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EXPLORING THE VIVIENNE ABRAHAM COLLECTION: RESOURCES, ISSUES, RESPONSIBILITIES

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BACKGROUND

The Abraham papers span the period from the Second World War until the 1980s – over 40 years. For the purposes of this author's research, only papers dealing with the National Service Schemes of 1951-59 and 1964-73 are discussed.

When the war ended in 1945, conscription for military service was suspended. It was reintroduced by the Menzies Liberal-Country Party coalition government's National Service Act of 1951, whereby 18-year-old males were drafted for six months' compulsory military training. The Act provided exemptions to men with certain disabilities, ministers of religious orders, theological students and conscientious objectors. Deferment was possible for men who could prove that their studies or apprenticeships would be seriously dislocated by performing National Service, and those residing in remote areas. According to official figures, by June 1958, 419,913 trainees had been registered, 209,906 had been enrolled for military service and 3,679 applications for exemption had been received from ministers of religion and conscientious objectors. The issue of conscripts serving overseas did not arise, as servicemen who fought in Korea, Borneo and Malaysia were all volunteers.

The National Service scheme ceased in 1959. In 1964, with political tensions rising in South-East Asia, the Menzies Government introduced a new compulsory military service scheme whereby young men born on the birth-dates chosen by ballot were called up, depending upon their fitness and educational status. Deferments were allowed. The issue of conscripts serving overseas soon became paramount. In April 1965, Menzies announced that a regular infantry battalion would be sent to serve in Vietnam. The new National Servicemen began military training in June 1965; the first conscripts left Australia for military combat in Vietnam on 19 April 1966. Approximately 50,000 Australians served, and almost half of these (19,450) were conscripts. Of the 442 killed, 200 were conscripts. Among the non-fatal casualties, conscripts numbered 1,279 and regular soldiers 1,553. In a long and bitter campaign of opposition to the war, over 1,000 conscripts applied for exemption as conscientious objectors – including those who objected specifically to service in Vietnam rather than in all wars. National Service ended in 1974; no Australians have been since conscripted for military service.

THE COLLECTOR

Vivienne Grace Abraham was born in Melbourne in 1920. She had a LLB from Melbourne University, but had not done the articles so was not admitted to the

bar and could not practice as a lawyer. She was deeply committed to pacifism from early in life. She was Honorary Secretary of the Victorian Branch of the Australian Peace Pledge Union (1946-47 and 1950-52). She was Victorian delegate and a speaker at conferences organised by the Federal Pacifist Council. Abraham also edited the pacifist newspaper, *The Peacemaker* 1953-1955 and 1964-71, and served as Acting Editor and Secretary to the Editor at other times. From 1964-68, the position was held jointly with her sister, Shirley Abraham. *The Peacemaker* ceased publication at the end of 1971. Abraham was Honorary Secretary of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (1982-89).¹ In her professional capacity she represented many conscientious objectors to military service during the Vietnam War.

I met Vivienne Abraham when I was researching a history of conscientious objectors to military service from 1911, when the Compulsory Military Training Scheme for boys was enforced, until 1945 – the end of the Second World War. She was living in a small apartment in inner Sydney. Every room was crowded with boxes and files from floor to ceiling, making the living space very cramped. As an elderly lady with failing health, she wisely foresaw the need to do something with this immense collection. Over the next few months, I paid a small part in disposing of it to the right places. Some boxes went to the National Library, Canberra, and some to the Melbourne University Archives. Venue was decided by context. The boxes containing correspondence files and Minutes of the Victorian-based peace organisations, such as Victorian Pacifist Council, were deposited in Melbourne. Boxes containing material from the Federal and Sydney-based organisations, such as the Australian Peace Pledge Union, War Resisters International, and the Federal Pacifist Council went to the National Library. I retained material dealing directly with conscientious objectors in the 1946-74 period to research for a further book, and this material is the subject of this paper.

THE COLLECTION

The Abraham collection is a major source of primary material for a planned history of conscientious objectors to National Service in Australia from 1951 to 1959 and during the Vietnam War period (1965-73). What do the papers in this collection reveal about the objectors, the times in which they lived, and the collector herself? What is their value as an archival collection? Where should they be housed when the research is completed? The paper will conclude with some observations about the responsibilities of researchers who are temporary custodians of historically valuable primary source material. The papers in the author's possession are a tiny fraction of Abraham's papers. The collection that forms the subject of this paper consists of approximately four book boxes of material and several bound books. The boxed material can be classified as pamphlets and other published material, correspondence, minutes, court transcripts, newspaper cuttings, and an entire series of *The Peacemaker* 1939-71.

