



Special Issue on Conscientious Objection to War

Winter/Spring 2008

- ◆ History of Conscientious Objection
- ◆ Local Church's Effort to Find Alternatives to Military Service for City Youth
- ◆ Opinion Piece About the Draft
- ◆ Ways to Support Conscientious Objectors
- ◆ Opting Out
- ◆ Links & Resources

Peace and Justice Committee
c/o Robert Walden, chairperson
826 Tioga Avenue
Bethlehem, PA 18018-3320
610-861-0653
rwaldenpa@entermail.net
<http://efpjc.ppj.org/>

peace and justice news

Eastern District Conference & Franconia Conference
Peace & Justice Committee

HISTORY OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION IN AMERICA

by *Anne M. Yoder*

Introduction

The New York Peace Society, founded in 1815, was the first official peace society in America. Since then, hundreds of peace groups and thousands of individuals have worked to promote peace and work against war, violence and injustice, following the voice of their consciences -- sometimes to the point of persecution and imprisonment. This article is intended as only a brief introduction to the historical setting for the topic of conscientious objection to war.

The first recorded conscientious objectors in America were members of religious sects whose faith principles forbade them the use of arms in warfare, such as Mennonites, Amish, Hutterites, Dunkers, Shakers, Christadelphians and Rogerenes, who emigrated from 1656 on. But America was not necessarily a safe haven for pacifists.

Revolutionary War

Resistance to the Revolutionary War (1775-1783) came mostly from the groups mentioned above. According to their discipline, members who wished to remain in good standing neither fought themselves nor gave support to the war effort (of either side). The tax issue was a particular cause for much discussion and heart searching. Many Quakers refused to pay taxes, asserting that they went directly to pay for the war. In addition, many would not take the oath of loyalty, considering this as part of their witness for peace. The Revolutionary authorities responded by imprisoning conscientious objectors, occasionally for as long as two years.

Some active opponents to the war were handled roughly. Over one hundred thousand pounds in goods and property were taken from the Quakers as penalties for their stance against war. The witness of the German peace sects was less political (and usually less educated) than the Quakers, so that their treatment by the authorities was more lenient. Few of them saw anything wrong with paying the fines for not mustering, nor did they speak out against military recruitment, though there were exceptions by some individuals. Mennonites and Dunkards were mostly farmers who were frequently called upon to supply horses and wagons for army transportation needs, to contribute food for the consumption of the troops, timber for construction purposes, and blankets and clothing to keep the soldiers warm in the winters. On the whole they

complied willingly with these demands. It is possible that they felt that the use made of their goods was the responsibility solely of the authorities. It seems that the only tenet to which they consistently held fast was against being conscripted.

Civil War

The Civil War brought with it the first national conscription act; in March 1863, Congress took over from the states the entire administration of conscription. The original Act provided an exemption for anyone who could find a substitute for himself or provide a \$300 commutation fee. In Feb. 1864, the Act was amended to recognize only those conscientious objectors who were members of religious denominations whose rules and articles of faith prohibited armed service. In the Confederacy, the draft law of 1862 exempted Quakers, Mennonites, Brethren and Nazarenes, with the understanding that they would either hire a substitute or pay \$500. These conditions were clearly unsatisfactory, and many northern and southern C.O.s could either not meet the monetary demand or would not hire someone else to go to war for them.

The conscientious objector often found himself moved to camps in states where no one knew of him or his good reputation, in the hands of military officers who had little or no sympathy for his scruples. For the first time, there are records of C.O.s who were hung by their thumbs, pierced by bayonets, or underwent other torture for refusing to carry a musket; many others were imprisoned. Cyrus Pringle wrote in his published diary *The Record of a Quaker Conscience* on Oct. 6, 1863: "The lieutenant called me out, and pointing to the gun that lay near by, asked if I was going to clean it. I replied to him, that I could not comply with military requisitions, and felt resigned to the consequences. "I do not ask about your feelings; I want to know if you are going to clean that gun?" "I cannot do it," was my answer.... Two sergeants soon called for me, and taking me a little aside, bid me lie down on my back, and stretching my limbs apart tied cords to my wrists and ankles and these to four stakes driven in the ground somewhat in the form of an X. I was very quiet in my mind as I lay there on the ground [soaked] with the rain of the previous day, exposed to the heat of the sun, and suffering keenly from the cords binding my wrists and straining my muscles.... I wept, not so much from my own suffering as from sorrow that such things should be in our country, where Justice and Freedom and Liberty of Conscience have been the annual boast of Fourth-of-July orators so many years." Some C.O.s joined the army as cooks and/or would shoot over the heads of the enemy rather than kill them. Others, such as Mennonites in Virginia, hid out in the hills until the war was over.

