

World War II: A Third Chance

For Unwilling Civilians

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Citizens from all over the world have always tried to excuse military service for their religion and ethnicities. Sadly, in some wars that behavior was unacceptable and men had to join the military, or else they would have had to pay fines, find substitutes, or even go to federal prisons. In the year 1941 President Franklin D. Roosevelt built Civilian Public Service camps and other volunteering opportunities for the religious and conscientious objectors as an alternative to participating in military services. Civilian Public Service Camps improved productivity throughout the entire country, eventually making extraordinary contributions to forest fire prevention, erosion and flood control, medical science, and improving the mental health system.

Conscientious Objection Throughout History

All throughout history citizens have refused to participate in military service for religious and ethical purposes. It all started in the times of colonial settlement when a small number of citizens resisted joining the militia system mainly based on religious beliefs. Though many conscientious objectors (COs) were protected at this time, citizens often harassed, fined, and confiscated properties owned by them. After the colonial era, the United States government made the conscientious objectors hire a substitute to be serving in the war for them and pay a communication fee.¹

Conscientious objectors became an issue again during the Civil War, mainly in the South, where the only way out of partaking in military service was hiring a substitute to take their place. Though some objectors did not hire a substitute, military leaders did not feel the need to force them

¹ Mennonite Central Committee, *Civilian Public Service*, civilianpublicservice.org/storybegins/krehbiel/conscientious-objection. (Accessed 17 Jan. 2018)

into doing so.² Eventually Lieutenant General Thomas J. Jackson suggested the allowing of conscientious objectors for the production of supplies or the serving of non combatants. This recommendation did indeed improve the CO problem during the Civil War.³

During World War 1 COs became an even bigger issue because the government did not allow men to hire a substitute or pay a communication fee.⁴ Instead, the government passed the Selective Service Act on April 2, 1917, claiming that men who object to military service will have to serve as a noncombatant (see Appendix A)⁵. This system, however, lacked organization, for the draft boards were quite arbitrary on the identification of the COs. This happened due to the Selective Service Act not specifying the meaning of “non combatants”. Eventually the president, Woodrow Wilson, defined the term “non combatants” as a form of service in Medical, Quartermaster, or Engineering Corporations. Some COs didn’t participate in any form of military service, these objectors were called absolutists. Almost all of the absolutists during World War 1 were taken to federal military prisons such as Alcatraz or Leavenworth.⁶

World War 2 Arises:

Before the outbreak of World War 2 in the United States, Peace churches, churches advocating pacifism, sent chosen representatives to a meeting with President Franklin D. Roosevelt on January 10, 1940 to ensure the safety and protection of conscientious objectors in the future.

² Mennonite Central Comitee, *Civilian Public Service*, civilianpublicservice.org/storybegins/krehbiel/conscientious-objection. (Accessed 17 Jan. 2018)

³ *Civil War Home*, www.civilwarhome.com/conscientiousobjectors.html (Accessed 18 Jan. 2018)

⁴ Mennonite Central Comitee, *Civilian Public Service*, civilianpublicservice.org/storybegins/krehbiel/conscientious-objection. (Accessed 17 Jan. 2018)

⁵ A and E Television Networks, *History*, www.history.com/this-day-in-history/u-s-congress-passes-selective-service-act. (Accessed 18 Jan. 2018)

⁶ Mennonite Central Committee, *Civilian Public Service Camps*, civilianpublicservice.org/storybegins/krehbiel/world-war-1. (Accessed 18 Jan. 2018)

During this meeting they decided upon making a civilian board to create better alternative services for COs and oversee these programs (see Appendix B). Though this meeting did not persuade President Franklin D. Roosevelt to change his beliefs on conscientious objection, it did inspire churches and the Selective Service to create civilian public service camps.⁷

