructure could amount to more than 55 trillion. The work to be done would surely extend over several decades.

House Resolution 101 includes a provision for a Cabinet-level council that would be charged with encouraging state, city and county governments to prepare capital budgets for renovating the public works and services under their jurisdiction. If carried out, this would set in motion a thoroughly decentralized set of nationwide planning operations for projects that would have employment needs beyond the size and capabilities of the existing work force.

The second area of new work for the converted military labor force would involve producing in the United States many of the products that are now imported. There is no law of nature or economics that prevents factories in the United States from once again becoming competent producers of shoes, for example; we now import 80 percent of our supply. An infusion of fresh investment and talent into the machine-tool industry could restore our former ability to produce high-quality machinery. The United States now buys 50 percent of its new machine tools from Japan, Germany and South Korea.

The third area is new ideas, a sphere in which American engineers and technicians once excelled. A uniquely large proportion of engineers and administrators are employed in the military-serving industries. For those occupations some special conversion prospects will surely

be in order. Teachers of mathematics and the sciences are in notoriously short supply in American high schools and junior colleges. The major teachers colleges could design appropriate programs for training some of these men and women to teach the young, an activity that would have long-range benefits for society. Many engineers could be retrained as civil engineers to work in American communities. The addition of an engineer to a city's or a town's staff would mean a substantial improvement in the ability of local governments to cope with the array of public works that are their responsibility.

The Process of Economic Conversion

The ideology of the free-market economy argues that the labor and facilities no longer needed in the military-serving sector will flow smoothly and efficiently toward an expanding civilian sector once military spending is cut. The market will take care of the transition. There is no need for special attention and certainly no need for advance preparation.

But this isn't true. The world of military industry is very different from the world of commercial industry. For one thing, military-serving firms do not operate in anything like a free-market environment. In the military production system, the nature, quantity and price of output are not determined by impersonal market forces. They are set by the interaction of the Pentagon's central planners and the managers of the military-industrial firms. Military industry, unlike any civilian industry, has only one customer—the Defense Department. Even when military firms sell to other nations, they typically sell products initially designed and produced to satisfy the needs of the Defense Department and can sell abroad only with its

permission. Furthermore, the vast majority of defense contracts are negotiated rather than awarded through true price-competitive bidding.

More important, competition in the civilian commercial marketplace provides a crucial element of cost discipline that is largely absent in military industry. In practice, most major military contractors operate on a cost-plus basis, being reimbursed for whatever they have spent plus a guaranteed profit. In such an environment, there are no real penalties for inefficient production. In fact, company revenues can be increased by jacking up costs. Such cost escalation would spell bankruptcy for firms operating in a free market.

The sales function of a typical civilian company involves dealing with large numbers of potential customers, ranging from perhaps a few dozen for firms purveying industrial products to millions for consumer goods producers. For military firms the sales function means knowing tire Armed Services Procurement Regulations, developing contacts within the Defense Department and being adept at lobbying. The most crucial job of managers in civilian industries is keeping costs down while producing good quality products. Managers in defense firms need pay relatively little attention to cost, but they must try to manufacture products capable of operating under extreme conditions while delivering every possible increment of performance.

It is not a question of one kind of management being easier or harder than the other. The point is that they are very different. It is simply not reasonable to expect a manager used to operating in one of these worlds to perform efficiently in die other without undergoing substantial retraining and reorientation. This takes time and will

not happen automatically. Civilian firms may well prefer to hire inexperienced civilian managers instead of facing the costs involved in retraining an experienced military manager for civilian work. The same consideration holds for engineers and scientists-the other main component of the military-serving labor force-who would require substantial retraining and reorientation.

The products of military industry are notorious for their poor reliability, despite requirements that only components meeting stringent military specifications be used. These components are not only remarkably costly but also certified to withstand extraordinary extremes of shock, temperature and so on. Poor reliability is an unavoidable consequence of the increasing complexity of military weaponry. Thus sophisticated military aircraft have been in repair a third or more of the time. That's bearable when the cost of maintenance is not a limiting factor. But city transportation systems cannot accept vehicles that are "not mission capable" a third of the time. Hence the retraining of military-experienced engineers and managers is an essential aspect of economic conversion. Of course, the physical facilities and equipment of military industry will require modification as well.

