

Conversation with Philip Berrigan

by Joe Urgo

This conversation/interview with Ploughshares activist Philip Berrigan took place on Saturday, July 6, 2002. To the great loss of everyone in the world who cares about peace and justice, Philip Berrigan passed away on Dec. 6, 2002. He was 79 years old, a World War II combat veteran who became an indomitable activist against war and injustice. One of the things he is most famous (and loved) for was leading one of the most dramatic protests of the 1960s. The group who came to be known as the Catonsville Nine walked into a Catonsville, MD military draft board office on May 17, 1968, scooped up 600 draft records and set fire to them with homemade napalm in the parking lot. The action, according to the Baltimore Sun, “ignited a generation of anti-war dissent.”

Joe Urgo is a veteran who spent 1968 in Vietnam. “I believed that the war was right when I went,” he says. He saw the “growing confusion, anger and resistance” of his fellow soldiers. “The work of the anti-war movement also helped wake me up,” he says, and within two weeks of discharge he hooked up with other anti-war veterans. He helped organize Dewey Canyon 3 in spring 1971, an action that ended with hundreds of Vietnam vets throwing their medals onto the Capitol steps. In August 1971 he was the first Vietnam vet to travel to Hanoi, North Vietnam (“the enemy”) on a peace delegation. He is a member of Vietnam Veterans Against the War –Anti-Imperialist and an organizer with the Not in Our Name Project in NYC.

This interview is long. NION had hoped to edit it before publishing on the web site. However, with Phil’s recent death we feel people would want to see it in its (near) entirety. If you would like to republish it, please credit www.notinourname.net .

Joe Urgo: We’re here with Phil Berrigan, sitting in this really beautiful house with this breeze crafting through it here on a nice Saturday. Hi Phil.

Philip Berrigan: How you doing, Joe? Pleasure being with you.

JU So ... this is a monumental task and we need to pull all of our strengths together like never before in our lives. I’m here today trying to find out how you see the situation and what needs to be done. How do you see the current situation that we’re in since September 11th?

PB Well, the missing link is the American people. And somehow, from a variety of realities in the current world, we have to convince people that war gets us nowhere and

that war endangers not only them, but endangers the planet and that they're pushing their luck if they don't become active, don't raise their voices against the madness going on. And I call it "madness" advisedly. We're leading the whole world into madness. I've had friends remark time and time again that the United States resembles a gigantic insane asylum right now; along with heightened security and the tremendously distasteful process you have to go through to get on a plane; the police you encounter in Washington, DC and in New York City, especially around where the towers went down. It's something unprecedented in the history of this country -- even after Pearl Harbor. So all of this has to be pointed out to people and they have to be encouraged to speak out and to control their fear and, depending on their consciences, to become involved, to become active, start doing symbolic yet real actions against this madness that I speak of.

It seems to me we're at a very, very critical point in our history and the only check upon what's happening is not any of the bureaucracies or institutions, but only the American people. We can help one another with the help of God, but we can't turn to church or synagogue, we can't turn to the media or the business community, we certainly can't turn to the defense establishment, nor can we turn to the political order. They've all betrayed us and sold us out. So we only have one another and we have almighty God and that's enough. That's enough to turn it around, but it's not going to be easy.

JU What do you think are the motivations? What do you think the U.S. is up to in its ambitions in the world? In other words, part of trying to figure out what we need to do is that first we have to have an assessment of "what are they up to".

PB Well, American ideas or concepts towards the planet and its wealth and so on are very, very curious. There are some who say we began to be an empire after the civil war and there's been a steady advance towards that realization ever since. I think our peerless leaders have found out that empires have to expand or they die, and so we're into this hysterical expansion right now. All of our leaders are deregulatory characters. They're all for privatization. They all support corporate expansion. They are all despoilers of the environment. They don't give a damn about the environment. Bush included. They're very, very deeply into even controlling our water, and maybe our air is next. They say that in the struggle over water, two thirds of human kind is not going to have adequate water within the next twenty years. Two thirds of the human family! There's nothing being said about economizing our water, about the fact that every human being has a right to water and whatever water one needs. There's nothing being said about that. There's something like 20 American cities that have already had their water privatized, simply because the economies of these cities -- Atlanta, Chattanooga, Charleston, South Carolina, New Orleans, a few others -- their economies are impoverished with the excesses of the Federal government in arms and in war, and so the corporations come around with deep pockets and they sell the water services to them. Immediately, of course, there is a multiplication, a skyrocketing of prices that people have to pay for water, the water is polluted, usually heavy with rust. There's no move to repair pipelines or the whole infrastructure in water services. And, of course, when things go radically wrong, the culprits -- you have no voice against them. You can't bring them into court. There's no

