

Conscription, Conscience and Controversy: The Friends' Ambulance Unit and the 'Middle Course' in the First World War

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Abstract

The Friends' Ambulance Unit (FAU) was established by British Quakers outside the formal structures of the Religious Society of Friends in August 1914 to provide frontline voluntary medical aid in Belgium. It was headed by a London-based 'Committee of the Friends' Ambulance Unit' (FAU Committee), which included men at the heart of the nation's political elite. This article considers the FAU Committee's response to the threat and enactment of conscription, and in turn what this did to the Unit's internal workings, its personnel and their consciences, centring on the experiences of four members of its 'Foreign Section' in France and Belgium. In doing so, it not only reveals for the first time the negotiations between FAU Committee members and Government representatives, but also suggests that the 'middle course' steered between prison and the military was, if not always popular, successful in ensuring the continuation of aid work and creating a space for consciences of many hues.

Keywords

anti-war, Laurence Cadbury, conscience, conscientious objectors, conscription, T. Corder Catchpool, First World War, Friends' Ambulance Unit, John W. Major, medical aid work, Military Service Act, Adam Priestley, Quaker, tribunals.

Introduction

'[I]t is not selfish soul saving and conscience appeasing that keeps us from fighting. That would send us either to fight or to prison', wrote 28-year-old long-term FAU member Olaf Stapledon, in June 1916, in an attempt to explain

the post-conscription stance of the Unit to his rather perplexed lover. ‘We risk our silly souls because we hold that this middle course is the most likely to help open the public mind to the folly of the whole business of war.’¹ Neither Stapledon nor the woman to whom he was writing was Quaker. But they, too, were wrestling with their consciences and did not agree on the right course to follow once conscription had been introduced in England, Wales and Scotland during the first three months of 1916. Within the Friends’ Ambulance Unit itself, and without the bonds of romantic love, matters were even more fraught, and responses varied. Indeed, the compromises induced by conscription would see what had been a close-knit body of men riven by discord rooted in conflicting views of and about conscience. This in turn resulted in unfamiliar management and working strategies, members leaving, new recruits arriving, and tensions surrounding social and class divisions. And yet the Unit’s ‘middle course’, steered purposefully between fighting and prison, held and worked practically (if not always ideologically) for the purposes of delivering aid work and accommodating consciences of many hues.

The FAU was established within days of Britain declaring war on Germany on 4 August 1914. Geoffrey Winthrop Young was working as a war correspondent for the Cadbury-owned newspaper, *The Daily News*, and had alerted certain Friends to the imperilled, medically ill-equipped Belgian army. Compelled to help those in need, the idea of a frontline ambulance unit quickly galvanised action. Less than two weeks after war began, Philip Baker—Quaker, historian, economist and Olympian in his mid-30s (and later Labour politician and Nobel Peace Prize winner)—placed an appeal for volunteers and funds in the Quaker publication, *The Friend*.² Despite murmurings of disquiet about working in association with the British Red Cross in the correspondence column of the same publication (due to the organisation’s close links with the British military),³ dozens of volunteers came forward, particularly young Cambridge-educated men, some of whom might be considered suggestive of ‘muscular Quakerism’.⁴

Reconvening after an earlier training camp at the hostel and historic Quaker site at Jordans, Buckinghamshire, the first party of 43 volunteers set sail for Dunkirk on 31 October 1914. Just out of port, their boat came across the

1 ‘Letter from Olaf Stapledon to Agnes Miller, 4 June 1916’, in Crossley, R., (ed.), *Talking Across the World: the love letters of Olaf Stapledon and Agnes Miller, 1913–1919*, Hanover, NH and London: University Press of New England, 1987, p. 153. Stapledon (1886–1950) went on to become a philosopher and an influential science fiction writer.

2 Baker, P., ‘To the Editor of *The Friend*: a suggested ambulance corps’, *The Friend* (21 August 1914), p. 626.

3 The subject was a regular topic in the column in the weeks after Baker’s letter was published. See, for example, Warner, M., ‘To the Editor of *The Friend*’ (2 October 1914), p. 734.

4 Freeman, M., ‘Muscular Quakerism?: the Society of Friends and youth organisations in Britain, c.1900–1950’, *English Historical Review* 125 (2010), pp. 642–69.

torpedoed and sinking ship, *HMS Hermes*. After helping to pull survivors from the water and administering first aid, the vessel returned the rescued men to Dover, before setting off for Dunkirk once more. Upon landing, word soon reached the volunteers that wounded (predominantly French and Belgian) soldiers, evacuated from frontline fighting, had been left with little care in railway sheds. The ambulance unit—operating under the auspices of the Joint Committee of the British Red Cross and the Order of St John—quickly attended the injured. Once matters stabilised, their eyes lifted to find new work: the original intention to assist the Belgian forces, along with the group's initial name, the First Anglo-Belgian Ambulance Unit, had been abandoned after the Belgian army had collapsed. The Unit then set out to 'Find work that wants doing; take it; regularise it later, if you can', actions which lived on as its motto.⁵

With headquarters sited at Dunkirk, vehicles set off to seek out fresh challenges. Over the coming years, the FAU provided medical care to, and aided the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of civilians and soldiers from both sides. It delivered public health measures, such as water purification, pasteurised milk and inoculations, helping to stymie the 1914/15 typhoid epidemic around Ypres. The Unit established and operated hospitals on land and water, and stepped in to provide medical services wherever they were needed. They ran and staffed ambulance trains and motor ambulances, including sections embedded within French military columns. They also helped drive the organisation of orphanages and schools, and assisted in finding markets for the wares of the famous female lace-makers of Belgium. However, by 1916, the FAU had gone from what initial members considered as its 'knight errant' period—as a largely mobile and responsive unit, frequently in the thick of things—to an organised and regularised body, which from 'necessity [undertook] much work which was inherently less interesting than that of earlier days'.⁶ The transition also required a formal chain of largely desk-bound administrators, who included Laurence Cadbury and T. Corder Catchpool. In this comparatively calm and unadventurous climate, conscription and its fallout hit especially hard.

'To describe them [the "difficulties"] fully would require, perhaps, the pen of a novelist rather than that of the historian.' So wrote Meaburn Tatham and James E. Miles—erstwhile Unit members both, though neither Quaker—in their 1920 official history of the Unit. Like them, the present author can only offer a glimpse of the FAU's internal troubles. But this article discloses what they may have been unaware of, or felt unable to—details of behind-the-scenes politicking that enabled the London-based Committee to steer a middle course and evoke individual Unit members' personal encounters between conscience and conscription. Even so, and while they understandably did not dwell on the

5 Tatham, M., and Miles, J. E., (eds), *The Friends' Ambulance Unit 1914–1919: a record*, London: Swarthmore Press, 1920, p. 8.

