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THE LONDON

" for a revolution of the heart "

CATHOLIC WORKER



A place of true refreshment

When I arrived at Peter's Café at 4.30 pm, there were about three guests having a cup of tea. They were obviously regulars; the atmosphere was cosy and relaxed. One of the visitors was playing his guitar outside. Martin was having a, very late, lunch : his thick vegetable soup looked and smelled delicious. The volunteer Diane made me a fine cup of tea.

After a while two schoolboys walked in. John, a year nine pupil, was a well-known customer, his younger friend Leon, year six, had not been before. I was intrigued to watch the three adults, Martin, Zelda and Diane, engage with the two kids. Their tone was interested but not nosy, encouraging but not pushy ("Why don't you have a piece of toast instead of that whole chocolate cake?" to Leon, who was on the podgy side), asking a few open questions without trying to direct ("What sort of sports do they do at your school?") Clearly, the adults' first intention was to try and build up a kind of trust with the boys and it was lovely to see the ease and sensitivity with which they went about this. *(continued p5)*

Dorothy Day House & Urban Table Soup Kitchen Needs

FOOD:

- Dry goods, rice
- Instant coffee
- Tuna, corned beef, cheese
- Sugar & salt & pepper
- Tinned tomatoes & other cans
- Herbs & spices etc

OFFICE:

- Help with IT maintenance
- Help with producing and sending out newsletter
- Box files & fresh A4 paper

HOUSEHOLD GOODS:

- A working laptop
- Pressure cooker and Frying Pan
- Shopping trolley & stand up clothes airer
- Bike locks & bike lights
- Small garden tables & chairs for cafe
- Double duvet covers & single duvets

OTHER

- Handyman / woman
- Soap, razors, shampoo & all toiletries.
- Men's Clothes
- New members and volunteers
- MONEY! - see p11 for standing order form.

"Prayer—without this, all the rest is useless"

CW FARMHOUSE NEEDS:

- Food, esp. juice, milk, cheese, butter, cooking oil
- Toilet paper, nappies, baby wipes
- New members & help with gardening, cleaning, cooking, DIY
- People to take part in vigils & round table discussions
- MONEY! -and of course your prayers.

While our finances are improving, we continue to rely on our supporters and readers donations, to pay the rent on houses and other costs. We need a total of at least £30,000 a year. Currently we are still using up the capital that enabled us to begin. Please make out a Standing Order and give generously to support our work with the crucified of today's world. "You will have your reward". (Luke 16:39)

SUPPORT OUR WORK

The **London CW** is part of the radical, pacifist Catholic Worker movement started in 1933 in New York & inspired by the Gospel vision and practice of our founders, Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. There are now over 150 CW houses in the US and about 10 other countries. Check out the US-based www.londoncatholicworker.com website, and come and visit us!

CW houses and our finances are independent. There is no 'headquarters' or central organisation. We in London are a network, not an organisation.

To donate: - to **Dorothy Day House** make your cheque to "London Catholic Worker".

To donate to the **Farmhouse**, make your cheque to "Catholic Worker Farmhouse".

Standing Order form overleaf.

WANTED:

COMMUNITY MEMBERS & VOLUNTEERS

At LCW we need people to share our life and work, and we always need more support for our acts of witness. If you feel God is calling you, or if you simply want to get involved, contact us. Details on p2 and above.

OTHER CW HOUSES IN UK:

Oxford Catholic Worker: Contact them at: 227 Cowley Road, Oxford, OX4 tel: 01865 248 288 and see their page on our website.

"Prepare a Way for the Lord" - at Northwood Joint Forces HQ

Two Catholic peace activists were arrested at 8 a.m. on 29th December after cutting through a perimeter fence at Northwood Permanent Joint Headquarters in suburban London. Fr Martin Newell 41 and Susan Clarkson 62 are from the London and Oxford Catholic Worker communities where they live and work with refugees from wars in Afghanistan, the Middle East and Africa. While the two were arrested praying inside the base, other members of Catholic Worker communities held vigil at the front entrance reading the names of British and Afghani war dead. Former British Marine Les Gibbons was arrested while (continues p9)



Above: Celebration at Peter's Community Café, run by Dorothy Day CW House

INSIDE:

- p2 No Borders, No Deportations**
- p4 From Destitution to Violence**
- p7 The miracle of healing**
- pP8 LCW Update**
- p11 DVDs and Books for Sale**
- P11 Easy Essay**
- P11 Standing Order Form**
- P12 House info and Needs**

Northwood after so many years...

When I first got busted at Northwood HQ Command Centre for British Forces deployed abroad, it was in the winter of 01 and the invasion of Afghanistan was just underway. Susan, Scott and I [Ciaron] were arrested after enhancing the Northwood sign with red paint, we were later found guilty of "criminal damage".