redress. So that's the caliber of people we have leading us, you see, and it's only by way of doing what the Bolivians did when their water rights were sold out a couple of years back. Many of them were killed because marshal law was declared in the face of a popular uprising where hundreds of thousands of people hit the streets in major Bolivian cities. But the Bolivians persisted and they forced the government to buy water rights from American and French corporations. Is that enough, Joe?

JU Since the 1960s, a lot has gone on and now, since September 11th. People in the '60s fought for a lot. They won some things. They were able to contribute to trying to develop a movement in this country for justice and peace and now since September 11th, it seems like the system has not only set back any of those hopes, but is aggressively out to recast the world and this situation here at home in a much more repressive and war-oriented expansionist situation. On April 20th, when you spoke [at the anti-war rally in D.C.] you spoke with hope in your voice. What gives you hope?

PB Well, Joe, only people. Only people. And April 20th was a real renewing experience for me because there were, some say, as high as 200,000 people in Washington, DC. Probably that's a little excessive, but certainly 100,000 there. And some of them had come at great expense to themselves and their jobs and families, their livelihoods and what have you. So I thought it was great. I thought it was wonderful to see African Americans so widely represented there and to see Palestinians. I talked with many Palestinian people and saw their anguish and the sorrow they'd been through, because all of them of course had relatives back in the Mideast. So the answer lies with people. On October 1st there's going to be an anti-globalization effort in Washington, DC against the World Bank and against the IMF, and that's hopeful. But somebody has to get to the anti-globalization people, valiant as they are, and say to them "Look, you can't talk about globalization unless you talk about war, because globalization in itself is economic war. It's very, very closely tied in with what the war-makers out of the Pentagon and the White House are doing today. I mean, the war in Afghanistan is almost certainly about Caspian basin oil. That's being done by global -- globalized American oil corporations. That's why our troops in Afghanistan and in Pakistan and in all of those surrounding Caspian basin republics are there. They are protecting the corporations and their exploitation of that oil, those huge reserves. Somebody, hopefully, will say some convincing things to the young globalization people, because they're doing great work and they're taking their risks. Sometimes they're facing crazy cops and tear gas and pepper spray and the whole works. They deserve to be helped and talked to and made linkage with.

JU After 9/11 people were really thrown into dealing with the grieving for the thousands of people who died. That didn't go very long before it became pretty obvious to many people that the U.S. was using that grief to carry out its expansionist aims, its imperialist ambitions. For many millions of people it took a process to wake up to that, where people began to say this is something more than simple grieving here, there's something else going on -- when they looked at the oil question, when they looked at who's going where, why are troops going to this country, and the Patriot Act and all the repressive measures. So how do you sum up the mood of the people, because in trying to access how to go up

against this government, we have to have some sense of what the mood of the people is, how they see these questions? What's your sense of that, for example, the question of fear and risk?

PB Joe, there are people today who are saying that overall the corporate media is a fourth branch of government. It does propagandizing for the government and not a great deal else. I don't think that is particularly far-fetched, talk like that. We have the Baltimore Sun here and, traditionally, the Baltimore Sun has been one of the nation's great newspapers. It isn't any more. Not by any stretch of the imagination. The Op Ed page is a disaster, to my mind. The government line is pursued faithfully. It's almost as though people are backing into some government office for a check on a weekly basis. There seems to be a kind of slavish fear operating among journalists. I can only point to four or five in this country that are worth listening to and are worth reading; a couple up at the Boston Globe, Bob Herbert at the New York Times, he's a black guy, but he doesn't write on war much, and so it goes. Then the TV media is as bad or worse. So that makes it very, very difficult for Americans to get any accurate, precise sources of information. You have to exert huge effort in order to do that.

