"The Good War and the Bad Peace: Conscientious Objectors in World War II"

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The poster down at the grocery store had a man in uniform, encouraging you to buy war bonds. Your neighbors were professing proudly how their son was off fighting Nazi evil. The politicians and the media were calling it a "good" war. But what if you didn't want to fight? What happened to you? To be a conscientious objector in World War II was to reject all of these social and cultural norms that had a stronghold on the national community. Conscientious objectors took many forms, from the orthodox Amish to the urban radical, each with a nonviolent philosophy that prohibited them from participating in combat. Depending on the personal circumstances of the objector, the government might send them to jail, assign them noncombatant duty as medics, or it sent the majority to Civilian Public Service (CPS) camps scattered across the United States. Most of these camps were established on the former sites of Civilian Conservation Corps camps from the New Deal Era. Men working in the CPS camps constituted one out of every thousand men who were drafted, or a total of 11,950.[1] For the duration of the war, these men were temporary firefighters, experimental guinea pigs, assistants in mental hospitals, and other service workers.

A focus on camp life on the home front, specifically in Oregon, the CPS experience was a complicated combination of the experimental and precarious relationship between the government and the churches, wartime sentiment against COs, and the frustrations of the COs themselves being ostracized from society for their beliefs. Placed in isolated geographical regions, they were "out of sight, out of mind", and their story is seldom told. Despite these hardships, the CO contribution during the war was immense, and their expression of pacifism influenced future generations. Through the analysis of written personal accounts and oral history interviews I have tried to give some of these men a voice, one that was not illustrated through any war poster or presidential

[1] Zahn, Gordon Charles, A Descriptive Study of the Social Backgrounds of Conscientious Objectors in Civilian Public Service During World War II. (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press) 1953, 4.

speech, but none the less, one that speaks of bravery, of conviction, and of patriotism through a different lens.

The interpretations of the COs experience tend to focus mainly on the effects of camp life and work. Many of those who have researched the CO camp life have found it to be both a positive and a negative experience. Scholars also examine workload, wages, and camp rules.

Mulford Sibley and Philip Jacob are among those who emphasized the great amount of contribution made by the COs to the nation during the war in return for very little recognition.[2] According to these authors, the men who chose CO status, whether spiritual or political dissenters, were just as much a part of the effort on the home front as any other contributing citizen. They did so in the face of public scorn and resentment. "In opposing the 'mass' state, he (the CO) is made to feel, by legal and moral pressure, that he is attacking not merely a small ruling class but the vast majority of his right-minded fellow citizens."[3] Sibley and Jacob choose to focus on the work done in the CPS camps and the variety of contributions made in these environments, from Oregon to Puerto Rico.

Offering a different perspective is Rachel Waltner Goossen, who looks at the CPS experience through the eyes of the women who worked and lived at the camps.[4] By revealing what it was like for the wives of COs, or the nurses who cared for them, Goossen broadens the CPS experience. She also illustrates the many faults of the CPS camps and how they affected the family structure. She concludes that CPS was oftentimes debilitating for families, due to financial hardship and separation.

Walter Kellogg, a major in the army during World War II, does not perceive any

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[2] Mulford Q. Sibley and Philip E. Jacob. Conscription of Conscience. New York: Cornell University Press: 1952); Julien Cornell, Conscience and the State (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.: 1973); Robert S. Pollard. Conscience and Liberty (New York: 1972)

[3] Mulford Q. Sibley and Philip E. Jacob. Conscription of Conscience. New York: Cornell University Press: 1952), 2.

[4] Rachel Waltner Goossen Women Against the Good War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

hardships endured by the CO. Kellogg believed that the government was too accommodating to these men who refused to be a part of the war, and believes that the CPS camps were a privilege.[5] In my research, Kellogg brought the only negative perspective of the COs, but as this paper will illustrate, he was echoed by the majority of the nation.

It is also the case that many COs have chosen to share their experiences through writing. Larry and Lenna Mae Gara have compiled a number of personal accounts, and William Stafford wrote his autobiography of his time spent at CPS camps. The Garas' work includes men who served time in prison as well as men who were workers at CPS camps nationwide; these men recall vividly the public sentiment that charged COs with being cowards, slackers, and enemies of the United States cause. Stafford also remembers the scorn he received from his nation for being a peaceful patriot.

The personal accounts and interviews that were included also are based on camp life and whether it was considered an effective means of "dealing with" the COs. Responses tend to be mixed, but the CPS experience was almost always regarded as a positive one. The CPS structure, the bureaucracy, and the government involvement were generally regarded as the negative aspects for COs. The personal accounts echo the sentiments expressed in the secondary material.

