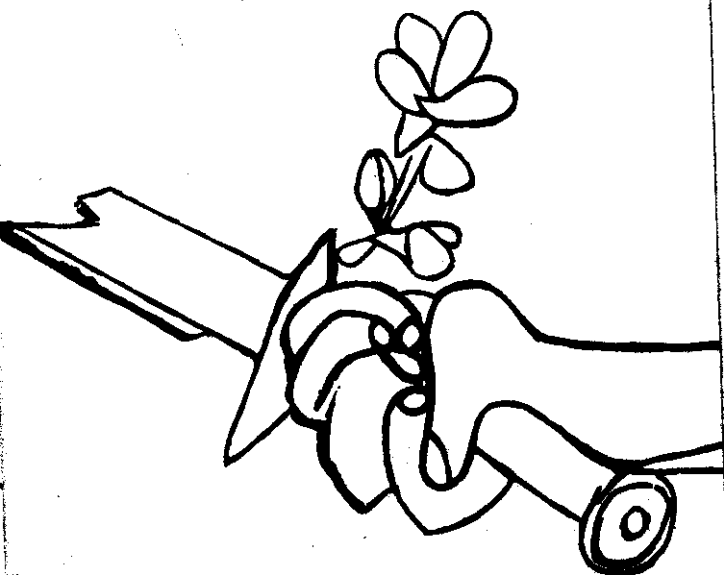
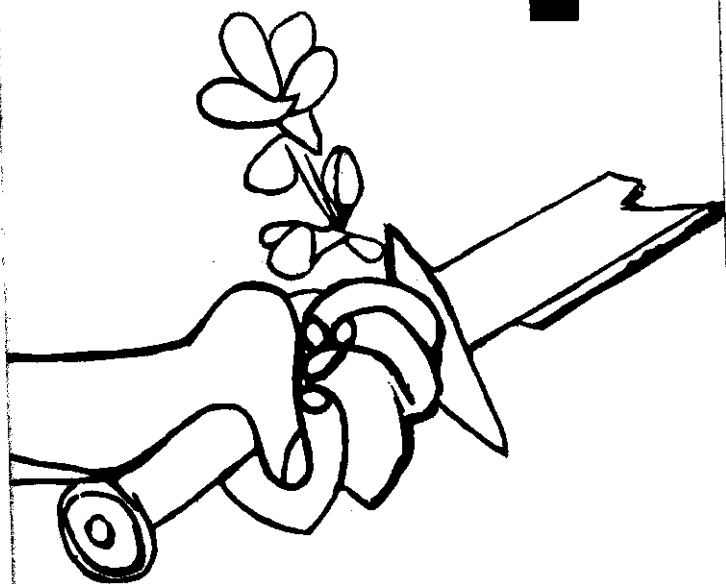


FOR



**What is the
E.O.R.?**



PERPETUAL WITNESS

The continuum of history, to anyone who chances to so direct his thoughts, seems to have a great deal to do with how human beings find their way around the gigantic roadblocks thrown across their path by wars, revolutions and other disruptions of the business of living together. Now to the ancient killers such as famine, pestilence and poverty have been added the newly discovered ones of overpopulation, pollution of the life streams and environment, chemical and atomic death. Who could not be forgiven the conclusion that mankind is determined to snuff out his own life?

Yes, today the ways of death appear to be strong enough to eclipse the ways of life. But although they loom as primal shapes that almost seem to have a life of their own, we know that war and violence to men and nature have human origins and are powered by man-made forces.

The Fellowship of Reconciliation began as the response of two men shadowed by the onset of the most destructive engine of death thus far to threaten human life — World War I. A German and an Englishman standing on the platform of the Cologne railroad station the very day German troops invaded Belgium, knew that their nations would soon be locked in awful conflict.

But they also knew that the forces of life — of human solidarity and brotherliness would in the end be stronger. They pledged themselves to begin in their own lands a new transnational organization that would attack the roots of war, racial hatred and mass death.

Thus was the Fellowship of Reconciliation born, to be formally organized in Great Britain in 1914, in the United States in 1915. Fifty-nine years have passed since that day in Cologne and, as all may see, mankind has not yet through its own efforts been turned around in its obsession with death and its reluctance to pursue fully the ways of life.

But the Fellowship has flourished throughout the world, with offices in 24 countries and with 23,000 members in the United States. What is even more important perhaps is that people in every nation are now much more aware of the heavy weight of war, violence and ecological death which menaces their very survival as members of the human family.

