

REFUSES to pay WAR TAXES

Robinson Sentenced to Year in Jail For Refusing to File Tax Return

Judge Edwin A. Robson, Federal District Court, Chicago, sentenced tax-refusing Eroseeanna Robinson on Feb. 18 to a year and a day on a charge of criminal contempt. Miss Robinson, who has refused on pacifist grounds for several years, was brought into the court bodily for the third time, where she remained in a reclining position throughout. Transported from the public health hospital where she had been taken

four days earlier from the Cook County Jail to undergo forced-feeding, Miss Robinson appeared in good spirits, though she had not eaten since her arrest by U. S. marshals on Jan. 26.

Judge Robson, who on Jan. 27 had committed her to the Cook County Jail until she should signify her willingness to file an income tax return and show records of earnings, had her brought before him on Feb. 18 for disposition of

the case, even though she showed no willingness to proceed with the matters leading to payment of income taxes which she continued to emphasize were mostly for war. Terming her attitude "contumacious criminal contempt," Judge Robson read an extended statement in which he avoided mention of taxes, saying that the issue was merely one of disobedience to the orders of the court. Continuing, he ridiculed the around-the-clock-vigil in front of the courthouse and other demonstrations of solidarity with her non-payment.

In her reply, Miss Robinson said she did not intend to take even the first step toward payment for war, adding that she did not hold the court in contempt, even though she had been put in jail. She expressed gratitude for the numerous messages which had arrived from all over the country, for the vigil, and for all of the other unexpected forms of support. "These make me very humble," she said. Though she spoke in good voice throughout, her voice began to tire near the end.

Judge Robson offered to release her in the custody of her father and sister so she could reconsider the matter in the light of everything that had taken place, maintaining he was still willing to take the matter under advisement if she were willing to conform. She declined. In sentencing, the judge left the way open for the court's reconsideration at the end of 90 days, during which time she would, he said, be submitted to physical and mental examination.



Eroseeanna Robinson

Taken to U.S. District Court on a stretcher.

Interesting Phases of Sis Robinson's Life

By Juanita Nelson

I met Eroseeanna Robinson in 1947 when we were both living at Howarth Cooperative House on Greenwood Avenue in Chicago. At that time Sis was, I think, a recreation and crafts instructor with the Chicago Park District. She had a degree from the Art Institute of Chicago, with additional study at Herzl College, University of Chicago and DePaul. But it is as an athlete and social-recreational worker that I have known her. Both her sisters have been in Olympic competitions, and Sis is herself a superb swimmer and diver, runner, high jumper, modern dancer. An artist in her daily living, she can create a striking costume from three yards of sale goods from Woolworth's; and it was her example that once stimulated me to make a pair of shoes.

About 1949 Sis went to Cleveland where she held a number of jobs: substitute teacher, instructor in recreation at a community center, director of the Rawlings Center, group worker for the Neighborhood Settlement Association.

She was a member of the Summer Interracial Workshop in 1951, sponsored by CORE and FOR. She was one of the Workshoppers who, as individuals, were involved in a minor riot at a Maryland night spot which was attempting to open on a non-segregated basis. Mob spirit developed to such a pitch (every man in the CORE party was struck at least once) that the CORE group was hustled away by the Chief of County Police. Back in Cleveland, Sis organized a campaign against a skating rink with a discriminatory policy. During a visit to the rink she was run down by youngsters encouraged by the management, and sustained a broken wrist. There was some permanent damage from incorrect setting, and it appeared that the doctor had been more motivated by prejudice than by medical ethics.

It was while she was in Cleveland that Sis became a tax refuser. As a single person she is limited to about \$13 a week on any one job before tax withholding starts, and only a rare combination of ingenuity and a wide range of skills kept her going. One job was with a YWCA as an instructor in cake decorating! Fortunately, Sis is able to live frugally without living meanly. A vegetarian, she expresses a gourmet's delight in the discovery of edible greens in the woods. Or she can make a lovely and delicious dish from a bit of this and a bit of that. Marion Bromley got to the finals in a cooking contest with Sis's "Summer Fruit Cake."

A few years ago Sis decided to bicycle from Cleveland to San Francisco, where she thought she'd like to live for a while. She made a trial run on the bike to see us at Gano (near Cincinnati), making the 240 mile trip in remarkably good time and in fine form. But a leg injury forced her to resort to thumbing after she got only about 500 miles on her western trek. She was fascinated with San Francisco, but the town was unable to support a tax refuser with no dependents. For a time she tried selling advertising for a weekly newspaper, but the job was neither satisfying nor lucrative. (She was unable to make ends meet even though she got her food budget down to about \$3 a week.) She reluctantly returned to Chicago where there were more social agencies and where she had more contacts. Here she was able to find work with three agencies, and was operating in this fashion when she was arrested.

