

MENNONITE LIFE

JUNE 1990



In this Issue

Fifty years ago, in June 1940, the Burke-Wadsworth Bill for military conscription was introduced into the United States Senate. That same month the German army entered Paris. Today the anniversary of World War II events is providing opportunities to remember and reassess the Mennonite wartime experience.

The Civilian Public Service (CPS) program was a focus for Mennonite activity during the war. In this issue *Mennonite Life* begins its anniversary coverage of CPS. In October, the Menno Simons Lectures will review CPS in the perspective of half a century. Dr. Al Keim of Eastern Mennonite College will present those lectures.

The CPS story is richly documented with photographs. If you unfold this issue at the center you will see a mural across the back and front covers. A patient at Ypsilanti hospital in Michigan painted the mural, which was located in the lobby of "B" building. The mural portrays the stories of a young man and young woman who move from the darkness of mental illness through the hospital to health. The inside centerfold is a photo from a CPS Christian Workers Institute in August 1944. Many of these young men became leaders in the General Conference Mennonite Church.

John D. Thiesen, *Mennonite Life* book review editor and recently appointed archivist at Mennonite Library and Archives, introduces two of the significant CPS camps: Camp #5 at Colorado Springs, Colorado, and Camp #90 at Ypsilanti, Michigan. The mental health work at Ypsilanti, Thiesen says, "perhaps came as close as any unit to fulfilling the peace churches' ideals for Civilian Public Service."

Perry Bush is completing a Ph.D. degree in social history at Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh and will begin teaching at Phillips University in Enid, Oklahoma this fall. His dissertation deals with the relationship of Mennonites to the United States government from World War II through the Vietnam War. His research has uncovered evidence of grass roots Mennonite resistance to the compromises implicit in the CPS arrangement with the government.

In 1944 Robert Kreider was with a group of CPS men bound for work in China, only to be recalled when the Starnes Amendment excluded the possibility of foreign service projects. In this issue Kreider, today a senior statesman among Mennonite churchmen and scholars, introduces us to the private journal of Paul Comly French. French was a Quaker journalist who served as Executive Secretary of the National Service Board for Religious Objectors from 1940 to 1946. French's diary, edited by Kreider, shows how a leader of worldly political sophistication became a mentor to the more culturally isolated Mennonites. A future issue of *Mennonite Life* will include selections from journal entries from 1943 to 1946.

This issue also includes the annual *Mennonite Life* bibliography, compiled by Marilyn Loganbill, Circulation Manager for *Mennonite Life*.

James C. Juhnke

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Civilian Public Service: Two Case Studies

by John D. Thiesen

From 1941 through 1947, 11,868 men reported for "work of national importance under civilian direction" in Civilian Public Service.¹ Of these, 4,665 were Mennonites, 39% of CPS draftees. The Mennonites thus made up a plurality of men in CPS. (The Church of the Brethren made up 11% of the men and the Friends 8%. Forty-two percent of the men were not from the three peace churches.)² The vast majority of these Mennonite men served in CPS camps or units operated by MCC. A few worked outside of MCC control and a significant number of non-Mennonites worked under MCC. (As an example, on July 1, 1942, about 5% of Mennonites were in non-Mennonite units and 14% of the men in MCC units were non-Mennonites.) The hard-working Mennonites performed about 45% of the over 5 million man-days (excluding administrative overhead and some small special projects) worked by CPS men.³

Of 235 CPS camps and units of varying sizes, 124 (53%) were involved with agriculture in some way: soil conservation, forestry, experiment stations, etc. Of 63 MCC units, only 28 (44%) were agricultural, although 68% of MCC man-days were in agriculture and the small non-mental health projects.⁴ An example of this type of unit was CPS camp number 5 near Colorado Springs, Colorado. It was the second Mennonite-administered camp opened, in June 1941. The facilities were located at Templeton Gap about three miles northeast of Colorado Springs and consisted of eight former Civilian Conservation Corps barracks, 16 feet by 100 feet, each equipped with bunks, one

potbellied stove, and no indoor plumbing, with room for 25 to 30 men per building.⁵ About 150 to 200 men were assigned to the camp at any one time when it was at its full strength.⁶

One of the later directors of the camp summarized the work projects employing the CPS men as follows:

... building irrigation ditches and diversion boxes to prevent soil washing; building dams to store water for irrigation purposes and stock water; leveling land with heavy equipment to allow tillage and irrigation with a minimum loss of soil; development of springs for stock water; stock tank construction; repairing of Government mechanical equipment; building fences to assist in better grazing practices; reseeding pastures; and similar projects. Emergency farm labor is a substantial part of the work program involving perhaps 25% of the men on the project.⁷

The men of the Colorado Springs CPS camp also planted several million trees in Pike National Forest, shingled the roof of the Summit House on Pikes Peak, and did road maintenance work for the Forest Service.⁸ During the last year of the camp's existence it was also the headquarters of CPS unit 97M-4. The men of this unit were individually assigned to dairy farmers within 40 miles of Colorado Springs as farm laborers.⁹

The camp staff consisted of the director, business manager, educational director, cook or dietician, and, for a time, a camp nurse. MCC originally intended to appoint ordained ministers as camp directors, combining the functions of administrator and chaplain and emphasizing the religious nature of the CPS program. As the number of draftees and camps mushroomed, there

was an immediate shortage of available ordained candidates. In addition, MCC found that some ministers made bad managers and that the administrative and disciplinary duties of the camp director often inhibited his pastoral role. Colorado Springs, which was the second Mennonite camp, had as its first director Albert Gaeddert, an ordained General Conference Mennonite minister from Inman, Kansas. Gaeddert was both an effective pastor and a capable administrator. When interviewed decades later, men who had served under him at Colorado Springs unanimously remembered him with respect and appreciation. Gaeddert was director in Colorado Springs for only about one year before being promoted to a higher administrative position in the MCC CPS program. All of his successors (six of them over the next four years) were appointed from the ranks of the drafted CPS men. Other camp staff members below the level of director usually were draftees from the start.¹⁰

During working hours, most of the men in the camp were under the authority of technical supervisors who were employees of the Department of Agriculture (Soil Conservation Service) or Department of the Interior (Forest Service). At other times the camp director was responsible for the men and was himself responsible both to the church agency that appointed him and to the Selective Service System, which set the stage for administrative conflict.

The work projects went along more or less routinely over the five years the camp was in operation, but occasionally incidents arose that challenged the religious and philosophical assumptions

of the camp. For example, the men were asked and refused to help haul scrap metal as part of the civilian war effort. At another time, the CPS men were asked to go to Monument, Colorado, to harvest ice off a pond in mid-winter. The ice was taken out in 200 pound cubes, loaded into boxcars, and used to refrigerate food for the military. The MCC and government administrators apparently gave the men the option of refusing this job without punishment. Some refused and some worked.¹¹ A third incident seems to have been more serious. Some men

recalled being sent out with a crew of 15 or 20 with Leroy Miller as foreman to work on a ranch south of Colorado Springs. They were told to dig through an earthen dam and release the impounded water. Ranchers were present to catch the fish.

All around the CPS men saw surveyors' stakes. They asked the ranchers the purpose of the stakes. The ranchers replied, "Oh, they are planning to build an army camp here."¹²

The CPS work crew immediately walked off the job and returned to

camp. Another version of this incident reports that the crew was actually asked to do the surveying for the military base, apparently the present-day Fort Carson.¹³

When CPS was begun, MCC had enthusiastic plans for a religious and educational program for the men in its camps.

The most important consideration, however, in causing the Mennonites to agree that it was wise for them to participate in the management of CPS was the fact that the plan gave them the opportunity to direct the religious and educational development of the men.¹⁴

This intention never materialized. The only curriculum materials ever published by MCC were a series of six pamphlets making up a one-quarter course in Mennonite history and doctrine. All of the other educational efforts in the camp depended on the skills available among the CPS men and staff. There were apparently some short courses in various crafts, hobbies, and labor skills (e.g. heavy equipment operation). There were perhaps a few

classes in history or foreign languages taught by the college-educated draftees. These activities were supervised by the camp's educational director, a draftee appointed by the MCC from the limited pool of college-educated CPS men. The man who was educational director at Colorado Springs in about 1945 felt that he had not been very successful and that not enough of the men were sympathetic to the educational program to sustain it.¹⁵ The vast majority of former CPS men could recall no details of the educational activities at camp #5.

The religious program was rather more successful, although it also depended upon the initiative of the men and the camp staff rather than upon encouragement and organization from MCC. A large majority of the men attended the camp's Sunday church services (participation was not mandatory) and a significant minority participated in other religious activities such as Bible studies. It is remarkable that MCC, a church agency, never succeeded in providing a systematic chaplain service to its CPS camps. Mennonite ministers



CPS Camp #5, three miles northeast of Colorado Springs, Colorado.

frequently visited the Colorado Springs camp, especially since it was located in a major tourist area, and spoke at Sunday services and other meetings. However, this part of the religious program was completely unorganized and merely took advantage of such opportunities as they arose.

The men also occasionally attended churches in Colorado Springs, particularly the Methodist church. The COs were accepted by the church and participated fairly regularly in its youth program. This provided a welcome opportunity to socialize outside the confines of the camp. One former draftee also recalled a Lutheran minister from the town who had formed a pacifist group in his denomination and was very interested in the CPS camp. In general, the CPS men tried to keep a low profile in the town. Incidents of hostility toward them because of their refusal of military service seem to have been rare. Reportedly, the county sheriff appreciated their assistance in forest fire fighting and called them "my boys."¹⁶

An important part of social and recreational life was, of course, hobbies. One of the rather unusual hobbies that eventually spread to almost all of

the other CPS units originated in Colorado Springs. "A history of CPS would hardly be complete without some mention of rugs."¹⁷ When the camp opened in June 1941, three brothers—Lawrence R., Elmer, and Dale Palmer, all of Bristol, Colorado—were paroled to CPS from federal prison where they had been held for draft resistance (they were non-religious conscientious objectors). Apparently they had learned the craft of weaving tufted string rugs while in prison. The men at Colorado Springs made more than 400 rugs during the first year of the camp.¹⁸

During the first several months of CPS, agricultural camps such as Colorado Springs, working for the Soil Conservation Service, Forest Service, or National Park Service, were the only option for drafted conscientious objectors. The more ambitious plans for NSBRO did not materialize. By 1942 there was open discontent with what some CPS men saw as a lack of meaningful work. In retrospect, the majority of former Colorado Springs draftees felt much of their work there had not been of significance. Even the first camp director, Albert Gaeddert, said that "often we felt that it wasn't" work of

national importance, "often we felt it was made work."¹⁹ The men recalled incidents of harvesting crops that would not have been considered worth harvesting if free CPS labor had not been available, of cutting rye by hand with scythes when just across the fence a combine was doing the same work, and of doing work with pick and shovel that might normally have been done by machine.²⁰

One recalls a rancher pointing to a pile of dead sheep and ordering him to pick the wool off the sheep covered with maggots. He refused on the grounds that "this was not work of national importance."²¹

Even some of those who thought that soil conservation work was valuable felt it benefitted wealthy ranchers and the government rather than people genuinely in need.²²

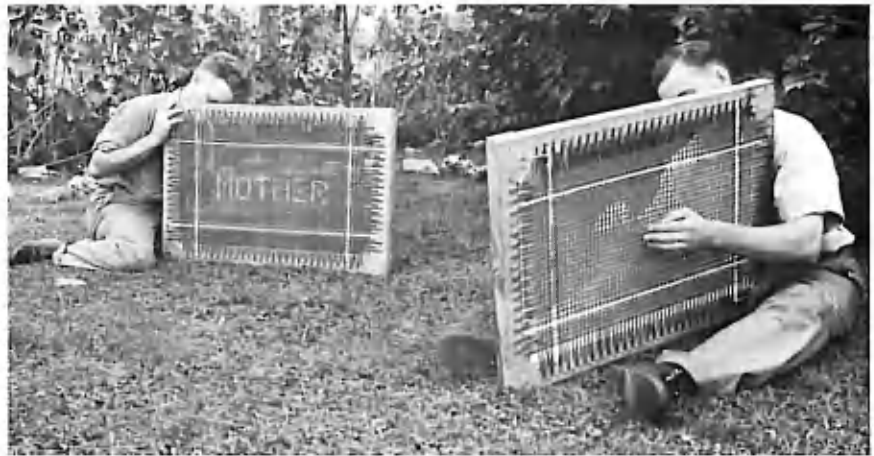
Selective Service officials were probably content with this state of affairs. Although they bore no grudge against COs themselves, they feared public opinion and wanted to keep the CPS program in the background. In testimony before the Senate Committee on Military Affairs in 1943, General Lewis B. Hershey, the head of Selective Serv-

Volleyball recreation at Colorado Springs camp.



ice, said, “. . . the conscientious objector, by my memory, is best handled if no one hears of him.”²³ Mennonite leaders, too, although they had agreed to the NSBRO proposal of October 22, 1940, had originally wanted exactly the kind of system they had in the CPS of 1941-1942.

