

# THE LONDON TRIBUNAL QUESTIONS THE C.O.

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### Foreword

Young Americans face conscription. In public meetings, over the lunch counter, wherever people gather together, the question is argued and debated—Is it necessary? Is it the beginning of Fascism? Is it the American way? Is it compatible with Christianity?

This British pamphlet is being reprinted in the hope of helping conscientious objectors in the United States to think through and to clarify their positions in regard to war. The questions asked by English tribunals are typical of the questions put to conscientious objectors in every country. They are questions to which the conscientious objector must seek answers which satisfy him in view of his religious training, his own experiences and observations, and his social vision.

The readers of this pamphlet will be interested to know that the British draft law provides that those who register as conscientious objectors shall appear before local tribunals to be judged as to their sincerity. Four courses are open to the tribunal in judging the conscientious objector: he may be given unconditional exemption; he may be exempted on the condition that he undertake work "of a civil character and under civilian control"; he may be transferred to the military register, to be employed in non-combatant duties only; he may be transferred to the military register unconditionally for regular military service.

—Ray Newton.

This pamphlet is issued primarily for the help of men who are to appear before the London Tribunal, but many of the questions contained here are typical of those asked by other tribunals.

### The Questions

These questions are a summary of those actually asked by the London Tribunal. Some have occurred rarely and others many times, but they are all typical. The chief value of the list is that it gives you an idea of the kind of questions that may be asked and an opportunity of testing yourself. It would seem that the Tribunal puts such questions in order to test your honesty and strength of conviction. Therefore, do not look for slick replies, but face the matter honestly and ask yourself what answer would be the right one for you yourself to give. Do not be worried if there are some you cannot answer satisfactorily. It may be that there is no direct satisfactory answer at all.

We have not attempted to print answers, as it is up to each applicant to decide the line of approach according to his own conscience. We considered including a bibliography of books and pamphlets, but felt that the questions cover so wide a range that an adequate bibliography would become too bulky to be of much use.

Conscience, after all, is not a matter of learning, and your case will be much stronger if you restrict yourself to points you feel absolutely sure about. Careful reading, however, may help to strengthen you in your stand, and, if you want advice as to suitable reading matter, we shall be glad to give it.

## The Written Statement

Take great care with the written statement you send with your application. A concise, quietly worded statement, confined entirely to the main issue and containing all relevant points, is more valuable to the Tribunal and to you than a lengthy one. Choose your words carefully. Be sure they express your real feelings and that you know their exact meaning. Misunderstandings have arisen through careless use of words. Before you send it in, ask a friend to tell you candidly what impression it conveys to him, and get him to cross-examine you on it.

## Before the Tribunal

You will find the procedure at the Tribunal quite informal. After the Clerk has called your name you go to the box. No oath is required, and the Chairman reads your statement aloud, after which you have an opportunity of adding to it or of amplifying any particular point. The first few questions will probably be for information only. The Tribunal wants to know in every case why the applicant objects, how long he has held his views, what work, if any, he is prepared to do, what he objects to doing, and what he is doing at present.

It may add to your confidence to know that there are always people in the public space who are supporting you in your stand. Some bodies have representatives present all the time, watching on your behalf and reporting.

The decision of this Tribunal is not final. If you feel aggrieved, remember that you have a right to appeal to the Appellate Tribunal within three weeks.

## Questionnaire

The following list is intended to show the kind of questions that might be asked as a preliminary, or on general, religious, humanitarian, or political matters. It is not intended to

convey that they are necessarily limited to applicants who base their objection on those particular grounds.

When testing yourself by these questions, be clear as to the reasons for your answers.

## PRELIMINARIES

What process of reasoning led you to the views you hold?

Are you sure that your objection is one of conscience and not of reasoning or repugnance?

How long have you held these views?

In what way have you expressed your views? What people have you told about them?

Are you a member of a religious, pacifist, or other society for propagating your ideals? How often do you attend their meetings? Are you an active member?

What sacrifice have you ever made for your conscience?

Have you done any work of National importance?

What books have you read on the subject? Tell us some of them.

Have you read any German books or papers or been to Germany?

What is your present occupation? Have you taken any steps to find out if it is assisting the war in any way?

Are you willing to continue in your present job, although it does help the war—even indirectly? If so, why do you refuse to fight?

What attempts did you make to improve things around you before the war broke out?

## GENERAL

Why is it inconsistent with your conscience to defend the right against evildoers?

Would you not resist even if everything you value were in danger of being trodden underfoot?

Why is it wrong to prevent evil from happening to someone else—to protect women and children from inhumanity?

Would you defend yourself?

Is your objection to killing or to warfare in general?

Why do you object to killing?

Is war wrong or merely inexpedient? Why?

What method would you use to resist evil?

If you are not in a position to overcome evil with good, would it not be better to destroy a greater evil with a lesser evil rather than not at all?

How can you overcome the Nazis by good? Mr. Chamberlain had a good try at Munich.

Your country is in danger. What do you propose to do for it now?

Do you want to continue with your propaganda while the soldiers are dying to make it possible for you to do it? What would become of your peace societies if we were conquered by the Nazis?

Would you feel happy if you knew our army had all run away?

Do you eat food convoyed to you by the Navy? Why?

What experience have you had of the world that you are so sure of yourself and set yourself against the majority of your fellowmen?

Have you a gas-mask? Why? Surely that proves you believe in defence.

## RELIGIOUS

What parts of the Bible do you cite in support of your Christian objection?

Where in Christ's teaching do you find anything which forbids you to serve in the army, or to help your country in time of war?

If war is evil, why did not Christ condemn it? Did he not even say, "He that hath no sword, let him buy one," "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight," and "I came not to send peace, but a sword"?

Did not Jesus whip the money-changers out of the temple?