There were those that did not discuss the CPS experience in length, and because of this, they will not be discussed at length in this essay. Robert Pollard chooses a more philosophical approach to the CO, addressing the serious spiritual issues and questions that the CO faced when his belief system came under attack from the government and his own community. Being a conscientious objector, according to Pollard, was a complicated and difficult stance to defend, especially for those political COs, to which Pollard pays

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[5] Walter Guest Kellogg, The Conscientious Objector. (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.: 1972),

close attention. He defends the political objector's stance against those who don't believe that it is a well-founded position to take.

In contrast to Pollard, Julien Cornell deals with the legality of being a CO, and what kind of steps the government was taking in its recognition (or lack of) of the CO status. Both Cornell and Pollard wholly disagree with the separation of COs into CPS camps and considered them to be tools of isolation and abandonment.

Many Americans are unaware of the history of COs in American society. COs have existed since the country's independence. Their rights were recognized by the Continental Congress, saying "there are some people who for Religious Principles cannot bear arms in any case...and this Congress intend no violence to their conscience."[6] This statement indicated that if for religious purposes one could not justify fighting, the government had no intention of forcing them to do so.

During the Revolution and the Civil War, men were permitted to hire substitutes, or to pay a "commutation fee" in place of combat. This fee, during the Civil War (the first war to introduce conscription), was three hundred dollars. What this became was a privilege for those who had the money or a slave to fight in their place. There was no moral or religious conviction, and it was acceptable this way. Most religious COs during this time would refuse to hire a substitute.

When World War I began, the government dealt with the growing group of conscientious objectors in a different way. The 1917 Selective Service Act stated that if a person were a conscientious objector, and exempt from combat, he would not be exempt from noncombatant duty specified by the President. This duty included the Medical Corps, the Quartermaster Corps, and the Corps of Engineers. This caused COs to be a part of the military institution although as noncombatant. Many refused this order to

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[6] Conscientious Objection, Selective Service Monograph No. 11 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1950), 33, in Rohr, John A., Prophets Without Honor (Tennessee: Abingdon Press), 18.

report for induction on the grounds that they would not contribute to the cause in any form, and many even refused to wear a uniform.

The United States government violated many civil liberties during World War I for the alleged good of national security. The Espionage Act of 1917 deemed illegal any "attempt to cause insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny, or refusal of duty in the military or naval forces of the United States or willfully obstruct recruiting or enlistment service."[7] The Sedition Act of 1918, an amendment to the Espionage Act, stated that "no one should utter, print, write, or publish any disloyal...language" of the government, Constitution, Army, or Navy of the United States.[8] Although this Act mainly targeted Socialists and German sympathizers, the wording immediately affected conscientious objectors and their stance against war. Due to these two acts, COs were technically in violation of the law by objecting to war and refusing to serve. Nevertheless, many COs accepted noncombatant roles, with 4,000 COs in military camps in World War I.

The National Civil Liberties Bureau learned of at least forty cases of abuse of COs in the first seven months of the draft. The abuses included starving, beatings with belts and brooms, and being hanged by the wrists.[9] Four hundred forty six COs were court-marshaled and sent to prison on the grounds of refusing to register. Of these, seventeen were sentenced to death, one hundred forty two to life in prison. Three were sentenced to fifty years, four forty years, and fifty seven, twenty five years. When he became president, Roosevelt gave amnesty to all COs still serving time in 1933. Fortunately, no death sentences were carried out.[10] This is a powerful example of the horrors that COs were forced to endure under the authority of those who considered them

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[7] Frederick C. Giffin. Six Who Protested (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1977), 33.
[8] Giffin, 33.
[9] Walter Guest Kellogg, The Conscientious Objector. (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.: 1972), 9.
[10] Mulford Q. Sibley and Philip E. Jacob. Conscription of Conscience. New York: Cornell University Press: 1952), 14.

second-class citizens, at best.

During World War II, six thousand men were sent to prison on these same grounds. Of these six thousand, 75 percent were Jehovah's Witnesses.[11] The reason for this group being denied CO status seems to be unknown. The average sentence imposed upon COs was 30.6 months; the average sentence for all federal prisoners was 22.1 months.[12] This paper will not address it in detail, but the prison experience was a unique one for COs. The reason why many COs went to prison was more out of choice than force. Large numbers of both political and religious dissenters refused to contribute to the war effort on any level in alternative service; according to the conscription laws, judges had little choice but to incarcerate these protesters. Those who went through the prison system in World War II found it to be an effective medium for expressing social resistance and invoking small-scale revolution. Although probably not altogether a pleasant experience, CO prisoners preferred it to conformity with the government.