What Does the Material Reveal about the Objectors and the Times in which they lived?

Minutes: The Minutes are from various pacifist organisations. Those from the Federal Pacifist Council Executive (FPC), for example, cover the period 1946 to

1951. They appear to be duplicates of those lodged at the National Library of Australia. They show that, after the Second World War, the pacifist organisations continue to be active and, in fact, to form new groups.² The FPC Executive consisted of seven members, whose attendance was recorded, somewhat intriguingly, by noting only their initials (thus: SRD – Chairman, etc.). Similarly, initials were used in the Minutes, probably for brevity rather than secrecy. Thus an item on 6 March 1947, stating: 'The Secretary to write to the BM asking him to send out the extra PM's ordered by FPC ..' means that the Secretary has been asked to write to the Business Manager asking him to send out extra issues of *The Peacemaker* ordered by the Federal Pacifist Council.³

The FPC corresponded with such groups as the Christian Pacifism Movement, War Resisters International (WRI – in Australia and overseas), the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and the Australian Peace Pledge Union, and well as State branches of the Pacifist Council. Topical issues included protests against the establishment of a Rocket range in central Australia and strategies to forestall any attempt by the Federal Government to reintroduce military conscription, as well as international issues including India's independence struggle, and civil rights abuses, such as the persecution of members of the Jehovah's Witness religious sect in Yugoslavia.⁴ In January 1948, the FPC Executive moved a resolution urging the Chifley Federal Labor Government to 'modify' the so-called 'White Australia Policy', which, they believed:

Denies the essential equality of all men [sic] and is a cause of suffering and pain to other peoples;

is a fertile cause of misunderstanding, suspicion and enmity and may easily provoke those attitudes, opinions and prejudices which lead to war, and

is a hindrance both to the material and cultural development of Australia.⁵

This resolution was acknowledged by the Department of External Affairs on 2 March 1948.

After the Menzies Government came to power late in 1949, a new issue gained prominence for the pacifist movement: the conscription of young men to undertake military training. By March 1950, the FPC was preparing a pamphlet on the conscription issue. One of those who worked on this pamphlet, Ray Beanland, had been a conscientious objector in World War II. Another ex-CO, E.W. Orr, protested against compulsory military training being instituted in schools.⁶ Other CO's who were prominent in the post-World War II peace movement included John Fallding, Tony Bishop and Kenneth Rivett. In April 1951, the FPC put out a statement to other pacific groups and sub-committees expressing its position on compulsory military training. The statement commenced by outlining the organisation's credentials 'a federation of Australian pacifist bodies [that] were in existence before the recent War' – having no links with the Australian Peace

Council, although individual members were free to join that organisation if they wished. The FPC stated:

As pacifists we reject violence as a means of settling international disputes. We oppose compulsory military training because we are opposed to war, and compulsory military training is preparation for war.

We know that many of our fellow citizens sincerely believe that compulsory military training, ie. conscription, makes for peace, because it ensures a strong army to deter the invader. We do not hold with this argument. We hold that history shows no certain evidence that preparation for war ensures peace.

The statement advanced the arguments that conscription merely built a military culture that facilitated a nation going to war, that it involved boys too young to vote, and that military training was not character building. It concluded with the suggestion that 'the best way to prevent war is to offer friendship to other countries'.⁷

The particular significance of these Minutes is that they enable the researcher to chart the activities and concerns of one of the major peace organisations in peacetime.

Typescripts: The Abraham collection contains several typed articles or addresses, undated and some are unsigned. These are probably copy for the *Peacemaker*. They include such titles as: 'Pepping up the Pacifist Programme' and 'War Resistance in Australia, 1939-45' (with comments by pacifist Eleanor Moore and Frank Coaldrake). G. A. Bishop wrote some of these articles, including 'The History of Pacifist Organisations in Australia' (dated 23 April 1947), and 'Australian Pacifists and Action' (dated 24 April 1947). The latter discusses the idea of experimenting with community living, which Bishop stated, 'first came to us from reading English publications among which were Gregg's *Training for Peace ...*' Bishop discussed the concept of 'active peacemaking' – that is, actually working towards a result, rather than the more reactionary concept of 'pacifism' or resisting a course of action. As a response, inner city communities were founded in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, with the last continuing at the time the article was written. The others closed in 1944 and 1945 respectively.