The discontent of the CPS men and the wartime labor shortage came together to produce the second major type of CPS work project. Work in mental hospitals (or hospitals of any kind) had not been included in the NSBRO proposal and it is not clear exactly how Selective Service and the church agencies became convinced of the feasibility of mental hospital work. Sixty of the 235 CPS units (26%) were located in mental hospitals or training schools for the mentally handicapped. Twenty-eight of the 63 MCC units (44%) were mental health-related and 32% of its CPS man-days.²⁴ Conscientious objectors worked in one fifth of the 300 mental institutions in the United States. About half of these workers were Mennonites and about 1,400 men served in hospitals under MCC.²⁵



*Above. Men in Camp 5 made hundreds of rugs in leisure time.
Below. Camp 5 members built irrigation ditches and dams to control erosion.*





The hospital library at Ypsilanti.

One such unit was located in the Ypsilanti State Hospital in Ypsilanti, Michigan, near Detroit. Ypsilanti was considered a modern and progressive institution compared to other mental institutions in the country. It was established in 1931 and thus had relatively new facilities on a large campus with extensive recreational opportunities, including even a golf course. At the beginning of World War II, Ypsilanti had 3,340 patients and 620 employees. In the first few months the number of employees dropped by one third as defense plants opened in the area, while the number of patients remained the same or increased.²⁶

The superintendent of the hospital, Dr. Orus Ray Yoder, had an interesting background in light of his supervision of a Mennonite CPS unit. His father, Silas Yoder, had been a Mennonite Church minister in Middlebury, Indiana, and had worked with CO matters during World War I. O. R. Yoder graduated from Goshen College in 1916 and in 1917 enlisted in the army. He

graduated from Rush Medical College of the University of Chicago in 1921 and went to work in the Michigan state hospital system, becoming superintendent at Ypsilanti in 1938. At the time the CPS unit was at Ypsilanti, Yoder had a son in the naval reserves studying medicine, but his relationship to the COs was always cooperative and enthusiastic.²⁷

CPS unit #90 at Ypsilanti was established in March 1943 with 50 men selected from four "base camps," as the agricultural units came to be called. (The first MCC unit in a mental hospital began in August 1942 in Staunton, Virginia.) The men were carefully screened and selected by MCC and the state hospital commission. A CPS draftee had to put in three months in a base camp before he was eligible for transfer to a hospital unit or other "detached service."²⁸ Those who requested transfers were those who were dissatisfied with agricultural work projects and desired to serve genuine human need. This process of selection

and self-selection led the hospital units to have the better-educated and more idealistic among the drafted COs.

The majority of the men in the CPS unit worked in the hospital as ward attendants, directly responsible for care of patients. CPS men also filled clerical and maintenance positions and worked as barbers, cooks, drivers, and in a variety of other jobs. Some who were ward attendants recalled receiving little or no orientation to this unfamiliar job. They were just given the keys to the ward and told to take care of the inmates there. One was oriented to his job by one of the patients. Part of the reason for this was the initial hostility of the regular staff towards these new COs. Most of the men interviewed in later years reported the relations between the CPS group and other employees as not being very friendly, at least at first. The CPS men felt that many of the other employees, especially attendants, were not qualified or trained for their work, "rough characters," persons who could not get work elsewhere. One wife of a

CPS draftee became an employee of the hospital when her husband was assigned to the unit (see below) and received a very hostile reaction her first day on the job. Her supervisor, who had a son in the military in Europe, told her she was not worthy to care for patients and ordered her to simply mop floors. After several hours of mopping, the woman complained to the supervisor and to Yoder, the hospital superintendent. Yoder supported the woman's complaint. The supervisor felt it impossible to work with conscientious objectors and immediately resigned. One man recalled that other attendants would sometimes incite disturbances among the patients to test the CPS attendants.²⁹

Relationships with patients, however, were very good. Regular employees sometimes abused the patients with violence, degradation, withholding of food, solitary confinement, alternating hot and cold showers, etc. The gentler treatment from the CPS men was their major contribution to the mental hospital environment in all such units and fit in well with their objection to violence.³⁰



*Above. Bennie Fadenrecht and Truman Christner prepare food in "B" kitchen.
Below. Attendant Hubert Moore washes patients for mealtime.*





Feeding a patient at Ypsilanti. Daniel Diener and Marie Ediger.

One major difference in conditions between hospital units and base camps was that wives could live with their husbands on the hospital grounds. Many of the wives, and also sisters, of CPS men became regular employees of the mental institution. About 25% of the men in the hospital units were married and had their wives working with them. This was desirable from the hospital's point of view since it helped relieve the labor shortage by providing two workers instead of just one.³¹

This also helped the financial situation of the CPS draftee. Men drafted into CPS received no regular wages. The Mennonite and Brethren church agencies wanted it this way, and General Hershey also opposed any payment to CPS men. Many of the men, and presumably the church agencies, felt that working without pay was a greater demonstration of Christian service and willingness to sacrifice. Mennonite men at first received a spending allowance of \$1.50 per month. The Friends and Brethren were paying \$2.50, so MCC gave that amount to

non-Mennonites in its units. In November 1941 MCC discontinued allowances to Mennonite men to cut costs. Non-Mennonite men continued to get \$2.50 per month and in 1944 this was increased to \$5.00. Some CPS men held paying jobs after hours, but MCC strongly disapproved of this. In August 1942 MCC decided that each camp director had authority to decide whether men could work outside jobs, but that each CPS man who did so had to give half of his earnings to charity. This decision was rescinded in September 1943 as men spent longer and longer periods of time in CPS. In addition to the question of wages, MCC did not pay medical costs for illness or injury not job-related until December 1943. After that, only those with more than one year of service were covered.³² Men at Ypsilanti (and presumably at other hospital units) were somewhat better off. They got an allowance of \$50 per month, of which \$35 was deducted for room and board and \$5 for uniforms, leaving \$10 cash.³³

The above was probably not a tre-

mendous hardship to the single, healthy Mennonite CPS draftee. Men with dependents, however, were impoverished. MCC's position was that this problem was the responsibility of the individual Mennonite denominations and the local churches. Not until April 1944 did MCC start paying men with dependents who got no help from these sources: \$25 per month for each dependent adult, \$10 per month for each child. By December 1944 800 men had submitted claims for aid. In 1945 Howard Charles, then an MCC staff member, in a study of Mennonites who had entered the military rather than CPS, made a rather callous remark on the pay question.

The economic problem is reflected in the fact that 251 or 9.4% of the men entering the army did so for financial reasons. In some cases this might constitute a criticism of the church's handling of the dependency problem, but in the majority of instances it probably is a commentary on the materialistic attitude of the drafted church member.³⁴

The persons associated with the CPS unit at Ypsilanti were a blending of



Tubs on the receiving ward. Paul Birky, attendant.

several groups formed for different purposes. In addition to the draftees assigned to unit #90 and their wives, there was a group known as the "relief training unit." In late 1942, presidents of colleges related to the three peace churches had taken the initiative to organize a program under NSBRO to train CPS men and other volunteers for possible work in reconstruction and rehabilitation of poor and war-damaged areas overseas. The Mennonite "relief training unit" began at Goshen College in Goshen, Indiana, in June 1943 and offered courses in languages, history, sociology, and public health. The relief training experiment was very short-lived. In mid-1943 Congress passed the Military Establishment Appropriations bill for 1944 which included the Starnes amendment prohibiting posting CPS men outside of the United States and the training of CPS men at colleges. A group of CPS men already en route to China was recalled and the relief training units were immediately closed, but the idea was not abandoned. The peace churches hoped that the Starnes amend-

ment would be dropped for the next year's appropriations (it remained in force through the rest of the war) and the training units were simply moved to other CPS locations.³⁵

Forty-nine men from Goshen came to Ypsilanti in September 1943 to restart MCC's relief training project. This brought a very rich and well-planned educational program to Ypsilanti, compared with other CPS units. Instructors from Michigan State Normal College in Ypsilanti (now Eastern Michigan University) taught languages, professors from Goshen and Bluffton Colleges continued to teach history and sociology, and the hospital staff, including the superintendent, taught medical and health courses. The courses were apparently available to all CPS unit members, but those in the relief training unit were allowed to spend two thirds of their time in study and only one third on hospital work projects.³⁶

During the summers of 1944 and 1945 there was a "women's summer service unit" at Ypsilanti made up of volunteers from the Mennonite col-

leges, most with training as nurses. These women, 36 in 1944 and 15 in 1945, worked on hospital wards and participated in educational activities along with the CPS men. As with the relief training unit, some of the women were planning for overseas voluntary work. Counting the volunteers, there were usually well over 50 women associated with the Ypsilanti CPS unit and over 100 men.³⁷

Ypsilanti perhaps came as close as any unit to fulfilling the peace churches' ideals for Civilian Public Service. It was serving genuine human need. Its relatively strong educational program was training people for possible humanitarian and church agency work after the war. It included a number of volunteer church workers. Former members recall it as having a strong and effective religious program, again at the initiative of the unit rather than of MCC. Its public relations with the surrounding area were good. Unit #90 seems to have been successful throughout its existence, until it closed in October 1946.³⁸



Salomon Ediger prepares meat with two patient helpers in the kitchen.

ENDNOTES

¹There are some discrepancies in figures. 11,950 men were assigned to CPS. The National Service Board for Religious Objectors (NSBRO) figures give 11,996 men having served in CPS, as opposed to Selective Service's 11,868. Mulford Q. Sibley and Philip E. Jacob, *Conscription of Conscience: The American State and the Conscientious Objector, 1940-1947* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1952), pp. 83, 168.

²Sibley, *Conscription of Conscience*, p. 168.

³Sibley, *Conscription of Conscience*, pp. 126-127; Melvin Gingerich, *Service for Peace: A History of Mennonite Civilian Public Service* (Akron, PA: Mennonite Central Committee, 1949), pp. 453-459.

