The Reporter for Conscience’ Sake

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First World Peace Forum Kicks Off in Canada

By Bill Galvin  CCW Counseling Coordinator

The first World Peace Forum convened in Vancouver, British Columbia on June 23. In the welcome the co-chairs of the World Peace Forum Society stated, “Three years ago, we had a dream. We imagined that the public effort to stop that invasion could be nurtured, globally connected, and transformed into a force powerful enough to halt aggression in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, the Americas, or anywhere.” That was a pretty big dream, and at times the WPF was somewhat overwhelming, as there was so much going on.

The WPF program guide alone was 52 pages. It included Dennis Kucinich and associates talking about the need for a cabinet level Department of Peace, Hibakusha (nuclear survivors) and others from Japan working for the abolition of nuclear weapons, a labor forum, and much more. The Forum included large plenaries, concerts, and a peace march and rally in downtown Vancouver. But most of the important work was done through smaller workshops, panels, and networking. One day included a film festival, co-sponsored by the National Film Board of Canada, CBC, and others, during which films portraying particular peace-related activities were shown, followed by a panel discussion.

The day themed “Where the Killing Stops: Soldiers turned Peacemakers” was one most relevant to CCW, and the Center’s counseling also informed FORUM pg. 4

CCW Visits Selective Service

By Hannah Kliewer  BVS Volunteer

In early August staff and interns from the Center made their annual visit to the national headquarters of the Selective Service System in Arlington, Virginia. Each year the office makes this trip, keeping an open line of communication between the two organizations and providing an open forum to discuss questions, suggestions, and issues of concern. Topics of conversation ranged from the future chance of draft legislation to the increasing pressure on individual states to impose non-registrant penalties to the responsibility of educating the public about conscientious objection.

Of particular interest and alarm to the Center this year were accounts of less-than-adequate training of local draft boards. Of particular interest and alarm to the Center this year were accounts of less-than-adequate training of local draft boards. Of particular interest and alarm to the Center this year were accounts of less-than-adequate training of local draft boards. Of particular interest and alarm to the Center this year were accounts of less-than-adequate training of local draft boards.
Three Israeli soldiers have been imprisoned for refusing to take part in the war in Lebanon. Omri Zeid departed from duty after refusing to shell a Lebanese village saying, “I am not willing to be a part of any army which shoots on women and children.” Amir Pastar refused service when called up to fight in Lebanon in late July. He was sentenced to 28 days in military prison. Izik Shabbat, a reservist called up in mid-July, refused to report. However, it is still unclear what finally became of his case. (War Resisters’ International 8/20/2006)

Marine Reservists Face Involuntary Call-Up

The Marine Corps announced that in several months it would begin calling individual ready reservists (IRR) to involuntary active duty. While the Army has been calling up reservists and instituting “stop-loss” orders for most of the current war, the Marines’ last involuntary call-up happened before the initial invasion of Iraq. The first call-up will be taken from a pool of about 34,000 Marines, calling as many as 2,500 at a time. Marines will be given five months’ notice before activation and would have the opportunity to petition for deferment or exemption. They would serve a maximum of two years. Most Marine Corps tours in Iraq last seven months. For many Marines this would be their fourth tour in Iraq. Says Paul Rickhoff, founder of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, “You can send Marines back for corps tours in Iraq last seven months. For more Marincorps tours in Iraq last seven months. For many Marines this would be their fourth tour in Iraq. Says Paul Rickhoff, founder of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, “You can send Marines back for corps tours in Iraq last seven months. For many Marines this would be their fourth tour in Iraq. Says Paul Rickhoff, founder of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, “You can send Marines back for...
these issues or making presentations to young people will be a very powerful counter recruitment tool. Anyone organizing around the military and the war, as well as a very important way to get his name off the [recruiter’s] list, I definitely would have!

I have learned a tremendous amount from my work at the Center this summer, especially from my counseling calls. Despite what many Americans claim, it is absolutely possible to wholeheartedly support the soldiers, without supporting the war. The soldiers are primarily good people who mean well - all it takes is picking up a few calls on the GI Rights hotline to be convinced of that. But most of them are not there to fight; rather, they are there for the benefits, the money, the education, the enlistment bonus, the job skills, etc. - things that one GI who was absent without leave described to me as “the wrong reasons.”