The inter-war years were a time of relative national peace for the United States, and many politicians took a strong stance of isolationism in the aftermath of World War I. Influential senators such as Gerald P. Nye were successful in passing a number of neutrality laws during the thirties, one of which established the United States' position with European affairs officially impartial. By 1939, however, there was a growing national sentiment against the fascist and Nazi powers in Europe and Japan, and the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941 convinced most policy makers to enter the war.[13]

In 1940, members of the historic peace churches, consisting of Mennonite, Friends, and Brethren, wrote a letter to President Roosevelt expressing their concerns regarding the coming war and the issue of protecting COs. This letter was a precautionary

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[11] Sibley, 354.
[12] Julien Cornell, Conscience and the State (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.: 1973), 15.
[13] America: History and Life, Clio Notes: "FDR and Isolationism"

action in light of the treatment COs received under the Espionage Act in World War I. The Friends War Problem Committee proposed an option for those opposed to combatant service as well as noncombatant service to be exempted from all types of service.[14] The President promptly rejected it. Yet, the administration did recognize a need for some accommodation for COs in wartime. It sought to create a policy that was more sensitive than that of World War I. Military commanders thought that the CO should be treated in one of three ways:

> Demand of them military service, and if they refuse treat them as criminals and imprison them at hard labor; send them to France behind the lines, where association with soldiers might have a missionary effect on them and cause them to forget their present base creed and rise to worthy levels of self-sacrifice and struggle for great ideals or if both of the above are regarded as too drastic, intern them with enemy aliens and send them permanently out of the country as soon as possible.[15]

A number of COs were brought to the Military Affairs Committee and were interviewed regarding their position on war in the hopes of gaining some insight on how to solve the CO problem. Congress was "concerned not with an examination of the problem of how to protect the objector but rather with barbed questions from congressmen seeking to show the invalidity of the objector's theoretical position."[16]

Thus the Selective Training and Service Act, or Draft Act, passed in October 1940 recognized only those pacifist positions derived from "religious training and belief", men whose oppositions derived from "essentially political, sociological, or philosophical views or a merely personal moral code" were excluded from CO status.[17] The non-religious objectors had a more difficult time in proving their nonviolent stance without church backing or reference. "A non-religious objector may have to choose between compromising his conscience and facing repeated persecution until he is beyond draft

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[14] Sibley, 48.
[15] Colonel Roosevelt, as quoted in Kellogg, 111.
[16] Sibley, 51.
[17] Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors, Handbook for Conscientious Objectors (Philadelphia: Larchwood Press), 1952, 4.

age."[18] Many men felt that their moral beliefs constituted their faith, and were just as valid as any organized religion, and were insulted by the fact that this was not recognized. There were a group of people from both inside the church and out that tried to get the wording changed so the word "religious" was dropped, but congress claimed that dropping the religious "would open up the floodgates to Communists seeking to evade their responsibilities."[19]

This act also established an elaborate system of appeals in order to gain CO status. A potential CO had to present his case to the local draft board, and if denied, he could appeal once more. If denied again, he could continue to appeal through the state courts, and eventually the Supreme Court. Research for this paper suggests that very few had to appeal as high as the Supreme Court, but it often took at least two appeals to the local draft board. The National Service Board for Religious Objectors (NSBRO), supported by the Peace Churches, assisted in administration of alternative service and designated representatives in many communities to counsel the CO on his decision and his future.[20]

Local draft board members asked a variety of questions of the applicant regarding his religious and moral conviction. These questions were often very hard to answer, and obviously geared towards putting the applicant in an awkward position. Board members asked such questions as: Why is it inconsistent with your conscience to defend the right against evil-doers? Why are you willing to accept the benefits of a country you won't protect? What would you do if you saw a murderer beating a child to death?[21] There were many more questions that had a similar connotation and biased political message. One CO from an Oregon camp put his response simply; "people say, 'what would happen if

[18] ibid, 89.
[19] Sibley, 51.
[20] Sibley, 55.
[21] ibid, 95-96.

everyone would do what you did? Well, I said, if everyone would do that, there'd be no problem."[22]

COs often regarded these questions as tactics to confuse and manipulate them into doubting their beliefs. If an applicant managed to phrase these difficult questions correctly, he was rewarded with CO status. The local draft board was clearly not willing to grant CO status to anyone. Dick Votaw, a CO from Indiana, thought that his draft board didn't even know what CO status was. "They did everything in their power to keep you from getting that classification...they were pretty mean."[23]

Of the thirteen million men who served in the armed forces, 50,000 were COs.[24] There were a number of classifications that one could receive from the draft board when applying for CO status, but there were two that were most prevalent. I-A-O CO, which made one available for noncombatant duty, such as the Medical Corps, and IV-E, which stated that the applicant was opposed to both combat and noncombatant duty and assigned to civilian work of "national importance." Informally, COs were divided into three categories. The least cooperative were sent to prison, the most cooperative put in uniform for noncombatant duty, and the limited cooperators (the majority) were sent to CPS camps.

