

Sam Williams
Publisher

Finger Lakes Times

J. F. Bertram
General Manager

Opinion

D. C. Hadley
Managing Editor

218 Genesee St., Geneva, N.Y. 14450

While the acid rains

(The New York Times)

When Prime Minister Brian Mulroney of Canada first met President Reagan in 1985, the President promised to study acid rain and the three million tons of pollutants the United States discharges north to Canada each year.

At their next meeting in 1986, after the promised study confirmed that indeed, acid rain is a serious problem and that

The drizzle of poison adds to a steadily mounting burden.

"the potential for long-term socioeconomic costs is high," Mr. Reagan sidestepped doing anything about it but promised to allot more funds to study control techniques.

Mr. Reagan didn't follow through on even that promise. But at their third meeting last week he proposed a new plan: He would fulfill his last year's promise of more study funds, and "consider" a treaty on acid rain.

As Mr. Mulroney contemplates the 14,000 acid-dead lakes in eastern Canada, the 13 blighted salmon-bearing rivers in Nova Scotia and the stands of dying sugar maples in Quebec, he must begin to wish that Mr. Reagan would stop making promises and start opening his eyes — and pocketbook.

In his refusal to start reducing acid rain, Mr. Reagan stands in fast-dwindling company. The states of Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New York and Wisconsin all recently resolved to order reductions in the waste gases that cause acid rain. So have many countries in Europe. The provinces of Ontario and Quebec have launched ambitious control programs.

None of these costly programs were undertaken lightly. But the evidence is so overwhelming that only the chief polluters and the White House advocate another study in place of immediate ac-

tion. Blue-ribbon scientific committees now see a clear causal chain between waste gases spewed from coal-burning power plants, like those in the Middle West, and dead fish in lakes hundreds of miles away in the Northeast United States and Canada. The sulfur and nitrogen oxides travel far from their source, forming sulfuric and nitric acids in rain or when deposited as gases. The acids slowly poison lakes and streams, especially in regions whose soils cannot neutralize them. At a certain stage of acidity, fish and water plants die.

Dead fish are only the most visible symptom of acid rain, a weak but insidious poison that probably now affects the ecology of the whole Eastern Seaboard in myriad unseen ways. Acid rain and gases corrode buildings and injure lungs. Acid rain may well be a factor in the widespread death and slower growth of trees along the Appalachian range. Ozone is another probable contributor, and curtailing emissions of nitrogen oxides would cut back ozone as well as acid rain.

As the picture becomes steadily clearer, scientific groups have urged that action against acid rain begin now, without waiting for the last details to be worked out. To protect lakes, the tonnage of sulfur emissions must be roughly halved, and nitrogen oxides also reduced, at a cost of about \$5 billion a year. Such reductions would also lessen damage to forests, human health, buildings and visibility.

Mr. Mulroney had to act gratified at the President's pledge to consider action. Considering his abrupt loss of popularity in Canada, the Prime Minister could do no less. But a pledge is a pledge; action is action.

The cutbacks and costs would fall most heavily on the worst polluters, like the power plants of the Ohio River Basin that inject their gases up through tall stacks and export their wastes eastward. While their foot-dragging is tolerated, the drizzle of poison adds to a steadily mounting burden. While Mr. Reagan roams, land and water burn.

Safer highways

(Scripps Howard News Service)

Tougher laws and a growing public intolerance of drunken driving appear to be saving lives on the highways.

According to a recent news report, about 400 new laws have been enacted by states in the past five years to strengthen drunken driving rules. And under pressure from the federal government, all but seven states have increased their legal drinking age to 21.

In one publicized case, a California repeat drunken-driving offender was convicted of murder and sentenced to 77 years to life in prison after he ran a stop sign and killed five people. He won't be eligible for parole until 2025. That kind of punishment surely ought to set people thinking about the trouble they can get into if they drink and drive.

The certainty of substantial punishment for those caught driving while intoxicated, even if they haven't caused an accident, is becoming increasingly likely throughout the United States. In Minnesota, for example, nearly 43,000 drunken drivers lost their licenses last year, a threefold increase over statistics

of 10 years ago; repeat offenders in that state can expect jail terms of up to 90 days and fines of \$1,500.

