



The Center on
Conscience & War

The Reporter for Conscience' Sake

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1 December 2003: Prisoners for Peace Day

Special Focus on Conscientious Objection in South Korea

Jung -min Choi works with Korean Solidarity for
Conscientious Objection (KSCO)

As recently as 2001 the concept of "Objection to military service" was relatively unknown to the Korean public. A current affairs magazine reported about a forum on the military service system, including the right to conscientious objection. It especially reported on the history of Jehovah's Witnesses CO. Since the formation of the Korean army, over 10,000 objectors (mostly Jehovah's Witnesses) have spent time behind bars. The public has treated them as nonexistent.

Korea has a long history of military dictatorships. Under the slogan "the richer the country, the better the living conditions of the people", governments made great efforts to boost economic growth, interested in nothing but the GNP. The military confrontation with North Korea was used to create obedience and unity. The core of Korean militarism was and is compulsory military service. Conscientious objection was not tolerated and CO's have been treated harshly.

The first stage of a CO movement

Back in 2001 it was taboo to talk about issues such as the military system, soldiers' human rights, and conscientious objection. Frankly speaking, we too had doubts about our ability to work on such a controversial issue.

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As expected, one week after our forum Seoul Police started to investigate three antimilitarist websites which also provided information on evading military service. In response to this, several peace and human rights groups organized a symposium, and published a report to dismantle the taboo, to bring into the open the issue of 50 years of imprisonment of conscientious objectors, and the right to conscientious objection.

Public sympathy has grown since. Increased awareness of the painful history of objectors and their families has played a role in this. In a recent poll more than 50% accepted the right to conscientious objection.

The idea that it is possible to object to military service provoked a very important momentum in Korea, especially among university students and young activists who still have to serve in the military. With the spread of the idea, we received an increasing number of phone calls and e-mails requesting information on CO. In December 2001, a pacifist and Buddhist, Oh Tae-yang, declared his conscientious objection, and turned CO into a political issue, linked to the relations between North and South Korea, and national security.

CO's -- a threat to national security?

In 2002 several human rights groups formed "Korea Solidarity for Conscientious Objection" (KSCO), and a judge appealed to the Constitutional Court because he had doubts about the constitutionality of the present Military Service Law. Since Oh Tae-yang's CO declaration, political CO has increased. So far, a total of eight



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News Briefs

Co's sentenced

ISRAEL: Five conscientious objectors sentenced to 1 year imprisonment. On 4 January the "trial of the five" ended with a shocking sentence: one year imprisonment for Haggai Matar, Matan Kami, Noam Bahat, Adam Maor, and Shimri Tzamaret. All five refused to enlist in the Israeli army, and have spent more than a year in military detention already. Up till this point, sentences have been in the 1-2 month range or less.

Israeli commandos defy sharon

JERUSALEM, Dec. 21 — Thirteen reservists from Israel's elite military commando unit stated in a letter to the prime minister that they would no longer serve in the occupied territories, joining other influential security officials who have recently criticized Israeli military tactics and treatment of the Palestinians. "We have long ago crossed the line between fighters fighting a just cause and oppressing another people," three officers and 10 soldiers of the army's most secretive unit, the Sayeret Matkal, said in the letter to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Human shield faces jail

Sitting in her modest two-bedroom home on the west Florida coast, Faith Fippinger talks about the prospect of going to jail. This spring, the 62-year-old retired schoolteacher decided to travel to Iraq as a human shield.

To many she is a humanitarian, but in the eyes of the US Government she is a criminal. Over the past few years she has visited almost every continent and the souvenirs dotted around the house prove it. But it was her decision to travel to Iraq to try to prevent the war which has got her into trouble. "War is carnage, I understand that," she says. "War is death, I understand that. In my opinion though this war was illegal, unjust and unnecessary." According to the US Treasury Department, by going to Iraq she had broken the US economic embargo on Iraq, which has been in place for years. A letter from the US government says, the penalties for being there could be as high as a million dollars and up to 12 years in jail."

Voices founder sentenced

On 27 January, Kathy Kelly, co-founder of Voices in the Wilderness and three-time Nobel Peace Prize nominee, was sentenced to three months in federal prison for crossing onto the property of Fort Benning military base in November 2003, as a form of protest against the School of the Americas/Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (SOA/WHISC).

Soldier joins peace protest

Gil Na'amati, a 22 year old kibbutznik from Southern Israel was shot and wounded at a protest just 2 weeks after finishing his three years military service. Gil was shot in the leg and was rushed to hospital due to heavy bleeding. His father said that the scenes of violence and suffering he had witnessed whilst serving at checkpoints on the West Bank had led him to join the peace protest.

