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Ruth's Copy

Bringing it All Together.

Contributed by Ruth Crow 7/12/93

In 1936 Maurie Crow was one of the Melbourne University students who organised a demonstrated against war and fascism calling themselves "Veterans of Future Wars". The main opposition to the University Peace Group came from the Campion Society which was lead by B.A. Santamaria.

Maurie became very interested in studying why Roman Catholics like Sanatamaria were such ardent supporters of fascism. Thus in the pamphlet section of Crow Collection at the Footscray Campus of the Victoria University of Technology there are quite a few Papal Encyclicals from the mid 1920s as well as peace movement pamphlets

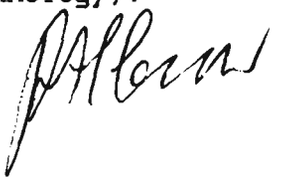
Later, in the late 1940s when Maurie was an organiser of the Federated Clerks Union, he wrote a pamphlet on the role Santamaria played in promoting "red scares" in the trade union movement. This has been praised as an early example of "investigative journalism".

Until the mid 1950s, our protestant backgrounds and our participation in left politics led people like Maurie and me to tend to lump all Roman Catholics together and to label them as "groupers" or "Catholic Actionists". But in real life the membership of the Catholic Church was not such a monolith.

Val Noone's recently published book "Disturbing the War - Melbourne Catholics in Vietman" puts the record straight. For that alone it is a very valuable contribution to political history in Australia. But it is much more than a handbook on politics. On the back cover Michael McKernan, deputy director, Australian War Memorial states that it is "part auto-biographical, part philosophical reflection and part history". It is also a "ready reckoner" on dates, places and people. It has a very comprehensive chronology (5 pages) and is very well indexed (13+ pages).

"Disturbing the War" has over 300 pages. It is a book that some people may not read from cover to cover, but it is a book that can be turned to again and again to confirm facts, but more importantly for me, to read about the complex soul searching that has been taking place world wide in the Catholic Church. I will read it too, because it confirms my belief that as Marx said "People change them selves as they change their circumstances"

To continue with Micheal McKernan's words "Noone explores the personal and institutional difficulties that war caused the Melbourne Catholic Church and shows how a small group made a real impact for change".

The title of the book "Disturbing the War" is a reminder that many peace demonstrators have been charged with "disturbing the peace". Val has coined an absurd title and in so doing he challenges our acceptance of official phrases. The Irish use of English has been termed the "language of the oppressed". Is it because he is an Australian of Irish ancestory that Val has a capacity to enrich our lives through humour and the sense of the ridiculous ? Whether this is so or not, he has enriched our lives through his painstaking research and is passionate commitment to peace.

("Disturbing the War" was published 1993 by Spectrum Publications (03.429.1404). Val Noone is a lecturer in sociology at the St Alban Campus of the Victoria University of Technology. This article has been contributed by Ruth Crow, Donor and Co-ordinator of the Crow Collection at the Footscray Campus of the Victoria University of Technology).