



The Center on
Conscience & War

The Reporter for Conscience' Sake

Volume 66

Winter 2009

Number 4

Bill Galvin and JE McNeil - 10 Years at CCW



Bill Galvin and JE McNeil, January 2010

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Bill Galvin Reflects on 10 Years at CCW

10 Years--Really? I guess time flies when you're having fun! Maybe fun isn't the right word, but there is no doubt that I really enjoy my work.

Probably the best part of my job is getting to know a variety of conscientious objectors. Some I have worked with as they prepared their C.O. applications; Anita Cole and Kevin Benderman are at the top of that list--and others I didn't get to know until after they had gone through the C.O. process. Since I realized I was a conscientious objec-

tor in the late 1960's, I've spent most of my life trying to stop war. It's an important goal that I feel we should always keep in front of us. But it's also such an overwhelming goal that looms so large that it sometimes seems we can't possibly make progress toward it. What I really like is that every day, we talk to people in the military who have decided to say no to war, and we are often able to provide them with information and other support that makes a huge difference to them. Often we help them get out. Other times we help them stand strong in a very difficult situation. Sometimes we just hold someone's hand.

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Founded in 1940, the Center on Conscience & War works to extend and defend the rights of conscientious objectors to war. In pursuit of this calling, the Center provides these services free of charge:

- Counsel military conscientious objectors.
- Provide legal support for military personnel.
- Lobby Congress to extend and defend the rights of conscientious objectors.
- Provide accurate information to the public on Selective Service registration.
- Provide support to COs who refuse to register for the draft through F.E.A.T student loans.
- Counsel soldiers on the GI Rights Hotline with accuracy and honesty.
- Military counter-recruitment information
- Provide workshops, training, and speakers on any of the above topics.

News Briefs

No U.S. Combat Deaths in Iraq

December was the first month since the beginning of the Iraq war in which there were no U.S. combat deaths, the U.S. military reported, but there were three non-combat fatalities.

Since the beginning of the war more than six years ago, 4,373 U.S. military members have died--3,477 from hostilities and 898 in non-combat incidents.

Combat fatalities have decreased significantly since June, when the United States started withdrawing troops from Baghdad, Iraq's capital, and other urban areas. The United States also started a troop drawdown in 2009 from about 160,000 to the current level of around 110,000. Casualties also have decreased among Iraqis, with Interior Ministry officials reporting in late November that the civilian death toll fell that month to its lowest level since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion. 2,773 civilians were killed and 8,900 were wounded in 2009. In addition, 242 Iraqi soldiers were killed and 612 were wounded in 2009.

In December, the ministry said, 306 Iraqi civilians were killed and 1,137 were wounded; 13 Iraqi soldiers were killed and 32 were wounded. Also in December, 48 Iraqi police were killed and 119 were wounded.

November recorded the lowest casualty figures for Iraqis since the U.S.-led invasion, with 88 civilians killed and 332 wounded. In addition, 12 Iraqi soldiers died in November and 44 were wounded. Among Iraqi police, 22 died and 56 were wounded.

(CNN.com, January 1st 2010)

How the Military Hides Dissent in the Ranks

No reliable count exists of how many soldiers consider themselves conscientious objectors.

The Army recorded 39 applications in 2007, the last year for which records are complete (and represents a five-year low). About half were approved. Nobody, however, believes Army statistics on the issue, probably not even the Army itself.

The Army counts only those applications that make it to headquarters, the real number is many times the official figure.

The process usually takes six months to a year and sometimes longer, during which time applicants are expected to comply with all orders and regulations, including deployment to a war zone. They're supposed to be reassigned to noncombatant duties, but this doesn't always happen. It may be in the interest of the Army to get rid of soldiers who don't want to fight, but conscientious objection is a direct challenge to the military's

core beliefs and retribution is commonplace.

However small in number, COs have a disproportionate influence, both practically and

symbolically. Especially during an unpopular war, resisters can be a match to the tinder of growing resentment. Even more threatening, they can make others realize that resistance is possible.

