

Warped

By Scott McCullar



Minister's son objects to draft

United Press International
ROANOKE, Va. — A minister's son says his faith in God would protect him in court Tuesday against federal authorities prosecuting him on charges of disobeying the draft registration law.

Enten Eller, 20, an honor student and the son of a Brethren minister refused to register for the draft because he believes military service opposes the teachings of Jesus Christ. Eller's attorney, Art Strickland, said the young pacifist did

not want a legal defense, a constitutional challenge based on religious freedom. Instead, the straight-A mathematics and physics major wanted to make his own explanation of his stand, citing the Bible.

"He said to me, 'I really can't lose' — to the extent he is doing what he thinks is right," Strickland said. "He's pretty prepared for the worst."

"He is his own defense," Strickland said. "Basically I'm just going to argue you shouldn't convict someone who is so sincere in his religious faith," the attorney said.

Federal attorneys decided to prosecute Eller as an example to the estimated 500,000 other draft-age men who have failed to obey the registration law, risking the threat of a five-year prison term and \$10,000 fine.

Four other young men were also indicted around the nation from a list of approximately 200 targeted for eventual prosecution by the Justice Department.

In Vista, Calif., Benjamin H. Sasway, 21, a political science major at Humboldt State University who was indicted in San Diego June 30 for not registering, was to appear at a pre-trial motion hearing Tuesday. He pleaded innocent to the lone count of felonious non-registration.

Eller refused to register be-

cause of the biblical commandment against killing, saying, "The U.S. government has asked me to do something God would not have me do."

Assistant U.S. Attorney Monty Tucker, who is prosecuting, refused comment before the trial.

Church officials and FBI agents were called to testify on opposite sides in U.S. District Court. Religious and anti-draft groups planned a vigil outside the courthouse, and federal marshals reserved three rows of courtroom seats for reporters.

Though there is no draft, federal law requires all young men to register with Selective Service when they become 18.

Eller's father, the Rev. Vernard Eller, an educator and theologian from LaVerne, Calif., registered as a conscientious objector in World War II, but failed a pre-induction physical. The author of several pacifist books including "King Jesus' Manual of Arms," the elder Eller has said he supports his son's decision.

The Brethren Church, with a membership of about 170,000, has preached against military service for nearly 300 years. Church members have endured torture and imprisonment rather than violate the pacifist teachings of Christ, a spokesman for the church said.

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