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standing up
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TIM EVENS

FOREWORD

STANDING UP TO BE COUNTED

Twenty-four men say why they
refused military service in 1939-45
and give their present views on
peace and war

edited by
TIM EVENS

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STANDING UP TO BE COUNTED

FOREWORD

Young people are idealists, radical and iconoclastic: the old are pragmatists, cautious and conservative, or so it is said. I sought to find how true this was of thirty men with whom I shared "non-establishment" opinions in the second world war, when we met as members of the "Winford Team" described below. I wrote to them asking two questions: what had led them to become pacifists in 1939? And what were their present views on peace and war? Twenty-four men, including myself, sent replies, and these form the substance of this essay. Though the sample is small, the material has intrinsic interest, notably because of what it reveals of the vigorous climate of opinion in which many young people grew up fifty years ago, in the period between the two world wars.

We are often exhorted to "stand up and be counted" in support of some cause or other. Those quoted here had to do that, almost literally, during the last war when, as some of the tiny minority of pacifists, they registered under the conscription acts as, in official jargon, "conscientious objectors", (CO's for short). What follows, therefore, is about pacifists but not, except incidentally, about pacifism: it is a record, not an argument, though arguments may arise in the minds of readers. Nor, to revert to my opening sentence, does this record imply that only the pacifists of 1939-45 were impatient for change. Far from it. Save on the issue of bearing arms, many conscientious accepters of military service were at one with pacifists in wanting a better society than the one they had grown up in. This was the generation that in 1945 put Labour into government by a landslide, so leading to the development of the welfare state.

In 1988, in a Britain which has for the time being given up the conscription which continued for some years after the second world war, no-one is compelled by law to declare to a tribunal of fellow-citizens his or her views on peace and war nor on - say - sexual behaviour or industrial pollution. But when, in 1916 and in 1939, military conscription was imposed on young men in this country, those opposed to taking up arms had to justify their stand before such tribunals in order to gain exemption from military service. In the jingoistic mood of the first world war, objectors often had a bad time. Many whose claims were turned down served long periods in prison in solitary confinement. Some were threatened with

the firing squad and suffered other ill-treatment. But in 1939 the provision made for objectors was more generous and on the whole more tolerantly operated than in 1916. In part the 1939 arrangements no doubt reflected a reasonable wish by the military not to be bothered again with "awkward squads", in part a genuine liberalism. Fortunate in history because of their geography, the British have a strong spirit of independence and a traditional suspicion of the military. There are no folk memories of foreign invasion. Nevertheless, the relative tolerance of conscientious objectors in the more soberly-fought second world war is a fact which many of them would acknowledge.

What was the "Winford Team" which responded to my questions? It came together through the following events. Early in the war, the Quakers set up, in a derelict mansion in East Devon, the Spiceland Training Centre, with a small staff led by John Hoare, a social worker who had been a CO in the first war. Here, young pacifist men and women, whether Quakers or not, could learn practical skills useful in service at home or abroad which was reconciling rather than destructive. This enterprise was in keeping with Quaker tradition as that branch of the Christian church with a particular concern for peace-making and the renunciation of war. Trainees, on a voluntary basis, spent three months at Spiceland learning basic skills in farming, food-preparation, carpentry and first-aid. Many trainees hoped to work abroad among the victims of war, but the fall of France made that impossible. The Centre's organisers then sought openings in this country at a time when this was difficult: most people were understandably unsympathetic; the bombing of cities had not begun. However, the Ministry of Health was found to have urgent need of portering and domestic staff at a new emergency orthopaedic hospital built alongside the existing hospital at Winford in Somerset, south of Bristol. Agreement was reached for a team of young men from Spiceland to provide this service. In the event there were twenty defined jobs and two extra men covered for time off so that a seven-day-a-week, round the clock service was provided. Terms of service were: all found, plus pocket-money of ten shillings a week. It was essentially voluntary, not waged employment. The team was responsible to the hospital authorities through its elected leader. It ran its own work-rotas and was internally self-governing.

After two years, a large part of the group left to take up nursing work at a tuberculosis hospital in North Wales. The remaining members provided an altered service at Winford till nearly the end of the war. One of the North Wales men started a newsletter to circulate between the two groups and among those men who had left the original team. "The Bell", as it was called, took the form of a stiff-covered exercise book in which each man wrote news of himself before sending the book to the next on the list. Remarkably, forty-six years and umpteen volumes later, this newsletter, in 1988, still goes round, slowly as always, among thirty of the sixty-two men who passed through the Winford Team in the 1940's.

Myself a contributor, I sought some years ago to write about this item of eye-witness social history. I borrowed past volumes from the newsletter's founder but could not deal with them. The entries formed their own commentary on the lives and careers of men and their families against the back-drop of public affairs since the war: the task of sorting out thirty interlocking autobiographies would have been considerable; and some of the material seemed banal. But what were directly missing were the motives and events which had led these men to become pacifists; and what their present views were on peace and war. Hence my questions.

It was not easy to edit the replies, which varied from the laconic to the lengthy and included one thoughtful statement of faith with no personal details at all. However, I have used most of the material, grouped under broad headings, and have made only minor amendments for the sake of clarity.

FAMILY BACKGROUNDS

The profound cultural shock of the outbreak of the first world war, and its ensuing horrors, strongly affected the fathers and mothers of those who grew up in the 'twenties and 'thirties, as well as the politics of the time.

JHB "I was 8½ years old in August 1914, living in Manchester. My father was in a strictly reserved job. He was not against the war. My memories are very clear. We had a young man of 20 lodging with us. He was in the Territorials and was called up at once. I can still see him in his uniform as he left us, giving me a concertina he no longer needed. A few weeks later my mother received notice that he had been killed in action. I remember she was upset. I heard all the anti-German propaganda and hatred expressed by those around me. Also in a nearby street I was shocked to see a small mob

hurling bricks through the windows of a house occupied by a family who were unfortunate enough to have a German name: a policeman stood and watched. As you know, King George V changed his family name. I read the newspapers with increasing understanding as the years passed, and felt very threatened by what was taking place in my world. The experience of those four years I am sure stayed with me and was probably the ground in which my CO position grew during my twenties and thirties. I feel for today's children as they become aware of the nuclear threat.

I was also strongly influenced by two world war one conscientious objectors: my brother-in-law, a religious CO who accepted conditional exemption, and a close friend and work-mate who refused to register under the conscription acts and was imprisoned. He was released after a hunger-strike which endangered his life, being re-imprisoned when he had recovered - the so-called cat-and-mouse procedure. He was a political, rationalist CO."

PC "I was the eldest of three children of a non-conformist joiner - - my father was essentially a radical (he voted Liberal until 1945); his family had been pro-Boers and supported Lloyd George rather than Asquith. My father had been in the first world war and a prisoner of the Germans, and he didn't like the French. He would not wear his ribbons or attend an Armistice Parade and he regarded the Boy Scouts as a para-military organization (though he didn't use that term); but he was not a pacifist."

TE "I was brought up in a Quaker family in Bristol, the youngest of a family of four. At eleven, I went to the Quaker boarding school at Saffron Walden (co-educational). Here the education was, for its period, very forward-looking and liberal. Though staff had differing views, Quaker views on peace and war were naturally uppermost amongst them and visiting speakers. I recall as a senior boy going to a pacifist meeting in Cambridge which was addressed by Charles Raven, Dick Sheppard and Gerald Heard. About this time I became secretary of a short-lived body called the Inter-Schools Peace Federation, which tried to support lonely individual pacifists in, mainly, public schools where it was hard to resist pressures to join the OTC."

DNF "I was born into an ex-military family - - my father was always known as the Captain from his rank in the 1914-18 war - - but with very free-thinking parents, especially in politics where my mother was considered a red rebel by the Tory snobs in the village. I was not a political animal."

RH "My beliefs are based on my Christian faith. I am convinced that merely humanistic pacifism is inadequate. I am also deeply convinced that God is not only real but active in human life and history and that His supreme revelation of Himself, of His ways and of His purposes for men is in Christ. God really is Love - - free from any trace of evil. Christ perfectly reflected God's character and was willing to give Himself to take the consequences of men's passions and hatred - - To fight and kill others is quite contrary to this attitude - - Our task is to collaborate with God in getting men right. This involves putting into practice the Sermon on the Mount and doing as Christ did."

LCH "I grew up in the years following world war one mainly in East London. My father was unemployed most of the time. Home atmosphere was of joyless ashamed poverty. Signs of the war were still around. Mutilated beggars - limbs missing, faces part shot away: some went around in singing gangs laden with medals clanking. The unwanted heroes. The street-corner orators with their condemnation of war were persuasive and I was anti-war before I was ten. Uncles, one crippled, with an ill-fitting artificial leg, and another a shell-shocked drinker, told lurid stories that fascinated and shocked. War was a nasty experience that did not benefit the working class."

HGH "When I left school in 1923 my uncle's political views led me to the Independent Labour Party where I met men who in the Boer War had been pulled off platforms and persecuted for their denunciations and opposition to the Government's prosecution of that war."