Eventually World War 2 had begun and Germany was taking over parts of Europe, Japan was progressing in parts of Asia, and Italy was advancing in parts of North Africa. Over in the United States, President Franklin D. Roosevelt was passing the Burke-Wadsworth Bill in the September of 1940 (see Appendix C). It stated that all American men, between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five years old, would be selected at random to serve for twelve months in the military. The military term was eventually lengthened over more than 12 months. The United States government was growing concerned with all of the military growth throughout the other countries. They decided to execute a draft so that they would be better prepared if conflicts were to arise between the United States and one of the other countries.⁸ Though this bill prepared the United States for war, it did not help out the conscientious objectors. It presented the COs with the same problem that appeared for the Selective Service Act of 1917, not specifying the rights of the COs. For that reason the COs felt as though they had a limited amount of protection from the government. Eventually, the bill was changed and renamed as the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940 so it would broaden the protection of the COs. Then, churches and the Selective Service could start building better opportunities for the conscientious objectors during war.⁹

⁷ *Civilian Public Service Camps*, Mennonite Central Committee, civilianpublicservice.org/storybegins/krehbiel/meeting-president. (Accessed 18 Jan. 2018)

⁸ *Ohio History Central*, www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Burke-Wadsworth_Act. (Accessed 18 Jan. 2018)

⁹ *Civilian Public Service Camp.org*, Mennonite Central Committee, civilianpublicservice.org/storybegins/krehbiel/burke-wadsworth-bill. (Accessed 18 Jan. 2018)

The Building of the Camps

The first Civilian Public Service (CPS) camp was built on May 15, 1940 in the Patapsco State Park in Maryland. This inspired many other towns throughout the United States to build civilian public service camps. The reason for the expanding of more camps throughout the United States was simply because the CPS workers worked on projects in many different fields. This not only grew their knowledge in many different areas, but also influenced the technology that we have today.¹⁰ For example, soil conservation camps helped us better our understanding of farming and tree plantation. In June 1941, the first soil conservation Civilian Public Service camp was built in Merom Indiana (see Appendix D).¹¹ This eventually led to the making of 23 other soil conservation camps throughout the U.S.¹² Once all the camps were closed down, the soil was used for farming and planting trees to continue the process of soil conservation for many years to come.¹³

Another example of a technologically advancing field during World War 2 would include the medical camps. It all started on December 1, 1942 the first medical Civilian Public Service camp was created.¹⁴ This eventually led to the making of 4 general hospitals, 5 public health services, and 43 state mental institutions.¹⁵ Medical camps were based off of a state-run medical institution to change the often deplorable work occurring at these camps. These medical camps

¹⁰ *Civilian Public Service Camps*, Mennonite Central Committee, civilianpublicservice.org/camps/anniversary. (Accessed 18 Jan. 2018)

¹¹ *The Civilian Public Service Story. Civilian Public Service*, civilianpublicservice.org/camps/5/1.?field_unit_agency_value=AFSC&field_camp_agency_value=MH. (Accessed 13 Dec.2017)

¹² *Swarthmore College*, www.swarthmore.edu/library/peace/DG051-099/dg056cpspers.htm. (Accessed 5 Dec. 2017)

¹³ *The Civilian Public Service Story. Civilian Public Service*, civilianpublicservice.org/camps/5/1.?field_unit_agency_value=AFSC&field_camp_agency_value=MH. (Accessed 13 Dec.2017)

¹⁴ *Duke University; Medical Center Archives*, archives.mc.duke.edu/blog/your-service-civilian-public-service-unit-61. (Accessed 13 Dec. 2017)

¹⁵ *Swarthmore College*, 21 Mar. 2017, www.swarthmore.edu/library/peace/DG051-099/dg056cpspers.htm. (Accessed 5 Dec. 2017)

treated over 17,000 patients injured from World War 2 (see Appendix E). The CPS workers volunteered to record medical information about the patients, transfer the patients, set up the equipment, retrieve supplies, mop floors, and sort linen and laundry. These medical camps, in the end, saved many lives that would otherwise have been lost in war.¹⁶

In May 1943, the first and only smokejumper Civilian Public Service camp was built (see Appendix F). It was originally built in Missoula, Montana, but then it was abandoned and the camp relocated in Huson, Montana (thirty miles northwest of Missoula). When the men weren't putting out forest fires they often carried hay to feed hundreds of pack mules or carried equipment to guard stations at the fires. Two hundred and forty men served as smokejumpers at this campsite and eventually all of their service helped revolutionize wildland firefighting.¹⁷