The tragedy at Fort Hood is not the only cost of refusing to acknowledge the growing opposition to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan among those we send to fight them. There are thousands of soldiers and marines--again, we have no accurate count--who once bet their future on the military, but have now can no longer make compromises with their conscience or their reality. They find ways other than murder to get out of the army: some turn their violence self-ward, a few try for CO, and many others resist orders, refuse deployment, go AWOL, or just don't enlist.

That's not the stuff of headlines, but it is a major loss for the military and the country.

(www.alternate.org, January 7th 2010)

For more news and information about conscientious objection, visit us at:
www.centeronconscience.org
myspace.com/centeronconscience
 and look for us on Facebook.

Bill Galvin reflects on 10 years at CCW

(continued from frontpage)

And even though these things might seem incredibly small, each makes a difference. I like our unofficial slogan: "Stopping war one soldier at a time." For each individual soldier, we have made a tremendous difference.

One of the highlights of my 10 years here was having a small hand in the creation of that powerful movie, *Soldiers of Conscience*. I remember the initial phone calls from the movie makers outlining a vision. I remember one night, while camping at my favorite amusement park, talking on my cell phone for HOURS with Gary Weimberg so he could understand the C.O. process, and the realities faced by COs in the military, laying the groundwork for the



NISBCO (CCW) Consultative Council meeting- Mid 1970s: Jim Bristol, Signe Wilkinson, Howard Maxwell, Bill Galvin

movie that he was planning. At that point in the process, I couldn't have imagined the quality and power of the resource that was to come.

Another personal point of pride was finishing the *Guide for COs in the Military*. We now have a current and thorough guide to help those in the military through the process. I also feel a sense of pride and accomplishment in other resources we have produced. I've completely rewritten the *Draft Counselors Manual* twice, and hopefully it will never be used for an actual draft!

Probably my favorite part of this job is public speaking, getting out there to meet people who care about our work, and to lead workshops. I LOVE interacting with children. I still remember the 5th grader at NY Yearly Meeting. I was talking to her JYM group about what has happened to some of the COs in the Iraq war. She asked, "What gives the government the right to put people in jail because they won't kill people?" Great question. I still don't have a good answer. But I feel like we're planting seeds. Maybe that girl will keep asking that question.

I know that for me, saying no to the war in Vietnam changed my life. I had to ask myself--if you really believe war is wrong, what are you going to do about it? I could no longer pretend that I didn't know what I did know. And for the people we are now helping to take a similar stand--their lives will be changed by the process--and the world will be better because of it.

It's not all glamorous work--many days have been spent reading government regulations and other tedious documents, reading CO claims that were not always inspiring, or on telephone conference calls that go on for two or three hours. Is it worth it? Will it make a difference? Some days it seems as if it makes no difference at all. But then you get the phone call--the mother of the soldier who has finally made it home--or the Marine himself, thanking you for making it happen.

There are some great legacies from this decade: the GI Rights Hotline is established on its own, independent of any particular group, an accomplishment which required a lot of time and long meetings. But it was well worth the effort to ensure that when CCCO self-destructed it did not take the Hotline down with it.

And the upcoming *Guide for military chaplains dealing with COs*. Coming to the realization that my years of experience working with COs have put me in a good position to provide useful insights that may assist military chaplains as they deal with COs.

For me, probably the most satisfying thing is knowing that I had a hand in making sure that conscientious objectors continue to have a place where they can go and get quality help: accurate information, a sympathetic ear, and encouragement and support. I wish it wasn't necessary--but we know that there have been conscientious objectors for as long as there have been wars. So as long as there are wars, there will be a need for an organization like the Center.

And as long as I am alive, I expect to be doing all I can to see it continue.

“Extending the rights of conscience...”

“If it’s an All Volunteer Military, Then Why Can’t I Leave?”

Former Petty Officer Second Class Daniel J. Lakemacher about his C.O. Process

This may sound odd coming from a 26-year-old, but it has only been during this past year that I became confident in citing my own conscience as the final authority for what I believe is right and wrong.