Planning for Conversion

Advanced contingency plans for moving into alternative civilian-oriented activity could help carry the nation smoothly through the transition to a demilitarized economy and protect militarily-dependent communities against the considerable economic disruption they will otherwise experience. The transformation of a facility and its work force to civilian production must be planned locally, by those who know them

best-not by distant "experts." Even at its best such a planning process will be lengthy. A great many details must be worked through to ensure that the transition is smooth and that the resulting facility and work force are properly restructured to be an efficient civilian producer, able to operate profitably without continuing subsidies. It is long past time to get this process underway.

A bill now before Congress, House Resolution 101, would institutionalize a nationwide system of highly decentralized contingency planning for economic conversion at every military facility in the United States. The resolution, called the Defense Economic Adjustment Act, sponsored by Representative Ted Weiss, would require the establishment of labor-management Alternative Use Committees at every military facility with 100 or more people. These local committees would be empowered to draw up detailed technical and economic plans for shifting to viable alternative civilian activity. Funds would be provided for services such as income support, continued health insurance and pension benefits during any actual transition resulting from military cutbacks.

There are two reasons why military-industry workers should be especially protected, even though workers in other industries are not. First, such protection is vital to breaking the hold of the politically powerful "jobs" argument, which raises the specter of lost jobs to the constituents and thus damage to the political careers of representatives who vote against any military programs. The second is that the special obstacles to conversion of military industry must be overcome to allow the infusion of resources into civilian activity that will ultimately revitalize the whole of U.S. industry, and not just the prospects of

converted defense workers and firms. By moving military-sector resources into profitable civilian activity through a carefully planned process of economic conversion, the nation can break its decades-long addiction to military spending and build a stronger and more secure economic base. Without such a revitalization of civilian production, it is difficult to see how America can climb out of the deep hole of production incompetence, deficit and debt it dug for itself in the 1980s and reverse the deterioration of its economic performance and competitive position in the global marketplace.

Perestroika and Glasnost

The remarkable changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe offer great promise of substantial arms reduction. We have seen only a beginning, but it is a hopeful one. The prospect of a 50 percent reduction in strategic nuclear arsenals—even talk of the total elimination of nuclear weapons within a decade or two—has moved from the realm of an impossible dream to the real world of negotiations. Progress toward reduction of conventional forces has begun. Each of the three forces we have been discussing has its counterpart in the Soviet Union, which has finally admitted that it too is plagued by out-of-control budget deficits. The military's diversion of critical resources from the country's civilian industrial base has played no small part in rendering those industries hopelessly inefficient. At the same time, the attention of the nations of Western Europe has turned increasingly to economic integration rather than military adventurism. As far as the Soviet Union is concerned, this surely diminishes the threat to their security.

Obstacles to Conversion

Nevertheless, there are strong institutional and ideological barriers to implementation of economic conversion. The most prominent of these are the managements in central government offices and the private firms that are dependent on the military economy. Government departments are ordinarily viewed as "bureaucracies"; however, the central management in the Defense Department that controls the operations of 35,000 prime contracting establishments is, functionally, a central administrative office. This central administrative office is probably the largest such entity in the world and performs the same functions as similar offices in large corporations.

Furthermore, the management of the Pentagon's central office controls the largest block of finance capital in the hands of any single American management. Every year since 1951 the new capital made available to the Defense Department has exceeded the combined net profits of all U.S. corporations. The top managers in the Pentagon and their subordinates are endowed with the usual managerial imperative to maintain and enlarge their decision-making power. Accordingly, they have consistently opposed all proposals for economic conversion planning in the United States.

