



a pamphlet about
CONSCRIPTION
the COUNSELOR
and the CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR



American Friends Service Committee

HISTORY

From the foundation of this country the right of conscience has been fundamental. The Declaration of Independence declared that man was endowed by his Creator with certain inalienable rights. The Constitution has as its first amendment the guarantee of free exercise of religion. Every federal militia law or draft law from the country's founding has recognized the right of conscientious objection — sometimes giving absolute, sometimes qualified exemption. Virtually every state constitution protects the right of conscience. Quakers, Mennonites, Brethren, and many others have long been recognized as sincere war objectors. It is estimated at the present time that there are over 300,000 pacifists in the United States; Great Britain has an even higher proportion; the European continent has a considerable number of war resisters, and Asian religions have produced this generation's outstanding pacifists. A list of pacifists in America would include almost every vocation and profession.

The present Selective Service law provides non-combatant or civilian service for sincere conscientious objectors. All other grounds of deferment are supposed to be considered first. This law reflects the decision of the U. S. Supreme Court that "in the domain of conscience there is a moral power higher than the state."

—Prof. Harrop A. Freeman,
Cornell University, College of Law

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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THE LAW

The draft law makes provision for conscientious objectors in Section 6(j) of the Universal Military Training and Service Act, as amended:

"Nothing contained in this title shall be construed to require any person to be subject to combatant training and service in the armed forces of the United States who, by reason of religious training and belief, is conscientiously opposed to participation in war in any form. Religious training and belief in this connection means an individual's belief in a relation to a Supreme Being involving duties superior to those arising from any human relation, but does not include essentially political, sociological, or philosophical views or a merely personal moral code."

The Act also defines the service the conscientious objector shall perform: "Any persons claiming exemption from combatant training and service because of such conscientious objections whose claim is sustained by the local board shall, if he is inducted into the armed forces under this title, be assigned to noncombatant service as defined by the President, or shall, if he is found to be conscientiously opposed to participation in such noncombatant service, in lieu of such induction, be ordered by his local board, subject to such regulations as the President may prescribe, to perform for a period equal to the period prescribed in section 4(b) such civilian work contributing to the maintenance of the national health, safety, or interest as the local board may deem appropriate."

THE COUNSELOR

The vocational counselor should consider military service as an occupation. He has a professional responsibility to provide his clients with full and adequate information about military occupations resulting from the draft law.

Robert Hoppock, professor of education at New York University, advises counselors as follows:

"The head of enlisted classification in the U. S. Navy has said in print that 'it is not the place of civilian counselors to augment the recruiting forces of the Armed Services.' Nor is it the function of the counselor to dissuade the client who proposes to enlist. Neither patriotism nor pacifism justifies the counselor in substituting his values for the client's values. Nor can the counselor escape his responsibility for helping his client to get ALL the pertinent facts before the client decides what to do.

"Current practice in counseling on military occupations leaves much to be desired, because so much of it is based upon information received from or presented by recruiting officers, who can hardly be considered unbiased sources of information. There appears to be a feeling among some counselors that military service is now inescapable, and that any discussion of resistance to it may be unpatriotic. . . .

"In the presentation of information about military occupations, the existence of . . . conscientious objectors to war is generally ignored. If an idealistic client has some doubts about war as a means of resolving conflicts, he is likely to be reminded of his patriotic duty. But the military services do not want conscientious objectors; and the law provides alternate service opportunities for them. "

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

Conscientious objectors are those who, for reasons of conscience, are unable to participate in war and preparation for war. Their convictions may be based on religious training and belief, on philosophical, humanitarian, or political ideas, or on other ethical grounds. (Note, however, that the present draft law recognizes only conscientious objection based on religious training and belief.) Conscientious objectors come from every sect and denomination. Some claim no church affiliation. Some are agnostic or profess no religious belief. They come from all walks of life. They are ordinary people. During World War II, 12,000 COs performed civilian tasks in Civilian Public Service; at least 25,000 served as noncombatants in the military; and another 6,000 failed to secure recognition and served prison sentences.