Promoting awareness and helping those who have gotten stuck in bad situations with the military is, of course, a large part of what CCW does and a significant aspect of what has made working here so rewarding. As the summer draws to a close, I will be preparing to start my second year at Swarthmore. I hope to return to CCW at some point in the future.

Another Summer Comes To A Close // Ian Yarett

After volunteering at the Center last summer, I came away not only with a vast amount of knowledge about the military, Selective Service, and conscientious objection, but also with a strong belief in the importance of the work that CCW does. My convictions were only deepened by a Peace and Conflict Studies class I took and other experiences I had during my first year at Swarthmore. Thus, I decided to return to CCW this summer to continue working as a GI Rights and Draft counselor.

In addition to counseling, I spent a great deal of my time redesigning our website. Some of my other duties included preparing the Center’s archives, cleaning the office, and packing up orders to be sent out.

Another Addition To The Summer Crew

My name is Roger Yarett, and I am a high school senior from Greenwich, Connecticut. I first learned of the Center on Conscience & War when my brother Ian volunteered here during summer 2005. I had always felt strongly opposed to war for moral and practical purposes and admired my brother’s activism at this vital juncture in our country’s history. As the war in Iraq continued and conflict in the Middle East intensified, I decided that, like my brother, I needed to get more involved with and help support peace advocates. Although my time here at CCW has been short, I have received GI Rights and draft training, conducted research, and scanned legal documents. I hope to return next summer as a GI Rights Counselor.

A Fond Farewell // Theo Sitther

During my time with CCW I gained many valuable experiences. I learned the importance and significance of working for the rights of conscientious objectors, even though, sometimes, the wider world might not see it as such.

The Center was my introduction to the Washington scene and it will always hold a very special place in my heart.

CCW Welcomes A New Staff Member

Pat Elder joined CCW in September of 2006. Pat lobbies for the rights of conscientious objectors on Capitol Hill. He is also a GI Rights counselor and helps with research and policy-making. Pat is also and member of the Mennonite Central Committee – Washington Office. I finished my time with the Center in August and started working for MCC in September.

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On Sale

www.CenterOnConscience.org/store

Admitted to War describes the world’s most active and powerful military’s domination. It is a carefully documented account of the U.S. military adventures since the colonial period to the present war in Iraq and Afghanistan. With over 160 footnotes, this book is an excellent tool for both children and adults. Available in Spanish.

On Sale for $5

Hell Healing and Resistance is a powerful book about the human cost of war. It shares veterans’ accounts of wars they faced and the suffering after the wars were over. This book also offers hope and healing through personal experience, which reaches to all parts of this culture.

On Sale for $20

SSS, From pg. 1

Sincerity of a CO Selective Service expressed similar concerns, but reiterated that they have only four hours a year with a local board and that it would take a much larger movement to break down CO stereotypes. This being said, they assured that they reliably revise training materials and role-plays for local boards and are working to counter some of the problems prevalent during the Vietnam draft.

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conscientious objector process works. We explained to them some of the problems created by the misleading advertising campaigns that makes enlistment appear to be about job training and money for college, and how difficult it is for groups like us to get accurate information to potential recruits about the realities of military service. They told us that in the Ukraine contact information for organizations just like ours would be posted in the recruiting office - quite a difference from US procedure. They also relayed that the Ukraine was going to end conscription soon, and they were concerned about the transition to a volunteer military and what effect that would have on their society and military. All and all, it was a surprising opportunity to create an international dialogue on issues that we often associate as close to home. Much was learned on both sides of the conversation.

This delegation was interested in far more than hazing. They asked many questions about how the military justice system in the US works, how the government and military deal with groups like CCW, how groups that might appear to be anti-government such as CCW fit into a democratic system wisely thought it would be appropriate for them to meet with us as a non-government organization working with the GI Rights Hotline and as advocates for the rights of conscientious objectors.