The men who were sent to CPS camps included both religious objectors and neutral objectors. These were considered limited cooperators, consisting mainly of Mennonites, Amish, Quakers, Jehovah's Witnesses, and non-affiliated religious members. There were over 200 religious sects and denominations represented in the CO population, with the Mennonites comprising of 40 percent of this population. The religious objectors were mainly rural residents from the Midwest and South, usually with

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[22] Lynn Elber "Refusing to Serve: Conscientious Objectors of 60 Years Ago Recalled" The Oregonian (January 17, 2002), E8.
[23] Dick Votaw, interview (May 5, 2003)
[24] Schlissel, 214.

less than high school education, and "native" born parents. This group also was categorized by their "encouraged deviation," meaning that their course of action to be a CO was prescribed by their religious creed.[25] For the Mennonites and the Amish, serving in the military would have been viewed as an act of rebellion.

For many neutral objectors, however, serving in the military seemed an act of conformity. The 400 neutral objectors, considered "unchurched" were mainly East coast urban residents with a few years of college.[26] Over half of the neutral objectors claimed foreign born parents. They were called "resister deviants" because their course of action was often an individual decision, either tolerated or ignored by their community.[27] Since this group had little to no inspiration in an organized religious form, they were inspired instead by Ghandi, Thoreau, and Eriq Maria Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front.[28] Both religious and neutral objectors were mainly single, with no dependents.

The CPS camp implementation was set in motion after the passing of the Selective Training and Service Act, but the government did not fund the camps. The Historic Peace Churches volunteered to fund the camps, with little help from the government. The churches, COs, and their families raised and contributed a total of $7 million for maintenance over the course of the five year program.[29] Authority would ultimately remain with the government, but the church was responsible for the well-being and the organization of each CPS camp. Thus the fundamental conception of the camps was that of a religious order, "whose members, though under legal compulsion, were moved primarily by their personal ideals to perform a sacrificial service."[30]

In 1940, Clarence Dykstra, former President of the University of Wisconsin,

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[25] ibid, 22.
[26] Sibley, 167.
[27] ibid, 22.
[28] Larry and Lenna Mae Gara, A Few Small Candles (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1999)
[29] Sibley, 124.
[30] Sibley, 111.

became the director of the Selective Service System, and was responsible for developing what would become the CPS. Originally the camps were intended to keep the men for only a year, but like many other forms of internment during World War II that went on across the world, their time in the camps were extended for the duration. A total of 151 CPS camps were located across the country, mainly on the west and east coasts, in relatively isolated areas. Most of the camps that were primarily agricultural and forestry based were old Civilian Conservation Corps camps from the New Deal Era, and poorly equipped for a new group of men to inhabit them. The government saw the men as much-needed laborers, and regarded them much like prisoners in their treatment. The government made this statement of COs; "He may be told when and how to work, what to wear and where to sleep. He may be moved from place to place and from job to job, even to foreign countries, for the convenience of the government regardless of his personal feelings or desires."[31] The goals of the church and the goals of the government regarding COs were obviously very different. While the church was concerned with the spiritual and mental welfare of COs, the government regarded them as primarily a source of labor.

For six years, a total of almost 12,000 men worked for 40-96 hours per week without pay. If the government had paid for this work at the same rate as for its army, it would have spent over $18 million.[32] There were three main areas of CO work: forestry work, medical testing, and public health work. The bulk of this work was related to agriculture and forestry, most of which proved to be difficult and dangerous. Forestry work involved a number of tasks, including watershed analysis, soil erosion, and the prevention and fighting of forest fires. From San Dimas National Forest in California to the Pocomoke River in Maryland, CPS workers contributed to the total of 49 dams built,

[31] Col. Franklin A. McLean, as quoted by Cornell, 104.
[32] Sibley, 124.

164 reservoirs, almost 3 thousand water control structures built for irrigation, and either moved or planted over 1 million trees .[33]

Forestry work involving the prevention and fighting of forest fires was the largest work of COs in CPS. "Smoke jumpers" were trained to parachute into a forest fire during the summer months in Oregon when fire was at its height. During the off-season, they constructed trails, built truck roads to inaccessible sections, hewed timber, and cleared underbrush.[34] Some lived in "spike camps", which were often 25-50 miles into the mountains and were constantly on call. The only contact with the outside world was a delivery truck for food and mail once a week.[35]