6 Tatham and Miles, *The Friends' Ambulance Unit*, p. 188.

difficulties, Tatham and Miles acknowledged that these were coloured by the rich diversity of sentiment within the Unit.

At one end of the scale were those who had but imperfect sympathy with the spiritual ideals for which the Unit stood, whose presence in the F.A.U. was more a matter of chance and circumstance than anything else, and who would gladly have seen a more stringent regime. At the other end were those who believed that the Unit ought to be ostentatiously pacifist in its behaviour, to be an active protection against militarism—a class which, fortunately for the Unit's existence was neither large nor influential. Between these two extremes were men of almost every shade of conviction.⁷

The remaining scholarly historiography that centres on the FAU essentially comprises a single article, written almost 100 years after the official history. Jessica Meyer considered the FAU's relationship with the British Red Cross and the 'ambiguity at the heart... of a unit in which young men opposed to conflict and combat on ideological grounds could nonetheless experience the adventure and excitement associated with the conflict zone and thus fulfil their gendered duty to the nation'.⁸ In doing so, she discussed Corder as an exemplar of the 'complexities of the Quaker stance on service in wartime',⁹ but did not examine the impact of such complexities of conscience on the internal workings of the Unit.

Controversy has been discussed in more general texts, though the divisions wrought by conscription were either glossed over—as in John W. Graham's official 1922 history of the anti-war No-Conscription Fellowship,¹⁰ which was a radical and belligerent defender of conscientious objectors (COs)—or depicted as happening outside of the FAU, and the main body of the Unit as an almost homogenous mass. Moreover, the middle course pursued by the Unit ensured that they came under attack, or suspicion at the very least, then and now. Historian of twentieth-century Quakerism Thomas C. Kennedy has been unequivocal about the difficulties. The 'army thought so well of the unit that ultimately it succeeded in turning the FAU into a quasi-military organization'. He argued that after conscription the restriction of new members to non-Quakers caused it to be 'disowned' by the Friends' Service Committee (the body established within Yearly Meeting to support COs),¹¹ also describing this as 'serious inter-Quaker conflict'.¹²

7 Tatham and Miles, *The Friends' Ambulance Unit*, p. 188.

8 Meyer, J., 'Neutral Caregivers or Military Support?: the British Red Cross, the Friends' Ambulance Unit, and the problems of voluntary medical aid in wartime', *War & Society* 34 (2015), p. 106.

9 Meyer, 'Neutral Caregivers or Military Support?', p. 117.

10 Graham, J. W., *Conscription and Conscience: a history, 1916–1919*, London: G. Allen Unwin, 1922.

11 Kennedy, T. C., *The Hound of Conscience: a history of the No-Conscription Fellowship, 1914–1919*, Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1981, p. 85.

12 Kennedy, T. C., *British Quakerism, 1860–1920: the transformation of a religious community*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 315.

John Ormerod Greenwood's view was similar to Kennedy's reading, emphasising that the FAU was surrounded by 'intense suspicion and bitterness', in part because 'it advertised its willingness to help the government' and 'allowed its principle field officers—who by this time [the point at which conscription came into force] were not Quakers—to accept honorary commissions in the Army to facilitate their work'. Greenwood aligned the stance of the FAU with a military that in May 1916 took a group of COs to France and sentenced them to death (later commuted).¹³ David Boulton stated that the 'advent of conscription divided Friends in their attitude towards the FAU's work',¹⁴ but, interestingly, as the FAU was rejected by the London-rooted Friends' Service Committee and supported by the Northern Friends' Peace Board, also saw the divisions as a manifestation of 'the north–south divide'.¹⁵ Like Kennedy, Boulton implied that some answered conscription by resigning and joining up, and a small number of others resigned in order to refuse to join up, leaving the central core of the FAU as of one mind;¹⁶ Kennedy went further and suggested that 'Not many C.O.s came into the FAU after March 1916'.¹⁷

This article reveals for the first time the response to conscription and the behind-the-scenes negotiations of the FAU Committee. It also explores the unique challenges which conscription held *inside* the Friends' Ambulance Unit, primarily through the eyes of four of its members, Quaker and non-Quaker: Adam Priestley, who was among the group of early COs sent to France and sentenced to death; T. Corder Catchpool, a later, determined absolutist; Laurence Cadbury, a long-term senior FAU official, who at points during the War considered joining up; and John W. Major, a new member who arrived after conscription. It considers not only how the Unit forged a path through the First World War, but the implications of doing so for its members. The actions of the London-based Committee will be outlined, before examining what difficulties these decisions presented on the ground. Most pointedly, it is argued that, far from the organisation compromising Quaker beliefs and conscience, the middle course the FAU plotted actually created a space in which a whole spectrum of conscience could be accommodated, both in Britain and in the very midst of the bloody violence of the First World War.

13 Greenwood, J. O., *Quaker Encounters, Volume 1: Friends and Relief*, York: William Sessions, 1975, p. 184.

14 Boulton, D., *Objection Overruled: conscription and conscience in the First World War*, Dent: Dales Historical Monographs, 2014 [1967], pp. 55–56.

15 Boulton, *Objection Overruled*, p. xv.

16 Boulton, *Objection Overruled*, pp. 55–56.

17 Kennedy, *The Hound of Conscience*, p. 85.

Responses to Conscription: London

The ‘Committee of the Friends’ Ambulance Unit’ originally consisted of 21 men, some there for practical reasons—as senior staff and points of contact with the Unit in the field, such as Young—but the overwhelming majority were prominent Quaker figures. These included justices of the peace, as well as historian William Charles Braithwaite and surgeon Sir Rickman Godlee. Central to the Unit’s response to conscription were, however, men at the heart of the nation’s political elite, with all the influence that brought with it: Sir George Newman—a public health specialist and, as chief medical officer to the Board of Education, a senior civil servant, who was Chairman of the FAU Committee throughout 1914–19—and five Quaker Members of Parliament. These MPs were Percy Alden, J. Allen Baker (Philip Baker’s father), Joseph A. Pease, J. W. Wilson, T. Edmund Harvey and Arnold S. Rowntree.