World War I

By 1917, conscientious objectors had become a larger and more diverse group. The historic peace churches mentioned above were joined by pacifist sects from the newer waves of immigrants, such as the Molokans and the

Doukhobors, who had come from Russia after 1903 to escape service in the Czar's army. There were also Jehovah's Witnesses, who claimed exemption from military service, not as conscientious objectors but as ministers (each JW adult male was considered a "minister"). In addition, there were political objectors such as the Socialists and members of the I.W.W. (International Workers of the World), and those who simply did not believe in war.

A.P. Shubin, of the Molokans in Arizona, wrote on Jan. 20, 1918 [ca.]: "Sheriff Young questioned [those of us who would not register about their decision...] They quietly replied, 'We cannot register because the Holy Spirit has forbidden it.' He then attempted to frighten them by saying, 'If you do not register, you will be sent into the army and go to France where you may be shot and killed.' Filled with the power and strength of the Lord they answered, 'Do with us as you wish but we shall never sign our names.'"

The C.O.s in World War I were sent to army camps where they had to convince officers & other officials that they were sincere in their conscientious objection to war, which, at times, resulted in abuse from the enlisted men. Occasionally, the C.O.s were taken to prisons instead of camps. One unofficial source states that 3,989 men declared themselves to be conscientious objectors when they had reached the camps: of these, 1,300 chose noncombatant service; 1,200 were given farm furloughs; 99 went to Europe to work for the Friends Reconstruction Unit; 450 were court-martialed and sent to prison; and 940 remained in camps until the Armistice was fully enacted. The absolutist C.O.s who refused to drill or do any noncombatant service were court-martialed and sentenced to many years in federal prison at Alcatraz Island or Ft. Leavenworth U.S. Disciplinary Barracks, with many suffering persecution, manacling, and solitary confinement.



Ulysses De Rosa, a Quaker absolutist, stated at his court-martial trial: "In these trying times the only authority

that I obey is the Inner-Light - the great ideal for which Christ gave his life, namely: Humanity. It is the spirit of reconciliation, not hate; non resistance, not aggression, that should dominate us." He was sentenced to 25 years in prison and sent to Ft. Leavenworth. He noted: "The cells were about 6x7x8 feet high. The bed was a wooden board, the size of an ironing board, flush with the floor, with one blanket..." Maurice Hess, a Dunkard (Church of the Brethren), told the judges at his court-martial trial: "I do not believe that I am seeking martyrdom. As a young man, life and its hopes and freedom and opportunities for service are sweet to me.... But.... I know the teaching of Christ, my Savior. He taught us to resist not evil, to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, and do good to them that hate us. Not only did he teach this, but he also

practiced it in Gethsemane, before Pilate, and on Calvary. We would indeed be hypocrites and base traitors to our profession if we would be unwilling to bear the taunts and jeers of a sinful world, and its imprisonment, and torture or death, rather than to participate in war and military service.... We cannot yield, we cannot compromise, we must suffer.... I pray God for strength to remain faithful."

Most C.O.s who had been imprisoned were released by May of 1919, though some of those thought to be the most recalcitrant were kept until 1920.

World War II



During WWII, the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940 dictated the terms by which more than 34 million American men, ages 18 to 44, participated in the war effort. Of the men who registered for the draft, there were 72,354 who applied for conscientious objector status. Of those, 25,000 accepted noncombatant service in the army, agreeing to work for the Medical Corps or in anything that did not involve actual combat. Another 27,000

failed the basic physical exam. In the end, 6,086 C.O.s (4,441 of them Jehovah's Witnesses) went to prison for refusing to cooperate with Selective Service. Another 12,000 men entered Civilian Public Service (CPS), a program under civilian direction designed to accommodate C.O.s by having them do "work of national importance."

