

to become a corporate stance, a minimum of forty percent of the membership must make a formal response, and seventy-five percent of those must indicate support. Negative votes may not exceed ten percent of those responding.

If support for a proposal falls short of what is required, a group of RSCJ may agree to make a public “collective response,” giving the names and/or the number of RSCJ who have signed on.

In the corporate stance calling for responsible withdrawal from Iraq, 223 responded, with 212 in favor, six opposed and five abstaining.

Once a position is adopted, RSCJ are urged to get behind it by taking appropriate actions. Suggestions in the case of the Iraq war include writing to members of the U.S. Congress, backing programs to assist returning troops, and encouraging United Nations oversight of conflicts in the Middle East, including Iraq.

Similar processes have been adopted by other religious congregations and are strongly supported by LCWR, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, as a way of bringing gospel values to bear on public policy.

What difference does a corporate stance make? To Mary Pat White, RSCJ, of San Francisco, who helped prepare the statement against the war, the significance is two-dimensional.

“For me personally, I want to be part of the movement that says ‘no’ to war, and I want to feel that the Society confirms where I am,” she said.

Looking at it from the perspective of the Society’s mission, she added: “We educate others by standing up for what we believe is right.” ❖

LIVING DANGEROUSLY

Although she grew up in a military family, Anne Montgomery, RSCJ, is one of the nation’s most ardent opponents of war. That is the clearest sign that this 78-year-old nun is a woman of paradox. In an article about her on August 8 of last year, a reporter for *The New York Times* listed other signs. “In a place where everything seems broken, she has been a fixer,” Ian Urbina wrote. At a time when most other American civilians were leaving the country, she was just arriving.”

That country was, of course, Iraq. Peace-loving Sister Montgomery is most often found in the arena she most deplors: the killing fields of the world. Since the Gulf War in the late 1980s, she has been to Iraq at least twenty times as a member of a Christian Peacemaker team. She has been in other war-torn places too, more often than she can count, including Bosnia during the 1990s war and Hebron in Palestine numerous times, as recently as early spring, when she was trying to get back into Iraq. She spent much of this summer at home in East Harlem, New York, because Christian peacemakers were being denied visas, though she said she didn’t know why.

Sister Montgomery is one of about thirty full-time members of Christian Peacemakers, an anti-war organization that sends teams into troubled spots around the globe. As a member of the Iraq team, she has had vivid proof of the risks. One of the three hostages freed by a multinational military raid in Iraq in late March, James Loney, was a Christian Peacemaker, as was Tom Fox, a fourth hostage, whose plastic-wrapped body had been found on a trash pile two weeks before the rescue.



Sister Anne Montgomery joins in a demonstration to reopen Hebron University in 1998. The school has suffered repeated disruptions due to conflicts in the West Bank.

When Montgomery is in danger zones, she carries out a “ministry of presence,” doing whatever she can to help civilians get through the day. She walks with children to school, accompanies people needing medical aid, helps families of detainees find answers. Asked if her efforts were effective, she said, “Jesus is our model. He died on a Cross. We don’t expect to see results.”

Montgomery, who began her peace ministry by acting against nuclear weapons, resulting in multiple arrests, is unique among RSCJ in the United States in the extent and form of her opposition to war, though she points out that many of her sisters focus on international peace and justice in other ways. She is grateful for the new corporate stance against the Iraq war. A key principle of non-violence, she said, is that “you don’t create peace by killing people.” ❖