

A narrow corridor ran between the cell row and the outside wall. I contemplated dappled bits of sunlight scurrying through the venetian blinds covering the window opposite the cell. I could not see anyone, but I heard the murmur of voices around one end of the hall where, I supposed, were the administrative offices.

I was just soaking things in. I was feeling more sensitive about the robe, not being quite able to determine its role in the affair. I did come to one conclusion. Until I made up my mind about what I was doing and why, I would continue in the most extreme position. I would not do anything, only suffer what was done to me. Almost as if I had divined what was coming, I resolved not to leave the cell under my own power for any reason whatsoever except to go home. I remembered almost excruciatingly an experience in the Cincinnati County jail on a charge of disorderly conduct for trying to gain admission to an amusement park which barred Negroes. I did not eat during the nine days. I would not wear the prison uniform. But, thinking I was exercising what degree of freedom I had, I wandered about the floor at will and bounced downstairs to see visitors. But there was always the agony of afterwards. I could not endure being dragged upstairs each time, and returning voluntarily was degrading.

So, when the deputy interrupted my reverie to announce visitors, whom I could see in the waiting room, I told him I would leave only to be released. He shrugged his shoulders and left. Well, I thought, they're not going to get themselves into a stew about this.

In a few minutes I heard a hearty, "Well, good morning." Two fellow pacifists, one of them also a tax refuser, had been permitted to come to me, since I would not go to them. I asked them what was uppermost in my mind, what they'd do about getting properly dressed.

They said that this was something I would have to settle for myself. I sensed that they thought it the better part of wisdom and modesty for me to be dressed for my appearance in court. They were more concerned about the public relations aspect of getting across the witness than I was. They were also genuinely concerned, I knew, about making their actions truly nonviolent, cognizant of the other person's feelings, attitudes and readiness. I was shaken enough to concede that I would like to have my clothes at hand, in case I decided I would feel more at ease in them. The older visitor, a dignified man with white hair, agreed to go for the clothes in a taxicab.

They left, and on their heels came another visitor. She had been told that in permitting her to come up, the officials were treating me with more courtesy than I was according them. It was her assessment that the chief deputy was hopeful that someone would be able to hammer some sense into me, and was willing to make concessions in that hope. But he had misjudged the reliance he might place in her—she was not as critical as the men. She did not know what she would do, but she thought she might wish to have the strength and the audacity to carry through in the vein in which I had started.

And she said, "You know, you look like a female Gandhi in that robe. You look, well, dignified."

That was my first encouragement. Everyone else had tended to make me feel like a fool of the first order, had confirmed fears I already had on that score. My respect and admiration for Gandhi, though not uncritical, was deep. And if I in any way resembled him in appearance I was prepared to try to emulate a more becoming state of mind. I reminded myself, too, that I had on considerably more than the loincloth in which Gandhi was able to greet