Beginning in childhood, I had been taught that morality is a closed issue; all one had to do was check the Bible, or as I now realize, the “correct” interpretation of the Bible. This didactic method continued through schooling (obey the teacher) and then into my enlistment in the Navy (obey the Chain of Command). Although lip service was occasionally paid to the idea that you didn’t have to obey bad instructions or unlawful orders, such rare references were made to convey that it would likely never happen and was merely a theoretical possibility.



Daniel before the discharge &

Unwittingly entrenched in such an unexamined life, it took a dramatic change for me to begin utilizing my conscience in determining matters of morality for myself. The catalyst for this change was my participation in the “detention” operations at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Although not exposed to the wanton violence of the battlefield, this firsthand experience of some of the effects and emotions involved in war caused me to reconsider my acceptance of any moral or ethical system that condoned war as right, or even necessary.

Considering such matters while still a member of an actively fighting military from which one cannot freely leave is extremely distressing. To give voice to my dissatisfaction, and to call attention to a frequently overlooked contradiction, I had a t-shirt printed with the pointed question: “If it’s an all volunteer military, then why can’t I leave?” Admittedly, in comparison to those inducted through a draft, my enlistment was certainly voluntary; however, after that initial act, neither the draftee nor enlistee can freely leave at will. Now, compare the latter lack of freedom to any other context in which someone is said to be doing something

voluntarily.

T-shirts aside, I did not always exude such confidence in my dissent. My wife can attest that as my beliefs changed, so began a long string of fear-filled and uncertain brainstorming sessions about what, if anything, I could do. In light of these lonely and stressful talks, I cannot understate the significance of finding the website for the Center on Conscience & War. Ultimately, it was because of CCW’s online resources that I first became aware that the U.S. military policy on conscientious objection could apply to me, a recent atheist. With a newfound hope, and CCW’s on-going counsel and guidance, I eventually filed a request to be discharged as a CO.

For months prior to my learning about CCW, I had felt trapped in an organization whose purpose I no longer supported. However, upon reading the Department of Defense instructions and talking multiple times with CCW staff, I became confident and encouraged that not only were there steps I could take to try to extricate myself from the Navy, but there were also people who agreed with my moral objections to war and were offering me support and guidance throughout the process.



after the discharge

Inspired by the solidarity I felt and wanting to pass it on to others who might not know about conscientious objection, or who could be in the midst of questioning the morality of war themselves, I decided to publicize my request for CO status with a website of my own. Just one day after I filed my CO application with my Executive Officer, I launched the website <http://WarIsImmoral.com>. It began as a blog to provide ongoing progress updates, but the website grew to include a video, radio interviews, an appended version of my official CO Request, as well as many of the letters and sworn statements that were used during my process of seeking discharge.

Whether or not it had anything to do with my website (I doubt I’ll ever know), I was discharged from the United States Navy as a conscientious objector on September 11, 2009. Since then, I’ve had the benefit of volunteering at the Center on Conscience & War, and I’m looking forward to continuing to seek opportunities to support and encourage present and future COs. Even more broadly, I want to promote the development of individual conscience that I felt the staff at CCW so respectfully helped me to cultivate for myself.

“Extending the rights of conscience...”

CCCO: A Eulogy

by Bill Galvin

The Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (CCCO) is now just a memory. But it sure had a good run for a while. CCCO was formed after World War II, when the draft resumed in 1948.

The National Service Board for Religious Objectors (NSBRO, now Center on Conscience & War) had been supporting COs since 1940. It had been created by churches, and during WWII, NSBRO helped with the administration of CPS camps (Civilian Public Service camps), places where conscientious objectors performing alternative service lived and worked. NSBRO’s work was primarily with legally recognized, religious COs.

NSBRO’s close cooperation with the Selective Service System during the war caused some churches and key people at NSBRO to feel that they had been co-opted. When the draft resumed in 1948, there were those who felt another CO organization was needed—one that would be free of the compromised position of NSBRO, and one that would better serve non-cooperators with the draft as well as non-religious COs. Thus, the creation of CCCO!

