

A25.10.10

1. The Board is located on the 6th floor, Saambou Building, corner of Maitland and Aliwal Streets, Bloemfontein. Phone: 051 7 6096/7. Postal address: Private Bag X 20521, Bloemfontein 9300.
2. Composition of the Board. Members are appointed by the Department of Manpower. It consists of a Chairperson (a judge or retired judge of the Supreme Court), three theologians, two SADF members (one of whom must be a chaplain.) The Board may coopt a member of the applicant's denomination. The Chairperson at the moment is Judge Steyn. All themembers are Protestant. They all hold to some version of the just use of violence and war. Judge Steyn is the most influential member. Within the parameters of the Board, he is fair and reasonable.
3. Board's mandate. To "determine the state of mind of each applicant" (Steyn), and classify them accordingly. What they need to determine is:
 - a. the applicant's religious convictions;
 - b. the universality of the applicant's objection to military service i.e. that he objects to participation in any armed force.
4. Statistics. Since the Board began operating in December 1983, until the end of June 1985, the Board had received 429 applications. 279 were placed in Category 3 (non-military service), 50 in Category 1 (noncombatant military service in uniform) and 1 in Category 2 (noncombatant service out of uniform). Of the Category 3 applicants, 233 were Jehovah's Witnesses. So far, 4 applications have been refused - less than 1% of the total. Only 11 of the Category 3 objectors have been assigned alternative service so far. *So far, 330 have been heard*
5. Presentation of case. The applicant reads his full application into the record, then answers questions put to him by members of the Board. He may call witnesses. It is important that the applicant express himself in terms of the Act. He should make it clear that the basis of his convictions are religious, and that he objects to service in any armed force. Where possible, he should provide examples and documentation to back up his case. Although the Board prefers statements of absolute universal pacifism they seem to accept the argument that one cannot make categorical judgements on situations which are not here and now. Thus, the statement: "As of now, today, my convictions are such that I cannot participate in any arm ed force" is acceptable. Overtly political content in the applicants statement seems acceptable, as long as it is clear overall that the applicant's **views** in respect of military service are universal and not particular.
6. General observations
 - a. The atmosphere at the hearings is reasonably non-threatening. Steyn has a sense of humour, which helps to lighten up the proceedings.
 - b. Applicants should remember that virtually all applications to the Board so far have been accepted, so as long as he presents his case clearly, he should have no trouble gaining acceptance.
 - c. The presence of church officials, friends and family members at the hearing is sobering to the Board, and a great support for the applicant.
 - d. "Religious" does not mean the applicant must be a member of a church or denomination.
 - e. "Religious" has been interpreted by the Board to imply theism i.e. belief in a Supreme Being. An application by a Buddhist was turned down because his religion is nontheistic. This case is now on review at the Supreme Court.
 - f. The bottom line in gaining acceptance by the Board is to clearly establish one's religious premises, and show how all else flows from these. Steyn: "While it is good to be open with the Board regarding your political convictions and how your political and religious convictions reinforce each other ... it is wise for the applicant to be mindful that he seeks to be classified as a religious objector."

Refer to CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION: A COUNSELLOR'S RESOURCE
MANUAL for further information (SACC, P.O. Box 4921, Johannesburg)

Synod questions ethics^{STAR} 5-7-85 of war

MARITZBURG — A Christian who dared to take up arms should be asked to give sound ethical reasons for doing so, the synod of the Anglican Church heard yesterday.

The Rev David Russell said the person who goes against the Christian norm by taking up arms should be stopped and asked what he is doing.

Mr Russell was speaking on a report of the Commission on the Just War. The commission had looked at whether a war can be just in light of Namibia and South Africa.

The report states that the members of the commission were not unanimous on whether South Africa was fighting a just war but agreed that apartheid was the root of the spiral of violence and counter-violence.

"In South Africa a mobilisation for peace is the only Christian answer to the present mobilisation for war. Without this the South African situation has all the makings of tragedy," the report says.

The church should constantly question the existence of military conscription and where it existed insist on adequate and generous scope for conscientious objection.

A plea was made to the synod to use the report to aid young men in any decision on conscientious objection. — Sapa.

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