



The Center on
Conscience & War

The Reporter for Conscience' Sake

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Cannon Fodder for Peace?

By Rick Jankow

During the days of the anti-Vietnam War movement, I remember hearing of a tactic that some people used to try to bring home to the public how completely twisted our values had become. As I recall, a news release and fliers would be circulated inviting people to gather at a specific time and place to witness a live animal (usually a dog) being immolated with homemade napalm. Immediately, there would be vigorous debate and loud outcry against the idea of such cruelty. Then, at the appointed time and place, fliers would be handed out to the media and any outraged individuals who showed up, telling them that there would be no immolation of a dog, and that the purpose of the hoax was to demonstrate how hypocritical it was for the public to be so completely incensed by such an act while the same thing was being done everyday, in our name, to men, women and children in Southeast Asia. The hope was that this lesson would turn more people against the war.

I'm reminded of this by the proposal to bring back the draft introduced on January 7 by Representative Charles Rangel (D-NY) — only in this case, he's essentially promising to place our sons and daughters, instead of a dog, in harm's way in order to make a similar point. Another difference is that, even though his proposal doesn't have a chance of passing right now, Rangel is serious about it and is not declaring it a hoax.

Titled the "Universal National Service Act of 2003," Rangel's bill would require that all males and females between the ages of 18 and 26 perform two years of "service." The Pentagon would have first dibs on draftees, and anyone not needed by the military would be assigned to a civilian job that, "as determined by the President, promotes the national

(cont. on page 5, as *Cannon Fodder*)

WOMEN REFUSERS IN ISRAEL

by Jen Flament

Israeli women find themselves in a unique position. Israel is the only country worldwide in which women are drafted into the armed forces. Yet, unlike men, women's right to avoid military service because of their beliefs is officially recognized by the military. Even so, information on exemption is not easily obtained. In some cases, women have been harassed and humiliated before being told about their right to present a case to the Conscience Committee, the Israeli equivalent of Selective Service draft boards.

Upon receiving their deferment, many are stigmatized and excluded. Refuser Danya Vaknin describes her occasional doubts

about her decision to refuse:

"The price of resistance is high. I've lost most of my friends. My friends are in the army now. They can't talk to me without getting angry or without dealing with a lot of emotions."

While many women accept

(cont. on page 6, *Women Refusers*)

Israeli objectors continue to say...

"There is a Limit"

by Bill Galvin

In early April, the Center joined with the Refuser Solidarity Network and others to sponsor public forums with Ishai Menuchin, one of the founders of Yesh Gvul ("There is a Limit.") Yesh Gvul is the first Israeli soldier group to publicly refuse to serve in the occupied territories. Ishai emphasized the importance of distinguishing between the government of Israel and the Israeli people and encouraged his audiences to support the Israeli Peace Block.

Ishai told of the terror his unit caused a poor Palestinian family and the humiliation brought upon the head of the household by other soldiers who almost killed him, only to discover he was not the man they had been sent to arrest. He was a young soldier at the time, "I didn't understand then, as I do now, the brutal reality of occupation. I couldn't sleep. Why hadn't I intervened? I questioned my decency." He decided he would not do it any more. "I was in prison, but the alternative would have been morally unacceptable to me." 2000 Israeli soldiers joined Yesh Gvul, over 160 went to jail.

Yesh Gvul is one of four

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Pax Christi

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News Briefs

On 16 March, J. Daryl Byler, the director of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) U.S. Washington Office, completed a 40-day **fast for peace**. He wrote daily letters to the President during the fast, urging him to turn away from war. The letters are posted on the web at www.mcc.org/peace/fast, along with "An open letter to my children on the eve of war." Written to his children, the letter reflects what Byler learned during the forty days and his hopes for the future.

Serbian conscientious objector Milan Gligoric fled from the barracks and went into hiding on 12 April. Gligoric, a Jehovah's Witness from Ljubovija, says he's prepared to perform alternative service. He is not, however, ready to accept what they've offered him: an unarmed service position in the military economic institutions of the Yugoslav Army. He was called up on 4 March, where he explained his position and started the CO application. Under Serbian & Montenegro law "no one is obliged to fulfill military duties or any other duty that involves the use of arms if this is contrary to one's beliefs." Gligoric was ordered to stay in the barracks until his alternative service application was approved. He was given the option of leaving only if he would say the military oath. Of course, **he refused to take the oath**. They informed him the process would take seven days. 11 April marked one month. Gligoric left the barracks on 12 April and is waiting to hear that alternative service is available, then, he says, he will return. If caught, Gligoric could be charged with desertion and could face jail time.