By the time of the Vietnam war resistance movement, NBSRO, by then known as NISBCO (the National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors), had broadened its focus to include support for resisters and secular COs as well, and both CCCO and NISBCO were leaders in providing training and resources for the draft counseling movement as part of the resistance to the Vietnam War.

CCCO was the better known of the two organizations, and in cooperation with NISBCO (CCW), AFSC and several other groups was responsible for creating the national network of draft counselors that so effectively served the draft-age population of the time. In addition to publishing what was considered the definitive guide for conscientious objectors facing the draft, *The Handbook for Conscientious Objectors*, CCCO staff traveled the country to train and provide wealth of resources for thousands of draft counselors. At its height, CCCO had 5 offices. (Philadelphia, San Francisco, Chicago, Atlanta and Denver) The Chicago office published a comprehensive *Draft Counselor’s Newsletter* that kept the national network of counselors a few steps ahead of draft boards throughout the country!

In many ways CCCO pioneered what became draft counseling.

And, as the war in Vietnam progressed, it broadened its work to include “military counseling”, translating the same skills that kept people out of the military through draft counseling to helping those who were already in the military. They published *Advice for COs in the Military*, to complement their *Handbook for those facing the draft*. And they trained counselors, developed training materials and a newsletter to keep these military counselors up to date.

Shop with GoodShop & Support CCW!

Up to 30% of a purchase you might have made anyway can go towards the Center. Just log on to www.goodsearch.com/goodshop.aspx, and search for your favorite online store. Just make sure you select “**Center on Conscience and War**” as your charity of choice, and proceeds from your purchase will go towards our efforts at defending the rights of conscientious objectors...at no extra charge!

After the Vietnam War and into the 1990’s, CCCO continued to do more fieldwork and grassroots outreach around these issues. Without an active draft the focus shifted away from Selective Service and draft issues and more towards counter-recruitment. And in addition to a specific military recruiting focus, CCCO broadened its work to try to address the militarization of schools and our entire culture. (A rather formidable task!) NISBCO/CCW worked cooperatively with CCCO throughout these years, although there were occasional disagreements about some specific issues, as

you might expect considering the Center is a faith based organization.

In the 1990’s, CCCO, NISBCO/CCW and a handful of other groups joined together to create the GI Rights Hotline. This is a toll-free number that can be called from anywhere in the country and the person calling would be able to get access to a military counselor. While it began small, the Hotline has now grown to 20 groups working together to provide counseling and receives over 30,000 calls a year.

CCCO was a key player in the creation of the Hotline. And during the first decade of the Hotline’s existence, CCCO took on a majority of the “grunt work” required to keep it going--things like routing calls from the toll-free number, establishing the webpage, developing outreach and training materials.

By the time of the new millennium, CCCO continued to play a key role with the GI Rights Hotline and military counseling, and continued to do counter-militarism work. But explicit CO oriented programs had disappeared from their agenda, (other than working with CO’s in the military who approached them for help). In recent years, financial woes seriously disrupted much of their programmatic work.

As someone who devoted 14 years of my life to CCCO, and as one who was helped by their materials when facing the draft myself, I am saddened by this loss to the draft and military counsel-

“Spreading the word...”

The entire movement for justice and peace has been diminished. There was a time when the name CCCO was synonymous with competent draft and military counseling, and its loss leaves a tremendous gaping hole.

Many people who continue to do this work were initially trained, or helped, by CCCO. There was a time when CCCO was the group you would automatically call if you had a tough question about conscientious objection, draft, or military law. In fact, I distinctly remember thinking, when I first began working at CCCO, “When there was something I didn’t know, I used to call CCCO. NOW WHO DO I CALL????”

CCCO’s actual closing brings an end to a painful demise. In 2006 CCCO had rearranged its staffing so that all of the programmatic work took place in the Philadelphia office, and the Oakland office just did fundraising and administrative work. In the summer of 2008, CCCO closed the Philadelphia office. It limped along for a while with volunteers and short term staff doing programmatic work. Around the beginning of October, 2009 the CCCO office in Oakland abruptly closed and their phones were disconnected. A month or so later, a CCCO board member officially confirmed that CCCO was shut down.