Some CPS camps were run by the three historic peace churches, and some were run by the government. The first camp was opened in Patapsco (MD) on May 15, 1941. By the time CPS ended in 1947, CPS men had logged over 8 million man-days of work in over 150 camps. The C.O.s were not paid and their families and churches contributed over 7 million dollars for their support. The CPSers worked at a variety of projects, including conservation, forestry, and agricultural, and as government survey teams. Others built sanitary facilities for hook-worm ridden communities, or worked with juvenile delinquents. Some wished to do more risky things (in part, to prove that they were just as courageous as the men going into combat) and volunteered as firefighters, or as human guinea pigs for medical and scientific research in jaundice (infectious hepatitis), typhus, infantile paralysis, pneumonia, influenza, starvation, sea sickness, immersion and frostbite, and fly abatement experiments.

Harold Blickenstaff, one of the C.O.s who agreed to be a "guinea pig," wrote on March 16, 1945: "We have now been on our semi-starvation diet for almost five weeks.... At the start...I weighed 150 pounds. This morning I weighed 137.5 pounds.... Only 25 more pounds to go, but when I look at myself it is hard to see where they are going to come from." On Sept. 11, 1945, he noted: "We

stopped starving July 29 (army doctors who had been in Europe who looked us over said we were in very similar conditions to the people they found in Belgium and the Netherlands except that we had been able to keep clean)."

Many male (& female) C.O.s volunteered to work in hospitals for the mentally ill, where their exposé of the appalling conditions that existed in many of the facilities, and their non-violent treatment and care of the patients, helped to revolutionize the way the hospitals were run. Warren Sawyer's letters, from his time at Byberry State Hospital in Philadelphia, are quoted in the book *The Turning Point*. He wrote on Sept. 27, 1942: "Thursday we had a meeting with...the hospital's superintendent. He remarked that since the C.O.s had arrived, he had noticed a distinct improvement in cleanliness throughout the hospital. He also observed that patients were receiving better treatment since our arrival. 'There was far less beating of patients by attendants,' he noted. He expressed the opinion that the regular attendant staff had been influenced by our behavior and were beginning to use a kindlier approach in dealing with patients." April 27, 1943: "This is a perfect setting in which to demonstrate the superiority of pacifism over brute force in handling tense situations. If you can convey to patients that you're not afraid of them and respect them as individuals – even though you're shaking in your boots – they return your respect. A few attendants have had their jaws smashed, but they're usually the ones who approach troublesome patients with broom handles and other similar weapons. When patients sense that you feel safe and have the situation in command without the threat of force, they are much more amenable to following instructions. I've already broken up several fights with this technique, and it works." Many of these men and women went into the helping professions after the war because of the profound effect their time in CPS had had on them.

There were some men in CPS who found the program intensely frustrating. How could digging ditches or blowing up tree stumps be considered "work of national importance"? How did it express their pacifism and/or objection to war and militarism? Often these men ended up walking out of CPS and going to prison instead.

Korean War

At the end of WWII, there was much debate about the efficacy of Civilian Public Service and whether there were alternatives to this that C.O.s could engage in. The I-W program became official in July 1952, and it made a wide variety of service opportunities open to draftees. A number of farmers were assigned to dairy or experimental farms. Brethren Service arranged opportunities in relief and welfare work in Europe, and the Mennonites created PAX service, which employed C.O.s around the world in construction, agricultural development, and relief. Most of the I-W men accepted low-level jobs in health facilities; by 1954 more than 80% of the men held hospital jobs. By the summer of 1953, Selective Service had approved more than 1200 institutions and agencies for I-W service, with over 3000 men enrolled. Overall, the Mennonites and Brethren were quite happy with the programs. Many of these C.O.s went on to careers in education and social

service because of this introduction to systemic ways of helping others. Of the nearly 10,000 I-W men from 1952-1955, only about 25 men left their jobs without authorization.

