



The Center on  
Conscience & War

# The Reporter for Conscience' Sake

Volume 61

Fall 2004

Number 3

## Do You Feel a Draft?

### A Little History

In World War I, to be recognized by JE McNeil

as a conscientious objector (CO), the draftee had to belong to one of the historic peace churches (Quaker, Mennonite or Brethren). If you were recognized as a CO by virtue of belonging to one of those churches, your only option was to serve in the military in a non-combatant role—generally that of ambulance driver. For those who refused to serve in even that limited capacity in the military, jail was the only alternative. If you did not belong to one of those churches and you refused to serve in the military, you went to jail as well. Since the agency that was doing the drafting was the Department of War, the jail you went to was a military jail. Eighteen COs were actually given death sentences. While all of the death sentences were commuted, ironically 18 people died from the harsh treatment in the military prisons.

The Center on Conscience & War was founded by several churches in 1940 to defend and extend the rights of conscientious objectors the day after Selective Service was formed. The founding of this organization, was in, part a reaction to the mistreatment of COs during the previous war. The COs felt very strongly as they watched the beginnings of a build up towards a military draft in 1940 that three things must be different.

First, the draft should be conducted by a civilian agency rather than the military. Prior to World War One, drafts were generally conducted by the states for militias. Having the draft conducted by the military resulted in the individual being subject to military law

and punishment. There was also a concern that the military might be less willing to listen fairly to a CO claim because of the second change that was needed: to the basis of the claim itself.

The second change was to broaden the basis for a CO claim to more accurately reflect the real population of COs. No longer would membership in a particular church be required. The basis of the draftee's claim would be on his own religious belief's. This clearly was a significant change, allowing a draftee from any religious faith to claim CO status. This resulted in a significantly larger number of potential COs, but still precluded those who could not make an argument based on faith.

The third change was also far reaching: the establishment of alternative service in a civilian capacity. The churches argued to Congress, citing the CCC camps (Civilian Conservation Corp) as an example, the vastly better use of men who refused to fight would be to have them do work that would support the national interest of the country.

The entire summer of 1940 negotiations and lobbying efforts went on. The result of this effort was, the draft law was changed to reflect these three things. The Selective Service System was created to conduct the draft rather than the War Department. The definition of CO was based on the individual's sincere religious beliefs rather than his church membership. And NSBRO, the National Service Board for Religious Objectors, the first incarnation of the Center, was formed to oversee the civilian alternative service of COs during World War II beginning in the now closed CCC camps.

### The Good News

Of course, many people think we are in a similar period of build up towards a draft. Rumors are flying left and right, especially on the internet. (See *Draft*, Page 6)

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*The Reporter for Conscience' Sake* is a publication of the Center on Conscience & War.

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## News Briefs

### Italy Ends Conscription

On July 30, 2004 the Italian Parliament voted to end the military draft. The "all-volunteer" force began on January 1, 2005. However, anyone wanting to join the police, the para-military carabinieri, the customs service or the fire service will still have to serve a year in the army for a monthly salary of up to 980 euro (\$1693).

(<http://news.com.au>)

### Indonesia Plans for Military Draft

"The Indonesian government plans to draft younger citizens for military service and avoidance of the compulsory service will be punishable by two years in jail," a legislator said Tuesday.

"House of Representatives member Joko Susilo told Kyodo News a hearing on a bill on military service is set ... during which the government will 'socialize' the plan to parliamentarians to seek approval."

([www.japantoday.com](http://www.japantoday.com))

### Israeli CO Imprisoned

Yahel Avigur, who is conscientious objector to military service was sentenced on February 27, 2005 to 28 days in military prison. He was charged with refusing to wear military uniform.

Avigur made the following statement, "all I can do now is to refuse to obey any order given me, and to spend some time in prison, until the military system realizes it is unreasonable to continue my incarceration."

Avigur is due to be released on March 25, 2005.

(*War Resisters League International*)

### IRR Members Refuse Call-Up

In the fall of 2004 the Army began calling up more than 4000 formerly active duty members who are now in the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR). The New York Times mentioned, "Many of these former soldiers - some of whom say they have not trained, held a gun, worn a uniform or even gone for a jog in years - object to being sent to Iraq and Afghanistan now, after they thought they were through with life on active duty." Over 1800 of those called up requested exemptions or delays. An additional 733 never reported for a "refresher training." This further strains an already over-stretched military.

