

PERSONAL APPEARANCE BEFORE LOCAL BOARD, THURSDAY, --, 1952

I appeared at the local board offices at 3 o'clock. With me were my parents, a neighbor, Mrs. --, and my minister, Rev. --. We were pointed to chairs and we were seated. At about 3:15 the clerk for the local board called my name. I responded, handed her a letter stating that I had with me the above mentioned individuals. The clerk stamped the letter with a date stamp and then gave it to the board members.

I was first introduced to the board members, Mr. --, and Mr. --. An overall impression of these men is that they were aware of what was in my file in a general manner. They had probably read it hurriedly just before the hearing. They appeared to be well educated, however they made no attempt to be overly cordial. The attitude was a very positive antagonism to me personally, and to the viewpoint I hold. I feel that in their questioning they acknowledged the sincerity of my position but could not bring themselves to vote to let me have the classification I requested. The attitude they held toward conscientious objection is one that could be expected from official American Legion, and it seemed to me that they held as tenaciously to the view that they were right and I wrong, as I held the view that my stand was the correct one and the warring stand the incorrect one. A third person, a coordinator, Mrs. -- was also present. She asked the questions on the part of the board, and took shorthand notes on most of my answers. No attempt was made to take down all of the answers verbatim, nor was there any attempt to take down all of the conversation as it developed. Mrs. -- took part in much of the discussion and her remarks did not seem (not being a judge of shorthand, I do not know) to be placed in her notes. The clerk for board -- was present and seemed to be taking notes also. The following is an approximation of the hearing as it developed. It was made several hours after the hearing.

ML: (clerk) What sports have you been active in? Name and describe.

TMB: I took some swimming at the university.

ML: Anything else?

TMB: Not much else.

A: (Board Member A) Football?

ML: Football, basketball, baseball?

TMB: No.

A: Tennis? Track?

TMB: I took a little tennis but gave it up as I didn't have time for it.

ML: Nothing else?

TMB: I've played quite a bit of volleyball.

ML: Have you ever done any hunting?

TMB: No, I've done quite a bit of fishing.

ML: Ever been out of the state?

TMB: Yes, when I was 10, I was sent to Wyoming for my health.

ML: Do any hunting there?

TMB: No.

ML: Handle any guns there?

TMB: No.

ML: Ever handle any guns?

TMB: No.

ML: Pistol? Shotgun? 22?

TMB: No.

ML: Not even a beeby gun---

TMB: No. In my family we were taught that it was not right to use guns or to play with them.

ML: Do you believe in self-protection?

TMB: I do not believe in killing---

ML: Do you believe in self-protection?

TMB: I believe in non-resistance which is not exactly self-protection.

ML: Do you believe in self-protection?

TMB: No.

A: If a man were to step up to you with a knife and try to kill you, you wouldn't try to stop him?

TMB: I'd step out of his way.

A: If he were going to strike you, you wouldn't try to stop him?

TMB: I could do more for him if I expressed confidence that nothing could harm me.

A: You'd just stand there and love him?

TMB: I would be there, but God would be working through me. God does work through men as he did work through Jesus Christ.

A: Let's put it this way. Suppose a man were going to murder your mother and father. What would you do?

TMB: I'd step in between him and my parents.

A: And you'd let him kill you before you killed him?

TMB: Yes. I couldn't commit an unloving act just because he would. You can't kill a man and make him free.

A: And your parents--you'd protect them by this action?

B: He'd be dead.

A: With you dead he'd kill them, wouldn't he?

TMB: Perhaps. But also perhaps, the sacrifice of one life for another might have a positive effect.

A: And if it didn't?

TMB: I have faith that there is eternal life and that it is more abundant than this one. My parents would then enter it.

ML: He would kill you; then your parents--then all three of you would go off to eternal life?

TMB: Yes.

A: The Methodist Church doesn't teach this belief (referring to what I had said and also to conscientious objection.)

TMB: Perhaps not in so many words. But Christ did. Christ's way is not necessarily easy. It led him to the cross, and we shouldn't be too surprised if it leads us there also.

B: The Methodist Church doesn't teach conscientious objection--at least not the one I go to. . .

TMB: I beg your pardon sir--but the Methodist Church in its discipline states its opposition to war---

A: We're all against war, son.