It seems such a long time ago. Could this war on Afghanistan, the British effort being directed from (continues p2)

London Catholic Worker:

We are: Angela Broome, Simon Watson, Henrietta Cullinan, Chris Goodchild, Scott and Maria Albrecht, Zelda Jeffers, Martin Newell, Eddie Jarvis, Rosemary Gomez, Diane Walsh, Katrina Alton, Papa Mao Fall Ndiaye

Dorothy Day House

16 De Beauvoir Road,
De Beauvoir Town
London N1 5SU
tel: 020 7249 0041

We are: Zelda Jeffers, Martin Newell & Papa Mao Fall Ndiaye

Dorothy Day House offers hospitality to destitute refugees, usually men. We run Peter's Community Café and the Urban Table Soup Kitchen. We organise regular non-violent resistance, as well as producing this newsletter.

Catholic Worker

Farmhouse:

Lynsters Farm, Old Uxbridge Road, West Hyde, Hertfordshire, WD3 9XJ tel: 01923 777 201

We are: Scott & Maria Albrecht and family, Shannon Hope Fisher

The Farmhouse offers hospitality to destitute women and children. We vigil regularly at the nearby Northwood Joint Forces Military HQ. We also grow some vegetables in our garden.

Peter's Community Café:

Open Mon-Weds 12noon-6.30pm
The Crypt, St Peter's Church, Northchurch Terrace, De Beauvoir Town, London N1 5AT
Tel: 020 7249 0041

Urban Table Soup Kitchen:

Open Sun. 2.30pm-4.30pm
The Old School Rooms, The Round Chapel, Powerscroft Road, Hackney, London E5 0PU

Peter's Cafe and the Urban Table

are both attempts to imitate Jesus' practice of sharing his table with all comers. At the Café in particular we also hope to offer a space to build bridges between the disparate groups and individuals in our local community, as well as welcoming activists.

NORTHWOOD *(continued from p1)*

Northwood HQ, have been going on so long? When I was busted in 01, Benjamin Whatley wasn't even in high school. Benjamin was killed in an isolated outpost of Afghanistan on Christmas Eve 08.

As we read through the names of the dead outside Northwood HQ on this year's Feast of Holy Innocents, I realised a lot of these British guys listed would not have been of high school age when this war began! I realised there is little, in terms of a broader anti-war presence in the culture, that would have given these young people pause before signing up to be cannon fodder for the folly of Bush and Blair. The mass anti-war protests, that came and went in 03, never seriously considered getting the tube out to Northwood or travelling to the U.S. and British bases dotted around England. It was left to the radical remnant to directly intervene there... Les at Portsmouth, small efforts at Fairford, the TP crew at Faslane, ourselves at Shannon.

Today the churches remain quiet, along with the academy, youth culture and the arts in the face of a no win war on Afghanistan. A war named as the "good war" by the new Obama administration and will surely escalate and expand into Pakistan as this year of 09 unfolds or unravels!

Following Christmas, nine of us from the Catholic Worker tradition gathered at the CW Farm on the "Feast of Innocents" to reflect. The good news is that our hospitality houses in Hackney, Oxford and the farmhouse seem stable and involved in the work of welcoming refugees from war zones and sustained resistance to the arms trade and wars that create such death and displacement. Folks had come from celebrating Christmas with the homeless, the refugee, survivors of torture and bondage. I presently find myself working in a shelter in Dublin and couch surfing. I'm presently house sitting 3 cats and a dog for a month The Catholic Worker experiment seeming to have run its course in Ireland for the time being.

It was great to gather once again with the CW tribe and turn our attention to Afghanistan, Northwood HQ and the gospels. The anti-war movement has shrunk but there is visual evidence of Northwood HQ expanding with its \$billion building budget. Nine of us gather for a weekend of reflection and there are a couple up for risking their liberty to confront the war machine.

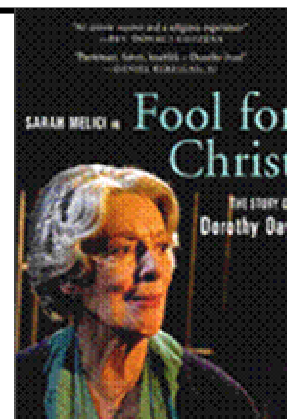
Susan employing the Warren Carter commentary "Matthew and the Margins" reflected on the violence of Herod and the disobedience of the Magi. Scott leads us through the last days of Jesus, contrasting Jesus entry into, and exit from, Jerusalem to the "triumphus" tradition of the imperial Romans. It's always nourishing to return to scripture with people of faith willing to resist empire. Fresh eyes from recent experiences with the poor and the war making state seems to peel off a new layer of meaning from the text and source nourishment. The last paragraphs of the Old Testament and Jesus NVDA in the Temple is worth a 'compare and contrast' alrighty! Was news to me! (Zechariah 14:20-21 - especially in Jerusalem Bible version)

