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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 themost 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 inDecember 1983, until the end of June 1985, the Board had received 429 applications. ^{So far, 330 have been heard} 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. ⁵⁰⁻ Only 11 of the Category 3 objectors have been assigned alternative service so far.
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 proce dings.
 - 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 bya 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 4920, Johannesburg)

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