

Precis of statement proposed and submitted to the Department of Sound Recording of Imperial War Museum.



My name is George Frederick Dutch. I was born on July 4th, 1894 at Bridle Path Cottage (now demolished), Tupwood, Caterham Valley, Surrey, the second son of John and Jane Dutch, one of seven children. My parents were very poor. My father was a domestic gardener, then one of the lowest paid occupations. He was employed by Mr. James Clarke of Tupwood House, and earned 18/- (after £1) weekly, plus a rent free cottage. Mr. Clarke was the Editor of THE CHRISTIAN WORLD and head of the well-known Congregationalist publishers, James Clarke & Co. Mr. Clarke was a man of deep religious convictions, an employer of the old fashioned paternalistic type, and my father's low wages were somewhat ameliorated by assistance from the Big House - cast-off

children's clothing, surplus food and garden produce, books, magazines and newspapers, and a golden sovereign gratuity at Christmas.

My parents had one long struggle to bring up their family. I marvel today at how they managed; they really devoted their lives and their scarce leisure hours to their children. Very few people today have to live under such deprived conditions, and few can realise what life for poor people was really like. It was the period of economic depression in the last years of Queen Victoria and following the Boer War. Engineers, princes of the working class, earned only about 30/- weekly, and there was no social security provision for sickness, unemployment, old age or misfortune of any kind. For such people, saving was out of the question, and a week of sickness brought destitution. As a boy of 8 or 9 years I had to walk, summer and winter, to fetch a half-gallon of skimmed milk, before breakfast and the long walk to the village school; which, with the help of an occasional tin of Dutch canned milk, was all we had. I never tasted un-skimmed milk until I was 14. I remember all too well how my small hands numbed with cold in the winter, and how my palms were blackened by the metal handles of the can. Our cottage was of wood, warm, dry and very picturesque, surrounded by a glorious garden and a small lawn, which was my father's only recreation and pride, though Mother thought he should rather grow potatoes. There was a fine hayfield and a gravel pit beyond the garden, a perfect playground for us.

We pumped our water, sparkling with chalk particles, from a well in the front garden; and in drought summers the well sometimes failed, and father had to push a great wheeled pannier up to the Big House (a stiff uphill climb) to obtain supplies from the mains, which we used carefully, to save father's labour. Sanitation was primitive; there was no flush toilet, and my father used to empty the toilet bucket daily into a small pit, which had to be replaced at intervals; I never saw toilet paper till I was full-grown. We had no daily paper, Mother could not spare the halfpenny, but on Sundays we had a Sunday paper (1d.) any one which was available from a travelling vendor.

Holidays for my parents were a day or two only at Christmas and Easter plus one or two weekends and August Bank Holiday; but we children had in turn an exchange holiday with relations at Brighton, our cousins similarly coming to us for a country exchange. My parents' only regular recreation was the fine weather walk with the pram through our local woods and downs. A magic lantern show at the lecture hall, a travelling circus or theatre company, a flower show or a school prize-giving, were red-letter occasions. When visitors came, and often give us a copper or two, sometimes even a silver 3d. or 6d., we gave it to Mother, and she rewarded us with 1/4d, or 1/2d to spend at the village sweetshop. We did not complain; we well knew how she needed it, and it would surprise modern children to know what a variety of sweets could then be had for one farthing: (equals one tenth of the new one-pence).

The long walk to school with sandwich dinners in rucksacks was trying, though often enlivened by seasonal peg-tops, hoops or marbles, or "conkers" on the way. Yet in some ways it was an idyllic childhood. We had loving parents who gave all they had for us; we were simply but well clothed and simply but well fed. My father gave his weekly one sovereign intact into Mother's hands, knowing how she needed every penny; he had only one luxury, an ounce of tobacco which came with the weekly grocery order, If ever he needed a penny or two he asked Mother for it. She was the manager, and even his clothing was purchased by her.

It was still a mainly horse-drawn world, and one or two rare lifts on tradesmens' carts live in my memory. When the family grew too large for the cottage, Mr. Clarke had an extra room built on, which spoilt its rotundity but was a great boon. On Sundays we again had the long walk twice, to Sunday School (Congregational) at the Lecture Hall, with friendly voluntary teachers, and there was a magnificent library attached for which I can never be grateful enough. We were allowed to borrow two books each weekly and I used to take my younger brother's and sister's tickets with my own, to get six books mainly for myself, a voracious reader. Besides the usual children's and religious books, there was a complete range of all the Victorian classics and poets and I read them all. In bad weather I would lay on the front room carpet, to read large bound volumes of books from our own collection, mostly presents from the Big House: the Family (Art) Bible, a complete set of Cassell's English History, Goldsmith's Animated Nature, etc. all too big for me to read on my lap. In fine weather I would do my share of family chores (cutlery and shoe cleaning, wood chopping, gathering the rabbits' "green food"), and then spend the rest of the day roaming the adjacent lovely woods and downs. I knew where mushrooms could be found, and many scarce wild flowers. I can recall even now a sunny Christmas scene where a hazelwood clearing was yellow with millions of short-stemmed early primroses In autumn we would go with Mother to a big local blackberry patch, each with a small basket, to be emptied when full into a large two-handed clothes basket which we carried home full, one at each handle in turn; later it would all go into the copper with sliced apples. Every year Mother made huge quantities of every kind of jam in its season; gooseberry, raspberry, strawberry, black currant, blackberry, plum, damson; mixing them in scarce years with rhubarb or apples. (Wild strawberry and rhubarb is a conserve for the gods.) How good it all was, but it always was used by Spring, so that Mother had to resort to 7lb. jars of cheap mixed fruit jam from the grocer's, which she complained was too expensive In July we could pick baskets of wild strawberries on the downs; after eating them with sugar from sour plates, without cream, at tea time, sometimes at jolly parties upon the lawn, joined by visiting relations or friends and my older sisters' sweethearts.

In Spring the woods were gay with primroses anemones, woodruff, blue-bells and early purple orchids, and the lovely spurge laurel, and hazel and sallow catkins brightened the downs, later came ox-eye, daisies., bellflowers restharrow, bedstraw, scabious, yellow-, stitch - and milkworts, centuary, soapworts and about a dozen wild orchids, most of which have almost vanished through the impact of suburban development.

And I am grateful for the memory of our schoolmaster, who would take interested children for educational walks, naming flowers and trees, explaining elementary botany and expounding simple geology in chalk and gravel pits, making every hedgerow come alive. I was always high up in the school flower list, but indeed I did exceptionally well in all subjects at school, topping my classes, though I suffered some discrimination from the Vicar (nameless) who gave us our religious instruction - I was an unfortunate Dissenter in an Anglican school: He could not prevent me from winning first prizes, including that for Prayer Book knowledge, but he selected and apportioned the prize books and could and did ensure that the finest volumes never came to me; and of this, this bookworm was understandably resentful. However, at ten years old, the idyllic chapter of my boyhood came to an abrupt end.