Military Draft: A Sleeping Giant Stirs

by Theo Sither

Topic of Upcoming Lobby Day Questions have risen: Is the administration preparing for the return of the draft? What is the word from Congress?

Bush continues to promote his doctrine of preemptive strike on any “rogue” nation and the Cheney/Wolfowitz list of countries to overthrow. Currently troop morale is very low. Many service members are saying that they will not reenlist. The military is already stretched thin across the globe. If the administration is to mount any additional military campaigns, the numbers simply aren’t there to carry out the job.

The official word on Capitol Hill is that there is no way a draft would be approved before the election. Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY), as we reported, is working behind the scenes with Republican members to push his draft bill, which he claims would make the Armed Services more equitable. There is a rumor that the administration is talking with Republican members of Congress on the possibility of a draft. This is a sign that the draft may be reinstated. The draft may be real in a little more than a year.

We must work to oppose the draft.

The Center is holding a *lobby day on May 14th, 2004* in conjunction with the *National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund*. We will continue in our effort to educate Congress and their staff about conscientious objectors. Most young congressional staffers are not knowledgeable about conscientious objectors since there has not been a draft in their lifetime. This will give us an opening to talk about how a draft is always a bad idea and how the draft can never bring equity to the Armed Services.

Mark the 14th of May on your calendar. It is important that members of Congress hear from their constituents to know that a draft is never a viable option.

Come to Washington to lobby Congress in an effort to stop the draft. **Even if it is not possible for you to be in Washington in May, please meet with the local office of your representative.** Contact us if you need

help in setting up an appointment or for more information.

Let’s sing the giant back to sleep

Center gets new volunteer

Hello to all of the faithful supporters of the Center and the peace movement in general! I am the newest addition to the staff here, and can not adequately express how excited I am to be here. Not only will I be able to learn within and contribute to an organization with such firm values and sincere dedication; but the issue of conscientious objection happens to be relevant to so many problems we face as a nation and world today.

Although I work full-time here, I am technically (like Eli) a volunteer through Brethren Volunteer Services. Before becoming a “BVSer” I had various jobs during my four post-university years. Most of these were in my home state of Michigan, and most meant nothing more than a paycheck to me. Throughout this period, however, my interest in civil rights and peace issues that had developed while I was a student continued to grow. Finally, after all the involvement in peace protests and debates with acquaintances about bellicose, self-righteous U.S. foreign policies—I decided to take a step in the right direction and explore all of my volunteering options.

Since September 2003, I am happy to report, my weekday hours have been spent contributing to causes about which I am passionate. Last fall, I interned for the Fourth World Movement (ATD Quart Monde), a small NGO dedicated to fighting poverty worldwide. One might think that my work here at the Center is unrelated to my work last fall, but I have been realizing something important: in the end, all peace/justice work is related. I have also been realizing that Margaret Mead was right: a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens CAN change the world. But they still need your support to do it!!

Peace be with you.

Michelle Williams
Program Assistant
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people have declared their CO. When the university student Na Dong-hyuk declared his CO, 20 more students pledged to object to military service when they receive their call-up orders.

KSCO receives an increasing number of requests from people considering CO, so we set up a regular meeting for young people who are worried about their situation. In winter 2002, we organised a “CO SCHOOL”, where we offered information and gave the opportunity to deepen the understanding of the CO issue.

With the spread of the CO movement in Korea, especially among young people affected by military service, the Korean government started to respond. The Ministry of Education served each university and college with guiding principles that block the spread of the CO movement, and the Ministry of Defense released a statement opposing the right to CO. Also, then-president Kim Dae-jung gave an address that he can not accept CO rights.

US attacks on Iraq, and . . .

The US attack on Iraq had a huge impact on the Korean society. For the first time, many people raised their voice against war and for peace, in relation to a country other than Korea. Many peace activists went to Iraq to try to stop the war and to be a witness. When the issue of deployment of Korean troops came up, the anti-war movement got broader. Towards the end of the war, another CO, Kim Do-hyung, declared his objection. In a press conference he said that he feels sorrow when he sees the US attack on Iraq. He said that the deployment of Korean troops made him determined to refuse military service, as he did not want to join an army involved in an unjust war.

Problems to be solved

Earlier this year, the group “People Sharing Conscience”, which supports COs, changed its name to “World Without War.” Some CO activists participated in the International CO Day training in Israel. In Korea we organised a peace camp for COs and antimilitarist activists. This was the first time such a camp took place in Korea.

A new documentary on CO was finally completed, and shown for the first time in public. We now expect it to tour Korea, and to be widely used. We plan the CO peace campaign on Korea’s streets and prepare for “Prisoners for Peace Day” on December 1st.