Ukraine Delegation Visits Center

By Bill Galvin
CCW Counseling Coordinator

In August, the U.S. Department of State sponsored an International Visitor Leadership project called “Civil Rights Protection within the U.S. Military” for a delegation from Ukraine. With hazing being a serious problem in the Ukrainian military, a particular focus of the trip was to learn how this is dealt with in the US. The delegation included a civilian court administrator, two military investigators, a military judge, and the program director of The Kharkiv Human Rights Group. This latter group provides assistance to individuals whose rights have been infringed, investigates cases of human rights violations, and educates the public about these violations, particularly with regard to political rights and civil liberties. The delegation mainly met with representatives of the military, law enforcement, and other government agencies while in the US; however, the State Department wisely thought it would be appropriate for them to meet with us as a non-government organization working with the GI Rights Hotline and as advocates for the rights of conscientious objectors.

This delegation was interested in far more than hazing. They asked many questions about how the military justice system in the US works, how the government and military deal with groups like CCW, how groups that might appear to be anti-government such as CCW fit into a democratic society, and even how we personally got involved in doing this work. They had particular concerns about military recruitment, how we handled recruiter fraud, and how the conscientious objector process works. We explained to them some of the problems created by the misleading advertising campaigns that makes enlistment appear to be about job training and money for college, and how difficult it is for groups like us to get accurate information to potential recruits about the realities of military service. They told us that in the Ukraine contact information for organizations just like ours would be posted in the recruiting office - quite a difference from US procedure. They also relayed that the Ukraine was going to end conscription soon, and they were concerned about the transition to a volunteer military and what effect that would have on their society and military. All and all, it was a surprising opportunity to create an international dialogue on issues that we often associate as close to home. Much was learned on both sides of the conversation.

Understanding the U.S. Draft

FORUM, From Pg. 1

Coordinator Bill Galvin participated in two of the panel presentations. The day focused on movements to help members of the military who don’t want to be there, particularly concentrating on the Canadian tradition of supporting U.S. war resisters. At least three people attending the Forum were currently AWOL from the US military and seeking sanctuary in Canada. Many people from their support communities were also there. In fact, a major sub-theme of the day was to help Canadians understand the need for their help with military conscientious objectors. A common question in Canada (as here) is why there is a problem if, since there is no draft, these people volunteered. Part of the day was devoted to explaining why people in the U.S. enlist. For example, many Canadians were surprised to learn how many people in the U.S. have no medical insurance and feel that joining the military is the only way they can cover the bills for a sick spouse or child.

With so many people and events, it was initially difficult to find one’s niche at the World Peace Forum and nearly impossible to fully experience the breadth of topics covered. However, once one found an individual focus for the weekend, it wasn’t difficult to draw value from the discussion and company.

For more information, reports, newsletters, photos, and more from the 2006 World Peace Forum, visit www.worldpeaceforum.ca

Should I Register for the Draft?

Should I Register for the Draft? is a free pamphlet that lays out the implications of registering with Selective Service. It is an especially great resource for anyone considering registration refusal and provides a list of contact organizations for more information.

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In the United States an 18th birthday can be a great milestone in the lives of young men. They legally become adults and are granted the rights and responsibilities that come with this distinction. One of the first decisions that these young men must make concerns draft registration. For many, this decision is automatic, and they register with Selective Service without giving it a second thought. For others, however, this could be the biggest decision in their lives. The Center has helped many of these young men grapple with their decision over the years and has developed several helpful resources on this topic. Many of these can be downloaded from CCW’s website or requested over the phone. www.centeronconscience.org

The Fund for Education and Training (FEAT) provides low interest loans to young men who, for reasons of conscience, do not comply with laws requiring registration for the draft. This free brochure provides details about the loan and who may qualify.

Basic Draft and Registration Information is a free 12-page packet that provides advice and resources about registering with Selective Service, preparing for a draft, and documenting one’s CO beliefs. It includes various recommendations for starting a CO file and many questions that should be considered by a CO. Finally, it provides a worksheet of beliefs that can be signed and sent to CCW for one’s file.