⁴Gingerich, *Service for Peace*, pp. 453-459; *Directory of Civilian Public Service, May, 1941 to March, 1947* (Washington, DC: National Service Board for Religious Objectors, [1947]), pp. x-xvii.

⁵Gingerich, *Service for Peace*, p. 110; Robert Kreider, "CPS Camp Life at Colorado Springs Recalled," *Mennonite Weekly Review*, September 11, 1986, p. 6; interview with Walter H. Krehbiel, McPherson, KS, December 1, 1974, Mennonite Library and Archives 940.5316 #22.

⁶Interview with Elmer Ediger, North Newton, KS, October 9, 1978, Mennonite Library and Archives 922.87x #1; Walter H. Krehbiel interview.

⁷Paul Schmidt, quoted in Gingerich, *Service for Peace*, p. 110.

⁸Gingerich, *Service for Peace*, p. 111.

⁹Gingerich, *Service for Peace*, p. 202.

¹⁰Gingerich, *Service for Peace*, pp. 114, 277, 462; Kreider, "CPS Camp Life;" interview with Albert Gaeddert, North Newton, KS, April 20, 1974, Mennonite Library and Archives 940.5316 #14; interview with Wes Prieb, Hillsboro, KS, November 24, 1975, Mennonite Library and Archives 940.5316 #36b; interview with Selma Bartel Reimer, Walton, KS, January 16, 1976,

Mennonite Library and Archives 940.5316 #49.

¹¹Albert Gaeddert interview; Walter H. Krehbiel interview.

¹²Kreider, "CPS Camp Life."

¹³Albert Gaeddert interview.

¹⁴Gingerich, *Service for Peace*, p. 396.

¹⁵Wes Prieb interview.

¹⁶Interview with Irvin E. Richert, North Newton, KS, September 29, 1979, Mennonite Library and Archives 940.5316 #98; interview with Raymond Juhnke, Goessel, KS, September 16, 1974, Mennonite Library and Archives 940.5316 #19; Elmer Ediger interview; interview with Edwin R. Stucky, Moundridge, KS, September 29, 1974, Mennonite Library and Archives 940.5316 #18; Walter H. Krehbiel interview; Selma Bartel Reimer interview; Kreider, "CPS Camp Life."

¹⁷A CPS man in Bluffton, Ohio, in 1943, quoted in Gingerich, *Service for Peace*, p. 330.

¹⁸Kreider, "CPS Camp Life;" *Directory of Civilian Public Service*, p. 111.

¹⁹Albert Gaeddert interview; Theodore Rickard Wachs, "Conscription, Conscientious Objection, and the Context of American Pacifism, 1940-1945" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1976), pp. 161-162.

²⁰Raymond Juhnke interview; Walter H. Krehbiel interview.

²¹Kreider, "CPS Camp Life."

²²Raymond Juhnke interview.

²³Quoted in Wachs, "Conscription," p. 126; see also p. 152-155.

²⁴*Directory of Civilian Public Service*, pp. x-xvii; Gingerich, *Service for Peace*, p. 459.

²⁵Grant M. Stoltzfus, "Mental Hospital Experience of Civilian Public Service," *Mennonite Life* 2 (April 1947): 8.

²⁶Gingerich, *Service for Peace*, p. 231; *Ypsi* ([Ypsilanti, MI]: The Publication Committee of CPS #90, 1946). *Ypsi* was an illustrated book, similar to a high school or college annual, put out by the CPS unit shortly before it closed.

²⁷*Ypsi*.

²⁸*Ypsi*; Gingerich, *Service for Peace*, pp. 214, 231-232.

²⁹Interview with Vincent Krabill, Hesston, KS, May 17, 1975, Mennonite Library and Archives 940.5316 #28; interview with Richard Weaver, Bluffton, OH, January 29, 1975, Mennonite Library and Archives 940.5316 #38; interview with Leonard Wiens, Walton, KS, November 2, 1975, Mennonite Library and Archives 940.5316 #34a; interview with Henry Claassen, Beatrice, NE, May 3, 1976, Mennonite Library and Archives 940.5316 #81; interview with Paul Leatherman, Ephrata, PA, December 22, 1977, Mennonite Library and Archives 940.5316 #71; *Ypsi*.

³⁰Henry Claassen interview; Leonard Wiens interview; Vincent Krabill interview; Lowell E. Maechtle and H. H. Gerth, "Conscientious Objectors as Mental Hospital Attendants," *Sociology and Social Research* 29 (September-October 1944): 19-22.

³¹Maechtle, "Mental Hospital Attendants," p. 16.

³²Sibley, *Conscription of Conscience*, pp. 217-218; Gingerich, *Service for Peace*, pp. 348-351.

³³*Ypsi*.

³⁴Howard Charles, "A Presentation and Evaluation of MCC Draft Status Census," in *Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Conference on Mennonite Cultural Problems* (Newton, KS: Council of Mennonite and Affiliated Colleges, 1945), p. 94.

³⁵Gingerich, *Service for Peace*, p. 305-311.

³⁶*Ypsi*; Henry Claassen interview, Richard Weaver interview.

³⁷*Ypsi*; interview with Amanda Ediger Bartel, [Inman, KS?], May 10, 1976, Mennonite Library and Archives 940.5316 #62; Gingerich, *Service for Peace*, p. 235.

³⁸Gingerich, *Service for Peace*, p. 287; *Directory of Civilian Public Service*, p. xii.

“We Have Learned to Question Government”

by Perry Bush

By the late 1960's, American Mennonites had clearly arrived at a new orientation towards the U.S. government. Mennonite young men were refusing to register for the draft, and at their churchwide General Conferences in 1969 and 1972, the two largest Mennonite denominations conveyed their official blessing to this form of open, non-violent civil disobedience. Throughout this decade, the official peace committees of these Mennonite groups had increasingly displayed a readiness to witness to the state beyond the traditional boundaries of Mennonite church-state separation, delivering to the government Mennonite prescriptions on such issues as capital punishment, civil rights, and the Vietnam war. James Juhnke argues that beginning with the First World War, Mennonites upheld a "great compromise" with the federal government. In this settlement they would obediently obey the state's draft laws in exchange for a special program of alternative service which did not send their men off to war. Plainly, by the late sixties this compromise had come to an end.¹

Yet new orientations and broken agreements do not happen overnight. Albert Keim outlines how Mennonite leaders and government representatives hammered out the "specific forms" of the Mennonite-state compromise in the Second World War. So, too, in that era did other Mennonites, more often lay people than leaders, begin to lay the seeds for the dissolution of this arrangement. Beneath the apparent triumphs of CPS for American Mennonites, in isolated churches and especially down in

the CPS camps, a groundswell of discontent rumbled as well. In this dissent, Mennonites began piecing together a critique of Mennonite-state cooperation and of state power and authority which would emerge in more potent forms in later years.²

First, it is necessary to discuss this incipient Mennonite radicalism in the CPS camps in the full light of the recognition that compared to other CO's, Mennonites were truly the "good boys" of the CPS system. From their first contact with the government, as it came knocking on their doors in the form of draft notices, these young men obeyed its directives quite submissively. Even more radical leaders such as Elmer Ediger, who in prewar years had worked with Quakers and fellowshipped in the "Harlem Ashram," recalls he "never came close" to taking the nonregistration stance. Other young activists concurred; Esko Loewen calls nonregistration an "unheard of idea," and another former Bethel student remembers very little sentiment for nonregistration there even at the heights of the prewar student activism.³

Likewise, once lodged in the camps, Mennonite CPS'ers engaged in no walkouts, work slowdowns, strikes, or acts of noncooperation to protest the nature of CPS as a Selective Service program.⁴ These were young people who had been raised to honor the thirteenth chapter of Romans ("the powers that be are ordained of God"), who believed deeply in two-kingdom understandings passed down by Anabaptist ancestors. Thus, they would take a pretty negative view of the resistance

and turmoil which occurred at other CPS camps. The Grottoes camp newsletter editorialized in December, 1942, for instance, that "Whenever a man refuses to register . . . he casts a shadow upon all true conscientious objectors." Instead, the paper continued, we should thank God and the government for even providing alternative service at all. Similarly, Mennonite CO's at a camp in Indiana argued "If we take matters into our own hands by staging demonstrations, we not only weaken our position in the eyes of Selective Service, but also weaken the position of our leaders"; likewise the editor of a South Dakota camp paper condemned the walkouts at the non-Mennonite camps. One non-Mennonite in an MCC camp recalled the "lack of social action or conviction to act on socially or politically involved situations" among Mennonite CPS'ers, and noted that more than once they booed his dinner-table announcements of FOR meetings.⁵

Yet young Mennonites shoveling away in the CPS camps and even laboring in camp administration⁶ slowly began to develop a radicalism in their own grain that took on increasing depth as the war years ground on. Consider the young insurgents out on the fringe of Mennonite political orthodoxy, men like Roland Bartel and Walter Juhnke. Tucked away in a CPS camp in Florida, Bartel devoured copies of the *Christian Century*, *Fellowship*, and *The Progressive*, revered Gandhi and declared himself a socialist. Hence he grew troubled with his cooperation with CPS. Writing to his good friends Albert

Gaeddert and Robert Kreider in June of 1942, Bartel averred "By registering and remaining *complacently* in a CPS camp, I am playing into the hands of the government and reducing my protest to a minimum." Hence he actively wrestled with whether to walk out. That August he reported his conclusion, that "CPS is worth the price" and that he could in conscience remain, though adding that the price is "that we are cooperating with conscription rather than protesting it." Similarly, Juhnke could hardly contain his enthusiasm for the socialist Norman Thomas in 1944, writing home with the advice, "...vote Christian. Vote Thomas. In my own mind there is no doubt but what Thomas and the socialists are the most Christian and have the deepest insights into the revolution we are going." Likewise he informed his family that "All I'm proposing to do is to return my draft card, and walk out of C.P.S.," though he does not now recall what kept him from finally taking that step.⁷

Of course, MCC administrators and other leaders were aware of such sentiments, but usually dismissed them as the product of too close an association with non-Mennonite firebrands. Guy Hershberger, writing years afterwards, admitted that when certain radical objectors in Quaker camps took the non-registration position, "a few of our boys were affected by this . . ." In actuality, Mennonite dissent in the CPS camps may have run deeper than Hershberger or others realized, and spring from more homegrown sources. One Mennonite camper, for example, expressed his concern that "when I see (the church) becoming involved in a church-state set-up I begin to wonder," and queried whether perhaps the leadership should have given more thought to mass migration. Another CPS'er agreed, pointing to the Mennonite migrations because of the threat of military service in the past, and conjectured that what Mennonites generations back objected to they now accepted without question.⁸

Other young dissenters men found different points of dispute, in comments that differed substantially in quality and tone from general CPS griping. "I am not able to find enough grounds in the Bible to sanction the CPS program. . ." wrote a thoughtful objector. "I feel that we have compromised greatly in trying to maintain and uphold the Spirit of

Non-Resistance by letting ourselves being domineered by the Militarists via Government." Further, this CO wondered, ". . . were (sic) is the place to draw the line against war? As I see it now, it would be the first step—not registering." Recognizing the good-faith effort of the church "to shelter their boys from the cruel world by setting up CPS camps," a CPS man from Lancaster still held that in doing so, Mennonites "have departed from their historic attitude toward government and those that oppress us." Similarly, another Lancaster CPS'er responded to a conference questionnaire with his measured opinion that while some benefit may accrue to the CPS man from his experience, his "testimony" would have been far greater if he had stood his ground and followed his vocation, and then gone to jail if it had come to that. "I do not believe good can come from the church cooperating with the state in forcing Christians to do things," he explained.⁹