An updated version of the Refuser Solidarity Network's website (www.refusersolidarity.net) shows an increased number of refusers in Israel. The count, from **Yesh Gvul (There is a Limit)**, is up to 1104 Israeli refusers. The website (www.refusersolidarity.net) also says that 15 refusers are presently in jail and 245 high school seniors have made statements that they will not serve the occupation. There are also 526 reservists who've signed the "Combatant's Letter", saying they will not fight if called up.

On 8 December 2002, the New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) approved a **Minute on Registration for Selective Service**. Within the Minute, the meeting states, "we view with alarm the expansion and increasing severity of state and federal measures to penalize non-registrants who are conscientious objectors." They are sending out a widespread invitation to religious and interfaith groups around the country, to consider how they may be called to bear witness to the free exercise of religion and the human right of conscientious objection.

German total objector (objector to military and Germany's equivalent to alternative service) Florian Quellmalz went to "his" barracks recently, and was arrested. He had been called up for military service and was expected to begin his service yesterday. The length of the first arrest is not yet known. The usual practice is that the first arrest is for 7 days followed by one arrest of 14 days, and two to three arrests of 21 days. After that, a total objector is usually discharged from the military, and his case is transferred to the prosecution service. A trial at a civilian criminal court will then follow, for "disobeying orders" or "refusing to serve."

On 11 April refusers and COs of all hues, along with members of many groups in solidarity with their ongoing struggle, gathered in procession around a park in Tel-Aviv. The crowd of more than 1500 came together in **protest of the Israeli occupation of Palestine**. They waved their signs and banners at the gawking motorists. Their signs, in Hebrew and Arabic read: "Occupation is terror - the refuser is the true hero", "The Army puts conscience behind bars", "I refuse to serve in the occupation army and to buy settlement products." A "distinctive group of Druze from the Galilee, parents of imprisoned refusers" came in numbers carrying signs with themes like, "My son will not serve in an army of occupation." A call was made, from the podium, to the prison where four soldiers, three from the UK and one from the US are being held for their refusal to fight in Iraq. Many different speakers and popular singer Aviv Gefen were there to support the cause.

CENTER BLESSED WITH MANY NEEDED AND APPRECIATED VOLUNTEERS

New FEAT Administrator

The Center welcomes Linda Swanson, the new administrator of the FEAT (Fund for Education And Training) program. FEAT is a fund set up to assist conscientious objectors who refuse to register, thereby losing federal, and some state, financial aid for school. Linda lives with her husband Neil in Reston, VA, where they have their own consulting business. She is active in the peace movement and spends her spare time volunteering with a neighborhood association as a CASA (Court-Appointed Special Advocate) in Fairfax County. Linda has been coming to the office about three days a week.

CCW as a Senior Project

Christopher Richmond, 18, a senior from Westtown School joined the CCW staff for a brief two-week internship this February. Westtown, a Quaker boarding school near Philadelphia, has a decades-long practice of letting seniors gain life experience from a two week "senior project" right before spring vacation.

"The time I spent at CCW taught me a lot about the impact a small group of highly dedicated people can have on untold numbers of other people," Christopher wrote at the end of his time. "Whether they're counseling military personnel on the GI Rights Hotline, sending out literature to people who want to help out, doing draft counselor training on the weekend, giving interviews to reporters or lobbying congressional representatives, the staff here works long, hard hours, and they were inspirational to me in their perseverance."

A Note From Daniel

Hello, my name is Daniel Davis and I am joining the Center on Conscience & War for the week of April 13, to help fulfill the community service requirements to graduate from my High School. I am a senior at Woodrow Wilson SHS in Washington D.C. and will be attending The University of Wisconsin-Madison starting next fall, where I will be studying Computer Science and Business. I am happy to be helping out, and look forward to working with everyone in the office.