This managerial opposition to conversion planning is not specific to any particular social structure, political ideology or management technique. Thus the managers of the U.S. military economy perform their command function via allocation of money resources, while those of the Soviet Union perform the command function by direct physical resource pre-emption and allocation. The results in each case are similar: preemption of major resources from civilian production

and powerful pressures for operating in an unproductive, cost-maximizing way.

The workforce and surrounding communities of factories, bases and laboratories that serve the military are another institutional barrier to economic conversion. In the United States 3.5 million men and women work in the military industry. An additional 1 million are employees of the Pentagon, including civilian workers on bases, and there are 2 million in the armed forces. For these 6.5 million people and their families and surrounding communities, the military-serving facilities have been the principal sources of jobs for most of their lives. The skills they have developed and the relationships with which they are familiar are powerful incentives to continue working for the military. The people in such enterprises know that even the appearance of an interest in the idea of economic conversion would bring the disfavor of the Pentagon's top managers.

The nation's organized engineering societies include large numbers of engineers beholden to the military economy. This has a significant effect on the contents of society meetings, the subject matter of journals and learned papers, and the network of contacts available for employment opportunity. At this writing no single engineering society has ventured to propose contingent conversion planning for its members as a way of coping with the possible reversal of military budget growth. In its November 1989 issue, *Spectrum*, a journal of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, published a special report titled "Preparing for Peace," a serious, courageous attempt to survey the military engineers' prospects during a subsiding cold war.

Finally, there are the universities, particularly the larger ones, which have grown accustomed to receiving major R&D grants from the Defense Department and to administering major research institutions, like the Lawrence Livermore and Los Alamos nuclear weapons laboratories, for the Pentagon. At the same time the departments of universities that might be expected to have some connection with civilian production, the engineering and business schools, have become less production-oriented during the long cold war period. Some schools are beginning to make an effort to re-establish the importance of civilian production in their curriculums, but the emphasis is small compared with the military-oriented research activities. The universities also contain large departments and schools—such as political science and international relations—whose faculties and curriculums have focused on training cold war technicians, researchers and administrators.

Alongside these direct economic ties to the military at the universities there are a number of ideological commitments that play an important part in sustaining support for military institutions. Among economists, for example, it is generally accepted that money equals wealth, that the proper measure of economic product is in money terms, that the money value of an economic activity denotes its value independent of the usefulness of the product. Military goods and services are thus counted as additions to real wealth despite the fact that they do not contribute to the central purpose of the economy—to provide the material standard of living. They add neither to the present standard of living (as do ordinary consumer goods) nor to the future standard of living by increasing the

economy's capacity to produce (as do industrial machinery, equipment and the like).

Since the Great Depression, economists, and indeed the larger society, have defined the central problem of the U.S. economy as the maintenance of proper levels of market demand, and thereby of income and employment. From this perspective, expenditures that generate market demand are critical, regardless of the nature of the product. A consensus formed that military spending is the best way to accomplish this effect. Thus, most economics textbooks do not differentiate between firms producing military goods and civilian enterprises.

Collecting the Peace Dividend

Apart from the planning of economic conversion, its actual execution will be heavily dependent on the timing and the size of the peace dividend that would result from the reduction of military budgets. Savings can be expected from two sources: first, and early on, reduction of certain military activities (such as base closings and elimination of marginal weapons programs) at the initiative of the federal government; second, de-escalation of military spending and the size of the military-serving institutions as a result of international agreements setting in motion a programmed reduction of the arms race. The first of these approaches could yield possible savings of several billion dollars annually. The New York Times editorialized on March 8 in favor of weapons and force cuts starting with \$20 billion per year and reaching \$150 billion annually after ten years. That would bring down annual military spending to a level comparable to that in President Carter's budgets. But a thoroughgoing military de-escalation would require international

disarmament agreements.