Forced unpaid labor

Like numerous non-Mennonite critics, many of these young men directed their fire at the unpaid aspect of CPS labor. "Lincoln abolished slavery," stated a Mennonite CO engaged in forestry work near North Fork, California. "Today CPS is again using means of slavery and the church is sponsoring CPS." Likewise, the final issue of the *Peace Sentinel* of CPS Camp 28 in Medaryville, Indiana, reflected "on this business of forced unpaid labor," concluding that "nothing much will come of it." By the end of CPS this paper's staff had ploughed new furrows of critical thought that must have occasioned church leaders a good deal of disquiet. That January they had editorialized on "church dictatorship," arguing that CPS'ers had learned to think for themselves and this "brought them into a head-on collision with the established practice of accepting without question the dictates of church leaders." In comments obviously aimed more at the hierarchical leadership patterns of the Old Mennonites, the editor still fulminated against a perceived decision by MCC to arrange a postwar CPS system. If they had consulted either the CPS men or the churches on this move, the agency would have received a firm "thumbs down." Now a few reason-

ably chosen words, he urged, "may bring a vital protest from the Mennonite constituency against church oligarchy and leadership which is unrepresentative."¹⁰

Others stopped short of these positions, but still wondered aloud about the wisdom of their church's wartime compromise with the state. Many of these doubts surfaced as MCC began to consider its response to possible postwar conscription, and took special care to survey CPS opinion on the issue. Overall, the letters gave a cautious endorsement to CPS as a temporary wartime expedient but spoke strongly against any permanent arrangement along this line. As one CPS'er put it, ". . . C.P.S. might be all right for an emergency, but as a permanent thing—we can't imagine that!" Instead, many urged a completely church-run program of alternative service, and underlined the dangers of further cooperation with the state. One draftee voiced his conviction that "we cannot be too careful with our compromising with the government," while another advocated that the church create its own voluntary service program and ask that the government accept it in lieu of military service. If the state should refuse, he argued, "the church should go ahead with their program and suffer the consequences, but under no condition submit to Government control to the extent of the present program." Another Mennonite CO agreed, wondering, "Are we compromising Christian ideals to avoid persecution? Certainly we do not welcome bodily persecution, but just how far do we go before we draw the line? Personally, I feel the line of demarkation is failing." In sum, perhaps the strongest single piece of evidence for an incipient Mennonite radicalism in the CPS camps is found in an undated note from Melvin Gingerich to Hershberger accompanying some of this correspondence. Gingerich wrote

"These letters reflect in part the great underlying uneasy conscience of many of our men in CPS. I am convinced that this was much more general than the Peace Problems Committee and many others of our leaders recognized. I have too much of a confidential nature from our own most deeply thinking boys to pass this whole thing off as a manifestation of radicalism produced by our contacts with pacifists."¹¹

In a series of larger CPS meetings known as "Conscription Institutes,"

the fledgling Peace Section went out into the camps to confront some of these questioners head on. Conducted in the spring of 1945, MCC gathered all its leading lights in administration and scholarship in four different CPS camps to discuss with CPS men some of the issues the church faced in dealing with conscription, both now and in the future. Years later, CPS administrator Ediger recalled an additional reason. MCC went through the considerable expense and trouble of the institutes, Ediger remembers, because "... we had a certain share of fellows who were debating ... the matter of walking out of CPS and getting imprisoned."¹²

As framed by MCC, the agenda of the conferences concerned such issues as determining "the significance of conscription and to recognize the danger of concentrating only on its immediate effects," to "Take an inventory on our thinking" and to "discuss the Christian attitude toward conscription." From the perspective of the Peace Section, if the purpose of the institutes was really to rein in some radical thinking among CPS'ers, then the conferences could only have been partially successful at best. Harold Bender, for instance, labored hard at the old passive formulations of nonresistance, arguing at the Powellville, Maryland institute that, in the words of one attender, "... if by opposition we mean testifying against this evil, then without question, we should oppose it. But if by opposition we mean putting pressure to bear, then it is outside of the Christian's duty." Likewise, at California's Camp Camino in April, Bender told the CPS delegates that "We cannot impose justice on a wicked social order ... sometimes we can do nothing but pray." Asked "whether we as citizens did not have a remote responsibility in the acts of the state, even if we do not approve of them," the Peace Problems Committee chairman maintained "we do not."¹³

A shifting majority of the delegates (MCC requested two from each Mennonite CPS camp in the region) appeared at times to accept the fundamentally careful views of elder men such as Bender. A camp paper, for example, reported that "One prevailing position" at Powellville held that "conscription is bad only when it has a bad purpose. It can have good results if its purpose is good." A wide majority there agreed, too, that the church could ac-

cept alternative service agreements, though preferring "less interference by government." Other developments at the institutes must have left MCC's more conservative leaders less satisfied. At the Medaryville, Indiana institute, discussion apparently grew so heated that the chair asked delegates "to enter the discussions with humble spirit knowing he might not have all the right answers."¹⁴

More importantly, a number of opinions commanded wide agreement on a willingness to witness to government on peace and justice issues that appeared to break new ground for Mennonites, particularly for the more conservative Old Mennonite understandings. At Powellville, delegates proposed resisting conscription "up to the extent of nonviolent direct action," and "most of the delegates" affirmed that "making our statement known to government was an evangelistic function and therefore the responsibility of the church." Again, later, the delegates mulled over how to oppose conscription, and while some felt the only course involved bringing it to God in prayer, "... the larger group" avowed that "we should act according to our best knowledge of God's will for us, and this might include considerable direct witnessing." Bartel stressed at Camino that CPS was clearly an aspect of military conscription, "a part of this act of war." Even more revealing was Ediger's summary of "What we have learned from the C.P.S. program," also at Camino. Simply put, Ediger relayed that "We have learned to question government." At Medaryville, summarized the camp newspaper, "many of those present" stood at the point of repudiating conscription, saying "they could not (register) again, knowing that seeing their convictions thru ultimately might mean another five years of their lives—spent in jail." Needless to say, the article continued, "This undoubtedly alarmed and disquieted some of the church leaders who were present."¹⁵

If MCC leaders were concerned at some of the opinions expressed in the official assemblies, they would have been perturbed to a considerably greater degree if they could have heard some of the lines of discussion in the delegates' private sessions. These have been preserved in a remarkable document which somehow ended up in the MCC's files. Written up by Daryl Frey, a

delegate and an obvious participant in (in his words) these "barracks bull-sessions," the delegates "advanced many ideas they did not express at open meetings." Considered as a whole, these private statements leave little doubt of the accuracy of Frey's observation that "Some C.O.'s have troubled consciences."¹⁴

One delegate, for instance, hotly declared that "... by accepting C.P.S. (Mennonites) had endorsed war for everybody but themselves." "Modern total war," argued another delegate, "demands that we bear total witness against it." A large part of the discussions revolved around a private refutation of many of Bender's teachings in the regular sessions. Frey summarized one of Bender's points as "conscription was a good thing because it gave CO's an opportunity to go into C.P.S. and bear witness against war." Such a view, charged one of the participants, was "expedient, short sighted, and pragmatic." "... is the expedient thing always the wisest in the long run?" queried a delegate. Moreover, what kind of witness of war did this really amount to, he wondered, when CO's "are hidden away, isolated both physically and spiritually, from their fellow-men. C.O.'s are talking to themselves ... They are strong in their faith, and are denied the opportunity to show it in action." Altogether, this same delegate delivered perhaps the most telling comment of all. "Our young men are more willing to make sacrifices than the church believes," he said. "They are more firm in their conviction than the church gives them credit for being."¹⁷

Before concluding, it is necessary to recognize that such dissent may have been shared here and there in the wider church beyond the CPS camps. Keim makes clear that for most Mennonites both in the camps and at home, CPS admittedly appeared as a measurable triumph for the church and as abundant reason to render thanks to the government. A careful reading of the documents, however, reveals scattered departures from the prevailing satisfaction with this Mennonite-state compromise, at least among the Old Mennonites.

Thus Daniel Kauffman, the crusty old editor of the *Gospel Herald*, listed in his suggestions for PPC work, in a letter to Orrie Miller in 1939, "... that you set your foot hard against what is some-

times called 'alternative service.' " Mennonites are in favor of extending war relief, he continued, "but NOT when this relief work is connected with the military machine as alternative service coming in the form of a substitute for military service . . . that is simply strengthening the military power of a country, something that we claim we can have no part in." In his response, Miller reviewed the many number of times Old Mennonites agreed on the legitimacy of alternative service from the 1937 Turner, Oregon statement on backwards, and informed him that this was the first time in his fourteen years of service with the Peace Problems Committee that he had heard such a perspective expressed. So shocked was Miller at Kauffman's comments that he wondered if he should resign from the committee if his own viewpoint "is not the correct one."¹⁸

Obviously Kauffman's was very much a minority position, but as the war progressed other voices rose to join it. As the outlines of the CPS program penetrated down into the churches, Paul Huddle wrote Bender from Salina, Pennsylvania, to ask ". . . why should this so called church privilege be purchased with money when both state and national constitutions guarantee freedom of religion . . . ? . . . were the Mennonites and others 'sold up the river by committees . . . ?' Huddle asked, who "purchase(d) their liberty and freedom from military services?" (Huddle's emphasis). Another Mennonite wrote from Virginia to suggest that "It is a question whether the leadership did sell the church down south through the set up so much talked of."¹⁹

Others from a conservative bent found reason to question the levels of church-state cooperation in the CPS system. In a 1943 article in the Old Mennonite fundamentalist periodical the *Sword and Trumpet*, writer Sanford G. Shelter listed the "chief disadvantage" of church-operated camps as "the dividing line between church and state is not as well defined as many would like to see it." Certainly more alarming to Bender was a short letter from a certain Jacob Brubaker of Lancaster, who reported on a speech he heard Peace Problems Committee member Amos Horst deliver in his home conference of Lancaster. According to Brubaker, Horst had avowed ". . . I am going to state my conviction on the

matter . . . I sometimes think that we should not register, and let the government take us to court and sentence our young to 5 years in the pen." "The "worst part is," informed Brubaker, "is that there were some who stood by him and endorsed this stand."²⁰

In sum, the Mennonite CPS experience had wrought some key changes in the church. Traditionally suspicious of government, Mennonites had spent some years cooperating intimately with it, and had learned a great deal in the process. Fundamentally they had discovered that, as Bender repeatedly told the men at the conscription institutes, "Government is not a monster to be feared." Yet they had also become aware that neither was it a distant, unresponsive, unmovable force, something like a storm or a plague that one merely had to endure. If older church leaders somehow missed this point, their young charges in the CPS system did not fail to grasp it.²¹

Correspondingly, during the war years Mennonites began to work towards a new understanding of the state and a newer Mennonite relation to it. More specifically, particularly the younger generation housed in the CO camps began to pioneer a new way of addressing the state; they groped towards a method of *witnessing to* the state about Mennonite concerns. In developing a more activist approach to society and laying the foundation for a questioning of the state, this generation in the camps began considering issues which would lead to the shattering of the Mennonite-state compromise in the turbulent 1960's.

ENDNOTES

¹James Juhnke, "Mennonites and the Great Compromise," *The Mennonite* LXXXIV, no. 34, September 23, 1969.