CNN or CCW?

Joanne Kumekawa joins CCW as a volunteer once a week. She is a member of Friends Meeting of Washington (Quakers), and finds her time better spent in front of a computer at CCW than watching CNN reporting on Baghdad. "I am grateful for the opportunity to do something at a time when I feel very helpless about the war and our Administration's policies."

Please Help Support Young Israeli Refuser!

As the numbers of refusers in Israel continue to grow, the number of those imprisoned grow as well. We recently received a letter from Yoel Perlman, an Israeli high school senior who has been called to participate in the Israeli army. He forwarded us a carbon copy of the letter that he sent to Shaul Mofaz, the Minister of Defense of Israel. The letter eloquently states his pacifist views and how he cannot, in good conscience, be a part of Israel's military force. He nobly requests to perform alternative service, which is, unfortunately, not an option in Israel. Perlman will, in all likelihood, be imprisoned. The Center is calling for letters of support to be sent to Perlman at:

----- Yoel Perlman
Rehov Nordau 15/2
Kfar Saba 44391
Israel
Further, let's remind the Israeli government that the rest of the world does not support their treatment of COs. Fax, email, and/or write to Shaul Mofaz, the Minister of Defense of Israel at:

Mr. Shaul Mofaz
Minister of Defence, Ministry of Defence
37 Kaplan Street,
Tel-Aviv 61909, Israel
E-mail: sar@mod.gov.il or pnio@mod.gov.il
Fax: ++972-3-696-27-57 / ++972-3-691-69-40 / ++972-3-691-79-15

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS IS LOOKING FOR STORIES OF VETERANS. WE WANT TO GIVE THEM STORIES OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS!

Have you...

- Participated in alternative service during any of the recent wars (WWII or after)?
- Been released from the military with a CO discharge?
- Become a CO following your term of service?

**Please call now to get your story into the
Library of Congress Veterans History Project!**

1-916-716-4908

(Ask for Robin Aurelius)

Israeli Objectors cont. from page 1

major refuser groups currently in Israel. They talk to soldiers about international law, war crimes and the Geneva Convention. They tell others, “decent people don’t commit war crimes.”

He said, “We take our commitment to democratic principles seriously. It’s not an easy stance with buses exploding and suicide bombers, but we refuse to participate in the repression of Palestinians.”

The resistance is having an impact on Israel. He said that for every person who is sent to jail there are 10 others who told their command that if they were ordered, they would refuse to go. And for every one of those, there are many who feel the same way but don’t want to take a risk. Many other Israelis evade the draft legally, i.e. exaggerate a medical condition, or leave the country at the time they are called up (a legal option under Israeli law.)

Ishai’s testimony was compelling and powerful. During the question and answer period he fielded many questions with wit and charm. Some of the questions were rather hostile, but the way he responded modeled the peaceful world he seeks.

There were two important messages left for us. One is that peace between Israel and Palestine must be based on the future - not the past. Ishai reflected, “the only question on the table now is how do we finish this - where do we go from here and how can we live together?” The US has an important role in pushing (he said, “forcing”) Israel and Palestine to start talking with each other. And we need to call for our government to push for these ends.

The other thing he said was that it is important to support people in this country who refuse to be part of a war they consider unjust. He said having a support network was important for himself, and others, to be able to take the stand they took. It is important to not feel you’re facing the odds alone.



Israeli peace camp leader Ishai Menuchin: “We have an epidemic of back pains. People are going to psychiatrists, they are going to their doctors... All of these are people who do not want to serve in the occupied territories.” (photo Dave Gravel)

Combat Calls for Conscience Conscientious Objectors in Today’s War

By Bill Galvin The Center has been in the news quite a bit recently, from the New York Times and USA Today, to religious publications, and numerous radio interviews and talk shows. While many questions have focused on the possibility of the draft and what we expect in that regard, the majority ask about people in the military who are saying no to the war in Iraq.

Much attention has been given to Stephen Funk who sought sanctuary in an Episcopal Church in March and held a press conference before turning himself over to Marine authorities. Press outlets throughout the country called him the first conscientious objector to the war in Iraq. Of course he wasn’t the first, he is just the first to receive significant attention from the media. More than a month before that, Michael Sudbury held a press conference to announce his refusal to deploy. Because the military discharged him immediately, the media didn’t give him anywhere near the attention that Stephen Funk received.