Vietnam War

The Vietnam War produced a very organized network of draft resisters and supporters. Rejection of conscription stemmed from opposition to militarism and war itself, to disagreement with the United States' foreign policy in Indochina, and/or to the belief that the draft epitomized injustice as it was weighted heavily against African Americans, the poor, and the less educated. Whatever the reason, a sizable contingent of young men declared that this armed conflict at least had no claim on them. Massive anti-war rallies were held, as well as rallies in which hundreds of young men turned in or burned their draft cards. GI resister groups spread, so that dissent was coming from the armed forces as well as those not yet in the military.

The language of the conscription law had specifically excluded the C.O. who did not believe in a Supreme Being; thus, the agnostic and atheist had no legal basis on which to claim exemption. It also excluded selective objection, those whose objection was based on the specific war involved rather than on long-standing religious pacifism. This held true until 1965, when the Supreme Court ruled that C.O.s need not believe in a Supreme Being; this was expanded in 1970 to say that any individual may object to military service on ethical and moral grounds, if such convictions "are deeply felt." A total of 170,000 men received C.O. deferments; as many as 300,000 other applicants were denied deferment. Nearly 600,000 illegally evaded the draft; about 200,000 were formally accused of draft offenses. Between 30,000 and 50,000 fled to Canada; another 20,000 fled to other countries or lived "underground" in America.

Conscription ended three years before U.S. involvement in Vietnam did. President Nixon thought that ending the draft would end the massive opposition to that war, but in this he erred. Ending the draft neither ended the war nor the opposition to it.

Post-Vietnam Era / Persian Gulf War

The first years of the post-Vietnam era were dedicated by pacifists to calling for amnesty for draft resisters and draft dodgers. Draft registration was reinstated in July 1980; from then until 1985, over 500,000 men refused or failed to register. Twenty persons were prosecuted for not registering from 1980 through 1990. Students who did not register generally could not receive federal student loans, grants or work-study money; some states also denied educational financial aid. After 1986, no new cases were brought against non-registrants, and draft registration became almost a non-issue, until the Persian Gulf War. By the time the war was launched against Iraq in Jan. 1991, several dozen men and women in the armed forces or the reserves had publicly refused orders to deploy. In Nov.-Dec. 1990, the military gave less than honorable discharges to a number of resisters, but as the war began,

there were rapid trials and jail sentences imposed. The ceasefire came in March 1991, by which time about 2,500 soldiers had sought C.O. discharges; in the months ahead, military courts sentenced at least 42 Marines to terms of six to 36 months in prison.



Current

The United States declared a "war on terrorism" after thousands of people were killed at the Pentagon (DC) and the World Trade Center (NY) by terrorists who flew airplanes into those buildings on Sept. 11, 2001 (also, one of their hijacked planes crashed in rural Pennsylvania).

Since then, an era of fear has arisen, with much concern, among those who long for peace, over the loss of civil liberties, the build-up of national weapons systems, and the institution of such government efforts as the new Department of Homeland Security. A retaliatory war was declared on Afghanistan and Iraq in 2003 and still continues five years later, although a great many peace groups and thousands of pacifists have been vocal in expressing their opposition to it. Various attempts have been made in Congress to reinstitute the draft and establish "Universal National Service." Groups such as the Center on Conscience and War are working to reintroduce the Military Conscientious Objector Act, which would broaden the legal definition of conscientious objection.

Katherine Jashinski, the first woman GI to publicly take a stand against the current war, applied for C.O. status in 2004 and then waited for 18 months before the army denied her claim as "frivolous." She stated: "At age 19 I enlisted in the Guard as a cook because I wanted to experience military life.... After enlisting I began the slow transformation into adulthood I began to see a bigger picture of the world and I started to reevaluate everything that I had been taught about war as a child. I developed the belief that taking human life was wrong and war was no exception.... Now I have come to the point where I am forced to choose between my legal obligation to the Army and my deepest moral values.... What characterizes a conscientious objector is their willingness to face adversity and uphold their values at any cost. We do this not because it is easy or popular, but because we are unable to do otherwise."