With the return to Chicago Sis returned to athletics. She went to Cleveland in the summer of 1958 (last time I saw her) to teach swimming for the recreation department in an arrangement which gave her time for practice and the chance to participate in various athletic meets. She made news, with a feature story in *Jet*, when she declined going to Russia with a woman's track team as a high jumper, not wishing to be a pawn in the cold war propaganda between Russia and the U.S. But even with this publicized criticism, she has continued to compete in national meets with considerable success.

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held up; she had been put in the punishment cell immediately; the press had not mentioned her fast, the vigil, or anything in the past week (with the exception of an article in *The Defender*).

Five days after my arrival, Maurice McCrackin came from Cincinnati. He visited the marshal, seeking a visit. This was denied, and he had a long talk, as I did. But by now it was evident that the marshal was getting numerous calls from clergy for visits, and that numbers of people were calling him asking her condition—whether she was being force-fed yet, whether the government still intended to hold her, etc. The following day Maurice McCrackin and Alva Tompkins (pastor of Mt. Olivet Presbyterian Church) tried to visit Sis by going to the jail. They had a long talk with the warden, but were unable to see her. The warden and the marshal each claim that the other has custody and both had by this time begun to show displeasure. "I sure wish they'd get her out of here!" said the warden to them at one point.

The first break in the news barrier came that night when WGN-TV carried photos of Mac and me at the jail with a sign identifying with her nonpayment. On this newscast a photo was shown of her being carried by the marshals and Mac's being carried by the marshals in similar circumstances a year ago; also mention was made of her fast. The *Sun-Times*, in the late evening and the following morning, also carried on the front page a large photo of Mac with the sign in front of the jail. Beneath the photo was a good story. This publicity helped people to realize that she was still in jail; we had found that many who were vitally concerned were supposing she was out.

By now a week had passed since I had arrived in Chicago. Sis was in the 15th day of a fast, and had been imprisoned for the same period. No one could tell how near or how far she was from release, but everyone involved knew her imprisonment had caused and was causing thousands to see perhaps for the first time that a sensitive and strong conscience is a marvelous thing to behold, especially when it stands unafraid against the power of the state and the destructiveness of the atom bomb. On the following morning, as Mac and I were preparing to leave for Cincinnati in a driving snowstorm, I called the Bethlehem Community Center, where Sis had been employed and where the marshals had come and carried her away. I got the director and said rather hesitatingly: "This is the place, I think, where Eroseeanna Robinson was working before her arrest." "Yes," the voice came back. "This is where she was working before she went to jail, and this is where she'll be working when she comes out—that is, if she still wants to." Being sort of "told off" in this fashion made the long drive home somewhat more comfortable.

VISIT WITH SIS ROBINSON—

"I Will Not Compromise"

By Ernest R. Bromley

After Sis Robinson was held in Cook County Jail, Chicago, for a week, and had been allowed no visitors, I took a night bus and arrived in the Chicago Terminal at 5:30 a.m. Having learned just before leaving home that pacifists in Chicago had for three days been conducting a round-the-clock vigil at the Federal Court House, I walked the five blocks in the pre-dawn chilly hours, finding Karl Meyer pacing up and down with a sandwich sign signifying support of "Rose Robinson" and handing out leaflets denoting the fact she was being held in jail until she agrees to file an income tax return and produce records of earnings. After walking with him for the best part of an hour, I took public transportation out to the Cook County Jail to try to see Sis and find out all I could about what was going on.

Being at the head of the line, I went in at 9:00 when the way became open to visitors. In her noncooperation I realized it was doubtful whether she would come to the special steel compartment to be locked up for a visit, and told the woman in charge of her section to convey my understanding in case she would not come. However, she did come, making it plain that because of the distance I had traveled

she was making an exception in her practice of noncooperation. It had been several years since we had met. Shouting back and forth through the screen panel in the steel wall was not the easiest kind of visiting, especially for Sis, who was in her 8th day of fasting, not having eaten since being arrested by the marshals on Jan. 26. But it was evident that she was in good spirits, and composed.

"I see the military system and jail system as one thing," she said, as I began writing. "I don't want to give up my own will. I will not compromise by accepting a lawyer or by recognizing the judge as judge. I would rather that no one try to make an arrangement with the judge in my behalf. I ask nothing from the court or the jail. I do not want to pay for war. That is my main concern. Love to everyone."

Stopping in the main entrance I asked to see Jack Johnson, the warden. ----- I visited the U.S. marshal (W. W. Kipp) in the Federal Building, asking for a clergy visit—saying the few minutes' visit through the screen a couple days before was unsatisfactory. This was quickly denied.

Upon leaving, I felt that this was indeed a tight situation—visits seemed impossible; mail obviously was being

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