After September 11 I was immediately locked down. I was in Elkton, a Federal prison in Ohio, when September 11th broke, and I was immediately thrown into solitary because I was under suspicion and later on a prison administrator lied and said it was a security matter -- I had to be protected -- which was pure bullshit. But, in any event, I talked with inmates there. One Chinese guy had a sister who worked at the World Trade Center and he was desperately worried about her because he thought she might have died when the towers came down. Actually, she was held up at one of the tunnels because she was driving in from New Jersey and they blocked the tunnels as soon as the first plane hit. But there were guys there, Merrill Lynch people, all sorts of bankers and brokers and tradesmen. It was sort of an evil genius that picked out the World Trade Center for a target because it was the capitalist heart of the United States, no question about it, just as the Pentagon is the military heart of the United States. The people who did this terrible deed wanted to illustrate that this country is about money and about war, and the targets indicated that. This country is about money and about war. The Native American peoples used to say, "The love of possessions is a disease with them." It's always been that way here in this country, whether it be the gold rush up into California or Alaska. Whatever it was, it was racing for the buck. We haven't begun to put our greed into focus and perspective under discipline. We haven't even begun to do that here in this country and our whole way of life is based upon it. It's one of the things, God help us, that we're going to have to take into consideration if we ever purport to be a free and caring people in the world. So what else can I say about that Joe?

JU Earlier you said that the media is, the corporate media -- I think millions of people now recognize -- the media is not telling them the truth. I think people also have a very profound sense that the politicians are not going to save them. Do you think that the people can save themselves, that we can actually mobilize people to change things?

PB When I first started to envision a general strike after doing quite a bit of reading on it, the Russian model in 1905, the Solidarity in Poland and Gandhi's work in India. I'd read about all of them in a very remarkable book on nonviolent resistance called *A Force More Powerful*. When I first read about that, I thought that we could, over a span of years -- of course it would take a tremendous amount of work and a great deal of money -- that we could go for the economy, which was the soft underbelly of the system and the empire, go for the economy and bring things to a point where we could begin to dictate to the plutocrats in Washington. I'm a great deal more modest in my appraisal now because I've learned the reluctance of people to take on even non-cooperation in buying, to cut back their consumerism. I went to a large meeting outside of Philadelphia and a bunch of Catholic Workers appeared. There were 25 of them there and they were all key people and old friends. I was, of course, looking upon them as potential organizers and I started to say to them, you know, you've got to call your friends together, your constituencies together. You've got to get them to start talking to one another and then do some modest planning on non-consumerism, on boycotts, on using water less -- not taking a shower every day, on flying less, driving less, eating less meat, on and on and on. I started talking that line with them. Well, they were already busy people and I don't want to be hard on them, but hardly one of the 25 was interested in doing any sustained work on this. And I tried to say to them -- this came out of the Viet Nam era -- you know, you're not really with it today, unless you're changing your priorities every week. You've got to be juggling your priorities every week. Now maybe that's hyperbole, a little excessive, but nonetheless there's a grain of truth there. Do you know? You've got to be flexible today, because the world scene is shifting with amazing rapidity and technology is going on and on, and there we are again. I've lost my train of thought, Joe.

JU That's okay. One of the things I was trying to get at with the question -- if, in 1963 or 1964-65, people who were organizing around Viet Nam and Civil Rights probably could not have a vision that only a few years later, 1969 and 1970, millions of people would be in the streets. The population was as brainwashed, or more brainwashed by the media or lied to by the media -- not brainwashed, but lied to by the media. Yet, in a short period of time, once people began to see the truth, once it began to be forced out by conditions in the world of what the truth actually was, especially in Viet Nam, of what the U.S. was doing, then millions of people came into the streets. Now, we face a situation where people are being lied to again, on an enormous scale and it's very hard to figure out what's true. Yet those of us who are trying to bring truth to the people have to base ourselves on the potential, for when they're dropping bombs on more countries than they are now, when they're doing things that are even more outrageous and millions of people begin to ask why. How do you see this potential for people to wake up and what do we need to be saying to them now as part of the process of building this movement?