Conclusion

Conscientious objectors, men and women alike, have made a significant contribution, throughout the life of this nation, in tirelessly and courageously affirming the preciousness of human life, as well as in being pioneers for conflict resolution, and for social justice here and abroad. They have raised important issues about citizenship and civil liberties. Conscientious objectors have been instrumental in making sure that there is a place for dissent from majority opinion in our country, which is an important gift to a free society. In 1980 Roger Baldwin, a WWI C.O. and lifelong advocate for human and civil rights, stated: "If you say, 'Here I stand, I can do no other,' it is a very important social force. Great human history has been written by people who would not be moved."

This article was originally written for the Swarthmore College Peace Collection website "Primary Sources for Researching Conscientious Objection in America." Anne Yoder has been the archivist for the SCPC since Jan. 1995, and serves on the Eastern District Conference & Franconia Conference's Peace & Justice Committee. For sources used in this article, contact Anne at ayoder1@swarthmore.edu.

LOCAL CHURCH'S EFFORT TO FIND ALTERNATIVES TO MILITARY SERVICE FOR CITY YOUTH

by Rebecca Steffy [written in July 2007]



Visit the U.S. Army's website and you'll notice that its banner includes links to "Careers and Jobs" and "Benefits." These headings aren't buried at the bottom of the page or in a sidebar; they are front and center. A flashing box below touts the army's latest bargain: "Have you heard the new offer? Over \$50,000 in benefits." Notably absent from the website, as far as I can tell, is any information about the current wars the U.S. Army is fighting, how many people (soldiers or civilians) are dying because of these violent conflicts, or the physical, emotional and psychological toll military service exacts. For a young person just out of high school, the Army's information will be tempting.

In the fall of 2006, the West Philadelphia Mennonite Fellowship (WPMF) Peace Group was offered an opportunity to address this off-balance equation. Titus Peachey, a peace educator who works through Mennonite Central Committee, invited us to consider designing a resource that would inform young people in our community of educational and employment opportunities that could serve as alternatives to military service.

With its discipline, skill-straining and hefty signing bonuses, the military can look like a great opportunity, especially for youth from low-income neighborhoods (which recruiters tend to target in greater proportion than middle- or upper-income areas). In fact, for some folks it is a great opportunity, providing the best available paycheck. While encouraging young people away from the military, this counter-recruitment effort would also steer them towards viable alternatives. We unanimously decided to accept the call.

Saying yes was the easy part. As a pilot project, the next steps were up to us. Some of the questions we discussed dealt with the practical issues at hand. Would we make a leaflet to hand out at malls or a lengthier booklet with detailed information? Could we do both? Could we hire a cartoonist to design our graphics? How would we get this resource (whatever it turned out to be) into the hands of teenagers? We also had questions about

how to make our project effective. In order to reach those who could benefit most from an Alternatives guide, who should we talk to for insight and advice? Do we have relationships with guidance counselors, youth leaders or community advocates in West Philly? Can this project help us build a better network among peace advocates and those serving youth in our city?

In the face of the great potential of the project, we needed a way to make it manageable for our group of 8 or so persons. We decided we wouldn't aim to be "comprehensive." We also decided to focus our energy on compiling information towards a booklet first, before we tried to make all the auxiliary decisions about additional flyers, a website or other media. Though we were the first Mennonite peace group (that we knew of) to take on a project like this, we discovered that several American Friends Service Committee chapters had completed similar guides in other cities. Their guides, posted online, served as helpful models.

Throughout the winter, each member of our group contacted various individuals or groups to get information. We spoke with community civic associations, guidance counselors, the Philadelphia Urban Ministries Partnership (PUMP), and friends. We took advantage of youth resources listed by other organizations in Philly, including the Philadelphia Youth Network. A self-employed carpenter in our group provided information on union apprenticeships, and our group coordinator dedicated a good deal of time to discovering further opportunities for youth and to typing up all of our contributions. By the spring of 2007, the list had grown to more than a dozen pages!