So what do we tell the press? We tell them that prior to 11 September, 2001 we received one or two calls a month from conscientious objectors seeking discharge from the military. In recent months we’ve been receiving two or three calls a day from such people. And in response to the inevitable question, “It’s an all volunteer military why did they join?” we explain that to get discharged as a conscientious objector your beliefs must have changed since you joined the military. Most folks in this situation have no difficulty pointing to something in their military experience that caused their beliefs to change.

Stephen Funk was interviewed on the Today Show on 1 April. During that interview he said all of the things that we typically hear from conscientious objectors. He publicly testified to the things that we’ve been telling reporters. He talked about realizing he had problems with the military while he was in training, but he didn’t know what he could do about the situation he found himself in. He talked to a military chaplain trying to make sense out of his experiences based on his religious convictions and was told to just stick with it and he would get used to it. He talked about continuing to feel uneasy about being a part of the Marines, and when he got his orders to go to war he knew he couldn’t do it.

Stephen’s story is familiar to those of us who do this work. But the things we hear from COs that caused them to say they can no longer perform their duties in the military vary, depending on their experiences. One of the conscientious objectors we’re currently working with was called up and stationed in southern Manhattan after 9-11 to guard the World Trade Center site. That put him face-to-face with the realities of war

(cont. on page 7, as *Military COs*)

Prisoners of Conscience

Finnish total objectors jailed for their beliefs

By Tim Showalter

Nokia mobile-phones, snow, Santa Claus... Believe it or not, Finland is home to more than well known icons of technological advancement and Christmas. Each year more than 60 Finnish conscientious objectors are sentenced to 5-6 months in jail for refusing to take part in conscription. Finland's neglect of the conscientious objector's rights has made them the only European Union country in which Amnesty International says there are prisoners of conscience.

All young men are called up to "annual enrollment", where about 80% of the 17-18 year olds register for military service. About 10% are excused on medical grounds, and about 7% choose alternative service. Alternative service is unpopular for a few reasons. Persons who choose alternative service are required to serve 395 days, over twice that of the required time if one chooses the military. The "annual enrollment" events, organized by military officials, often don't meet their requirements of offering information about alternative service. If one does obtain the information and is willing to overlook the punitive length of alternative service, there are other obstacles. Much of the time, alternative servants are forced to find their own place to work. And sometimes, when there are too many servants for the provided workplaces, the servants are made to stay in the alternative service training sites for their full 13 months. Additionally, the hosting organizations have historically done a shoddy job of finding housing, insurance, and other required necessities for the servants.

The option of alternative (cont. on page 6, as Finnish COs)

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Quotes from our Combatants

"I had such an idealistic image of the Marines -- the brotherhood and all that. But this is so much [nonsense], I just can't believe it. I didn't want it to turn out this way. [Rather than get the medical discharge that I'm entitled to], I'll just take the OTH [(other than honorable discharge)] and be done with it."

-enlisted person, 7 April '03

"The weapon was heavy, like a brick in my hands. I knew that I could never use that gun to inflict pain upon another human being. I was planning on being a tattoo artist, now that is out of the question too, because it manifests pain."

- private, 14 April '03

"And after he told me that, I took my nameplates out of my pocket and I said, 'this is what I think about you and your military' - and I took my nameplates and dropped them to the floor."

- private, 14 April '03

Cannon Fodder... cont. from page 1

defense, including national or community service and homeland security." A similar bill was introduced in the Senate on January 9 by Senator Ernest Hollings (D-SC).

Rangel, who is generally regarded as a strong peace and justice advocate in Congress, gives several justifications for bringing back the draft that are very flawed or contradictory. He says we need a draft because "a disproportionate number of the poor and members of minority groups make up the enlisted ranks of the military, while most privileged Americans are underrepresented or absent." He also notes that members of the U.S. Congress have very few sons or daughters in the military, yet a Congressional majority voted to authorize war in Iraq. Rangel says, "I believe that if those calling for war knew that their children were likely to be required to serve — and to be placed in harm's way — there would be more caution and a greater willingness to work with the international community in dealing with Iraq."