Mr. James Clarke, our good employer, died of cancer and was cremated at Woking, and his widow transferred to her early home in Suffolk. Tupwood House, its estate and cottages were sold to a retired tea planter who renamed it "Tinivelli" after the source of his wealth. He

brought with him his own gardener and jealousies developed, as so often happens between domestics when big changes are made. My parents, who had worked so happily for seventeen years with Mr. Clarke, became uneasy and anxious for their future. They sensed that the new head gardener wanted to be rid of us, and warned us children to be very quiet and careful. But the blow was only delayed for a few months.

A young lady who was governess to neighbouring gentry had a bachelor brother, Mr. Cockerell, a champion walker, who wished to visit his sister occasionally at weekends, and she asked my mother if we would lodge him for a night at such times. My mother, thinking no harm and always generous and helpful, agreed to make up a bed for him in our front room. One day the new gardener's wife questioned me, asking if we had someone in the cottage that weekend who was not our relation, and I quite innocently said we had. The next Saturday Father was given one week's notice "to clear out" (after 17 years' service) on the pretext that we were taking in lodgers without permission. It seemed a poor reason even if it were true, and it was not. Mr. Cockerell only came for one night as agreed with his sister, on not more than three weekends; though he left, I think, 2/6d. on the mantelpiece, knowing how small were my Mother's resources, as most people, even our more affluent relations, would do in similar circumstances. Poor Dad was not 55, somewhat aged with toil, at a difficult age for a man with a small family to get another suitable place, and he had only one week to prepare. He was such a good, quiet, conscientious man and this unfair blow depressed him and all of us.

A local builder had a row of new three-storey houses for renting in the village, not very suitable for us but all Mother could get; and sadly we packed our furniture and the cat into the removal van, for Dad would not remain a single day longer than we were legally entitled. He would always do what was right whatever the penalty and was absolutely incorruptible. I loved my cottage home, the Bridle Path with its fine horse chestnut avenue, the hayfield, the gravel pit, the lovely garden and the dear downs and woods. How I remember the last day. After the van with my mother, sister and brother had gone, I could not tear myself away and I remained by the empty cottage until dusk, when after a storm of tears I left for the village.

Life was now completely changed. No longer had we to take sandwich dinners to school, we could go home. But my mother's difficulties compounded. Dad could only get jobbing work as a gardener at 4/- a day, the local rate; 24/- for a six day week with no holidays, and he knew no other trade. And from this, poor Mother had to reserve 8/6d. weekly rent, leaving only 15/6 to keep us all. It was an impossible task and Mother, in desperation, having now a much larger house, took in two or three lodgers at 10/- weekly, the usual charge, and which included washing. There was but little margin from this to add to our income, but it added tremendously to my mother's work. My older brother Hubert, previously bound to an uncle who was a blacksmith in Kent, being now free, operated a twice-daily milk round for a local dairyman, with a pram, churn and cans, as milk was then supplied; and I got up at 5 a.m. with him, Sundays included, to assist, earning 1/3d. weekly. On Saturdays I earned another 1/- running errands for local traders, and in the summer holidays I earned 5/- weekly with a local butcher. I was glad to earn these small suns, which were so helpful to Mother, and it was a joy to give her a little relief. Mother, who all her married life had incurred only temporary seasonal debts for such things as coal or preserving sugar or the Doctor, got steadily deeper into debt despite all her care and thrift. In the end, my brother, now twenty, a fine fellow who felt that he was at a dead end at home, emigrated to Queensland, under contract to sugar growers. Here his letters told us that he was doing very well and was able to use his blacksmiths' skills much to his advantage. He hoped to save enough to bring us all to his land of promise in Australia and my parents looked forward to the prospect. Hubert was the pride and hope of their ageing years.

Then another blow struck. A cable from Queensland, and a letter from a relation informed us that my dear brother had been drowned while bathing in the Mackay estuary. How different would our lives have been had he lived and progressed his plans for our welfare: My parents were visibly aged by their great loss - he was indeed the apple of their eyes.' I was now the oldest surviving son, my younger brother still at school. Being now thirteen, I left school,

under a "Labour" examination which I sat at Croydon, and I found this very easy and finished after an hour, to the inspector's surprise. We heard later that I had topped the Surrey list and my delighted schoolmaster called me out in front of the whole school, as being a credit to our school. Having done so well, I was offered training as a reporter by the Editor of the local paper, for a time without salary. But I refused the offer, knowing that my Mother could not undertake to keep a big growing lad without some income at least to help. I obtained work at 5/- per week with a local grocer.

One of my father's part-time employers who was doing very well in his business decided to move to a bigger residence at Tunbridge Wells and asked Dad, whom he greatly respected, to move with him to Tunbridge Wells as his full-time gardener, again with a rent free cottage. Dad was very pleased to accept the offer which greatly improved our condition and on my fourteenth birthday I again travelled with the furniture and cat (all day, by horse van) to the new home. After two temporary residences we were finally settled at the cottage, really built as a dower house for extra guests at the Big House. My parents were much more comfortable and happy here, where we remained for six memorable years, I was apprenticed for five years to a multiple grocery firm.

My religious views at this time were uncertain; but in the meantime social conditions had changed a little. Trade conditions were better, un-employment had reduced and a Liberal Government had introduced old age pensions, compulsory sickness and unemployment insurance. The small Labour Party was still the tail of the Liberal dog, but Socialist thinking was steadily growing and was becoming respectable,

I began to take some thoughtful interest in politics. A shopmate supplied me with Socialist leaflets and eventually persuaded me to attend with him the large open Socialist meetings held on Sundays on the Tunbridge Wells. The Labour Party had not yet an organisation in the T.W. Co-op. Society. I had recently become more interested in the Co-operative Movement and was a regular reader of "THE CO-OPERATIVE NEWS", It seemed clear that the Co-op was the nearest form of Socialism possible in a capitalist society and the right place for a Socialist to work, working for the consumer rather than for capitalists' profits. I applied to the Manager, whom I previously knew well as the Chairman of the Union branch, and received a telegram "Start Monday", but I insisted on working out my week's notice with Barkers, whose pleasant employment I very much appreciated.

Back at home in Tunbridge Wells, I was speedily active in the Socialist branch and in my Trade Union, and mainly devoted my efforts to making preparations for resisting conscription, which now was clearly on the way. I noticed the formation in 1915 of the No Conscription Fellowship, which I joined, and decided to organise a local branch. I inserted a notice, I think in "The Labour Leader" or in the local press and received a number of replies from prospective members. I arranged a meeting at a Friend's house, and the branch was formed. Our Chairman was Horace G. Alexander, a Quaker student (Secretary to the Friends' Peace Committee), who afterwards became well known as an associate of, and an advocate for, Mahatma Ghandi of blessed memory. Our Treasurer was Percy Saunders, a lay nonconformist preacher, and our first Committee included E.G. Collison and Philip Hamblin of Tonbridge; others came in after. We received much valuable help from the Friends' Meeting, particularly from a wonderful trio of sisters, the Misses Candler, who, being above conscription age, were able to hold up the organisation after we were arrested; and mightily they did so. Their connection with prominent personalities in and out of Parliament was specially valuable and ensured that none of our people was ever lost sight of. Their home was always placed freely at our disposal. This was my first real contact with the Quakers, whose members were completely sympathetic and encouraging, as might be expected from their long religious history. The formation of a National Council Against Conscription was being mooted in London and I resolved to form a local branch of this, which would enable us to receive affiliations of Local Trade Union and other organisations. This was done and Miss Sarah Candler was the first Chairman, with myself as Secretary, About this time I had a visit from the N.C.F. Southern organiser, a plucky little comrade who was prepared to tramp in all weathers the south-eastern countryside in support of isolated

C.O.s. She arrived at our house late on one miserably wet night, wet through and exhausted, and my Mother just would not let her go on as she planned, but insisted on a good meal, a hot bath and a warm bed as imperative. Florence Exten (afterwards Mrs. G.M. Hann) capitulated and I escorted her to the station in the morning, refreshed and ready for anything.