With the help of a recent reading of three pieces: "The Road" by Cormac McCarthy (as the Guardian recently paraphrased Cohen in its review) the author "has seen the future and it's murder": a recent viewing of the Smash Edo campaign DVD "On the Verge" (inspiring stuff from a small crew of committed Brighton folks up against their local expression of the all profiteering war machine): and yes a viewing of Johnny Cash's early '70's *(continues p10)*

Dvds and Books for Sale

Fool for Christ - the best introduction to Dorothy Day on film. 55 minutes.

AVAILABLE from London CW for just £10!



Hammered by the Irish By Harry Browne



how the Pitstop Ploughshares disabled a US warplane with Irelands blessing.

AK Press ISBN 9781 9048 59901

AVAILABLE from London CW for just £10 (less than Amazon!)

In order to purchase please send a cheque payable to "London Catholic Worker", to LCW, 16 de Beauvoir Road, London N1 5SU.

If you have any questions, please phone or email -

Easy Essay

Uncle Sam does not believe
In the unemployed dole,
But Uncle Sam does believe
In the money lenders dole.
Uncle Sam doles out
[billions] of dollars
To the money lenders.
And it is the money lenders dole
That put Uncle Sam
Into a hole.
The money lenders are the first citizens
On Uncle Sam's payroll.
There were no money lenders
On the payroll
In Palestine and Ireland
Because the prophets of Israel
And the Fathers of the Church
Forbade lending money at interest
But Uncle Sam does not listen
To the Prophets of Israel
And the Fathers of the Church.

By Peter Maurin -
co-founder of the
Catholic Worker
movement in 1933
in New York



It is remarkable how many of Peter's "Essay Essays" - this one written in the 1930's—and his general insights - are still relevant, in this new era of 'bankers dole' as the 'socialism for the rich'.

STANDING ORDER MANDATE

Please fill in the form in **BLOCK LETTERS**. Filling out this form enables us to set up a monthly standing order with your bank. It can be stopped at any time by informing your bank.

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BS8 3NN

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London Catholic Worker
Sort Code: 16 58 10

A/C No: 20066996

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at: 14 Deal Street, London E1 5AH

YOUR NAME & ADDRESS:.....

..... POSTCODE:.....

TEL:.....

Until further notice, the sum of the value indicated above.

NORTHWOOD (continued from p2)

"Gospel Road" (the gospel to a country and western soundtrack is less shocking than this story of normal fisherman etc got out of antiquity - a literary genre dominated by kings, gods, warriors etc etc) I offered a reflection on the place and time we're in.

It feels remarkable to be with these good people Lizzie (who I lived with East Timorese exiles at the Liverpool CW '96-'99), Les (3 tours of the North as a British Marine, arrested multiple times in non-violent resistance, notably as the "Ark Royal" pulled out of Portsmouth for the Iraq invasion), Martin and Angela from the London CW so consistent in NV resistance in the imperial city while caring for refugees from its wars, Susan likewise from similar efforts out of Oxford, Hubert fresh from Germany after multiple experiences with the monastic life and horticulture, Scott formerly of the U.S. Air Force and Maria who both care for exiled, exploited and homeless women.

It's remarkable that we have hung in with each other for close to a decade and non-violent direct resistance to these long wars on Iraq and Afghanistan. We know each other pretty well by now, our strengths and weaknesses. We have known each other half the life of Ben Whatley who died last week in the outback of Afghanistan following commands that came from Northwood HQ in the quiet leafy suburbia of London.

We played some footage of Bush to mark the passing of his time, from Caligula to Augustus, empire remains empire - demanding total dominion and subservience and the death of the innocents.

While we were kept busy in the '80s resisting U.S. sponsored massacres in Central America and nuclear threats of omnicide, the U.S. was busy sponsoring Saddam in war with Iran and the Taliban in war with the USSR. Today it's American boots on the ground attempting to secure the new colonies, the Vietnam Syndrome seems to have been vanquished as the home front has learnt to live in heavily censored environs with the steady deaths coming out of Iraq and Afghanistan. Old allies have become new enemies in the United States of Amnesia. Even some of the '80s faces from the Central American killing fields remain - Gates, Negroponte doing their thing in the Middle East now.

As we resisted at Northwood HQ, friends were resisting at the White House, Pentagon, Israel Embassy D.C., Ft McCoy, STRATcom/Omaha and Caoimhe was on a boat out of Cyprus with medical supplies for Gaza. In these bleak times community and resistance is where we can find hope. And as Phil Berrigan instructed "Hope is where your ass is!"