CK "Whilst living in Sheffield until 1941, I was, along with my parents, brother and sister, a regular attender at the local Friends Adult School Union for many years and took a great interest in this religious and educational movement. I was also secretary for the Sunday School (Juniors) for a long period. The adult classes held there had a great influence - - - and with a number of pacifists attending the classes - their views convinced me that theirs was the right road for me to take. (One of the members happened to have been a CO in the 1914-18 war). I had tremendous support from my parents when I decided to be a CO - - - and had no problems with friends or workmates."

FL "I come from a radical Free Church background. My grandfather was a founder-member of the Adnitt Road Baptist Church when it was formed in a

wave of "outreach" on a then new estate, from a town centre church in Northampton, at the turn of the century. He was a staunch Liberal, and, living almost opposite the Tory Club, regularly got his front windows "busted" at election times because he'd display a Liberal window bill. He supported Charles Bradlaugh during those exciting election days and had to defend his action in church - a Baptist deacon supporting the atheist Bradlaugh! He was a clicker by trade and worked for Manfield's all his working life. I still have the clock presented to him on his retirement. He was a joint founder of the No.2 Boot and Shoe Union. He and grandmother were thoroughly Victorian, but products of what was best in that often derided period. They had five children - three boys and two girls. The boys became carpenter and joiner (my father), cabinet maker and engineer. One girl was a tailor and the other went into a footwear factory, never married but looked after the old folk until they died and after my mother died, looked after my father until she herself died a few years ago. She was quite a good amateur naturalist. - - - My father enlisted in the first hundred thousand Kitchener called for. He was in France by November 1914 (Field Artillery). The first Christmas, when the war nearly ended by mutual consent of the opposing front-line troops, made a big impression on him, and on me too as he told of it long after. Four years, three woundings and three gassings later, came "peace". Physically he was better than many, he was alive and the only permanent damage, deafness in one ear from the constant crack at the breach every time the gun fired - ear plugs were not thought of until half the gunners in the British Army were deaf - and no sense of smell as a result of being gassed.

After the war he threw himself into work for the old League of Nations Union and ultimately for its successor the United Nations Association. He'd describe himself as a Christian Socialist. He was a lay preacher, cycling to village churches all over Northamptonshire for services from the early 'twenties until he got too old. Both he and my mother were very active workers for the Labour Party. My father's mentors were people like Studdart Kennedy, George Lansbury, Donald Soper. He was not infrequently in trouble with the evangelicals within the Baptist Church, but long before the Ecumenical Movement - - - he was trying to break down barriers and reach a working understanding with other denominations in Northampton. He served for years on the Free Church Federal Council. He also found time to be an active member of the Northamptonshire Natural History Society and to serve

on the Old Scouts Working Committee doing maintenance work on our camping ground. These interests were the outward expression of the whole, a conviction that man, God helping him, could create a better society for all. A payment, too, of a debt. Laurence Binyon's lines were very meaningful to him -

' They shall grow not old
As we that are left grow old.
Age shall not weary them
Nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun
And in the morning
We will remember them. ' "

MM " I had a strong non-conformist upbringing, with its emphasis on conduct. The Baptist Church in which I was reared was not pacifist and in the middle 1930s I was very critical of its fence-sitting attitude which led to my departure from it in 1938 and my approach to the Society of Friends because of its consistent pacifist stand."

RR " I had been a pacifist, more or less, since 1933 when I was at Gresham's school and in the Officers' Training Corps. I had expressed my beliefs strongly at the University. My two tribunal witnesses were college friends. My home, and school, background had been 'peaceful' liberal and League of Nations, but not to the extent of refusing military service. I alone took that step. Though disagreeing with me, my father attended the tribunal, which fact was part of the evidence, though silent. There was a strong element of politics in pacifism of those days, e.g. we knew many ILP members. I had met Jimmy Maxton, a friend of my father; but I had identified my beliefs as a Christian pacifist with Quakerism."

AHR " Parents' background was liberal/Manchester Guardian/middle-class. Father only worried when I became a CO that it might affect his business (post office and travel agency). But father did realise that there were 'other ways to live'. Mother was more conventional."

WKS " With father Quaker and mother Anglican (but coming often to Meeting) I went to Ackworth Quaker School then on to Bootham ditto in York: and so had the benefit of solid quiet grounding in Quaker principles."

SS " Family background - strong non-conformist tradition with radical Liberal political allegiance; member of Methodist Church from teenage days;

youngest of family of five with two brothers fourteen and sixteen years my senior who were in the Army and the Royal Flying Corps in the 1914 war, born in 1912 - vague memories of my soldier-brother home on leave whom I did not recognise - 'Mother, there's a soldier in our kitchen!' - - - also going into the cellar of our house when the German Zeppelins were overhead in Leicester. "

GBS " I was only nineteen and had led a sheltered middle-class life mainly in the Great Ayton Quaker School where I was born in the 'tied house' of my parents, facing into the boys' playground. I just absorbed Quakerism 'with my mother's milk' and really never questioned the fact that I was a pacifist - although in my two years at Bootham School the general atmosphere among the boys was not pacifist and many leavers were going into the services."

GFT " In 1940 I registered as a CO. I had the support of my sister though not of my parents. "

SMW " My childhood was surrounded by more or less pacifist influences. My mother and father were both very anti-war, and I remember they did not encourage us to join the Scouts (which, so far as I was concerned, was not a great temptation!) because it was too 'jingoistic'. My mother's brother, a Navy man, was very shocked by these unpatriotic tendencies, and I remember tensions about the question."

JLW " I was the only pacifist in a family of seven, and the only pacifist in a work force of a hundred. "

CW " My parents had not been married long when the 'Great War' broke out. My father was the eldest boy in a family of three boys and four girls. He was a good footballer and cricketer and 'looked up to' by his two younger brothers. These, being unmarried, immediately, in August 1914, volunteered for the army. My father - naturally, as my mother said - wanted to join his brothers 'on the picnic'. He waited till I was born and joined up. All three brothers suffered the horrors of trench-war in France, but though the youngest lost an arm at the age of eighteen, all survived.

The Great War was still very close in the 1920's, and I read a good many books about it, particularly the great 'All Quiet on the Western Front'. My father, too, had read 'All Quiet', and, I know, thought a lot of it. He was a most gentle and loving man and in answer to my questions about why he had joined the army, replied that, like his brothers, he had felt that it

was his duty to 'punish the Germans for what they had done to Belgium and to stop them doing the same thing to England'. Now it was over he wished to forget it. He was not interested in Armistice Day parades or medal-wearing. He would often point out that 'the war had been fought to end war' and that war was a terrible business. He thought that war would never come again because men knew now, which they did not in 1914, just how bad modern weapons had made warfare. He agreed that the ordinary German seemed to feel as we did, and that the best way to prevent war in the future would be for ordinary men in all countries to refuse to fight. "

OTHER INFLUENCES

An account on television (late 1986) of the life of Benjamin Britten showed that he was among the producers in the late 'Thirties of a pacifist film called "Peace by Reason". Peace by reason was the great hope of the inter-war period and lay behind the foundation of the League of Nations in 1919 and also the attempts later on to deal with Hitler's "reasonable demands". Broadly, the anti-war books mentioned here stressed the unreason of war as experienced in 1914-18; the numerous peace and international bodies stressed the need for rational negotiations on problems - for love and trust instead of hate and fear.

MKB " On holiday with my family in my teens I read Beverley Nichols' 'Cry Havoc!' which made me a pacifist. I was already exploring the non-conformist churches of Slough, where we lived, in an attempt to find a better and different religious belief than my family's token Church of England adherence, and I was eventually attracted most to the local Congregational church. "

JHB " I had no religious affiliation but accepted the Christian ethic. I became a member of the Peace Pledge Union, early on. I had an association with Quakers (my older sister was a member) during the 1930s. I felt at home in a Quaker meeting but did not feel I could apply for membership before the outbreak of war (i.e. shelter under the Quaker umbrella if accepted by them). I became a member in 1948. Two books that have stayed in my memory are 'All Quiet on the Western Front' by Remarque and 'Cry Havoc!' by Beverley Nichols - who in 1939 decided to support the war. Family, relatives, work-mates and friends accepted my CO decision without being judgmental, including a brother-in-law who was a sergeant-major in the regular army. Whether this was just my good fortune or had to do with my having no judgmental feelings towards them as supporters of the war I do not know. "

PC " I failed the County Minor Scholarship exam, left school at fourteen and got a job after three months (it was 1930) at a printer's where I came to know two or three men who had been 'conchies' in world war one.

In the Young Men's Class every Sunday afternoon (our chapel was nonconformist but undenominational) all sorts of ideas were broached - never, as I recollect, devotional ones, but crudely philosophical. We ranged in age from fifteen to my father and uncle-by-marriage who were in their fifties. Uncle Joe was a mill-manager who began working life as a half-timer in the same mill. He was a Freemason and a Knight Templar. He loved to talk about 'tenets and principles' and to quote in reply to any suggestion of political or social idealism:

' Morality, thou deadly bane,

Thy tens of thousands thou hast slain.

