

The Daily Worker Case

By Dorothy Day

The Catholic Worker, April 1956, 2.

*Summary: Criticizes a raid on the communist paper, *The Daily Worker*, as a blow against freedom guaranteed by the constitution. Says it is a sin to keep silent and that “freedom in general is essentially a religious concept.” (DDLW #701).*

During Holy Week, at noon one day, revenue agents suddenly raided the offices of *The Daily Worker*, Communist paper, evicting its editors, padlocking the doors, saying that this action was because of unpaid taxes. The editors claimed that there were no taxes due and that what the revenue agents wanted was a glimpse at their files, the names of those who were contributing to make up their deficits, and their subscription lists. They have appealed the case to the courts, and protested to the President that this action was an infringement on freedom of the press and so a violation of guaranteed constitutional liberties.

It was a sudden gesture, totally unexpected by all those concerned and the result was an immediate protest on the part of radicals, liberals and a number of other Americans including plenty of other daily papers who were not afraid of the stigma of guilt by association and who believe that openness, free discussion of ideas can never harm our way of life, or our Christian ideals.

During that great season of Holy Week, which this year began with the feast of the Annunciation (there is no time with God) which celebrates God becoming man, taking upon Himself our weak flesh, becoming like unto us in all things save only sin, all I could think of was that God loved *each one of us* so particularly that He bore our sins, died for our sins, conquered death, gave us hope. If we believe and hope in Him and I trust are trying to grow in love of Him, we must try to reflect a little of this Christ love and trust and mercy in dealing with our fellows, friend and enemy. At times like this we can't get much further than seeing our own sins, our own guilt, especially since we as a country seem to be trying to outdo Russia in ways of killing off as many people as possible with guided missiles. One thing which will guarantee a continuance of the arms race is to play up a spirit of fear and such raids as that on *The Daily Worker* is as much calculated to inspire that fear of ever present menace and danger in our midst among the citizenry in general as it is to outlaw the Communist or make existence difficult for him. (We are not trying to judge the case only as a tax case, and don't know anything about political parties and their payment of taxes. We are dealing with this matter from the standpoint of the newspaper alone.)

The Holy Father in his Easter message says that not to “every appearance of faith is guaranteed the victory,” and that appearance of faith he defines as “the vague sense of Christianity, flabby and empty, which remains on the outer threshold of conviction in the mind and of love in the heart. It is not set into

the whole structure of life whether public or private. . . . true peace is not a state of repose like death, but rather the power and activity of life.”

We are taught that it is a sin to keep silent when we should speak out in defense of the right, thus consenting to wrong . . . that God turns even malice and wrong doing to His own ends . . . that we must be ready to uphold truth at whatever cost to ourselves . . . that it is only the truth that can imbue men’s hearts with true freedom. So with all these things in mind we sent the following message to the editors of *The Daily Worker*:

We at the *Catholic Worker* express our sympathy to *The Daily Worker* in the eviction they have suffered even though their beliefs are contrary to our own. Freedom of the press is a concept fundamental to Jeffersonians and libertarians and freedom in general is essentially a religious concept. The Smith Act itself shows that our country is so superficially religious that it is not willing to take the risk and consequences of a faith in freedom and man’s use of it. (In a lighter vein), if we only had the space and could be truly charitable and hospitable we would offer the use of our offices and even of our mailing list, since the bureaucrats have confiscated yours, and we are sure that we would risk nothing in such a gesture but achieve a healthful clarification of thought. Yours for a green and peaceful revolution.

The editors *The Catholic Worker*. D.D.

P.S. Seriously speaking, since it has been called to our attention that the faithful are forbidden to read Marxist writings, we withdraw our facetious offer of our mailing list.