British conscription had been whispered about for some time. But in mid 1915, with a manpower crisis brewing, the War Office’s Director-General for Recruiting (later Minister of War, 1916–18), Lord Derby, initiated a census that identified men of military age and a drive for the voluntary attestations of men willing to be called up to fight. While Rowntree had commented to his wife that the introduction of conscription would be ‘mad’,¹⁸ by September, it was looking increasingly likely. FAU Committee members were amongst the significant minority of anti-conscription MPs who met and drafted their arguments to present to the Government. The arguments were diverse and included humanitarian, economic, libertarian, moral and religious reasons.¹⁹

These few months before conscription enabled the FAU Committee to put contingency plans in place. So when it seemed that ‘certain claims might be made on men of military age serving under the Red Cross’, Newman was able first to call on Arthur Stanley, the Chairman of the Joint Committee of the British Red Cross and the Order of St John, under whom the FAU were operating, and then on Stanley’s brother—Lord Derby. In meetings between Newman and Derby from 1 December 1915, the case was made for the FAU being ‘engaged in useful and indeed important work’, and that ‘they would be unable to serve in the army owing to their conscientious objection to military service’. Derby agreed that if Sirs Arthur Sloggett and Arthur Lawley (respectively, Director General of the Medical Services of the British Armies in the Field, and commissioner for the British Red Cross in Boulogne) certified the FAU as “indispensable” he would exempt the whole unit from the recruiting scheme’. This they did, and Derby

18 ‘Letter, 15 September 1915’, Packer, I., (ed.), *The Letters of Arnold Stephenson Rowntree to Mary Katherine Rowntree, 1910–1918*, Camden Fifth Series, vol. xx, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 196.

19 TEMP MSS 977/1/6, ‘M.Ps’ Conscription Protest, Oct. 1915’, Development of Conscientious Objection and Alternatives to Combatant Service, 1915–1918, Arnold S. Rowntree Papers, Friends House Library (hereafter LRSF).

then permitted a significant expansion of work for the Unit.²⁰ The negotiations, directed by the Committee and not the War Office, completely transformed the experience of the War for hundreds of men. Not only did the arrangements ensure the Government officially recognised the spiritual influences, stance and voluntary nature of the FAU, and that the Unit would survive conscription; crucially, it also offered the Committee the ability to manoeuvre. It soon became clear just what these manoeuvrings might achieve.

On 9 January 1916, despite the resignation of his Home Secretary, John Simon, and earlier assurances to the contrary, Prime Minister H. H. Asquith and his Coalition Government introduced the Military Service Bill. The following days saw a political storm around the Bill, which would introduce conscription for all single men aged between 18 and 41 not in work of 'national importance' (expanding to married men in July, and in 1918 to men between 41 and 51). Though the Military Service Act was passed on 27 January, it was not without significant concessions having been made. Two Quaker MPs, Rowntree and T. Edmund Harvey—both members of the FAU Committee—ensured the insertion of the so-called 'conscience clause'. Under the new tribunal system, which was designed to hear and adjudicate cases and appeals by individual men against their conscription:

Any certificate of exemption may be absolute, conditional, or temporary, as the Military Service tribunal think best suited to the case, and in the case of an application on conscientious grounds may take the form of an exemption from combatant duty only, or may be conditional on the applicant being engaged in some work which in the opinion of the Tribunal dealing with the case is of national importance.²¹

It has been claimed that Rowntree and Harvey's plans for exemption from military and not simply combatant service was scuppered by clumsy wording,²² and that local tribunals differed in the understanding and application of the legislation.²³ Nevertheless, the two MPs ensured that by law conscience was to be considered and also that alternative work might be used to accommodate conscience. The negotiations taking place behind the scenes, concerning the Unit as important work, thereby came to be aligned with what was present in the legislation, thanks to two of the FAU Committee.

Moreover, in the week before the Military Service Act was passed, Newman (accompanied, on one occasion, by Rowntree, Harvey and J. W. Wilson) had

20 TEMP MSS 881/C, 'Meeting of the Committee, 9 December 1915', Friends Ambulance Unit Committee Minutes, LRSF.

21 Military Service Act, 1916, 5 & 6 Geo. 5, 104, Section 339 (3).

22 See, for instance, den Boggende, B., 'Reluctant Absolutist: Malcolm Sparkes' conscientious objections to World War I', *Quaker Studies* 10 (2005), p. 68.

23 Boggende, 'Reluctant Absolutist', *passim*. See also, for example, McDermott, J., *British Military Service Tribunals, 1916–1918: 'a very much abused body of men'*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011.

been busy meeting with Lord Derby, at the latter's request. The meetings essentially formalised earlier agreements and made sure that the conscience clause would work in practice. Three main points were discussed:

1st.—whether the Friends' Ambulance Unit could provide a sphere of national service for all young Quakers of military age who did not enlist;

2nd.—whether in such event the War Office could provide the Friends' Ambulance Unit with increased scope for their work in hospitals, motor convoys or ambulance trains;

3rd.—whether it would be possible to make similar arrangements for all conscientious objectors unwilling to fight, but willing to serve the State in non-military work.

Explaining the Quaker position on oaths, enlistment and military service, as well as providing a broad grounding in Quaker membership and practice, Newman secured points one and two in favour of the FAU and Friends with conscientious objections. As to the third, Newman suggested that a new, different organisation might be established to which tribunals might refer non-Quaker COs.²⁴ (This suggestion might help explain how Harvey came to sit on the Government's 'Committee on the Work of National Importance', generally known as the 'Pelham Committee', which was established hastily, at the end of March 1916, and identified and found such work.)

In early February, inquiries were sent out to Jordans, to the FAU group at Haxby Road Hospital on the Rowntree factory site at York, and to Dunkirk to ascertain the feeling of the FAU membership towards conscription. It was 'then decided that it was important to proceed immediately with the necessary arrangements for obtaining exemption under the Act.' At a rapidly convened meeting, Stanley agreed 'it was desirable to obtain exemption... *en bloc*'. Lord Derby quickly confirmed and also approved 'the exemption of the indispensable men in the Unit in France who were not members of the Society or who had not the same conscientious objection to enlistment.'²⁵

Furthermore, the Committee's manoeuvrings with the War Office opened the door to an entirely new scheme. On 10 March, eight days after the Military Service Act came into force, the 'General Service Section' (GSS) of the FAU was established 'for finding suitable service of National Importance' for men willing to undertake it.²⁶ The Committee recognised that not all conscientious objectors responding to conscription would be comfortable in ambulance work:

24 TEMP MSS 977/1/6 'Memorandum respecting negotiations with Lord Derby... Chairman of the Committee of the Friends' Ambulance Unit, 15 February 1916', Development of Conscientious Objection and Alternatives to Combatant Service, 1915–1918, Arnold S. Rowntree Papers, LRSF.

25 'Memorandum Respecting Negotiations with Lord Derby'.