Vain is his hope whose stay and trust is

In moral mercy, truth and justice. '

(Burns, I understood, but never checked it).

When I became Plan Secretary I got some speakers who were members of a local WEA class studying Social Philosophy, Modern Political Theory and various aspects of Economics. (Psychology and Literature were frowned upon as superficial and bourgeois, though I once attended a lecture on 'Proletarian Poetry'). I particularly recall one speaker talking about rights and duties, privileges and obligations, which I minuted in detail. Thus I became infected with libertarian ideas. It was my idea to hold evening debates - - - I don't remember what we debated until the public outcry at the Oxford Union's 'King and Country' motion led me to decide that we should debate that. I got speakers to oppose the motion and one to support it as seconder. I wanted a Mover but could not get one so had to do it myself. Preparing for the debate, I got a 'History of Peace' from the public library. This was really about peace movements and gave a list of addresses. Soon I was in possession of literature from Quakers, the No More War Movement, the League of Nations Union, the Fellowship of Reconciliation and others. And in preparing to Propose the Motion 'That under no circumstances will this House fight for King and Country' I became a pacifist. I think we lost the motion, but my father, though not agreeing with me, loyally supported me. In becoming a pacifist I had also become a socialist. I joined the Fellowship of Reconciliation and subsequently the Peace Pledge Union and the Labour Party. The litho foreman

at work introduced me to the Glasgow 'Forward' (edited by Emrys Hughes, son-in-law to Keir Hardie) and later to the Left Book Club (which I thought meant publishers' remainders). "

TE " I left school at sixteen and went to work as an office-boy at the London head office of Unilever. (My father, an accountant, worked for a subsidiary in Bristol). I didn't get on there - it was between Munich and the war - I was introverted, naive and somewhat scared of the general worldliness and conventional attitudes of my colleagues. I stayed with family friends in south London and during the Munich crisis I remember going along to be issued with a gas-mask. I was in touch with Quakers in London but don't recall going to pacifist meetings though I read 'Peace News' and 'Cry Havoc' and 'Ends and Means'. "

DNF " At public school, I had strong pacifist views, and refused to join either the officers' Training Corps or the Scouts, with the result that I was looked down on by my more militant colleagues. In my teens, my adopted aunt, who felt that my parents' agnostic outlook left a void (although at school I was nominally C of E), introduced me to Friends' Meetings, and in my last year at school I obtained special dispensation to attend meeting in Taunton once a month, with another boy who was a birthright member, and there met the Fox family from Wellington, who in the course of time helped me to Spiceland. Living in the depth of the country when not at school, I had no contact with any political or social groups who might have influenced my thinking. In 1938 I went to Oxford, but financial constraints barred me from joining any of the many societies. I did not return after the outbreak of war. Somehow in my bones all through the 'thirties I knew that there would be another war before I reached majority. "

FWH " It was the Spanish Civil War which made me think a little more seriously - - - It was discussed a great deal among us at school and elsewhere and caused anguish to many. Consideration of the case of each side in the war brought me to a consideration of war itself and of what Christianity had to say about it. I became more and more convinced that the right understanding of Christianity imposed rejection of violence as a means to any end and that if I were to accept Christianity I should have to accept the position and all its consequences. I began to seek support and was encouraged to find that it was not lacking. Respectability was added to my position by the attitudes of such as Dick Sheppard, George Lansbury, Laurence Housman, Bertrand Russell, J. Middleton Murry and Vera Brittain. But - - - I had the greatest regard for C. E. Raven whose two publications 'The Cross and the

Crisis' and 'The Starting Point of Pacifism' influenced me much. However, I think I drew greatest comfort from the knowledge of the existence of the Society of Friends. "

LCH " School-teachers told of the folly of war. 'It's up to you young people not to allow yourselves to be fodder for the guns,' said our science master, debilitated by war service in Mesopotamia. At eighteen I did not trust authority in any form - employer, parents, national politicians, but I did not join any 'anti-' movement, I was very much alone. A working-class unaffiliated pacifist. Films - 'All Quiet on the Western Front' 'The Man I Killed', re-inforced. I had a religious inclination, but after an initial welcome most of the churches were not keen to draw me in. My radical pacifist views were not well received until I started attending Friends' Meetings in 1939. My views were influenced by kind, tolerant friends who helped my attitude to become more positive. My line was humanitarian work. "

HGH " I was drawn into a live church - High Cross Congregational in Tottenham in 1916. Over the years under ministers of fine calibre and dynamic personalities I came to a grasp of Christian faith and practice which led me to believe that - - - it was a personal decision that mattered. I came under the influence of a Sunday School teacher whose witness was to pick up the hopes of the peace and Versailles in working for the League of Nations Union. I became junior branch secretary when he became the local branch secretary. This brought me in touch with the views of politicians of all parties and also of religious leaders like Archbishop Temple, Bishop Gore, the Bishop of Birmingham, Maude Royden and of Dr. Frank Norwood, the Australian spell-binder and apostle for peace at the City Temple. At Independent Labour Party meetings I met Runham Brown, Harold Bing and other workers in the War Resisters International. I also came to an understanding of foreign affairs from the writings of H.N. Brailsford, editor of the ILP's organ, 'The New Leader'. This ILP influence also brought me under the spell of Fenner Brockway and Jimmy Maxton, both of whom from the Socialist standpoint claimed that war was a capitalist tactic to enslave the workers and that the promotion of profits transcended frontiers.

In about 1929 I came, through the Holiday Fellowship, to join a young Quaker offshoot, International Tramping Tours. This organization arranged for parties of young folk to tramp abroad in the regions mainly affected by the Peace Treaty of 1920 to learn for themselves the feelings of

local people whilst sharing simple accommodation with them. In 1936 I came with an ITT party to Geneva when Haile Selassie made his impassioned appeal to the League of Nations. That same year came the Spanish Civil War when many young socialists felt they had to stand by the Left Government of Spain which had been attacked by Franco. Also the Dean of Canterbury, Dick Sheppard, felt that the way of renunciation was essential, and with a group of sponsors launched the Peace Pledge Union. This I joined, and when the second world war was declared I held on to the pledge, believing it to be the only way possible for a socialist and pacifist. Through the ITT and the PPU came an understanding of the message of Tolstoy and Gandhi in the hope of non-violence as the ultimate weapon in the war on war. "

FL " Conscription came during the period between 'Munich' in 1938 and the outbreak of war in September 1939. It was a period for decisions - - . Our Scout group had a very strong senior section which also formed the bulk of the Young Men's Bible Class at the church (i.e. scouts between sixteen and eighteen years of age plus Rover crew eighteen up to about twenty-five). The Bible Class was led by a man who fought through the first war and had become a convinced pacifist - a great man and an excellent field naturalist - assisted by a scouter of similar view. The Group Scouter was not then a pacifist but he was a superb leader and he gathered about him a number of first-rate assistants of varying persuasions.

The Rover Crew had a permanent camp site on the Association Ground three miles out of town. Here they camped from Easter to September each year. Usually there were from six to twelve every night, going in to work every morning and back out at night. A few of we older scouts were permitted to join them. I qualified, and I value this period as much as any in my life. Everything got thrashed out round the fire and often long into the night - religion, politics, ethics, sport, birds (feathered and otherwise) etc. Current affairs and conscription were very much to the fore.

You will know that the Baptist Church only recognises believers' baptism - usually by immersion. By the time we were sixteen most of us had passed through the waters of baptism. It was never lightly taken and was always a point of reference even if later there was falling away.

Of that old scout group about a third became COs and of the other two-thirds the majority volunteered before their call-up time and didn't seek soft numbers. My brother, three years younger than me, who was so effective in my defence that everyone thought he would follow me, joined

the Airborne Division and was at Arnhem. After the war we all co-operated to get the group back on its feet. While none of the COs have recanted, quite a number of those who were not, now take that position. "

MM " There was a strong political element in my philosophy which embraced not only Christian beliefs but also a socialism of the Lansbury variety (I was not from a socialist home). My political awakening, at age nineteen, was triggered by finding and reading G.B. Shaw's 'Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism'; and Aldous Huxley's 'Ends and Means'. The economic climate of the early 'thirties - queues of unemployed, hunger marches - reinforced my socialist ideas, and in the later 'thirties this was fed by Gollancz' Left Book Club whose books I devoured.

