

Price of Non-Conformity

WHEN Pittsburgh's air raid siren was sounded in its weekly test yesterday morning, we were reminded of 29 New York pacifists who are awaiting trial for refusing to take cover during "Operation Alert" last June 15.

"Operation Alert," it will be recalled, was the big test of civil defense in several Eastern cities which suffered a mock hydrogen bomb attack in which there were 15 million hypothetical casualties.

But there was nothing hypothetical about the 29 people who refused to cooperate in the test. They were arrested, jailed, denounced from the bench as "murderers," and finally released in \$1,500 bail each pending trial on charges of violating the New York State Defense Emergency Act of 1951. They are the real casualties not only of the mock raid but also of an alarming decline in American civil liberties.

Shall an American conscientious objector be denied the traditional right of dissent even in a mock emergency? One would expect at most a mock arrest in a mock air raid. But such is not the case of the 29 citizens who gathered in City Hall park to protest what they felt was an irrational governmental attempt to prepare the nation for mass-suicide.

As they protested, there was no "clear and present danger," which provides the only basis for the abridgement of an American's constitutional rights. But there is a clear and present danger in the denial of these rights to the 29 non-conformists.

These pacifists and conscientious objectors are not dangerous radicals. They are from the Catholic Worker House of Hospitality in New York, the Protestant Fellowship of Reconciliation, and the pacifist War Resisters League. They hardly merited the word "murder" used in their cases by Judge Louis Kaplan, or the heavy bail under which they were released pending trial next September 14. The offense for which they were arrested is, after all, only a misdemeanor. And yet they may be fined \$500 or sent to jail for a year, or both.

Every citizen who wishes to protect the rights of all Americans, including his own, should protest the arrest of the 29 non-conformists who refused to take cover. If we must take cover, let it be the cover of our constitutional rights.

PROVISIONAL DEFENSE COMMITTEE

Room 825, 5 Beekman Street, New York 38 • Beekman 3-0463

Dear Friend,

If you are a person "who wishes to protect the rights of all Americans, including his own," you will want to help in the defense of the 29 persons whose case is described in this editorial. FUNDS ARE NEEDED AT ONCE:

1. For current expenses of the lawyers representing the group and to insure them a modest compensation for their work.
2. For expenses in consulting specialists on constitutional law, and for educating the public.
3. For the exorbitant bail imposed... a 2% bail tax must be paid on cash bail and 6% on bond. Most defendants cannot pay this. Nor should those who provided bail be put to this expense, unless they volunteer to do so. The Provisional Defense Committee must, therefore, have money to meet these charges.

Please send your contribution as promptly as possible.

Very truly yours,

Dorothy Day

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A. J. Muste

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PROVISIONAL

COMMITTEE: Bayard Rustin, Secretary, A. J. Muste, Treasurer, Bess Cameron, Dorothy Day, Ralph DiGia, Roy Finch, Robert Gilmore, Mike Harrington, Ammon Hennacy, Kent Larrabee, Orlie Pell, Igal Roodenko

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