Bishop compared life in the communities with all its strengths and weaknesses and then discussed some of the work they did. This included staging protests against the evictions of tenants in nearby dwellings, who were unable to pay their rent, and campaigning to improve conditions for prisoners – conditions which some CO's had suffered at first hand during gaol terms of up to six months duration.⁸ There are several other typescripts by Bishop in this file. These articles give an insight into the thinking of some of the most prominent pacifists of the era, and the ideas that they disseminated to CO groups in the 1950s.

Hand-written notes: The collection contains numerous hand-written notes of lectures, trials, meetings and other events. The files of objectors who appeared in court also contain Abraham's notes of interviews that she had with them. Some of these are stuffed in envelopes, such as one marked 'CO Court Hearings. Not filed or no file' which contains notes on Wally Grey, John Zarb, Ian Wright and several others. Some of these are her notes of court proceedings. While articles for publication present the public thoughts of activists in the peace movement, these notes are the private jottings, taken at the moment of a particular interview or other happening and they provide a different, but equally valid, insight.

Court Reports and other material relating to individual objectors: These are in files, sometimes one case to a file, sometimes several. An example is the case of Maxwell Beddow. Max Beddow was a conscientious objector to military service in 1968-69, during the Vietnam War. His case file tells a tragic story of a young man who did not fully understand the laws operating at that time, and whose isolated, country existence separated him from the support groups that objectors had set up in the capital cities. Beddow was not a theorist or thinker as ~~was~~^{were} some of the young men that I will mention later in the paper. He was just an ordinary man caught up in the unfortunate circumstances of his time. Briefly, here is his story, as revealed in the documents.⁹

Max Beddow was born in 1946 and lived with his parents and siblings on the family farm at Liston, NSW. He had spent most of his working life either on the farm or employed in various rural occupations in the district. He had been a rabbit trapper and had spent two days working in an abattoir. In both instances, he became aware of the cruelty inflicted upon animals. In 1965, he became a vegetarian because he did not want to be responsible for causing cruelty by his eating habits. Both Max and his father seem to have suffered from some form of anxiety or hypertension, which they referred to as 'nerves'.

Beddow registered for National Service in July 1966 and passed a medical examination. He was reluctant to enlist but later said that he had 'obeyed the other laws of the country and so I obeyed this one. Although I felt that to take part in military service if I was called up would be wrong'.¹⁰ In 1967 he applied to be exempted from all forms of military training. His case was heard in September at Tenterfield, and was dismissed. Beddow decided not to appeal because he did not want to spend much money and because he did not think that he had much chance of proving his case. He also applied for deferment of his National Service because his father needed him to run the apiary on their farm. This, too, was refused. In November 1967, he was passed medically fit, but did not receive his call-up until July 1968. Anticipating arrest when he did not report for duty, Beddow gave notice at work, because 'if I had waited at my job to be picked up, it would have meant that my employer would have had difficulty in placing another man in my position without having time to train him ...' He continued to work at the family's apiary and ignored a second call-up notice. In court in December, with no legal representation and with none of his family present, he pleaded guilty to having disobeyed a call-up notice and was fined. The Magistrate told him that if

he would agree to be called up, he could then apply again for exemption as a CO. Beddow refused to 'have any part of the army' and was sentenced immediately to two years' imprisonment. He began his sentence at Glen Innes Prison Farm. His finger prints were taken and he was treated as an ordinary prisoner. He became very depressed at the prospect of two years in prison, especially when informed that he might be transferred from the Prison Farm to Grafton Prison, a much harsher environment for hardened re-offenders. The Prison Governor told him that he might be released if he agreed to do his National Service, so he decided to apply.

Vivienne Abraham visited Beddow after she learned of his two-year sentence. She went to Glen Innes with Ian McIntyre, the Secretary of the NSW Branch of the Peace Pledge Union, and his wife, Louise. They interviewed Beddow. It was just before Christmas and he was due to leave Glen Innes the next day, his application for National Service having been accepted. In this interview, Beddow said that he was against the Vietnam War and also against all war and killing and violence. He did not think he could do combatant duties in the army, and he would try to do 'some humanitarian work'. Abraham and the McIntyres then visited the Tenterfield solicitor, T. Kneipp. There were many unclear issues. They could not even be certain whether Beddow had applied for National Service or enlisted in the regular Army – a commitment of up to six years. Beddow's licence (on file), however, shows clearly that he was liable to render service under the National Service Act, which committed him until 2 December 1970.