Martin and Susan appear in Watford Magistrates court in consequence of their action in the days ahead on March 19th
by Ciaran O'Reilly - ciaronx [at] yahoo.com

Dates for your Diary

G20 Protests:

March 28th , 11am Saturday - starting Victoria Embankment, Central London - **"Put People First" march - for "Jobs, Justice and Climate"** - organised by a coalition including CAFOD, major trade unions, Greenpeace etc.

See: www.putpeoplefirst.org.uk

April 1st & 2nd - the G20 will be meeting at EXCEL centre in east London docklands - contact us or see Indymedia for protest info

29th April - 3rd May

Catholic Worker Euro Gathering 2009
In Germany, outside Dulmen near Munster
Contact us for more information

May 27th , 11am - Die in for NATO's victims in Afghanistan at Northwood Military HQ, see www.voices.netuxo.co.uk for more info

Summer UK CW Gathering

- at the end of June -

For all CW friends and supporters

- more info coming soon -

- check our website, or contact us for details -

Sept 8 - 11 - DSEi Arms Fair protests

at the EXCEL Centre, East London docklands, Custom House - contact us or CAAT (Campaign Against Arms Trade) for more details

For more information about any of the above, please contact Dorothy Day House on

No Borders! No nations! No deportations!

This Christmas members of the London Catholic Worker had an early morning vigil outside Communications House. Every Tuesday in Advent we made our way to this dismal almost anonymous building across from Old Street tube where Asylum Seekers who have been or are being refused the right to stay have to sign on, usually monthly but sometimes weekly or more often. Signing on here and in other similar places is a time of stress as every so often people are seized and taken onto detention and deported. We were trying especially to touch the hearts of those that work here for the Home Office and dressed in festive cheer and wished them a Happy Christmas. Our leaflets featured a nativity scene with the words, every child is precious, every person belongs on this earth and is entitled to go where they choose, to live, to love, to work, to have a family. Father Christmas was also pictured "Free to travel the world giving gifts." Some took our leaflets and some refused.

People flee here escaping hardship and horror often caused by the past exploitation or present military action of this country. They are our Brothers and Sisters. Let us welcome them. Let us work towards a world where we can all live in peace.

By Zelda Jeffers



Above: Zelda Jeffers and Angela Broome outside Communications House, Asylum Reporting and Detention Centre, Old Street, London

Tiny Poem,

by Zelda Jeffers

Trying to be good
Being good
Being

To be
Try to be
To be trying

Good
Be good
Try to be good

Try
Trying to be
Being trying. Etc etc etc

Fresh and Wild

In the Dorothy Day house we have been enjoying the generosity of the branch of Fresh and Wild in Stoke Newington Church Street. On Saturday nights one of a group of supporters who has a car takes one of us along and we are given food that can no longer be sold. We get cooked food which helps sustain the guests in the house and bread and vegetables which also go to make the hearty soup we serve in the Urban Table. Often we get to eat delicious cakes and lovely food but especially we appreciate having organic fruit, salad and vegetables as well as a variety of bread and rolls.

We would all like to thank the management of Fresh and Wild for their support and thank the staff for their friendly help when we arrive at the end of what must be a long day at work for them. Fresh and Wild help many organisations in this way and each day another charity turns up. We now also get stuff on Mondays as this day has become free. I can't end without thanking Jean, Myra and Una for their help transporting the food.

By Zelda Jeffers

From destitution to violence: Talibes and asylum seekers.

It is common to meet a beggar boy or “*talibé*”, outside the cities of Senegal. During a journey to Saint-Louis, I met a Talibé called Modou Diaw. Aged about six years, I passed him early before eight in the morning holding out a big empty tomato can which serves him to collect money and food. I saw him running along the street without any shoes on his feet wearing small pants with an old and dirty ragged shirt although it was cold in the street. Modou whose father died from Malaria came to Saint-Louis by walking from his native village “*Teud Bitti*” which is located between Louga and Saint-Louis and where there is extreme poverty. He joined a Daara or Koranic school just after his father’s death in search of life changing lessons. Instead of that he was forced by his Marabout or teacher through beatings to beg in the streets. The fear of being beaten and whipped by the Marabout frightened him into walking for miles across the town to beg for alms. Due to regular punishments in Daara, he ran away and joined a gang of street children forced by ‘*Faxmen*’ or attackers to sell drugs. So, he is abandoned by his poor family who consider him a deviant. Modou’s story reminds me of the ones of destitute asylum seekers in Britain. Coming from poor countries generally affected by war, they hoped to escape from poverty and oppression by immigrating to Britain. But they understand quickly through British policies that they have to abandon hope. Many of them, as a result of destitution, sleep rough, beg in the streets and breach the law in order to survive. Anne Forbes, chairperson of Church Action on Poverty gives details “Many people seeking asylum in the UK are ending up destitute rather than accepting, however reluctantly, to return to poverty and human rights oppression in their country of origin, once their asylum request has been turned down. Often they end dependent on food parcel handouts and the hospitality of friends here- their alternative is homelessness, with consequent illness, both physically and mentally. The current situation is forcing people into the illegal and informal economies, sexual exploitation and crime. The social, economic and criminal costs are felt by the whole of society.” I have come to understand better Forbes talk during a meeting with Rodrigo Silva, a failed asylum seeker from Guinea Bissau. Silva who slept from buses to parks in London lives in the stress of being deported to his unsafe country.