PB Yeah, that's very clear. It's going to depend upon blokes like you and me and like thousands more of us. We have to be talking the line of justice and peace constantly to one another. We have to be sharing information, good information, with one another all the time. We have to be doing multiple mailings with one another, using e-mail and the internet. One friend of mine, Francis Boyle, a law professor at the University of Illinois in Champagne, and international law expert, says there's only two things left to us, after this

Ashcroft star chamber: that's the First Amendment and the Right to Assembly. Maybe they're on their way out, maybe there are big plans afoot to curtail even them, but while we have them, we have to look upon them as the bulwark against more repression. When we go to the Pentagon -- and we've been going there since 1975, demonstrating there and going to jail from there, on and on and on -- the employees will say to us, we're protecting your right to come here and bad mouth us. We commonly answer that by saying, you got it all wrong, you got it all wrong. We're here practicing our civil liberties, so that you have them too!

But getting more to your question -- **for the people to learn the truth, we're going to have to go to extraordinary lengths to convey the truth.** There was a big air show down in Langley, Virginia, the air force base that you spoke about earlier. Of course, they brought in the heavy stuff, the B-52s, F-16s and F-15s and all of the rest of the flying armament we have. Two of our friends, who were Catholic Worker, approached the B-52. The wings, you know, are swept very, very low and they boosted one another up on the wings. They climbed on top of that vast ship and unfurled a banner -- it lasted about maybe a minute up there -- unfurled a banner which said "You are now looking at an instrument of mass destruction right here -- this bomber". Of course, they were immediately hauled down and arrested. Now they're facing charges. But that's the kind of education we need. That's what grips people, when you not only verbalize what you feel, but you act on it. That's what we think when we do Ploughshares actions. I've done six of them and most of my jail time has been tied up with the aftermath of Ploughshares convictions, most of the eleven years that I've done. But we don't have anything immodest in our claims regarding Ploughshares, we merely think that some voice for sanity and disarmament is being kept alive. There have been approaching eighty of these actions in Australia, the United States, Britain, and the Netherlands, Germany and Sweden. We're keeping afloat some tiny whisper of a sane course, a human course of action, and that is disarming these hellish weapons. People have responded to them, a lot of thinking people everywhere.

JU As one of the senior citizens of our movement, I'll use that phrase, what do you say to the youth today, particularly to the youth who've showed themselves from Seattle, around globalization, who've been out on the streets trying to make this a better world. What do you say to them?

PB Well, you know the old cynical saying abroad in our country: Youth will be served, particularly with chestnuts. In other words, **youth is on a platter and youth is being victimized and lied to** and youth is encountering nothing, nothing by way of social sanity on the campuses. Our daughter is a senior at Oberlin, a college west of Cleveland, and it's one of the few campuses in the country where some activism is allowed and supported by the administration. Ninety nine point nine percent of the campuses here in this country, that can't be said of them. That is to say that students are channeled. Do you remember that old term that was used during the Viet Nam war? Selective service channeled young guys into the service.

JU I was asking what do you say to the youth of today, particularly the youth who are on the front lines of demonstrations all around the world, whether it is Seattle, Genoa,

New York City, Washington, DC, where youth are coming out in large numbers saying they don't want to live in this kind of world. What do you say to them about the tasks ahead for the future?

PB Well, eventually I get around to the issue of nuclearism. I try to impress on folks, especially young people, that when we inaugurated the nuclear age in 1945 with the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, most Americans thought that we were getting away with it. Then we threatened, unilaterally with nuclear weapons maybe another twenty five times that we know of, that we know of historically, and we thought we were getting away with that. Meanwhile, we did over half of the 1900 atmospheric and underground tests of major nuclear weapons systems. And then we have 103 nuclear power plants in this country and we also have these huge nuclear weapons stations, like Hanford, Washington, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, Fernauld, outside of Cincinnati, Paducah, Kentucky, on and on and on. We have 149 of them and the Department of Energy says that 104 of them are so contaminated with toxins that they can't be cleaned up. In addition to that, we fought four nuclear wars. This country. It's to our utter shame and historically this will catch up to us sooner or later. We fought four nuclear wars with nuclear weapons and the last three have been with depleted uranium. So I tell students about all of this and I say, you know, old Mother Earth is so saturated with fissionable garbage that we're all now possible cancer risks, or we're HIV or AIDS risks -- it's impossible, it's impossible to imagine this HIV/AIDS epidemic sweeping the world, into even China and Russia today, outside of Africa -- without the ecosystems of the planet being radically poisoned by fissionable garbage, by radiation.