The men felt that these isolated conditions were purposeful, to keep them from the rest of society during the war. Arthur Ekirch, Jr. was in a number of camps from Oregon to Pennsylvania, and he said that, while in Oregon, "the favorite wisecrack is 'we asked for peace, and we sure have it.'"[36] The work in Oregon mainly consisted of forest maintenance, fire-suppression, look-out observation and building repair. Timber stand improvement was performed in western Oregon where large burned over areas were reseeded.[37]

Camps in the Pacific Northwest were established in Oregon because the state had a higher number of residents who were members of peace churches than other states in the area.[38] There were seven camps total in Oregon, the most famous of these being Waldport camp number 56, known for its artists and creative contributions to Oregon and the CPS camps as a whole. These tasks were overseen by the U.S. Forestry Service, National Parks Service, and General Land Office. Most camps were facilitated by the

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[33] Sibley, 130.
[34] Sibley, 128.
[35] Sibley, 128.
[36] Ekirch, Arthur Jr. " A Political Prisoner in Wartime", Peace and Change 12 (1987): 81.
[37] Sibley, 129.
[38] Joyce Justice "World War II Civilian Public Service" Prologue (1991) 267.

Church of the Brethren, the Mennonites, and the Forestry Service. The LaPine, Oregon camp was established in 1943 as a government run camp for those objectors who did not want to be under the authority of the churches. Camps 21 and 56, located in Cascade Locks and Waldport, Oregon, respectively, were established in 1941 and administered by the church.

Cascade Locks, also known as Wyeth, was located 45 miles upstream from Portland on the Columbia River. It had 113 residents, of which only 13 were from Oregon, the rest were mostly from California.[39] Most of the assignees were considered well-educated, with 14 of them having one and a half to two years of graduate work in addition to bachelor's degrees. The average education was two years of college.[40] The camp eventually supported the School of Pacifist Living when other camps began to establish schools. A typical day at camp 21 began at 6:00 a.m., with breakfast at 6:30, followed by a devotional until 7:45 a.m., when work began. There was a noon lunch, four more hours of work, and dinner at 6:00 p.m.. Fifty cents per day was allotted for meals. Evenings were reserved for recreation.[41]

George Yamada, a Japanese American Nisei CO, was assigned to Cascade Locks for one year until he was ordered to go to an internment camp. He refused, and was eventually sent to prison in Michigan after being assigned to various other camps in the interior of the country. Yamada had the unique privilege of experiencing double-oppression, both of his beliefs and of his race. He considers himself, along with his fellow COs an interesting case, since they were "imprisoned for *refusing* to kill."[42] Yamada recognized the charged atmosphere of war, and observed that "in saner periods,

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[39] Nokes, Richard "Wyeth's Conchies Fight with Shovel" The Oregonian (March 1942) 5.
[40] Nokes, 5.
[41] Nokes, 5.
[42] George Yamada "My Story of WWII" in Larry Gara and Lenna Mae Gara, eds. A Few Small Candles (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1999), 199.

we realize that war subverts whatever pretensions to freedom a nation may espouse."[43] Yamada was eventually sent to the Germfask, Michigan camp because of the fact that he was a Nisei citizen, and not allowed to remain on the coast. Shortly after his Germfask stay, he was imprisoned.

Another larger camp in Oregon, the Waldport camp, was established on the site of former CCC Camp Angel. It was famous for housing poets, pianists, writers, painters, college-trained craftsmen, and an audience of literate, well-educated men.[44] These artists proposed a Fine Arts school to be established at Waldport, and William Everson became the director. They published pamphlets and essays, one of the most popular being *The Illiterati*, which raised some eyebrows of those suspecting this artistic element of being "spokesmen for the Pacific Cause."[45] The publication was later censored by a member of the Selective Service agency.

Not everyone was supportive of the Waldport camp, and many community members felt threatened by their presence. One resident of Yachats wrote to the Selective Service stating, "we don't want them here...a bunch of men who are too yellow to fight for the country that feeds them...if we have to keep them, put them back in the interior like they do the Japs."[46] What is interesting to note about this statement is that the U.S. was

in fact *not* feeding the COs. It was the churches. These forms of misinformation and fear were not uncommon, and were directed at multiple groups besides the COs. One 1942 article in the Oregonian stated that " much of their courage is displayed in braving public scorn of their stand against military defense of the nation."[47]

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[43] Yamada, 204.
[44] William Eshelman and Charlie Davis "Oregon's CO Camps" Oregon Cultural Heritage Commission: Portland.
[45] Justice, 269.
[46] Justice, 267.
[47] Nokes, 5.

Loyd Osburn, an Oregon CO, spent time at Camp Elkton in southern Oregon.[48] This camp was administered by the American Friends Service Committee, and since Loyd was a Quaker, he was sent there. After only a month at Camp Elkton, he applied for a job at the Portland Office of the Oregon and California Revested Lands Administration, where

he was a compassman for a timber cruiser and a draftsman in the office. He remained at this position until he was discharged in 1945. He and his wife, along with a few other COs, shared a house in Portland together.