The point at which conscientious objectors draw the line of cooperation with the government varies. Many will perform noncombatant duty in the military. These men are usually assigned to the Army to perform various medical services. On grounds of conscience they cannot kill, but they are willing to assist the wounded. They wear the uniform and are treated as other soldiers.

A second group consists of conscientious objectors who will cooperate with the draft law, but cannot conscientiously perform any military duty. They are, however, willing to perform civilian work of national importance if called by their draft boards. Approximately 13,000 men have served in mental and general hospitals, social and settlement house work, teaching, civil service jobs, and other public services performing work under civilian direction.

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A third group of conscientious objectors, small in numbers, is often referred to as the non-cooperators. Some may refuse to register for the draft; some will register, but refuse to cooperate further with draft procedures. They act openly and do not seek to avoid the consequence of their conscientious convictions. They expect to suffer imprisonment rather than violate their conscience. The position of the non-cooperator is the least understood by the general public, but that does not mean that it is any less sincere.

THE CHALLENGE

The implications of the decisions of the English Tribunals for conscientious objectors are immense. They mean literally that it is recognized that the final judgment on participation in any war should be made not by the state, but by the individual. . . . It is a revolutionary acceptance of the right of the individual within the most totalitarian form which a state can assume, the state mobilized for war.

The significance of this is greater because we are living in a period when generally the power of the state is growing. . . . This widened sphere of the state may be deadly to personal liberty unless the rights of the individual are protected and asserted.

—Fenner Brockway, Member of Parliament,
(London, 1949)

AVAILABLE MATERIALS

The following materials are some of the major items available from any of the offices listed on the following page. Much additional material is also available.

ALTERNATIVES TO MILITARY SERVICE

A nontechnical introductory folder on conscientious objection, especially helpful for the high school student.

THE DRAFT LAW AND YOUR CHOICES

A somewhat longer statement on conscientious objection, describing in some detail choices, procedures and sources of help.

HANDBOOK FOR CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

The most comprehensive and authoritative single guide to the legal requirements and procedures under the present draft law.
Price: \$1

STATEMENTS OF RELIGIOUS BODIES ON THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR

A compilation of statements from most religious groups.
Price 50¢

ALTERNATIVES

A 24-minute, 16 mm film on conscientious objectors, describing choices and portraying kinds of alternative work. Rental: \$7.50

FOR AGES 10 TO ADULT

A 16-minute, 16 mm film on the military draft. Shows the draft as part of a life process that begins with children's games, and raises questions on the impact of the draft upon society. Rental price on request.

AVAILABLE SERVICES

Counseling conscientious objectors has its specialized aspects. Conscientious objectors need to talk over their beliefs. They need factual information on the draft law. They need to know their rights and responsibilities. They need help in finding civilian service, in lieu of military service, that fits their qualifications and interests. They may need referral to competent legal counsel.

Most of all those interested in conscientious objection need help in knowing their minds and deciding which course of action is right for them, regardless of what their peers and society say.

The following agencies maintain complete CO services and are competent to handle any problems that may arise. The services are free and nonsectarian. Either a counselor or a person interested in conscientious objection may visit or write.

American Friends Service Committee
160 N. 15th Street, Philadelphia, Pa. 19102

Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors
2006 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pa. 19103

or

514 Mission Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94105

National Service Board of Religious Objectors
550 Washington Bldg.
15th Street & New York Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20005

Or any American Friends Service Committee Regional Office:

BALTIMORE, MD. 21218
32 W. 25th St.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS. 02138
44-A Brattle St. (Box 247)

CHICAGO, ILL. 60605
431 S. Dearborn St.

DAYTON, OHIO 45406
915 Salem Ave.

DES MOINES, IOWA 50312
4211 Grand Ave.

HIGH POINT, N.C. 27261
1818 S. Main St. (Box 1791)

NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10003
15 Rutherford Place

PASADENA, CALIF. 91103
980 N. Fair Oaks
(Box 991 - Code 91102)

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF. 94121
2160 Lake St.

SEATTLE, WASH. 98105
814 N.E. 40th St.