At this time I spent some time in writing letters to the local press and in dealing with replies, which gave us considerable (anti) publicity. This was extremely annoying to my father's employer, as my address was well known even though I usually wrote from the B.S.P. assembly rooms. I'm sure that my father's employer did not agree one bit with my unpopular views, no doubt he detested them, and of course when I in due course appeared before the Tribunal, my address was inevitably given as my father's lodge. I now deeply regret all this. I realise that I was most inconsiderate to say the least, and I should have had more regard for the feelings of my father's employer who had always treated Dad very well. His family was no doubt deeply resentful. I can only plead in extenuation that I was very young and as enthusiastic for my cause as no doubt his family was against it, Life's experience has taught me that in expounding my own views I must be careful and tolerant and must, give consideration to opposing views, careful not to place others in a false position. My parents suffered for my thoughtlessness and our family removed to a nearby suburb and Dad was again reduced to jobbing gardening.

About this time, early in 1916, Lord Derby published the famous "Derby Letter"; in effect enjoining all single men to join up "voluntarily" before they were pushed! And the first Conscription Act followed, for single men only, thus neatly splitting what small opposition might be expected. Some married men opposed to conscription accepted the Act, naively hoping that they would be exempt - their conscription soon followed!

A local Tribunal under the Military Service Act 1916 was soon set up, sitting at Tonbridge. It was formed of selected and utterly reactionary Local Conservatives whose minds were completely opposed to any views even remotely like ours, and we had no expectation of a fair hearing from such a crowd. No person likely to understand, or even to try to understand us, could hope to be appointed to such a bigoted and one-sided caucus as most of these Tribunals were; even people who strongly opposed war resisters of any sort were aghast at the violent and vicious words and actions which with few exceptions, came from these Tribunals. No degree of exemption was given by our Tribunal to any C.O., not even to H.G. Alexander -with his Quaker family background. We resolved to use the machinery of the Act to the full, and so we appealed to the Appeal Tribunal, expecting no more satisfaction; this Appeal Tribunal did, however, grant conditional exemption to Horace Alexander and, I think, to P.D. Saunders.

After the Appeal decision, all the rest of us received formal call-up notices and automatically became "absentees" and none could employ us without breaking the law and risking heavy penalties. My Co-op employers, who were always sympathetic and helpful, retained me in employment up to the last possible hour, but now had reluctantly to discharge me. Comrade, E.G. Collison, a Clerk for the Tonbridge Gas Co., was in the same position, and for some weeks he and I were unwillingly idle, our parents remaining absolutely tolerant and helpful. The Spring of 1916 was warm and sunny and Ted and I, both being very strong and fit young men who loved outdoor life, but hitherto had never been able to enjoy much of it, walked the Kentish lanes with much relish., leaving word that we were returning in the evening, should anyone call for us. This happened first to Collison, who with Philip Hamblin was arrested in April, the first C.O.s to be taken

in Kent. After the usual Court appearance they were handed over to a military escort and taken to Maidstone Barracks, where, surprisingly and to his bitter distress, Hamblin was rejected on medical grounds and sent home. Collison was left to face the music alone and the soldiers were pretty rough with him, but he steadily refused all cooperation and was forcibly dressed in uniform. I visited him in the guardroom next day and it was easily seen that he had been roughly treated, but was unbroken. When he refused to drill, they had dragged him, prostrate, with ropes around the concrete parade ground.

The public and military generally completely misunderstood the C.O. position and in any case most people thought that our refusals could not long be maintained and we should be compelled to give way. I think that the Army at Maidstone were trying out Collison to see what sort of stuff we were made of; he was the first. Questions were asked in Parliament about Ted's ordeal and afterwards he was treated correctly and I heard no more reports of bad work at Maidstone. I told the chief N.C.O. what I thought of them all, and he did not like it.

Soon after, my friend Parker, local detective, called while I was out and left a message that he would be calling in the morning and asked that I would stay in, which I did, We walked together to the Town Hall, where the magistrates duly handed me to an escort, an old friend, Sergeant Sullivan, a comrade in the B.S.P. who had orders to take me to Tonbridge Recruiting Office, Here I refused to sign or handle any papers and was then sent on under another escort to Maidstone Barracks. Here I refused all cooperation but was not ill-treated and no attempt was made to put me in uniform. I spent the night (sleepless) in a big dormitory room crowded with newly arrested men, mostly gypsies, who had recently been picked up by the police and who, like me, were to go on to Dover. They were a rough and dirty crowd, and they sat up drinking, smoking, swearing and gambling all night,

The next morning saw us arrived at Dover, Oil Mill Barracks, all still in civilian dress of some sort. As I refused all orders, I was sent to the guardroom, where I found two other C.Os. Simmons from Croydon and Saunders from Wickford in Essex. We were taken under escort to the Quartermaster's tent, and issued with uniforms and equipment which we did not accept, but which our escort carried back to the guardroom. Here we again declined the uniform and the escort was instructed to undress and dress us with as little force as possible, which they did. Our old clothing was taken away to stores. It was necessary to have covering of some sort, and having made our protest, we accepted the army underclothing, shoes, trousers and tunic but would not wear puttees, hats or badges. The sergeant in charge was a big, affable, friendly old soldier, named Wood, and he talked to us like a father, I felt quite sincerely, trying to persuade us to accept the situation, He told us that we were the only decent men in all his company (which I could well believe, having travelled down. with a sample) and promised us two stripes (a corporal's) at once, even before our training commenced! He was genuinely grieved that he could not move us. He said that we would be before the Company Officer in the morning.

Our uniforms were of very good quality cloth and the guards, most of whom were rather shabby, were envious of them. We had no desire to appear attractive and we offered to exchange, an offer joyfully accepted. I exchanged mine with a guard recently returned from France who had lost an eye and whose tunic, besides being dirty and old, had a visible bullet hole. He was courting a Dover girl and was ashamed of his appearance. All the guards got on well with us and were as helpful as they dared, as also was Sgt. Wood.

We duly appeared before the Company Officer (very young and inexperienced, but annoyed with our somewhat disreputable appearance) and were remanded to appear before the Commandant next day. My crime (Insubordination - refused to dress in uniform when ordered). At the Commandant's hearing everyone was very correct and official and we were all remanded to a District Court Martial. After some days for preparation by prosecuting and defending officers of our case, we were marched under escort to Dover Castle for the D.C.M. I put in a statement, of which I have no copy, which the defending officer read out and which greatly interested our escort. This was listened to coolly and one or two questions asked. Verdict: Guilty. Sentence: Six months hard labour. Next day we were all taken under escort to Canterbury Prison and soon after we were informed that our sentences had been reduced to 112 days.

