Definition: **Conscientious objector** from Brewer's Dictionary of Modern Phrase and Fable

A person who objects to serving in the armed forces on grounds of conscience. The expression in this sense dates from the First World War. Colloquial names for a conscientious objector are 'CO' or (sometimes disparagingly) 'conchie' ('conchy').

Summary Article: **conscientious objector**
from The Columbia Encyclopedia

A person who, on the grounds of conscience, resists the authority of the state to compel military service. Such resistance, emerging in time of war, may be based on membership in a pacifistic religious sect, such as the Society of Friends (Quakers), the Dukhobors, or Jehovah's Witnesses, or on personal religious or humanitarian convictions. Political opposition to the particular aim of conscription, such as that maintained by the Copperheads during the Civil War, by radical groups during World War I and, to a more limited extent, during World War II, and by large numbers during the Vietnam War, is usually considered in a separate category. The problem of conscientious objectors, although present in different forms since the beginning of the Christian era, became acute in World Wars I and II because of the urgent demands for manpower of the warring governments. The United States and Great Britain allowed members of recognized pacifistic religious groups to substitute for combat service: (1) noncombatant military service, (2) nonmilitary activity related to the war effort, or (3) activity considered socially valuable. Pacifists without recognized claim to exemption were liable to harsher treatment, and about 5,000 conscientious objectors were imprisoned in the United States between 1940 and 1945. The postwar Selective Service Act, passed in 1948 and amended in 1951, required that conscientious objection be based on religious belief and training that included belief in a Supreme Being. In 1970 the Supreme Court removed the religious requirement and allowed objection based on a deeply held and coherent ethical system with no reference to a Supreme Being. In 1971 the Supreme Court refused to allow objection to a particular war, a decision affecting thousands of objectors to the Vietnam War. Some 50,000–100,000 men are estimated to have left the United States to avoid being drafted to serve in that war.

See Field, G. C., Pacifism and Conscientious Objection (1945);
M. Q. Sibley; P. E. Jacob, Conscription of Conscience (1952, repr. 1965);
Schlissel, L., ed., Conscience in America (1968);
Zahn, G. C., War, Conscience, and Dissent (1967);
APA

Chicago

Harvard

MLA