I remember one day we were sleeping together in the 25 Bus from Oxford Circus to Ilford when suddenly an inspector got into the car, caught Silva and threatened to report him to the Immigration. It was very frightening. Fortunately through homelessness arguments we convinced him not to report. Next thing I remember was when a gang of five destitute Somali asylum seekers entered the Bus and stole my mobile and other belongings. All 5 of them were screaming at me and started asking me to join the gang. I felt like my whole world had fallen in on me. Oh my God should I become a gang member to survive in Britain? Violence by and against destitute asylum seekers is getting worse in London. “When you are stuck in the middle of nowhere, joining a gang becomes an alternative” said Silva during a talk. For gang members, like the five Somalis, turning around new destitute asylum seekers presents an opportunity to expand their business interests-in particular, dealing drugs and attracting members. In addition to drug trafficking, some destitute asylum seekers engage in a range of criminal activities through extortion. Others run prostitution rackets to survive. I am sad that I have to address the effect of destitution in the community, but I think it is necessary for people to hear about the violence involved in destitution in order to help keep authorities from making choices that will lead the community down this path of destruction.



“Peace Break In” (continued from p1)

engaging armed guards, M.O.D. police and other Base employees making their way to work at the base. During the arrests, sirens and public address messages from within the base could be heard announcing "Operation Round Up" and a return of all staff to buildings as the base's security response was put in place.

Northwood Military Headquarters is the command centre for all British forces deployed abroad in Afghanistan and Iraq. It is a 43 acre site in suburban London accommodating over 2,000 military and civilian personnel. In recent weeks, two British soldiers committed suicide in Basra while the 136th British soldier to die in Afghanistan was killed on Christmas Eve. The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission estimates over 750 Afghani civilians have been killed by Western forces in 2008.

The Catholic Worker is an international pacifist movement focused on work with the homeless and non-violent anti-war activity. The Catholic Worker has sustained a constant peace presence and non-violent resistance at Northwood Headquarters since the initial 2001 bombing and invasion of Afghanistan. This recent action coincided with the Catholic "Feast of the Holy Innocents" that commemorates the massacre of the children by King Herod who saw the birth of Christ as a threat to his power. The entrance sign to the Northwood base, that had been stained by red paint during previous actions, had been removed by military security seemingly tuned into the rhythms of the liturgical calendar!

The three arrested were taken to Watford police station and will be on trial at Watford Magistrates Court at 10am on March 19th, where they handed in statements originally given to base security.



Susan Clarkson and Martin Newell before their peaceful visit to Northwood

The three arrested were taken to Watford police station and will be on trial at Watford Magistrates Court at 10am on March 19th, where they handed in statements originally given to base security.

STATEMENT OF FAITH by Susan and Martin

“We come here today from Catholic Worker communities to witness at Northwood on behalf of all the victims of war. We come here to pray, repent and create. We pray particularly for all those who have died in the war in Afghanistan over the past year, especially those connected to Northwood

Military Headquarters. This includes all military and civilian victims, women, men but especially the children. On 28 December the Catholic church commemorates the murder of the children by King Herod in his search to destroy the baby Jesus who Herod believed threatened his empire.

We repent of our complicity in this imperial war making of our government and pray to be people committed to non-violent ways of solving conflict. We invite all we meet today to reflect on this power of non-violence.

In this place, where the military planning of the joint forces of the United Kingdom takes place veiled in secrecy and fear based security, we are here to create a new citizen's gateway through which we enter to pray and through which we invite our fellow citizens to enter and see what is done in our name. We make our own the words of the Bible "Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight"

By coming here today we are trying to put into practice the words of Jesus whom we follow: Love your enemies and do good for those who persecute you" which are the ways to peace. We ask you to join us in entering this gateway to peace.”

LCW UPDATE . . . UPDATE . . . UPDATE...