Abraham felt that Beddow did not understand some of the questions that he had been asked the Tenterfield Court. The excerpt from the transcript indicates that he at least understood that if he refused to pay the fine and to obey a further call up notice that he would be sentenced to two years imprisonment, and that he was willing to do this. What Beddow does not seem to have been prepared for was the experience of prison itself. After he was granted his licence, he was allowed to go home for Christmas. Then he went to Sydney to join up. Shortly afterwards he was sent with other recruits to train at Kapooka, near Wagga. Despite his preference for non-combatant duties, the Army authorities informed Beddow that he must do the same basic combat training as every other recruit. This included bayonet drill, using dummies. Beddow later stated that the recruits were told to 'twist our feet about on the dummy as we withdrew the bayonet'. Beddow was told that it was 'likely' that he would be placed in a non-combatant unit (Ordinance, Catering or Service) after training. But he was so sickened by the bayonet training that he decided not to return to Kapooka after his first leave. Even though in contact with Abraham and legal professionals, Beddow made this decision without seeking any advice.

Abraham later met up with him in Newcastle and took him to several Conscientious Objectors' meetings in Canberra, including an Orientation Week presentation at ANU, entitled 'Register or Resist'. Abraham and legal counsel, Mr. Dew, persuaded Beddow that, if he wanted to make an application to be a

registered as a CO, he must first rejoin his unit and make the application through his commanding officer. She travelled back with him to Kapooka. Beddow was sentenced to 7 days detention for going absent without leave (AWL) and told that he would be given leave without pay at the end of that time to prepare his case. His application was forwarded to the Department of Labour and National Service.

Beddow's case was heard in the Liverpool Street Court of Petty Sessions in Sydney on 31 March and 1 April 1969. Beddow was subjected to extensive cross-examination by Mr Carruthers, Counsel for the Crown, including questions about the veracity of answers that he had given at his first court appearance at Tenterfield six months earlier. Carruthers closely questioned Beddow on whether he believed himself to be a Christian. Beddow stated that he had 'felt' that he was a Christian but he now regarded himself as an agnostic. He also explained that before he went to Kapooka, he was unaware that there was such a unit as the Army Medical Corps. He had thought that all military medical work was undertaken by the Red Cross. The following extract from the cross examination illustrates the type of questioning that Beddow was put through in court, when the Prosecution attempted to show inconsistencies in his statements. The first issue was whether Beddow knew that the Australian Army Ambulance Service was a military unit or a civilian unit:

Carruthers: At Tenterfield ... you were asked by Mr Russell – he referred you to a certain part of the Scripture dealing with the Good Samaritan; do you remember that?

Beddow: Yes, I remember.

Carruthers: And you said that you would be prepared to do as the Good Samaritan had done; do you recall that?

Beddow: Yes.

Carruthers: And he then said to you, 'That being so, what conscientious objection would you have to serving in the Australian Army Ambulance Service?' and you said, 'It would be helping the Australian Army and that would be indirect killing. I will never kill, indirect or direct'. Do you remember that?

Beddow: Yes.

Carruthers: And then he said to you, 'Do you think the primary purpose of an Ambulance Corps or Medical Corps is the preservation of life rather than taking life?' and you replied, 'Yes, helping Australian soldiers so they can go back and kill'; do you remember that?

Beddow: Yes, I remember.

Carruthers: Well, you certainly knew after those questions had been asked of you that there was such a thing as the Australian Army Ambulance Service, did you not?

Beddow: At that time and up until I was at Kapooka I believed it was the

Red Cross and not exactly a part of the Army. I thought the conscientious objectors who wished to be put into that part would be in the Red Cross.

Another issue concerned Beddow's account of the way he had handled a violent incident at a dance hall several years previously.

Carruthers: Now you gave evidence yesterday that you were involved in an incident some years ago at Stanthorpe in Queensland when you say, I think, you were at a dance and you were attacked; do you recall giving that evidence?

Beddow: Yes, I recall it.