So I say, this is the world you live in and you can be like a sheep and you can run and hide behind the woodwork, practice denial and pretense, or you can struggle. You can struggle, and the tools for struggle are full of the scripture and full of nonviolent philosophy. If you want to struggle, you can learn to struggle with the help of friends. **So I say, don't be a slave. Don't be a slave. I don't think young people are hearing that from too many quarters.**

JU As someone in Ploughshares, and Ploughshares actions have traditionally had their own standard of what violence and nonviolence is, what is nonviolence to you?

PB Joe, nonviolence is no more than carrying love and justice into the marketplace. It's no more than speaking truth to power, as the Quakers will say. It's addressing structures and systems, Brahmins and pharaohs and plutocrats, with the truth and exposing their lies, duplicity and deviousness. That's what nonviolence is to me.

JU You'll like this one. Recently I was reading a quote from a speech that Mario Savio gave, people that I've talked to are using this quote in different ways. Mario Savio spoke right around the time of the free speech movement and said, sometimes the workings of the machine are so odious that people have to put their bodies on the wheels of the machine in order to actually stop the machine. It was a very heavy statement to be made in the early 1960's. I think it's one of those statements that foreshadowed what was to come in terms of the movement in the United States. People are looking at that quote and

looking at what's going to be required today to stop this war machine. What do you think of that?

PB It seems to me that there are various ways to fling one's life or one's body upon the gears of the machine in order to stop it. There again, I think nonviolent philosophy helps us. I don't believe in fasting to the death, because I don't think I have a right to fast to the death. I don't think I have a right to symbolically commit suicide. I don't think I have a right to provoke some young soldier into shooting me because I've been foolhardy and gone from an unplanned basis in entering some military hell hole and provoked this kid to shooting me. You know, in the course of six Ploughshares actions I've been under a lot of guns, you have a lot of guns pointed at you, you're always taken at gunpoint. But should you provoke some 22 year old, some 19 year old youngster into shooting you, they wouldn't be charged if they killed you or injured you. They wouldn't be charged, they're only doing their job. So there are various ways to accomplish stopping the machine. In Germany, I used to run into Ernesto Cardinal from Nicaragua, who was with the Sandinista Junta, as you know. He was a poet and a deeply sensitive man, but he used to say that we North Americans didn't know anything about the sacrifices that Nicaraguans went through for the freedom of their own country. He made statements like that when the Contra war was going on, Reagan's war, the Sandinistas. I tried to make clear to him that its a hell of a lot tougher fighting the faceless, devious, devilish system here in this country than it is fighting a bunch of Contra mercenaries coming in from Honduras, if you know what I mean. To sustain oneself in the movement here, with all the seductions and enticements that this culture has, you know from your own life, it's a major enterprise. It's a major moral and ethical enterprise, and you've got to believe something very, very deeply otherwise you're never going to be able to do it.

JU I agree with you. People have to judge what they do, people shouldn't give up their lives needlessly, and I'm not talking about individual actions, I'm mainly talking about the potential to envision millions of people coming into motion, because in a country of 280 or 300 million people, the powers that be want us to believe that they have the majority on their side. First of all, I don't believe that, but even conceding some of it for argument's sake, whatever numbers of people there are today, there is the potential to be many times that number in the future because of the outrageousness of what may happen. Again, it's going back to saying that in 1963 you couldn't envision what crimes they'd be committing in 1969, but as they were committing those crimes, many more people came into motion. What the Not in Our Name project is trying to do is make a statement, now by thousands, and hopefully be part of bringing millions of people into the streets in the future to say "Not in our name will we allow you to do this." Do you see that potential and what do we need to do to bring that into motion?

