

OBJECTORS WITHOUT CONSCIENCE

Sabotaging Conchies Are Willing To Suffer---a Bit---for Ideals

Recently the government indicted a number of inmates of the conscientious objectors' camp at Germfask, Mich. What goes on in the minds of these "incorrigibles" among the conscientious objectors is told in three revealing articles, of which this is the last.

BY ALFRED PROWITT.
Staff Writer.

GERMFASK, Mich.—All conscientious objectors at the work camp here are violently opposed to the national draft. That's why they're here. So most of them try to make the camp system ridiculous through job-loafing and sabotage.

Harvey Saunders, camp project boss, says about a score of the 72 conchies here, realizing they are not engaged in any activity connected with the war effort, do a fair amount of work. Not so much, however, as to bring blisters.

The remainder—the majority—have become adept in the art of evading work without getting into serious trouble. Outspoken refusals to labor can bring jail sentences. They don't want that.

THESE "bad boys" who have been sent here from other camps because of their trouble-making know all the tricks of malingering. Reported cases of illness sometimes approach the proportions of epidemics. Expert shovel leathers could learn something from them.

Watch some of these youths who will neither work nor fight go about the simple job of chopping and stacking firewood for the camp. You see something like a slow-motion movie.

They stand, or lean or sit near the woodpile. Some chop as feebly as if they had glass axes. Others break small twigs into smaller pieces with their hands. Sometimes the carrying of a stick to the pile appears a superhuman physical effort, almost too much for one man.

SOME conchies constantly wander away from the job. For this they give the naive explanation: "It ain't really work of national importance. So what's the difference?"

Conchies told to drive nails never seem able to achieve a connection between the hammer's head and the nail. And if they do, the nail usually is in the wrong place. More time—and obvious effort—are required to pull out the nail.

Most annoying to the camp authorities, however, is the sabotage, which seems rather babyish when you consider that these youths call themselves intellectuals—whose superior mental powers tell them that even to defend one's country is stupid.

SAND is discovered every now and then in the motors of trucks and tractors and other machinery. Toilets flood because they have been plugged. Fire hose is mysteriously slashed in the middle of the night.

On several mornings the kitchen has been a picture of chaos,

with flour and sugar and other provisions scattered recklessly. Once the knives and forks disappeared—found later, fortunately, buried in a snow bank.

So many pieces of chinaware have been smashed that there was not enough for proper serving of meals. Cook after cook, all civilians, resigned.

FOR THE property destruction, the "conchies" disclaim all knowledge. Mice, they suggest, scatter the food.

The sand in the motors must have come in dirty oil.

Maybe, a spokesman for the objectors said in the instance of the silverware theft, some of the youths were driven to a prank because camp "slavery" twisted their mental processes.

WHY ISN'T something done about discipline?

Projects Chief Saunders states a reason. "We haven't adequate powers," he said. "We can't order even such punishment as depriving a defiant conchie of a meal or placing him in solitary confinement."

"If conchies refuse to work they can be prosecuted in the federal courts and sent to prison. But they don't refuse to work. They just malingers. If they go A.W.O.L. they can be sentenced in the same way. Few like to take that step."

RECENTLY nine bold conchies fled the camp, but were caught. Another dared to refuse to work. One got three years in prison. Seven others got three and a half years apiece. The others are awaiting sentence.

Some of the remaining ones at Germfask were asked why they didn't go to such extremes of defiance—to satisfy the "intellectual honesty" for which they said they are willing to die.

"Oh, no," one of their spokesmen answered. "We think we can fight the draft better by just staying here, writing senators and other people. We don't want to stick our necks out too far. We couldn't do much good in jail."

The conchies here seem willing to suffer so much for what they call their ideals. But not suffer too much.

Just this, in closing. One of the bearded conchies was asked how he felt about the growing lists of American war casualties. One hesitates to report his answer, because words can be shocking.

"Poor dumb fools," he said, referring to American boys who

have fallen on the battlefield or at sea for their country. "They thought they were fighting for something."

OUTSIDE the camp, in the open country, loggers descended from loggers rumbled by in their trucks with cargos of wood. Men in high-top boots were setting traps for beaver and otter.

The first blue herons—heralds of spring—winged over the lake-front.

Just this, in itself, seemed worth fighting for.

UNCONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

Germfask Boys Don't Care Who Wins

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BY ALFRED PROWITT.

GERMFASK, Mich.—This is one of the most unheroic stories of the war. It is the story of 72 young conscientious objectors who are sitting it out in a work camp here in all-out indifference—so they frankly say—as to which side wins.

The "conchies" of Germfask are the "bad boys"—the incorrigibles—among 8,000 youths in this country who have been placed in camps because they not only refuse to shoulder arms in defense of their homeland but because they also refuse to do anything that would aid the nation's war effort.

IN ALL, three work camps for conscientious objectors are maintained in the country under di-

rect supervision of Selective Service. Scores of others are operated by religious groups under control of Selective Service. Civilian directors—not military men—are in charge at each.

At such camps the objectors are given free housing, free food and free Army clothing and \$5 a month spending money by the government in return for "work of national importance."

The Army itself has no part in

this picture. As a matter of fact, an Army officer said emphatically:

"Please make that point clear. We have nothing to do with the objector camps." He gave the impression that the Army doesn't like the subject.

GERMFASK'S conchies are different from those at the other camps. Elsewhere, their brothers in pacifism, although refusing to accept the draft or military service in any form, have done their assigned work in a fashion.

Some in the other camps, deeply religious, have risked their lives for medical science to prove their humanitarianism.

But the 72 here at Germfask have been brought from other camps because they caused too

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