Carruthers: You said, 'I was at a dance hall; first I was attacked by one person. He sort of gave up about a minute or so later'. Now, was there any reason for this attack upon you?

Beddow: Not to my knowledge.

Carruthers: You say that you were attacked; the attack was unprovoked and as far as you are concerned without any apparent justification?

Beddow: Yes.

Carruthers: And what was the reason the first person who attacked you gave up after about a minute?

Beddow: I'm not sure.

Carruthers: Well, are you suggesting that you made no attempt to defend yourself?

Beddow: I didn't make any attempt to harm the attacker.

Carruthers: What did you do when you were attacked at this dance?

Beddow: I moved about to stop myself from being harmed.

Carruthers: Did you retaliate with any blows?

Beddow: No.

Carruthers: And you avoided his blows and he gave up, did he?

Beddow: Yes.

Carruthers: Have you got any knowledge of why he gave up?

Beddow: No.

Carruthers: And did he manage to inflict any blows on you?

Beddow: A couple.

Carruthers: Then you were attacked by another person shortly after that, two people?

Beddow: Two people.

Carruthers: And you got a swollen face, bruises and a broken tooth, is that the position?

Beddow: Yes.

Carruthers: And you say you were attacked by two persons and did you make any attempt to defend yourself on that occasion?

Beddow: I moved about to try to prevent any harm being done to myself.

Carruthers: And did you retaliate with any blows?

Beddow: No.

Carruthers: Did you put your fists up?

Beddow: I put my hands up.

Carruthers: And then what made them give up, do you know?

Beddow: I'm not sure ... I think they could possibly see that I wasn't going to fight and so they discontinued their fighting.

Carruthers then tried another line of questioning, creating a scenario involving a female whom Beddow might be expected to protect if she was threatened with violence.

Carruthers: Now if you had had a young lady ... there and these three gentlemen had attacked her, would you have gone to her aid?

Beddow: I would have went to her aid.

Carruthers: And you would have endeavoured to fight them off?

Beddow: No.

Carruthers: What would you have done?

Beddow: I would have tried to talk them out of it or get her out of the road or to hold them off.

Carruthers: How would you hold them off?

Beddow: Well, if I could sort of just hold them bodily, catch them.

Carruthers: You would be in some difficulty holding the three of them bodily, wouldn't you?

Beddow: There were only two attacked me ...

Carruthers: Well, this would involve at the least fending them off while you got her out of the way, would it would?

Beddow: Well, they would probably attack me.

Carruthers: Well, it would involve fending them off, wouldn't it? You would have to use force to keep them away from her, would you not?

Beddow: I am doubtful.

And so it went on for several pages. Carruthers then cross-examined Beddow on his relationship with Abraham and other pacifists. He tried to prove that Beddow was 'influenced' by Abraham's letters and actions. Beddow was also questioned on whether he had 'attended meetings of the pacifist defence'. Throughout the hearing, Beddow's answers suggest that he was calm and in control of the situation. He gave very brief answer to the questions, for instance, remaining firm on the fact that he had not discussed his application for conscientious objection

with Abraham, but only with Mr Dew, his legal counsel. Beddow's application for exemption from military service was successful. A telegram, dated 12 April 1969, informed him that he need not return to his battalion after his leave without pay ended.

Beddow's case file is one of about a dozen among the Abraham papers. These files tell the researcher many things about the objectors, the reasons for their beliefs, the type of questioning that they faced in court, and – in some cases – public opinion. It also shows the effort Abraham put it to assist these young men. While not a qualified legal practitioner, she travelled considerable distances to support them, took them to legal counsel, attended meetings of CO groups and spoke in their defence in court.

Correspondence: Abraham's correspondence consists mainly of letters written to her by or about CO's, either to be published in *The Peacemaker*, or seeking information or assistance.¹¹ In June 1971, for example, Gordon Kinsey wrote to *The Peacemaker* to say that he was a deserter from the Army, having been AWL for eight weeks. He said that he complied with the call up because he thought he might learn a trade in the Army. He knew little about the war in Vietnam. At first he underwent training to be a cook, but then he was transferred to Ingleburn where, he said, he was taught to kill human beings. He decided to refuse to cooperate with the Army and so went absent without leave. In September, Kinsey wrote again to relate the remainder of his story. Shortly after writing his first letter he had been picked up by the police who thought he was a vagrant. When they discovered that he was a deserter, they handed him over to the Military Police who sent him to the Military Correction Establishment at Holdsworthy. He asked to see the chaplain who told him he 'didn't have a chance in hell' of succeeding if he applied for exemption as a CO. He then decided to pretend that he was mentally disturbed. He developed what he described as 'antisocial tendencies' and sat in a corner talking to himself. Eventually, he was sent before a medical board and discharged medically unfit. He suggested that there should be a booklet published informing draftees of how to get out of the army.¹²