²Albert Keim, "Service or Resistance? The Mennonite Response to Conscription in World War II," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* LII, no. 2, April, 1978.

³Oral Interviews, Roger Juhnke with Elmer Ediger, October 9, 1978; Keith Sprunger with Esko Loewen, October 9, 1973; Linda Schmidt with Wesley Bartel, November 4, 1973; all from Schowalter Oral History Collection, Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas (hereafter abbreviated MLA).

⁴At times, however, Mennonite CPS men did refuse to participate in work, such as surveying possible sites for army camps or thinning beets, which they perceived as directly related to military needs.

⁵"For Conscience Sake," *The Olive Branch*, December 19, 1942, p. 5, IX-13-1, Archives of the Mennonite Church, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana (hereafter abbreviated as AMC). "Resolu-

tion Adopted by the Camp." *Jasper-Pulaski Peace Sentinel* I, no. 21, May 22, 1942, p. 4, IX-13-1, AMC. Editorial, "Shall We Walk Out?" *The Rushmore Reflector*, February, 1943, p. 4, IX-13-1, AMC. "History of Leonard Holden in Civilian Public Service," undated statement to Melvin Gingerich, Peace Problems Committee (hereafter abbreviated as PPC) Papers, I-3-5.7, Box 36, file 85, AMC.

⁶This point is important. Even early in the CPS system, former campus radicals like Ediger, Loewen and Robert Kreider had quite quickly been installed in important posts in camp administration, and as the years passed other younger CPS men also rose to fill such roles. As Gingerich points out, in such positions these men continually faced the variety of tensions coming their way as war objectors administering a Selective Service program. While publicly they affirmed the program, privately such tensions led many to a mounting dissatisfaction with the whole arrangement. As one young CO and camp administrator wrote to Albert Gaeddert, "In our selling of the CPS 'vision' . . . we act as though this CPS is a beautiful and glorious experience . . ." when in actuality they knew, he admitted, that it was merely "the best that could be worked out on short notice . . ." After the war a number of former administrators testified they would never again be caught in such a dual role. See Melvin Gingerich, *Service for Peace*, Akron, Pennsylvania: MCC, 1949, 372-373; Paul Albrecht to Albert Gaeddert, January 23, 1946, Gaeddert Papers, MLA-MS-50, Box 3, file 16.

⁷Roland Bartel to Gaeddert and Kreider, June, 1942, Gaeddert Papers, MLA-MS-50, Box 1, file 3; and August 9, 1942, Gaeddert Papers, MLA-MS-50, Box 1, file 4. Oral Interview, James Juhnke with Walter Juhnke, January 4, 1977, Schowalter Oral History Project, MLA. These quotes from Juhnke's letters were read by interviewer Juhnke as part of the interview.

⁸Hershberger to Edgar Metzler, January 5, 1960, Bender PPC papers, I-3-5.10, Box 52, AMC. Orie Cutrell to Paul Erb, April 22, 1944; Louis Lock to Erb, April 22, 1944; both in Hershberger materials, PPC papers, I-3-5.7, Box 36, AMC.

⁹Lee Kanagy to Paul Erb, December 19, 1944, Hershberger materials, PPC papers, I-3-5.7, Box 36, file 87. "Extracts from Questionnaires," undated report, J. Paul Graybill Papers, Box 39, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, Lancaster, Pennsylvania (hereafter abbreviated as LMHS). Albert Miller, response to questionnaire from the Camp Committee of the Lancaster Conference, March 4, 1946, Amos Horst Papers, LHMS.

¹⁰Roland Stucky to MCC, November 16, 1944, MCC correspondence, "Campers' attitudes towards conscription," IX-6-3, AMC. "Finis," *The Peace Sentinel* V, no. 4, April, 1946, p. 2, IX-13-1, AMC. Royce A. Engle, "Dictatorship," *The Peace Sentinel* V, no. 1, January, 1946, p. 2, IX-13-1, AMC.

¹¹"Symposium of Post-war Conscription," *MCC Bulletin* 3, no. 7, October 22, 1944; Francis Smucker to Gaeddert, October 21, 1944; and David Anderson to Robert Kreider, October 8, 1944; both in MCC Correspondence, "Campers attitudes towards conscription," IX-6-3, AMC. Melvin (Gingerich) to Guy (Hershberger), undated note, Hershberger materials, PPC Papers, 1-3-5.7, Box 36, file 87, AMC. Particularly after the American Friends Service Committee voted to withdraw from CPS administration in March, 1946, MCC began to receive an increasing number of letters and petitions from Mennonite CPS'ers urging that it follow suit. See "Statement of Attitude concerning CPS Demobilization and Continuance of CPS proposed by the Peace Section in Agreement with CPS Administration," undated memo, vertical file, "CPS," Menno Simons Historical Library, Eastern Mennonite College, Harrisonburg, Virginia (hereafter abbreviated "MSHL").

¹²Ediger interview.

¹³"Notes on Conscription Institute," Powellsville, Maryland, February 24-25, 1945, p. 1, Hershberger Materials, PPC Papers, 1-3-5.7, Box 36, file 48, AMC. Dwight Weldy, "Powellsville Conference," *The Skyliner* III, no. 3, March, 1945, p. 3, IX-13-1, AMC. "Notes on Conscription Institute," Camino, California, April 8-9, 1945, pp. 2, 4, Hershberger Materials, PPC Papers, 1-3-5, Box 36, file 48, AMC.

¹⁴"Powellsville Conscription Confab," *Box 96* I, No. XII, March, 1945, p. 3, IX-13-1, AMC. Weldy, "Powellsville Conference," p. 4. "Notes on Conscription Conference at Camp Medaryville, Medaryville, Indiana," March 18-19, 1945, p. 2, vertical file, "CPS," MSHL.

¹⁵Notes of Powellsville Institute, p. 2-3. Notes of Camino Institute, pp. 3, 8. "Conscription Institute," *The Peace Sentinel* IV, no. 4, April, 1945, p. 2, IX-13-1, AMC.

¹⁶Daryl Frey, "The Powellsville Conference," MCC Peace Section Data Files, IX-12 (pronto 1),

"Conscription Institute, Powellsville, Maryland," AMC.

¹⁷Frey, "The Powellsville Conference," Peace Section Data Files, AMC.

¹⁸Kauffman to Miller, Sept. 14, 1939, Bender PPC Papers, 1-3-5.10, Box 51, AMC. Miller to Kauffman, Sept. 19, 1939, Bender PPC Papers, 1-3-5.10, Box 51, AMC.

¹⁹Paul T. Huddle to Bender, October 17, 1941, Bender PPC Papers, 1-3-5.10, Box 51, AMC. Noah Showalter to Bender, Feb. 15, 1943, Bender PPC Papers, 1-3-5.10, Box 55, AMC.

²⁰Sanford G. Shelter, "The Civilian Public Service Program," *The Sword and Trumpet*, December, 1943, 2. Jacob Brubaker to Bender, March 4, 1944, Miller PPC Papers, 1-3-5.3, Box 17, AMC. Equally revealing was Bender's notation on top of the letter, reading "For O.O.M. personal. Thow in waste basket. HSB."

²¹Notes of Conscription Institute at Medaryville, Indiana, p. 5.



Preparing for truck transportation to work projects in the morning, Colorado Springs camp.

A Journalist's Private Reflections on the Mennonites

by Robert Kreider

No one in the first half of the twentieth century did more to lead Mennonites into the labyrinths of politics than Paul Comly French, Executive Secretary of the National Service Board for Religious Objectors (NSBRO) from 1940 to 1946. He coordinated the efforts of the Peace Churches—Brethren, Friends and Mennonites—and other church groups in administering the alternative service program for conscientious objectors in an uneasy collaboration with U.S. Selective Service.

French was an unlikely political mentor for Mennonites. A pipe-smoking journalist, he rose from police reporter on the old *Philadelphia Record* to correspondent on such national events as the 1936 Lindbergh kidnapping-Hauptman murder trial. French was a member of the Society of Friends, but not of two Mainline Quaker families. He had not attended college. He gained attention in newspaper politics as the first president of the Newspaper Guild of Philadelphia and from 1937 to 1939 as head of the Federal Writers Project in Pennsylvania.

Author of the book, *We Won't Murder*,¹ French emerged in the summer of 1940 as a pivotal member of the Friends War Problems Committee. Members of this committee, assisted by Brethren and Mennonites, labored energetically to secure recognition of the conscientious objector in the unfolding Burke-Wadsworth conscription bill of 1940. Step by step in the late fall of 1940 the National Service Board took form. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Brethren Service Committee (BSC) and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) created the NSBRO and agreed to divide costs. They were joined by the Methodists, Disciples of Christ, Federal Council of Churches

and the Fellowship of Reconciliation in forming a board of seven. M. Robert Zigler of the BSC was elected chairman; Orie O. Miller of the MCC, vice chairman; Paul Furnas of the AFSC, treasurer; and Paul C. French, executive secretary.²

Paul Comly French kept a private diary during the years from before the creation of the NSBRO until his retirement, July 10, 1940 to December 31, 1946.³ In this 1,000 page diary with its brief off-the-record entries, French commented candidly about Peace Church colleagues, national figures and the trials of operating the alternative service program for COs called "Civilian Public Service" (CPS). In an earlier essay I have made use of the French diaries in describing his perception of conscription issues.⁴ The diary provides a wealth of information on a variety of intriguing subjects: for example, French's rocky relationship with the American Friends Service Committee, the human side of General Lewis B. Hershey, the persistent efforts to open overseas service for drafted COs.

The focus of this study is French's encounter with Mennonites, whom he scarcely knew before 1940 when he was plunged into daily association with them. Orie O. Miller, Executive Secretary of the MCC, provided his principal window to the Mennonite world. Along with hundreds of entries referring to Miller, he frequently speaks of Henry A. Fast—director of MCC-CPS, Albert Gaeddert—Fast's successor in 1942, and Mennonites on his NSBRO staff, Joe Weaver and Chris Graber. The excerpts that follow are drawn from the years 1940 through 1942. I have chosen to correct spellings. My brief annotations appear in italics. In these entries one observes French's

mingled admiration for, occasional bewilderment and rare exasperation with his new-found colleagues and friends, the Mennonites.

Part I

September 11, 1940.

Orie Miller is first mentioned in a meeting with a General Shedd to discuss conscientious objectors.

September 26, 1940.

Henry Fast is identified in a meeting with Dr. Elbridge Sibley, secretary of the Osborne Committee drafting conscription regulations.

October 2, 1940.

Henry Fast, "Church of the Mennonites," attended a meeting with Attorney General Robert Jackson.

October 4, 1940.

French reported that the AFSC was willing to operate the alternative service program for all COs with the Mennonites, Brethren, Methodists, Catholics, FOR and the Federal Council of Churches on an advisory committee.

Not recorded in the French diary was resistance from Mennonites and Brethren, supported by the Methodists and Disciples, to Quaker administration of alternative service for all groups. At a Chicago meeting a collegial pattern began to take form.

October 5, 1940.

Attended the meeting of representatives of the Historic Peace Churches at the Mennonite Home Mission, [1907 South Union] Chicago. M. R. Zigler presided

The Mennonites reported that they favored church-directed projects as over against government-directed projects and also that they favored cooperation with the Friends and Brethren

Orie Miller's Plan

October 11, 1940.