26 TEMP MSS 881/EC/M1, 10 March 1916, Friends' Ambulance Unit Executive Committee Minute Book, vol. 1, p. 1, LRSF.

some considered caring for soldiers to be abetting the War and working with the military. Committee members used their links and position as leverage and created work under the FAU banner that was divorced from any association with the armed forces. Moreover, each man chose which available employment best suited them and their consciences. For most, the work was agricultural, but it also included placements in a 'wide variety of occupations: Education, [Friends'] War Victims Relief [Committee], Y.M.C.A. [Young Men's Christian Association] work, Friends' Emergency Committee work, attendants at Asylums, Hospitals, Epileptic Colonies, and similar institutions, Welfare work, Surgical appliance making, Engineering, Electrical work, Ship-building, Building construction, Timber work, Flour-mills, Food factories, and clerical work.'²⁷

In response to conscription, the Committee had striven for and achieved an expanded organisation that created significant space for conscientious objectors with a diverse range of sentiments, who were recognised by the Government as taking a legitimate stance. Committee members had helped set an agenda to which the War Office was forced to bend and had fashioned an organisation that was able to accommodate non-Quakers and men set against any contact with the military, as well as carry out medical aid and continue ambulance work. The FAU Committee had steered a middle course between fighting and imprisonment for COs. However, their manoeuvrings were by no means universally welcomed by FAU members, old or new. While the Committee created a space in which consciences might be accommodated, not everyone felt this space was right for them. Within the Foreign Section, the impact of conscription and the Committee's response generated a new wave of controversy which broke against the shores of France and England.

Responses to Conscription and the FAU Committee's Plans: France and Belgium

Decisions prompted by the Military Service Bill: Adam Priestley (1883–?1971)

Adam Priestley was born in Manchester in 1883. He went on to qualify as an engineer at Victoria University (now University of Manchester), officially registering with the professional body for engineers in 1909.²⁸ He later moved to Stafford, Staffordshire, worked as a company secretary, and lived with his father, who was a physician. Their address on Foregate Street was within two minutes' walk of the Quaker Meeting House; perhaps he first encountered Friends here, or maybe reconnected after being aware of them at his University, which had strong

27 TEMP MSS 977/1/6, Peverett, G., 'A Brief Report on the Work of the General Service Section from the Time of its Inception in 1916 to September, 1917', pp. 3–4, *Development of Conscientious Objection and Alternatives to Combatant Service, 1915–1918*, Arnold S. Rowntree Papers, LRSF.

28 Ancestry.com. 'UK, Civil Engineer Records, 1820–1930' [online database], Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013.

links with Quakers. Priestley joined the FAU on 15 September 1915, working as a nursing orderly at Dunkirk, before becoming an administrator. He saw conscription coming and left the Unit for 'reasons of conscience' two days before the Military Service Act was passed.²⁹

Priestley returned to England and planned to work at his friend Christopher Eden's engineering firm. His local tribunal at Northwood, Ruislip exempted him from combatant services only. Priestley appealed, and his case was heard before Middlesex Appeal Tribunal on 3 March, the day after conscription came into force. Both tribunal boards made much of the fact that he appeared before his initial hearing 'in khaki' (in his FAU uniform).³⁰ While this did little to support his case for absolute exemption, he stated at his first hearing that he saw

no distinction between combatant and non-combatant war services. After taking part for some months in ambulance work... I came to see that while I and others were doing this work, other men were thereby being forced to fight. But even worse than this to me, is the fact that to do any non-combatant work means giving some form of allegiance to a state which is at war, and so to acknowledge that it is right to be at war. Now war is contrary to that spirit which is clearly expressed in the New Testament, and to try to live in this spirit is to me the only thing which makes life worth while [*sic*]; I will therefore not live contrary to it, whatever may be the penalty. I realise that this spirit is not compatible with any of the institutions on which the state now rests, or with patriotism, if this means the harm of other nations. I do not expect, therefore, that I shall obtain from the state exemption from the Act, but I wish to appeal for such exemption in order to make it clearly understood why I shall refuse to do any war service whatever.³¹

His appeal was refused and he became one of the first conscientious objectors to feel the full weight of the State. Placed under military authorities as part of the British Army's Non-Combatant Corps (NCC), he refused orders and, along with another eleven men from Harwich Redoubt, Essex, was placed in irons and on a punishment diet, before being sent to France on 7 May 1916. Initially described by *The Friend* as an attender,³² and later as attached to or associated with Quakers,³³ Priestley stated that the transfer overseas '[made] the outlook more serious; any penalty may be exacted out there for refusal to obey orders.

29 'Priestley, Adam', Friends' Ambulance Unit 1914–1919: Personnel Cards, Series 2, LRSF, <http://fau.quaker.org.uk/search-view?forename=&surname=Priestley>, accessed 10/02/2016.

30 MH-47-8-34, 'Priestley, Adam', Middlesex Appeal Tribunal Papers, Home Office Collections, The National Archives, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C14091055>, accessed 10/02/2016.

31 MH-47-8-34, 'Priestley, Adam'.

32 'Friends and the Military Service Act', *The Friend* (12 May 1916), p. 339.

33 He is later described as such in press coverage, e.g. 'Sentenced to Death: Conscientious Objectors How Dealt with in France', *Evening Post* (26 August 1916), p. 13, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=EP19160826.2.94.2>, accessed 05/04/2016.

As far as I can see, however, considerations of this kind will weigh with none of us'.³⁴

Contemporaries and historians have made much of the early group of at least 35 conscientious objectors, which included Priestley.³⁵ Contrary to the meaning attributed by some, the term 'Frenchmen' was applied by the men themselves to anyone who had been sent at this time from England to France by the military authorities,³⁶ and not only those who had been court-martialled there and sentenced to death, before an immediate commuting of the sentence to ten years' hard labour in prison (this, too, later diminished). In June, Priestley and others were returned to England and placed in the civil prison at Winchester.³⁷

Priestley spent the rest of the War in the Home Office Scheme, which had been hastily established in response to the number of men refusing to serve in the military. This new scheme, centred on work camps, was also open to those under the military authorities who refused to carry out orders on account of being COs, and was extended to the 'Frenchmen' in civil prison. Men who agreed to work in these camps (the labour whereof was supposed to be detached from anything that could be directly considered to serve the war machine) were considered 'alternativists' and not 'absolutists', as they had accepted alternative service to the State. Priestley went first to the infamous camp at Dyce, Aberdeen, with other 'Frenchmen', like Cornelius Barritt—who, like Priestley, was one of the 'Harwich 12'—and Howard Marten, then later to Wakefield, from where he was released sometime around the end of the War.³⁸ He remained a staunch opponent of the conflict and, after conscription, seems to have deeply regretted his time with the FAU: when he was offered his medals for service as part of the British Red Cross, he refused them.³⁹

The eye of the conscription storm: T. Corder Catchpool (1883–1952) and Laurence Cadbury (1889–1982)

Corder Catchpool was a birthright Quaker from Leicester. He received a Quaker schooling and was then apprenticed to be an engineer in Essex. He was 31 and

34 'Friends and the Military Service Act: news from the Harwich Group', *The Friend* (19 May 1916), p. 363.