The Spanish Civil War was a crucial event for me in that it demanded my political loyalty which I found to run counter to my Christian pacifism. It was here that I chose to give Christian pacifism priority so that when the Hitler war broke out in 1939 my convictions were already established. "

HHP " Two years prior to the war - became Christian pacifist (C of E). Addressed young people's groups of various denominations. Organised public meetings with PPU speakers. Attended private study group discussing Gregg's 'Power of Non-Violence'. Treasurer of Nuneaton Appeal Fund to aid Jews persecuted by Hitler. Three of us on the staff of Nuneaton Corporation took the pacifist stand. (One of the three has just retired from the United Nations with the position of Assistant Secretary General). "

AHR " Influenced by my elder brother who joined the PPU in 1936 and also by a liberal sixth form teacher at Manchester Grammar School. The PPU local group was an opener of ideas, as against the 'directives' of school and family influences. Reading the Daily Express(!) and its illustrated first world war 'Covenants of Death' also made me start thinking more deeply of political and religious anomalies and the Church of England 'Vicar of Bray' attitude to war in 1939. Through a PPU meeting came alliance with like-minded groups at Friends House, Manchester. Here I met the consistent 300-year-old Quaker belief in non-violence which led me to Spiceland and to Winford. "

WKS " Married Margot in spring 1939, and from the outbreak of war we both wanted to undertake some active relief work of a civilian nature, preferably with Friends. In spring 1940 Tessa Rowntree in Hungary was

trying to get permission for us to join her there in relief work. Then in April 1940 Margot and I joined the first Spiceland Training Camp (which included that gallant experienced group which came on from Carclew in Cornwall). During that super hot summer we expected to be sent to Southern France to one of the camps for refugee French children, but then came Dunkirk (although the news and radio very much soft-pedalled the adverse side of that during the summer). "

SS " No conscious questioning of the acceptance of war until at the age of nineteen, I visited a friend in London who had an illustrated history of the 1914 war. I was horrified by the realisation of what I can only and inadequately describe as the complete de-humanization of men and women by the reality of war and the ensuing abandonment of truth and integrity so that the 'enemy' might be destroyed at whatever the cost. I became a fervent supporter of the pacifist crusade of the 1930s and gave a lot of time and effort to the various activities - public meetings, selling 'Peace News' in the centre of Leicester, pacifist group meetings and arguing for the Christian pacifist position in the Church. In addition to the PPU and the Fellowship of Reconciliation, I remember my interest in the No More War movement and the War Resisters International. I read pretty widely and remember in particular the influence of Aldous Huxley's 'Ends and Means'. Political consciousness on a wider scale developed and I became a convinced socialist through my own insights into social and economic inequalities and injustices and through my reading of the radical and socialist press and especially the books published so cheaply by the Left Book Club under the brilliant management of Victor Gollancz. George Bernard Shaw was probably one of the greatest stimulants to my thinking and I still treasure a copy of the prefaces to his plays which was published at a give-away price by Odhams, who published the 'Daily Herald'. However, Gandhi was the man I revered most.

The Spanish Civil War made its impact. The name of the town of Guernica is one I shall never forget. It was here that the aerial bombardment of an open town took place for the first time in any war. There was a public revulsion at this outrage against a defenceless civilian population on a scale that can hardly be imagined today when it has become a commonplace happening. My experiences brought me into contact with a variety of people, including those who suffered the consequences of their objection to fighting in the 1914 war, and also the members of the Leicester Society of Friends. These were all supportive influences. "

GST " My pacifist views were fostered by a Methodist minister and a group of young people in the Youth Fellowship at the church, many of whom shared these ideals. The seed was possibly sown by my history master, (Philip Radley, later head of Ackworth School). He certainly didn't preach pacifism, but amongst other things he took us on a visit to Jordans Meeting House and introduced me to Quakerism. "

SMW " I came to Cambridge as a freshman at St. John's College in October 1938. I came under strong Christian pacifist influences, notably the minister of Emmanuel Congregational Church, 'Polly' Carter, and, later, Charles Raven. The Fellowship of Reconciliation was strong amongst undergraduates and I got involved in it and other pacifist groups via my active membership of the University Congregational Society centred on Emmanuel Church. Looking back, I realise that the threat of conscription forced me (and many of my contemporaries) to decide 'where I stood'. "

JLW " I was then an Anglican, in which denomination pacifism was very much a minority conviction, though the junior curate of my church was a pacifist. I was a PPU member and read 'Peace News' and the 'New Statesman' (whose editor had been in the Friends Ambulance Unit in World War One). "

TRIBUNALS, SPICELAND, AND THE WAY TO WINFORD

The tribunals set up to hear claims to exemption from military service made on grounds of conscience, operated in fifteen areas throughout the country. Each was chaired by a county court judge who was flanked by a trade union representative, an academic and two others. Tribunals had power to dismiss an application, to recommend non-combatant service in the armed forces; or to grant exemption from military service, with or without conditions. Unconditional exemption was rare - less than the proportion of such exemptions among these contributors. Most exemptions were conditional on the claimant's taking up specified civilian work. Those who could not accept the decision of the tribunal, and of a subsequent appeal tribunal, could suffer arrest and imprisonment, as is shown by PC and AHR. Tribunals varied in their treatment of objectors. Some were more lenient than others, some asked fatuous questions, occasionally their sittings were very funny. MKB, observing for the Central Board for Conscientious Objectors, recalls that "the academic at Bloomsbury was a famous professor, very old, called Jevons. He once fell visibly asleep during a case and had to be shaken by the Judge, who went literally white with fury, the only time I have ever seen

this phenomenon. They then adjourned (there were only three sitting) and then came back to grant exemption. They could hardly not, could they? "

John Hoare wrote in his foreword to an account of the work of the Winford Team in 1945: "The pacifist in wartime makes a very bold claim and runs counter to the trend of thought and effort of the nation as a whole and of most other groups of which he may be a member. His claim is not that he is a better man than others; it is that he has seen a better way of meeting and overcoming evil and of serving the ideals which often he shares with those who adopt other methods. He has not merely seen a vision but should be able to start living by it here and now. The consequent attempt to find practical service through which his conviction can be expressed may plunge him into rather deep waters." Floundering in deep waters is revealed by some contributors. Sometimes they seem to take small matters too seriously. But having been asked to prove a case, they naturally wanted theirs to be as honest and consistent as possible. They did not want to seem to be seeking an easy option. That is what caused the early crisis at Winford Hospital described by WKS on page 24. Those who left because this civilian hospital had soldiers in it were not just being picky. Having taken a public stand against being involved with the military, they felt it contradictory to appear to do this by another route. Others felt that their wish to relieve the human suffering of the war overrode minor inconsistencies. But "drawing the line" was never easy.

MKB " I had no trouble getting unconditional exemption at the local tribunal, partly because it was the phoney war period, but mostly because my objection went back long before the war, and was well-documented with plays I had written. There was also a letter from Dick Sheppard and evidence from an old school-friend who was already in uniform and clearly did not agree with my views.

I was a firm absolutist, determined to have nothing to do with the war. There was little trouble with my family, who were very tolerant, but I do remember some reported threatened violence from some youths I did not know, but it never materialized. My views changed a bit as the war hotted up, and I was, in any case, living in a sort of limbo at home at the time. My acting career had been abandoned, I was studying shorthand and typing at a local secretarial college in a desultory way and writing plays. But nothing was really happening in my life. I tried the Friends Ambulance Unit first,

but they were not then recruiting, and then my acquaintanceship with Brother Oswald brought me to Spiceland, then Winford. During this time I naturally became very attached to the Society of Friends. (I had previously joined the PPU and gone to meetings.) "

AEB " My religious beliefs, my father having been a 1914-18 conscientious objector, led me via the Society of Friends to enrol for Spiceland prior to my twentieth birthday. Spiceland led to Winford, where I was one of the original team. "

JHB " I had decided to register as a CO but not to accept military service of any kind, come what may. The tribunal pressed the non-combatant role, but finally gave me the conditional exemption (hospital, etc.) which I was willing to accept. "

PC " In 1939 I took up a post as a technical clerk in H.M. Stationery Office in Westminster. The work was agreeable and I liked living in London where I at once joined fellow pacifists. I eventually registered as a CO and was required to work on the land. On appeal this was changed to Non-Combatant Duties, which I refused. So I was presently summoned to appear in court and thereafter found myself doing what was still called 'hard labour' for a twelve-month sentence. I quite enjoyed being in prison. On release I went to Spiceland. Then married to my first wife, I took a job jointly with her in Sidmouth. At this point - perhaps, really, when I was in prison - the marriage broke up, and on a sunny day in January 1943 I cycled to Winford where Stuart Walters took me in hand along with the 'Rump' and a handful of FAU men. "

SE " On religious grounds I was given unconditional exemption, but I would have taken a condition if given by the tribunal. Once war had broken out I felt I could not stand by and do nothing. Hearing of the Friends' unit at Spiceland I decided this might be the way of finding out where I could best give service. "

TE " When the war started, I left Unilever and returned to Bristol, where I was on the dole through the autumn of 1939. I had no clear idea of either a career or of anything very specific to do as the pacifist my upbringing had helped me to be. I went along to a few job offers but nothing materialised until January 1940, when through a contact of my brother, I started work as an assistant in Stanley Roberts' Bookshop in

Park Street. This was very congenial. Stanley and his chief assistant were both pacifists and 'progressives'. Being still very gauche with people, I was happy spending most of my time doing the accounts at the back of the shop. But I remember selling books to Sir Adrian Boult and Arthur Askey - the BBC's Music and Entertainment departments were based in Bristol at the time.