Attended an organizing meeting of the National Council for Religious Conscientious Objectors, in Washington. Orie Miller and Henry Fast were present for the Mennonite Central Committee M. R. Zigler was named chairman; Orie Miller, vice chairman; and myself, ex. sec.

Orie Miller suggested that all decisions made in the preliminary stages of the council be by unanimous consent and this all agreed to

October 22, 1940.

Orie Miller presented a memorandum covering the purpose of a national c.o. service board, and the relation of the Mennonites to it. The proposed service board, he suggested, would be responsible and recommend projects of national importance; coordinate, sponsor, and supervise work projects, provide for all c.o.'s of constituent groups and as many more as may be assigned by the govt. The MCC would represent all Mennonites to the national board, would provide for direct handling of a majority of their numbers, approve assignments of all other Mennonites, assume up to 1/3 of the National Conscientious Objector Board overhead, including 1/3 of initial deposit provided the board functions remain administrative, with its executive committee limited to not over c.o. Christian groups, the Board's educational activities be limited to projects under its direct management. The main projects would be agricultural. One or two minor projects might be approved for those who could qualify for specialized service. Fully supported projects would be studied and developed directly or jointly with other groups concerned. Allowance to men above subsistence would be left for the development of group conviction from experience.

November 14, 1940

Units approved MCC camp [at Grottoes] in Rockingham County, VA, in conjunction with Soil Conservation Service.

November 25, 1940

. . . . Representatives of the three groups expressed their willingness to handle one third each of the total number of c.o.'s The hope was expressed that joint camps might be continued.

November 26, 1940

It was agreed the National Council for Religious Conscientious Objectors should be changed to the National Service Board for Religious Objectors.

December 18, 1940

After considerable discussion, it was felt that the general program might be called Civilian Public Service.

January 15, 1941

Joe Weaver, a Mennonite from Kansas, reported on visits to camp locations at Lagro, Illinois, and Bluffton, Indiana. He is just starting with us and seems to be an excellent chap. I think we will be able to work together without any trouble Orie Miller said they would operate the Bluffton camp Henry Fast reported on a visit to Colorado Springs and agreed to administer

I think the Mennonites and Brethren feel that it is more economical [for us to handle all contacts with government] and not attempt to set up individual offices for each group. The Friends are somewhat more interested in dealing independently

January 28, 1941

Tom Jones [Friends] objected to the use of "conscientious objector" in our name and proposed that the Board be called the National Board for Civilian Public Service Orie objected to this change the matter was passed over.

March 15, 1941

French attended the formal dedication of the first camp at Patapso, MD, where Quaker Rufus Jones spoke. French comments: I wonder where it will lead? And whether we will be able to make the kind of testimony against war that we hope to. I wonder what the problems will be?

April 16, 1941

Walter Van Kirk [Federal Council of Churches], Orie Miller and Paul Furnas [AFSC] were asked to work out a system of representation so that the Federal Council of Churches would have adequate representation on the Board. There was a general feeling that we should be cautious of government.

May 7, 1941

Bob Zigler and Orie Miller were anxious to develop a farm unit in Washington County, Maryland, which might continue after the war as a permanent center The experiences of

1917 were cited by Orie Miller as a reason for continuing on a group basis.

Exploring Service in Paraguay

May 20, 1941

Took Orie Miller to see Laurence Duggan [Acting Chief of the American Republics Division of the State Department] about men going to Paraguay. Orie described their Paraguayan Colony and the kind of things Mennonites would like to do in Paraguay. [Miller and French met again with Duggan on May 23.]

June 5, 1941

Arrived at Colorado Springs this morning about 6:30. Was met by Albert Gaeddert, the [MCC] camp director. The train I was on had a number of men assigned to the camp and we all drove out in trucks for breakfast. The camp is located in a beautiful spot. From the kitchen, Pike's Peak seems to stand on guard. I was much impressed after breakfast to hear a group of farm boys singing hymns while they washed the dishes.

June 24, 1941

In the evening I went to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and met with a group of Amishmen in the office of a Mennonite lawyer, [Sam Wenger]. It was an interesting evening. They are so naive and so completely unworldly in many ways, yet so very shrewd in others that it seems like a throw-back to another age to talk with them.

July 8, 1941

P.C. Hiebert [Chairman of the MCC] felt that we should not press for compensation insurance and a bonus, but would accept them if the government offered them.

Amish Host the General

August 1, 1941

General Hershey, Colonel Kosch and I drove to Lancaster and had dinner at the farm of David Fisher, an Amish bishop. I haven't seen so much food at one place for a long time. After the meal, Hershey perched on the back fence and discussed the problems of conscription and religious conscience for about two hours. After we finished there, we attended a meeting of three Lancaster County draft boards who have most of the conscientious objectors, and Hershey made it very clear to



CPS Christian Workers Institute at Bethel College, August 1944. Many of these men planned for full time Christian service and became leaders in the General Conference Mennonite Church. Left to right, beginning with the front row. (Note irregular rows.)

Row 1: Walter Adrian, Herbert Dalke, Maynard Shelly, Stan Hostetter, Henry Fast.

Row 2: Loris Habegger, Winfred Reimer, Verney Unruh, Oswald H. Goering, Alvin Doell, Aaron J. Epp, Edmund G. Kaufman, Jacob H. Langenwalter.

Row 3: Walter Gering, unidentified, Roland Bartel, unidentified, Wesley Bartel, Elmer J. Buhler, Erwin C. Goering,



unidentified, Mildred (Gerbrand) Ediger, Elmer Ediger, Robert W. Senner.

Row 4: Jacob D. Goering, Waldo W. Kaufman, Henry W. Goossen, Gordon D. Kaufman, Roland R. Goering, unidentified, Irvin E. Richert, Alice (Hostetler) Loewen, Esko Loewen.

Row 5: Arthur Thiessen, Donovan E. Smucker, Harold Thiessen, Ben Rahn, Henry Fransen, David C. Wedel, Samuel J. Goering, Otto L. Sommer, Christian E. Krehbiel.

Row 6: Olin A. Krehbiel, Peter J. Dyck, A. James Rinner, Robert S. Kreider, unidentified, William Stauffer, Albert Gaeddert.

them that he was anxious that the problem be handled with intelligence and discretion so that we did not have a repetition of the last war when men were given pretty brutal treatment. It seemed to me it was rather interesting to see a general in the army willing to spend an afternoon with the Old Order Amishmen and to discuss problems of conscience with them.

September 1, 1941

The Consultative Council met at Winona Lake today for the first of the three day session Harold Bender of the MCC reported on the Canadian government c.o. camps and said that the men received 50 cents a day and their maintenance Ori Miller said the Mennonites would be willing to see a government camp if it would not jeopardize the present program

September 3, 1941

Orie Miller explained that they were happy in having their camp directors follow instructions and guidance from the NSB A special committee consisting of Clarence Pickett [AFSC], Orie Miller, Frank Olmstead [War Resisters League], Walter van Kirk, M. R. Zigler and myself were named to discuss the problem of a government camp with the government.

Obviously Sincere People

October 25, 1941

Arrived in Chicago in time to get to the Mennonite Mission for a 9:00 AM meeting of the Mennonite Central Committee. I always enjoy Mennonite meetings because they are so obviously sincere people and have so few shams. Everything is open and above board. . . . Orie and Henry Fast were on the train returning east [Orie] said that the Mennonites had agreed to continue the program during 1942 and 1943 if it seemed necessary to commit ourselves for that period.

November 4, 1941

I received a letter today addressed to the Service Board accusing the Board of being Communistic and particularly me with having been a Communist on the basis that Communists were on the Federal Writers Project during the time I was Pennsylvania State Director. I discussed the situation with Jerry Voorhees and Congressman Maas [of the Dies Committee]. I was somewhat disturbed by it because of a fear that it

might be the beginning of a major campaign on c.o.'s.

November 10, 1941

Discussed the Communist situation with Orie who said the Mennonites were not a bit disturbed.

November 18, 1941

In discussing the question of a flat 5 percent increase [in financial support] for staff with Orie I obtained another insight into the Mennonite paternalistic pattern when he said that we did not hire the staff on a mass production basis but as individuals and that I should use my individual judgment if anyone needed additional money because of the increased cost of living

Seeking CPS Units in England and China

November 26, 1941

Clarence Pickett, Orie Miller, Bob Zigler and I met with General Hershey to tell him formally that the historic peace churches were prepared to continue the program until Jan. 1, 1943. . . . We discussed the Chinese and English units with Hershey and he is still dubious about his legal rights to let men go outside the western hemisphere. [In an entry for November 27 Orie Miller appears to be present with French for a talk with Dean Acheson, chief of the Far Eastern Division of the State Department, and with Dr. T. L. Tsui, Chinese Embassy, to explore possibilities for a CPS unit in China.]

The Terrible News

December 7, 1941

Have just heard the terrible news that the Japanese have bombed the Hawaiian Island. It seems so utterly tragic and horrible that we have to murder thousands of young Americans and Japanese and Dutch and Australians and Chinese before we get together around a table and arrive at an intelligent solution of the problems of the Pacific region Dark days are ahead We need more than ever a sense that we have God with us and are guided by Him. Tonight the Green Street Peace Committee met at our house.

December 8, 1941

Washington was grey and depressing when I got off the sleeper from Philadelphia One has the feeling of

impending doom that the whole world is tied together in universal slaughter. . . . Went to Congress at 12:30 and heard the President read his request for a declaration of war. It took but a few minutes to deliver and thus we again move into a tragic era the honeymoon is over, and we will soon know whether we have developed understanding and tolerance Went to Patapasco tonight with Joe Weaver to talk with Paul Furnas about the possibility of organizing a relief unit at San Dimas, California, in the event the West Coast was bombed or attacked.

December 12, and 13, 1941

Bob Zigler told me some of the background of the relationship between the Mennonites and Brethren and Friends in relief work, and I can appreciate how they feel about too much Quaker control of the NSB. I suppose as time goes on we will learn how to work together. . . .

December 15, 1941

The first report of possible trouble came today in a letter from Colorado Springs. Gaeddert wrote that Soil Conservation Service people had told him that the Legion and the VFW planned to paint the camp and then to drive the boys out of the community. I talked with Orie about it and suggested that we accept Colonel Kosch's invitation to be helpful

Civilian Bonds

December 23, 1941

Took Orie Miller and John E. Lapp to see Linton Collins. They were anxious to get his viewpoint on whether the government would feel they were obstructing the war machinery if they advised their people about the position of the church in regard to the purchase of defense bonds and the whole problems of the c.o. Collins was very understanding and said that he personally would feel that they would be inconsistent if they did advocate the purchase of bonds to buy military material. He suggested that they were free to quote their official church statement and to make their position clear in their church papers and through correspondence. Later the three of us talked with Houghteling at the Treasury about the issuance of a special civilian bond issue which pacifists might buy in good conscience. [In subsequent weeks appear many entries on Mennonite participa-

tion in negotiating a plan for civilian bonds.]

January 3, 1942

Don Smucker [*Menmonite pastor, Wadsworth, Ohio*] has written me that the American Legion in the Middle West seemed disturbed about the camps and suggested that we might look into it. The colonel [*Kosch*] . . . felt that as long as things worked out as they had been we should be able to carry on.

Farm Earnings for Reconstruction

January 8, 1942

Orie felt that the men [*on detached farm service*] should not receive any wages but [*and both Bob Zigler and Paul Furnas agreed*] all of the money over and above that needed for clothing and incidentals should be held by the National Service Board for a special fund for relief and reconstruction.

