

Levi Pennington

People

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## Levi Pennington To All Friends Who Have Applied for Exemption Because of Membership in the Society of Friends, 1918

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TO ALL FRIENDS WHO HAVE APPLIED FOR EXEMPTION BECAUSE  
OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS:

This letter is addressed only to the above class of persons, but it is sent to all Friends of registration age. It is intended to supplement the letter sent you a few days ago.

In filing your claim for discharge and your supporting affidavit on the ground that your "religious convictions" forbid you "to participate in war in any form" you entered with high purpose upon a certain path of conduct. You are a member of a religious body which throughout its entire history, by sacrifice and heroic suffering, has borne a testimony against war and has stood for a type of Christianity dedicated to loving service and human brotherhood. Its members have always endeavored to be loyal citizens to their nation, ready to serve their country in every way consistent with conscience. Acts involving participation in any form of war, or service under military direction, however, have seemed and still seem to those who share our faith a sharp violation of our religious principles.

This letter is intended to assist you in taking the steps that must be decided upon in the immediate future.

First: If you have not yet received your certificate of discharge from combatant service on Form 174 from your Local Board, you should immediately make all necessary effort to secure it. If your Local Board refuses to issue it, you should appeal to the District Board. No discretion is vested in the Local Boards with respect to this claim except to pass upon the truth of the affidavits. Unless they think that you or the clerk of your Meeting has committed perjury



they should issue the certificate as a matter of course. If the Local Board has refused, the District Board should order the issuance of the certificate.

The time for appeal expires in ten days from the mailing of the notice that your claim has been refused. However, it is provided in Section 26 of the Rules and Regulations of the President that the Boards have authority to extend the time to appeal, and if the time has expired ~~then~~ you should apply for such extension on the necessary papers, to be secured from the Local Board.

It is imperative that you obtain this certificate on Form 174 since all your rights of exemption from army service will depend upon it. Do not allow any persons to discourage or intimidate you, because you are entitled to this certificate as a matter of course.

If your District Board refuses your claim upon appeal, notify the American Friends Service Committee, 20 S. 13th St., Philadelphia, Pa. immediately, and you will be advised as to further action.

Second: You should clearly understand that the above mentioned discharge is from combatant service only. Friends are not only liable for some service, but are willing and anxious to serve in a manner allowed by their religious convictions. As stated in our previous letter, the government itself has correctly interpreted the principles of Friends as against participation in war in any form.

The correct interpretation of Form 174 is a discharge from all service as a part of the "military forces" provided for in the Law. We have thus asked the War Department to allow Friends so desiring, to serve under the American Friends Service Committee in forms of service wholly apart from military control, to be approved by the President. We suggest that, if you desire such service, you fill out and return to the Service Committee the enclosed enrollment



blank. You can then state to all officials and officers with whom you may have dealings that you have applied for such service.

Third: According to Government Ruling you will be expected to mobilize before being assigned to non-combatant service. The following very grave difficulties are presented in the Mobilization Regulations if these are intended to apply to persons holding discharges on Form 174. They provide in various sections as follows:

Section 5. "From the time specified for reporting to the Local Board for military duty, each man in respect of whom notice to report has been posted or mailed shall be in the military service of the United States."

Section 9. The men will be ordered to form a line and the Local Board shall instruct them as follows:

"1. That they must report in person at 5.30 p/m. to the Local Board for retreat roll call.

2. That they are to report in person to the Local Board at a specified hour on the day of entrainment, which hour shall be fixed by the Local Board at least 45 minutes before train time plus a sufficient time to reach the railroad station from the office of the Local Board.

3. That they are now in the military service of the United States and that unpunctuality to report are grave military offenses in time of war.

4. That after they have been conducted to the assigned lodging house they are at liberty until the hour of retreat roll call, at 5.30 p/m., when all must be present at the office of the Local Board."

Section 11. "The Local Board will caution the men that the person designated is in command of the party, that it is their military duty to obey his orders and instructions, and that disobedience of orders is the most serious of all military crimes."

Since these regulations, if intended to apply to persons holding discharges on Form 174, require incorporation as part of the army from the time of reporting to the Local Boards, the following



two courses are open to Friends who are unable to become a part of the army:

(A) He can write to the Chairman of his Local Board or present a written statement in person, and respectfully inform him that he has been exempted from military service and that he cannot obey mobilization orders, as this act (by definite statement of the Mobilization Regulations) puts him "under military service", from which, by the Selective Draft Law, he has already been exempted. He should further inform his Local Board that he desires to perform non-combatant service if he can have it assigned to him without conditions which make him a corporate part of the military system such, for example, as service under the American Friends' Service Committee.

(B) The other consistent course for a conscientiously minded Friend would be for the individual to notify the Chairman of the Local Board that he cannot mobilize in the manner prescribed since it puts him "under military service", but that he will report at once in person at the mobilization camp (providing his own transportation and paying his own travelling expenses to the place) and will there ask the proper officer to be assigned to a form of non-combatant service entirely free from the military system.

According to the Mobilization Regulations, in the section regarding absentees, the information will be forwarded to the Adjutant General, which will enable the government to open for the individual a field of service which is mutually satisfactory.

Any Friend who is not able to pay his own expenses to the camp should communicate with the Service Committee, and in all probability a fund will be raised to meet these expenses.



Fourth: Further information will be given in "The American Friend". If your family has not been receiving this paper, please send notice of this fact to The American Friend, Richmond, Indiana

In attempting to act consistently with the principles of Friends and to conform also to the Selective Service Law, which recognizes these principles, it seems that the following two criterions should govern your solution of all difficult problems that may arise:- First, your inability to become a part of the army in any of its departments (even the hospital or supply departments); second, your entire willingness to render service that is dissociated from army control.

May we conduct ourselves during these difficult times in a spirit of charity toward all with whom we come in contact, and may we seek to express our loyalty to our country through loyalty to the Kingdom of God.