

113 Heaton St.,
CHRISTCHURCH, 5.
21st Sept., 1970.

The District Officer,
Department of Labour,
CHRISTCHURCH, 1.

Dear Sir,

I wish to register as a conscientious objector. I have not registered previously because I have never before critically assessed my own attitudes towards military service, Militarism in general, its logical extension in war, and its consequences. I have been brought up to believe that armed force is inevitable and justified as a last line of defence, in a situation where apparently all peaceful measures have failed to bring about reconciliation of two opposing factions. Because of this, I have always assumed that in extreme circumstances I would be prepared to fight and kill for my country. I now find that, after much thought and consideration of alternatives, I cannot accept such an attitude and I no longer believe that war, even if it is an inevitable last step in a long chain of events - which I doubt - can be justified, irrespective of the circumstances leading to its declaration.

I have been raised in a family of which both my parents served in the armed forces overseas during World War II. My father was in action in Italy and was decorated for his role. I myself was an N.C.O. in the Cadet Corps at ChCh Boys High School and a member of the Special Training Unit. I even, voluntarily attended a training course at Burnham Military Camp during vacation time. Since then I have often questioned the morality of the war in Vietnam - irrespective of other considerations I oppose this war on purely political grounds - but not until very recently have I examined my attitude to war in general. As my call-up became both inevitable and imminent I began to reconsider my responsibilities, with regards to war, as a Christian I have been a member of Oxford Terrace Baptist Church, baptised several years ago - a human being, and as a citizen of this country. Military training appeared to be a harmless activity and which participation required no moral compromise until I began to examine its logical consequences and implications over a period of time and realized I should have to take an uncompromising stand.

I believe as a result of my listening, discussion, reading and meditation, that I cannot participate in any form of military activity and still remain sincere to the dictates of my conscience. This is my own decision. I have not been consciously influenced in this decision by any particular person or group of persons although I gain comfort and inspiration from the thoughts and actions of men such as Jesus Christ, Dr. Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, Kahlil Gibran and many others. My Statement follows:-

I, by reason of my conscience, refuse to be involved in war, or, by extension, in military service of any kind. I believe that armed force is wrong and I am totally opposed to war in general on humanitarian and religious grounds.

My objections to war on humanitarian grounds are based on the belief that every road towards a better state of society is blocked sooner or later by war, by threats of war, by preparations for war. The world is afflicted by the mania of militarism. War is a purely human phenomenon. Man is unique in organizing the mass murder of his own species. The argument "survival of the fittest" has often been used in support of military methods. Instead war tends to eliminate the young and strong, while a still greater number are rendered unfit, and spare the unhealthy. War causes destruction, degradation, misery and sorrow in the extreme. That various civilizations of the world have adopted fundamentally different philosophic attitudes towards war indicates that there is nothing "natural" about war.

Compare the Chinese and Indian attitudes towards war with the European. Europeans have always worshipped the military hero and, since the rise of Christianity, the martyr. Our European admiration for military heroism and martyrdom has tended to make men believe that a good death is more important than a good life, and that a long course of folly and crime can be cancelled out by a single act of physical courage.

Confucianism prefers a wise prudence to mere physical courage and declares that an untimely sacrifice of life is unfitting for a wise man. Lao Tzu, the probable author of the Tao Teh Ching, uses the Tao as an eternal cosmic principle that is, at the same time, the inmost root of the individuals being. Those who would live in harmony with Tao must refrain from assertiveness, self-importance and aggressiveness, must cultivate humility and return good for evil. Since Confucius and Lao Tzu Chinese ideals have been essentially pacifistic. Indian pacifism finds its completest expression in the teaching of Buddha. Buddhism, like Hinduism, teaches ahimsa, or harmlessness towards all living beings. It forbids even laymen to have anything to do with the manufacture and sale of arms, with the making of poisons and intoxicants, with soldiering or the slaughter of animals. For Buddhists, anger is always and unconditionally disgraceful. For Christians there is such a thing as "righteous indignation". Thanks to this possibility of indignation being righteous, Christians have often felt themselves justified in making war and committing atrocities. War is not a law of nature nor even a law of human nature. It exists because men want it to exist. People accept war only because they are taught to consider it an inevitable last step in settling differences of any magnitude. The machinery for peaceful change is ready and waiting; but nobody uses it, because nobody wants to use it. Wherever we turn we find that the real obstacles to peace are human will and feeling, human convictions, prejudices and opinions. If we want to get rid of war we must first get rid of all its psychological causes. Only when this has been done will the rulers of the nations even desire to get rid of the economic and political causes.