([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com))

### United Nation Quakers

In fall 2004, Rosa Packard and John Randall, both part of New York Yearly Meeting, were asked to be associated with the Quaker United Nations office in New York on matters of conscientious objection. They are both very involved in NYYM Peace Concerns Committee and they also represent Conscience and Peace Tax International. In addition, Randall and Packard helped found and are members of the working group on conscientious objection at the United Nations, which includes representatives from various peace and justice organizations.

### New Domain Name

The Center switches to a new domain name to reflect the name change that occurred in 2001.

[www.centeronconscience.org](http://www.centeronconscience.org)

## Eli Bainbridge Bids Farewell

In December Eli completed his Brethren Voluntary Service term of service with CCW. Eli is now working on a farm in rural Virginia. Eli was an active counselor on the GI Rights Hotline, edited the newsletter, and he handled the data processing needs for the Center. Eli's service and passion for the job was much appreciated.

## Michelle Williams' Goodbye



"Since I joined the office staff in February 2004, I have hardly had a dull moment inside or outside of the office! It has been an exciting year to be involved in U.S. policy and politics at the center of it all. I have immensely enjoyed counseling GIs and those facing draft registration, as well as meeting wonderful, dedicated people in various peace movements and having

opportunities for a lot of work-related travel. From the Chicago BVS retreat to the 2004 Annual Lobby Day to NNOMY (the national counter-recruitment conference) in Philadelphia to office retreat at Knoebels (PA) to speaking at a Michigan peace conference to the staff/board retreat in Maryland to the School of Americas vigil in Georgia to the Peacemaker Training Institute in Pennsylvania, it has been an amazing experience all in all!! I will surely miss this unique city and my lovely, hard-working co-workers and new friends. But all good things must end, and in March I am joining the volunteer corps of the Fourth World Movement, an anti-poverty NGO, for at least two years. My first project will be in Montreal and I look forward to keeping a connection with CCW through continued *In the News* contributions for the website, looking up conscientious objectors in Canada, and keeping the valuable perspective on anti-militarism gained in the last year."

## Another Faithful BVSer



In January Tim Verni-Lau joined the CCW staff through the Brethren Voluntary Service program. Prior to working at CCW, Tim worked as an employment counselor for homeless men and women at the Samaritan House in Atlanta, GA. He studied Theater at the Columbia University of Chicago. At the Center, Tim is work-

ing as an active GI Rights counselor, handles the Center's data processing needs and edits the quarterly newsletter.

## Theo Sither Comes on-Board



Theo has been working a two-year term at the Center through the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) service program since May of 2003. At the completion of Theo's MCC term he will continue to work for CCW as a full-time staff member. Theo will continue to be the lobbyist for the Center and will take on

more travel responsibilities.

## CCW National Lobby Day

May 16, 2005

Washington, DC & Local Districts

- Support Conscientious Objectors
- Oppose Military Draft
- Support Military COs
- Support Peace Tax Fund

For more information:

[www.centeronconscience.org/LobbyDay05/lobbyday.html](http://www.centeronconscience.org/LobbyDay05/lobbyday.html)

Or Call: 202-483-2220

# School of the Americas (SOA) Watch Vigil

## CCW Staff Participate in the SOA Vigil

In November 2004 the Center staff traveled to Columbus, GA to participate in the School of the Americas Watch at the gates of the Army base: Ft. Benning. The staff participated in the vigil and spoke to many young people about conscientious objection and the draft. Bill Galvin of CCW along with Steve Woolford and Lenore Yarger of Quaker House in North Carolina conducted a workshop on GI Rights and military counseling. It was attended by about thirty participants who were interested in counseling members of the military. For the past three years the Center has been a visible presence at the vigil and will continue to do so till the School of the Americas is closed.



Theo Sittler (behind the CCW table) and Michelle Williams (in front of the table)



Susan Sarandon and Martin Sheen in the Funeral Procession

## Funeral Procession

Each year the SOA vigil has a solemn funeral procession as a way of remembering all those who have been killed by graduates from the school. The funeral procession consists of naming every victim to remember the tragic loss of life which is directly connected to the operation of the School of the Americas. The naming of each victim takes hours and it is a very solemn event where the participants can feel directly connected to the tragedy of war and killing.

(See SOAW, Page 5)



Puppetistas at the Celebration Parade

## Celebration of Life

Every year the funeral procession is followed by a celebration of life. This event has many different displays of art and creativity. A joyous procession is conducted along the same road where the funeral procession took place. The celebration is a vital part of the annual vigil because it signifies the importance of envisioning a world where war and violence are eradicated.