Some of this work of national importance involved volunteering for various testing programs. One of the most famous of these tests was the starvation experiment in 1944 performed at the University of Minnesota. It was a year long study aimed at finding remedies for the anticipated post-war malnutrition problem. There were various other starvation tests performed for the Army and Navy to determine how long soldiers could go without food or water.

Some other experiments involved disease research, and many COs were exposed to various diseases such as malaria, pneumonia, and hepatitis. One of the more extreme cases involved men wearing lice-infested underwear for two weeks while continuing to work in their forestry jobs, and then being sprayed with various insecticides to test for typhus control. Another account involved the test subjects ingesting infected human feces, blood, and mouth washings to research the effects of hepatitis. In 1944, Army doctors announced that as a result of tests on COs, they had "partially unraveled the mystery of infectious hepatitis."[49] This came at a price. Although they were touted as "volunteers," if it weren't for the CPS sponsorship of such experimentation, these men would not have had to endure things of this horrible nature.

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[48] Loyd Osburn, interview, May 5, 2003.
[49] Sibley, 144.

The third major area of CO contribution was in the public health system. COs were appointed to work in severely under-funded and understaffed mental hospitals, acting

as cooks, wardens, and recreational and occupational therapy assistants. Some COs even administered deep-shock insulin treatment to patients. There was approximately one CO for every 100-175 patients, and that CO would be responsible for their well-being at all hours of the day, and this meant that the work week often constituted over 100 hours.[50]

Certain hospitals were well-kept and had adequate care for patients, but many hospitals that COs were assigned to were in worse shape. The state hospital in Pennsylvania, Byberry Hospital, assigned COs to an uncared-for ward where the 350 patients were neglected, naked, and filthy. The group of CPS men cleaned, dressed, and fed these patients, making vast improvements on their living conditions.[51] They even repainted the walls and scrubbed the floors. Their work left a powerful impact at Byberry and many other hospitals nationwide; so much that many COs after they were discharged chose to continue their work in aiding the mentally ill.

Public health projects outside mental hospitals were taken on in Florida, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. In Florida, there were five counties where 85 percent of the population was infected with hookworm. CPS men produced and installed sanitary water supplies, dug deep wells and septic tanks.[52] These steps taken, the disease was curbed and prevented from spreading. In Puerto Rico, the contribution was also very large. In 1942, CPS men, along with the Puerto Rican government, developed the Martin G. Brumbaugh Reconstruction Unit, which provided medical aid, public health education and community and social services to rural populations. They taught the importance of

[50] Sibley, 135.
[51] Sibley, 136.
[52] Sibley, 140.

hygiene and disease prevention, as well as malnutrition prevention.[53] Similar institutions were set up in the Virgin Islands. This CPS work was considered some of the most rewarding, and

the contribution to the nation by the CPS men, as is illustrated here, was quite large. Just as many COs continued their work in the mental health field, some found the public health realm so rewarding that they chose similar careers in the post-war world.

For many COs, though, the work was unrewarding and frustrating, and they felt like prisoners on government-commissioned assignments. In addition to being isolated, many men felt like they were wasting their time, and the jobs that they were given were worthless and petty. David Dellinger, a worker in the camps had to leave his job counseling inner-city children to take up a much less meaningful job. "To supervise nonviolent religionists raking leaves in an isolated geographical area wasn't the kind of nonviolence I believed in."[54] These tedious, non-paying jobs were not what the workers were expecting when told they would be performing tasks of "national importance." "Service to one's country when voluntary is a noble thing, when compulsory is degrading."[55]

Many COs began to speak out against this degradation near the end of the war. These men felt frustrated about the isolation of the camps, feeling like the government just threw them someplace to forget about them. Arthur Ekirch, an Oregon camp worker, also mentioned that he and the men in the camps regarded FDR as their "personal jailer."[56] He was frustrated by the camps' oppressive nature. "Like prisoners we are ready to protest and feel persecuted at the least opportunity. However, there is no persecution-

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[53] Sibley, 142.
[54] Dellinger, David "Why I Refused to Register" in Gara, Larry and Lenna Mae Gara, eds. A Few Small Candles (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1999), 23.
[55] Cornell, 7.
[56] ibid, 90.

only discrimination in the form of segregation and work at no pay."[57]

Many CPS men, including the residents of the Cascade Locks camp, performed walkouts, strikes, and worker slowdowns in response to the growing dissatisfaction with CPS administration and imprisonment. These men were considered "troublemakers", and "arrogant individualists with anarchic beliefs", according to Victor Olsen, a field representative for Selective Service.[58] "What the American public, or even the CPS administration, church, or government did not seem to understand was the way in which the camps politicized and radicalized the individual."[59] This was not an unheard-of sentiment, and when the workers chose to protest their living and working conditions, they were met with great opposition, "his protest had been greeted as insubordination rather than as constructive criticism,"[60] and the CO dislike grew.

