THE DRAFT: INDIVIDUAL VS. THE STATE

The following letters are actual correspondence between an individual and the state that we thought you might find interesting.

November 29, 1981

Ronald Reagan, President of the United States of America
Thomas K. Turnage, Director, Selective Service System
Caspar W. Weinberger, Secretary of War
William French Smith, Attorney General

Friends:

I am writing to inform you that although legally required to do so I have failed to register with the Selective Service System. I have counselled others to refuse registration, and I shall continue to urge resistance to all war and to all preparation for war.

It has always been young men such as myself who have done the killing and the dirty work that the government leaders have directed. It could have been me who nailed Jesus to the cross, who ran the ovens at Dachau, who bombed Dresden, and then Hiroshima. It is men like me all over the world who are training to kill, to die, at the order of their governments.

You claim you want peace, as do the governments and armies of Russia, of Israel, of the Palestinians, of the West- and East-Germans; and yet you would have me march to kill not only the soldiers but the women and the old men and the children—children laughing and crying and growing up some of them to be soldiers themselves. It is the tragedy and the joke of your wars that we go to rape and burn in the "enemy" country those who we would protect in our own homes.

You ask sometimes if I would have fought Hitler, but nobody fought Hitler. The soldiers killed each other in a thousand battles and they burned each other's cities so there was no one to come home to and I have never heard that a single bomb was ever used to stop the trains into Auschwitz. Six million rode those trains and died, killed by executioners only following orders. But of the people running the trains, working in kitchens and factories, paying taxes, who ever stopped to ask why? Nobody on either side fought Hitler—they only followed orders.

I say "enough"! I refuse to kill. I will not cooperate with you in your murderous business from which some profit while others die. I will not compete with you in violence by turning guns and threats of destruction against you. I am an anarchist and a pacifist and I think little good can ever come of your orders and your wars—beliefs I hold as a free person but which it is not "legal" to act upon.

I am not trying to tear down or overthrow the political system of the United States. I am trying to live my life in harmony with my spiritual, ethical, and political beliefs—to act out of my love, respect, and responsibility for humanity and the living planet which is my home. I regret that this has brought me in conflict with the government of my country, but I cannot comply with the dictates of that government while still seeking to serve the cause of life on earth.

For the generations yet unborn,

Russell F. Ford

Selective Service System
National Headquarters, Washington D.C. 20435

March 10, 1982

Dear Mr. Ford:

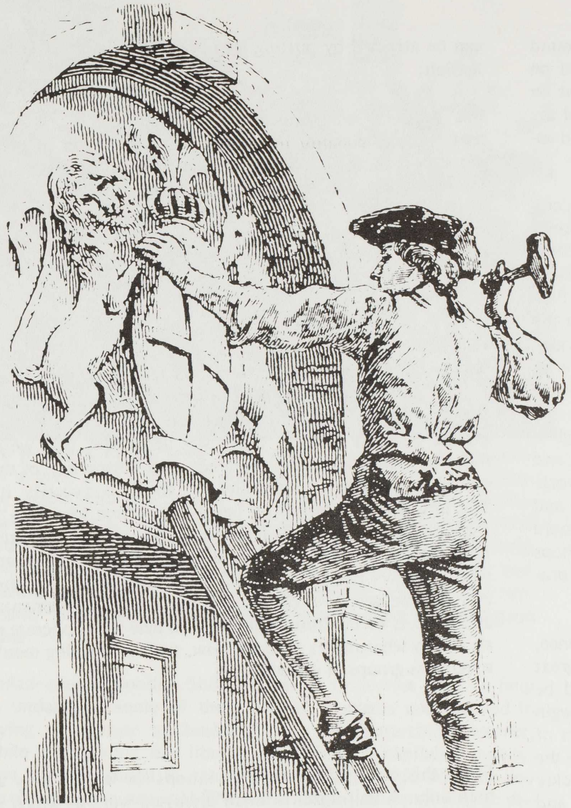
We have received information that you may be required to register with Selective Service under provision of the Military Selective Service Act, but a check of our records indicates that you have not registered. The purpose of this letter is to check the accuracy of this information. Please understand that we are required by law to refer possible violators of the Military Selective Service Act to the Department of Justice. If a person is convicted of violation of the Act he may be imprisoned for not more than five years or fined not more than $10,000 or both.