Drummers at the Celebration

## Surveillance

The Military and the Police have always had a visible presence at the annual vigil. Each year brings new forms of disturbance and difficulty by the authorities at Ft. Benning. This year the vigil area was fenced off and surveillance helicopters kept hovering over the vigil site. On several occasions the funeral procession was disrupted when a helicopter hovered low enough that the naming of the victims could not be heard over the sound system. This form of utter disrespect is just a minute sign of how the Military wields its power against peaceful people.



Surveillance Helicopter

*Photographs taken by Michelle Williams & Bill Galvin*

## Draft (continued)

While most of the rumors are based on facts, generally they are facts taken out of context and misinterpreted by people who have not been looking at the big picture.

One of the earliest rumors began circulating in 2002 and is still making the rounds. It was, in fact, cited not so long ago by two of the lesser presidential candidates: Ralph Nader and the Libertarian Party candidate, Michael Badnarik. The Department of Defense put up a web page suggesting that one way to show your support for the country was to volunteer to be on a local draft board. This was cited as an attempt by the DoD to “secretly” staff the draft boards in anticipation of a draft. Interestingly, one email that circulated this story had an individual who was given authority on the basis of having attended the Army’s War College while in the military some years earlier was quoted as saying: “This is significant because this is the first time since Vietnam that the draft boards have been reconstituted.”

The draft boards, of course, were reconstituted in the early 1980s when the Nobel Peace Prize winning President Jimmy Carter reinstated registration. Draft boards are not staffed by the DoD, in any case, but by the governors of each state in conjunction with the Selective Service. The maximum period anyone can serve on a draft board is twenty years. When you add twenty to 1982 you quickly realize that many people who were appointed to the draft boards when they were first reconstituted are being forced by term limits to leave the draft boards, resulting in openings on the boards. A mere suggestion by the DoD to help fill openings that exist is not a major indication of anything. (In fact, the Center was encouraging our constituents to consider volunteering for the boards.)

Another rumor was that Selective Service received an additional \$28 million appropriation in anticipation of reinstatement of the draft. The Selective Service’s annual budget has ranged between \$24 to \$28 million dollars since 1980. This was merely the annual appropriation of that budget. The rumor that the Selective Service had reported that it would be ready for a draft in 75 days came from the Selective Service’s required obligation to report to the president twice a year as to the state of its readiness. Since Selective Service is required to be ready within a 14 days period under one scenario of the day, the 75 days pales in

# International Conscientious Objector Day

May 15, 2005  
Church of the Brethren  
337 N. Carolina Ave. SE  
Washington, DC 20003

**Seminars and workshops about conscientious objection, anti-militarism, counter recruitment, and war tax objection.**

**To Sign Up:**

[www.centeronconscience.org/adccoun05/adccoun.htm](http://www.centeronconscience.org/adccoun05/adccoun.htm)

**Or Call: 202-483-2220**

comparison.

Another rumor is the secret agreement between Selective Service and the Pentagon. CCW has tried to make the annual hearings for appropriations of Selective Service. We go and say to the sub-committee: “If everyone is in agreement that there is no good reason for a draft, why are you spending \$26 million or so on Selective Service?” In January 2004, a congressional member asked the then acting director of Selective Service, Lew Brodsky, essentially the same question. Brodsky suggested that while there may never be an across the board draft, it would be wise to keep Selective Service in order to allow for a selective draft. In the late 80s Congress asked Selective Service to prepare a study about the feasibility of a medical draft. Selective Service, building on that study asked the Pentagon to speculate on what other skills might be handled in a similar manner. The first mission of Government agencies is to assure they do not go out of existence!

The greatest bit of excitement concerning the draft revolved around the presidential elections. The presidential candidates all claimed they were the one who would keep the draft at bay and that the other candidate would bring it to the fore. The Congressional Republicans, in a brilliant but transparent parliamentary move, brought the much discussed Rangel bill HR 163 forward (See *Draft*, Page 7)

## Draft (continued)

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from certain death in committee for a vote on the House floor mere days prior to the election. The special rule required an up or down vote with no amendments and a maximum of 45 minutes of debate. The bill was defeated 402 to 2. Even Rangel voted against the bill. The only two Congressional members who voted for the bill were Pete Stark (D-CA) and John Murtha (D-PA) who both essentially said: We are going to have to be seriously talking about this sometime, might as well be now.