Basically, Rangel is implying that: (1) a draft would make U.S. combat forces more representative of society as a whole; and (2) having more middle-class and affluent young people in the military would compel greater opposition to war.

But Rangel has his facts wrong. The draft has never made the pool of people used in combat more representative. In past drafts, better educated men and those with more money were able to use their resources to increase their chances of being deferred or exempted, and even though some of the past draft loopholes that were exploited have been eliminated, people with better education and financial advantages will still find it easier to secure conscientious objector status and be able to document claims for medical deferments. Those in this more privileged category who don't manage to stay out of the military entirely will be more likely to get less risky noncombat jobs, especially in the more technological military of today. The poorer kids who don't have private doctors' letters and x-rays to submit, or who never got a college education, will wind up disproportionately in the infantry.

With regard to the draft acting as a brake against war, there is no historical evidence to support Rangel's theory. The U.S. had a draft in place before both the Korean and Vietnam wars, and it didn't keep us out of those conflicts. Indeed, it was the blank check for cannon fodder provided by the draft that enabled the U.S. to wage a 10-year war in Southeast Asia that left millions of people dead or injured. Rangel gives another puzzling reason for bringing back the draft. He says we need it because "war against Iraq will severely strain military resources already burdened by a growing number of obligations. . . . The administration has yet to address the question of whether our military is of sufficient strength and size to meet present and future commitments." So, first Rangel argues that we need a draft to inhibit military adventurism and war, then, in almost the same breath, he says we need it to ensure that we have the resources to pursue military expansion and fight a war with Iraq. Clearly, Rangel is not thinking consistently.

Fundamentally, though, Rangel is really basing his strategy on the belief that by jeopardizing (cont. on page 6 as Cannon Fodder)

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service is available during peace time, however, if Finland were to be involved in a war, things could change. There are no provisions for CO rights within the war time regulations. The decision of how to punish or not punish an objector during a war would be left up to the "Defense Staff" (the headquarters of the Finnish Army). This could mean that a conscientious objector could be forced to bear arms or face harsh penalties for non-cooperation. In WWII it happened: Arndt Pekurinen, a CO, was executed for refusing to carry a weapon.

People resist conscription in Finland every year. Some do it in protest against the compulsory conscription; others do it to protest the systematic unfairness of the Finnish alternative service. The conscientious objectors in Finland are generally sentenced to half of their service time in jail, up to 197 days.

As of now, Jehovah's Witnesses are the only group granted CO status by the state, giving Witnesses the option of exempting both military and alternative service. There is no room, unfortunately for non-religious COs to be heard, much less recognized.

To find out more about Finnish objectors and ways that you can help, contact For Mother Earth: www.motherearth.org or email kirsi@motherearth.org

their exemption quietly, others have been creative and controversial. Women have organized vigils and fasts to support their husbands, sons and friends who have been imprisoned and harassed for their beliefs. Some have begun speaking tours, educating the world about the conditions for conscientious objectors in Israel. Numerous women have resisted conscription, with estimates suggesting that up to 40% of women do not enlist.

Several groups have emerged to support women refusers and conscientious objectors. New Profile, a feminist group founded in 1999, has been instrumental in helping young women present themselves before the Conscience Committee and in raising awareness. Shministim, or the Israeli Youth Refusal Movement, has also been very inclusive of women. The students, numbering over 300 between the ages of 15 to 18, have published two open letters to Prime Minister Sharon announcing their refusal to "be soldiers for the occupation."

While female conscientious objectors are theoretically recognized, many still find themselves in difficult situations in need of support. Until Israel fully recognizes the rights of conscientious objectors, male and female, objectors will continue to face harassment, imprisonment and social ostracism.

For more information about women refusers and objectors, check out:

- www.wri-irg.org
- www.newprofile.org/english
- www.shministim.org/english



PEACE NOT WAR CD

This 2 CD set produced in London was compiled not-for-profit to inform and inspire music listeners and to raise funds for action of peace all over the world.

You can buy the set from CCW for \$15! Send a clearly marked check payable to the Center on Conscience & War for \$15 and we'll send you this quality compilation. (Free Shipping!)



- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| CD 1 | CD 2 |
| Ani DiFranco | Ms Dynamite |
| Sleater-Kinney | Roots Manuva |
| Public Enemy | Alabama 3 |
| Billy Bragg | The Mark of Cain |
| Midnight Oil | John Lester |
| Chumbawamba | GM Babyz |
| DJ DisOrientalist | Torben & Joe |
| Asian Dub Foundation | -with Ken Livingstone |
| -with Tariq Ali Life | Nitin Sawhney |
| Seize the Day | Fun<da>mental |
| Cross | SuparNovar |
| Change The Unpeople | Laszlo Beckett |
| -with John Pilger | Pok & the Spacegoats |
| Slovo | Stephan Smith |
| Yo La Tengo | -with Pete Seeger & DJ Spooky |
| | Saul Williams -with Coldcut |
| | Sia |
| | Massive Attack |
| | Bindi Blacher |

THE REBIRTH OF PROTEST MUSIC!

Cannon Fodder... cont. from page 5

more people's children (including kids of parents who are already antiwar), he will stimulate the necessary outrage to stop a war (i.e., like threatening to immolate the dog). But even if you accept such a hostage-taking strategy in principle (which I do not), it can't work now. Congress has already authorized war against Iraq, and it would be absolutely crazy to follow that up with giving Bush a blank check for cannon fodder that would be used to pursue this and future wars!

In reality, no draft proposal introduced at the moment is going to be viable, in large part because the Pentagon doesn't want it. Since the last draft was terminated, the military establishment has made huge gains in its ability to command influence over civilian society by expanding its presence in institutions of socialization, especially schools. The draft would bring back a level of

opposition and hostility that would greatly undermine these gains. There would have to be a more severe strain on military resources than presently exists before the benefits of a draft would begin to outweigh the liabilities for the Pentagon.

On the other hand, if the military is allowed to continue expanding its influence in schools and our culture, it will condition more people to be accepting of soldiering and militarism and thus pave the way for a future draft. Unfortunately, Rangel's proposal, and his fallacious arguments that are getting a lot of airplay, are going to make this end result more likely.

What we really need, instead, is to curtail the U.S. military's size and mission, to get the Pentagon out of our civilian classrooms and schools, and to have no more talk about bringing back the draft. We need less military influence in this country, not more!

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Military COs cont. from page 4

for the first time, and he realized that he could not be a part of it. Another conscientious objector was stationed in Afghanistan last year, and while looking down the barrel of his rifle at Afghani civilians he realized that if the order came to pull the trigger, he couldn't do it. We've heard from medics, who came to the realization that the purpose of the Medical Corps is not to help people but to keep the troops in good fighting condition; those who've had a religious conversion; and MANY others who have had life changing experiences (visiting the memorial site in Nagasaki).

But the story we hear more than any other is Stephen's story, about bayonet training. Part of that training requires you to stab a dummy, while shouting kill. Trainees are required to chant things like "Blood makes the grass grow!" and there is competition to see who can be the loudest and most brutally savage in their screams for the blood. This causes many people to question what they've gotten themselves into. Even though, in the abstract, they had thought it was acceptable to fight to defend their country, when faced with this reality, they feel in their gut that it just isn't right.

The military, as of now, is handling conscientious objectors very differently during this war than they did during the first Gulf War. During the first Gulf war, military stop-loss orders prevented conscientious objectors, or anyone else, from getting discharged. If you were a conscientious objector your choices were to go to war or go to jail. Many people went to jail. Many others just didn't show, and eventually nothing happened to them. But people were not discharged and conscientious objector claims were not processed until after the war.

This time around it's very different. Even though there are stop-loss orders that would appear to mean conscientious objectors cannot be discharged, so far COs are being processed out. In almost every case when a conscientious objector whose claim was pending requested to not be deployed, that request was honored. (We are aware of a CO who was deployed over his objections. It appears to be an overly zealous command, not reflecting the overall policy.)

In the case of Michael Sudbury, mentioned above, he had been told his claim was not going to be processed, and he would be deployed. So he scheduled a press conference to announce his refusal to go. The morning of his press conference he was told he would be discharged. Even the well-publicized Stephen Funk, who expected to be punished for having publicly refused to go, is apparently being processed out with no punitive action taken against him.