I heard of Spiceland, and with a school friend I cycled there in June 1940 to spend a week of my holiday. Later I heard of the need for early replacements at Winford. I cycled over one evening and spoke with Bill Sessions, but did not feel I could leave my job just then. Also, the hospital (I arrived just after supper) smelt of mingled fish and disinfectant. This re-inforced my dislike of hospitals, which went back to childhood visits. A few weeks after this came the first blitz on Bristol and I was bombed out of my job. The entire shop, stuffed with Christmas stock, went up in flames like so much else that night. After a while my boss started up elsewhere but there was no immediate job for me and I started the Spiceland course in the frosty January of 1941. The good company, and the remoteness, made Spiceland reassuring. Its clientele sparked off ideas, as in a good university. Books were always an escape for me and I recall the room full of John Hoare's books which served as a library. Here one could sit and browse among the English classics with a background of utter silence unless there were bombers droning over to South Wales or Bristol.

In April, a new-found friend, Geoff Drewitt, was about to leave to fill a vacancy at Winford. I was undecided what to do, but still didn't care for hospitals (fish and disinfectant!). Suddenly there was a call for a 'temp' at Winford, to stand in for a few weeks while Johnny Wolstenholme recovered from an appendicectomy. I thought I would try it. I liked it! And stayed on to fill another vacancy when JLW returned.

Geoff Drewitt and I travelled to Winford together. Because of news censorship, we did not know there had been a big air attack on Bristol the night before (the last, as it turned out) and we arrived at a damaged Temple Meads station about five p.m., without our luggage and with nowhere to go for refreshment. (The luggage turned up next day, having been put out at Flax Bourton). All cafes were closed and emergency water lorries drove through the deserted streets. There were no buses, so we walked the seven

miles to Winford through the still-burning streets of Bedminster and along past the Barrow reservoirs.

Soon after coming to Winford I had my tribunal at Bristol. I had put in a claim for unconditional exemption, but was content to accept 'ambulance, hospital or other humanitarian work', and returned to Winford. I had the support of my family. I was not then close to my father and remember showing him the statement I had prepared for the tribunal, on which he made little comment. Much later, he told me that though a pacifist in the 1914 war (he was in a 'reserved' occupation) he supported the second war, though reluctantly. In this he was at one with the leading Quaker theologian of the time, Professor H.G. Wood. Theirs were minority views among the Quaker minority then! My father, however, was always a much better Christian than I have ever felt able to be. "

DNF " At the appropriate time I registered as a CO having taken a job in the wholesale side of a chemist's business run by a friend's father. At my tribunal I was only supported by my mother in person. I had no written supportive statements and was exempted on condition that I remained in the distribution trade and/or did humanitarian work, either whole - or part-time. Threats to my employer obliged me to leave rather than cause him trouble. It was then that I learned about Spiceland and very quickly was there, and from there was one of the first at Winford. "

FWH " We went through the Munich crisis. It was about that time that I made up my mind to refuse military service, and then there were consequential decisions to be faced. These were:

(i) Was I to register as a CO or was I to allow myself to be conscripted and then refuse to obey orders ?

(ii) If I were to register, what conditions of exemption would I be prepared to accept ?

(iii) What was I to do, once having registered ?

The answers to these questions emerged over a period of time and were as follows:

(i) Since I lacked the simple courage to refuse to carry out military orders, it was not difficult to decide to register as a CO.

(ii) I was not willing to accept, as a condition of exemption, non-combatant duties within the armed services, but I was happy to accept work

which was thought as 'humanitarian'.

(iii) For this question, I was guided by a principle which many COs were anxious to observe throughout the war - that the CO should, as far as possible, not be seen to be at an advantage over his combatant contemporary. I therefore decided to continue normal life until the tribunal had ruled.

All this was occupying my mind while I was in my first year (1939-40) at Kings' College, London, then evacuated to Bristol. At the end of that academic year I felt I would not be justified in returning for a second year while awaiting the tribunal's decision, so I withdrew from the university course and began to look for suitable work. - - - Two school-friends of mine, Sidney Harvey and Ronald Youngs, who subsequently abandoned their pacifism and joined the Forces, had obtained places on the Spiceland course. - - When the call to Winford came, they were members of the original team but their intention had always been to return to Spiceland as soon as possible. They were quickly in touch to ask if I was willing to replace one of them. This I agreed to do and I arrived at Winford on 18th October 1940. Philip Clifton was the other replacement. My tribunal took place in Bristol on 5th November and I was granted exemption on condition of doing 'ambulance or other humanitarian work' which I found acceptable and which allowed me to resume work at Winford. "

LCH " Spiceland was a tremendous experience. I met people there who had been well-educated who did not find my views crazy. Fortunately the opportunity to help set up the Spiceland Centre came just as life was becoming difficult at home. My parents were tolerant but neighbours shunned me and I was spat upon in the street. My work-mates in the factory were not hostile but they accepted the way society was going and would not understand my line of argument. Spiceland was a stimulating haven - for me another world. "

HGH " Through some PPU friends I learned of the camp being set up at Spiceland and wrote to John Hoare to join it. Thus at thirty-two and single I braved the good life at Blackborough with trepidation. I had never been so isolated from my family and friends. Nor had I ever faced up to the rigours of country farming in a ruin of a mansion. A month later I found myself in Cullompton (the police station I believe) signing on as a CO. Looking back on my tribunal and registration as a conditional CO it seemed

in a sense that I had chosen a 'soft option', but at the time it appeared to be within my belief to do humanitarian relief work and so I entered hospital service with the Winford Team. At home my father (in spite of his chapel past) approved of my 'dodging the fighting' on a self-preservation level but the noble strands of reasoning heard among pacifists were so much empty air to him and above his head. This riled me as much as the gibes of the patriotic folk behind the war effort. Mother was neutral as were my sisters. My leaving home was the loss of a bread-winner even though I tried to carry on with small sums from time to time. "

CK " I attended my first tribunal at Leeds and asked for exemption from military service on religious grounds. After trying to answer some very stupid questions, I was struck off and registered for military service. I appealed against this decision and after a long wait was summoned to appear at the Manchester Appeals Tribunal. I was prepared to do hospital or forestry work and after a fair hearing was registered for such - hence my arrival at Winford. "

FL " For me the step to Spiceland and thence to Winford was certainly one of the best things I ever did. It opened doors to a whole wider concept of living. My academic attainments were nil and I had quite an inferiority complex rubbing shoulders with and working among folk whose education had been so much superior to mine. I was helped through this by those very people to whom I shall always be grateful as I made the first fumbling steps to an appreciation of music, literature and the natural world. I have been able to pass on a little of this, I hope. "

MM " In 1940, having already registered as a CO, when my occupation was no longer reserved I applied for leave of absence from my teaching post and went to Spiceland. A decision to respond to the call to the Winford Hospital was simply that it was a job to do that I could accept. There was no family opposition to my stand as a CO. My colleagues accepted it quietly. "

HHP " The outbreak of war came six months before the birth of our first child. Three months after his birth I went to Spiceland and on to Winford. Family remained friendly but firmly opposed to our stand. It never occurred to me not to register. Rather I was pleased, then, to register (as a CO) and show I was not afraid to do so. Obtained unconditional exemption whilst at Spiceland, from Bristol tribunal. I disclosed that I drew the line at any conditions. Even if I agreed with the conditions I

would not buy my exemption this way. The tribunal accepted my sincerity. "

AHR " The tribunal in 1941 turned down my objection. In 1942 I went to Spiceland. This was an eye-opener - because of its openness! When I arrived, I knocked on the door. Eventually a girl (in trousers!) came and said 'Why don't you come in - the door is always open!' Behind her came Brother Oswald (in his monk's habit!) My month there before going on to Winford was an 'explosion' into the varieties of men and women. I felt accepted as a human being. "

Had Appellate Tribunal in Bristol, but still got no exemption - probably because I claimed to be a Christian without affiliation to any church. Dismissal of my appeal meant that I went to an army medical, but refused to undress. I was therefore arrested and sentenced to six months imprisonment. I served only six weeks. Four weeks in Horfield Gaol, Bristol, where I asked for and got a Quaker visitor (Stephenson Grace). Then I went to Feltham Juvenile Prison for one week, and to Wormwood Scrubs for one week. In Horfield and Feltham I had to wear shorts because I was under twenty-one!

Prison was shocking in that I was shut up for twelve hours on end in my cell (which I had to myself the whole time) and (in Horfield) there was no light because the gas mantles were broken. The idiocy of the work provided! - Amateurs making by hand, rulers for government offices. These were made black by dipping them in black sooty paint. Prison officers were mostly ex-Indian Army NCOs. The general futility of the prison system has remained with me.