Another way to serve in public service was to volunteer to be a “human guinea pig” in experiments. Just during World War 2 more than 20 different experiments were run on Civilian Public Service workers (see Appendix G). Most of these experiments focused on the three main areas: disease, nutrition, and exposure to abnormal environments. Many of the workers did not know of the physical and mental circumstances they would be experiencing throughout the these terrifying experiments. This eventually led to further medical, psychological, and scientific research.¹⁸

¹⁶ *Duke University; Medical Center Archives*, archives.mc.duke.edu/blog/ your-service-civilian-public-service-unit-61. (Accessed 13 Dec. 2017)

¹⁷ *Civilian Public Service*, Mennonite Central Committee, civilianpublicservice.org/camps/103/1. (Accessed 11 Dec. 2017)

¹⁸ *American Friends Service Committee*, www.afsc.org/story/they-served-without-weapons-world-war-ii-conscientious-objectors-service-human- guinea-pigs. (Accessed 12 Dec. 2017)

Conscientious Objectors Faced Many Challenges

During World War 2, for conscientious objectors, there were many conflicts. Many people at this time had beliefs that did not allow them to participate in activities including violence, such as serving in the military during times of war. Some bills did not specify many terms making the protection of COs very minimal. For example, the Burke-Wadsworth Bill originally was not very specific making the COs vulnerable.¹⁹ Another issue was President Franklin D. Roosevelt's low opinion of the COs. This later influenced the creation of the camps slowing down the building process. Thankfully, after the first camp was built he realized the positive influences that these camps held on society. Another conflict they faced was during colonial settlement. Some pacifists did not believe that you should hire a substitute to go to war for them. They feared that they might be injured, or even killed in battle on their behalf. Though they paid their communication fees they were still put in jail for not participating in war.

The Contributions of Public Service Camps

Though many conscientious objectors avoided war due to religious or moral beliefs, through Public Service camps they were still able to contribute to the country in ways that we still experience today. They not only influenced our history, but we are still benefiting from research and technologies developed during this time through these camps. Thanks to them we now have more advanced forest fire prevention, erosion and flood control, medical science, and an improved mental health system.

¹⁹ *Ohio History Central*, www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Burke-Wadsworth_Act. (Accessed 18 Jan. 2018)

Appendix A



Attention Getting Sign for Men to enlist in the Military. *Schenck and Abrams: Free Speech under Fire- Espionage and Sedition Acts*, Awesome Stories, www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/ESPIONAGE-and-SEDITION-ACTS-Schenck-and-Abrams-Free-Speech-Under-Fire. Accessed 15 Jan. 2018.

During World War 1 the United States was becoming concerned with all of the recent attacks on countries and they needed a larger military force. The U.S was starting to draft men between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five. This attention getting sign was used to inform men in that age range to register for the military. The Sedition act was passed on May 16, 1918. It stated that if men in the age range were to not join the military they would, “be punished by a fine of not more than \$10,000 or imprisonment for not more than twenty years, or both.”

Appendix B



Conscientious Objectors in World War 2. The War within, simpleviewer, www.lib.uci.edu/sites/all/exhibits/warwithin/gallery_sec5/index.html?detectflash=false. Accessed 14 Jan. 2018.

During the summer of 1939, after the meeting with the Peace Church representatives and President Franklin D. Roosevelt, this newspaper was published. It was published to support the COs and, to those who didn't know about conscientious objectors, inform the citizens on what conflicts were arising for COs. In the year 1946 there were 68 issues published.

Appendix C



President Franklin D. Roosevelt Signs the Burke-Wadsworth Act. Ohio History

*Central.org, www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Burke-Wadsworth_Act. Accessed
18 Jan. 2018.*

In September of 1940 the United States passed the Burke-Wadsworth Bill, in which was eventually adjusted and turned into the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940. It was adjusted to be completely specifying what work the COs would be conducting to protect them and their families. This is a picture of President Franklin D. Roosevelt signing the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940.

