

The trouble with our state

John Dear | May. 15, 2007 | On the Road to Peace

This week, my troublemaking friends and I might, after several postponements, be standing trial for our attempt in Santa Fe Sept. 26 to pay a visit to Sen. Pete Domenici and urge him to sign the "Declaration of Peace," a pledge to help end the U.S. war on Iraq. To aid our case we boldly subpoenaed the good senator, who is up to his ears in problems for his role in the firing of prosecutors. His lawyers are wrangling to keep him out of the courtroom, so our trial may well be postponed again.

But resistance to the war grows and with it our hope. A few weeks again, the Philadelphia Fourteen, another Declaration-of-Peace group, were acquitted for a similar case. Trapped in an elevator too, for going to see their senator, the police milled about monitoring their moves. Their verdict gives us hope -- if we keep at it, others will be acquitted, and others and others, and the props holding up the lies will come down in a crash. And the war, one day, will end.

I draw hope from another quarter -- the tenacious witness of my Jesuit brother, Daniel Berrigan, who turned 86 last week. This summer, a series of his 10 best books, including his autobiography, will be republished by Wipf and Stock.

To celebrate his birthday, and his keeping at it all these years, friends have produced an astonishing CD of Dan reciting and reflecting on 25 of his best poems. I wrote the liner notes, Martin Sheen and Howard Zinn wrote the text for the back of the CD. Just before he died, novelist Kurt Vonnegut sent his endorsement, "If Jesus were a poet, this is what he would sound like."

In honor of Dan's birthday, our Philadelphia friends' victory, and this great new CD, I thought I'd offer the title poem, Dan's insightful summation of these 50 states. May it inspire us to speak out against this unjust, immoral, illegal war, through our own nonviolent action.

The Trouble With Our State

By Daniel Berrigan

The trouble with our state

was not civil disobedience

which in any case was hesitant and rare.

Civil disobedience was rare as kidney stone

No, rarer; it was disappearing like immigrant's disease.

You've heard of a war on cancer?

There is no war like the plague of media

There is no war like routine

There is no war like 3 square meals

There is no war like a prevailing wind.

It flows softly; whispers

don't rock the boat!

The sails obey, the ship of state rolls on.

The trouble with our state

-- we learned only afterward

when the dead resembled the living who resembled the dead

and civil virtue shone like paint on tin

and tin citizens and tin soldiers marched to the common whip

-- our trouble

the trouble with our state

with our state of soul

our state of siege

--

was

Civil

Obedience.

John Dear's new book, *Transfiguration*, (Doubleday, with a foreword by Archbishop Tutu) is available from www.amazon.com [1] or your local bookstore. To order a copy of the new DVD, "The Narrow Path: Walking the Way of Peace and Nonviolence with John Dear," go to www.sandamianofoundation.org [2]. To order the new CD of poetry read by Daniel Berrigan, go to www.yellowbikepress.com [3]. For more information, see: www.johndear.org [4].

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