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Heather T. Frazer, John O'Sullivan. *"We Have Just Begun To Not Fight": An Oral History of Conscientious Objectors in Civilian Public Service during World War II.* New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996. 306 pp. $33.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8057-9134-1.

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The Other Side of the Home Front

World War II, often labeled 'the good war,' was probably the most popular war in which the United States has ever been involved. Yet there was a small, determined, and indeed, conscientious group who opposed the war. Because of their religious convictions these approximately 43,000 men refused to fight and earned 'Conscientious Objector' (CO) status. Some 12,000 served in various government-sanctioned work programs under the auspices of an organization known as the Civilian Public Service (CPS). Eighteen oral histories, topically grouped into six chapters, provide readers with an interesting and thought provoking view into this little known aspect of the World War II 'Home Front' history.

Conscientious Objectors displayed their opposition to war through one of three courses of action. The hard liners, most of whom were Jehovah's Witnesses, refused to cooperate with the government at all and were jailed, while the most cooperative, and largest group of COs (about 25,000), joined the military as noncombatants. Service in the CPS was the middle course between these two extremes. This book documents various aspects of service in the CPS, including, the organizational set-up of the CPS, the reactions of individuals to the CPS, and individuals' work experiences.

Frazer and O'Sullivan provide essential contextual information in the Foreword and Introduction chapters of the book. Otherwise, the oral testimonies are not interrupted by editorial commentary, and are presented in a straight question and answer format. The COs, as would be expected in World War II when patriotic fever ran so high, often faced public hostility. They also worried that the stigma of not fighting for their country would follow them for the rest of their lives. Perhaps in response to these concerns, many volunteered to serve as human guinea pigs for medical experiments as part of their CPS service. Day-to-day work situations, however, caused them more concern. The mundane and seemingly useless 'make-work' projects, such as pulling weeds or draining swamps, made some COs worry that they had been conveniently stashed away by the United State's government and military without being allowed to make a significant stand for their convictions. Other COs found themselves forced to face their true commitment to pacifism when their jobs working with the mentally insane required use of force.

The COs were almost unanimous in their opinion that although their experiences were perplexing and challenging, they all believed that they did the right thing. The significance of the COs takes on added meaning in the years after World War II. Many became influential in the anti-war protests that characterized the Vietnam War era and counseled students who were considering becoming Conscientious Objectors.

"We Have Just Begun To Not Fight" is worthwhile reading for the casual as well as scholarly reader. Frazer and O'Sullivan provide an "experimental view" of the largely overlooked anti-war movement during World War II. The fact that these individuals stuck to their convictions even during America's most popular war gives extra meaning to the term 'Conscientious Objector.'

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