In Illinois, more than 50,000 inebriated drivers lost their licenses last year. Such statistics mean that a lot of people are having to scramble to find a way to get to work, not to mention the crimp being put in their social lives.

Some state and local governments have banned the sale of discounted drinks at "happy hours," those relaxing-at-the-bar-after-work periods that daily set many boozey commuters loose on the highways.

Some states are experiencing a dramatic drop in highway fatalities caused by drunken drivers. In Wisconsin, the percentage fell from 44.3 percent in 1981 to 35.3 last year. One-fourth of Missouri's 1986 traffic deaths involved alcohol, compared to as much as 49 percent in previous years.

It appears that federal, state and local officials, including judges, are finally getting the message: The public is fed up with the carnage and headache caused by drunks at the wheel.

the small society

by Brickman



The story of Holy Week and Easter

The story of Holy Week and Easter will always fascinate people. It intrigues us to think of a God who came to Earth to share the life of humanity and then rose after a crucifixion.

Palm Sunday marks the day when Jesus and his disciples went to Jerusalem after teaching in small towns and villages. He had gotten famous as a prophet and healer. Many thought the youthful leader would spearhead a movement that would free the Jews from Roman imperialism.

On Monday, he drove the money-changers out of the temple. Tuesday, a day of controversy, he repeatedly met those who came to him with questions; questions that had nothing to do with getting information or guidance. They asked their questions to trap and tangle him in his own words. On Wednesday, he stayed outside Jerusalem, in the quiet village of Bethany. There he enjoyed the hospitality of a man named Simon.

Meanwhile, Judas Iscariot took steps to arrange his betrayal of Jesus to the religious leaders. The downfall of Judas did not come suddenly. By this time, the authorities had Judas in their corner. He would end his days with a broken life and broken heart.

By Thursday of the last week, time for Jesus was running out. That day, he ate his last meal in the upper room with the 12. Out of that meal has come the central sacrament in Christian worship, wherein the faithful remember him, confront him, experience him, participate in his saving work, sense the awfulness of sin, and the wonder of



J. Richard Hart
Hart to Heart

God's cure for sin.

When the last meal had ended, they went to the garden of Gethsemane where Jesus experienced a sense of loneliness, spiritual agony and, finally, with perfect trust, submission to the will of God. He had reached and passed the point of no return. The die was cast.

As soon as this took place, the sound of people approaching reached his ears. The drama unfolded with the traitor's kiss; then the arrest.

First they took him to Annas, the power behind the throne; father of high priests, father-in-law of Caiaphas; possibly owner of the stalls in the Temple which Jesus had overturned. Annas could be the first to gloat over the arrest.

Next they hustled Jesus off for a preliminary trial at the house of Caiaphas, the high priest. As morning broke, the Sanhedran, the supreme court, found him before them for his official trial and condemnation. Then came the trial before Pilate, then before Herod, and back again to Pilate for the final condemnation.

After the verdict, they scourged Jesus — always a prelude to crucifixion. The Roman government had few more terrible ordeals than scourging, in which they stripped and beat the victim, literal-

ly ripping a man's back to pieces. Under the lash, many lost consciousness.

Following custom, the soldiers enjoyed a little horse-play, in which they made a crown of thorns and mocked him. Then they forced him to carry his cross to the place of crucifixion. With the cross flat on the ground, they laid him on it, nailed his hands to it and, in a moment of searing agony, lifted the cross up and set it in place. The soldiers cast lots beneath the cross to see who would win his robe. Jesus died a slow agonizing death beneath the burning sun.

On Saturday, the Jewish day of rest, his body lay in a tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea. Guards stood by the sealed stone door to make sure no one would steal the body. Rumors already floated around that Jesus would rise from the dead. The rulers did not want any funny business.

On the first day of the week, now known as Easter, several women who had worked closely with Jesus came to anoint his body with spices and ointments. When they reached the tomb, they found the stone rolled away. A messenger told them Jesus was risen and had gone before them into Galilee as he had promised he would do.