At reception in prison we were registered, bathed and provided prison clothing of shabby dark cloth white broad arrows here and very old, ill fitting and not very warm; shirt and underclothing of poor quality, old odd socks and old shoes which fitted so badly that it was some time before we could walk with any degree of comfort. Fortunately they would be worn almost entirely indoors. We were given a blue duster for a handkerchief. (I found that it was

almost impossible to get more than one handkerchief weekly, or to get an exchange, which is a hardship to catarrh people; and one cannot use one's own handkerchiefs). Reception officers were quite civil. We were provided with a small hard towel and two hard sheets each.

From reception we were taken to our separate cells, high up on the third tier of a great hall, reached by iron stairways and sidewalks with polished top metal handrails; with stout wire netting slung between the sides of the hall, probably to prevent prisoners from throwing themselves over the rails to the hard floors below (which would almost certainly be fatal). The cells were three paces long and two broad, painted to halfway and above whitewashed, also ceiling. They were lit through an opening in the wall partitioned by a thick glass (opaque) behind which was the light. The stout doors had each a small spy-hole through which the landing officer could look when on his rounds. Windows looked over a cinder-covered exercise ground; they were barred, with small panes, one of which was moveable to let in fresh air if desired. Furniture was a slab of wood in the corner next the door, for table; one hard wooden stool; one heavy bed-board; one bright metal dust pan, bowl and water can and plate, one scrubbing brush with brick-dust powder for metal scouring; and a shelf in the window corner, where were placed a thin soft metal "knife" which would not cut, a spoon, a china handle-less vessel for tea, a small covered jar of salt, hairbrush and comb, soap, and a few small pieces of thin brown paper for toilet use. There were also a Bible and a small book of religious instruction, but both of these had many pages missing, which probably had served when the toilet paper ration ran out. Also in the cell were a stone chamberpot, a bright but not very warm bed rug and two poor quality blankets. I was able to get the Bible etc replaced.

(I must not forget the mattress). The mattresses were taken out, as hard labour prisoners must for the first fourteen days sleep without one. Diet and regulations cards were hung on the walls.

The metal utensils were a futile nuisance and there can be no reason why enamelled ones should not be used. Warders insist that the metal must be burnished bright for inspection (everything must be laid out for inspection according to a fixed ritual) and of course one's hands were blackened in polishing the utensil, with powder and rag, after which one dimmed the bowl by washing the hands, after which one cleans the bowl and again soils the hands, and so on, ad. inf.

The regulation diet was poor; the army's was immeasurably superior. Food was always insufficient for healthy young men and for many months those of us who were vegetarians half-starved, after we had rejected the proffered flesh or fish items. We had to exist on 14 ozs. of bread and two pints of thin porridge, plus small portions of such greens as were sometimes on the menu, and 8 - 12 ozs. of potatoes. When I became proficient in mail-bagging I was mercifully able to earn a bonus of 4 ozs. of bread and one pint of weak unsweetened ship's cocoa. Towards the last, outside pressure was successful in winning the grant of an alternative vegetarian diet which was much better, so that non-vegetarians often applied for it; but the long periods of insufficient food before this was achieved had, I am sure, serious effects for many of us.

I was ordered to get a bucket of water from the landing tap and to scrub out the cell, which was tiled., and after my first prison "tea" of 4 ozs. bread and 1 pint of "skilly" (very thin porridge) I was locked in for the night. I was not used to lying upon bare boards and I got no sleep, and welcomed the sound of the bell which announced 6 o'clock and a new day.

There is a good prison library, enriched with many fine volumes donated at various times by Friends and others, Regulations permit the provision by friends for individual prisoners of suitable, particularly educational books, and I mastered Esperanto through manuals supplied from outside, Prisoners on normal behaviour are entitled to receive from the library one selected book and one "educational" book, non-fiction, which may be anything the librarian classifies as such.

Safety razors are now allowed to prisoners, but we had no such privileges. Every week a group of prisoners could have hair cuts by the prison barber, who also would run his clippers over beards if desired; but many C.O.s preferred to let their beards grow. Sanitary arrangements were deplorable, though inevitably one got used to them in time.

Canterbury is an old prison. Discipline was strict, The place is colourless, featureless and boring, Once in prison at Maidstone I was standing upon the wooden stool to look at the sunset above the high walls (the only lovely thing within sight) when I was peremptorily ordered to get down by the night officer (through the spy-hole). I got down, but got up again after he went on, and he caught me again on his return. (Warders wore soft slippers on these rounds which made their approach silent). For this I was reported and punished (3 days No. 1, which means bread and water, no mattress and no privileges, also loss of remission marks).

The Workshop officer came to my cell with a prisoner carrying mailbag materials and a "palm" (a thimble set in leather and worn on the hand) and I was instructed in the art of mail bag sewing. This was a cell job and one was expected to do not less than a fixed quota daily. At first I could not do this and was severely admonished, but I soon became expert and could reach my quota easily, more production earning the before-mentioned bonus. At Canterbury all my tasks were done alone in the cell and the only respites were twenty minutes' exercise with other prisoners (but no speaking or contacts allowed) and Sunday chapel.

I need say no more of Canterbury gaol. That long 112 days came at last to an end and I was handed over to an escort from Dover. The battalion was now camped in tents on a football ground at Maxton. Again at once we were in trouble. I forget the exact charge but insubordination was the essence of all charges. We went through the usual routine of Company Officer and Commandant, Doctor, etc., but here the unexpected happened. The old Colonel in charge was a dear old gentleman, obviously friendly. He said quite openly that he thought we were a good type of person should be outside doing what service we were willing to perform for the community; that it was quite wrong that we should be in prison and he would do nothing to send us there again. He tried hard to persuade us to let him arrange for us to be transferred to Red Cross or non-combatant service and when we still declined, decided to send us home "on indefinite furlough"! This was a surprise indeed! Bless his heart, he meant well, but he could not amend the military machine.

My family was amazed but delighted to get me at home, but of course it was hopeless to seek employment. The dear old colonel's decision could not possibly be endorsed by higher circles, though it did give us this welcome "breather", and after a week or two I was sent a Railway Warrant and ordered to return at once to camp. I replied, informing the officer that I would not voluntarily return, and returned the warrant; if they wanted me again, they would have to fetch me as before. They acted speedily and again I was arrested, handed over, and returned to camp.

I again refused to wear uniform, but this time no attempt was made to dress me, The usual routine followed. But the Commandant now was a Major, a very different type from our old Colonel, an arrogant and ignorant bully. I made the brief statement required.

The Major:

"Well, when all is said, I am still of opinion that conscientious objection is just another name for arrant cowardice."