Some protests came in the form of song. CPS men would write songs and sing them to the tunes of familiar standards, reflecting ideas of socialism, unity, pacifism, and resistance. One song, a favorite in the LaPine camp was called "Money Patriots", sung to the tune of "Clementine":

"Join the party that is ruling
Give the boss what brains you've got.
Pay the rooster, be a booster,
And then you'll be a patriot."[61]

This is just one song among many that are examples of the COs sentiments against not only their treatment in the camps, but the nation's stance against them.

The COs did not only dedicate themselves to fighting issues occurring within the camps. In 1944, Andrew J. May, Chairman of the House Military Affairs Committee introduced an Army-supported bill to require one year military training in peacetime for

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[57] ibid, 80.
[58] Justice , 270.
[59] Ekrich, 82.
[60] Sibley, 278.
[61] Vincent and Ervin Beck, "CPS Protest Songs" Mennonite Life (1996), 18.

all males ages 17-21.[62] Immediately a grass-roots campaign began within the CPS camps. COs made speeches, distributed pamphlets, posters, articles, and letters to the editor and congressmen. The May Bill was never passed, and it is probable that the CO campaign had an influence. Although most of CO protest was aimed at the policy of no pay within the camps, they were informed and involved with the politics and policy of the nation during the war.

The issue of work at no pay was a sore spot for many of the COs. Although the majority of COs were single with no dependents, there was still a group who had families to support, and this was a difficult task when working for nothing. In 1942, instead of choosing to pay the men, the administrators of CPS camps allowed men to look for after-hours work that would bring in income for their families.[63] Loyd Osburn worked a second job to make ends meet, as a janitor for the Friends Church, and later as a groundskeeper for a Mormon mission home. His wife worked in the Portland Flour Mill.[64] For Loyd and his wife, the $2.50 a month was not much. "I'm not sure what that was for; just to salve somebody's conscience, I guess, that they were paying us something."[65]

As many as one thousand children of COs lived on or near a CPS camp, along with two thousand women. fifteen percent of these women were in the camps with official duties, such as nurses and dietitians.[66] Eventually, some COs had no choice but to register for noncombatant service or even combatant service so they could receive benefits for their dependents. In 1942 the Servicemen's Dependents Allowance Act was passed, guaranteeing benefits to military personnel, including family allowances at approximately fifty dollars a month, and included obstetrics care for wives. This Act did

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[62] Sibley, 154.
[63] Rachel Waltner Goossen Women Against the Good War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 50.
[64] Loyd Osburn, interview. (May 5, 2003).
[65] Osburn
[66] Goossen, 60.

not extend to COs.[67]

In addition to financial strains, COs and their families were faced with emotional strains. Many times the family of a CO's wife would disapprove of his stance, and it was a hardship to endure broken relationships with family members. It was so difficult that some women felt compelled to lie about their husband's CO status to her co-workers and friends.[68] Mary Feagins, the wife of a CO, was fired from her public teaching job due to her husband's status. Not only was Feagins fired, but a friend was fired as well for attending War Resisters League meetings with the couple and expressing her own anti-war sentiments. Mary eventually got a teaching job close to her husband's camp with the condition that she could not tell anyone what her husband was doing.[69] The CO wives were also not allowed to live with their husbands unless one of them was a staff member. Many men had to leave behind wives and children and move across the country without enough leave time to visit them. Often times, this rule was broken and wives lived with their husbands in semi-secret until the rule was relaxed in 1942.

Besides enduring life in the camps, the atmosphere towards COs outside the camps during World War II was not the most friendly. "In World War II, a high level of consensus supporting the war effort was achieved from the beginning. Although occasional areas of criticism or dissatisfaction with specific programs and policies might arise, they were never permitted to outweigh the central patriotic theme-that the war had to be won and every individual had a definite part to play in its winning."[70] In these times, patriotism was, and still is, shown through the defense of one's country, and those who did not follow this mold were considered the antithesis of the widespread patriotic spirit.

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[67] Goossen, 49.
[68] Goossen, 66.
[69] Mary Feagins, "Alternative Service". The Southern Friend (Autumn 1992), 29-30.
[70] Zahn, Gordon Charles, A Descriptive Study of the Social Backgrounds of Conscientious Objectors in Civilian Public Service During World War II. (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1953), 1.