It's as if the military wants to avoid a confrontation with conscientious objectors. Why? No one knows for sure, but I

have a couple of ideas. First of all, with the widespread opposition to this war, both internationally and within this country, it's as if government officials don't want folks to realize that there are also many people in the military who do not support this war. Another possibility is the tremendous impact of the Israeli refusers on Israeli society. (See article, "There is a Limit", on page 1) The government has become aware that large numbers of resisters in the military has a detrimental effect on their ability to wage war. Or possibly it's because President Bush is aware that during his father's administration, for the first time ever, Amnesty International adopted prisoners of conscience in the United States (conscientious objectors who were imprisoned for their refusal to participate in that war). It is an embarrassment to this country, which perceives itself as standing for democracy and freedom, to have the additional negative publicity of its repressive CO practices.

The fact that conscientious objectors have been treated much better so far in this war could change at any moment. And even with this improved treatment, there is still a double standard. One conscientious objector called us because she had been told she would be court martialed if she submitted her CO application. While someone can't be court martialed for submitting a CO claim, the threat is intimidating. And as mentioned above, the command has wide discretion, and could find something to bring charges about. For example, last year, a CO we were working with called us in a panic because she was being disciplined for being disrespectful to an officer. What had she done wrong? She was nice. They interpreted her niceness as sarcasm, so they could claim she showed disrespect!

Compare this treatment to what happened to military personnel in Iraq, who disobeyed the order to not raise the US flag upon taking over an area because of the negative reaction of Iraqi citizens to the perception that the US was a conquering force rather than a liberating force. Not only were these folks not disciplined, (unrest created by one such flag raising resulted in several deaths) but those who draped the US flag over the statue of Saddam Hussain in violation of these orders were made into national heroes, getting reunited with their families on national TV (the Today Show).

So even though things are going relatively well for conscientious objectors over all, there is still much room for improvement. But keeping in mind the discretion given to the command, if the political climate changes, treatment of COs may change. For example, if a quick military "victory" coupled with seeming support for the administrations policies alter the fundamental discussion about the war throughout the culture, this could also change how COs are treated. We will see what the future holds.

STOPPING WAR WHERE IT BEGINS - ORGANIZING AGAINST MILITARISM IN OUR SCHOOLS

WORKSHOPS & PRESENTATION TOPICS

Youth/Peer Organizing - Opposing JROTC Expansion
Alternatives to Joining the Military
Military Recruiting & Race, Gender, and Ethnicity
Draft Registration and Conscientious Objection

A NATIONAL CONFERENCE

June 27-29, 2003
Philadelphia, PA

WORKSHOPS & PRESENTATION TOPICS

Military Access to Student Lists - The Poverty Draft
Counter-recruitment Strategies & Legal Issues

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From the Desk of the Executive Director

“hope springs eternal in the human breast”

-- Alexander Pope

Dear Friends:

It is official: the War is over. The president announced it. The statues have toppled. Our phones are quiet for the moment. Surely the war is over.

It is true in a sense. Saddam Hussein has apparently toppled with few regrets from anyone in the world. Many people who opposed the war are now saying that it must have been a good idea since so many people are happy that Saddam Hussein is no longer in power.

We do not regret Saddam Hussein's apparent loss of power. We do regret the deaths of civilians, many of who were children; we regret the death of reporters, demonstrators and soldiers.

We do note each day that the daily number of US casualties remains the same.

And our troops continue in Afghanistan (remember?) and Kosovo (surely that was so long ago) and Somalia (wasn't that just over night? No?) Troops are in the Philippines and Yemen (they were supposed to pull out in June but are still there) and Columbia (military “advisors” like in Vietnam).

Reporter for Conscience' Sake

And a memo by Rumsfeld was leaked that indicated that he thought preemptive warfare had worked so well we should do it again.

And again.

It is over we are told.

Meanwhile, the op-ed articles and point counterpoints with increased calls by our supposed congressional friends for a draft—to make the military more fair.

The phones are quiet. We are beginning to catch up. But we are also gearing up for a new onslaught.

We can get a lot done because the war is over.

Or is it?

Yours for Peace and Justice,

J. E. McNeil



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