35 See Appendix 2014, 'Conspiracy or Cock-up?: the case of the 35 conscientious objectors sentenced to death in France', Boulton, *Objection Overruled*, p. xxv. This provides one of the more detailed overviews of events, but see also the earliest found in a scholarly book (though an official history): Graham, *Conscription and Conscience*, pp. 110–26.

36 See TEMP MSS 62/COR/FR/10, 'Reunion of "Frenchmen" 1931', Cornelius Barritt papers, LRSF.

37 Priestley, A. T., in 'The Pearce Register of British WW1 Conscientious Objectors', *The Imperial War Museum's Lives of the First World War*, <https://livesofthefirstworldwar.org/lifestory/7645867>, accessed 10/02/2016.

38 Priestley, A. T., in 'The Pearce Register'.

39 Ancestry.com. 'UK, WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914–1920' [online database], Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014, accessed 02/02/2016.

in Switzerland when war began. With Europe in a state of panic, an anxious Corder travelled back to England. 'Within a few days' of the outbreak of war, it was said that he 'had experienced a call to take up ambulance work, should the way open'.⁴⁰ He was one of the first group of 43 FAU volunteers to embark for France in October 1914.

During his time in the Unit, Corder took a spiritual approach to his medical aid work and what he felt was the moral support of individual soldiers caught up in a horrific war; to him, the conflict had humanised fighting men. He felt deeply that he was following in the footsteps of Christ, and through this frontline aid work was sharing the suffering of ordinary people (soldiers and civilians) in the middle of the violence. But in the months after the Second Battle of Ypres in April/May 1915, everything had calmed down militarily and, therefore, for the FAU. 'The standardising... of our various activities, has led to life becoming more normal for us all out here'. Corder also 'accepted... the post of Adjutant',⁴¹ an important administrator at Dunkirk headquarters and away from the trenches.

Laurence Cadbury was the first son of birthright Quakers George and his second wife Elizabeth. He was born at Woodbrooke, Birmingham, the large residence to which George moved when he and his brother relocated their chocolate factory to Bournville, creating a model settlement. George was a staunch pacifist and during the Second Boer War bought the *Daily News* to provide a counterview to the jingoistic Tory press. Laurence was born into privilege, given a Quaker schooling, and read economics at Trinity College, Cambridge. Once he had graduated, he joined the family business, later taking a year off to travel to America, where he explored the Yukon and competed in motor sports.

He returned to Birmingham just before the First World War began. When it did, he first sought to join the military in a potential armoured car division,⁴² before becoming one of the first volunteers for the planned ambulance unit. He met up with the first party of arrivals in France on 4 November 1914. Laurence had brought with him his own car, nicknamed 'The Beetle'. With his passion for motor vehicles, and perhaps to quell his thoughts of leaving the Unit to join the Royal Field Artillery,⁴³ Laurence was appointed the Chef-Adjoint of Section Sanitaire Anglaise 13 in June 1915. The mobile convoy of ambulance vehicles had worked extensively with civilians and went on to be embedded with the French Army.

40 'Editor's Note', in Catchpool, T. C. P., *On Two Fronts: edited by his sister with a foreword by J. Rendel Harris*, London: Friends Book Centre, 1971 [1918], p. 17.

41 'Letter, 29 August 1915', Catchpool, *On Two Fronts*, pp. 86–87.

42 Crosfield, J. F., *A History of the Cadbury Family*, 2 vols.; London: John Crosfield, 1985, vol. ii, p. 664.

43 MS327/B/2, 'Letters and Papers Relating to a Proposed Application by Laurence Cadbury for a Temporary Commission in the Royal Field Artillery' (dated March/April 1915), Laurence Cadbury Papers, Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections, University of Birmingham (hereafter CRL).

Corder, on the other hand, was finding his promotion less than satisfying. With time at headquarters being spent 'mending motor cars instead of men', in the relative comfort of a bed and good food, and with a nagging sense that war was becoming normalised, Corder began to grow bored and feel 'soul-sick'.⁴⁴ The feeling was pushed to the back of his mind, even when he was back in England and sitting through the furore against conscription of the January 1916 adjourned London Yearly Meeting.⁴⁵ He returned to France and found succour in the good work in which he felt the Unit was engaged. At the end of March, though, Corder's ideas began to shift. The issues generated by conscription coming into force were significant. Reflecting that the decisions to fight by the poor, smashed and dying soldiers whom he had tended had 'been a matter of conscience', he again longed to sacrifice his own comfort to join with the suffering of others, though was exempted as a CO as part of the FAU Committee's arrangements. The Friends' Service Committee had finally disowned 'the poor unit'. There were 'large numbers of new [Quaker] applicants for membership of the Unit', which he regretted was just going to divert funding away from refugees. Yet 'A good many of my boys are getting restless, being afraid that C.O.s will be forced either into the N.C.C. or into prison [as was happening to Priestley], and that if so they must resign the F.A.U. and take their share of the hardships.'⁴⁶

Laurence, on the other hand, wanted his war record to demonstrate his stance. He was to be exempted as 'Indispensible' to the Unit, and not on the grounds of conscientious objection.⁴⁷ Unhappy at 'the blighters in the Society... bleating about their precious, pampered and oversensitive consciences', Laurence went on to write in his letters home that 'a few fellows' had wanted to leave as they had been exempted because the Unit 'was doing useful work; and not given total exemption, not because the work they were doing had any value, but because of their blighted consciences. Most have been pretty well sat on, I am glad to say'.⁴⁸

Within three months it became clear that these Unit members had not been sat on firmly enough.

44 'Letter, 17 October 1915' and 'Letter, 7 November 1915', Catchpool, *On Two Fronts*, pp. 88–90.

45 In May 1915, London Yearly Meeting had 'For the first time... in history' been 'adjourned with a Minute reading, "We leave the Meeting for Sufferings at liberty to call together the representatives appointed to this Yearly Meeting, should such a course appear necessary. Such meeting, if summoned, is to be considered as an adjournment of this Meeting, and is to be open to all Friends"' ('Notes and Queries', *Bulletin of Friends' Historical Society of Philadelphia* 7 [1916], p. 36). The adjourned Meeting was called once conscription appeared to be an inevitability.

