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Anti-Copyright



Ammon Hennacy

Tax return

1949

The Autobiography of a Catholic Anarchist, Ammon Hennacy
(1954)

Letter written to a tax collector. Later printed by the Catholic
Worker.

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Tax return

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I am writing this preliminary statement of my reasons for not paying my income tax in advance, as I was recently informed by your office that I would be imprisoned for my continued refusal to pay it. Upon my arrest, I will give you the correct account of my earnings to date in 1948. My belief in the iniquity of government, which exists primarily to wage war, has been affirmed these past six years since my statement to your office when I refused to pay any taxes, and also in articles in the *CATHOLIC WORKER*. I will briefly summarize them again for your possible edification:

1. As a Christian anarchist, I refuse to support any government, because, first, every government denies the Sermon on the Mount by returning evil for evil in legislatures, courts, prisons, and war. As an anarchist, I agree with Jefferson that "The best government is that which governs least." It perpetuates the exploitation of one class by another. In our case, it is the exploitation of the poor by a parasitic propertied class that lives off tariffs, subsidies, rent, interest, and profits, and maintains its political power corruptly through the actions

of servile clergy, blind educators and scientists, as well as the prostituted press, film industry, and radio.

2. Jesus said to forgive “seventy times seven.” But we make retroactive laws and hang our defeated enemies. Jesus told his disciples that he would not come down from heaven to destroy those who refused to hear his gospel. We have no concern with any gospel except the dollar and our atomic bomb, which carries fire, not only to the destroyed enemies but also to those who stand in the way.

Jesus said, “Put away your sword, for he who takes the sword will perish by the sword.” In times of peace, we recruit our boys and prepare for more terrible wars.

3. World War III, directed by the bigwigs, will destroy us instead of saving us. Every country that has relied on the draft has brought its own defeat; a country prospers through justice, not through theft and abuse.
4. Warmongers tell us that Russia will invade us. We invaded the Indians, Mexicans, and Central and South America with our dollar diplomacy, Europe with blockbusters, Japan with the atomic bomb. We must speak out! Russia wants security. We must not fear communism because it will collapse under its own weight of bureaucracy and tyranny of power.
5. In our Civil War, no country openly aided either side. In the Spanish Civil War, we refused to aid the cause of Liberty, but today in China, Greece, and wherever ordinary people seek freedom, we side with the fascists, and we do so with hypocritical mutterings of being a peace-loving nation.
6. Capitalism is doomed. It cannot function. With man producing ten times more on the machine than before when free land was available, it is now increasingly impossible for the

worker to buy with his wages more than a portion of the goods produced. Hence the depression or the sale of goods to foreign markets. But there are no markets, so we have a Marshall Plan to get rid of the surplus. Capitalism is doomed despite the erratic efforts of that demagogic Santa Claus in the White House, with his generals and bankers bribing with pension subsidies and false promises. And as in the days of Wallace, we destroy the crops.

7. The remedy is clear, but the current trend is ever deeper in the mire of governmental paternalism and war, and public distraction through radio programs, bingo, witch hunts, and escapist Youth for Christ, World Government, and such delusions. What is needed is decentralization of society, with each family unit or cooperative group living simply off the land. Self-government and individual responsibility! Mutual credit and free exchange! Liberty instead of government! Understanding that you cannot make people good by law and that the Sermon on the Mount trumps all codes and dogmas!