

1944

Toward the encouragement of understanding where understanding is needed, and in behalf of many of my fellow-campers, I spoke the following words at the Executive Committee meeting held at Philadelphia on August 25th. - C. Czapski

As representative for the one hundred and fifty-five men of Camp 76 in California, I am speaking for a group which numbers many veterans of CPS, single men, married men, and justifiably hesitant men.

The years they have spent as conscripts in what they view as a progressively limping set-up has made them tired and disillusioned. They regard with misgiving the discreet policies which are employed to further pacifist goals. Many of them who once held hopes that CPS might become what it set out to be, or at least be improved, have come to the point where their only hope is that the war end and they be released.

From the beginning of their camp life, they have heard frequent official mention of "principle" as a motivating force in pacifist living and administration. Despite this, they have been hard put to discover those areas of CPS administration wherein principle has steadfastly been adhered to. Many are perplexedly asking: "Just where does the AFSC stand? Is its main function one of compromise? Why does it so often bow to the dictates of Selective Service?"

The majority of men in Camp 76 are no longer interested in words, plans or promises. They look for a sign that will assure them that not everything is lost. They look for the practicality of direct, principled action; action toward the originally guaranteed AFSC control of camp administration, particularly in regard to transfers, discipline, and choice of projects; action on provision of pay--pay as a valid token of equity and civil rights in a democracy. They are seeking, as always they have been seeking, work that is socially significant. They are becoming more and more concerned over the problem of readjustment after CPS.

These men show the effects of the circumscribed existence which they have been obliged to lead for so long a time, and there is now not enough faith or spirit left in many of them to enable them to "rededicate" themselves to any such situation-ignoring venture as the "second mile". For now, as ever, they are tendered no incentive save the old assurance that, despite the lacks and frustrations which constantly attend them, they still are afforded the opportunity to grow spiritually. This, while their shoes may be coming apart, while their pants may be ragged and their pockets may be empty. Such men have been asked to think anew of the "second mile" while the predicament of their wives, infants, or other dependents preys upon their minds and embitters their hearts. Opposition to war, and dedication to an enlightened Way of Life is all very well to contemplate and talk about, but what if while men are trying to live it, as well as talk it, they are led to weariness and strife within by the limitations of the very program under which that course of action is said to be possible?

This, of course, is not the whole story, nor is it true of all the men in CPS. There is a good number of campers who still believe in CPS and the policies of the Friends, and what may be done, even now. But they are a minority. To add to them, to make them a majority, a determined new direction must necessarily be taken by the AFSC--a direction which hinges upon principle rather than upon expediency, a direction which places the God-in-man above the level of a pawn of the State, a direction which considers pacifist testimony to be a dedication to a course of action which shall provide the maximum, rather than the minimum of opportunity for creative and serviceful living.