

WE WILL NOT FIGHT



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To learn about the different types of Conscientious Objectors, what their motives were, and what actions they took.
- To find out about how Conscientious Objectors were treated by the authorities and the rest of the population.
- To think about the influence of pro-war propaganda over people and its effects.
- To discover how young women in Britain, and young West African men also took part in the movement against war, and to think about why their forms of protest were different.
- To question the rights and wrongs of the Conscientious Objectors' actions, beliefs, and treatment.



'Who Were the Conscientious Objectors?'

WWI - trench warfare and global nature mean a lot of people are needed in the army.

January 1916- conscription was introduced for all single men aged 18-41.

In total over six million men are mobilised in the UK.

A clause in the law allowed people to register as a Conscientious Objector (CO).



THE MILITARY SERVICE ACT. 1916,

APPLIES TO UNMARRIED MEN WHO, ON AUGUST 15th, 1915, WERE 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OVER AND WHO WILL NOT BE 41 YEARS OF AGE ON MARCH 2nd, 1916.

ALL MEN (NOT EXCEPTED OR EXEMPTED),

between the above ages who, on November 2nd, 1915, were Unmarried or Widowers without any Child dependent on them will, on

Thursday, March 2nd, 1916

BE DEEMED TO BE ENLISTED FOR THE PERIOD OF THE WAR.

They will be placed in the Reserve until Called Up in their Class.

MEN EXCEPTED:

SOLDIERS, including Territorials who have volunteered for Foreign Service;
MEN serving in the NAVY or ROYAL MARINES;
MEN DISCHARGED from ARMY or NAVY, disabled or ill, or TIME-EXPIRED MEN;
MEN REJECTED for the ARMY since AUGUST 14th, 1915;
CLERGYMEN, PRIESTS, and MINISTERS OF RELIGION;
VISITORS from the DOMINIONS.

MEN WHO MAY BE EXEMPTED BY LOCAL TRIBUNALS:

Men more useful to the Nation in their present employments;
Men in whose case Military Service would cause serious hardship owing to exceptional financial or business obligations or domestic position;
Men who are ill or infirm;
Men who conscientiously object to combatant service. If the Tribunal thinks fit, men may, on this ground, be (a) exempted from combatant service only (not non-combatant service), or (b) exempted on condition that they are engaged in work of National importance.

Up to March 2nd, a man can apply to his Local Tribunal for a certificate of exemption. There is a Right of Appeal. He will not be called up until his case has been dealt with finally. Certificates of exemption may be absolute, conditional or temporary. Such certificates can be renewed, varied or withdrawn.

Men retain their Civil Rights until called up and are amenable to Civil Courts only.

**DO NOT WAIT UNTIL MARCH 2nd.
ENLIST VOLUNTARILY NOW.**

For fuller particulars of the Act, please apply to Local No. 15 in the nearest Post Office, Police Station, or Recruiting Office.

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Over 16,000 Conscientious Objectors during WWI, although many weren't given that legal status.

People didn't fight for many reasons-religious, political, and even personal.

Religious groups like the Quakers opposed all wars.

Political groups like pacifists and socialists felt German and British workers should work together, rather than fight each other.

Some people asked for permission to remain because of personal reasons.



Different types of CO's

'Non-Combatants' joined the army but did not use weapons, and instead were stretcher-bearers, hospital workers, and drivers.

'Alternativists' refused to join the army but would do other jobs that the government considered important for the war, like working in mines and factories.

'Absolutists' were so anti-war that they refused to do any work for the war effort or the army.



THE COURT-MARTIAL
FRIEND
AND PRISON GUIDE

Being a detailed statement of the present procedure with regard to Conscientious Objectors, before, during, and after Court-Martial, with special reference to the proceedings of the Central Tribunal; and a digest of certain prison rules.

Price Threepence
NO-CONSCRIPTION FELLOWSHIP
5 YORK BUILDINGS
ADELPHI
W.C.

Military Tribunals decide whether or not a CO should join the army.

The tribunals weren't known for being fair or sympathetic.

If the tribunal rejects the CO's application they were forced to join the army.

Those who still refused to fight could be punished with prison, military jail, or even threatened with death.

Pamphlets such as these, printed by the No Conscription Fellowship, aimed to help CO's avoid military service and prison.
(Working Class Movement Library)



CO's who avoided service were often called 'conchies' and bullied.

Some were given white feathers - a symbol of cowardice - while walking the streets.

'No Conscription Fellowship' tried to support CO's.



PLATE 9.

"This little pig stayed at home"

CO's were portrayed by pro-war newspapers as lazy and selfish.
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**WERE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS
RIGHT TO DO WHAT THEY DID?**



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the different reasons that Walter gives for seeking the status of Conscientious Objector?
2. Is there one that you find particularly convincing?
3. If you were on the military tribunal, would you allow him to not serve in the army? Why / Why not?





[archive.ppu.org.uk/nomoreNews/
worksheets/ws2/
worksheet02Source9.html](http://archive.ppu.org.uk/nomoreNews/worksheets/ws2/worksheet02Source9.html)





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In Africa as well, many young men attempted to avoid the army.

The British Army often employed them as 'Carriers'. Conditions were very harsh:

West African Carriers in the British Army received less than 1000 calories a day in their rations (British soldiers had 4000 per day).

Among East and West African carriers, the death rate was 20%- almost double the 11.5% death rate for British soldiers.

Most died from malnutrition, disease, and overwork.

Carriers received no pensions, no sick pay, and did not even receive a medal.



Image Q 15528 from the Imperial War Museums collection

Some feared being treated like slaves. Others didn't want to fight for a country that invaded them. Still others didn't think the war affected them.

Many were forced to join, through the threat of arrest, beatings, and death.

African war resisters would hide from towns where recruiters were visiting. They would hide in rural areas or cross borders into other colonies. Some moved to very remote villages.



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Improving the lives of young people

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