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Conscientious Objector Service

National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors

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April 15, 1976

Dear Friend,

I'm probably new to you, so I'd like to share a bit about myself before going further.

My home was a midwestern farm until I was 21 and Selective Service wrenched me away. After some unique and colorful struggle with the system - appeals, FBI investigation - my CO classification finally came through.

My claim was not recognized until after I experienced some unusual procedures like being called to stand naked for a hearing before a room full of military officers. Questioning like this finally pushed me to articulate a resistance position. "Would you go to prison rather than wear a military uniform?" "yes!"

Now, my wife, Ruth, and I have four children, one of whom is a sophomore in college. Not only must she and our others face the military's pervasive invasion of our society, but right now we are struggling with her over the question "Where do I go from here?"

Mary asks a good question, a question that speaks not only for her but for a sizeable part of an entire generation. People from around the country contact NISBCO, and I observe that a high percentage of them are where our daughter is - searching - where to from here?

Should all this really surprise us? A generation of hot and cold war, of "managed" economy, and channeled youth has left us in shambles. And what Mary might explain away as "Sophomore Syndrome" has all of us in its grasp.

The military is trying to channel our youth by capitalizing on their uncertainties. And, contrary to what some have said, the draft is not destroyed. It has merely been slipped back into the holster. The draft law (unless repealed) is permanent legislation.

As the draft was put on "deep standby," serious discussion of universal (compulsory) national service for young men and young women as the logical next step was begun immediately. If something like this happens, what should Mary do?

NISBCO is one of the few agencies prepared to help a young person see what compulsory service and the option of a stint in the military really mean. Many who turn to us for help are already in and are filing claims for discharge as COs.

Before Mary completed high school, military recruiters got her

name, address and who knows what other information from the school. Recruitment mail became frequent fare in our box. I can testify that this all seems pretty real when it's happening to you.

I am pleased to be able to report that our Board and Consultative Council members are sensitive to concerns like these. They have unanimously adopted a statement of opposition to invasion of our schools by the military. Not only are we on the staff to let Mary and her friends know about this but to let our nation's policymakers know.

Our Board, knowing that hearings on the future of Selective Service were planned for early this year, asked that testimony be presented calling for complete dismantling of the Selective Service System. We are one of the very few agencies presenting such testimony.

The immediate effect of dismantling the draft machinery on Mary and her friends may be rather obvious, but how about the fate of an amendment now much alive in Congress calling for an increase of over 50% in the number of ROTC units allowed in our high schools? Junior ROTC is not going to affect Mary directly right now, but, if she should happen to become a teacher, a counselor, a parent

Mary isn't a candidate for amnesty, but she knows how important that subject is. She knows that amnesty information and counsel are vital parts of our work. She knows that deep wounds in our national life will fester until universal unconditional amnesty comes.

Ours is one of the few national agencies dealing solely with the "people" concerns in the area of conscience and militarism. Our services are made possible only by the generous support of persons like yourself. No charges are made for any of our staff services. Your contributions to NISBCO are tax deductible.*

Sincerely,
Warren W. Hoover
Warren W. Hoover

P. S.: Let us help you keep current on vital conscience and militarism concerns. See our special offers for THE REPORTER FOR CONSCIENCE' SAKE.

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