In the summer of 2007 we put the finishing touches on our Alternatives booklet effort. Entitled *Seeking Direction After High School? Alternatives for Youth of Philadelphia*, the booklet is divided into three sections: Employment & Job Training, Education & Educational Development, and



Volunteering. The back of the booklet includes resources for those considering enlistment and those who want to get out of the service. Chris Esh, a young man from our congregation, wrote a cover letter that introduces the booklet to readers, and he struck just the right pitch as a peer and a peacemaker. Now it's time to get the word out! We plan to

distribute the booklets at our Peace Group table at community fairs in West Philadelphia, through personal contacts and peace advocacy networks, and online. You can view or download our booklet by visiting the WPMF Peace Group online at <http://www.wpmf.com/Outreach.htm#Peace>.

Rebecca Steffy is currently working toward her Masters in English at Villanova University.

THE DRAFT & MENNONITES

by *Andy Peifer*

As Mennonites, we can speak proudly of our history as conscientious objectors. Mennonites played a key role in the formation of a conscientious objector status in times of war and we are regularly looked to in ecumenical circles for leadership on issues of justice and peace. Those who participated in alternative service in times of war returned to their communities changed by their sacrifices and they continue to shape our church today.

The ending of the active draft in 1973 was seen as progress at the end of an immensely unpopular war in Vietnam; a war which was predominately fought by those who were forced, through conscription, to kill and be killed. But under the surface of this progress, national leaders were making calculated decisions about how to most *effectively* fight wars in the future. President Nixon saw how conscription fueled widespread public opposition to the Vietnam War and this country has not seen a draft since. Our national leaders developed a precise awareness that a military draft was an obstacle in waging war.

All of our wars since Vietnam have been fought by a volunteer force, one which is, according to the Pentagon, much more effective and committed than a drafted force. In the past 34 years, the U.S. military has grown stronger and more dominant than ever. And just as anticipated, opposition to war has been marginalized and the American public is generally silent. Outrage is minimal.

Today, the American public's interaction with the draft has changed radically. Rather than young men fearing their draft number being called, it is now the law to sign up with Selective Service System at the age of 18. This database of names is kept in case of a "national emergency," but little more is heard about this preparation for a reinstatement of a draft. Each year, bills are debated in Congress to bring back the draft but none gain much traction (most recently, HR 163 brought by Rep. Rangel, Democrat from New York, was defeated 402-2).

However, many opponents to war consider the current tactics used to recruit young people into the military a "backdoor draft". It is a strategy that targets those with few prospects for higher education or job opportunities, often resulting in false monetary promises and mandatory extensions of service. In the absence of a draft, the poor in our nation end up disproportionately shouldering the burdens of war. As Mennonites who have traditionally been most concerned about a military draft forcing *us* to fight, we must now transfer our energy into advocacy for the young men and women who are currently fighting, many of whom are as reluctant as a drafted soldier.

Following are a few suggestions of how to take action:

- ◆ Work with the poor in your area and you will create relationships within the community in which military recruitment is a daily reality. These relationships will lead you to further clarity for action. Dorothy Day repeatedly stated that our opposition to war must be rooted in our work with the poor.

- ◆ Participate in and support counter-recruitment efforts. Find out when military recruiters will be at a local job fair and simply observe the recruiting tactics for a few minutes.

- ◆ Work with a group from your church to compile a list of local and viable alternatives to a career in the military, targeting those considering joining. Distribute your list to local high schools or outside a local recruiting office.

- ◆ Make a donation to Mennonite Church USA's Fund for Non-Registrants (<http://peace.mennolink.org/safnr.html>) to support young men who refuse to register with the Selective Service and therefore forfeit their access to federal financial aid for college.

- ◆ Pray for peace. Fast for peace. Empower yourself and your church.

The pacifism of our Anabaptist history is one type of non-violence described as nonresistance. Nonresistance is rooted in the preservation of integrity and non-participation in violence, whether personal violence or war. This moral compass is rooted in the rejection of violence by Jesus, even as he faced his own death, a fate Anabaptists communities became subject to. For North American Mennonites today, the theology of nonresistance has largely remained the same, but the context has changed entirely. Our role as "the quiet in the land" loses integrity in a context in which we are mostly the beneficiaries of our country's wars and violence. We are no longer victims and our silence merely communicates complicity.