In spite of the recent demise, there is a long and proud heritage that we can and should celebrate. And CCCO’s closing makes it even more important that we work diligently to ensure that the groups that continue to do this vital work: CCW and the GI Rights Hotline, remain strong.

The Last Casualty

Thomas Bergman about chemical munitions at the AU Campus

In war, truth is the first casualty.
—Aeschylus

That truism is widely quoted to cover the utter senselessness of certain, or indeed all, wars. World leaders praise the heroism and the courage and the sacrifice of those who kill in our name. Some people cheer for those who endure sorrowfully inhuman conditions, but others have questions that lurk in their minds and hearts. Do these praises make sense? Was it all worth it? These are inquiries to which we will probably never have a final verdict.

During World War I, the so-called “War to End All Wars,” German forces used chlorine gas against the French position in the

Second Battle of Ypres, killing up to 6,000 troops by asphyxiation or subsequent respiratory damage. Witnesses reported people dying within ten minutes of exposure, the victims coughing up muriatic acid produced from the mixture of chlorine with the mucous lining of their lungs. Troops on all sides began to use lethal gas attacks, and it became a widespread tactic that caused even more horrific death and prevented forces from entering territory marked off by gas deployments. A chemical warfare arms race ensued, with all sides producing more and more effective gases and countermeasures, including the gas mask.

As a result, when the United States was preparing to enter the war, the Department of War thought it had to catch up. The Army Corps of Engineers took charge of that responsibility and was given permission to use the campus of American University in northwest Washington, DC, in exchange for monetary compensation. The Engineers constructed scores and scores of buildings, wherein they developed poison gases and countermeasures, and used bare ground for testing their products.

After the Engineers turned the campus back to American University, DC, residents thought that this was the end to the relationship. This turned out not to be the case. According to a report to Congress in 1996:

In January 1993, construction workers uncovered a pit in a housing development at 52nd Court near the site of American University. The pit contained a variety of World War I era munitions, some of which were liquid-filled. This pit was excavated and the munitions were safely removed from the area during Phase I remediation activities. As a result of this incident, additional information has been found that indicates this area was used as a proving ground for the Chemical Warfare Service.

In addition, it concluded:

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has now completed Phase II, which is a comprehensive investigation and cleanup of this site. The Corps aggressively searched for further buried munitions. No chemical warfare materiel (CWM) was found. The record of decision (ROD) for no further action was signed and approved June 2, 1995.

In its desire to close this chapter in the investigation, however, the government was proven to be acting in undue, possibly deliberately negligent, haste. In fact, while commencing the investigation, the Army Corps of Engineers found potentially volatile and lethal munitions that required a sealed metal container to be

Remember our annual
Advisory Council meeting at the
15th of May
International CO Day

We will celebrate the 10 Year
anniversary of
JE McNeil & Bill Galvin
at CCW

“Spreading the word...”

built around the site and high-tech chemical weapons detectors placed around the residential area to automatically notify the residents in the event of the release of the chemical weapons.

According to an article in the *Washington Post* on October 30, 2007, reporting on the excavation of munitions in “Pit 3” of the Spring Valley Formerly Used Defense Site (FUDS) that began in 2007:

Tan fabric covering the structure is designed to contain and filter chemical vapors, and sirens will warn residents living within a safety zone running 742 feet in every direction from the pit -- the distance based on calculations of the danger from a detonation of a round of arsine, which officials describe as the more “worrisome” of the chemicals because of its volatility.

All residents inside the zone, which includes parts of AU and 49 homes, have been given instructions to stay indoors and not try to leave the area. In a letter to the campus last month, AU President Neil Kerwin called a chemical release “highly unlikely” but said the school would remain “vigilant.”

Shortly after 10 a.m. yesterday (October 29), an operator inside the containment structure radioed to the project’s command post that chemical detection equipment was ready. “We’re getting ready to begin digging operations,” he radioed.

According to the Army report cited above, this is only one of around 700 FUDS that could contain chemical weapons. One can only imagine how many more “pits” could contain more lethal gas.