Appendix D



The Civilian Public Service Story. Civilian Public Service,
civilianpublicservice.org/camps/5/1.?field_unit_agency_value=AFSC&field_camp_agency_value=MH. Accessed 13 Dec. 2017.

This is the first soil conservation civilian public service camp ever built. It was built in Merom, Indiana in the year of 1941. In this image these civilian public service workers are grading soil and weeding plants before starting to plant the seeds for the upcoming season.

Appendix E



At Your Service: Civilian Public Service Unit #61. Duke University; Medical Center Archives, archives.mc.duke.edu/blog/Your-service-civilian-public-service-unit-61. Accessed 13 Dec. 2017.

As World War 2 continued on more men were falling in the battle field, getting awful illnesses, and fighting terrible injuries, so in the year 1942 the Selective Service built the first medical civilian public service camp. This is an image of 3 conscientious objectors assisting a doctor by transporting an injured patient. All civilian public service workers, involved in the medical industry, could be recognized by the green diamonds on their scrubs.

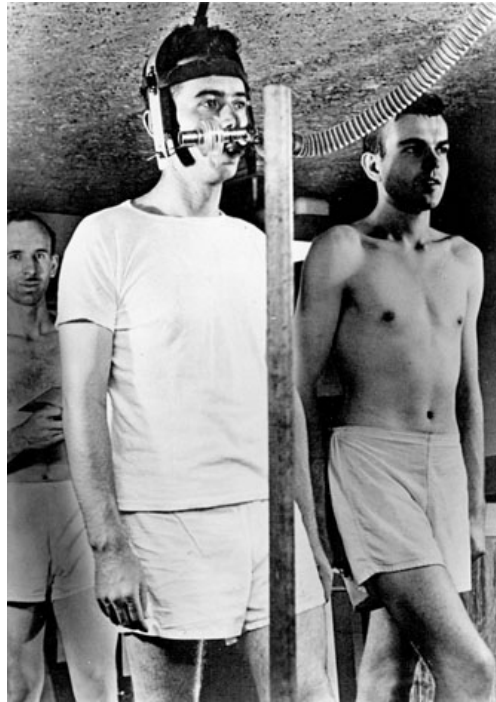
Appendix F



CPS Unit Number 103-01. Civilian Public Service, Mennonite Central Committee, civilianpublicservice.org/camps/103/1. Accessed 11 Dec. 2017.

Though the camp in Missoula, Montana was the first and only forest fire prevention civilian public service camp, it made a big influence on our fire prevention technology today. This image was taken in a helicopter above the civilian public service camp while the CPS workers were conducting a drill. This is what would have happened if a fire were to start in the forest.

Appendix G



They Served Without Weapons: World War II Conscientious Objectors Service as "Human Guinea Pigs." American Friends Service Committee, www.afsc.org/story/they-served-without-weapons-world-war-ii-conscientious-objectors-service-human-guinea-pigs. Accessed 12 Dec. 2017.

During World War 2 CPS workers could also volunteer their service to be tested on for scientific research. This image shows men getting prepared to be adrift in the Boston Harbor for twelve hours to test the effects of dehydration and the consumption of salt water. This research eventually determined how to “cut down on the amount of liquid lost from the body by exposure to different elements.”

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Attention Getting Sign for Men to enlist in the Military. *Schenck and Abrams: Free Speech under Fire-Espionage and Sedition Acts*, Awesome Stories, www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/ESPIONAGE-and-SEDITION-ACTS-Schenck-and-Abrams-Free-Speech-Under-Fire. Accessed 15 Jan. 2018.

This image can be found in Appendix A. It was a sign used to inform young men to register for the military, for it was during World War 1, and the U.S government needed as much help as they could get.

Conscientious Objectors in World War 2. The War Within, Simpleviewer, www.lib.uci.edu/sites/all/exhibits/warwithin/gallery_sec5/index.html?detectflash=false. Accessed 2 Jan. 2018.

This image can be found in Appendix B. This was an old newspaper that was published during the summer of 1939 to inform people of the troubles that conscientious objectors were going through at this time. This demonstrates how Peace Churches were trying to inform the public to get support from the people.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt Signs the Burke-Wadsworth Act. Ohio History Central, www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Burke-Wadsworth_Act. Accessed 3 Jan. 2018.

