D.C. 9 go on trial

Special to the Guardian

Washington

The D.C. 9, facing three felony charges, went on trial here Feb. 3. They were arrested for a raid on the Washington government relations office of the Dow Chemical Co. last March.

The nine, four Catholic priests, a sister, two Catholic Jesuit theology students, a former nun and a draft resister, are accused of destroying files in the raid as well as wrecking office equipment, splattering the walls with blood and throwing confidential records out of the window.

Throughout the first week of the trial, the nine attacked the inhuman and repressive nature of the courtroom. On Feb. 6, however, two of the nine changed their plea on the charge of destruction of Dow property to no contest. Kathy Melville, speaking for herself and father Bernie Meyer, stated, "I cannot continue with this trial and remain a human being." While the other seven continue to expose "the farce of our court system," the two were immediately found guilty by the judge.

Shortly thereafter, as sister Joann Malone of St. Louis gave her opening statement and tried to show the jury a picture of napalmed Vietnamese children, the judge ruled it irrelevant. As a few outraged spectators protested, federal marshals wrestled the protestors to the floor. They included a middle-aged lady who was a legal research assistant and defendant Michael Salaski.

Even before the trial had begun its repressive tone had become evident. Presiding judge Pratt enjoined the attorneys from speaking to the press. Pratt also allegedly contacted local papers not to print articles on the D.C. 9 case prior to the trial and conferred with police officials on the handling of the large planned demonstrations and rallies.

Pratt began by denying in a closed courtroom the motions of five of the nine defendants to defend themselves on grounds of lack of formal training and the possibility of disruption. All nine then attempted to fire their attorneys—Phil Hirschkop, Addison Bowman and Caroline Nickerson. The nine insisted on their rights guaranteed by the fifth and sixth Amendments to defend themselves. The entire defense stems from their personal intent for the already-admitted actions at the Dow Chemical office. They stress that no lawyers could adequately represent them

The nine come primarily from the radical Catholic sector of the movement and include Art and Kathy Melville, Maryknoll missionaries, who were expelled from Guatemala for working with peasant guerrillas and fathers Meyer and Bob Begin, subpenaed from the priesthood for carrying out a mass for peace in Cleveland.

The D.C. 9, which has joined in a suit against Dow (see page 2) issued a pamphlet to the press documenting Dow's production of napalm and other chemical and biological weapons and Dow's exploitation of the poor in the U.S. and other countries. For copies write the D.C. 9 Defense Committee, 1620 "S" Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.

GUARDIAN
2/14/70

P. 4