We have had a number of comings and goings in recent weeks. Among them we welcomed Emil from Sweden who stayed for a two weeks, while Clare moved out of Dorothy Day House after about four months but continues to be involved - and is hoping to start a Catholic Worker in her home town of Bedford! As Clare left, we welcomed Mao who is expecting to stay till the summer.

The Farmhouse has also welcomed interns in the shape of Tanya and Shannon, who is still with them. They also recently had visits from Jane Tallents and Brian Larkin of Trident Ploughshares in Scotland., who along with Hubert from Oxford CW helped move the new poly tunnel to a sunnier position!

We took advantage of the presence of so many volunteers and interns in February, to visit the farmhouse for a day of prayer, reflection, peace vigilling in Northwood and social time.

On Ash Wednesday we joined Pax Christi and others at the annual witness at the Ministry of Defence (MoD). Over 50 people took part in the liturgy while Rose, Henrietta and Katrina of the London CW group, as well as Emil, all tried (and three succeeded) to mark the War Office walls with blessed charcoal despite police efforts, although barriers prevented marking of the MoD HQ.

There will be more changes at Dorothy Day House in the near future. Zelda will be moving out soon after nearly two years living and working hard here, especially in getting the café up and running and thriving. However, we will be welcoming Katrina Alton who will be moving in. She is gradually getting to know us and the work. Ciaron will also be coming to stay.

A number of us went to the recent "No Accommodation" conference at Praxis refugee and migrant centre. It brought together groups working with people 'no access to public funds' - mainly refused asylum seekers and people from the new EU countries in eastern Europe. The main problem is lack of accommodation. It was a reminder of how widespread are the terrible situations our guests are faced with, and of the reality of a whole hidden world of absolute poverty in the midst of enormous (but perhaps crumbling?) riches of this global Babel that is London. It is also a reminder of how urgent it is that more people practice Peter Maurin's advice, to have a "Christ room" in every home.



STOP PRESS: "ARCADES OF DEATH" - news received today - the MoD is launching so-called "Army Show Rooms" - military recruitment centres featuring video games simulating tanks and conflict situations. The first one will be opening in our neighbourhood in Dalston on Saturday March 14th. "You can now 'virtually' go to far off places, meet interesting people - and kill them." by Martin Newell

"A Place of true refreshment" - (continued from p1)

When I asked about possible help with homework after school, the adults shrugged their shoulders in a you-must-be-joking way. When I asked whether there were any board games around for bored school kids to play on a rainy day, the answer was that there had been, but by now most had bits missing. And then Martin remarked that he felt that these kids would really like to be involved in something more serious, something with a bit more responsibility than just homework or playing games.

Tuesday 16th September

The café was full. All five tables were occupied by eaters, outside there were three more guests and a big dog, a man was lying on the sofa, fast asleep. Three volunteers were busy making cheeseburgers and sandwiches and cups of tea and a huge pot of vegetable soup. The atmosphere was calm and cheerful. The main reason for people to be there was obviously : food. Everybody was quietly concentrating on their plates/bowls. One or two were reading, but the food was all-important. There were no leftovers on any of the plates and the guests were visibly satisfied. So was the dog. The man on the sofa slept through everything.

I asked about volunteers. Zelda and Martin work 'fulltime', i.e. all three afternoons. There are seven part-time workers, but more help would be very welcome. The staff is strong on wholesome cooking (especially soups) and scrupulous about re-cycling.

Two memorable moments today:

One guest, the one who played the guitar last week and again today, was talking about someone (maybe he himself) being refused a work permit. He found this oddly amusing and kept repeating the phrase 'he was not permitted to work', 'he was *not permitted* to work' '*he was not permitted to work*' etc. His voice rose with incredulity as he repeated the words, and after a while he could hardly speak for laughter. Gradually, all of us there could hear what he was hearing : to refuse someone to work was to him as absurd as refusing someone to walk, talk, or eat.

The second event that impressed me was an exchange with an Irish down and out. He came in, demanded two cheeseburgers. No, he was told, we only do *one* cheeseburger, but have some soup, it's good. OK, he said. When his plate came, there were two cheeseburgers : 'just this once'. He ate them and then went on to complain how cold he was in his place, no electricity. Yes, he had blankets, but they were no good. "I need three pounds for the meter", he said. "Sorry", Zelda answered, calmly but firmly, "we don't do that".

And that was that. For these are the boundaries implied in the 'works of mercy' : feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick and those in prison, welcoming the stranger and burying the dead.

Yes to two cheeseburgers. No to money for the meter.

I was impressed to see the Catholic Worker ethos so clearly applied.