I usually try to be civil to officials who are only doing their duty, but this roused me and I replied:

"And in my opinion., Sir, viewing our respective positions - I helpless in custody and you sitting there backed by all the authority of army and government, that is the most insulting and cowardly remark that ever I have heard, and you -would not dare to repeat it under fair and open conditions outside this camp",

He was furious. The junior officers standing around were all laughing behind their hands. He was the typical martinet and I was not surprised to find that he was not popular.

"Take him away" he screamed 'and don't put a rag on him; make him dress himself"

They took me back to PV tent and removed my clothing, leaving me there in my underclothing only and I set my teeth to endure. I always feel the cold and it was November, bitterly cold and damp. The whole camp was interested. Nobody liked the Major and all hoped he would fail. Time and again, someone would put a head into the tent with "Good luck - stick it if it kills you!" But the Major noticed the general interest!

After two days my tent was taken down and re-erected right on the top of the cliff overlooking the camp on one side and the sea on the other. I was left there by myself with the uniform beside me. And just to make sure that I kept sufficiently cool, they rolled up and fastened the tent walls so that I sat on the wet turf in the cold sea wind. The mist and wind went right through me, but after a time I became thoroughly numbed and just sat there almost without feeling of any kind. By Major's orders, nobody came near me and I remained there in that condition about ten days and nights. But I am not sure of the exact period; I was too chilled to notice.

I think someone must have had a qualm of conscience and told the Medical Officer that there was a man perishing of exposure in the solitary tent on the cliff top. A group suddenly appeared, the Doctor, orderlies and some N.C.O.s, The Doctor was angry. He said to me (quite gently) "What are you doing here?" I heard, but I could not answer. To the N.C.O.s "What is this man doing here?" "Major's orders, Sir". To me: "Can you get up?" I could only shake my head. He told the orderlies to get me on my feet, to dress me gently and to take me down to the Medical Tent, I was completely without feeling and could not walk by myself, but with a soldier supporting me on each side we stumbled down the hill to the tent. The Doctor gave me a small glass of warm liquid which I think was brandy, the only time in my life that I have tasted alcohol, so far as I am aware. But it certainly did me good. They seated me on a chair by the warm stove and told me to stay there as long as I needed. The Doctor saw me again later and asked me how I felt; already I felt much better and said so. He then told me that I could go down to the mess tent and get something to eat but to be careful not to eat too much. I was to be put on light duties, which in effect meant that neither the Major or anyone else could interfere with me without the Doctor's authority. I think the Doctor would have some severe things to say to the Major, for his authority had been flouted. No officer, however high, has the right to punish or even to charge any soldier until the Doctor has examined the soldier and certified that the soldier is fit for punishment or trial according to law.

I went down to the mess tent. Already it was all over the camp that I had been released without dressing myself, and the Major had failed; and the cooks and orderlies were ready. They patted me on the back, seated me at a trestle table and surrounded it with a circle of trestle tables on which they placed galleys of tea and cocoa and piles of bread, butter, cheese and meat and vegetables with "Get it back, lad - as much as you like". This was clearly mainly a demonstration, for I could not eat more than a fraction of the eatables provided. I went ahead, to their great satisfaction, eating perhaps rather more than the Doctor would have recommended. After, I was given another tent and a spiked stick which I was told was for picking up camp litter. I did not use it.

The next day after dinner when the Adjutant had been round "Any Complaints?" - a large crowd of soldiers stayed behind and from a trestle table I answered questions and explained my views on the war and my purpose in resisting conscription. The soldiers enjoyed it: there was unanimous approval; few questions, none antagonistic. Then someone must have warned the Adjutant, who unexpectedly returned and dispersed us. The weather improved and I spent some time sitting at the tent door, warmly clothed in the wintry sunshine. The Major passed me as if he did not see me. I wrote home giving an account of my ordeal and the affair was raised in Parliament I think by Mr. Lambert. The Major's only punishment was

"a transfer else-where, but I was told that the N.C.O.s concerned, who only carried out the Major's orders, were reduced. It seems incredible and I hope it is not true.

After three days the Doctor examined me again and declared me fit for trial and I was ordered a Regimental Court-martial. I don't know who ordered this for I did not meet the Major again. The R.C.M. was held in due course, quite a small affair compared the D.C.M. at the castle. It was held in a tent at the camp and was formed of younger officers; it sentenced me to one month's detention which is the military term for imprisonment at a military prison.

Again, this was wrong; obviously someone in command was not acquainted with, or chose to ignore the new regulations covering treatment of C.O.'s . Where a prisoner at an interrogation pleads Conscientious Objection, he must be tried by a D.C.M, and sent, if convicted, to a civil prison. (This new regulation was made following the ill-treatment of C.H. Norman at Wandsworth Detention Barracks; it was an acknowledgment that military prison methods were quite incapable of correctly handling C.O.s). Again, this was raised in Parliament but in the meantime I was taken under escort to the "Glasshouse" the military side of Wandsworth Prison. I refused to carry the pack rifle and bayonet, canteen, etc. One of the escort carried the kitbag and the rifle was roped to me around my arms, probably to prevent me from throwing it away, as I did all equipment which I considered unnecessary for decent clothing. I must have looked unusual and my condition raised some strong criticism of military methods from passengers when we changed trains, I think at Maidstone. They wanted to be told what the "poor soldier" had done to be so treated. My escort kept mum and were really quite friendly and shared rations with me,

Our reception at the prison was really funny. The N.C.O. in charge was a stout florid old sergeant who looked as if he had served in India. My bonds removed, he glared at me and shouted that I had better soldier quietly - "We tame lions 'ere". I laughed and replied that I was no lion and lion treatment was not likely to be effective: He hardly knew what to make of this, but a soldier carried my accoutrements to a cell (I would not touch them) exactly like that at Canterbury; and I settled for the night.

Next morning I was ordered on parade and I strolled under escort on to the exercise square, minus cap., belt and puttees. The old sergeant was there. He glared, then ordered me to fall in and double - there were many soldiers, I should say hundreds, doubling and sweating in overcoats and full equipment and rifles around the square, a terrific labour and I often wonder why they endured it, why they did not revolt - I can only think that they have an exaggerated view of the power which tyranny has over the minds of men. Had this large mass of men refused to be so wickedly punished in the face of a mere handful of custodians who were probably secretly sorry for them, what could authority have done? Already an infinitesimal minority of C.O.s had shown that authority was helpless to bend conscience!

I smilingly declined to join the sweating files but indicated that I would be glad of a little walking exercise. The Sergeant swore at me and as I still refused to go, he ordered one of the soldiers with him to shift me, but he obeyed with little enthusiasm and I remained firm. He then ordered "Tread on b---- heels" . Reluctantly the poor chap made a feeble attempt to do this but uselessly, and the Sergeant said, in a rage, "Like this 'ere" and trod, hard on my heels. With all respect for age, I was not enduring this and I warned him that if he did not desist he might get hurt, but he persisted. By the look of his feet, I think he must have suffered from corns or bunions; and I brought the heavy heel of my military boot hard down on his toes, I hope not too hard, but I had to stop him! He jumped around on one leg, holding up his outraged foot and swearing as only an old soldier can. I was hurriedly taken back to the cell, but I'm sure that the watching and sweating files enjoyed the episode!

