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CENTRAL COMMITTEE FOR CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS 514 MISSION STREET
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A great deal of misinformation has been circulating about the new draft law. For example, on June 29 Drew Pearson, in his zeal to prove that Mendel Rivers had "not only blocked draft reforms but left the law more discriminatory than it had been", was guilty of asserting as fact what must be considered opinion in the light of the wording of the law itself.

He states that "conscientious objectors can no longer claim deferment unless they belong to an established religious group. This overrules a 1965 Supreme Court decision..." This may well have been the intent of Congress, but it is far from clear in the law itself. The law requires that conscientious objection be based upon "religious training and belief", which was defined in 1948 as "an individual's belief in a relationship to a Supreme Being involving duties superior to those arising from any human relationship." The new law deletes that definition of religious training and belief as regards the Supreme Being. Although Congress has expressed its wish that "religious training and belief" be more narrowly construed, the wording of the law is obviously open to far wider interpretation than before. In effect, it seems an affirmation of the 1965 Seeger Supreme Court decision, which broadened the concept of a Supreme Being to include any belief which "occupies a place in the life of its possessor parallel to that filled by the orthodox belief in God of one who clearly qualifies for the exemption."

Mr. Pearson further states that "young men can no longer appeal their draft classification until they have accepted or rejected induction." This is not true. The new law still allows appeal procedure within the Selective Service System at two levels, the State Appeals Board, and the Presidential Review Board. However, as has been the case in the past, no judicial review is allowed of a draft classification except as a defense in a criminal proceeding, ie., until one has refused induction, and can be allowed only if a classification has been given without a basis in fact.

The Appeal procedure for conscientious objectors has, however, been severely truncated. In the past, State Appeal procedure has included a non-criminal investigation by the FBI, a hearing before an officer of the Department of Justice, and a recommendation by an office of Department of Justice headquarters. The new law eliminates that investigation, confrontation and recommendation, and no substitute procedure has been provided.

At this time, one can only speculate as to how the Selective Service and the Courts will interpret the new Selective Service Law; as regards conscientious objectors, the law says less by way of definition than before, thus increasing the potential for broad interpretation. Until such time as the interpretation becomes clear in practice and court action, statements such as those of Mr. Pearson must be recognized as speculative.

*Services to
Conscientious
Objectors*



CENTRAL
COMMITTEE
FOR
CONSCIENTIOUS
OBJECTORS

2006 Walnut St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19103

Purpose

- ▶ to maintain freedom of conscience
- ▶ to interpret the moral and legal basis of conscientious refusal to participate in war
- ▶ to counsel and assist conscientious objectors who oppose conscription, payment of taxes for military purposes, civil defense, or loyalty oaths

Services offered to all conscientious objectors free of charge

- counsel COs on draft problems
- advise local counseling agencies and attorneys defending COs in court
- arrange for legal counsel for COs facing criminal prosecution
- assist in arranging bail when needed
- assist COs in the armed forces
- visit COs in prison
- work for release of prison COs requesting our help
- assist in securing pardons, work for general amnesty

Publications

NEWS NOTES reports current information in the field of conscientious objection, including changes in the draft law or regulations which affect COs. Subscriptions available without charge upon request.

HANDBOOK FOR CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS, a manual of detailed information about the draft law and procedures relating to COs; describes life in prison and the army medical service for COs. Contains nine-page selected and annotated bibliography on conscientious objection. Most comprehensive publication available in this field. Indexed for easy reference use. Eighth edition, 1967, \$1.00 postpaid.

THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR AND THE ARMED FORCES, an advisory memo for men who become COs after entering the military. Single copies free.

Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors

A voluntary non-sectarian committee organized in 1948 by church, peace, and civil liberties groups.

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The Committee's work depends entirely on voluntary contributions. Your support is invited. Contributions are not tax-deductible.

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