I served only part of my sentence because my brother called in a lawyer who took my case to the Higher Appellate Tribunal in London, which had been set up because the prisons were getting too full of COs! (One of the wings at the Scrubs was full of COs when I was there). This new tribunal allowed me conditional exemption and so I was released and returned to Winford. "

WKS " In June 1940, I had my tribunal at Bristol, from Spiceland and asked to be registered to do civilian relief work. I had the pit-of-the-stomach feeling that day, yet was sure I could do no other. In fact it was brief, just a few quite reasonable questions and then I was indeed registered as above.

From July to mid-autumn 1940 there were virtually no relief work

openings. (Then with widespread bombing there was of course great need). So a few weeks before our course ended, John Hoare asked me to look around for openings for service. Through an FAU contact I got an introduction to a chap in the Regional Ministry of Health in Bristol. John Hoare encouraged me to go to see him. (I hitch-hiked for economy). The official asked for orderly help at Winford Orthopaedic Hospital: assured me it was a civilian hospital (but he refrained from telling me it was full of wounded Dunkirk soldiers). John Hoare released me for three weeks to lead the first Winford Team. It was a great shock of course to us all to find the wards full of wounded Tommies, but thanks to Max Melling (who later took over from me) and others, that initial very genuine conscience problem was resolved and the team developed a wonderful sense of camaraderie and purpose.

I immediately re-checked with the Ministry of Health about the civilian status of the hospital ('We take any who are in need of hospital care, Mr. Sessions, however they are dressed!'). Then after hours of searching talk with Team members - yet keeping the jobs going - I needed to go to Matron and explain that rather more than a third of that first group would need to withdraw and that enquiries for replacements from Spiceland (who were forthcoming) had been phoned through. Matron and I had quite a deep talk - 'But, Mr. Sessions, I still don't understand why the conscience of one pacifist allows him to stay but does not allow another to do so?' All this tested the Winford group at the very outset, and me too (I was twenty-five at the time and married one year). After three weeks, back I went to Spiceland to follow up leads for the unorganised beginnings by Quakers of evacuation hostel work. "

SS " I suffered no hardship or estrangement as a result of my pacifism. The insurance company for which I worked showed no more than a cold indifference when I left to go to Spiceland. I registered as a CO in 1940 and the Birmingham tribunal granted exemption on condition that I undertook work of National Importance.

I remember my one month's stay at Spiceland as an idyllic existence far removed from the world of war. The notion of relief work in Europe ended with the fall of France. The Winford project appealed to me at once as I had at one time been strongly drawn to the care of the sick and the

possibility of taking up medicine. I seized the opportunity to join the Winford Team and even more to go to Llangwyfan in 1942, with the eventual move to Liverpool and into the nursing profession for the rest of my working life. "

GBS " I have an abhorrence of violence (including my own bad temper) but also I have a sense of belonging to society and could not be an absolutist while fed and lodged by my society at a time of crisis when such basic necessities were hard to come by - so I pleaded as a CO on Quaker grounds and expressed willingness to do 'relief work' which condition was granted. So I went to Spiceland and found the rough life there rather tough. I was willing to do almost anything but hospital work - yet eventually went to try it - and stayed - despite the shock of being expected to do an hour's work before breakfast! "

GST " Many arguments took place at home and after a short time my employers voiced their strong objections to my pacifism and I was sacked. I was seeking unconditional exemption, but after my tribunal and appeal I was given 'social work', under which umbrella I worked for the next six years. After my sacking in 1940 I was very relieved to be accepted as a Spicelander. When I was ready to leave there, the Winford opportunity came up and although the idea of hospital work had never entered my head, this seemed to offer the useful service I was seeking and I finished walking that first day from Flax Bourton station to Winford with the rest of the Team. "

SMW " The case I presented to the CO tribunal in 1940 was 'conventionally Christian pacifist', much influenced by Raven's writings and speeches. I was prepared to accept civilian hospital or ambulance work and was conditionally registered for this. The Cambridge tribunal was relatively lenient, especially with religious objectors. I started working in Sheffield voluntarily, in the Royal Infirmary to which I travelled from home. It was the winter of the Blitz, and so it seemed worthwhile. Who exactly told me about Winford I can't remember - but I applied and joined in 1941. "

JLW " My local tribunal (Chairman: Judge Burgis, World War One hero) awarded me 'full military duties' in response to my application for unconditional exemption. The Appellate Tribunal (Chairman: Sir H.A.L. Fisher, later killed in the Blitz), gave 'ambulance, hospital or other

humanitarian work' as a condition. (This was the so-called 'Spiceland special' condition). As I was then at Winford, I accepted it. "

CW " It seemed to me that I should take a decision not to take part in any war, for any reason, and to hope that others, in all countries, would do the same. This decision led me to the tribunal in 1940 and dismissal from my job with a local authority. I attended a meeting at Friends' Meeting House in Manchester at which I heard a letter read out from Johnnie Wolstenholme, saying that help was wanted at Winford Hospital. As I was working temporarily for an accountant in private practice, I decided that work in a hospital would be suitable for me in war-time. I gave notice to the accountant - a prominent church-worker and peace-pledger - who was very cross with me, deducting the cost of an advertisement in a newspaper to obtain my replacement, from my last week's wages! "

NEARLY FIFTY YEARS ON

MKB " My views changed during the war. I can only attribute this to changes in my personal life. I had one cataclysmic love affair when I was at Spiceland and Winford, and afterwards went back into the theatre, this time as a writer. My career developed and other love affairs followed. I clung to conscientious objection after the erosion of religious beliefs and was turned down from the FAU because my objection was no longer based on Christian pacifism. My activities during the war included working for the International Voluntary Service for Peace, on meals delivery in West Ham, but also reporting tribunals for the Central Board for Conscientious Objectors where my writer's interest was held by the varying kinds of pacifists, and, I am afraid, pretenders to pacifism, who applied for exemption. This experience of semi-judicial proceedings gave me an enduring interest in the courts, and later I was a court correspondent for a medical paper, attended several trials of different kinds, and eventually wrote a play about a Queen's Bench judge trying his first case.

No longer a pacifist, I kept level with my social conscience for a time in the Authors' World Peace Appeal and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the 'fifties. Now my conscience is expressed mildly in professional matters connected with my new career of fight-directing in the theatre. Looking back on my views of 1940 I did what I thought right then. I no longer think it right now. But I am full of admiration for many of those I worked with then, and still have affection, respect and

understanding for those who were my fellow-objectors in the second world war. "

JHB " Looking back to the 1940s, I feel that my beliefs at that time were valid, but my life fell far short of my ideals. Today I am far more aware of the complexities of the whole issue. I was not comfortable as a CO, feeling that war could not be isolated from the other areas of one's life and treated on a different moral level. Time has only confirmed this moral dilemma. Our society is based on privilege and the sanctity of private property, a foundation which I see as being amoral. I recognise the structural violence in our social system which means people being sacrificed - - - you cannot have privilege without under-privilege. If I claim the right of individual conscience, I cannot logically do so in the area of war while at the same time enjoying the benefits I have managed to garner from a social system based on the protection of privilege and property often at the expense of injustice. I am not burdened with guilt, which I am sure is negative and unproductive. Forgiveness (self as well) must be a key element in the development of the individual and so society.

- - - We are struggling to cope with the pressures generated by a society which we largely despise but which we eagerly embrace. "

AEB " My present views are as my 1940 views. I would do it all again if necessary. "

PC " My transition from pacifism began imperceptibly during the war. I never remember not wanting England to win: I always felt I was missing something valuable in terms of comradeship and sharing the general will to victory; but I was committed to an absolutist pacifist position and it never occurred to me to abandon it. War fixes us in our established attitudes and change would have seemed like treachery. Besides, all the arguments which had won me to pacifism and all that I had since read about passive resistance and non-violent opposition to aggressors still seemed valid. But when a man I knew in Maidstone Gaol decided he wasn't a pacifist any more and intended to join up when he finished his sentence I was sure he was right to do so.

It was not until the Soviet coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948 that I realised I was no longer a pacifist. By the time of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 I was actually advocating (I am now ashamed to say) the use of atomic weapons against the Russians. Now I am emphatically in favour

of unilateral nuclear disarmament, though not a pacifist. If my pacifism is lost, my socialism never has been. I remain a member of the Labour Party and expect to continue so.

Part of me could be a practising Christian, but I never attend a place of worship. Brought up as a Christian, I could never feel a personal devotion to Jesus, though I take comfort in God's forgiveness unto seventy times seven and I know that however I may fall, underneath are the everlasting arms. "

SE " My beliefs have changed little over the last forty years. I have not been involved in efforts for world peace as maybe I ought to have been, thinking it was first important to live at peace with one's personal contacts. "

TE " I remained a pacifist throughout the war, though more and more aware of the illogicalities of this in a situation of 'total war'. I do not know what I would have done if the Germans had invaded. In 1945, in north Holland and then Germany with a Quaker Relief Team, I learnt of the moral compromises forced on Quakers and many others who hid Jews from the Gestapo or had simply to help themselves and their families to survive. I am still a pacifist but less happy than I ever was about moral absolutes, though there are always occasions when a stand must be made. I am much more aware than my young self was of the complexity of things. But in spite of the piled-high possibilities of nuclear war by design or accident - or because of them - there is much more understanding now of methods of conflict - avoidance and of conflict-resolution - though not yet among those who most need it, and I put my hopes into this. In my years of teaching and educational organising I always tried to play a positive and when necessary a reconciling role. However, I am conscious of many failures; some of these because I had not fully come to terms with my own aggression. My Quaker upbringing did not help me to clarify the difference between negative aggressiveness and a useful forcefulness in human inter-actions.