You have been telling us about Christ's conscience. What does *your* conscience say?

How do you explain Revelation where it says, "and there was war in heaven," also "and in righteousness he doth judge and make war"?

Are you sure you are not just selecting texts from the Bible to suit yourself?

You say that God directs you to take this attitude. How do you know the direction comes from God?

Does God direct you to live at the expense of other people who are risking their lives bringing food and fighting for you?

If God directed you to defend your country, what would you do?

Did not Christ condemn evildoers? Evil was not tolerated by Him. Did He not condemn them to everlasting punishment? Is not that worse than killing?

How can you justify turning your back on your countrymen just because of their "sin"? Would Christ do that?

Would not Christ help the wounded and sick? Do you think He would show discrim-

ination in His acts of mercy? Would it not be pleasurable to Him if you helped the wounded and sick also?

Would Christ object to a war for freedom and to stamp out evil?

Would you fight to bring Christ's kingdom on earth?

Have you not read about the wars of religion?

Did the Jews sin against God in their wars ordered by God?

If you did non-combatant work in the fighting forces, could you not spread the gospel there?

What policy does your religion suggest we should follow?

How is it any practical help to pray for oppressed people while they are being massacred?

You say evil cannot triumph. What about the Nazi regime in Germany?

Pilate admitted that he found no stain in Christ, but he refrained from resisting evil and freeing Christ. Do you think Pilate did right?

## HUMANITARIAN

If you love your fellow men do you not want to protect them?

If you saw people, or children, being beaten up by a gang of roughs, would you go to their help or let them be done to death? How would you pacifically defend them?

If you believe in succouring those in distress, is it not well to join the R.A.M.C. or at least to take an active part in A.R.P.?

Why would you help the wounded and sick individually, but object to being organised to help them?

How can doing the same thing, such as ambulance or relief work, be right under civilian control and wrong under army control?

Why would you not assist a soldier who is wounded in conscientiously defending you?

If you are willing to help the civilian population, have you realised that modern warfare is carried on largely through their support?

If you are willing to help victims here, why not in France? Surely an act good here is not bad there?

Will you help to produce food? It is very necessary for life. If not, why not? Would you let your country starve to death?

If you are willing to grow food in England, why are you not willing to join the Navy and help convoy food from abroad?

If you would help your fellows if they suffered from one evil, why will you not help them if they suffer as a result of war?

If you object to taking life, are you a vegetarian? Do you wear leather boots?

## POLITICAL

Why is it wrong to defend your country?

If a nation suffers unjustly from unprovoked attack, should it not defend itself? If not, why not?

Would you object to a class war?

Should the Germans be allowed to dominate the world unchecked? How would you meet their aggression?

How do you reconcile the fact that active resistance drove the Germans out of Belgium in the last war, with the fact that in Czechoslovakia and Denmark passive resistance was not effective?

Do you honestly suggest that the Germans would settle down peaceably side by side with nations they conquer? Do the facts show this?

How can you restrain a powerfully armed army except by a more powerful and better armed army? What stopped Napoleon conquering the world except the wars against him? Was this "futile," "barbaric"?

Would you forcibly restrain individual law breakers? If so, how do you reconcile that with refusing to restrain a State law breaker?

Do you pay taxes indirectly if not directly? Do they not help the war? What is the moral difference between helping to pay for the war and fighting in it?

Do you recognise any duty at all to the community? How do you propose to discharge it?

Is your objection to going into the army due to a dislike of discipline?

What would be the consequences of converting this country to pacifism? What would suit the Nazis better? They could then invade us unopposed.

Have you realised that by refraining from helping our army you are in effect helping the German army to win the war?

Why do you disapprove of the blockade of Germany, and yet refuse to produce food for our country?

### In Conclusion

The number and variety of questions listed above make them look rather alarming at first sight, but they cover the activity of some months and several hundred applicants. Only a very small fraction of these questions will be put to you, and you may get others not mentioned here. The type of questions you are asked will depend partly on the line you take in your original statement and on the lead you give in your answers.

If you can, make a point of attending at least one session before you are due to go up. It

will probably clear up a number of points you are uncertain about, and will help to prepare you.

Unless you adopt an unpacific attitude, the members of the Tribunal will deal with you quite informally and courteously. Give your answers in a clear voice and with firmness and confidence. Whatever happens, endeavour to be at least as courteous as the Tribunal. Remember that you are not there to make speeches, nor to convert them to your point of view. In the words of the Chairman, "If you satisfy us that you have a genuine conscientious objection, you have an absolute right to be excused." Do not try to score debating points. It does not pay. Above all things, be honest, and, if you find a certain question unanswerable, say so. There is something more important than the ability to answer questions. Remember that your spirit and the attitude you adopt are the best evidence of your genuineness,

### Have You Read

WHAT ABOUT THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR? A Supplement to the Pacifist Handbook, 1940; 108 pp., 15 cents each, 8 for \$1.00.

HELP WANTED! The Experiences of Some Quaker Conscientious Objectors by Arle Brooks and Robert Leach, 1940; 48 pp., 15 cents each, 8 for \$1.00.

PACIFIST HANDBOOK, Third Printing, 1940; 48 pp., 10 cents each, \$1.00 a dozen.

PACIFIST PROGRAM. In Time of War, Threatened War or Fascism by Richard Gregg, 1939; 62 pp., 10 cents.

NEW TESTAMENT BASIS OF PACIFISM by G. H. C. Macgregor, 156 pp., 50 cents.

WE WON'T MURDER by Paul Comly French, 1940; 189 pp., \$1.50.

Special rate: NEW TESTAMENT BASIS OF PACIFISM and WE WON'T MURDER, two books for \$1.50.

Order from American Friends Service Committee, 20 South Twelfth Street, Philadelphia, Penna.