

Society's Attitudes to COs

Whilst it has often been assumed that COs were universally rejected during and after the war, this was by no means entirely the case. Although some COs experienced isolation, prejudice, abuse and even violence, sympathy, respect and support could sometimes come from the most unlikely sources.

Also, although COs could sometimes be portrayed as unmanly cowards and weaklings who failed to help their country, there were many who saw them as intensely masculine, brave, warrior-like and patriotic.

Friends and family often supported their CO relatives – even if it did not fit with their politics. Organisations also worked for COs. The No-Conscription Fellowship was founded to resist conscription and was made up of COs and others who supported them. In addition, [Quakers](#) and the [Fellowship of Reconciliation](#) worked on their behalf and campaigned for peace (as they continue to do today).

Some military men could respect at least some COs – for example [Commander Wedgwood MP spoke in the House of Commons](#) (see paragraph 338) of a patriotic pride in objectors who stood up for their beliefs. Volunteer soldiers could respect the bravery of a 'conchie' who stood out for his principles and took the consequences. Conscripts could sometimes also respect the strength it took to resist conscription. And, more generally, a war weary population sometimes viewed the war and the military with less enthusiasm than we might today expect, meaning that sympathy and understanding towards a CO's stance could be forthcoming.

See also the pdfs on this website relating to *The No-Conscription Fellowship*, *Support for COs* and *COs Post War*.