PB Yes, I see that potential and I think that it's extremely important. For a long time I took a rather caustic view of the mass demonstrations during the Viet Nam war. You remember the March on the Pentagon in 1967 and the great mobilizations, David Dellinger worked on some and Renee Davis did, worked their heads off and faced conspiracy trials because of what they did. I used to say, it's a bunch of bullshit, people leave the Pentagon, and maybe they'll leave even two or three days in jail and they'll go

back to normalcy in their own communities. Well, that was too facile on my part. The Brahmins in Washington watched those demonstrations very, very closely and learned from them, learned plenty about crowd control, about counterinsurgency, learned control, power is about control. So they took them seriously, see, and I didn't and I was a fool for not doing so. To envision that potential and to say, well the 100,000 of April 20th has to be half a million next time, that's very, very important if we can pull it off. However, I don't want to settle for what some call the sociological approach. Do you know what I mean, where you're constantly thinking in terms of quality and not quantity? You get quality when you get people who have their lives together enough to take on church and state and the law, simultaneously, and go for broke and risk jail. That's quality. I have a friend in Texas in Federal penitentiary right now. She's finishing up eighteen years for nonviolent resistance, Ploughshares. Eighteen years this woman has been down and she might have to do another six. I just talked to her on the phone the other night. That's quality. I was at my son's wedding, Liz and my son, in Michigan. I ran into another priest just out of jail -- sixteen and a half years -- just for nuclear weapons, not for Viet Nam. He started going to jail after 1975 when the war in Viet Nam had ended.

JU What is his name?

PB Karl Cabot. He's an oblate priest, an old foreign missionary, in the Philippines and then Brazil. That's always meant quality to me, because I see more truthfulness in it, truthfulness. What I mean by that is, you've given justice an awful lot of thought and you know where the hell it comes from. It comes from truth and love. The people who take those kinds of risks have been all through that, analyzing that is virtuous.

JU In your talking about quality you're saying, this is my understanding of what you're saying, that specific actions that concentrate particular statements, embody quality, but that these are a part of bringing quantity out.

PB Oh yeah, oh yeah, because they'd be catalysts. You've probably seen that great documentary during the Viet Nam era called "Hearts and Minds."

JU Yeah.

PB You saw that and you know the argument is that you have to approach hearts and minds and spirits in people and you only do that by truthfulness and sacrifice. Sacrifice. Sacrifice to my sweet ass, where I'm not grinding my own ax, I have absolutely nothing to gain from this except knowing I did the right thing -- as far as I could tell it, because very often we get confused about doing the right thing.

JU So, understanding that and going back to the question of potential for the future, how can we develop a movement that works more closely together? That's the first part of the question. What do we need to do to unite many, many times our number, not just the activists, but the tens of thousands, the millions out there now who are, in many cases, being inspired by Not in Our Name. How do we make our movement stronger?

PB It's going to require a vast amount of sacrifice and travel and hard work and planning and suffocating meetings. I don't know if you've ever suffered from meeting-itis, but I guess everybody in the movement has, pretty much, where you get so fed up with meetings, especially bad meetings, when people aren't listening and when, perhaps, they don't have that much to offer. All of that has to be endured. Then there's the expense and the fact that we're the living poor, we're not making a lot of money and the little money we have is devoted to our work. Our work is sacred to us. So it's sort of a package and once I get functional from this bad hip of mine, around the middle of September maybe, I intend to get up into New England and Maine, because this house is a resistance house and everybody here is a Ploughshares activist and we're all jail veterans. That's a Dominican nun from Michigan out there in the kitchen and she's a three-time Ploughshares activist, veteran of jail. Once I get started, I'll just take a week or two weeks, I go up there and lay it on people and say, Look, war is killing us and you have people in your family dying of cancer. You know the frightful tolls in the world from HIV and AIDS. You know about our susceptibility to a whole new range of allergies because our immune systems have been deeply affected. So, lay that on them and say, Look, we've got to start talking to one another. We have to strategize about what will bring these savages to a halt; maybe point it toward 2004, so that this warring, puny human being, George W. Bush, won't get reelected; maybe to look upon that election as pivotal in American history, and I haven't voted in 30 years. I don't believe in voting, but maybe I better vote in this one.

JU You bring up an important question, because I remember a famous Ploughshares button that I still have someplace, says "If voting could make a difference, then it would be illegal." Do you still think that's true?

PB Yes, generally speaking, it is true. There's this bumper sticker which says "Don't vote. It only encourages them." So I haven't voted for 30 years, but maybe it's very, very important to see that somebody who will do less harm gets into the Blight House, and we call it not the White House, but the Blight House.