It is a paradox that Korea, a country that has a long history of struggle for democracy, has only three years history of struggling for COs. There are only a few COs yet, and it may need a lot of time to generate public support. But it is obvious that the CO movement provides a new perspective for another world, and although it moves forward slowly, it does so with a lot of power.


Jung -min Choi works with Korean Solidarity for Conscientious Objection (KSCO)
Reprinted with permission from International War Resisters League

Troubled about paying for war?

Learn about the campaign to pass a federal law that would allow the taxes from those conscientiously opposed to war to be used for non-military purposes only: the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Bill. Excellent resources are available, including a video, *Compelled by Conscience*, and a booklet, *Congress Shall Make No Law: Stories of Religious Freedom and Conscience in the United States*.

The booklet puts a human face on the legislative issue. The video gives a method for acting on behalf of one's conscience against participation in war.

Cost for video + booklet + study guide + shipping = \$20

 NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR A PEACE TAX FUND
2121 Decatur Pl. NW, Washington, DC 20008
1-888-PEACETAX www.peacetaxfund.org info@peacetaxfund.org

New figures reveal the true number of GIs wounded in Iraq

The true scale of American casualties in Iraq is revealed today by new figures obtained by The Observer, which show that more than 6,000 American servicemen have been evacuated for medical reasons since the beginning of the war, including more than 1,500 American soldiers who have been wounded, many seriously.

The figures will shock many Americans, who believe that casualties in the war in Iraq have been relatively light. Recent polls show that support for President George Bush and his administration's policy in Iraq has been slipping.

The number of casualties will also increase pressure on Bush to share the burden of occupying Iraq with more nations. Attempts to broker an international alliance to pour more men and money into Iraq foundered yesterday when Colin Powell, the US Secretary of State, brusquely rejected a French proposal as 'totally unrealistic.'

More US soldiers have died in Iraq, since the hostilities were declared over on May 1st. A similar amount have died in accidents. It is military police policy to announce that a soldier has been wounded only if they were involved in an incident that involved a death.

Critics of the policy say it hides the true extent of the casualties. The new figures reveal that 1,178 American soldiers have been wounded in combat operations since the war began on 20 March.

It is believed many of the American casualties evacuated from Iraq are seriously injured. Modern body armour, worn by almost all American troops, means wounds that would normally kill a man are avoided. However vulnerable arms and legs are affected badly. This has boosted the proportion of maimed among the injured.

There are also concerns that many men serving in Iraq will suffer psychological trauma. Experts at the National Army Museum in London said studies of soldiers in the First and Second World Wars showed that it was

prolonged exposure to combat environments that was most damaging. Some American units, such as the Fourth Infantry Division, have been involved in front operations for more than six months.

Andrew Robertshaw, an expert at the museum, said wars also claimed casualties after they were over. 'Soldiers were dying from injuries sustained during World War I well into the 1920s,' he said.

British soldiers are rotated more frequently than their American counterparts. The British Ministry of Defence has recently consulted the National Army Museum about psychological disorders suffered by combatants in previous wars in a bid to avoid problems.

The wounded return to the USA with little publicity. Giant C-17 transport jets on medical evacuation missions land at Andrews Air Force Base, near Washington, every night.

Battlefield casualties are first treated at Army field hospitals in Iraq then sent to Landstuhl Regional Medical Centre in Germany, where they are stabilized.

Andrews is the first stop in the US. As the planes taxi to a halt, gangplanks are lowered and the wounded are carried or walk out. A fleet of ambulances and buses meet the C-17s most nights to take off the most seriously wounded. Those requiring urgent operations and amputations are ferried to America's two best military hospitals, the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, near Washington, and the National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda.

The hospitals are busy. Sometimes all 40 of Walter Reed's intensive care beds are full.

Dealing with the aftermath of amputations and blast injuries is common. Mines, home-made bombs and rocket-propelled grenades are the weapons of choice of the Iraqi resistance fighters. They cause the sort of wounds that will cost a soldier a limb.

The less severely wounded stay overnight at the air base, where an indoor tennis club and a community center have been turned into a medical staging facility. Many have little but the ragged uniforms on their backs. A local volunteer group, called America's Heroes of Freedom, has set up

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on the base to provide them with fresh clothes, food packages and toiletries. This is our way of saying, "We have not forgotten you," said group founder Susan Brewer.

