

# 'Religion' of Lew Ayres Seems of Recent Origin

## The Country Calls 'Dr. Kildare' But He Prefers Objector's Camp

By JOHN M. CUMMINGS

**C**ALLING Dr. Kildare... The country called Lew Ayres, the Dr. Kildare of the movies. The country had every right to expect him to respond, for this is the country that gave him the opportunity to win fame, of a sort, and a fortune that's the real thing.

Lew Ayres was mixed up in one "war." He was a flower-picking German soldier in "All Quiet on the Western Front." He died on a movie battlefield.

He's not going to this real war. He's got religion. Not that he attends any particular church. Not that he belongs to any particular religious denomination or group. Lew Ayres has a religion of his own. His personal religion is opposed to war. He will have nothing to do with our fight against the Japs, the Germany of Hitler and the Italy of Mussolini. The hero of a movie hospital is in an Oregon camp for conscientious objectors.

**A**LL over this country young men of Lew Ayres' age are responding to the call. When their number comes up they march off without a whimper. They, too, could proclaim their hatred of war, as Ayres did en route to the safety, yes, the



comfort, of an objectors' camp. They, too, could tell the draft boards they had a personal religion, an inner conviction against war. But they didn't—save in very few cases.

Where would this country be today if every man insisted on placing his personal convictions above the common welfare? The answer to that is simple. We just wouldn't be a nation at all. We'd be a vassal state, pawns of the aggressor nations.

There is no basis for comparison between the attitude of Lew Ayres and the position of Quakers and members of other sects who, in time of peace as in time of war, practiced their religion as a matter of established faith. Ayres' conversion to the doctrine of non-resistance admittedly is of recent origin. It well may be that some few people knew a year ago that he had a personal religion, that its chief tenet was opposition to war. Yet it seems strange that with all the love of publicity for which movie actors are noted the personal religion of Lew Ayres remained buried under a bushel until he was asked to step forward and take his place among the defenders of his country.

**T**HEY tell you that Lew Ayres is a peculiar sort of duck. He lives, like a mountain goat, atop a peak in California. Part of the time his home is obscured by the clouds. There's a case here for Dr. Kildare. He should set out to ascertain how the fog got into his brain.

"I do not go to any church regularly," said Ayres, "but I do have a genuine religion of my own and my convictions confirm that religion. I am certain that my role in 'All Quiet on the Western Front' had a powerful influence on my life. I was 20 years old when I played the part of the German soldier who abhorred war and I thoroughly believe that the picture had much to do with my later thinking and my present step."

That's the kind of hogwash which induced the higher-ups among the draft officials to classify him as a conscientious objector. If his experience as a movie soldier had such a profound effect on his mental processes it's strange that his role as a hospital doctor didn't send him galloping to the medical corps or the Red Cross.

We're a lenient and a tolerant people. We're lenient and tolerant with men who advance nonsensical excuses for avoiding service. We are lenient and tolerant with organized groups which still persist in throwing monkey wrenches into the machinery of the war effort. We're lenient and tolerant with profiteering contractors and with labor racketeers. But the Lew Ayres case takes the cake.

**T**HE young man who ekes out a modest living in mill, mine, factory or office marches off to take his place with the fighting forces without stopping to think of a "personal religion" that might help him duck his duty. But an opulent mountain goat trots off to an objectors' camp on the specious plea that to shoulder a gun would violate his personal convictions.

Of all the outrages of this war, that presented by Lew Ayres is tops. By comparison the misguided youth who stood before a U. S. Commissioner the other day and flatly declared his refusal to serve is a patriot. He at least had the courage to say he was of German descent and "proud of it."

We'd think more of Lew Ayres had he defied the country and refused to serve. Instead of that he relied on a recently acquired "personal religion."

# LEW AYRES SENT TO PACIFIST CAMP; STAR OF 'ALL QUIET'

HOLLYWOOD, March 30 (U. P.).—Lew Ayres, star of "All Quiet on the Western Front," one of the most powerful anti-war films Hollywood ever made, boarded a train tonight for a conscientious objectors' camp at Cascade Locks, Ore.

War, he told his Selective Service board, was as abhorrent to him in real life as it was upon the screen nearly 15 years ago. He told officials of Selective Service Board 246 that he could not conscientiously shoulder arms for his country. They assigned him to the camp on the Columbia River near Portland.

Ayres left Hollywood in the upper berth of a tourist sleeper. He eluded curious Hollywoodians by boarding the Southern Pacific train at San Fernando, Calif., a flag stop in the Los Angeles suburbs.

### FIRST PACIFIST STAR

Ayres was the first motion picture star to claim conscientious objection to war and was, for that matter, perhaps the first well known American

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# Lew Ayres, Who Starred in 'All Quiet,' Sent to Conscientious Objectors' Camp

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to refuse to fight on the basis of his religious convictions.

Fellow motion picture stars professed themselves amazed at his decision. Some said they believed that by publicly holding to his belief, he had blasted his future as a movie actor.

In Oregon, Ayres will join fellow conscientious objectors in clearing underbrush, felling trees, cutting fire breaks and other work similar to that performed by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

By the time his decision had been released by draft board officers, Ayres had disappeared from his regular haunts. He could not be located at his studio, where he had been starring in the Dr. Kildare movies, nor could he be found in his cloud-brushing home atop Lookout Mountain.

Later it was learned he already had boarded the train. A. H. Pier, chairman of Ayres' draft board, said he first had entered

the plea of conscientious objection when his number came up six months ago.

"He was quite a philosopher," Pier continued. "He wasn't a Quaker or a member of any other religious organization, but he did have a kind of religion of his own."

Pier said his release from armed service had been taken up with Washington and approved by the Attorney General's office.

Ex-husband of two top-flight movie stars, Lola Lane and Ginger Rogers, Ayres was a man who seemed to live within himself. He had few intimate friends in Hollywood, save a handful of those actors who appeared with him in "All Quiet."

### LIVED IN SECLUSION

He lived alone on his mountain top, where he composed music and made a hobby of weather predicting. So high was his home that it frequently was enveloped in clouds; on clear days, he liked to sit on his front

lawn and yell greetings to passing aviators. Many of them made a practice of throttling their motors, passing his home and carrying with him a lung-shattering conversation.

Ayres was born in Minneapolis, 1902, became a banjo player in traveling orchestras, and finally landed Hollywood as an actor. He scored first success with "Greta Garbo" in "The Kiss." After "All Quiet," his career suffered a hiatus of seven years. Only recently has he achieved prominence again as young Dr. Kildare in his continuing adventure with Lionel Barrymore.