

WRITTEN SUBMISSION TO THE NATIONAL SERVICE COMMISSION
BY DRAFT RESISTER C.J. HINKE, FEBRUARY 23, 2018

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Commission on Service <national.commission.on.service.info@mail.mil>,

Subject: "Docket No. 05-2018-01" **RFI COMMENT**

Dear Commissioners,

While US history may be a history of almost-continuous wars, it is no less a history of war refusers. The US since its inception was a haven in the world for freedom of religion which often incorporated war refusal into the consciences, study, and doctrine of members of the traditional peace churches.

I should point out to you Commissioners that among religionists, America has seen the Amish here in Pennsylvania; Roman, Greek, and Russian Catholics; Quakers; Mennonites with 1.5 million current believers; Brethren; Hutterites; Doukhobors; Molokans; Jews; 1.2 million Jehovah's Witnesses; 1.1 million Seventh Day Adventists; 200,000 Unitarian Universalists; Baha'i; Sufis; 50,000 Nation of Islam; Muslims; and a million Pentecostals, among other war resisters. These believers, even today, do not have inconsequential demographics.

No fewer were political war refusers who had reached this ethical position for the greater good of us all. Socialists of many kinds; student revolutionaries; Black Lives Matter; Latino farm workers; and anarchists, to name a few. With the advent of Occupy Wall Street or anti-globalization protest, can you imagine these folks would sign up for war? High school and university students? Think you can put these genies back in the bottle, cow these Americans by force of law? You may want to reconsider.

The US created a system for conscientious objection to military service but then made it so restrictive only traditional objectors could take advantage of it. In particular, a man needed to be a pacifist and oppose all wars.

Of course, this system left out many men. These absolutist objectors then chose prison over war. Even though Civilian Public Service from 1941 through 1947 made alternatives available to COs, many young men refused to cooperate and many others walked away. The draft is a feudal press-gang running continuously in the U.S. since 1940. Under such compulsion, there will always be those who walk away.

My very best birthday present ever was the ending of the US war on Vietnam on April 30, 1975. I was the last man arrested for the Vietnam draft, in December 1976. And pardoned by President Jimmy Carter on January 22, 1977.

In the process, the US war machine robbed me of my country. I moved to Canada and lost many of my ties with the US.

I will refrain from presenting the argument here that, just maybe, we should not be fighting all these wars, or any, until we solve America's own problems, that \$700 billion could be better spent on social services and humanitarian efforts.

But I can tell you for a fact that, if registration for military conscription is mandatory, as it is today, a great percentage of young citizens will continue to evade this requirement by refusing to register or making themselves impossible for government's computers to find.

Military service has been touted since Vietnam as a way out of poverty, a route to a practical education, employability, and economic security. I think that's nonsense, of course, but just suppose government made such education and training a reality but in the *civilian* sphere, at a fair, living wage with a pension plan? I believe young people would sign up, *voluntarily*, in droves. What about training for nonviolent civilian defense which can actually protect us all?

I hope this Commission is honestly considering ending draft registration. I refused to register in 1968 and I'd refuse today. I would always choose prison over war and there are many more like me.

We need fewer troops, more public service at home, and more relief efforts overseas. Let's make that available to our next generation, not compulsory. Accomplishing this teaches our young people peace instead of war.

We finally have the opportunity to do the right thing, to strike our own path, irrespective of conscription in any other country. Selective Service should rest... in peace. It's time to put an end to the draft in America, once and for all.

No registration, no draft of men, women, or professionals. Return us the freedom on which our nation was founded.



peace&freedom,

CJ Hinke

Author, *Free Radicals: War Resisters in Prison*

<https://www.amazon.com/Free-Radicals-War-Resisters-Prison/dp/>

As a final note, I wish to mention that I will make myself fully available for consultation with the Commission over this issue.