46 'Letter, 26 March 1916', Catchpool, *On Two Fronts*, pp. 101–06.

47 'Cadbury, Laurence', Friends' Ambulance Unit 1914–1919: Personnel Cards, Series 1, LRSF, <http://fau.quaker.org.uk/search-view?forename=&surname=cadbury>, accessed 05/04/2016.

48 MS327/A/1/26, 'Letter, 4 March 1916', pp. 5–6, Personal Letters, 1914–1919: Transcripts of Cadbury and related family correspondence, Laurence Cadbury Papers, CRL.

[W]e have been having a terrible time, the air being thick with ultimatums and memorandums... I don't object to consciences not even over-manured ones, so long as they only prompt people to self-regarding actions, but when they start seriously and adversely affecting other people, I consider it time to remind their owners that there are other considerations besides their own particular and peculiar individualities, that there are other people in the world, and that their welfare should at least be given a thought, if only a passing one.

Anyway, our conscientious purists completely forgot everything else, and when they heard that people were being sent to prison, dashed round the country getting people to sign a memorandum, telling the government that all people who claimed conscientious exemption were sincere and holding the awful threat over their heads that, if they did not reform their wicked ways, then, in the name of the FAU, they would return home.

The whole thing was engineered by a little group, quite regardless of the wishes of the vast majority of the Unit. Consequently, there has been a row with the authorities over unauthorised, and what they regard as highly objectionable, people visiting the [ambulance] trains [the FAU were working on under military officers. These trains transported wounded troops away from the fighting].⁴⁹

This had serious implications, as the news had reached the British Army's most senior staff and threatened to suspend the FAU's work, in turn jeopardising the good name of the Unit and therefore its ability to continue the work of the Foreign Section in France and Belgium, and also that of the GSS in England. In short, the consciences of a few threatened to override those of hundreds of members, whose many and varied individual decisions about their own consciences had been reached by careful, even agonised reflection.

To protect the middle course between fighting and prison, the London Committee issued what Laurence called 'ultimata'. The first was a letter written by Newman 'to the personnel of the Unit, pointing out the difference between one's behaviour as a private individual and as a member of a Unit working in the war area'.⁵⁰ It was also an effort to calm some of the real anxiety about exemption, 'the extension of Compulsion, and the operations of the Tribunals'.

[F]rom the beginning the Committee have always sought to safeguard the Unit in such a way as to protect its ideals and provide accommodation as far as possible for the natural desires and susceptibilities [*sic*] of the genuine Conscientious Objector. With you we desire to keep the Unit free, untrammelled and as voluntary as it can be, though we all recognise that improved and effective organisation and proper discipline is absolutely necessary.

Newman further underscored how 'valuable' the Unit had been to conscientious objectors in England 'in helping to secure for them the freedom from military

49 MS327/A/1/29, 'Letter, 26 May 1916', pp. 1–2, Personal Letters, 1914–1919: Transcripts of Cadbury and related family correspondence, Laurence Cadbury Papers, CRL.

50 MS327/A/1/29, 'Letter, 26 May 1916', p. 2, Personal Letters, 1914–1919: Transcripts of Cadbury and related family correspondence, Laurence Cadbury Papers, CRL.

service' through the GSS. The Committee '[deprecated] as much as you... any attempt to sow dissention among us or any action which places the Unit in a false position'. Newman then strongly urged members to avoid approaching Government authorities or issuing 'memorials or formal Resolutions'. These actions were 'absolutely harmful to the Unit and likely to lead to grave confusion and difficulty... We are anxious in no way to stifle or suppress freedom of thought or discussion, but it is obvious that men in the Unit cannot be at liberty to take part in public movements, however excellent or desirable in themselves, while they remain members of the Unit'.⁵¹

A marginally more delicately worded attached statement for GSS members suggested that they should think carefully about where their conscience located them; peace work was still possible, but working hours were long and arduous—the 'leisure time of members', however, did 'not directly concern the Unit provided that reasonable conduct is maintained'. The statement concluded by underscoring that the War Office had nothing to do with Unit policies. 'It [was], however, inevitable that an Ambulance Unit should be associated with the Military Authorities both English and French respecting the ambulance work which it' was undertaking.⁵²

The letter, Laurence wrote, 'led to a few going home, one or two of whom I am sorry to see the last of'. These included Corder, 'with whom [he had] been closely associated so long, and who [was] such a thoroughly genuine old man... The course taken was, however, the only possible one, and should make for things going more smoothly internally in the future'.⁵³ For Corder, the atmosphere and the policies being pursued were deviating beyond what he was comfortable with. Just before the Committee's letter to members was issued, he wrote:

The Conscription Act has meant a gradual tightening of the screw of military discipline, and I cannot help feeling now we are a conscript unit... I could have stayed on in spite of the conviction that the Unit is no longer a place for the strong Peace man—but the later happenings make it impossible—as an ordinary member all excuse for my doing so finally disappears.⁵⁴

The second ultimatum to which Laurence referred was issued in person by Committee representatives at a meeting with the War Office: 'unless the Unit was duly authorised, and [the Army's General Headquarters] given distinct orders that the work was to be facilitated in every way, they did not see that the carrying on of the Unit was further possible'. The middle course—challenging what might

51 TEMP MSS 977/3/1, 'Letter, 17 May 1916', Friends' Ambulance Unit, Arnold S. Rowntree Papers, LRSF.

52 TEMP MSS 977/3/1, 'Letter, 17 May 1916', Friends' Ambulance Unit, Arnold S. Rowntree Papers, LRSF.

53 MS327/A/1/29, 'Letter, 26 May 1916', p. 2, Personal Letters, 1914–1919: Transcripts of Cadbury and related family correspondence, Laurence Cadbury Papers, CRL.