Of interest to Western Australians, in particular, are letters on file from the legal firm of Paterson & Dowding, signed by the junior partner, Peter Dowding, later Premier of the State. Dowding defended several CO's in Perth, including David Lin, Peter Reed, Bernard Hearsch and Ronald Barry.

Another example is a letter from Peter Clark, dated 8 May 1972, addressed to 'Dear Editress'. Clark wrote:

I have been shamed into at last sending this off by your consistent faith in me. Thank you!

You might be interested that I have finally obtained CO status after 3 1/2 years of draft resistance, which included 8 days in Pentridge, for non-registering, and threatened prosecution for non-attendance of a medical, also 1 referral by the Dept. L & NS for a CO hearing at which I refused

to give evidence.

Even when I was found a CO the Crown Prosecutor wanted to proceed with a medical prosecution (a la Greenwood's head count), even though my barrister (Geoff Eames) argued that (a) it would be a mockery of the law to do so, and (b) they couldn't anyway as it was not a prosecution for my 1st medical examination failure to attend (over 18 months ago) and the requirement to attend a 2nd medical [was] not covered under the Act as it is at present.

Thank you for giving me new material & challenges not to fall asleep on my beliefs, but to develop them further. I hope you continue to do this in the future.¹³

By the time he wrote this letter, Clark was through his ordeal. George Burcher, an objector who was still facing prosecution, wrote from Albany, WA.

Many thanks for your much appreciated phone call on Sat. night as it brought a great deal of relief to both myself and in particular my parents who although so terrific to me are suffering the most. Fortunately, we've had no police visits yet but I just hope that when they do start coming they don't work on my mother too much.

The situation thus far is that my father went in and paid my fine against my wishes but I respect him for it because he did it for my mother's sake. Anyway it gives me about three weeks to get some doe and as my wage is \$100 a week and I can work weekends too I should be set for the 20th. I shall not attend my medical again. Can you tell me what is the best action to take if Labour do not get in? Obviously I will go underground but would it be best to head over there or stay in Perth? I know I should go up there [Perth] and ask around but I don't know any address except Peter Dowding but he could tell me couldn't he?¹⁴

An uncashed cheque for \$10 remains attached to Burcher's letter. It was for a donation and a subscription to *The Peacemaker*, and the fact that it had not been cashed is surprising, for *The Peacemaker* always ran on a very tight budget.

Unlike the published material described below, setting out the ideology of the more educated CO's, these letters give a unique glimpse especially of those less accomplished resisters, who still deeply resented their loss of freedom, the stigma of prison and the strain placed upon their families as well as holding various personal positions on war in general and the conflict in Vietnam in particular.

Pamphlets and other printed material: The collection contains many pamphlets and booklets, including *Conscience and Compulsory Service: the position in Australia*, written by Maurice Blackburn for resisters during World War II, and issues of the *Anti-Militarist News and Review*, the journal of the Victorian

organisation the League for Freedom, founded by Blackburn in 1942, and a newsletter of the same name. *Anti Militarist News* No. 11 (December 1951) notes the court appearances of the first CO's to National Service in 1951. Other serials include *The War Resister*, journal of the WRI, and *Aquarius* the magazine of WRI's Melbourne University Branch. Pamphlets include: 'The Ins and Outs of Conscription'; 'To Young Men Liable for Military Service'; 'War or Pacifism ... a choice between risks'; 'To overcome the Atomic Bomb; Civil Defence. What you should do now!'; 'The War and Civil Rights'; 'Why Register for National Service? Notes for the guidance of intending conscientious objectors'; 'Questions to CO's'; 'Proposed Amendments to the National Service Act 1951-1965 (August 1967)'; 'Will Geoffrey Mullen return to gaol?', and copies of the National Service Act 1951-65. During the spoken paper, I will show examples of this literature on overhead transparency.

