

**Uncle Sam Wants You
For the Military**

***You Don't Have To Go
Know Your Rights!***

by Tom Cornell

Published by the Catholic Peace Fellowship
P.O. Box 4232
South Bend, IN 46634

Single copy free; bulk rate available.

Reprint permission granted; attribution appreciated.

You are in high school. Military recruiters are after you. You need to read this.

Or, you are out of school and you don't have the job you want. You are thinking of enlisting in the military. You need to read this.

The draft may be back soon. You don't have to go. If you don't want to go, start doing something about it now. Do you know your rights? You need to read this.

You may be in the military. You have decided you made a mistake. You want out. Do you know your rights? You need to read this.

Recruiters

High school students are bombarded with slick recruitment mailings. Military recruiters will telephone you, even visit your home, act like big brothers. Some of the claims they make are misleading. You want to learn auto mechanics? The army will teach you! Fly jet planes? The same! College degree? Why pay for it when the army will send you to college for free and pay you at the same time?

What they don't tell you is that their contract binds *you*, but it does not bind *them* to anything. Once you are theirs, it is entirely up to the military where they will put you, what job, what training, what country, what war. They own you for eight years! That's right, *eight years!* Recruiters are salesmen. Recruiters must fill their quotas or *they* may be shipped to Iraq or Afghanistan.

You may find yourself in a dead-end situation. You may want out. The military may look better to you than more of the same dead-end jobs. Maybe you're right.

Maybe you would be better off in the army. Maybe life is so destructive where you are that the army would be a step up and out. Okay, brother, sister. Best of luck and God bless you! But talk to a counselor or to a veteran, somebody who has been there first.

List

Catholic Peace Fellowship, P.O. Box 4232, South Bend, IN 46634. Tel. 574-232-2295. E-mail staff@catholicpeacefellowship.org.

Center on Conscience and War, 1830 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20009. Tel. 1-800-379-2679. E-mail ccw@centerconscience.org.

Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors, 1515 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA 19102. Tel. 215-563-8187; 405 14 St., #205, Oakland, CA 94612. E-mail info@objector.org.

Fellowship of Reconciliation, Protestant peace fellowships, Jewish Peace Fellowship, Muslim Peace Fellowship, Buddhist Peace Fellowship, Box 471, Nyack, NY 10960. Tel. 914-358-4601. E-mail [for@\[forusa.org\]](mailto:for@[forusa.org])

GI Hotline Tel. 1-800-394-9544; www.girights.org.

War Resisters League. 339 Lafayette Street, New York, NY 10012. Tel. 1-800-975-9688. E-mail wrl@warresisters.org.

The question remains: Can war ever be just in today's world? How many children have to die before they are no longer "collateral damage" but victims of state terrorism?

"No, never again war, which destroys the lives of innocent people, teaches how to kill, throws into upheaval even the lives of those who do the killing and leaves behind a trail of resentment and hatred, thus making it all the more difficult to find a just solution of the very problems that provoked the war." Pope John Paul II

"We cannot fail to praise those who renounce the use of violence in the vindication of their rights and who resort to methods of defense which are otherwise available to weaker parties too, provided that this can be done without injury to the rights and duties of others or of the community itself." Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, #79

"The Church emphatically rejects war as a means of resolving international disputes, and has often pointed out that it only leads to new and still more complicated conflicts." Pope Benedict XVI

"To me nonviolence is the all important problem or virtue to be nourished and studied and cultivated." Dorothy Day

Decisions made in desperation are often unwise. There may be better alternatives.

Registration for the Draft

Males (and perhaps females in the future) are required to register with the Selective Service System at a local Post Office, through the Internet or over the telephone when they turn eighteen. Register at the Post Office. The registration form asks information necessary to contact you. There is no place on the registration form to indicate that you might have problems with a draft. But you can write across the form or in the margin, I WON'T GO or I AM A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR if that's the case.