After an undisturbed night in the cell I appeared before the Commandant. This was a new man, succeeding Col. Brook who had recently been moved following his savage and illegal treatment of C.H. Norman. I expected no consideration from him and was sentenced to solitary confinement in the punishment cell, with bread and water.

This was another nasty phase. The punishment cell was in the prison basement, It was almost bare, having only a bed-board clamped to the floor and a wooden block for a seat,

clamped to the wall, and the only light came through a dirty skylight, It was a most unprepossessing abode - as no doubt was intended. Two wooden pots were provided, one for water and one for toilet: "There's no restriction on water, lad" said my custodian gaily, I'm afraid the two pots were very liable to get reversed in use. No kind of bedding was allowed and I was not let out of this miserable hole for one moment, not even for necessary exercise. The very air was tainted and I had no appetite even for the daily bread ration.

I remained confined to this miserable hole for over three weeks, with no means of passing time except to read my Bible. Day and night (for proper sleep was impossible) I would sit awhile on the hard block, my back rigidly propped against the wall., or lie for a few minutes upon the bed-board, then take two or three paces up and down the cell until I could stand no longer and started the seat, board and pacing routine all over again. The only reliefs were the two occasions on which I again appeared before the Commandant to receive further sentences of No. 1 punishment and diet, Regulations (as for civil prisons) lay down that a prisoner on dietary punishment may be kept on No. 1 (bread and water) for three days only, then followed three days on No. 2 (this adds one pint of skilly) and then full diet for three days. But the Army knows that regulations are only observed when convenient and the Commandant ingeniously got outside them by re-charging me for the same offence, thus bypassing the requirement for diet changes , ' I received only 1 ozs. of bread and unlimited foul water daily for three weeks - and I had hardly recovered from the starve-and-freeze treatment on Dover cliffs. But the Parliamentary machine worked again, if slowly.

A few days before I was due for release the door opened to reveal the Commandant and his escort. He said "Private Dutch, I have to inform you that His Majesty has been graciously pleased to grant you a free pardon and you will be released tomorrow". While this officially wiped out the crime for which in any case I had already served almost the full period under atrocious conditions, my "freedom" meant only that I should be again handed over to an escort for return to camp; I had now at least a regulation meal; poor as it was, it was an improvement on bread and water.

The same escort was waiting. The corporal in charge whose home was nearby, took his comrades and myself to his house. He was horrified when he learned that I had lived for three weeks on bread and water and his wife cooked us all a good meal, never to be forgotten. I would not carry kit or rifle, but my friendly guards understood, and cheerfully took charge of them.

We got back to Dover in the evening. The battalion was now quartered in billets and I was placed with a couple who must have thought me a strange soldier but who asked no questions, I went out and expended my last sixpence on chocolate and biscuits, but did not apply for rations. I was feeling very poorly and feverish. Although very fit and strong when arrested in May, successive hardships were telling upon me and I had no wish for solid food. Early in the morning the S.M. called and told me to report on parade. I said I must refuse but he asked me as a favour to appear on parade when I could refuse to fall in, which would serve me as well and would save him the task of coming to fetch me. This seemed reasonable. I agreed and was duly confined to the guardroom.

The guard was stationed in an empty old house, sitting around a ground floor fire; and the first floor, the cellars and a large cupboard were used for prisoners. I was at first consigned to the cupboard but I was obviously ill and they removed me to the empty cellar which was larger but was very damp; water running down the walls. I was fast getting worse as the guards, in inspecting, could see. They sent for an officer who in turn sent for the Doctor. I could not stand and the Doctor sent for an ambulance which conveyed me to Western Heights Military Hospital.

Now followed a pleasant interlude, for me and for the guards. Good warm food and a comfortable bed in a warmed ward soon restored me and in a day or two I was able to get up and assist in small ways, as also did my guard. They knew they were on a "cushy" job, for everyone knew that I would not try to get away. Guards and I were on friendly terms and

were really sorry when the good time ended. A brother-in-law who was in training in Dover visited me here and. was able to keep my family posted as to my condition.

On return, my guards treated me much better and I mixed with them while formalities proceeded for my second D.C.M. in Dover Castle. This was much as before and resulted in a sentence of one year's imprisonment with hard labour, which afterwards was reduced to six months. I think I started this at Canterbury, but after a few days was transferred to Maidstone Prison. This was arranged for myself and comrades to appear before the recently appointed Central Tribunal, set up to review the cases of all C.O.s sent to prison. The Army and Government and the public were concerned at the increasing numbers of men in camps and prisons who were not criminals and who were capable and often quite willing to serve the community usefully in accordance with conscience, but as soldiers or prisoners were only wastefully clogging up the military machine. Much army personnel was engaged in holding or escorting C.O.s to and from imprisonment, and many an officer's time was wasted in courts martial or in preparations ALL OVER Britain. In due course we all appeared before this Tribunal at Wormwood Scrubs, which heard us civilly and which offered myself and others partial freedom conditional on undertaking civil work in a re-organised Wakefield Prison. My two colleagues accepted this offer and I regretfully watched from my cell window at Maidstone their departure with many others for Wakefield. But I who in the first instance would have accepted from, my local Tribunal some kind of conditional alternative service, felt that way no longer, and I declined the offer, and after a few days was sent back to Maidstone where I finished my sentence. I determined that I could accept no compromise with conscription or with a government at war. I resolved to be an "Absolutist" and I still feel that this was right. There was a small hard core of C.O.s who held to this position. Among prominent C.O.s collected at Maidstone for interview by the Central Tribunal were comrades Clifford Allen (afterwards Lord Allen), Fenner Brockway (now Lord Brockway) J. Scott Duckers and E. Runham Brown. All took the Absolutist stand. It was at Maidstone that I was punished for looking at the sunset: It was hopeless to contest a charge before the prison governor; the warden's word was automatically accepted.

My sentence concluded, and escorted back to Dover, I was now included in a new battalion at Long Hill Camp, in a guardroom of modern wood construction. I had some exceptional experiences here, but must, not recall all or this account will never end. The guard used to scatter over the Downs when the sirens sounded, leaving any prisoners locked in. The Adjutant, Lt. Hatchard, a young officer invalided home who had been badly wounded, was very kind and friendly, talking with, and agreeing with me completely, and spending much time in long discussions. He gave orders that I was to receive all letters parcels or papers or books unopened and that I was to be exercised not in the small hot chalkpit where the guards had first taken me, but by walks upon the cliffs with one guard as companion, giving word that I would not attempt to escape, The guard relished these pleasant walks as much as I did. It was, I think, 1918, and the early summer days along the cliff among violets and other flowers were delightful, a lovely change from prison; and conducive to regained health.

The usual formal routine proceeded, but very slowly, for this fourth trial was to be a General Court Martial, the highest form of military court. This did not worry me; my mind was made up and at peace. At last the G.C.M. took place at Dover Castle, formed this time of high-ranking officers. I remember so well the ceremony of the formal pronouncement of my sentence, which I think was intended to frighten any soldiers who might be thinking of following my example. The whole battalion in full uniform was drawn up in a hollow square on the parade ground. My guards and the Adjutant were very apprehensive for me but I was not concerned; they could do little to me more than they had already done. An officer read out my sentence through a loud speaker, enumerating my various crimes and sentences, ending with the new sentence "Three years" penal servitude", then, lower "reduced to two years" hard labour". I was the least concerned of all that day, Next day, an escort conducted me to Wandsworth Civil Prison.