A program for reversing the arms race was laid out by President Kennedy in April 1962 in a document called "Outline of Basic Provisions of a Treaty on General and Complete Disarmament in a Peaceful World." This plan called for a ten-year period to accomplish a significant reversal of the arms race among nations and the parallel establishment of international institutions for inspecting the disarmament process, for coping with international conflict by non-military means and for developing an international peacekeeping force. If this blueprint is implemented, a ten-year cumulative peace dividend of \$1.5 trillion is within reach. That is the magnitude of resources needed to start serious economic conversion and to rebuild the infrastructure and industry of the country.

Up Against the Arms Merchants

By Colman McCarthy

One of the Sperry Corporation's efforts to be both a good servant of the Pentagon and of its shareholders is the production of computer equipment for nuclear weapons.

Sperry, a major military contractor that recently pleaded guilty to three counts of fraudulently overcharging the government, currently gets \$1.3 billion from the Pentagon to develop, among other things, computer components for the Trident II missile. This is a multi-kiloton weapon able to explode a holocaust many times more violent than the bombs dropped by America on Japan in 1945. In its current annual report, Sperry boasts of being "well established in the electronic-warfare business."

In August, John LaForge, 28, and Barb Katt, 26, entered a Sperry plant in Eagan, Minn., and began hammering at the computers. LaForge is a former Eagle Scout and a graduate of Bemidji State University who served 18 months as a VISTA volunteer. Katt, who graduated from Bemidji State with a degree in Philosophy, has worked with mentally-impaired adults. Both have made deep commitments to peace, whether in the form of comforting a poor person or of trying to stop the military's idolatrous faith in the bomb.

LaForge and Katt have been involved in civil disobedience for four years. They are also students of the history of arms escalation.

The disarmament conference convened by the pair in the Sperry weapons plant went at first unnoticed by the employees. LaForge and Katt had entered the place peacefully, were unarmed and wore the clothes

of corporate respectability: blue suits and shined shoes.

During the disabling of the computer, workers were at first confused. Finally, LaForge recalled, "Someone said, 'Shouldn't someone call security?' They thought we were employees gone bonkers."

Security was called. LaForge and Katt were arrested. Two months later, in mid-October, both were found guilty by a jury of a felony. Two days ago, Judge Miles Lord, sympathetic to the defendants, gave them six months suspended sentences.

The case of the Sperry Software Pair, as it is called, deserves attention. A number of facts converge to make it larger than only a Minneapolis case, and a number of ideas were presented by LaForge and Katt that make them more than two well-meaning rebels.

The destruction of a weapons system at Sperry - causing about \$35,000 damage - is one of at least a dozen recent actions against the government's war preparations. In Syracuse, seven members of the Griffiss Plowshares, who had damaged a B52 fitted with cruise missiles, were hit with two- and three-year prison terms. In Orlando, eight peace activists were each sentenced to three years for damaging a missile launcher at the Martin-Marietta plant. Jail terms were given to four members of Friends for a Nonviolent World for trespassing at an Air Force base in Grand Forks, N.D. In Bangor, Wash., three citizens are serving 90-day sentences for blocking a train carrying nuclear missiles to a military base.

In all, more than 30 peace activists are in prison or jail for civil disobedience against the arms race.

In cities such as Minneapolis and Orlando, the trials of these cases receive media attention. But nationally, there is little. Trees in the forest are falling as never before, but because the media choose to put their ears elsewhere, the noise never happened. Americans are told more about the protests occurring in places like England, where the women of Greenham Common are saying “no” to nuclear weapons. Petra Kelley of West Germany is better known to Americans than Elizabeth McAlister, now locked away for three years in the Federal Women’s Prison in Alderson, W. Va.

McAlister and the others in jail, as well as John LaForge and Barb Katt, are not off-the-wall crazies. All of them are well-educated, mature, prayerful, and caring citizens who came to civil disobedience in the same spirit that Gandhi, King, and Thoreau defied the might of the state. Many are parents, some are teachers, a few are priests or nuns. Todd Kaplan, 26, in a Florida prison, describes himself as “a faithful Jew struggling to follow God’s call to bring shalom (peace) and tzedekah (justice) to this world.”