As a peace church in the most powerful nation on earth, we are burdened by this paradox. We must work creatively to extend our commitment to justice and peace beyond preventing Mennonite participation in war. May God help us in this historical opportunity to be a prophetic voice in our nation.

Andy Peifer and his partner run a carpentry business in Philadelphia; Andy just finished a four-year term with the Peace & Justice Support Network of Mennonite Church USA.

HOW YOU AND/OR YOUR CHURCH CAN SUPPORT PRESENT-DAY CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

by *Anne M. Yoder*

Men and women in the armed services face a very difficult time when their consciences begin to bother them about their part in war. Often they don't have the spiritual and practical training to argue their case well. Many times their officers will not process their C.O. claims as they legally should. Often their great loyalty to the men and women in their battalions will keep them from taking the final steps toward C.O. status. Furthermore, the emotional and financial burden on family members when someone decides to become a C.O. is overwhelming. The church has an important role to play in providing support:

- ◆ Be a spiritual mentor; write letters of support to the C.O.s and their families (Susan Mark Landis is often contacted for this; she can be reached at susanml@mennoniteusa.org). Yvette Coil, whose husband became a C.O., wrote: "Some-

times, when my spirits were down, I would read the letters [we received] and know that there were people who walked in faith with me. People I didn't know and probably would never meet, but they cared and it meant a lot to me and to Tim. We both received letters, he in Iraq and I in Germany.”;

- ◆ Gather literature on the subject of peace and conscientious objection to send to men and women in the armed forces who are thinking about becoming a C.O. (again, contact Susan Mark Landis to be put on a list for this);
- ◆ Give financial assistance to counseling organizations, like the Mennonite Counseling Network (part of the G.I. Rights Hotline), which offer expert advice on many subjects to soldiers and have counseled many C.O.s;
- ◆ Provide pro-bono legal counsel for C.O.s when they must appear before courts to prove their sincerity;
- ◆ Befriend families of C.O.s by offering to help with housework or inviting them for meals;
- ◆ Offer a job to a C.O. for whom it can be difficult to find work after giving up the military as a career; provide other monetary assistance, when possible, either with small gifts or in larger ways that will help with schooling or medical bills;
- ◆ Do the work of gathering records from a C.O.'s school/s, places of employment, etc. to help them with the paper trail they must provide to support their C.O. claim;
- ◆ Send Christian audiovisual material to C.O.s to help them keep up their spirits;
- ◆ Hold the military accountable for good and responsible treatment of C.O.s according to their own military standards;
- ◆ Pray for the C.O.s and for their families;
- ◆ Follow the stories of C.O.s; a great source is the online newsletter *Courage to Resist* (<http://www.couragetoresist.org/x/>).

OPTING OUT OF THE MILITARY

Children & Youth

Federal public law 107-110, Section 9528 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (i.e. the "No Child Left Behind Act") requires school districts to release student names, addresses, and phone numbers to military recruiters upon their request. Students are then called at home by recruiters and pressured to join the military. The law also requires the school district to notify students of their right to Opt Out from this. Students have the RIGHT to request that their private information NOT be released to military recruiters and others, and this may be done by completing the Opt Out Form (one per student) [http://www.pccy.org/opt_out.htm] and giving it to their school's principal or school administrator. Verify this request at the beginning of each school year.

Young Men Turning 18

The law requires that every male must register for the

draft within a 60 day period, beginning 30 days prior to his 18th birthday. At present there is no actual draft, but one could be instituted at any time by Congress. The government presents draft registration as a low or no risk proposition -- a rite of passage to adulthood, like getting a driver's license. The Selective Service System even sends out reminder notices in the form of a birthday card to lists of young people purchased from state driver's license bureaus and commercial agencies that market products to young people.

There is no legal procedure for "registering as a conscientious objector." Some people register for selective service but place messages stating their opposition to war in the margins. It should be understood that this is a form of protest and does not necessarily have any legal significance later if an application is made for a deferment or exemption if/when a draft is instituted.

