Rosewood State Training School

Rosewood State Training School was one of 16 state institutions for people with mental retardation at which conscientious objectors (COs) volunteered during World War II. State mental hospitals received most of the attention during the exposes initiated by the COs, but the "training schools" had similar conditions.

The Rosewood CO unit was the only mental hospital unit sponsored by the Association of Catholic Conscientious Objectors (ACCO). Of the nearly 12,000 COs during the war, a reported 149 were Roman Catholic.

The ACCO was closely affiliated with the Catholic Worker movement, founded in 1933 by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. The Catholic Worker movement performed acts of charity in poor urban areas and was committed to social justice and pacifism. It also published a newspaper. Most Catholics and the Church itself did not share the Catholic Worker's pacifist views.

Dorothy Day did not believe in the Civilian Public Service program and alternative public service for COs. Her moral beliefs lead her to oppose any form of violence against other human beings and any cooperation with the consignment or draft system run by the Selective Service. She did not stand in the way of the ACCO.

One of the COs at Rosewood was Gordon C. Zahn. Zahn and some of the other Rosewood COs previously served at an ACCC sponsored U.S. Forest Service camp in New Hampshire that closed in 1943. After the war, Zahn received a Ph.D. in Sociology and published at least five books on war and pacifism.

Sources

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