

PM: Real People on the Move Against Corporate Control

by Polly Mann

Years and years ago I read about Vinoba Bhave, the so-called “Walking Saint of India” who has been compared to Mahatma Gandhi. He went from one Indian farm to another begging for a small portion of each farmer’s land to be given a would-be farmer who had none. I was reminded of Vinoba Bhave when I met the Monahan brothers, Laird and Robin, walked across the country on what I consider an equally important mission.

They spoke to a small group of us in a break-out session of a meeting of the Minnesota Alliance of Peacemakers which is composed of activists from various peace, ecology and church groups. Attendants at the meeting were instructed to meet with others in one of several “break-out” groups that had been set up around various peace issues. My group was to discuss how to build a peaceful revolution.

As soon as our group heard the self-introduction of the Monahan Brothers there was a clamor to hear about them. We’ve met priests demonstrating at nuclear sites and Grandmothers for Peace trying to enlist in the military, but two well-dressed, soft-spoken, somewhat older men on a personal mission was something else. Like the majority of Americans they want to see an end to war and they convinced us that their particular campaign can be a tangible first step.

We discussed who desires and profits from never-ending war. All agreed that it was primarily the munitions makers—corporations that are now accorded the same rights and privileges as individuals. They can contribute as much as they choose to political candidates from the vast sums of money at their disposal. And to whom do you suppose they give their money? Of course to those politicians who vote to fund the mightiest military machine the world has ever known. Every minute of every day, the U.S. government spends \$2.1 million on the military. According to New Priorities Campaign, U.S. military spending on the whole totals \$711 billion per year. We know that at the same time funds used to provide services for public servants, education, the homeless, the poor, the disabled and the ill are being reduced or eliminated. Today, there are campaigns calling for the impeachment of the five Supreme Court justices responsible for the decision.

The brothers described the specific focus of Move to Amend, the campaign they support. It calls for a constitutional amendment that would deny personhood to corporations. I’m not sure if I actually heard a huge sigh of relief from the Minnesota Alliance of Peacemakers on hearing this information, but I think so. For me, it sounded so reasonable, so do-able and at the same time, so simple. I’m leafleting my condominium and intend to ask for endorsement from groups I belong to. I’m going to call my state legislators. But why should I stop with just my own? I’ve got to call a meeting of the committee. There’s just so much to be done.

Newcomers to the campaign can begin by reading up on it. The website is www.movetoamend.org. There is also a great resource, a paper entitled, "You Can Be An Agent of Change," available by contacting Move to Amend at mnmovetoamend@gmail.com. Of course, even with the passage of the desired constitutional amendment, we know how tough the going will be, but the majority of us wanting peace should be able to manage it.

Polly Mann is a co-founder of WAMM and continues to be active with the organization. Her column appears regularly in the WAMM newsletter. Also find her writing at www.worldwidewamm.org in the Middle East Committee section and on the WAMM Blog.