Again, however, it is not numbers or changing attitudes that characterize the Fellowship. It is their persistent and perpetual witness in a wide spectrum of positions and actions that have, bit by bit, established a tiny but growing territory of peace and justice in the minds of men and women.

COMMITMENT

Members of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, unlike those who sign up with other groups working for the end of war, for brotherhood, peace and justice, etc., begin with a certain commitment. By implication affirming the essential unity of mankind, the consistency of ends and means in reaching social goals and the inevitability of a world community, they begin by stating clearly that they will not participate in war or its preparation in any way in which they have a choice.

Now pacifism, one way of describing this commitment, has never been a comfortable label or an easily understood description of a way of looking at the world. Etymologically speaking, it derives from pax, pace, the Latin word for peace (in French, les pacifiques means "peacemaker".) It has nothing to do with passivity, since it often involves action, the converse of passive acceptance.

Also the word pacifist suffers from a popular overtone of negativism. To refuse military service, to raise questions about the payment of taxes for war, to withhold cooperation with those who would engage in violent acts, to stand in criticism of people and forces who would destroy the web of life — all these and many more may be required of the pacifist, if he is true to his commitment. They sound negative!

Yet basically the commitment is to the fullest life possible. The social creed of the pacifist or Fellowship of Reconciliation member is one of affirmation, not of denial. Its statement of purpose "recognizes peace as the fruit and pleasure of a community that cherishes and defends the full dignity and freedom of every human being everywhere."

Thus the negative side of pacifism is not even half of the whole position. A pacifist will not kill but that is because he sees the continuum of life violated by so doing. He must therefore become deeply involved in the struggle to overcome the injustices and

inequities in life that result in war. It is the first step in affirming a way of life that will profoundly affect our system of criminal justice, of penology and rehabilitation, of ownership of war-related industries, of family life and schools, of economic opportunity, of discrimination based on race or sex.

THE ROOTS OF OUR COMMITMENT

That killing is wrong, that war is immoral, is perhaps one of the oldest of man's taboos that grew into a concept. Other scriptures than the Hebrew have parallel stories to that of Cain and Abel. Three thousand years before Christ the emperor of the ancient Maurya empire which stretched from Afghanistan to Madras ordained that in his dominion no living beings were to be killed or offered in sacrifice.

Thus the religious sanctions for pacifism are broad, as a glance at the statements from religious bodies compiled to give support for conscientious objectors in the United States will show. Historically, a number of sects of which the Quakers are one, have systematically formulated a religious philosophy of non-violent resistance to evil. These, together with strong pacifist strains in the major denominations, made up the bulk of the first membership of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Their chief source was Jesus' sermon on the mount, and the doctrine of the cross.

Now the strain is enriched by Buddhist, Humanist, spiritualist, and ethical elements, to name only a few. Today in the USA, Protestant Christians are in the majority while Roman Catholic and Jewish members are fast-growing categories. Each national group, recognizing at the same time the limitations of their ethnic cultures, has brought new insights, like the colors of the rainbow, to the Fellowship of Reconciliation. The human family, as a reflection of divinity, is not yet an actuality, but is both an archetype of past dreams and hopes and also an achievable vision of a world united.

THE REALITY OF OUR FAITH

It is not easy to project such a world of peace from present models. Especially in the political realm. But communities of many kinds based on love and mutual respect are springing up like mushrooms everywhere. Where attention is paid to personality needs and real

relationships in an extended social situation, learning takes place in schools, growth in other institutions. The love formerly thought to flourish only in intimate settings such as the family is now being turned loose in churches, new group settings of all kinds. There is intense self-examination about the futility of custodial institutions such as mental hospitals and prisons where the idea of coercion is dominant.

On the other hand, violent solutions, or reactions, turned to out of frustration, anger and desperation, are, even while being practiced, seen as non-productive, burned out actions. A frantic, subterranean search is on for new ways that will mend, not further rend the torn fabric of human relations. Threat and fear, having failed abysmally in international affairs to produce peace, is now seen as failing in more intimate, close-to-home relationships. With wit, imagination, and verve, a whole new range of alternatives to violence are being tried and tested everywhere.

The Fellowship puts it in its statement of purpose: "We strive to build a social order that will utilize the resources of human ingenuity and wisdom for the benefit of all men, and in which no individual and group will be exploited or oppressed for the profit and pleasure of others." Utopian? Not in the old sense, since human survival, both in quantity and quality, we think, can't exist on anything less. It's infinitely superior to what C. Wright Mills called the "crackpot realism" with which the world is presently wired together.

