

Atom Bomb And Conscription Still Issues To Be Faced

By Dorothy Day

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*Summary: Condemns further atomic bomb testing and quotes the *New York Times* concerning a resolution supporting this view recently introduced in the Senate. Likewise opposes conscription (the draft) and its extension when there is no war as usurpation of authority regarding the destiny of the individual. (DDLW #422).*

When we said in our February issue that we believed the proposed atomic bomb tests should be abandoned, a friend asked whether we thought we could sweep back the sands of the sea. His question implied that we were undertaking an impossible task, expressing opposition to inevitable events.

We must admit that what our friend said seemed to be true at the time. As a matter of fact, our editorial ("Stop That Bomb Test," Feb., 1946) stated that we did not expect our small voice to have any effect on the course of events. We were simply putting ourselves on record.

That opinion remains unchanged today, but things have happened in the intervening two months which tend to show that perhaps our position is not so untenable after all. The rising tide of opposition by scientists to military control of atomic energy is one of the most important things that have happened. It is also one the most encouraging things.

Postponement of the tests last week by President Truman is also of great importance because it is an indication that abandonment may be contemplated.

The latest and most significant development as we go to press is the introduction of a resolution in the United States Senate proposing abandonment of the tests. The New York Times (March 30) reports on the introduction of the resolution as follows:

Outright cancellation of the two projected atomic bomb tests at Bikini Atoll this summer went suddenly and intensively under Senate debate today (March 29) when a new member, Senator James W. Huffinan, Democrat, of Ohio, introduced a resolution to request President Truman to abandon the experiments on the surface targets.

The measure received prompt endorsement from Senator David I. Walsh, chairman of the Committee on Naval Affairs, which recently approved legislation authorizing the use of an estimated \$425,000,000 of naval craft in the tests. The House already has passed this measure.

"I see no objection to the resolution," Senator Walsh said.

“In fact, I think it is desirable that the Senate and the President should reflect further upon whether it is wise to proceed with the experiment, and I think perhaps it is very wise for the Senate itself to take a position in regard to the matter or to inform the President what its feelings about the matter are.”

Mr. Walsh indicated that he might reopen the hearings on the ship-use bill, which is now on the Senate calendar awaiting call.

Senator Huffman, making his first address to the Senate, attacked the projected Bikini tests as costly, unnecessary from a scientific standpoint, and as being planned when “this is no time for martial gestures.”...

Andre J. Bethune, Ph.D., a young scientist who worked on the Manhattan Project at Columbia University, in an article in this paper last month expressed criticism of the fact that domestic control of atomic energy is still in the hands of the Army, and said that *the Army can think only in terms of war and weapons*. Now it is evident that the scientists have learned an important fact. They know that the control of atomic energy must not be left in military hands, because the military mind holds to no purpose but the waging of war, sees no vision but that of the battlefield. The scientists have made a great forward step in recognizing this fact and acting upon their knowledge, but they and all of us must advance further and learn the answer to the all important question: If military control of atomic energy is morally wrong, is not the same control of human life a far greater evil?

We believe that the authority to cut a young man off from his normal life and vocation, to separate him from his family and his community is of far greater importance than the power to split atoms. It is more important because it is an interference with the destiny of a human soul. It is usurpation of authority in the moral sphere, as regards the individual. Collectively, this power to conscript men for military duty results in turning the whole world into an armed camp. If you think this is theory, just look at the world today, and think again. Observe our own country, where the military authorities are demanding extension of the draft although we are no longer at war. They will use any pretext, adopt every subterfuge, to gain their end. And we find ourselves living in an armed camp.

Christians are not supposed to live in armed camps. The atmosphere of armed camps is poisonous with hatred, whereas Christians must live in that communion of love which is the life of the Mystical Body of Christ. The two states of life are unalterably opposed to each other. We will take an important step toward true Christianity when we realize this truth and act upon it.

Many awakened Christians are acting today by signing the Catholic Voluntary Peace Declaration Act. This act****has been printed in diocesan papers, and in other Catholic publications. Its preamble reads as follows:

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I hereby declare my goodwill to volunteer for active service in the ranks of the numerous Catholic Voluntary Peacemakers of all nations, who have already—even

in countries where tyranny of conscience still refused them legal recognition, and still charged them with disobedience to Caesar-conscientiously renounced to support conflicting National War Efforts, to militate instead for an undivided Catholic Peace Effort, and to raise a vast International Army of Volunteer Peacemakers to Christ the Pacific King of kings.

You may obtain the entire pledge by writing to one of the following addresses:

United States: The Ass'n of Catholic C. O.'s, 115 Mott Street, New York 13, N.Y.;
Canada: The Catholic Pacifists Ass'n, 2115 Dorchester Street W., Montreal;
England: PAX Society, 78 Bristol Road, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset; New
Zealand: Catholic Peace Society, 39 Forfar Street, Mosgiel.