Beyond question, the church owes its beginning to the conviction of the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead. It owes its continuing existence to the ever-living Christ, who lives today in the hearts of his modern disciples.

(Dr. Hart is pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Geneva.)

Dreaming of a Peace Tax Fund

WASHINGTON — Whether a taxpayer obeys or violates his or her conscience on April 15 is no concern to the Internal Revenue Service. It wants dollars, not qualms. But at tax time, conscience is an issue to a fair number of citizens whose religion, ethics or value system holds that cooperation with war or war preparation is not moral.

They see no consistency of conscience in working 364 days of the year opposing policies that make the United States the earth's most militarized nation while, on the 365th day, paying taxes that overflow the government's war trough.

Tax money has paid for all seven of America's declared wars and all of its 137 "presidential actions," the latest of which are Grenada, Libya and Nicaragua. Citizens helped provide the Pentagon with nearly two trillion dollars under the Reagan administration, including a doubling of money for nuclear weapons and the beginning of a space battlefield.

The National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee, an East Patchogue, N.Y., group estimates that between 10,000 and 20,000 people will be

Colman McCarthy

sitting out April 15 for reasons of conscience. The estimate is probably low. This isn't a group much given to self-generated publicity or issuing press releases every time Caspar Weinberger emits another war whoop. Street theater is rare, although a few war tax protesters will put up a picket line April 15 in front of the IRS offices in Washington.

More important than the precise number of resisters is the growth of lawyers or counselors assisting them: More than 120 are now at work, up from 55 in 1981. Strength is seen in another figure: a 400 percent increase — from 45 to 180 — in the past seven years for national and local groups working on war tax resistance.

Kathy Levine of the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee reports that the people saying yes to their consciences and no to the IRS form a diverse group: "During Vietnam, it was mostly 'the peaceniks' who protested this way. They were against just the Vietnam War. Today there are people from all kinds of political and philosophical

positions who are refusing to pay their taxes. Some are opposed to the development of nuclear weapons. Some have religious convictions who feel they must obey God's law before a civil law. And many in the middle class are sickened and fed up with the amount of money going to the military."

Groups like the War Resisters League and the Friends Committee on National Legislation calculate that 55 percent of the tax dollar goes for military or military-related purposes. The federal tax law lacks a provision for pacifists or others who want no part of the government's violent solutions to conflicts. After that, though, good news and bad news emerges.

The good news is that no conscientious tax resister has been jailed for 15 years. For the IRS, the strain in dogging tax cheats and willful evaders, and prosecuting them if they are caught, is too great for it to be coming down hard on the noncriminal resisters. The bad news is that the IRS, through the "frivolous return" penalty that was added to the tax code in 1982, has increased enforcement powers to make it easier for the government to get not only the money that wasn't paid by April 15 but also a larger amount from penalties. Bank accounts and personal assets can be attached. Without a meticulous plan of resistance before a decision is made and the services of a skilled tax lawyer after, a conscientious resister can end up paying the IRS more than if he had not protested at all.

In a few days, a solution that would satisfy both the resisters and the government will be proposed in Congress: the Peace Tax Fund bill. With some 55 House sponsors and four in the Senate when offered in the last session, the legislation would amend the tax code. Citizens opposed in conscience to participating in any way in military solutions would be allowed to redirect their taxes to non-military purposes. These tax resisters aren't out to deny money to the government. They seek only to deny it to that part of government that wants money for military violence, which is morally unacceptable.

Marian Franz, the director of the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund and who has been working for this law for 16 years, says that "during the Vietnam era 1.5 percent of all draftees were recognized as conscientious objectors. If that same percentage of taxpayers diverted their tax payments to the Peace Tax Fund, this trust fund for peace projects would receive about \$2 billion each year. These funds would have an impact on the way the world would think about, and moves to resolve, international conflict."

A dreamer? Yes, gloriously. But not a dangerous dreamer. The planet-threatening menaces are those who keep on dreaming — especially around April 15 — that more money for more militarism is the way to peace. All that group proves is that well-funded dreams become expensive nightmares.



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