January 13, 1942

Bob Zigler and Orie Miller wanted all of the funds from [*detached farm*] service deposited in a special fund under the NSB and then have the Board designate which agency should operate relief and reconstruction projects with the funds. Clarence Pickett felt that each boy should decide . . . Inasmuch as a majority of the men who will work on the farms are likely to be Mennonites, it seems to me that Orie's wishes should carry the most weight . . .

Harold Bender [*MCC*] presented a draft of a statement which he and Paul Bowman [*BSC*] had prepared as the basis of our attitude toward civilian defense on which the pacifists could agree. Clarence Pickett disagreed and felt that this problem is no concern of the NSB . . . It all makes a difficult situation for me, inasmuch as the Mennonites and Brethren look to the NSB to perform certain functions which the Quakers prefer to do independently.

January 16, 1942

Bob Zigler had stayed to talk with me about the meeting he had last night with Orie, Paul Furnas and Clarence Pickett in Philadelphia to discuss the whole problem of cooperation. Said that they had made no headway and that he felt that Clarence was unwilling to work, on a broadening scope, with the Brethren and Mennonites.

January 17, 1942

Went over to Trenton this morning

and had lunch with William Scott and a committee of Christadelphians. They are a fine group to deal with. Remind me much of the Mennonites from the standpoint of integrity and calmness . . .

January 21, 1942

Discussion of detached farm service . . . Henry Fast . . . seemed satisfied with the plans. It will likely affect more Mennonite boys than any other group, so I am glad that it satisfies him . . . Henry and I talked about the problems of civilian defense, and he felt with me that we should make every effort to present a united front to the government.

Fixing Up the Rough Edges of the World

February 11, 1941

Met Henry Fast on the train to Fort Wayne, and we spend the evening fixing up the rough edges of the world.

February 18, 1942

[*Victor*] Olson [*of Selective service*] told me that he had decided to take this job because of his experience with the Plain People in Lancaster County and a belief that he understood their viewpoint.

They made a Serious Mistake

March 10, 1942

The Consultative Council met at Friends Meeting House at Florida Avenue, Washington, D.C. . . . In the afternoon Bishop B. Bromley Oxnam [*Methodist*] . . . made a strong plea for government camps. Walter Van Kirk moved a resolution . . . Crain, Swift, and John Thomas all spoke against it. Bob and Paul and Orie agreed to it and it was passed. I am quite sure they made a serious mistake and failed to realize that it will be used as a basis of their approval of government camps . . . I may be quite cynical but I think the Bishop is probably motivated by his desire to welsh on promises the Methodist Church has made over the years to the c.o.'s . . . I told Bob, Orie and Paul after the meeting that I could not understand why they had backed down before the Bishop . . .

March 18, 1942

Orie Miller, Henry Fast and Amos Horst [*Mennonite bishop from Lancaster County*] came in this morning to discuss a lot of details. Always enjoy

talking with them because things get to the point. Orie talked about the foreign projects and expressed their position as not objecting to anything I might do to make progress . . . He said that he understood that the Brethren wanted action, they were neutral, and the Friends did not want me to move. He felt that I was in a rather difficult position, I agreed with him.

The First Mennonite Disaster Service

March 20, 1942

I talked with the camp director at Henry, Illinois [*Mennonite camp*], today about the work men from that camp have been doing at Lacon, Illinois, where the tornado hit four days ago and killed fourteen persons and injured 100 others. They have done a fine job apparently and Col. Kosch felt well satisfied with it. Senator Lucas of Illinois pleased. It is curious that when I first suggested the mobile relief units I conceived of them in terms of possible East or West Coast bombing . . .

April 6, 1942

C. L. Graber [*Mennonite*] from Goshen, Indiana, and a Mr. Cluen, member of a local draft board in Indiana, were in today to discuss with General Hershey the problem of two Mennonite boys whose claim for IV-E classification has been rejected. I think [*it*] did considerable good, inasmuch as Hershey agreed that he would appoint another person to handle all of the Presidential Appeal applications.

April 9, 1942

Spent an hour and a half with Colonel Kosch and Orie Miller discussing the Hagerstown project and the general plan of farm assignments.

April 23, 1942

The Financial Council met at Akron, Pennsylvania [*MCC headquarters*] today and discussed the increasing deficit which is now up to \$88,000.

May 2, 1942

Talked with Chris Graber today on the phone about the possibility that Federal Reserve Banks might have Land Bank bonds and similar securities available for us to buy. This whole bond business is the most difficult job I have had since the program started.

May 9, 1942

Newton, Kansas. The regional camp conference was considerable different from that in Amherst, Massachusetts, because most of the Mennonite and Brethren boys had little to say; whereas the problem of Amherst was to divide the time up so that everybody had a chance to talk; here the problem was pretty much to get somebody to say something. Henry Fast felt the meeting was quite successful even though the men didn't talk too much.

May 10, 1942

. . . . went to Hesston College with Joe. Joe was graduated from here and seemed to know everybody Went to Newton Hospital to see Dr. E. L. Harshbarger who has been sick for over a year. In the evening the president of Bethel College called a special faculty meeting and asked me to expound on current events and international affairs. I always feel very silly doing this because I doubt if any one knows exactly what is going on in the world today. I find in places like this that they take everything you say very seriously

May 12, 1942

. . . . Orie is greatly concerned about the bonds, and I suppose justly so in view of the fact that when I was in Kansas I saw barns and stores painted yellow

May 16, 1942

Met with representatives of the mid-western camps at Winona Lake, Indiana,

today for a two-day conference. In the evening towards the end of the meeting, the hotel manager came in and asked me if I would talk with a committee of twenty Legionnaires who had just arrived and asked that we leave the hotel and the town. We had an interesting discussion with them in which Paul Furnas, Orie Miller and Harold Rose [BSC] joined. This was my first experience with the vigilante attitude . . . there were several veiled threats about driving us out of town, which seemed to disappear after we had discussed the whole situation After they left we discovered that one of the restaurants had put up a sign saying that no c.o.'s were wanted.

During the summer of 1942 French and Mennonite representatives met frequently to discuss the Civilian Bond program and training units in the colleges for postwar relief and reconstruction work.

June 16, 1942

I am a little disturbed at Paul's and Orie's attitude of appreciation to [the Provident Trust Company] for their willingness to handle the job [of issuing bonds] It is something that any bank would agree to handle when they planned to make money from it.

October 8, 1942

Met with Orie, Bob and Paul at Paul's today Orie explained that the Mennonites did not feel able to tell the government what work of national importance should be. He felt that he was not ready to press Selective Serv-

ice . . . any given type of program, but would welcome any detached service to which [Selective Service] might agree

December 31, 1942

. . . . The train I was on had four ambulance cars bringing wounded to Walter Reed Hospital from North Africa.

As French made his final diary entry for 1942 Europeans were in their fourth year of war and the United States had entered its second year of war. Although German advances had been halted at Stalingrad and in North Africa, French's military friends were predicting a long war. The year 1943 would bring added diversity and promise in the Civilian Public Service program. However, in 1943 the lengthening months of war and the wearing weight of conscription would test the administrative endurance of Paul Comly French and the Peace Churches.

ENDNOTES

¹Paul Comly French, *We Won't Murder*. New York: Hastings House, 1940.

²For a survey of Mennonite Civilian Public Service see Melvin Gingerich, *Service for Peace*. Akron, PA: Mennonite Central Committee, 1949. For a review and analysis of the Historic Peace Churches and the United States at war, 1917-1955, see Albert N. Keim and Grant M. Stoltzfus, *The Politics of Conscience*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1988.

³NSBRO-NISBCO Collection in the Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.

⁴Robert Kreider, "Lessons from World War II," *Peace Section Newsletter*, Vol. XII, No. 3, May-June, 1982, pp. 5-9.



The camp chorus of the Mulberry unit in central Florida, a hookworm eradication project. Back row: Nelson Hostetter, Oswald Goering, Galen Widmer, Dallas Voran, Delbert Schrag, Wesley Prieb, Mervin Hostetter, Martin Schroeder, Frank Wiebe. Front row: Ed Zehr, George Bohrer, Menno Lohrenz, Art Thiessen, Harold Thiessen (director), John Horst, Leo Goertz, Walt Adrian, Roy Smucker.

Radical Reformation and Mennonite Bibliography

compiled by Marilyn Loganbill

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Book Reviews

James C. Juhnke, *Vision, Doctrine, War: Mennonite Identity and Organization in America, 1890-1930*. The Mennonite Experience in America, vol. 3. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1989. Pp. 394. (\$19.95—paperback)

The long-awaited third volume in the Mennonite Experience in America series became available in early 1990. Unfortunate delays slowed the progress of James C. Juhnke's *Vision, Doctrine, War: Mennonite Identity and Organization in America, 1890-1930* through Herald Press, and the distribution of copies, including the one supplied to this reviewer, with thirty-two pages of the first two chapters missing, may also reveal a low priority placed on the series by its publisher. The projected four-volume set will eventually tell the story of the Mennonites during three centuries in the United States.

James C. Juhnke, Professor of History at Bethel College and editor of *Mennonite Life*, begins his account in the 1890s and focuses on the increasing denominationalism of American Mennonites throughout the next four decades. During this period Mennonite sectarian self-consciousness declined while centralization and institutionalization increased. Each group of Mennonites differed in their reaction to modernization, revivalism, war, and other challenges to their traditions and identity, and Juhnke describes a complex "mosaic" of Mennonite pluralism. Mennonites in general became more like American Protestants, but Juhnke describes a three-dimensional matrix which divided Mennonites: "(1) Swiss and south-German versus Dutch and north-German origin in Europe; (2) differences between the earlier established settlers in the East and those who arrived later or migrated from the East and settled in the frontier Midwest or West; and (3) differences due to separate group or conference affiliation in America." (p. 32) This framework

facilitates a clear description of the degrees to which the religious-ethnic identity of various Mennonite groups eroded during the forty year period studied in the volume.

The Old Order Mennonites and Old Order Amish were the most traditionalist. While they were also influenced by pietism, revivalism, and other forces which affected Mennonites who were more open to change, the old order Mennonites "gave unity to the Mennonite mosaic." (p. 78) These "quintessential" Mennonites survived, adopted technology and other new practices at their own pace, and occasionally were split by schism, but they anchored one end of the Mennonite spectrum.

At the other end of the continuum were the Dutch-Russian Mennonites who immigrated to America during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Their methods of boundary maintenance differed from the "old" and old order Mennonites of Swiss background. Whereas humility was a central theme for Mennonites related to the Amish and Mennonite Church (MC) groups, the more recent immigrants had a more positive view of worldly responsibilities. They assumed leadership roles in the General Conference Mennonite Church, established in 1860 to promote missions and the unification of Mennonites. Juhnke describes the centrality of congregational life among the Dutch-Russian Mennonites and elaborates the philosophy of congregation-christendom (*Gemeindechristentum*) as developed by Cornelius H. Wedel, first president of Bethel College and mentor and historian for this group of "new" Mennonites.

Although new Mennonites promoted a flurry of activities at the end of the century, they did not monopolize denominational advances in establishing mission ventures, hospitals, and colleges. Juhnke concludes that missions was the heart of denominational activity between 1890 and 1930. The mission became a business with a bureaucracy

and an increasingly professional outlook. On the other hand, missions revitalized the sending church. New roles for women in the church and exotic artifacts were among numerous external manifestations of a new understanding of the gospel. Mennonite missions for the most part reaped a small harvest during this period, but Mennonites expanded their understandings of other cultures and discovered a common theological basis for missions with American Protestantism.

