

STIPEND STATEMENT - Deborah Scott, Mennonite Central Committee, Washington DC

I am Mennonite. The Mennonite Church is an Anabaptist church with its roots in the Protestant Reformation. It shares a similar background with the other "historic peace churches" such as the Quakers and Brethren. The major differences from other Protestant churches are that no one is baptized until they make the conscious decision to join the church and our pacifist stance.

What does this have to do with the Lewis and Clark PILP program? Well, I came to law school because of my interest in environmental and international law - these passions grow out of my faith and experiences within the Mennonite church community. My first year of law school was surprisingly engaging and interesting. Not quite as surprising was the fact that there weren't any other Mennonites at our law school. I quickly realized that I did not want to develop a professional knowledge over three years and at the end not know where my faith fit into it. I also knew that I wanted to Do Good Things For The World. So I applied for a PILP stipend.

The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is relief, service, and peace organization of the Mennonite and Brethren Churches. There are volunteers all over the world, usually working assignments for at least three years (for example, volunteers teach nursing in Lesotho, help develop sustainable agricultural techniques in Bolivia, and assist immigrants in Miami, Florida). The MCC Washington DC office is small - only 5 people - but it covers almost everything that happens in Congress. The office monitors and analyzes legislation, educates the Mennonite constituency, and introduces the stories and perspectives of MCC workers to Congress members and aides.

My work revolved around the environmental and health consequences of war. I researched and wrote a report on a cluster bomb incident in Jordan and its political and legal consequences. At the request of the MCC director for East Asia, I attended and reported on a conference on developments in understanding Agent Orange. I helped FACES (Filipino/American Coalition for Environmental Solutions) make contacts on the Hill, and I did legal research for their case against the U.S. Department of Defense for not cleaning up former U.S. military bases in the Philippines. I spent a lot of time trying to understand the whole depleted uranium debate - the science, the politics, and the potential legal consequences - and putting together a report for MCC and its workers and partner groups in Iraq.

My summer was great. I got a good look at how things work within Congress and within the culture of the Non-Governmental Organizations clustered around the Hill. I did interesting, relevant work. All of us in the office packed our lunches and ate together. Over a summer of lunches, I learned about our country's policies to combat poverty and the alternative views of my co-workers; my boss gave me advice on how to enjoy law school; MCC workers from the Philippines, Argentina, and the Appalachians came through the office; and I saw the world's largest, stinkiest flower at the US Botanical Gardens. I came back to school knowing that it is possible to work on daunting, long-term projects in a sustainable fashion - so that you survive both physically and spiritually.