HOW WE WORK AND WITNESS

Now "building a social order" may strike today's cynical ear as far-off and grandiose, not to say inexpressibly difficult. What do we do today? asks the person eager to "get with it." To them, the Fellowship's program, past, present and future has an answer both practical and compelling in terms of its goals.

But to answer properly we must first step back a bit into our recent history since action for peace and justice does not merely begin today.

To meet the challenge of each generation and in fact each moment in which a year becomes an epoch and sometimes a few months an era in the accelerating pace of change — this is the task the Fellowship sets for itself.

In an earlier age, or at least so it seems in retrospect, the choices facing mankind were a bit more elementary. Thus, when the U.S. entered World War I and hundreds of COs went to prison and oftentimes torture, it was natural that the fledgling Fellowship turn first to searching out each isolated pacifist to offer him what aid it could. Or in the era of repression that followed the war that our members should help found the precursor of the American Civil Liberties Union.

Nor that, in a time when the right to organize at one's workplace was in question, we trained leadership in nonviolence for the Lawrence, Mass. and Paterson, N.J. long strike ordeals. Or that again our people would organize Brookwood Labor College or set up the Workers Defense League.

Similarly, during the twenties and thirties when much talk and activity about the "social gospel" pervaded American Protestantism, the Fellowship began to relate social concerns to the greatest neglected social evil of them all — war. Interchurch agencies for international order and (as World War II drew on) for a just and durable peace, received large infusions of strength and material help from the FOR. And, in the shadow of all the more visible structures, we worked very hard to turn thousands to a position of conscience in respect to joining future wars.

PACIFISM ON TRIAL

Pacifism was even more in the shadow after Pearl Harbor but never quiet. Not content to oppose and resist the war, we turned also to further means to give social expression to our commitment to nonviolence in race relations. European cities were still in flames when a memo went forth from FOR staff outlining the structure of what was to become the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE).

Even in wartime, "sit-ins" (a new word) were taking place in a Chicago restaurant, challenging public complacency about discrimination and clearing the way for legislation barring segregation. The first student sit-in in the South — at a lunch counter in Greensboro, N.C. shook Jim Crow to the roots.

Now the way had been opened for a massive application of nonviolence to the civil rights question North and South and in this the FOR played a large part. Staff worked

closely with Martin Luther King, an FOR member, for the time was ripe.

World dilemmas too continued to challenge both resources and the relevance of the FOR position. We assigned a staff member to work in setting up Americans for South African Resistance which became the American Committee on Africa, now independent, to help the emerging new nations. In two major famines in Communist China, we urged relief through a national campaign as a means of opening up relations with a country condemned to isolation.

Pro-peace rather than merely anti-war more accurately describes FOR: Yet anti-war we had to be when the American nation started down the long trail of the destruction of Indochina and itself as it has done in Vietnam. Here our actions have followed closely each escalation since 1965, mainly through the sending of three prestigious teams — one of them international — to try to bring through study and action an absent measure of reason and reconciliation to the scene. At the same time we have joined, in all that we in good conscience could, with the burgeoning anti-war movement in the United States and the world, often offering significant leadership.

Pacifists, however, are not only to be found in peace movements. When Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnam Buddhist monk, first came to the United States under FOR auspices, there was only an anti-colonialist "struggle" movement in South Vietnam. But now there are countless ties between the Buddhist pacifists of Vietnam and the Christian pacifists of the U.S. with accompanying fruits of mutual help and support.

A double dilemma faces the religious pacifists today. One of them used to be his "purity", but this is no longer an issue, when on at least one level everyone in the whole world must acknowledge that war is our common enemy. It cannot co-exist any longer with the idea of the survival of mankind. Did not its trillions of dollars worth of irreplaceable resources burned up forever, its millions of dead, its suffocating weight upon the whole human enterprise — did not all these call for its past-due end, we would still have the problem of reclaiming the earth as a fit home for the creatures of God, of whom mankind is only one.

Believing as we do that, in an absolute and final sense, only a pacifist view of life will suffice today, we are still confronted with the problem of its day-to-day relevancy. It is a whole response to history, to being human. Through the Fellowship of Reconciliation, it has been and is a way of both viewing and being acted upon by events.

However, the key is the creative response to the event. Since our members and their political "clout" are not going to greatly change history, it is as symbol and as catalyst that we stir and galvanize the conscience of mankind.