Before you hand the card back to the clerk at the Post Office, make a photocopy. Your original form will be destroyed and the information on it will be stored digitally. Your statement on your photocopy will not prejudice you in any way but it may come in handy if you decide that you don't want to do military service.

Keep your photocopy on file in a safe place.

You will receive a letter of acknowledgment from the Selective Service System, with a SSN, a Selective Service Number assigned to you. There will be a form attached for you to submit any changes or relevant information. If you send anything, make sure to keep a photocopy in your file. (This would be a good time to state reasons that you believe should keep you out of the army.) And remember, send everything by Certified Mail with Return Receipt Requested! Keep the receipt with the photocopy. If you fail to register you may face prosecution in federal court. No one has been prosecuted for several years. Several states deny non-registrants admission to public institutions of higher learning and state jobs.

Your File

You need to keep your own file, a record of everything that might affect your availability to the military. You need copies of all your letters or forms you have sent to your draft board. Your file should contain anything that might bear on any deferment or exemption you might apply for or to any feelings you may have against war or military service. The draft board will keep their own file on you. If there is anything missing from your file at the draft board, you can prove that it is missing by supplying a photocopy of what you sent and a receipt signed by the secretary of the draft board that proves that they received it. That is why your correspondence should always be by Certified Mail with Return Receipt Requested. If you should ever be in court for refusal of an induction order, this file will be absolutely necessary for your defense.

The Draft: How it Works

Recruitment is down. Be prepared for the return of the draft. Not everyone would be drafted. The military *selects* those they want. That is why it is called *Selective Service*. There are many reasons why you may not be eligible. Selective Service will give you a leaflet with basic information, but don't expect Selective Service personnel to explain your rights in detail.

If you are drafted you will have ten days to document any reasons you claim for exemption or deferment or conscientious objector status before being ordered to report for induction into the army. So start preparing NOW! Document everything, and keep it in your file. You can not be inducted until all claims you have made for deferment, exemption or conscientious objector status have been denied and all appeals are exhausted.

In the Military

It's not too late to demand your rights even if you are in the military. You joined the National Guard thinking you would be fighting floods and forest fires in your own state instead of people who are completely foreign to you in a land that is theirs and not yours.

It's not too late! Your legal situation is more difficult than if you were a civilian. But you have rights and you can claim them. If any family member needs you at home, if a physical or emotional problem has developed since you joined the service or has become worse, if you find that you are troubled in conscience by military service, you may have the right to an honorable discharge with no penalty or prejudice.

Military personnel who find themselves unable in conscience to continue service need expert help. Talk to a chaplain. Tell your commanding officer and insist upon filing a claim for separation as a conscientious objector. An objection to war and military service may "crystallize" at any time after induction.

Above all, do not make yourself liable for prosecution as a deserter! The penalties are severe and will prejudice the rest of your life .

And contact a military counselor as soon as possible! Call the GI Hotline at **1-800-394-9544**. They can help you understand grievance procedures, regulations for military discharge and other rights issues. Keep in contact with your counselor. The GI Hotline people will do everything they possibly can for you.

The organizations listed below are not anti-military even if they are anti-militarist and anti-war. As long as the strong threaten the weak the world will need military people to act as police. If they perform their duties faithfully and within the bounds of morality, international law and rules such as the Geneva Conventions, they contribute to peace.

If you think you may enter a conscientious objector claim at any time in the future, now is the time to start building your case. Have you or any member of your family been involved in anti-war protests in the past? Note that and put it into the file. Have you talked about these things with a member of the clergy, a teacher, a counselor, your parents, friends? Document all of these in some way. Ask clergy, teachers, social workers to write letters of recommendation for you stressing your sincerity even if they do not agree with you and put them into that file.

Be prepared to explain why you are opposed to serving in war, your religious or moral beliefs, your reasons for opposing war, how you acquired your beliefs and how they have influenced your life in the past and your plans for the future.

And most important: Contact a qualified draft counselor who knows the law and the Selective Service Rules and Regulations. A list of agencies that can offer you a competent counselor free of charge is at the end of this pamphlet.