After reception at Wandsworth and a night in my cell, I joined the queue waiting to interview., first the Doctor, a perfunctory examination a question or two, then "O.K."; then the Governor,

very polite but not unfriendly, who readily granted my application for the vegetarian diet. I had been allocated laundry work for the daytime, which commenced next day. I was given charge of a hydro (a powered machine for wringing and drying clothing) and of the blanket room, where I hung the wrung blankets upon rails attached to the ceiling, to be dried by heat coming from the furnaces below. This was an uncomfortably steamy job in summer, but in winter the warmth was very pleasing. In the laundry in summer there was placed a metal bath full of oatmeal and water for drinking; into which we could dip as desired; and I found the soaked oatmeal dregs a welcome addition to our short diet, scooping up all I could with my drinks. I retained this laundry job for the rest of my sentence, or rather for that part I actually served. All the various machines in the laundry were in charge of C.O.s and we mixed and conversed almost without interference, except when Governor or Chief Warder came through.

The warder in charge was Mr. Gentry, and indeed he proved himself a real gentleman. He can hardly be alive today, so I cannot harm him by recalling that he did all that a man in that position could for us though he was always nervous and on tenterhooks lest some incautious C.O. should let him down. He was a member of the I.L.P. and wholeheartedly agreed with us. I was careful not to ask how, so that I could not reveal anything under questioning, but I guess that the odd copies of "The Tribunal", "The Labour Leader", C.O.s Hansard and N.C.F. reports and leaflets which surreptitiously circulated were through him, and I am sure that he would take out any letter or information which would assist or protect us. We did appreciate that he ran great risks for us; discovery would have entailed disgrace, possibly imprisonment, certainly the loss of job and pension. After the war, some of us who worked under him joined in a day's outing to Jordans with his family for our guests, organised by H. Runham Brown. It was a happy reunion, and Gentry, free of the old tensions, enjoyed it as thoroughly as did we.

The second in command, a man named Broad, under whose directions I was, was a bluff humorous Cockney type but good to work with. I feel certain that he must have had a good idea of what underground work was going on, but he gave no hint of it, or let his colleague down in any way; even though he may well not have held Gentry's views. We were fortunate that two such fine men had charge of us for such a large part of our time.

The library at Wandsworth was excellent and though at times one was given a book which some previous, kinky user had embellished with crude drawings and foolish, sometimes obscene comments, and which had escaped the vigilance of the Librarian, I got great satisfaction from it. Any book which you specially requested would, as far as possible be supplied; one fiction, one non-fiction for each week.

I had originally not claimed adherence to any particular sect, being at age twenty, unsure where I stood. I was brought up as a Congregationalist, though attending a C. of E, elementary school and there receiving Anglican instruction. The Army always classified doubtfuls as C. of E. which made them liable for Sunday Church parades. The Congregationalist churches in Tunbridge Wells, like most churches everywhere, were hostile to my views. Nearly all prisoners of all sects or none welcomed the Sunday service as a break from routine. Without it, the whole of Sunday except twenty minutes for exercise would be spent locked in one's cell. All prisoners joined heartily in the hymn singing, but the chaplaincy in most prisons was a scandal, Usually chaplains gabbled through the service at top speed, probably anxious to get away to lunch. Occasionally when the chaplain was away the Governor took over then the service was conducted more reverently. Apart from what outside news reached us through illicit means, our only information of what was happening in the outside world came from a few minutes' news summary by the chaplain after service, and this was slight and completely prejudiced by a viewpoint quite obnoxious to us! I remember particularly the chaplain's remarks in reporting the 1916 and 1917 Russian Revolutions. I am sure that ordinary prisoners were entirely misled on the world significance of these events, but those of us who were politically conscious gained fresh heart from the bare facts as reported, dismissing his reactionary comments.

At Wandsworth, one of our colleagues who was a skilled organist was given the organist's job, and he often treated us during entry and exit to the strains of "The International", "The Red Flag", "England Arise", "Jerusalem", etc. The authorities seemed to have no idea of the nature of these contributions. I am sure that he would have been pulled up, had they realised. Any news not personal or of a social or political nature was carefully censored from our monthly letters.

I was troubled by a skin infection (or so it seemed) which was very irritable, and I saw the Doctor and he instantly assumed that I had the unpleasant malady called scabies. I had not. This is a dirt infection very prevalent under army conditions and is usually caught from infected blankets. It was not uncommon among prisoners, especially military prisoners, and the prison had a special ward apart from the hospital and the main wards, for scabies treatment, to which I was at once consigned. The treatment is nasty and simple, but effective in three or four days. One is painted at regular intervals (self painted) from head to feet with a repulsive yellow sulphur liquid which looks and smells very like the mixture used to spray for scab in fruit trees. It is unpleasant, to say the least, but as it is completely effective one endures it for the short period required, with patience. If one has scabies! When finished one's body is a bright canary yellow, and every crevice of one's person must be impregnated with the stuff. I duly painted my self as directed, and then looked around. The cell was larger than ordinary cells, better lit, with a tiled floor, an iron bedstead and a wooden chair; blankets and mattress only, no sheets, and all smelling horribly of the mixture. The mattress had a great hollow from use by previous occupants, and I went to turn it over, and got a fresh shock. (One is meant to lie naked between the blankets). Underneath was one huge yellow and green mildewed mass like a big sore. This was just too much to endure and though it, was cold and I was unclothed, I would not lie in the bed and rang the bell vigorously until the warder re-appeared; and I demanded another mattress. He refused, saying that it had been good enough for others and must be good enough for me and we had a long altercation and he went away. I persisted in the violent bell-ringing which forced him to return, and after about a half-hour of this he gave way and brought me another old but unsoiled mattress and took away the first one. I had put up with the smelly blankets and by now was so chilled that I got between them.

My only occupation in this place, other than the periodic paintings was a pile of dirty and torn old child's scrap books and some cheap American publications which were so puerile and fantastic that I cannot believe they would ever circulate in Britain. They gave one a poor opinion of American intelligence, if one did not know better. The warder said that no good books were allowed in the scabies cell, only the last relics of papers past use in the main hospital, as nothing could be used again from the scabies cells; all was burned. One was not even allowed to write the customary monthly letter. I kept asking the warder for permission to leave, or to see the Doctor or Governor, but got no satisfaction and I remained in these deplorable conditions for about three weeks - when suddenly the Chief Warder showed up. No senior official, not even the Doctor had been near me and it seemed that I had been completely overlooked. My plight only came to light when the usual monthly letter was not received by my parents and they made enquiries, and the Chief was making enquiries for a reply. He was aghast to hear how long I had been in the scabies ward. I was removed to the main prison hospital and had three successive warm baths to get the yellow impregnation out of my skin, after which I had a comparatively luxurious three days in a comfortable warmed cell, with a good bed and bedding, and better food. The Doctor then discharged me and I was returned to the normal prison life, still with the skin trouble - which was not scabies; this remained with me, gradually lessening for some years after.