I still attend Quaker meetings but am giving thought, now that I'm retired, as to whether I am really any sort of Christian. More a kind of pagan humanist at present. "

DNF " Having spent thirty years in the shadow, so to speak, of Calder Hall, where so much work is done on nuclear power and its peaceful uses, and having twice gone round parts of it to see the safety aspect of their

working methods, I have come to accept the advantages that it has given to the electricity generating techniques and to medicine; but as the years go by I am becoming more anti-nuclear in armaments. I accept that the two are inextricably linked, but I hope mankind can manage the one without the other. Because so much is centred in Carlisle, my support is more passive than active and will remain so until there are more local groups. I tend rather to support local humanitarian/minority causes. Perhaps when I retire from general practice I shall be able to shift my attention from the caring/curing role to more active pacifism. "

RH " My convictions have developed and increased over the years, but there has been no fundamental change. It has been a natural development on the basis of believing that Christ is trustworthy and of my deciding to go His way. This confidence has been profoundly challenged in many ways, but I am surer now than I ever was that my choice was right. "

LCH " My beliefs have not changed basically since the 'forties. Paradoxically I am more cynical about human beings being able to order their lives collectively - but I wonder at and admire ordinary people such as those parents with handicapped kids who rise above their suffering,

I still believe in small, individual, carefully-planned, well-expressed protest. It works better than the big demos. More violence in the world? There is less in some ways - less violent exploitation in factories on a day-to-day basis, but there is grand violence. £2m. is cut from Bristol Polytechnic's next budget, at a stroke. That is violence to the eighty people who will lose their jobs. "

CK " My beliefs are much the same now as they were in the 1940s. Whilst not taking part in groups which are trying to further the peace message, I do take opportunities to spread the 'gospel' in my contacts with friends and relatives. I hope I have had some success if only in stimulating the thoughts of others. "

FL " I believe now much as I did, except that I no longer see in such clear-cut terms of black and white but rather in varying shades of grey. I am no longer the zealot for a cause. I hope this is more old age than apathy. I mistrust mass movements, especially religious or political ones. The late C.E.M. Joad once said 'The intelligence of a crowd is measured by its lowest common denominator'. This applies as much to a political or religious rally as to a football crowd.

In matters of faith I am persuaded of the validity of George Fox's testimony to 'that of God in every man'. I have found its truth breaks down the barriers of denominationalism. I find the environmental cause encouraging - a growing awareness of a one-world outlook developing. Perhaps one day even governments will have to take note - unless of course the balloon does go up before then. But Good Friday was followed by Easter-Day. "

MM " My Christian pacifism has stood firm. I still belong to the Fellowship of Reconciliation and support the CND. My old socialist faith is eroded on the grounds that socialism appears to have lost its soul and to have become just an economic device which union power is determined to use for selfish ends not idealistic ones. In the last two elections I have voted Liberal. My association with the Society of Friends is stronger now than it has ever been. I admit with some shame that I have left propaganda to those who have more taste for this activity. My voluntary work in the family-phase of life has been with the Scout movement which is neither political nor pacifist. It had about twenty-five years of my unpaid efforts. "

HHP " My beliefs have not changed. Having been for forty years self-employed in market-gardening and a part-time professional musician I have never reached taxable income therefore the Peace Tax idea never arose with me. I support it completely, though I think Friends' way of old should be followed: tax payment refused and distraint allowed. I have given my time and influence in the Society of Friends and in the ecumenical movement in Cornwall. I have never shrunk from including the Christian pacifist viewpoint. I have never joined any political party nor attended political meetings. Have voted at every general election since 1934 but have never voted for a winning candidate! "

RR " My views are still the same, yet I have become less active in peace work as such. There are compromises; sometimes one has to be silent, but I have always revealed my position as it was during the war when I have appeared before committees when applying for jobs (and once heard of genuine appreciation of the FAU in North Africa by an ex-major Eighth Army). On the other hand my time has been pretty fully occupied in the local Friends' meetings.

I am greatly impressed with the concern of so many younger ones for peace; but I am also impressed by the conviction of an ex-refugee

from Nazi oppression that the bully will always attack a weaker one. The inference is that some nations are bullies at some stage. I am not prepared to counter this argument on the facts; but I would say that we represent the position of the Christian pacifist as one of sacrifice. "

AHR " I would do exactly the same. The only way to eliminate war is to opt out. I would not take life because ordered to by someone else. "

WKS " If today I were presented with the same issues as in 1940, I would respond in the same way: I could do no other. It is as hard today as it was then (but for very different reasons) to be quietly optimistic that the world will gradually become more peaceful and more civilised. But the Quaker/Christian way is to go on 'walking cheerfully over the world answering that of God in every man'. Perhaps I have lowered my sights in concentrating on tackling good and useful things that I might manage to achieve - for example printing and publishing worthwhile books, including good Quaker ones; for example being chairman of a two-hundred-size firm with a feeling of common purpose; for example local conservation work. Plus my post-graduate studies initially with the Open University into the spread of early printing after 1476. I don't think I ever felt I could solve the world's problems: I certainly don't believe I can do so now. These interests will none of them set the Bristol Channel on fire - yet they are creative, they are fun, they are me! "

SS " My pacifist position arises out of a total view of life which has deepened with the passing of the years and is even more justified in the light of the turn of events over the past forty years. This conviction does not give me any feeling of satisfaction; the possibility of our world moving away from war becomes more and more unlikely as we approach the end of the century.

In the 1930s we felt there was a chance to outlaw war once and for all, through a very enlightened approach to the politics of reconciliation and co-operation as envisaged in the League of Nations, and a major attack on world poverty. But this chance was lost.

The revulsion from war has never been strong enough for people to demand an end to the use of the instruments of death by their governments. Guernica and Hiroshima convince me that there is no hope of limiting the methods of warfare once it has been resorted to. The only answer is the

abandonment of war.

Since entering the nursing profession I have had little to do with the pacifist movement, though I belong to the Methodist Peace Fellowship and consequently the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Hospital work has been very demanding. Nevertheless I have not hesitated to stand for the pacifist point of view when opportunity has arisen. "

GBS " My views today are, I hope, a matured version of those I held in the 1940s. Perhaps things which seemed straightforward to me then I now see as more complicated. My Quaker views have evolved so that I am more of a universalist than I was, largely due to my having worked in other parts of Europe and extensively in Africa and with people of many nations beyond these two continents. In all these environments I have tried to live a life 'to take away the occasion of all wars' and to appeal to 'that of God' in the strange mixture of peoples who have come my way. My work, in adult education mostly, has been most interesting and fulfilling and it is to this that I have devoted the bulk of my energies and to being a 'witness for peace' within those work-patterns. "

GST " Although the passing years blur the black and white views of idealistic youth, as far as war service and conscientious objection are concerned, I feel quite sure that I would take the same stand again. In time of war the pressures for decisions and actions are great and immediate. Since the war, however, I must admit that I have not been actively involved in campaigning for peace and disarmament although I have maintained my links with Friends as an attender and kept a nominal membership of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Now, in retirement, I might well become more involved. "

SMW " I still find it impossible to be a Christian and not be a pacifist, though I now have more respect for my fellow-Christians who do not interpret their faith in this way. I have 'soldiered on' in the F.o.R. and watched its dwindling membership grow older. I certainly feel that 'its up to the younger ones' but the nuclear disarmament debate has greatly revived interest in attitudes to war and I find I have something to contribute to a much wider potential audience. This I find stimulating, though the nuclear threat appals me. Looking back on 1940, I feel that I did not 'agonise' enough over the problem of combatting evil in the form of Nazi ideals and actions. I tend to feel that a Europe politically dominated by

Soviet Communism would not be lost for a generation (or forever) as a Nazi-dominated Europe could have been. This is partly because I have travelled in Russia and all the East European Countries (except Albania!). To that extent I find unilateral disarmament an easier political choice now than it could ever have been in 1938. But the nuclear armaments problem is of frightening dimensions and the whole scale of the thing is quite beyond anything we had to face."