The only effective methods for carrying out large-scale social reforms are non-violent methods. Violence produces only the results of violence and the attempt to impose reforms by violent methods is foredoomed to failure. The only cases in which violent methods succeed are those where initial violence is rapidly followed by compensatory acts of justice, humaneness, sympathetic understanding etc. This being so, logic demands that we shall begin with non-violence and not run the risk of stultifying the process of reform by using violence, even as an initial measure. This risk I speak of stems from my belief that small scale fighting leads to war, that small wars lead to bigger wars, and so on. To where?

I do not propose to outline here my conception of non-violent methods of reform except to say that I believe a nation can defend itself effectively against armed attack by non-violent means using

civilian resistance as a national defence policy. After Russia's brutal invasion of Czechoslovakia it became clear that many civilian activities (including radio and press) had been successfully, if spontaneously, deployed to resist the invader. I believe civil disobedience, strikes, boycotts, underground newspapers and the whole armoury of passive resistance can be expanded and co-ordinated into a strategy of national defence, with patriotic government running in parallel with enemy or puppet authority.

About the Machinery of peaceful settlement and international co-operation it is unnecessary to say very much. A machine may be exquisitely ingenious and of admirable workmanship, but if people refuse to use it, or use it boldly, it will be almost or completely useless. This is the case with the machinery of peaceful change and international co-operation. It has been in existence for a long time, and if the governments of the various nations had always wanted to make use of it, it would have served its purpose - the preservation of peace - with efficiency. But governments have not always wished to make use of it. Whenever 'national honour' and 'vital interests' were concerned they have preferred to threaten or actually make use of violence. Even in cases where they have consented to employ the machinery of peaceful settlement, they have sometimes displayed such bad will that the machine has been unable to function. So much for the United Nations Organization etc....

I am a Christian. I believe the duty of a Christian is to consciously try to live the type of life Jesus Christ lived, as shown as through the Bible. Jesus Christ taught that we should love all men, even as he so obviously loved all men, that we should treat all others as we would wish to be treated ourselves and that we should not be overcome by evil but should overcome evil with good. Christianity is a policy of peace and love in action. I believe Christianity teaches killing and warring is wrong. Many Christian people maintain that war is justified when it is waged in defence of the vital interests of the community. But the nature of modern warfare is such that the vital interests of the community cannot be defended by it; on the contrary, they must inevitably suffer more from the waging of war than they would suffer by non-resistance to violence. Modern war destroys with the maximum of efficiency and the maximum of indiscriminate, and therefore entails the commission of injustices far more numerous and far worse than any it is intended to counteract. Therefore, in the circumstances of the present time, complete pacifism is reasonable, right and even orthodox.

It is of interest to note that during the first two and a half centuries of the Christian era, Christians were almost without exception conscientious objectors, not only because they objected to the shedding of blood, but also because service in the army was connected with worship of idols and sacrifices to the Emperor. When the Church, after the conversion of Constantine, decreed the excommunication of Christians who threw away their arms in time of peace, religious objection to war, in Europe, became a minority concept.

It may be objected that the majority of men and women all over the world ardently desire peace and that therefore there is no need for private individuals to make propaganda in favour of peace. The truth is that one can never have something for nothing and as the saying goes "All men desire peace, but very few desire those things which make for peace". The voters in every country desire peace. But hardly any of them are prepared to pay the price for peace. In the modern world, the 'things that make for peace' are disarmament, unilateral, if necessary, renunciation of exclusive empires; abandonment of the policy of economic nationalism; determination in all circumstances to use methods of non-violence; systematic training in such methods. How many of the so-called peace-lovers of the world love these indispensable conditions of peace? Few indeed. And who is prepared to make the first move? I must make my stand as a peace-loving individual.

Some of my objections are expressed more adequately by
A. Baxter when he says ..

"I have always been a true believer
in law and order and as a citizen I have regard
for the thoughts and opinions of my fellows and also
for their feelings. I believe that a man should
seek to bring ~~to~~ his life and actions into agree-
ment with his truest sense of duty towards God
and Man. I believe that the ~~soul~~ of Man is not,
and cannot be subject to any earthly state, for
no earthly state is perfect.

I believe that passive resistance to evil is
the power that will yet conquer the world and I
cannot acquiesce to any form of militarism that
goes on the principle that man is merely the pro-
perty of man. I view all men as comrades and brothers
in different stages of moral, intellectual and spir-
itual development.

I am not against the soldier. I judge no man
for his opinions. I have my failings like other
men but I stand for Universal Brotherhood."

Signed.....*A. Mackenzie*.....