There were now many more C.O. prisoners at Wandsworth. I gathered that we had a larger group than any other prison and were being used a kind of centre. The strain of long months of imprisonment was beginning to tell and my comrades were resentful that our friends' efforts to obtain our release met with so little success; only those who were at the point of death could expect discharge - and not always then. There was some amelioration, such as the concession of a vegetarian diet. The chief boon was in the daily exercise. We now were able to walk and to talk together when exercising; previously we had to walk behind each

other, six feet apart., and I no contact was allowed; even a word could bring report and punishment. The warders in charge now stood idly by, and practically abandoned disciplinary control for the time, and this, I think, led to subsequent events. We were able to confer together, and could and did plan concerted action. Almost without a dissentient it was resolved to refuse adherence to rules in order to compel the authorities to take more notice of us. As a result we were confined strictly to our cells, being obviously a bad influence (from our custodian's 's standpoint) on ordinary prisoners. We got over this isolation by breaking the thick glass which concealed our wall lamps, leaving us an aperture through which we could, with normal voices, communicate with our nearer neighbours; the prison wing construction itself admirably facilitated good speakers, who could speak, sing or lecture and be heard all through the C.O. wing. Many did so speak and sing. I particularly remember Guy Aldred (now, alas, passed on), a Glasgow Socialist agitator (no offence to his memory). He would willingly have accepted the description; an experienced outdoor orator with a mighty voice which all could hear, he acted as a kind of Chairman or leader to these extraordinary meetings which no prison staff had ever before encountered; and they simply did not know how to deal with such a situation. Warders just stood around and listened but did not interfere. Probably we were too many to be quelled by the routine disciplinary punishments and in any case the prisons were understaffed. Some of our fellows had good voices and sang well, others lectured on appropriate subjects. After a time it was resolved to go further, to hunger strike.

The Home Office probably heard of all these happenings, but apparently had no remedy. And then we were all unexpectedly released under the same "Cat and Mouse" Act devised in earlier years to deal with militant suffragettes. Our group of London and Home Counties ' C.O.s met together at a comrade's house in Hackney, where it was agreed that if one or a few of us were re-arrested all would return and continue the hunger strike, The torture of forcible feeding might well be applied to one or a few, but with large numbers it was unlikely. I was appointed Secretary to our group. I had the addresses of all and any re-arrest was to be at once notified to me , when I would immediately advise the others and all were to return.

After a short lapse I received a telegram from Mrs. Harding of Folkestone, wife of one of our men, that Ben Harding had been arrested. I immediately wrote round to all our group as arranged and then boarded the train for Wandsworth. The Common looked so green and lovely in early Spring sunshine, as I walked up to and knocked on the forbidding doors: The warder who opened it and who I think remembered me, was taken aback, He asked what I wanted and when I said that I had returned to continue sentence, said "What – d'you like it?" I said no, I certainly did not and he said "Go away, lad - B--- off, while you can - this ain't a home". As I persisted he could only take me in and after a few questions I was taken to a cell. I was not feeling very well but at once I went on hunger strike. Warders told me that Ben was in the hospital, also on hunger strike.

It appears that we were extremely fortunate at Wandsworth in our Medical Officer, Dr. Pitcairn. Without agreeing with us he was sympathetic and under-standing and careful of our general health to a degree I never met elsewhere. Like the old colonel at Maxton Camp he thought that prison was no proper place for us and was resolved that no C.O. should die under his care, as had already happened elsewhere. He could see that I was unwell and after a check up I was again ordered to hospital, where in coughing I was losing blood. I did not realise then how ill I was; actually, I had T.B. Dr. P. Must have gone straight to the War Office for my "ticket" for the next morning I was discharged from the Army and prison and sent under escorted to Tunbridge Wells, where my sister, who had been advised of my coming, was waiting at the station. The escort was used because of my sickness. My sister signed "for my body" - and at last I was free.

After my own Doctor and the local M.O. had examined me, my good friends the Candler sisters contacted Dr. Alfred Salter M.P., who invited me to visit his surgery at Bermondsey for a thorough check. He then kindly invited me to enter the lovely convalescent home which he had at his own expense established at Fairby Grange, Hartley, Kent. It was a glorious

Spring and Summer and I remained there until October, working for the last few weeks in the gardens, orchards and hayfields. Thanks to good food and care and the fine Kentish air, I was completely cured, though to this day doctors who have had occasion to examine me find dead tissue from those days. It is good to know that our world still produces good and clever men like Alfred Salter. And I thank God for a good constitution which enabled me to come safely through so many trials.

After leaving Fairby Grange I, like many C.O.s, felt restless to do some useful practical constructive work, after the long months of negative witness to our conscientious beliefs. I applied for, and was accepted to join the Friends' War Victims Relief Committee services, and served for two years, first in France and then in Poland.

I have had a varied experience since, mostly in the Co-operative, Trade Union and political Labour Movements, in all of which I have consistently held offices; an Essex County Councillor and Magistrate, sitting at Romford upon a Bench which once had sent me to prison; a Governor of London Hospital and a member of numerous committees in public life of many kinds. I have thrice been President of Romford and Hornchurch Trades Council, and thrice Chairman of the Romford Constituency Labour Party. For ten years I was a Director, and later for six years until my retirement, the President of London Co-operative Society, then the world's largest on Rochdale principles; and I am an honorary life member of my Trade Union and of its London Co-op branch: Committee. I retired still reasonably secure, well and happy, and thank God that my wife and I are still together in my eightieth year.

What do I think, our stand achieved? We proved that no physical power can suppress convictions conscientiously held, or can enforce actions contrary to conscience, We have clearly demonstrated to Governments the futility of taking persons with conscientious objections into the Armed Forces where they can only function as sand in the machine; or indeed into any form of compulsory war service. We should have served some more useful purpose even in a war situation, for if left free, economic necessity would have compelled us to undertake useful work in order to live, whatever our views; whereas we were a standing example of "subversion" to the soldiers who wasted time, effort and resources in keeping us in custody. And in prison we again occupied space and used the time and labour of Prison officers, performing trivial tasks, and in every way were an expense and loss at a time when all agreed that national and human resources needed to be harboured and used with the utmost efficiency. Our individual skills were wasted in idleness or in frivolous and unnecessary occupations.

Our witness has borne fruit all over the world. In all countries groups of C.O.s like us now exist, under varying degrees of persecution or tolerance, and no future war is conceivable which will not -produce its own C.O.s

The British Government by its actions in the second world war has shown that it has accepted the lessons of the Great War as regards the treatment of conscientious objectors. Persecution and repression of C.O.s has been slight in comparison; hardly anyone has been imprisoned who was willing to do some kind of useful work in civilian conditions, and some have been unconditionally exempted. Our witness has ensured for the young C.O.s of today a far more fair and tolerant hearing, and near security from bureaucratic and military oppression.

While in the light of older wisdom I in details might now act differently, I am sure that our stand was well worth while and I would not wish to have been spared an hour of it.