Tuesday 23rd September

A quiet time of day. One guest sits asleep on the sofa. One regular homeless visitor has had a shower and is sorting out his belongings. Outside two men are having a cup of tea and a - friendly - argument. Zelda and Martin are present, making it all work smoothly. Martin went to court last week, following a civil protest action. 'What happened?' 'Two days in Pentonville' he said. 'How was that?' I asked. 'Better than Brixton' was his comment. Prisons, too, are relative.

There's a new feature in the café, a piece of art, which may sound deep, but also pretentious. It's an M&M vending machine and the unusual thing about it is that people can put in any sum of money they like. However, they'll get the amount of M&M's which the *previous* person has paid for. In other words : potluck. "It's only a vending machine, but between you and the buying of sweets stands a difficult decision", explains the publicity leaflet. The blurb gets fancier : *Team (the name of the people behind this project) is a design collective set up to create products and services which lead people to re-consider their values through interaction with apparently insignificant consumerables.*" Juicy creative writing. Reading the M&M vending leaflet, I can't help thinking that its text is aptly symbolic. *People must re-consider their values through interaction.* (continued p6)

A place of true refreshment (continued from p5)

Into the café walks a somewhat battered, bright-eyed man. On the subject of M&M's he informs us that Smarties were not rationed in WW II. How does he know *that*? 'Because I did a university project on people who didn't fight in the war. My mum made hand grenades. My lawyer dad watched over the Lancasters in Yorkshire'. Dishevelled, mentioning a stint in prison, this man is strikingly well educated, knowledgeable and articulate. He says he once wrote a poem using only words of more than seven letters 'to send up the ignorant users of long words'. He then entertains us with a Twinkle twinkle little star version he learned from his dad:

Startle startle, little Twink :
Who the heck you are you think ?
I'm not under the affluence
Of inkohol, although some thinkle may peep so.

Across the room from this man sits another guest, filling in the Peter's Café questionnaire. He is a lively and cheerful chatter, but finds writing difficult. "How do I spell *field*?" We tell him. Next to the question about future visions for this area he writes : "hoses in the field". Here, in the same hour, two very different examples of interaction, which invite an immediate re-consideration of values. Might this be the social purpose underlying the M&M art project?

(PS : the art project is rendered more abstract by the fact that nobody at Peter's Café much cares for M&M's)

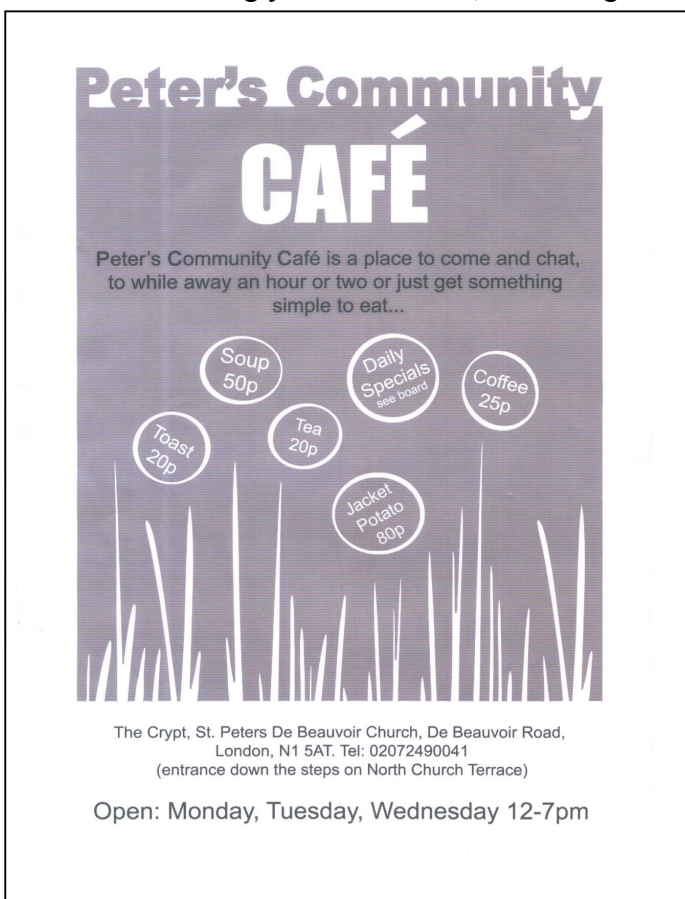
Wednesday 1st October

A windy afternoon; lots of leaves and bits flying around. Inside the café about half a dozen people. One is lying asleep on the sofa, the others are all talking breezily. Trying to keep track of the various conversations requires some aural acrobatics. On the left an exchange about **football**, management, which players go where and why, doomed decisions, crazy tactics. On the right a conversation about the **value** of things: Starbuck's charge you a week's pay for a cup of coffee; good value in the Turkish restaurants up and down Dalston; you mustn't wear jewellery when cooking, it might drop into the food; price of silver's dropped, no it's gone up. In the middle a conversation about **education** - John and Leon have walked in again at the end of their school day. What did you do at school then? Nothing, nothing.

