

effective, and maybe less dramatic, *civil disobedience* that must be sought to regenerate the status quo.

Finally, I had hoped that Daniel Berrigan would have offered some specific proposals; I wanted so much to have some concrete suggestions, but I get the feeling he is more excited by the intellectual and ideological experience of "Looking at Catonsville," at the time of writing, than by a coalition of all the oppressed against "wickedness in high places" and "principalities and powers" of this world which rob us of our rights to be human under God.

The Rev. James E. Gunther
Pres., Ministerial Interfaith Assn.

New York, N. Y.

Dear Sir: A popular button reads, "If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem!" My question to Fr. Berrigan, simply put, is, "Are you part of the problem?"

The rhetoric and tactics of the peace movement must bear responsibility for the election of the Nixon Administration. As a black person, I cannot now accept the Movement's claim of anti-racism. If no choice was seen with respect to Vietnam policy, why did the Movement not see the widely different approach of the candidates to the issue of race? If his movement did not act correctly with reference to the choice then at hand, how can it now lay claim to a mystique of such purity and concern for human values? Vietnam is hardly the only moral issue we face; nor is it the most long-standing.

Second, one must inquire whether clearly illegal tactics of resistance effectively communicate legitimate concern or whether they simply discredit the resisters. I suspect the actors may gain a false sense of righteousness at the expense of adversely polarizing opinion. The consequent radicalization of our public affairs seems to me as much a product of the techniques of dissent as of the rhetoric of the Administration.

In short, use of the politics of disruption born out of despair and questionable assumptions of moral superiority may simply invite repression and complicate the problem of developing the institutions and resources we require "to survive in the wilderness of the world."

Ernest M. Howell

Hartsdale, N. Y.

Dear Sir: The Catonsville Nine performed a beautiful and necessary act of witness. They are the free men; we who presume to judge them must recognize that we are the prisoners of the system, because of our

complicity with it. I write this response to Fr. Berrigan's article in a spirit of deep appreciation for his deeds and vision.

At last, a framework for surviving the spiritual agony of our time: civil disobedience *and* alternate forms of community, saying No *and* growing new organs and resources to realize the alternatives.

We have reached a point where there is no more comfort in huddling together inside any of the anti-Establishment movements than there is in imagining that one is part of the silent majority. If Movement people are not intent on forging alternatives, they are merely reflecting the common predicament in a different way. They, too, are engaged in "keeping the soul's terminal sickness a secret" (Josephine Johnson, *The Inland Island*).

I am convinced that a degree of moral isolation from the system is necessary, but I am not convinced that it should take the form of civil disobedience in the usual sense. The Catonsville Nine had the luxury of a chosen act, of a public trial, of a decisive and dramatic break with the Establishment. For tens of thousands of others, the drama, if any, was simply saying No to the war machine and facing jail, the stockade, exile and, in some cases, death. The difference is that the vast majority of choices were forced by the draft or by in-service oppression, and that these acts of refusal truly incapacitated the system at root level.

Refusal can take forms which are not civil disobedience: a technologist's refusal to do war-related work (what work isn't?), a professional's refusal to work in an institution which does not serve all the people (what institution does?), a student's refusal to be merely trained. . . .

We need new institutions and new forms of community, but these should not be expected to emerge until truly large numbers of people have said No to the system, at a cost of giving up any claim on middle-class professional status and material comfort. They shall have to live as peasants, while using all their skills and resources to make the technology work for the communal welfare.

Fr. Berrigan identifies students and war resisters as the core group of the new world. I see a more basic force in the hundreds of thousands of the middle class whose complicity with the system has gone farther than they can stand, and the millions of poor who are learning not to want the cancer that is middle-class America. They will bring forth the new world out of faith, necessity and desperation. The present system sooner or later will force the choice.

Meanwhile, we would do well to learn to live on rice and beans, and to share the necessities with as