A few examples: A war-weary nation in 1944 uneasy about its own defenses of freedom here at home responded — through its courts and legislatures — to lunch counter and swimming pool sit-ins sponsored by FOR. With our government's espousal of backyard shelters against atomic blasts, we began building "shelters for the shelterless" in India and Colombia. And when the U.S. began to pour troops into Vietnam after the Tonkin Bay incident, the FOR started the whole ball rolling by getting 3,000 clergy to side with us in saying "In the Name of God Stop It!" Six years later, the war still on, we enabled up to 300 a day symbolizing the Daily Death Toll of Vietnamese, to "fall dead" in front of the White House for nearly a month.

Today, the FOR through its related transnational program Dai Dong, dramatized for all the world to see at Stockholm the congruence of the world as family, set beside sovereignty displayed at a parallel UN conference. Actions of local communities symbolizing the destruction of the earth through pollution, mass crossings of borders, affirmations of life and its interrelatedness, are being planned as symbolic action.

Publications, advertisements, records, films, speakers, seminars, deputations, discussion leaders, petitions, joint actions of all kinds have been the means of extending these many witnesses. Under the impact of the agglomeration of issues, the deepening of the moral crisis and the shaking loose of millions heretofore apathetic, new and more involving instrumentalities will have to be found.

Join us in the commitment, in the witness, in the search.

Questions You May Have About The F.O.R.

WHO ARE THE MEMBERS?

Most vocations and virtually all the geographical areas of the United States are represented in the FOR. Overseas there are organized groups in countries, including all the continents, the largest being in England, except perhaps for a newly formed group of Kimbanguists in Nigeria. The average age of members is actually dropping, due to the extraordinary interest of young people. Most members remain for their lifetime.

ARE THERE LOCAL GROUPS?

In most cities, although the state or local organization tends to vary widely in terms of local leadership. College communities are sure to have considerable numbers of members. New members can usually receive the names of others in their locality from the national office. Activities in local communities will likewise vary widely from study groups to action programs.

HOW IS F.O.R. ORGANIZED?

Democratically, as you would expect. A national staff and some field workers are responsible to a national council that meets biennially. It is elected by a mailed ballot from the entire membership. Anyone may propose program, meet with traveling staff or committees. Many write us freely in informal, "family" fashion.

DOES THE F.O.R. TAKE POLITICAL POSITIONS?

No, it is prohibited from supporting individual political candidates or specific legislation by income tax law. However, it is certainly not a-political in the sense that its various position papers and writings have a strong sense of political reality in a context of the great social and moral questions of the day. The national council and its interim organization, the executive committee, have on occasion issued statements on current issues for the guidance of its members. Its members are very often extremely active politically, both nationally and locally where they do so out of a deep sense of moral concern.

HOW DOES THE F.O.R. REGARD REVOLUTION?

In the face of multiplying movements of national liberation and rising expectations of peoples, the FOR has expressed frequent sympathy with their goals even when it could not approve of nor assist with some methods of cataclysmic social change. At the same time, it has constantly pointed out that the use of violence in bringing about necessary change is very often self-defeating of the goals of revolution as is the institutionalized violence of the status quo. To this end it has sponsored an extensive training program for leadership in nonviolence in the United States and in Latin America is launching an important center for the study and training in nonviolent revolution.

WHAT DOES THE F.O.R. SAY ON THE SEPARATION VS. INTEGRATION ISSUE?

Historically, the FOR has been a pioneer in the campaign for the abolition of segregation in all its forms. In the 60s and 70s in the U.S. it has come to a recognition of the validity of independent ethnic movements as a sometimes necessary stage along the road toward total integration. In humility and sensitivity then, the FOR encourages the cooperation of whites and blacks, Jews and Gentiles, etc., at the same time that it provides for the need for self-determining peoplehood, realizing that true integration is achieved only by recognizing and honestly meeting differences.

HAS THE F.O.R. A POSITION ON PRISON REFORM?

Membership in the FOR seems divided on the urgency of reform and rehabilitation of the prison system vs. the ultimate need to abolish the prison system altogether. Here again there is creative difference, open to new positions.

ARE THERE F.O.R. "WITNESSES" IN THE AREA OF SCHOOL, FAMILY, ETC.?

A peaceful world, as the FOR sees it, must have its roots in the smaller units of society as well as the larger. Thus it explores new learnings and experiences of pacifist living in the home, schools. It recognizes that more radical and effective ways of nurturing peace must be constantly developed in personal and social relationships.

Further information is available by writing

Fellowship of Reconciliation
Box 271, Nyack, N.Y. 10960

Send me your **Statement of Purpose**,
including membership form.

Send me further data on _____

Send me your latest literature lists _____

Send me _____ copies of the folder
"FOR: A Profile of the past 58 years"

(sample free—100 or more \$2.00,
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