

OYM and World War II

The major issue for Ohio Friends during the 1940s was World War II and associated peace issues. Throughout the decade, Ohio Friends believed they had been given important ministry through the peace movement. Civilian Public Service Camps played a major role in bringing Ohio Friends into contact with people of other branches of Friends for the first time in a meaningful way.

The United States entered World War II in 1941. However, the US government began warlike actions much earlier. In 1940, compulsory military training was instituted on educational campuses around the nation, and late in the year the Selective Service system began to draft people for military service even though the US was not at war. Albert Livezey played a major role in assisting Ohio Friends throughout the decade; in the spring of 1941, he worked with draft boards to help Friends obtain exemptions. Two Friends went to Washington DC in the spring of 1941 to speak with members of Congress on how the Civilian Public Service camps would be set up and funded. A nationwide Quaker conference was held in Richmond, Indiana, on managing camps. Charles P. Morlan was appointed to an AFSC committee to oversee camps in the USA. All these actions took place while the nation was not technically at war.

Byron G. Thomas visited some camps in 1942 and reported to the Meeting for Sufferings. He stated that many conscientious objectors were frustrated by the menial labor they were assigned. COs were so tired from the difficult work assigned them that few of the educational classes originally envisioned were actually held. At that time, about a quarter of men in camps were Quakers. A major problem was funding of the camps. The COs were expected to cover their expenses while there, so MMs were asked to help as much as possible. Ohio YM collected money to assist, and during the war Ohio Friends contributed \$23,484 towards CO expenses.

Not all Friends went to CPS camps. Several Friends chose to go to jail instead, including Ri-

chard A. Hall and Samuel Cooper. Ohio Friends visited these inmates to encourage them; some were held in local jails (one at Cadiz), while others were taken elsewhere. Samuel Cooper served time in jail in Michigan.

The Peace Committee continued its activities throughout the war. It wrote letters to public officials, held conferences, and brought speakers to Ohio YM for the Seventh Day program. It corresponded with others who were concerned about the camps for Americans of Japanese descent. Once the war ended, the Peace Committee worked to assist returning COs to find jobs and help when they were discriminated against for not serving in the military. It worked to end the peacetime conscription, which continued after the war ended in 1945. In 1948, Ohio YM approved a testimony on peace. It had 30,000 copies printed, and the testimony was so popular that the Peace Committee reported at YM in 1949 that it had distributed all but a handful. The YM sent an epistle to its members who had served in the military and encouraged them to consider returning to their home meetings.

A major change in the organization of Ohio Friends took place in 1949 when the men's and women's business meetings were merged on the YM level. Feelings were intense on both sides as the topic was discussed year after year. In 1948, the Yearly Meeting Representatives were united in recommending the change. They renewed the request in 1949, and retiring men's Clerk Charles Morlan urged the YM to enter into joint session. The men's and women's Representatives were directed to meet together and discern the way forward. Only two of the Representatives were not in unity with the proposal, so they reported in favor. Although Richard Hall said that making the change would be "the downfall of Ohio Yearly Meeting," the meeting was overwhelmingly in unity to make the change. Men's Clerk Louis J. Kirk would become the Clerk of the joint session yearly meeting, and women's Clerk Martha B. Thomas would become Assistant Clerk. The first joint session YM was held in 1950.

1940 to 1950

