

"Trident a first strike weapon"

by Gordon Turtle

The Gateway had a chance to interview James and Shelley Douglass, prominent anti-nuclear activists, just before they appeared at a forum in SUB Theatre on Friday. Appearing in Edmonton for three days late last week, the Douglass' trip was sponsored partially by the U of A Chaplains' Association.

Gateway: What is the prime goal of your activities?

J.D.: To reverse the arms race. Our immediate focus is on stopping the building of the Trident submarine, which we see as a symbol of nuclear arms.

Gateway: Who are the villains in the arms race? Can one side be blamed?

J.D.: Different parts of the American government argue different things. The official stance of the U.S. is one of "deterrence" but that is certainly modified by the fact that the nature of most American weapons is first strike. Disarmament of the U.S.S.R. is also desirable, of course.

Gateway: Is there a plot of some sort to threaten the rest of the world with nuclear attack, or is the arms race strictly between these two superpowers?

J.D.: There is evidence to suggest that the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. are jointly planning to prevent third world countries from gaining nuclear power and weapons. The neutron bomb is an example of a weapon designed for use in a third world country: it will kill the people but protect the oil fields.

Gateway: What is meant by the term "first strike"?

J.D.: It's offensive strategy. The U.S. in the event of a mere threat of Soviet aggression, hopes to eliminate every Soviet submarine and missile before they have a chance to retaliate. It forces the Soviet Union to continue its buildup so they can achieve parity and eliminate the first strike threat.

It's a self-perpetuating militaristic mentality in the U.S. that allows this to continue.

Gateway: What about the so-called military-industrial complex? Does that term have any meaning today? How do you deal with the argument that ending the arms race would create massive unemployment?

J.D.: The billions of dollars being put into weaponry could easily be channelled into jobs. It's important to note that ending nuclear weapons development will involve a profound change in our economic system. The Trident

submarine protects the capitalist system: they justify each other.

Gateway: Do you advocate revolution against capitalism?

J.D.: Yes. But the only successful method is non-violent revolution. We must change our own attitudes; each person must accept change inside before outside change can be affected.

Gateway: How did the two of you become involved in political activism?

S.D.: I was born in Europe, the child of two CIA employees. Being on the inside, so to speak, I learned of all the lies the U.S. perpetrates, all of the subversive activities it undertakes in foreign countries. I attended the University of Wisconsin where I became involved in the civil rights movement in 1962. In the late Sixties I worked in Vietnam war resistance. In 1974, I met Bob Aldridge, one of the Trident's designers who is currently the strongest opponent of nuclear weapons. What he told me convinced me that fighting the Trident and weapons like it was the most important task at hand.

J.D.: I was involved in the Catholic Worker Movement in the Fifties. At that time we protested against the

Eisenhower administration's requirement that all people participate in bomb shelter exercises. We saw this as the creation of the nuclear mentality, as insane and wrong. I have continued, through non-violent means, to oppose this nuclear climate.

Gateway: How was the Ground Zero Center for Non-violent Action established?

S.D.: We shopped around for some land we could buy close to the Trident base, and were lucky enough to find 3.8 acres right next door. Since establishing the center there in 1975, we have had several successful actions against the base.

J.D.: We had 4,000 people climbing the fence last year, and 3,000 last spring.

Gateway: What else does your Center involve itself with?

J.D.: Our main objectives are education and organization. When people find out what is going on at the Trident base, they are shocked. The government doesn't tell the truth and they oppose our aims.

Gateway: Have you had trouble with the government? Have there been arrests, or any violence?

J.D.: Hundreds of people have

been arrested during the course of our activities. About 112 were arrested only last week. But we are fighting a criminal government; they are the lawbreakers. They consistently violate international law, and so we will violate their laws. It's civil disobedience, and we are ready to be thrown in jail.

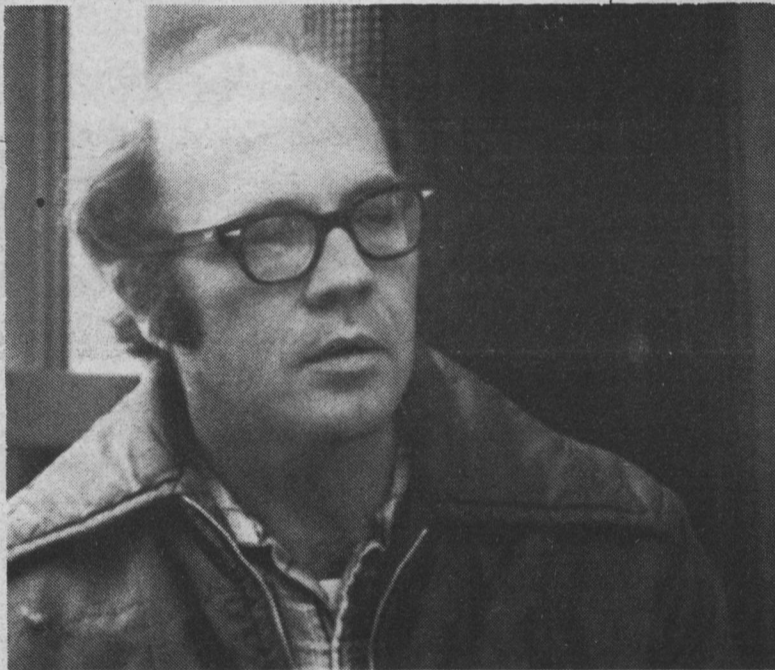
There has been no violence so far. The government has very sophisticated methods of avoiding violent confrontation, they have learned their lesson from the Sixties. We never try to provoke violence.

Gateway: What sorts of people are involved in the Ground Zero movement?

J.D.: Mostly whites, and less students than one might expect. We have people from all levels of society, including, doctors, church people, sales clerks and many older, middle-aged people.

Gateway: What's in the future for Ground Zero?

S.D.: We will continue our policy of non-cooperation with evil. People not opposed to nuclear weapons are helping their development. The secretaries, the paper-pushers, the caretakers at the Pentagon are all cooperating; we must fight proliferation with a role of non-cooperation because nuclear power is destructive in every sense.



Jim Douglass

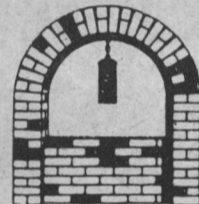
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