The 700 suspected sites are in addition to the several internationally declared stockpiles that have been destroyed, a process that resulted in the reduction by 60% of chemical weapons that do not require excavation and which has already cost \$25 billion.

Moreover, the area where the Engineers plan to destroy the material found at Pit 3 is near Sibley Hospital, where more than a dozen residents live within the range of potentially released gas, and where the DC supply of drinking water is located just a couple hundred feet away from the official range.

The investigation and remediation project at the Spring Valley FUDS has already cost over \$170 million and has posed a danger to civilians and Engineers alike. A study by the *Northwest Current*, a neighborhood newspaper, published November 10, 2004, found over 150 cases of disease in the Spring Valley with possible links to exposure to chemical weapons material, although no causality has been concluded. What more risk and cost will the 700 other sites entail?

I would like to ask another question:

If truth is the first casualty in war, then what is the last?

Truth Commission on Conscience March 21-22 New York Riverside Church

To Honor and Protect Freedom of Conscience for our Nations’ Service Members

The Truth Commission on Conscience in War, a national gathering of community and religious leaders, advocacy groups, and artists, will receive personal testimony from veterans and briefings from expert witnesses about:

- moral and religious questions facing soldiers both before and during combat
- moral and religious criteria of just war
- international agreements governing the justification and conduct of war
- limits of military regulations on Conscientious Objection
- Soldiers must have freedom of conscience:

The exercise of individual moral conscience is an expectation and strength of those who serve in the U.S. military. Current regulations require them to be opposed to “war in any form” to receive Conscientious Objector status. Many service men and women serving in Iraq and Afghanistan have faced moral dilemmas because they believe one or both of these wars are illegal or unjust.

Join the Center on Conscience & War and others at Riverside Church in New York City to Promote the Military Conscientious Objector Act at

The Truth Commission on Conscience in War

March 21, 4-8 pm

Public hearing

Location: The Riverside Church Nave, New York City

- * Screening of Soldiers of Conscience
- * Testimony from Veterans
- * Briefings from Expert Witnesses

March 22, 9 am-4 pm

Meeting of Commissioners and Testifiers (closed to public, but if you are interested in becoming a Commissioner, contact us)

<http://conscienceinwar.org/>



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From the Desk of the Executive Director

It is sad to note the demise of CCCO, as told in more detail in Bill Galvin's article in this *Reporter*. CCCO grew out of a feeling among NSBRO (National Board of Religious Objectors) supporters in 1948 that there needed to be a place for secular objectors to war. Many years later and much water under the bridge, when I came on as Executive Director of the Center, much more had changed in the two organizations than the Center's name.

CCCO and the Center had worked side-by-side for many decades at that time. Our missions more complemented each than overlapped – although some overlap was inevitable. In particular, the Center and CCCO worked together as members of the GI Rights Hotline which they, among a handful of other organizations, co-founded in the early 1990s. CCCO provided the administration of the Hotline, but the Center provided its share of training, research and writing as well as counseling.

It is true that in recent years CCCO claimed ownership of the GI Rights Hotline Network which it had so ably administered for many years past. The other members of the Hotline Network tried very hard to keep the dispute over the ownership in-house, but eventually, as these things do, rumors began. Nevertheless, the Hotline Network was always ready to work with CCCO at any time and considered CCCO to be one of its members in spite of the dispute.

CCCO closed its Philadelphia office without notice in the spring of 2009. This left no one on staff with CCCO who was trained in GI counseling. A volunteer program was established, but the person staffing it, though well intentioned, was still untrained. CCCO closed its San Francisco office in the fall and abandoned the 800 number, referring people who needed counseling to the GI Rights Hotline Network.

So that is where things stand today.

We are sorry to see the demise of CCCO .

The Center on Conscience & War continues in its support of and its work with the GI Rights Hotline Network, of which it is a member. The Center is the only organization in the United States that focuses solely on the issue of conscientious objection to war.

Because the work did not end with CCCO.

Yours for Peace and Justice,

J. E. McNeil