Lobby Day for Conscience's Sake

Stop the Draft



May 14th, 2004

Come to Washington or lobby
at your local district office
and educate Congress about
COs and against conscription

Methodist Building
100 Maryland Ave. NE
Washington, DC 20002

Meet in Methodist Bldg. at 9:00 AM

Sponsoring Organizations: National Campaign for
a Peace Tax Fund, Mennonite Central Committee,
Veterans for Peace, Church of the Brethren,
United Methodist Church General Board of
Church and Society, Unitarian Universalist
Association of Congregations, Pax Christi USA,
and Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

Visit www.nisbco.org for registration info

International Conscientious Objector Day



Center's Annual Advisory Council Meeting

**May 15th, 2004
Noon - 5:00 PM**

Church of the Brethren
337 North Carolina Ave. SE
Washington, DC 20003

Visit www.nisbco.org for registration info

HERMAN WILL

When I heard from Mary Kay Will that her father Herman had died it was no surprise, but I still greeted it with great sadness. Herman Will was a mentor for me and many others concerned about peace. His 88 years on this earth seemed too short.

I first met Herman as a 19-year-old attending my first United Methodist General Conference. I was there to help the young adults of the church lobby the General Conference of the Church to oppose the Vietnam War and to expand the church's definition of conscientious objection to include objection to the draft itself. Herman was helpful to us all and treated us like adults. He was a model for those of us who were conscientious objectors.

Later, I moved to Washington to work with the United Methodist Council on Youth Ministry and Herman continued his mentoring. I learned that Herman had become a religious pacifist at a relatively early age and that at age 19 he became involved with the national youth movement of the Methodist Episcopal Church (a predecessor denomination of the United Methodist Church). He served as youth secretary for the Methodist Commission on World Peace and was president of the National Council of Methodist Youth from 1939-1940.

During World War II, Herman served as a conscientious objector. He performed his alternative service as the director of the Castaner Project, a rural hospital and service project of the Church of the Brethren in the mountains of Puerto Rico. After the war, he worked with the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) traveling, speaking, and organizing for them in Mexico and Cuba.

Herman also worked with FOR in many other ways, including years on their board. His early work with FOR was on the issues of desegregation and racial justice culminating in the 1942 creation of the Congress of Racial Equality.

After the war, Herman put his training as a lawyer to work at the administrative secretary of the Commission on World Peace of the Methodist Church until that body

merged with other social justice agencies of the church to become the Board of Christian Social Concerns. Herman served as the Associate General Secretary of the Peace division of the new board until his retirement in 1980. During his time as head of the division Herman played a key role in the formation of the Church Center for the United Nations (1963) and many other church related groups including the Coalition on a New Foreign and Military Policy, The Washington Office on Latin America, and the Washington Office on Africa. He encouraged others, including myself, to found the US China People's Friendship Association. When a young Congressional staffer named Tom Harkin exposed the infamous tiger cages in Vietnam, it was Herman Will that found the money for Harkin to travel the country speaking on Vietnam.

After his retirement in 1980, Herman worked for a year with the National Council of Churches in New York City and then wrote a history of Methodist peace activities that was published by the United Methodist Church and Society. The editor using a pun on Herman's last name called the book, "A Will for Peace". It's an apt title and a good goal for us all.

On the occasion of Herman and Rita Will's 60th anniversary in 2002, I wrote:

"Today, I sit in what was once Herman's job of some 40 years and can only say that I am humbled. Herman was/is the very soul of the church's peace efforts. Not a day goes by that I don't wonder if I am/ we are doing justice to his legacy. Herman and Rita were always ready to dispense good advice to those of us younger ones following in their footsteps."

Herman Will died at age 88 on September 27, 2003. He is survived by Margarita (Rita) his wife of 61 years, six children and 11 grandchildren and thousands of us whom he taught to seek justice and pursue peace.

Jaydee Hanson is a consultant for The United Methodist Church-General Board of Church and Society and is currently completing a study on terrorism and how the church should respond.



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From the Desk of the Executive Director

The weight of this sad time we must obey,

Speak what we feel; not what we ought to say.

King Lear by William Shakespeare

And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell-and great was its fall! Matthew 7:26-27.

This is a sad time. It is very hard to sit here and watch each wall be built brick by brick of a house built on sand.

Each day we receive emails with articles from newspapers around the country carrying arguments about how we can stop war by drafting our young men. Well meaning articles, articles full of fallacies and misinformation.

Each day we also receive articles about how there is a secret plan for a draft. How the Department of Defense is doing this sneaky thing or that. Well meaning articles,

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articles full of fallacies and misinformation.

This Reporter gives you our most recent and accurate information. The only way to be more up-to-date is to get on our Urgent Action E-mail list (You can sign up at our web page: www.nisbco.org).

We do think a draft is coming. We do think we are very close. But it is essential whether you lobby or counsel young people that your information be correct. So we urge you to contact us when you receive information check the accuracy. We want the correct information out there.

We are making every effort to be ready. But we can't be ready without your help. We need you to "speak what you feel" and to lobby on May 14 [See article on page 3] We need to make sure that the information you have is correct.

And, of course, we need your financial support to help us be heard.

Yours for Peace and Justice,

J.E. McNeil



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