By delivering stiff sentences to resisters like Kaplan, the courts give credibility to the Pentagon’s argument that the Bomb is sacred. Destroying the property of death that could destroy the ultimate property – the world – is somehow, twistedly, seen as criminal.

From: Washington Post

War, Property & Peace

By Colman McCarthy

When John LaForge spoke to the jury in a Federal District Court about why he and a companion did \$35,000 damage to a nuclear-weapons system in a Sperry warfare plant, he discussed choices. “We are not romantic idealists, naive of the real cat-eat-bird world,” he said. “In this world, Sperry prototypes are built to operate in a harsh radiation environment. The living beings of this world cannot. So we have spoken as loudly as possible, without harming anyone, to this dark time of planned human extinction. . . in which billions of dollars are spent to make nuclear war happen, and practically nothing is spent to keep it from happening.”

The jury rejected the argument. It found LaForge and his friend guilty of the destruction of federal property.

Convictions are common these days for the artisans of anti-war civil disobedience. Out of a dozen recent trials, more than 30 peace activists are now in prison or jail because they have entered weapons plants and disabled one bomb part or another. With clumsy determination, most judges, viewing the defendants as publicity seekers or outright loonies, hurry them through the courts and into jail as though national security is being undermined every minute they walk free.

This case in Minneapolis is different. Judge Miles Lord, aware that the militarism needs to be put away and not the citizens of cast-iron conscience who oppose it, gave the two defendants six-month suspended sentences. For once, a courtroom is presided over by a jurist who respects both the tradition of civil disobedience and the arguments made for it by peacemakers who have been damaging

the weapons. Lord, best known for his judicial firmness against corporate criminals, gave LaForge a full forum for his views. Lord said, “I was very impressed with the plausibility of the argument of the defendants when they said that international law made it illegal to manufacture these atomic weapons that indiscriminately kill and wipe out whole civilian populations.”

Lord is not a romantic idealist either. He was not surprised by the jury’s verdict of guilty: “A good motive doesn’t count. The jury is required to follow the law.” However, in court last Thursday, Lord said, when setting the pair free, that he wanted “to take the sting out of the bomb and remove the halo over any device that can kill.” What most juries, as well as most people, find troublesome about the actions of war resisters in weapons plant is their destructiveness. How can they call themselves nonviolent peacemakers, it is asked, when they are unpeacefully doing violence to someone’s property?

A fair question, except how can anti-property property be respected? Nuclear weapons, stacked like firewood and ready to burn the final conflagration, are pieces of property that threaten the world, the common property of everyone. The war resisters who have smashed everything from warhead nose cones to Trident II missile tubes believe they are acting against anti-life property. They ask that if a gun is held to your head or the head of someone you love, don’t you have the right - or obligation - to dismantle, destroy, or get rid of the gun.

In the Sperry trial, it was reported that Judge Lord told the prosecutors to stop their

repetitious talk of violent acts against Sperry. Stressing that this wasn't an assault case. Lord was quoted in a Minnesota newspaper as saying that the acts were like a person "going into a National Forest and cutting down an expensive tree that didn't fall on anyone." La Forge spoke up (in another court he would likely have been silenced) to extend the analogy: The felled tree was diseased and threatened to destroy all the forests of the Earth.

Weapons that kill indiscriminately have been outlawed by such international agreements as the 1977 Geneva Protocol. The Nuremberg Principles talk of "crimes against peace," namely, "planning, preparation, initiation, or waging of a war of aggression." Nuremberg does not absolve a citizen from responsibility to stop such crimes, "provided a moral choice was in fact possible for him."

Martin Luther King, Jr., when asked whether his civil disobedience was efficient or politically shrewd, answered that efficiency or shrewdness wasn't the point. The issue is: Is it right or wrong?

If King is unpersuasive, there is the Buddhist tale of the spiritual master who went to the town square every day to cry out against war and injustice. Disciples, seeing that he was having no effect, said, "No one is listening, everyone's insane. It's time to stop." "No," said the master, "I will keep crying out so I won't go insane."

From: Washington Post