### The Bad News

Murtha and Stark were right: we are going to have to be seriously talking about this sometime. We know that in December 2003 Karl Rove, who has sometimes derisively described as President Bush's brain, polled the Republican side of the aisle in the House of Representatives asking: If the President calls for a draft, will you support it? Unfortunately, we cannot know to what extent there was support for the call but we see some of the same problems that are bound to drive the call for the draft. We have sent essentially all of our available active duty troops on one tour of Iraq. We have used up most (soon to be all) of our available reserve and National Guard. While the Navy and Air Force have waiting lists of people to join—they are not being deployed in the same manner-- Marines and Army are struggling to meet quotas and in order to meet them in 2004 had to play slight of hand with recruits who were to have been called up in 2005 to close the gap. They did not make their recruitment quotas at all the first several months of 2005. The General in charge of the Army reserves was quoted on the front page of the Washington Post as saying: The Reserve is broken. The National Guard has met only 80 % of its quota in 2004 even with ever increasing signing bonuses. We are shoring up our numbers by the use of mercenaries (whom we call contract workers) who perform similar if not identical work as our troops and we pay them \$1000 a day what we pay our own troops closer to a \$1200 a month to do.

### Something Has to Give

Many people believe that a vote for a draft in the Congress is a suicide vote for a Congressional member. Congress played up that idea with its playtime vote over HR 163. But Congress voted to support the invasion of Iraq in spite of overwhelming opposition to it by all of their constituents (the smallest number of calls/letters/etc. in

opposition was in Montana where ONLY 50% of the constituent contacts opposed the invasion). After the fact, the majority of the voters made clear that they feel they have no choice but to “support” the troops by supporting our efforts in Iraq.

Time will, we believe, eventually bring the public back around to full opposition to the war as it did in Vietnam. But in the mean time the same sort of phenomenon will allow Congress to go forward with a draft if asked by the president.

Remember, we are in a turn-key situation. There is already a draft law, regulations, manuals, boards, offices, and systems in place as there has been in varying degrees for the last twenty years. All it takes is an up or down vote.

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## Donate to CCW

We depend on your help and contributions in order to make the National Lobby Day and the Advisory Council meeting possible

Unlike most charitable organizations, which depend largely on grants, over 80% of the Center's income comes from individuals and churches. It is vital to the survival of this organization that we receive donations from thoughtful, conscientious individuals like you.

### **To Donate Online Visit:**

<http://www.centeronconscience.org/donations.htm>

### **By Check Payable to:**

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1830 Connecticut Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20009**



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## *From the Desk of the Executive Director*

I am often asked to train CO Counselors. I always refuse. I train draft and military counselors, not CO counselors.

Why do I make such a point of this? For two reasons.

First, because we do a disservice to those COs we counsel if all we know is CO counseling. We may think that in as much we know our own children or we belong to a Peace Church that we only need the CO counseling. After all, the members of our church or meeting are all COs. But the draft is structured differently from Vietnam and before. The process is such that all other possible deferments and exemptions must be dealt with first before the CO process. If we only tell our own kids about CO and they qualify for some other exemption, we put them unduly at risk. If they do not succeed at obtaining CO status they will not get another chance to go back and apply for the other exemption. For example, if they qualify for a hardship deferment but only apply for CO status, the failure of the CO application will result in their being drafted—not having a chance to make their case on the hardship deferment. So we need to know and explain to our children all of the exemptions—not just conscientious objection.

Second, we do a disservice to those persons who do not know they are COs, if all we know is CO counseling. If all you have is a hammer, you are always in danger of thinking that everything is a nail. But young people come to counselors in all stages of spiritual and critical thinking development. If we try to force them all into CO applications when they will not fit the definition, we are liable to have many more people fail at getting CO status. Indeed, many may turn away thinking that, because they are not COs, they have no options. This is especially true of selective conscientious objectors who do not meet the legal criteria.

If we are ever to succeed in ending wars we must be open to helping everyone who refuses to fight with whatever tools we have available—not just that hammer.

Using the hammer in all cases is also liable to damage our reputations as counselors.

We, at the Center, are always being asked if it isn't true that we knowingly promote CO applications from people who are not COs. It enhances both our credibility and the credibility of people applying for CO status that we can honestly say, "No, we reject fraudulent CO applications." We do refuse to help CO applicants we do not find credible. But we go on to help them with other options.

I guess there is a third reason I think that it is important that we not just learn about conscientious objection. We must be open to new people and new experiences. When I speak, I often tell the story of when I first began to turn away from war in 1964 in Junior High. Sometimes I tell the last part of the story: When I finally understood that war was not just morally wrong, it was completely ineffectual in obtaining anything but very short term goals and certainly not peace or justice. That was during Kosovo.

We should remember that everyone who turns from war must make a first step and be ready to help them make that first step—even if it is not the first step we would want them to take.

That is what the Center does with your financial support.

Yours for Peace and Justice,  
J. E. McNeil