This image can be found in Appendix C. It is an image of President Franklin D. Roosevelt passing the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940. This indicates that President

Franklin D. Roosevelt did indeed try and protect the conscientious objectors by signing a changed bill.

The Civilian Public Service Story. Civilian Public Service,

civilianpublicservice.org/camps/5/1.?field_unit_agency_value=AFSC&field_camp_agency_value=MH. Accessed 13 Dec. 2017.

This image can be found in Appendix D. It is an image of men grading soil on a soil conservation Civilian Public Service camp in Merom, Indiana. This image portrays all of the hard work that went in to being a Civilian Public Service worker.

At Your Service: Civilian Public Service Unit #61. Duke University; Medical Center Archives,

archives.mc.duke.edu/blog/Your-service-civilian-public-service-unit-61. Accessed 13 Dec. 2017.

This image can be found in Appendix E. This is an image of three Civilian Public Service workers assisting a doctor at a medical camp. This image shows how little, but influential, the Civilian Public Service workers work had on our society today.

CPS Unit Number 103-01. Civilian Public Service, Mennonite Central Committee,

civilianpublicservice.org/camps/103/1. Accessed 11 Dec. 2017.

This image can be found in Appendix F. This is an image of Civilian Public Service workers practicing parachuting for a forest fire protection drill. This camp

had a very big impact on the United States because it eventually inspired new firefighting technology. This image shows how the men were to respond if a fire had started in the forest.

They Served Without Weapons: World War II Conscientious Objectors Service as "Human Guinea Pigs."

American Friends Service Committee, www.afsc.org/story/they-served-without-weapons-world-war-ii-conscientious-objectors-service-human-guinea-pigs. Accessed 12 Dec. 2017.

This image can be found in Appendix G. This is an image of a man getting prepared to be adrift in the Boston Harbor for 12 hours for an experiment. This image magnifies how atrocious these experiments actually were and sometimes how little of an impact they hold on our society today.

Secondary Sources

"Civilian Public Service Camps" ["Civilian Public Service Camps"]. *Ohio History Central*,
www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Civilian_Public_Service_Camps. Accessed 5 Dec. 2017

This website was crucial to my understanding of the events leading up to the building of Civilian Public Service camps. The different bills that were being passed, the different meetings that were held, and every single last detail that the Peace Churches had to change to create Civilian Public Service camps.

"Civilian Public Service Personal Papers and Collected Materials" ["Civilian Public Service Personal Papers and Collected Materials"]. *Swarthmore College*, 21 Mar. 2017,
www.swarthmore.edu/library/peace/DG051-099/dg056cpspers.htm. Accessed 5 Dec. 2017

Swarthmore archives gave me all of the names of the existing camps, their locations, populations, and what type of camp it was. This helped me picture how big the camps were, and how many camps were scattered throughout the United States.

"U.S Congress Passes Selective Service Act" ["U.S Congress Passes Selective Service Act"].
History.com, A and E Television Networks, www.history.com/this-day-in-history/u-s-congress-passes-selective-service-act. Accessed 18 Jan. 2018

This source helped me better understand conscientious objection during World War 1 and how it affected the Civilian Public Service camps in World War 2. This source also

thoroughly explained the Selective Service Act of 1917.

Krehbiel, Nickolas A. "Civilian Public Service" ["Civilian Public Service"]. *Civilian public service.org*, civilianpublicservice.org/storybegins/krehbiel/civilian-public-service. Accessed 7 Dec. 2017

This website was the most important and crucial source because it had records and many intricate details about every single camp. It provided images of the campsites, but it also described the impact that the camps made. It explains every event involved in the Civilian Public Service camps, including every little detail.

"World War 2" ["World War 2"]. *Third Way*, thirdway.com/prepare-for-peace/history/world-war-2/. Accessed 5 Dec. 2017

This website helped me understand what corporations and industries supported and helped build Civilian Public Service camps. It also explained what parts of the government supported this idea. This source helped me better understand the government system for building these camps.