

PEACE NEWS

FOR NON-VIOLENCE AND UNILATERAL DISARMAMENT

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TRIUMPH FOR COMMITTEE OF 100

LAST Saturday's sit-down outside the Ministry of Defence in London was joined by about 4,000 people, apart from several thousand supporters who added their solidarity.

This act of mass civil disobedience, organised by the Committee of 100, demanded "the complete rejection by our country of nuclear weapons and all policies and alliances that depend upon them." It was aimed especially at the Polaris agreement with the USA.

The Committee's declaration—which was posted on the Ministry's door, and is on page five of *Peace News*—concluded: "Our action today is the first step in a campaign of non-violent civil disobedience. We hereby serve notice

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on our Government that we can no longer stand aside while they prepare to destroy mankind."

The entire protest, including the march from Marble Arch to Trafalgar Square, the big rally there and the sit-down itself, was marked by a striking calm seriousness of purpose. The only opposition came from a handful of fascists and Mosleyites who turned out to shout for the Bomb.

But it was also a great *human* protest. Some demonstrators had given up their jobs in order to be free to go to jail. One young mother had checked with the authorities that she would be able to keep her baby with her if she were imprisoned.

The chief marshal was handed an envelope containing this anonymous message: "We must have supreme courage in our convictions. We must give our time, our money, even our freedom. We must succeed." The envelope also contained 20 £5 notes.

Austin Underwood's picture, right, shows the sit-down in progress down one side of the Ministry of Defence.



photo: Austin Underwood

... and the police did not arrest a single demonstrator

"And so disobedience—deliberate, proclaimed and placarded disobedience—to the laws of the State has still about it something of a defiance hurled at the gods, and provides, too, a test of how

great their power really is. Cortes threw down the idols on the island of Columel to prove to the natives, by his impunity, that their gods were false. When Hampden refused to pay ship money at Charles I's behest, his friends

trembled for him; but his escape was proof that celestial thunderbolts were no longer wielded by the Stuart King: the king fell. Ransack the history of revolutions, and it will be found that every fall of a régime has been pre-

aged by a defiance which went unpunished. It is as true today as it was 10,000 years ago that a power from which the magic has gone out falls."—Bertrand de Jouvenel: "POWER: THE NATURAL HISTORY OF ITS GROWTH."