

PUBLIC STATEMENT

Karl Armstrong
10.11.69.

A twenty-one year old offset platemaker (Melb.) was due to register in July 1968. He notified the Department of Labour and National Service of his non-registration in January 1969, although his photograph appeared on over 20,000 'Don't Register' leaflets since early December 1968. He notified the Department again in May 1969, of his refusal to register; once again received no acknowledgement. A certified letter, sent direct to Mr. Bury in Canberra, stating reasons for his opposition to the National Service Act, provoked an acknowledgement but no comment, on May 28th. 1969....the only response to that date. After an interval of thirteen months without any action being taken by the authorities, he confronted the Department, personally, on 17th. Sept. at 5p.m. At 7p.m. on the same day, a Commonwealth Officer called at his home and conducted an interview concerning his reasons for non-compliance. On 29th. Oct. 1969 (four days after the elections) he received a summons to appear in the Melbourne Court of Petty Sessions on 10th. November at 10a.m. to answer a charge of having failed to register under the National Service Act.

Sir,

I have been summonsed here today to answer to the court for breaking the law. However, since laws are designed to protect the innocent and private property, I cannot bring myself, in conscience, to comply with a law which serves only to deny the rights of the individual.

Just as I feel it is my duty, as a human being, to defy this immoral law, I realize that however sympathetic the magistrate may be to my views, it is his duty as a servant of the court, to carry out this law; although he could refuse to administer this law, on principle.

The reason I refused to register for National Service is because I deny that the Government has any right to profess to be democratic and yet enforce conscription...for any purpose, whether civil or military.

Conscription deprives the individual of his right to act according to his conscience. A motion carried at the Nuremburg War Trials states that '...ultimately the responsibility for an individuals action lies with himself...'. If I acted against my conscience to participate in a war of genocide napalm and chemical warfare I would then consider myself as guilty as those in authority.

The National Service Act is immoral firstly because it coerces a voteless minority into servitude and acceptance of an authoritarian mentality and secondly because it serves to maintain our illegal involvement in Vietnam.

The A.C.T.U. executive in 1965 and 1967 passed a motion stating that '...we express the strongest opposition to conscription for overseas _____ in all of the current circumstances..' further that '..we are strongly opposed to the decision of the Federal Government to send a battallion of Australian troops which can be used as a combat force in South Vietnam..'

Thus as a Trade Union member I have gained support, for my actions and strength in my beliefs by this policy of continious opposition to the National Service Act and Conscription.

In order to follow fully, the dictates of my conscience, as is my right under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; I intend to ignore all National Service notices and fines incurred against me, to work for the complete repeal of the National Service Act.

I understand that I will be forced to suffer the consequences of my actions according to the law of this country, but will do so not as a criminal breaking the law, but as an individual acting according to his conscience, to repeal a law which is unjust, immoral and undemocratic.