American Mennonites founded seven new schools of "higher education" between 1890 and 1914. These institutions became denominational centers as well as the means to indoctrinate and retain the youth of the denomination within the church. Financial stability and modernism were among the issues which challenged the Mennonite Colleges during the first quarter of the twentieth century—the latter forcing Goshen College to close for one year. Bluffton College gained an extraordinary faculty in part through an exodus from Goshen. Juhnke examines the Mennonite deaconess movement as another focus of institutionalization at this time. He concludes that American "Mennonites did not lose their identity and historical memory." (p. 187) Instead they borrowed Protestant models and Americanized in many respects, thus achieving a new social synthesis and a revitalized sense of peoplehood.

Mennonites in America have never been immobile either geographically or socially. The early twentieth century saw an acceleration of both types of movement. Between 1890 and 1920 inexpensive land on the frontier beckoned many Mennonites to Oklahoma, western Kansas, Colorado, Idaho, Washington, California and other westward points. More of the small and scattered Mennonite settlements founded during this period failed than prospered. Thousands of Mennonites from struggling rural communities as well as

others whose diaspora took them to urban areas left their ancestral faith. Urban areas boasted few Mennonite congregations at this time, and the Mennonite mainstream with its emphasis on humility found it difficult to accept Mennonites who joined the professional and upwardly mobile classes.

Several of Juhnke's previous works have emphasized the critical impact of World War I on American Mennonites, and this volume provides an opportunity to broaden his analysis beyond General Conference Mennonites in the plains states to an excellent synthesis of the wartime experience of Mennonites nationwide. Mennonites were not prepared for total war, and especially the more recent immigrants of Dutch-Russian background had not grasped the potential conflict between their non-resistant theology and their desire to be good citizens. While the impact of the war on Mennonite communities varied according to many factors, most became overtly aware of a choice between citizenship in the American democracy and in the kingdom of Christ—a choice they had thought could be avoided.

World War I also ushered in a period of rapid social and economic change in the western world. The general cultural upheaval had a major impact on American Mennonites, and theological conflict between modernists and fundamentalists exacerbated their social transition. The debate over modernism split Mennonites and slowed their denominational advance. Juhnke does a masterful job sketching the varied impact of fundamentalism on different Mennonite groups. While most of this volume focuses on the "old" Mennonite related groups and the General Conference Mennonites, this chapter emphasizes the post-war religious revival of the Mennonite Brethren and charts their somewhat divergent course of Americanization from other Dutch-Russian Mennonites. While Juhnke examines the various splinter or smaller groups and their story is not completely ignored, the account of the Mennonite Brethren, Holdeman Mennonites, and other less populous groups of the Mennonite mosaic is slighted at times.

Rapid change and post-war controversies did not halt the progress of Mennonite denominationalism. It gave birth to institutional advances such as Mennonite Central Committee, and new leaders such as Harold S. Bender and

Orie O. Miller ushered in a more ecumenical and progressive era. All-Mennonite Conventions, like the Mennonite Central Committee, tentatively examined inter-Mennonite cooperation and became the first steps toward the successful Civilian Public Service program during World War II. While the course of Mennonite denominational development described by Juhnke was not smooth, Mennonites retained their identity. Fragmentation and discord sometimes restrained their progress, but Juhnke concludes that each group "was free to work its own balance of separation from, and accommodation to, American society." (pp. 316-17)

As members of the Mennonite church and General Conference begin to discuss integration, *Vision, Doctrine, War* should be required reading. This book (and presumably the fourth and final volume in the series as well) charts the background of the courting partners. Readers will better understand the development of their own group as well as the issues and struggles of the other while reading Juhnke's description of the birth and formative years of the denominationalism of today. Although the Mennonite Brethren and other smaller groups may find less light shed on their own internal development, they also will find the context critical to understanding their identity and placement within the Mennonite mosaic. Juhnke admirably achieves his goal of showing the whole of American Mennonitism while revealing the interrelationships and influences which defined Mennonite peoplehood in the early twentieth century.

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Omar Eby, *A Long Dry Season*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1988. Pp. 216. (\$14.95)

This novel follows the physical and emotional struggle of Thomas Martin, an American missionary to an unspecified African nation. The dust jacket blurb accurately describes the novel as a study in "conflict between art and idealism and western and non-western values," but the novel is less about a

cosmic battle between these forces than it is about the clash of these forces in a single man, the doubting Thomas Martin. This is a compelling novel for any reader interested in the church in Africa.

At a very general level, narrative plots fall into three categories: human versus environment, human versus human, human versus self. *A Long Dry Season* draws much power from its effective use of all three themes; Thomas finds himself in conflict with the majestically and precisely described African landscape; he finds himself in conflict with his parishioners, with his fellow American citizens (represented by a pair of well meaning, but vulgar, tourists), and ultimately alienated from his own family; and finally, he struggles throughout with his own feelings of worthlessness and with the conflict of his desires.

A Long Dry Season is a lonely book. Thomas exists among humans, but he never seems fully connected to them. Indeed, his final alienation is so thorough that the novel's rapid conclusion did not fully convince me. Logic told me that the "fall of distant rains" would break the "long dry season"; but my heart was not persuaded, so thoroughly and with such finesse had Thomas been cut away from everything he counted on in life.

Readers of *Mennonite Life* will find *A Long Dry Season* of greater interest as a novel by a Mennonite author than as a novel about Mennonite experience. Once a teacher for six years in east and central Africa, Omar Eby teaches writing and literature at Eastern Mennonite College, but his is not an explicitly Mennonite novel. Much of its success in focusing on the story of Thomas, the individual, comes from its deliberately general locale. Eby never names a specific identification for his African setting (although Kenya seems likely, since the most convenient cities are Nairobi and Mombasa), and likewise, in its depiction of religion, the novel names no specific denominations nor hierarchical organizations. While this makes for good literature, it could annoy those hoping to find a documented interpretation of Mennonite experience.

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Calvin Redekop, *Mennonite Society*.
Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University
Press, 1989. Pp. 397.

Both newcomers and scholars will appreciate the organization and clarification Calvin Redekop brings to the study of the confusing array of Mennonite groups.

In part one of this four-part book, Mennonites are categorized according to a number of variables important in their beginnings and subsequent development. This material provides the basis for illustration and reference throughout the book.

In part two Redekop searches for a commonness, the "Mennonite Ethos." He finds this in at least four emphases: (1) the Anabaptist protest against ecclesiastical corruption and the social oppression of secular powers, (2) common beliefs centered around brotherhood and associated congregational and conference organization, (3) a struggle toward unity, (4) a "restitutive" motif, a hope in the restoration of God's rule in this world.

In part three the impact of forms of family, education, economics, politics, and welfare encountered by Mennonites in their host societies is described. Mennonites have selectively acculturated wherever they have lived. The "progressives" are little different from the dominant society while the "conservatives" have separated and isolated themselves.

In part four Redekop analyzes both the internal and external forces producing the continuing fragmentation in Mennonite society. In spite of this fragmentation Redekop still has hope in the future of Mennonite society. His hope lies in the completion of a cycle with the following sectors: (1) a poly-genetic beginning in the social upheaval of Reformation Europe with its social critique and protest, (2) the Anabaptist religious and social goals were burned out in the persecutions forcing the movement into seclusion and separation, (3) in this context the protest element was lost leaving only certain religious and organizational elements, (4) migration, toleration, and subsequent social experience in diverse host societies fragmented Mennonite society into groups across the whole range of possible responses.

In the religious acculturation, "progressives" are denominations and "conservatives" are isolated, separated sects. In both of these options the original dynamic of social and religious critique has atrophied. In spite of this atrophy, Redekop discerns some residue of the original "restitutive" motif. He hopes some elements of critique, some remnants of protest, some measure of hope in God's continuing creative work continue. If any of the original "ethos" is still present it may yet galvanize Mennonites to revival, renewal, and unity.

Redekop suggests a revitalization can occur and a renewed explication of the "ethos" is possible. A new critique and protest will occur in response to the profound crises in our physical and social world. It is an opportunity to restore the physical and social world which God intends. Mennonite society, the family of Mennonite groups, can be a tool in God's purpose for this world.

However, in spite of Redekop's heroic efforts to find a "Mennonite ethos," it takes considerable faith to find the tie which binds the fragments of Mennonite "brotherhood." The polar opposites and typologies underlying the methodology hardly encourage one to believe that significant commonalities really exist. The use of the term "society" is problematic. Mennonites are at best subcultures since they lack the geographical and political characteristics ordinarily associated with the idea of "society."

Beyond description and analysis, Redekop has provided seminal thought. His suggestion that societal problems may wean "progressives" from their headlong assimilation and jolt the "conservatives" to encounter the world from which they cannot separate is worthy of thought. The inescapable environmental and social problems may lead full circle. This circle has led Anabaptists from protest to withdrawal to assimilation to an opportunity now for renewed critique, protest, and work toward the restitution of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Redekop has made a significant contribution to the study of Mennonite community. He has categorized many dimensions of Mennonite life in understandable ways. Above all, he has launched into new territory by suggesting a way in which Mennonite society may be revitalized and move toward unity.

This is a book which should be in every Mennonite home. It can well be material for discussion groups. It is required reading for everyone who wants to understand Mennonites.

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James Urry, *None But Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia 1789-1889*. Winnipeg: Hyperion Press, 1989. Pp. 289. (\$24.95 Canadian—paperback)

James Urry's book *None But Saints* is based on the author's doctoral dissertation in anthropology submitted to Oxford University in 1978. After E. K. Francis, Urry is the first non-Mennonite author to study the Russian-Mennonite Anabaptists.

As indicated by the title, the author is more interested in the impact of the Russian experience on the life and character of the group than in its specific institutions. The critical assessment of an external examiner is always useful for a better understanding of minorities that too often have to rely solely on self-evaluation. The attractive appearance of the book may not seem that important but it adds to the general quality of the publication. Readers will appreciate maps, sketches, photographs, and color prints from the Henry Pauls collection, which help to recreate the mood of the period.

The significant contributions of earlier writers like D. H. Epp, Franz Isaak, P. M. Friesen, and some of the more recent contributions of Frank H. Epp and others are not overshadowed by Urry's book but rather complemented in a very significant way. As an outsider, the author was free to deal with issues which earlier writers may have chosen to avoid.

The general direction of Urry's interpretation can be found in a number of more recent essays by Mennonite historians, but Urry's book is the first major publication analyzing critically especially the events of the second half of the nineteenth century. This is a first critical interpretation in a major publication of the religious and economic tensions experienced by the Russian-Mennonite community. Urry sees Mennonite developments in the context of

religious movements in Europe and convincingly argues that between 1850 and 1880 there is a correlation between the economic and the religious tensions in the colonies. The author shatters a number of Mennonite "self-portraits" and we should be grateful for it. As David Rempel in his extensive introduction to this volume says, this is not a comprehensive history of the Russian Mennonites, but it is a very significant contribution to Mennonite historiography. The only minor irritant this writer has found in the publication is the spelling of Mennonite place names. But that is really a problem for Mennonite historians to solve. The author and his

Winnipeg supporters have to be congratulated on an important publication.

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Below: The concrete works for making platforms for outdoor privies by the Mulberry unit in Florida. By autumn 1944 a thousand sanitary privies had been installed.