JLW " I still believe that the pacifist position is the more appropriate response in an increasingly violent world. Violence cannot be cured by counter-violence. The example of Christ is the only one which offers hope to end violence. "

CW "Perhaps the passage of time should have led to change in one's outlook and beliefs, and about many matters this has been so with me. However, on the matter of war between nations I still have the deepest conviction that war is wrong. I have the belief in the brotherhood of man which I had when I was young. I do not think that the dreadfulness of modern weapons will of itself prevent war. The horror of the 1914-18 trench warfare did not prevent the war of 1939-45 (my father thought it would) and I am convinced that only the determination of men and women to refuse to make and to use arms will bring peace and ensure the survival of the human race. "

AFTERWORD

In the world of the four-minute warning, accounts of tribunals and deep thought by young men about their stance in time of war may seem to come from a remote and leisured age. But the need to stand for the individual conscience on matters of peace and war as on other profound issues of civil liberty is as vital as ever in the "global village" where we all now dwell. We who were young half-a-century ago can only wish today's young men and women luck in their own approaches to freeing the world from war; a task which, in Sydney Bailey's words, "often seems impossible but always is necessary."

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

In a supplementary I asked the writers to provide notes on their careers and present religious affiliations, which are not always apparent from the text. Many replies outlined life-stories full of colourful detail impossible to fit in here. This is especially true of the pre-war years and of the immediate post-war years when several men involved themselves in relief work or were in what proved to be temporary positions. However, in broad terms eight men pursued careers in education: two were craft teachers in secondary schools, one of them a deputy head for many years; another man became head of a primary school; two lectured in further education colleges and polytechnics. One man became warden of an adult education centre in Wales; another a community education adviser in the Midlands; and a third worked in adult education in England and in rural development in West Africa. Four men continued their work in nursing begun in war-time, three of them qualifying to fill senior posts in hospitals. There was one each of the following: hospital administrator; academic botanist and director of a university botanic garden; head of family printing firm; clinical psychologist and Gestalt therapist (in Denmark); civil engineer and town planner; market gardener and musician; manager on the export side of engineering; editorial, publicity and archive worker; evangelical worker in Italy; general practitioner and occupational health physician; local government officer; stage fight director and instructor. The last-mentioned states that the combats he directs "satisfy one's natural instincts without actually hurting anyone"!

Of religious outlooks: there are ten Quakers, six of them from before the war; two Methodists; one United Reformed Church, one evangelical Christian, one Church of England. Nine men have no church affiliation, though several of them attend Quaker meetings or church services from time to time.

PEOPLE, BOOKS AND ORGANISATIONS MENTIONED

There were no television networks in the 1930s. In the nation's affairs it was still the age of the pamphlet and the well-attended public meeting. The speeches and writings of the following were "our daily diet" (Stan Smith). Vera Brittain, Gerald Heard, Laurence Housman, Aldous Huxley, C.E.M. Joad, Middleton Murry, Beverley Nichols and Bertrand Russell were well-known as writers on other topics when they spoke out for pacifism: (some changed their views when war began). Murry experimented with pacifist land communities. Huxley's "Ends and Means" was a philosophical study of ways of eliminating war. Nichols' "Cry Havoc!" was a passionate call for peace, critical of the arms trade. Richard Gregg's "The Power of Non-Violence", advocated training in non-violent resistance to war. "All Quiet on the Western Front", by Erich Maria Remarque, was a classic anti-war book, written out of Remarque's experience of the German trenches in 1914-18. H.N. Brailsford was a socialist, a brilliant writer on politics and one of the few leading left-wingers of the time who was not taken in by Stalinism.

The most prominent pacifist churchman was Dick Sheppard, Vicar of St. Martin-in-the Fields, who inspired over 100,000 people to pledge themselves against war in 1935 and formed the Peace Pledge Union. Donald Soper, Methodist minister, life-long pacifist and socialist, was famous for his open-air preaching on Tower Hill. He eventually became a life peer. Canon Charles Raven, Master of Christ's College, Cambridge, wrote influential books on Christian pacifism. Maude Royden was a powerful preacher and advocate of Gregg's non-violent resistance. William Temple, Archbishop first of York and then of Canterbury, though not a pacifist, was strong on social concerns. H.G. Wood was a Quaker theologian who felt that pacifists often under-rated the power and subtlety of evil. He believed that the pacifist interpretation of Christianity had to be rooted in the Cross of Christ and not be based on the letter of the Sermon on the Mount.

Fenner Brockway was imprisoned as a CO in 1916 and was active in civil liberty and internationalist causes until his death in 1988 at the age of 99. He was an MP and later a reluctant life peer. George Lansbury, a pacifist, led the Labour Party from 1932-35, when he resigned on the peace issue. James Maxton, MP was a leading member of the Independent Labour Party. A fine speaker; not a pacifist. Haile Selassie was Emperor of Ethiopia (Abyssinia) from 1930 to 1962, when he was deposed. He was in exile

during the Italian occupation of his country between 1935 and 1941, and appealed in vain for strong support against the Italian fascists from the League of Nations, the fore-runner of the United Nations. Adolf Hitler, leader of Nazi Germany from 1933-45, is seldom named by contributors, doubtless because we take his looming background presence for granted when we recall those days. We knew that German pacifists were among the first prisoners in the concentration camps where many of them died from brutality and neglect; but no-one foresaw the extermination camps which, with their gas-chambers and crematoria, were not built until after the German victories in 1940.

Soon after the first war the Fellowship of Reconciliation began to advocate Christian pacifism internationally. In 1921 the War Resisters' International was started. So was the No More War Movement, whose members were eventually absorbed into the PPU. The International Voluntary Service for Peace (now IVS, not IVSP) became the British branch of Service Civile Internationale, the work-camp movement started by a Swiss citizen, Pierre Ceresole. The Left Book Club, the brain-child of the publisher Victor Gollancz in the late Thirties, provided for its avid subscribers a stream of lively books on socialism, international affairs and the murkier associations of supporters of the current Tory government (then apparently immovable), all in unmistakable soft orange covers. The Oxford Union is the student debating society which in 1933 passed by a large majority a motion stating "That this house will in no circumstances fight for King and Country." The Quakers' formal title is the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). It is one of the historic peace churches, founded in the seventeenth century by George Fox.

Two war-time Quaker organisations mentioned are the official body, the Friends' Relief Service, and the autonomous Friends' Ambulance Unit. Both were engaged in a wide variety of emergency work at home and abroad and operated a number of joint ventures.

RECENT BOOKS RELEVANT TO THIS ESSAY

WAR AND CONSCIENCE IN THE NUCLEAR AGE, by Sydney D. Bailey, MacMillan Press, £12-95, 1988.

An expert and lucid study of the history and present state of attempts to limit the conduct and effects of warfare by international law, to promote disarmament and to allow for conscientious objection. My quotation on P.33 is from the last sentence of the author's introduction.

TROUBLESOME PEOPLE: Enemies of War, 1916-86, by Caroline Moorehead. Hamish Hamilton, £14-95, 1987.

A detailed history of twentieth-century peace movements in Britain and abroad.

THE DROWNED AND THE SAVED, by Primo Levi. Michael Joseph, £10-95, 1988. Concise and penetrating reflections on the Nazi extermination camps by a survivor, writing in 1986. In his concluding chapter, Levi states that "from violence only violence is born", but his book is a cool corrective to over-optimism among those who strive to better the human condition.

NUMBERS OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Figures produced by the Central Board for Conscientious Objectors show that by the end of the war there had been 62,301 objectors out of a call-up of about five million, or 1.2%. Of this number 1704 were women, who began to be called up in 1942. These figures are quoted in Caroline Moorehead's book, "Troublesome People".

Figures for the two years to 1941, which cover many contributors, show that over 50,000 men had already registered as objectors and been dealt with as follows:

18% received unconditional exemption.

45% received conditional exemption.

20% were put on the military register for non-combatant duties.

17% were refused exemptions.

The last three categories had the right of appeal. These 1941 figures are from Vera Brittain's "England's Hour," an autobiography, 1939-41. Futura paperback, MacMillan 1981, Chapter X.

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION IN EUROPE IN THE 1980s

An English friend of mine was a student in Germany in 1939. Soon after conscription was introduced in Britain he was staying with a Junker family in East Prussia. His hostess, who later became a distinguished West German journalist, took the London "Times". When she read of the conscience clauses, she said, "That is the mark of a truly civilised nation".

How civilised in this respect are European states today ? A study, "Conscientious Objection to Military Service in Europe" was submitted by the Quaker Council for European Affairs to the Council of Europe and published by that body in 1981. It shows that of the 25 European countries which have conscription, only 13 offer any exemption, mostly very limited. Not all the 13 countries give applicants for exemption the chance to make their cases in person or by legal representation. The states which, in 1981, gave no exemption at all were: Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Rumania, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, the USSR and Yugoslavia. The one east European state which allows restricted exemption is the German Democratic Republic.

But in 1988 there are small hopeful signs. In a follow-up to the Helsinki Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, a meeting was recently held in Vienna, (reported in "The Guardian", 22nd March, 1988). Over 400 people from Russia, Poland, East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia signed a petition demanding the right to conscientious objection for Europeans. The document says, "It is disgraceful for the whole of our continent that even after Hitlerism and Stalinism and the evils of two world wars, there are still governments that do not respect the rights of individuals to follow the dictates of their own consciences". The east European signatories also support men imprisoned in countries such as Turkey, Greece and Spain for their principled refusal to carry out military service.