TMB: Then if we're against war the next logical step is opposition to participation in war.

B: I don't believe that most of the church members believe that.

TMB: There are many things in the church which are not Christian. I belong to the Methodist Church because it most satisfies my needs. It is the church I support, and I support it recognizing that some of its acts are unchristian. It is the church which is making it possible for me to be a missionary. I am an accredited missionary with the Methodist Church. I am now on salary, and am under appointment to Malaya for a 3 1/2 year term.

ML: (After Pause) If you were given I-O classification would you go to work in a government hospital and with civilian supervision treating soldiers coming back from the war?

TMB: If there was any opportunity that the men I would be treating would ever be in a position that they would re-enter the battle, then I could not undertake such work in such a hospital. That would be a humanitarian act performed in order to win a war-- to me such an act would be immoral and my conscience would not be satisfied.

Clerk: Someone has to do it.

TMB: Well, no one HAS to go to war. That is their own moral choice. To me the moral choice is clear that I cannot support war, nor support any part of war and its machinery.

A: What would happen if we all believed as you believe? What do you think would happen to us if the Russians took over?

TMB: I believe sir, it would be a great spiritual lesson to us. We might even learn really to have faith in our God. We could learn much more about God's will for our lives possibly under oppressive conditions than we can now in our own comfortable smugness. In our present condition we've convinced ourselves that we don't need God. But I believe, further, that if we were Christian we could overcome any amount of foreign oppression. India is an example of practiced pacifism and they finally achieved their independence.

ML: And look how long it took them to get there...

A: Yes--

TMB: If we were Christian and had faith--

A: Stop saying "If we were Christian." We are Christian.

TMB: Yes, sir, but we're not the type of Christian Jesus was talking about. We're not the new men he would have us be if we followed his way and expressed love for one another.

A: Finish up the questions. We've got others to talk to today.

ML: If you were given the hospital work suggested you would not accept it.

TMB: No.

ML: Not even if ordered to do it.

TMB: As I understand it, the law states that I submit three choices for possible activity, and the board submits three. An agreement is then reached.

ML: But if ordered to work in a hospital of this type you would not.

TMB: I would not. I would go to jail rather than go against my conscience. I have so stated many times previously, and you probably have several letters to that effect in my file.

ML: Are you aware that a I-A-C man does not bear arms?

TMB: I am.

ML: That a I-A-O cares for sick and wounded, or other non-combatant duties?

TMB: I am.

ML: But you would not go in as a medical attendant?

TMB: Certainly not. And I have stated my reasons.

A: What would you do?

TMB: I believe this missionary activity would satisfy the requirement for service.

A: How would that serve the country?

TMB: I'm going to an area of the world where the publicity stock of the American nation is very low--due to a number of causes. Asia needs American White people who can live with the people there without being superior to them, and yet raising their standard of living. In this work I would, of course, be serving God first, but I would also be serving the best and highest interests of the nation.

A: We'd all be made slaves of Russia if we held your view.

TMB: We could not be conquered if we believed in God.

ML: Would you defend this country?

TMB: Not by arms.

ML: Would you defend this country?

TMB: I am at this very moment giving the best defense of this country I could possibly give. By standing up for the rights which are mine I am doing the most possible to preserve those rights. Democracy in its practice is its own best defense. Military defense destroys it, but practice of it strengthens it. It is the same with Christianity. It is powerless when people merely profess to be Christians. When it is practiced it is the greatest force in the world.

ML: That's all the questions.

A: Have you anything to add?

TMB: I have with me several people who can add to your information--

A: That would just be substantiating what we already have and would take up time. I don't feel we need any further evidence on the matter and we have several people to see.

(I made no comment. I think some comment was attributed to me by ML in her notes.)

A: We'll talk this over and decide whether to classify you or to send it on to the appeal board.

TMB: I sincerely hope that you make the decision. Thank you for your time.

One further note in general about the proceedings: The questions ML asked were type-written in a loose-leaf notebook. This indicated to me that they were the standard questions asked in the hearings before the board. On Saturday, --, 1952, I received through the mail a classification of I-A granted by the local board. A letter of appeal was sent immediately.

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604 Washington Building  
15th and New York Avenue, N. W.  
Washington, D. C. 20005