54 'Letter, 14 May 1916', Catchpool, *On Two Fronts*, pp. 107–08.

be seen as the extremes of both ‘sides’—was successful: ‘We got all we wanted’, concluded Laurence.⁵⁵

On quitting the Unit on 20 May 1916 and returning home,⁵⁶ Corder was in breach of the Military Service Act. He spent the next seven months at Woodbrooke, which George Cadbury had in 1903 given over for an educational settlement, where Corder became ‘chairman of a group for the study of International Relations and the general work of Reconstruction’.⁵⁷ On 12 January 1917, a party of five military men and police detectives raided Woodbrooke and ‘arrested seven... as having failed to show any reason for not being in the army’. The men, including Corder, were taken before the magistrates the next day and placed under military authority.⁵⁸

At his court martial, Corder seems to have been allowed time to make extensive representation. After some discussion, he said:

At home men who stood for the same ideals as myself were called cowards and shirkers at the tribunals, whilst members of the Unit were often held up as the ‘genuine conscientious objector.’ I knew that the course chosen by my friends who stayed behind was harder than the one I had so eagerly taken. In the circumstances which had arisen I felt able to serve the cause of Peace better at home than abroad. On May 23rd, 1916, after nearly nineteen months at the front I left the Unit and returned to take my stand with the thirty-four comrades [including Priestley] who were then expecting sentence of death in France, for their faith.⁵⁹

Corder refused to enter the Home Office Scheme. He remained an absolutist for the rest of the War, with the cycle—arrest, transfer to military authorities, refusal to follow orders, court martial, prison, release—visited on him four times in total, with his final release in spring 1919. He accepted his First World War medals.⁶⁰

With the standardising of the FAU’s work and its attendant administration, Laurence was, to his lament, appointed as the officer in charge of the Unit’s Transport Section back at Dunkirk headquarters in autumn 1916. He had earlier written of the difficulties in having ‘a large number of men who have been handed over to us by the Tribunals waiting for work’,⁶¹ but, in January 1917, Laurence had cause to vent again. ‘The absorption of new and rather unprepossessing recruits with a C.O. Tribunal flavour about them, into rather aristocratic convoys of men of a different class, many of whom joined the Unit years ago because they wanted

55 MS327/A/1/29, ‘Letter, 26 May 1916’, p. 2, Personal Letters, 1914–1919: Transcripts of Cadbury and related family correspondence, Laurence Cadbury Papers, CRL.

56 ‘Catchpool, Thomas Corder Pettifer’, Friends’ Ambulance Unit 1914–1919: Personnel Cards, Series 1, LRSF, <http://fau.quaker.org.uk/search-view?forename=&surname=Catchpool>, accessed 05/04/2016.

57 Catchpool, *On Two Fronts*, ‘Editor’s note’, p. 109.

58 ‘Friends and the Military Service Act’, *The Friend* (9 February 1917), p. 109.

59 ‘Friends and the Military Service Act’, *The Friend* (9 February 1917), p. 109.

60 Ancestry.com. ‘UK, WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914–1920’.

61 MS327/A/1/30, ‘Letter, 22 June 1916’, p. 2, Personal Letters, 1914–1919: Transcripts of Cadbury and related family correspondence, Laurence Cadbury Papers.

to get out before the war was over and thought it the quickest way, is a very ticklish matter.⁶² Even with these upheavals, and other thoughts of joining up,⁶³ Laurence remained loyal to the Unit. He was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire before he left the FAU. He was one of the last personnel working in France after the fighting ended and when the Unit was disbanded. He returned home on 2 March 1919. He accepted his service medals and was also awarded the French Croix de Guerre.⁶⁴

Entering the FAU after conscription: John William Major (1895–1966)

Major was born in South Shields, Durham, the son of a joiner-undertaker and member of the Church of England. He was awarded a place at Emmanuel College, Cambridge to study mathematics. In 1916, at twenty-one years of age and while still an undergraduate, he appeared before Cambridge Tribunal as a conscientious objector. The tribunal offered a conditional exemption from combatant duty, dependent on joining the FAU, which Major did officially on 19 August 1916. After receiving medical and physical training at Jordans, he arrived at Dunkirk headquarters and worked as a school instructor from 9 October to 17 November, then joined Ambulance Train 16 (AT16) as an orderly.⁶⁵

'There was always a certain distinction about' AT16, wrote Tatham and Miles; certainly it had 'superior paintwork', but 'this was the first of the Unit's trains, and seniority was not to be lightly forgotten'.⁶⁶ Nor was it, as, for Major at least, the fact that the khaki-coloured train—overwhelmingly manned by FAU orderlies (around half of whom joined the train after conscription's enforcement)⁶⁷—was also under military command with officers from the Royal Army Medical Corps as well as the British Red Cross, was an unsettling one. On AT16, 'in place of a great adventure there [was] the humble, monotonous duty behind the lines of conveying sick and wounded from Casualty Clearing Station to Base Hospital'.⁶⁸ Just as appears to have been the case for Corder at Dunkirk headquarters, this routine existence seems to have lent time to thinking and a vague but gnawing discontent.

Amusements were few, but discussion meetings, often held under the guise of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR), were part of life on board for Major

62 MS327/A/1/40, 'Letter, 25 January 1917', p. 5, Personal Letters, 1914–1919: Transcripts of Cadbury and related family correspondence, Laurence Cadbury Papers.

63 MS327/B/3/16, 'Letter from George Newman, 25 March 1918', Letters to Laurence Cadbury, 1915–1919, Personal Letters, 1914–1919: Transcripts of Cadbury and related family correspondence, Laurence Cadbury Papers.

64 Ancestry.com. 'UK, WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914–1920'.

65 'Major, John', Friends' Ambulance Unit 1914–1919: Personnel Cards, Series 2, LRSF, <http://fau.quaker.org.uk/search-view?forename=&surname=major>, accessed 05/04/2016.

66 Tatham and Miles, *The Friends' Ambulance Unit*, p. 141.

67 Harrison, C. A., and Young, C., (eds), *A Train Errant: being the experiences of a voluntary unit in France and an anthology from their magazine*, Hertford: Simson and Co., 1919, pp. 325–27.

68 Harrison and Young, *A Train Errant*, p. 8.

and his comrades. The FoR was established in Cambridge in December 1914, as a nondenominational Christian pacifist group. Alongside the Friends' Service Committee, FoR worked closely with the No-Conscription Fellowship (N-CF), which was formed in 1914 for anyone who opposed war on religious, political, moral or humanitarian grounds. The FoR meetings on AT16 were centred, not on Christian topics *per se*, but on subjects of political concern. '[C]apitalist influence and force should be restricted by socialism',⁶⁹ was the consensus at one meeting. Two others considered 'State propaganda',⁷⁰ and fairness under colonisation.⁷¹ One event was called 'Industrialisation and the Problem of Poverty'.⁷²

In Major's diary there was a seam of dissatisfaction at the treatment of pacifists, COs and the N-CF in Britain, especially in 1918.⁷³ But much of his immediate disgruntlement centred on what conscription had meant for the running of the FAU and its association with the military. A group discussion in early 1917 centred on 'the gradual decline of Quaker Spirit in the Unit' and consequently the 'increase of military discipline'.⁷⁴ For Major, there was a real tension between these two:

The great idea of the Unit seems to be to suffer great inconvenience from the military, although such inconvenience may be against all one's ideas of what is right simply for the purpose of being allowed to do good work. This is really sanctioning a small evil that great good may come from it; a principle to which I do not hold, nor indeed any of the old Friends, who steadily maintain that it is better to constantly do right, speak truth, and give freedom of action than it is to practise evil that good may come of it or lie for the same reason.⁷⁵

The middle course steered by the FAU Committee was, for Major, a source of great concern. With the FAU's introduction of an additional half-hour onto the daily duties of AT16's orderlies, Major wrote: 'Here of course the F.A.U have the military Act behind them. How much will they tighten their ropes, before we realise that they do this only because of the additional authority that the Act gives them? How much longer before I resign the Unit?' Still he continued, at one point '[working] in the staff-coach', where he railed against the 'constant subjugation of

69 TEMP MSS 606/2, 'Diary, March–October 1917', 2 April 1917, John W. Major papers, LRSF. All quotes from the diaries are presented as they appear in the original, including punctuation.