Generally, a male who is not already in the active Armed Forces is required to register with Selective Service if he was born in 1960, 1961 or 1962, or if born in 1963 or a later year, within 30 days of his eighteenth (18) birthday. If a person required to register fails to do so because of "some condition beyond his control" he must be able to prove that the "condition not under his control" prevented him from registering. If the "condition" changes he has 30 days to register. Generally, being in prison or confined in a hospital or institution qualifies as a "condition beyond his control."

In order for us to clear our records, and not forward your name to the Department of Justice for investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation you must take one of the following actions:

—If, as described above, you are required to register and have not already done so, please fill in the enclosed form and mail it to Selective Service in the enclosed envelope.

—If, as described above, you are required to register but have not already done so because of a continuing "condition beyond your control", please indicate in a letter mailed in the enclosed envelope your reason for your continued non-registration.



—If, as described above, you are required to register and believe that you have registered, please send us a copy of your Registration Acknowledgement letter (SSS Form 3) or provide us your Selective Service number in the enclosed envelope.

—If, as described above, you do not believe you are required to register please explain why you feel you do not have to register and provide proof of your status in the enclosed envelope. Proof will vary from case to case but may be a copy of your birth certificate, a DD Form 53 or similar form showing your active duty status in the military, a statement, in English, from the diplomatic agency of the country of which you are a subject explaining why you are not required to register, or other document which supports your claim.

Please note that sending false information in response to this letter may be a violation of the Military Selective Service Act and may subject the sender to the penalties described above.

Let me stress that unless we hear from you within 15 days of the date of this letter we will send your name to the Department of Justice for investigation and possible prosecution. If you have registered or if you are a person who is not required to register we are sorry for any inconvenience this letter may cause you and we appreciate your help in clearing our records.

Sincerely,

Henry N. Williams
General Counsel

March 29, 1982

Henry N. Williams, General Counsel
Selective Conscription System
Washington, D.C. 20435

Dear Mr. Williams:

This is in response to your letter to me of March 10.

1) Your "information" is correct. As I told your bosses in my letter last November ". . . although legally required to do so I have failed to register with the Selective Service System. I have counselled others to refuse registration, and I shall continue to urge resistance to all war and to all preparation for war."

2) Military Selective Service Act, 50 USCA App c462 *Offenses and penalties*: ". . . any person who . . . evades or refuses registration or service in the armed forces or any of the requirements of this title . . . who knowingly counsels, aids, or abets another to refuse or evade registration or service in the armed forces . . . who shall knowingly hinder or interfere . . . or who conspires to commit any one or more of such offenses. . . ." I have willfully violated as many parts of this law as possible. In newspapers, over the radio, and on television (including the Washington DC NBC evening news) I have encouraged others to break this law. I am no doubt guilty of violations of other laws I don't even know about.

3) "Continuing conditions beyond my control" have prevented me from registering. These include my responsibilities as a human being and as an American, my anarchist convictions, the nuclear weapons in this country's arsenals, my sympathies for the people of Nicaragua and El Salvador, the threatened use of American troops (meaning me, if I allow myself to be drafted) against those people, and the absurdity of obeying a law which puts people in jail for being too peace loving.

4)I have "registered" with the War Resisters League as a conscientious objector to war. The W.R.L. is the American branch of the International Pacifist Conspiracy, with which you may be familiar.

5)Threatening letters upset me. I do not like to obey orders that are backed up by force, even by the dungeons and hired gunmen of the state.

6)I heartily affirm your right to disagree with me about draft registration. This is a democracy, and democracies thrive on dissent. Even groups based on violence and inequality such as the Ku Klux Klan and the U.S. Government have the right to free speech. I do not however agree that your organization has the right to impose its views on others with physical or legal coercion. Please keep in mind that there are points of view other than yours, and that you have the responsibility not to make yourselves obnoxious to the rest of us.

7)Please take my name off your mailing list. You are a despicable violent hierarchical organization. I do not want to belong to your club, and I have better things to do than to maim and kill innocent and defenseless children, women, and men. El pueblo vencerá.

In peace and struggle,

Russell F. Ford