JU You know, the question of less harm is seeking the lesser of two evils – more the question is this: the political system is making it clearer to people than ever before that they have no intention of changing anything, when we're talking about the poisoning of the earth, poisoning and selling of water, the air, making war all over the globe. We need a movement that goes beyond the 1960s, that actually stops them. Do you think that an election in 2004 gives us the opportunity to stop them, or might we be faced with the task of stopping them before 2004. It seems to me that's part of the choice here and the potential we have to look at. That's my opinion on it, what do you think?

PB Yes, except that I don't know if that's humanly possible. I hear from Francis Boyle, from Champagne, Illinois, who says we've got to have a one day national strike after October 7th. That was his target date. Then his next e-mail said, Look, we've got to have a one day national strike right after, right after the November elections to prevent them going into Iraq. He's fairly convinced they're going to hold off going into Iraq until after the November elections. I write him back and I say, who's going to do this? Who's going to

do this? I mean, I'm about half operational. I just broke my arm. I'm walking wounded and I don't see the people doing the organizing, so when I speak about modesty, I mean about what's possible given the whole human landscape. For eighteen months now I've been working remotely and otherwise on this general strike idea. When I send this literature out, the feedback I get mostly from people is misgivings about it. The misgivings have to do with people who are not willing to sacrifice, people who are bound up by their jobs, people who are owing the bank, because almost everybody owes the bank. Who's going to be free to do it? And they say, look, I don't want to be cynical about sisters and brothers in the country, but we're a selfish crew and we've been high on the hog for 55 years now. We've enjoyed a standard living that is almost unmatched in the world outside of maybe Denmark and Sweden and a couple of other countries. I mean, we're going to convert from that quickly? No, only very, very slowly ... anyway --

JU Okay, good. One of the things that's happening, I gave you some of the e-mail Not in Our Name is receiving, is these e-mails are thanking us for putting the Pledge out, because the Pledge concentrates this stand, a very sharp stand against what the government is doing and a very sharp stand with the people of the world. We're not standing with you, U.S. government, we're standing with the people of the world. That inspires hope in a lot of people, because people have been looking for something. The people that are responding right now are the ones who are actively concerned and engaged and find out about it, that's who we're coming across. The question that's come up in a couple of places and it's in one of the e-mails I gave you from Wisconsin, where this woman writes about taking risks. When people resist, they take a risk. What I find is that there is a certain important number of people now who are contemplating that. What do you say to them? Why is it important to resist and to take risk?

PB That question can be approached from a whole variety of perspectives, but the one that I've always thought to be important is that the law and the state are the same thing, and if you have oppressive laws it's because the state is oppressive, they match one another. They are identical and, in fact, it's impossible to contemplate any state without its laws. So, from that perspective it's impossible to touch a state or affect it, unless you break its unjust laws. Martin Luther King used to say, "An unjust law is no law." You deal with it as no law, because the people in power are doing their best to enforce it, no law or law, whatever their view is. They're doing their best to enforce it and they'll lock you up for it. So, if you feel in your conscience that it's oppressive and unjust, then you break it. And that's where the risk taking comes in. You break it. I've even had law professors say, Look, the only way you're going to change the court system is by constantly breaking the law and flooding the courts with cases of conscience, where people have broken the law because they know the law is wrong and it's unjust and it's evil. You bring this before the court system time and time again.

JU [Tape change] I was just telling Phil about some of the plans for September 11th and about trying to develop a more united effort...and to utilize the globe symbol in the center of our activities...

PB Okay, Joe, apropos of your idea of taking the globe or the planet as your symbol, and not the flag, I was down in North Carolina in March for [a commemoration of] Martin Luther King. There was a huge march and rally planned down there on the state capital. It was drawn together by religious and secular coalitions and they did marvelous work over a sustained period of three months, in which they had to raise thousands of dollars. They got a beautiful march in the rain with the flags of maybe 160 nations held aloft on long poles. It was the most striking street demonstration I've ever seen, with all those flags, you know, all humankind represented, very stirring. Anyway, their symbol was a huge banner, "One earth, one people." And that says it all. We're one people and we've got to start acting that way.