If you intend to file for conscientious objector status, send notice of this to your bishop or the authorities of your church, synagogue or mosque. Most can be counted upon for support.

It is important to show your claim did not come out of the blue the day you got your induction notice. A realization that you are a conscientious objector may come at the last minute, but it is harder to prove.

Deferments

There are many reasons you may be eligible for a temporary deferment from the draft. For instance, if you have a family member who could not function without your help, and you are the only person who can give that help, you may qualify for a hardship deferment as long as that person remains in need. Deferments will be reviewed annually.

Full-time students *may* be allowed to finish a term or year or a course of study. If you are a full-time high school student you will be deferred until graduation. If you are a full-time college student you may be deferred, either until completion of your semester or graduation.

Physically unfit

Do you have a medical condition making you unsuitable for military service? Have you ever had an asthma attack? How about allergies? There are many conditions that make you unsuitable. Private physicians have discovered these conditions in many men. Army doctors may overlook them. It's a good idea to go to a private physician who knows what to look for. The agencies listed at the end of this pamphlet may be able to direct you to a physician who will work for you free of charge.

Psychologically unfit

Is there any reason you think you might be psychologically unfit for military service? Are you taking medication for depression or anxiety? Do you have trouble with authority figures? The agencies listed at the end of this pamphlet may be able to direct you to a psychologist who will work free of charge for you.

Morally Unfit

If you have been convicted of a felony you may be deemed morally unfit.

Other exemptions

Full-time ministers of religion and full-time students preparing for religious ministry are exempt. Members of vowed religious orders as brothers or sisters and those in formation to become members are exempt.

If you are a foreign national or have citizenship in another country as well as in the U.S., contact that country's consulate and ask if treaty obligations protect you from a U.S. draft. If you are not a U.S. citizen and you take advantage of such a treaty obligation, then you will not be drafted but application for naturalization as a U.S. citizen may be denied.

Did a close family member die in military service, killed in battle or as a result of combat? You may qualify for exemption. You need not be a sole survivor.

Notify your local draft board of change of address or any changes in your life that may affect your draft classification. Exemptions may be reviewed annually.

Conscientious Objection

Is killing other human beings on a mass scale for political purposes offensive to your sense of right and wrong? You might be a conscientious objector and qualify for exemption from military training and service. All Protestant denominations, the Catholic Church, the Jewish religion, Islam, Native American religions and Buddhism support conscientious objectors.

If your sense of right and wrong has not been formed within a religious tradition, you have the same rights as those whose have. But again, you will need a file on this.

The draft board will want to know if you are opposed to your own participation in "war in any form" and to military service as well. Draft boards are more willing to grant conscientious objector status to those who are willing to serve in the military without weapons, as medics for instance, if they meet certain qualifications. Selective Service is obliged by law to grant the same recognition to those who are unwilling to serve in the military in any capacity. "War in any form" means any form of war. The conscientious objector claim must be based upon a deeply and firmly held religious or moral belief, but not a political belief or judgment. It must apply to war in general and not to a particular war. The objection must be sincere.

Conscientious objectors are subject to a call to civilian alternative service for the same period of time as if they were drafted into the military. But they are under civilian authority, not military, and assigned to such jobs as hospital orderlies, work in agricultural experimentation, work with the disabled, at the same rate of pay and with the same benefits as any other employee. You may pick your own place of work from a list of approved agencies.

Local draft boards in the past have turned down most conscientious objector claims on the basis of lack of sincerity. Don't let this surprise you! You can appeal to the Appeal Board for your state. It doesn't cost any money. Appeal boards are made up of people who are much better trained than local draft board members. If there is no hard evidence to deny your sincerity, if the claim is based upon religious or moral principle, training and belief, and if it is a claim against war in general, then the Appeal Board will almost certainly grant the claim. The Justice Department does not wish to waste money prosecuting a draft refuser if it is bound to lose its case. On the other hand, don't make a claim unless you intend to live by it, even if that means prison. The maximum sentence for refusal of induction is five years.