The maximum penalties for non-registration are stiff (prison and/or a fine), although current government policy is not to prosecute people accused of failing to register for the draft. However, the SSS will deny federal and state benefits (such as financial aid for college, certain government jobs, and participation in federally-funded job training programs) in perpetuity to non-registrants. In many states, you cannot get a driver's license without registering, and this at the age of 16! The risks associated with not registering are obvious: possible prosecution or the loss of benefits. On the other hand, persons who register may find it more difficult to avoid the draft later. There is a helpful worksheet available at: <http://www.centeronconscience.org/publications/draftpdf/basic.pdf> [last few pages] that can help young people sort out their beliefs about war.

The Mennonite Church has established a fund to help nonregistrants receive financial aid for college (<http://peace.mennolink.org/safnr.html>). The Fund for Education and Training also provides financial assistance to persons who have been denied benefits because they have not registered for the draft (<http://www.centeronconscience.org/publications/draftpdf/feat.pdf>).



RESOURCES & WEB LINKS

by **Anne M. Yoder**

A lot has been done by many groups and organizations to provide information and updates on conscientious objection, draft registration, and opting out:

- ◆ Youth Peace Resources, Mennonite Church USA (<http://peace.mennolink.org/youth/draft.html>)
- ◆ Conscientious Objection -- Ask A Vet, Mennonite Central Committee (<http://www.mcc.org/ask-a-vet>)
- ◆ Youth and Militarism, American Friends Service Committee (<http://www.afsc.org/youthmil/>)
- ◆ Military Out of Our Schools Program, CCCO (<http://www.objector.org/recruiting.html>) for blogs, youth myspace and youtube, posters, and much else, including links to recruitment myths
- ◆ Youth and CounterMilitarism Program, War Resisters League (<http://www.warresisters.org/youth/>)
- ◆ Coalition Against Militarism Of Our Schools (<http://www.militaryfreeschools.org>)
- ◆ Committee Opposed to Militarism and the Draft (<http://www.comdsd.org/>)
- ◆ The GI Rights Hotline (<http://www.girightshotline.org/>)
- ◆ Quaker House [counsels GIs re: conscientious objection] (<http://www.quakerhouse.org>)
- ◆ Military Counseling Network [counsels GIs re: conscientious objection] (<http://www.getting-out.de/>)
- ◆ DVD "Before You Enlist" by AFSC and Veterans for Peace (<http://www.beforeyouenlist.org>)
- ◆ DVD "Sir! No, Sir!" tells the story of thousands of GIs who resisted the Vietnam war
- ◆ Opt-Out information and form, posted by Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth (http://www.pccy.org/opt_out.htm)
- ◆ Alaska Draft Resistance (<http://www.draftresistance.org/index.php>)
- ◆ Center on Conscience and War (<http://www.centeronconscience.org/>)
- ◆ Iraq Veterans Against the War (<http://www.ivaw.org/>)
- ◆ Soldier, Say No! (<http://www.peacehost.net/ssn/>)
- ◆ Campus Antiwar Network (<http://www.campusantiwar.net/>)
- ◆ Books on conscientious objection are available from the Swarthmore College Peace Collection through inter-library loan (see the catalog at <http://tripod.brynmaur.edu/>); the SCPC has what is probably the largest archival collection in the world on the subject of conscientious objection (for more information, see <http://www.swarthmore.edu/Library/peace/index.htm> [choose SCPC Resources on Conscientious Objection])

Note: This newsletter is available online at <http://www.swarthmore.edu/library/peace/conscientiousobjection/co%20website/pages/CONewsletterOpenOffice.pdf>. The links shared throughout this newsletter are also posted online at <http://efpjc.ppjr.org/milco.htm>



Images used in newsletter:

- page 1: C.O.s condemned to death during WWI (sentences later commuted to prison terms)
 - page 2: Card announcing meeting to press for amnesty for political prisoners, including conscientious objectors, ca. 1920s
 - page 3: A CPSer who took part in starvation experiments as a human guinea pig, 1940s
 - page 4: Button declaring Mennonite draft resistance, ca. 1980-1981
 - page 5- & 7: anti-recruitment cartoons, 1980s
 - page 8: logo of the Mennonite Church
- images on pages 1-4 are the property of the Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, PA*