William Stafford, a prominent poet and World War II CO had many memories of the negative responses he and his fellow COs received. "Those of us who objected openly found our country conquered overnight-conquered by aliens who could shout on any corner or in any building and bring down on us wrath and hate more intense than on any foreigner."[71] They were without support from their community or their government. Ralph Digia, a CO felt that "World War II reinforced my belief that in war one becomes what the enemy is accused of being."[72] While off fighting the "damn Japs" and "evil Nazis," the American community at home was practicing multiple forms of segregation and hatred, the very evils they were proud to be fighting against.

In the post-war environment, COs continued to feel discriminated against. It was policy that COs would be released from camp more slowly than the soldiers were discharged so the CO would not have employment advantages.[73] There was not much advantageous about CO's experiences with finding work. When Loyd Osburn was drafted, he was working at Portland General Electric (PGE), a job he had for seven years. Although given a leave of absence for his wartime service, when he returned he was fired. The members of his office, who he considered to be friends, "just wouldn't stand for a CO coming to work around them...I was second-class, trash citizen."[74] His leave of absence was canceled for being a CO. He then tried to get a job at the Tigard as well as the Portland office, but both said "no" to a CO. In Kentucky, a CO could not be re-appointed as a teacher after being in camp. The Assistant Attorney General of Kentucky stated "he has been guilty of an offense involving moral turpitude, and that his conduct is such that an orderly society must remove him from circulation."[75]

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[71] Stafford, William, Down in My Heart (Oregon: Oregon State University Press, 1998), 7.
[72] Digia, Ralph, "My Resistance to WWII" in Gara, Larry and Lenna Mae Gara, eds. A Few Small Candles (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1999), 38.
[73] Goossen, 116-117.
[74] Osburn.
[75] Cornell, 113-114.

Many COs were involved in post-war peace activism. The 1946 Conference on Non-Violent Revolution consisted of many leftist pacifists with the goal of a cooperative, nonviolent world.[76] Loyd Osburn was a member of the World Affairs Counsel of Oregon, which was also a committee dedicated to nonviolent solutions. He was also a member of the Peace Committee of his local Friends Church in Newberg, Oregon.[77] COs felt that their peaceful protest was not only needed during wartime. They chose to live their entire lives as peace activists on a number of different levels.

The average CO felt disliked, shunned, and completely without purpose during the war. Performing "work of national importance" involved grueling tasks and no pay. But

they understood what their goals were, and they did "not expect to stem the war forces today, but we are helping to build the movement that will conquer in the future."[78] The experience of the Oregon CPS man reveals to us that the camps contained men from all walks of life, and the diversity produced a legacy that is rarely at the forefront of WWII history. Although rejected by their nation and forced into internment, within the camps there were formed long term friendships and inspirations. Among the stories that were involved in this research, not one man said he would take back his experience, or change his mind and enlist in the war instead of choosing to be a CO. There is an old saying that "wars will cease when men refuse to fight" and these men felt like they were setting an example for others to follow, to help them realize that violence isn't always the only choice.

A rich and untold history exists of COs in America; what many would consider a twentieth century phenomenon has been occurring in this nation and across the world for

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[76] Sibley, 41.
[77] Osburn.
[78] George M. Houser "Reflections of a Religious War Objector" in Gara, Larry and Lenna Mae Gara, eds. A Few Small Candles (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1999), 133.

centuries. In the United States, large improvements were made in the treatment of COs from World War I to World War II, and the CPS experience in World War II illustrated both the successes and failures of this experiment in CO wartime service. Instead of being enlisted as soldiers or medics on the frontlines, COs were enlisted as firefighters and hospital wardens on the home front. They were treated like enemy aliens by their fellow countrymen during the war, and rejected by their own communities for their beliefs even after the fighting was over. Benjamin Franklin aptly said "there is no such thing as a good war or a bad peace", and the COs of World War II tell the stories of those who did not believe in what many would consider today "the good war". Even more powerful is the fact that men (and women) from all different backgrounds and belief systems came together under the umbrella of the CPS to express and solidify their pacifism with one another.

Regardless of why they chose to be COs, they were governed by the ideals of nonviolence and peace, and they inspired thousands decades later to resist the draft. I found each story inspiring and was proud of these men who were brave enough to stand against the strong tides of violence and racism that governed this war. William Stafford carried a favorite poem in his wallet that left a powerful impact on me, and really illustrates with simplicity the thoughts and experiences of this subculture of pacifists and their CPS lives:

"This is the field where the battle did not happen,
Where the unknown soldier did not die.
This is the field where the grass joined hands,
Where no monument stands,
and the only heroic thing is the sky."
-The Un-National Monument along the Canadian border

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