They don't teach the right things at school, says the old man in the corner: no communication, writing by hand, first aid, cooking, using a dictionary. I'd remove sport and religion from the curriculum. Sport they can do on their own, walking to school. Religion they have to do for themselves anyway.

Suddenly in walks M. who's just been thrown out of his flat because of complaints from the neighbours. He was briefly handcuffed and couldn't get over the stupidity of the police "What I've seen about so-called authority is unbelievable, unbelievable". This introduces a four-person exchange about handcuffs. "Modern handcuffs are made of some kind of plastic with a bit of chain in the middle; they can be very painful. They handcuff you for their own bizarre reasons, and then forget they've done it, so you're just sitting there, with your hands behind your back. Then, because they can't see them, they forget".

More snippets, about games, chess, backgammon, the British Isles, monasteries, circulation, cholesterol, little saints, M&M's (the schoolboys are trying to fathom the point of the artistic vending machine), gooseberries, goose fat, youth hostels, King Midas turning everything he touched into gold, "yeah, even his own daughter", says John, unimpressed. Snippets of talk, ideas, jokes, flying around randomly, like the leaves and bits of paper blowing in the wind outside. No agenda. (continued p7)



(from p6) The world is so full of structures and systems, says Martin, we just like to provide a place to *be*, somewhere to come to and spend a bit of time, feel at ease. Those schoolboys, they don't need more organised stuff, they just need to hang out with adults who will listen and talk to them, notice them.

Peter's Café is a place where the air keeps moving.

The door is open all the time; people drop in and wander out; words fly around, encounter other words, bounce, follow their own prosaic, poetic, or cranky track, shoot off on a tangent, drop down, lift off again. The air keeps moving ; a kind of in-house wind, blowing where it listeth.

Monday 6th October

Lunchtime : Zelda's fragrant lentil & vegetable soup is warming the air. Two guests are eating and chatting in Portuguese. One regular guest is eating in the corner – he now smiles at me. Another guest is eating and reading. A young man comes in, orders a bowl of soup and starts writing in a small, full notebook. There are two volunteers : Ali from Iran with a lovely smile and little English, and Sue from the Mennonite Church. She is cutting up runner beans, while explaining some basic Mennonite theology to me, promoting non violence, community service, hospitality.

This is my last visit as part of the placement and I've come to relish the calm atmosphere of this place as well as the rich randomness of the encounters. Anybody might walk in, any subject might be discussed, any weird or wonderful thesis might be posed – and all this is happening because, down here, there is easy, un-pressured hospitality, terrific food and few distractions. There is no radio or TV, the café is tucked away from the street level; it is quiet and secluded and welcoming.

A place of true refreshment.. Peter's Café is a place of nurture for body and spirit, a place for dreams *and* action. Right under our feet, here is something wonderful.

- By Romee Tilanus

This article is based on the report Romee wrote after her placement, which she spent in our Community Café, for a pastoral assistants course.

The Miracle of Healing

I have heard a lot of different opinions on the way God provides healing, but understanding the concept and then experiencing it first hand is a bit like hearing about love and then being in love.

Counselling is available to all our guests, although sometimes we struggle to resource quickly the specialists needed for survivors of major trauma, but what I refer to is the healing which comes out of community living and a house founded on Christian teaching. I rejoice in the subtle way healing takes place here at the CW Farm, it originates from deep within our fragile community as each of us participate in as well as find ourselves the instrument of God's love. All who give, then receive; our guests support each other as we support them and as they support us. Time and again the casual conversations turn into profound truth sessions and evening chats develop into deep supportive friendships. It is amazing how readily these women who have survived terrible suffering put aside their own grief to support and listen to each other. How they quickly develop techniques to give care and space when it is needed as well as take every opportunity to laugh and share in all manifestations of joy. How our friendships develop and how easily our

own pain is easily shared, where we find ourselves the recipients of the healing we seek to give.



This miracle of human contact, of shared pain and mutual support, is beautiful to witness and it is clear to see God's love for us is manifested in the care our guests take with each other and with us as we work together to rebuild and replenish our broken lives. It is not perfect love; there are many flaws, but I deeply value being part of such a healing process. Living here at the Catholic Worker farm is difficult – sharing personal space, putting up with noise and a sometime overwhelming experience of too much personal interaction – but overall I consider it a privilege and am so grateful to God that he has put me in a place which not only adds integrity to my existence but gives me the grace to grow in his love.

By Maria Albrecht (left)