70 TEMP MSS 606/2, 'Diary, March–October 1917', 25 May 1917, John W. Major papers.

71 TEMP MSS 606/2, 'Diary, March–October 1917', 26 June 1917, John W. Major papers.

72 TEMP MSS 606/2, 'Diary, March–October 1917', 7 April 1917, John W. Major papers.

73 See TEMP MSS 606/3, 'Diary, October 1917–November 1918', John W. Major papers.

74 See TEMP MSS 606/3, 'Diary, October 1917–November 1918', 26 April 1917, John W. Major papers.

75 See TEMP MSS 606/3, 'Diary, October 1917–November 1918', 1 May 1917, John W. Major papers.

the will to those who are utterly selfish in their actions'. He requested a change of post, or else he would resign 'from the Unit; believing that it [was] better to go to prison & be right with one's conscience, that to stay here & pander to the military caste'.⁷⁶ Thoughts of resignation were never far from Major during the War, especially when Joseph Whitaker, his Cambridge, Wesleyan friend, opted to transfer out of the Foreign Section to do agricultural work under the GSS.⁷⁷

Major also firmly believed that the mooted plans for the FAU to continue after the conflict would 'acquiesce in the next war, and [...] help the government in their conscription after the war'.⁷⁸ However, after having trained almost 1,800 personnel—including several women and around 400 men in the General Service Section—the Unit was disbanded in early 1919. It was only at this point that Major left, on 5 January, four days after his friend Whitaker and twenty before Olaf Stapledon.⁷⁹ At first, he refused to sign for his medals, but later accepted them. Both Whitaker and Stapledon accepted their decorations.⁸⁰ Major became a convinced Quaker around 1922.

Conclusion

The Friends' Ambulance Unit was established by Quakers outside of the formal structures of the Religious Society of Friends. What this perhaps did was offer its Committee—comprised of well-connected and prominent Quakers, with at least six (George Newman and the five MPs) having the ear of Government—and its members some leeway in how the FAU went about its work. On the ground in France and Belgium, and under the auspices of the Joint Committee of the British Red Cross and the Order of St John, the Unit was initially an energetic, responsive organisation. This spirit of proactiveness infused the work of its London-based Committee when, with several canaries in the Parliamentary mine, they realised in late-1915 that conscription was coming. With their political connections, as well as their relationship with Arthur Stanley, Chairman of the Joint Committee, key members, particularly Newman as Chairman of the FAU, began to organise

76 See TEMP MSS 606/3, 'Diary, October 1917–November 1918', 29 August 1917, John W. Major papers.

77 See TEMP MSS 606/3, 'Diary, October 1917–November 1918', 10 June 1917, John W. Major papers. Confirmed by 'Whitaker, Joseph', Friends' Ambulance Unit 1914–1919: Personnel Cards, Series 1, LRSF, <http://fau.quaker.org.uk/search-view?forename=&surname=whitaker>, accessed 05/04/2016.

78 TEMP MSS 606/3, 'Diary, October 1917–November 1918', 26 April 1917, John W. Major papers.

79 'Major, John', 'Whitaker, Joseph' and 'Stapledon, Olaf', Friends' Ambulance Unit 1914–1919: Personnel Cards, Series 2, LRSF, <http://fau.quaker.org.uk/search-view?forename=&surname=major>; <http://fau.quaker.org.uk/search-view?forename=&surname=whitaker>; <http://fau.quaker.org.uk/search-view?forename=&surname=stapledon>, accessed 05/04/2016.

80 Ancestry.com, 'UK, WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls', accessed 02/02/2016.

in preparation. Under their steer and in negotiations, Lord Derby and the War Office recognised the FAU as an important and indispensable body before 1916.

Meanwhile, the Quaker MPs of the FAU Committee were involved with a broader coalition of anti-conscription politicians and, along with a wide range of other reasons, helped ensure that religious considerations were included in a memorandum to Government. As the Military Service Bill was introduced in January 1916, meetings with Lord Derby continued. In Parliament and behind the scenes, FAU Committee members were working to establish the recognition that the Unit was a conscience-led, spiritual and legitimate form of what was termed 'work of national importance'. Indeed, T. Edmund Harvey and Arnold S. Rowntree secured the introduction of a 'conscience clause' into the Military Service Act. Under the law, the tribunal system had to consider conscientious objection as a valid reason for men asking to be exempted from conscription. The FAU was a place to which the COs offered conditional exemptions could be referred. Moreover, the manoeuvrings of the FAU Committee had orchestrated not only universal exemption for FAU members—Quaker and non-Quaker, as conscientious objectors or indispensable—but also the aid activities and longevity of the Foreign Section through the expansion of War Office work. Crucially, the Committee was able to establish the General Service Section, a separate space where men who rejected working with the military might find labour conducive to their consciences.

The controversy surrounding conscription and the decisions made by the FAU Committee hit just as there was a military lull in fighting, and as work in France and Belgium had settled into a routine, with all the requisite administration that entailed. The response to conscription within the FAU membership was varied, which certainly created internal divisions; it was by no means a homogenous body. Those who might have caused the most ideological, and therefore practical, discord—such as non-Quaker, Adam Priestley and Friend, Corder Catchpool—left. However, once they did, and much to the chagrin of Quaker, Laurence Cadbury, others who had not wished to enter the Unit previously, including ardent anti-war men and men whom Cadbury felt were of a distinctly different social class from its earlier members, did so under conscription and brought their consciences with them. So while non-Friend, John W. Major railed against the loss of the Quaker spirit from the Unit, and its working relationship with the military, he and other tribunal COs guaranteed that the Quaker spirit thrived. The middle course steered by the FAU Committee, while ideologically difficult at times, ensured that the Unit was able to accommodate consciences of different hues and—contrary to the reason given for the Friends' Service Committee's disowning of the Unit—men of different religions.

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