Much of the literature shows that, unlike the objectors who were in court partly as a result of misunderstanding their situation, many of the young men who stated their reasons publicly had thought out their positions very thoroughly. Some pamphlets took the form of public letters, such as one from Geoff Mullen to electors in 1969, when he stood as the Labor candidate for Wentworth (NSW). In it, Mullen stated:

I am 22 years old. Depending on your vote in the next federal election, I will spend my 23rd and 24th years in Long Bay Gaol for the crime of refusing to register to be conscripted. But why should my misfortune be your concern?

Unfortunately, they are not my misfortunes alone. The government that imprisons me is the very same that slaughters the Vietnamese, that impoverishes the pensioners, that compulsorily miseducates your children ...¹⁵

Other pamphlets, such as *I say No* and *We resist because ...*, detailed the reasons why certain individuals chose imprisonment rather than National Service. Sean Foley argued from a pacifist viewpoint, rejecting violence as a means of solving disputes and stating that 'wars are impractical'. John MacKay opposed conscription rather than wars. 'I would not have opposed voluntary participation in the Allied Forces during World War II'. Brian Beckett's pacifism was based in Christian beliefs: 'Christ at all times practised non-violence'. Bill White opposed the taking of human life, objected to war as a national policy and believed that the State's imposition of conscription was contrary to democracy.¹⁶ Michael Matteson argued that 'Vietnam and conscription are different issues'. He posed the question, 'Should a person register for something they don't intend to do?' He objected to complying with the National Service Act, even to the extent of registering as a CO.¹⁷

These pamphlets are especially useful in ascertaining the point of view of the objectors themselves. The graphic illustrations on many of these publications convey the atmosphere of the era.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER

When dealing with a portion of a collection such as the Abraham Papers, there are a number of issues for the researcher to consider. Firstly, as I have already indicated, the major collection is housed in several repositories in the Eastern States. The responsible location of the papers once my research is finished includes such tasks as ascertaining where other collections are incomplete and adding to them, and ensuring that the relevant State holds the appropriate papers. Ms Abraham presently lives in Sydney, and her personal papers are lodged in the National Library in Canberra, so the papers may all go there, or some may go to complete those lodged in the Melbourne University's collection.

On the other hand, the papers in my possession have value on their own as a 'complete' collection, especially as they contain some papers that are duplicated in other collections (eg the FPC Minutes). Is there a case for lodging them in the WA State Archives? They would provide local researchers will access to an important collection of pacifist documents. There are other collections of a similar nature in the Battye, for example, Irene Greenwood's papers. There is also the extensive collection of 'underground' and 'alternative' papers from the era at the Murdoch University Archives.

As a temporary custodian of these papers, I am well aware of their value, the effects of wear and tear caused by being inadequately boxed, and the problems of making them accessible (to me at least) without spoiling their integrity as a historic documentary collection. I shall look forward to the opportunity to discuss these issues further at Perth Congress 2000.

REFERENCES:

- ¹¹ Information from Dr. Kenneth Rivett 24 February 1997.
- ² The Minutes of the Federal Pacifist Council (hereafter FPC Minutes), 26 April 1946, refer to a new group forming in Western Australia.
- ³ The author knows this because of her previous research in the area while writing *Peacemongers. Conscientious objectors to military service in Australia, 1911-1945*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1997. There is nothing in the Minutes to explain these initials.
- ⁴ FPC Minutes 2 January and 6 March 1947, 15 January 1948.
- ⁵ FPC Minutes, 26 January 1948.
- ⁶ FPC Minutes 3 April 1950, 2 January 1951.
- ⁷ FPC Minutes, 5 April 1951.
- ⁸ G.A. Bishop, 'Australian Pacifists and Action' typescript dated 24 April 1947.
- ⁹ File 'Max Beddow'.
- ¹⁰ Where letters are quoted, I have retained the original spelling, grammar and symbols (eg &) except where it is necessary to make alterations for clarity. I have done this to preserve the flavour of the original.
- ¹¹
- ¹² Kinsey to Abraham, 4 June and 13 September 1971.
- ¹³ Clark to Abraham, 8 May 1972.
- ¹⁴ Bucher to Abraham, 31 October 1972.
- ¹⁵ Mullen, Letter to electors, 17 September 1969.
- ¹⁶ 9 Say No.
- ¹⁷ We resist because ...p. 7.