

IF YOU WORK
FOR PEACE



STOP PAYING
FOR WAR.

More than a paycheck

NEWS FROM THE WAR TAX RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

April 2009

Tax Day 2009 (The) War Is Not Over

Here at the NWTRCC office a few notes have come in from people saying, "I've decided not to resist this year to give Obama a chance." This is a familiar problem for the peace movement when a Democrat is elected, and, there's no denying that Obama is looking pretty good after the Bush years. He should get a lot of credit for promising an honest budget even if the numbers look bad with all the bailouts, stimulus money, and wars. The Bush folks hid the war money; it's guesswork to try and find out what's really been spent in Iraq and Afghanistan. The accounting lacks detail.

But a couple things remain clear: we will not see dramatic cuts in military spending soon, and the wars are not close to an end.

The whole idea of giving Obama a chance is tempting, but actually, he didn't recommend it himself. The blog "Daily Kos"

quotes Obama from 1995: "We must form grass-root structures that would hold me and other elected officials more accountable for their actions." He expressed the same sentiment after his nomination. It seems a good idea to take him up on it.

A lot of us feel the need to hold ourselves accountable too, but many won't make the choice of war tax resistance. Getting out on (or before) tax day and leafleting and demonstrating about the ever-obscure

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Tax day vigil at the IRS in DC. Photo by Alan Gamble, 2007.

Peace Tax Legislation and NWTRCC

Last fall the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund asked its endorsers to renew their support. NWTRCC has been an endorser for many years, but the request was one that needed review by the Coordinating Committee, and the question was raised at our November 2008 meeting in Eugene. A range of opinions were expressed, and the question required more time than we could give it. Therefore, the May Coordinating Committee meeting and gathering will include time for a thorough airing of opinions about the bill and

NWTRCC's endorsement. In addition, we solicited statements for this issue of *More Than A Paycheck* to provide background for the May meeting. If you would like more information about the history and current status of the legislation, please see the website peacetaxfund.org or call the NWTRCC office for a brochure.

Pam Allee, Portland, OR

I am a war tax refuser and redirector. I am also in favor of a Peace Tax Fund.

I feel very strongly that neither my resist-

ance nor the Peace Tax Fund are perfect solutions to creating peace. Both are simply steps on the way to creating a social order that "works" for everyone.

As a war tax refuser, I do redirect to life-giving organizations, but I am unable to contribute to (for instance) the EPA or CDC or National Endowment for the Arts. Because I choose to file and refuse, I am subject to seizures of money and property.

On the other hand, a peace tax fund would not, by itself, reduce the military

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More Than a Paycheck is a bimonthly publication of the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee, a clearinghouse and resource center for the conscientious war tax resistance movement in the United States. NWTRCC is a coalition of local, regional and national affiliate groups working on war tax related issues.

NWTRCC sees poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, economic exploitation, environmental destruction and militarization of law enforcement as integrally linked with the militarism which we abhor. Through the redirection of our tax dollars, NWTRCC members contribute directly to the struggle for peace and justice for all.

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IRS Ends Private Debt Collection

On March 5, 2009, the IRS announced that it would not renew contracts with two private debt collection agencies. The program began a few years ago, and a few war tax resisters did hear from private collectors. Now, after extensive review, the IRS figured out what research had said to begin with: the work is done best and most cost-effectively by IRS employees. IRS Commissioner Doug Shulman also noted that the IRS anticipates hiring over 1,000 new collection personnel in FY 2009.

Reducing Taxable Income

For those who file and look closely at credits and deductions to lower their taxable income, a variety of tax changes passed in February with the Economic Recovery Act. They are temporary and may only apply for 2009 taxes, but might be worth your research. Some of the areas covered include

increased college tuition credit; bigger earned income tax credit; sales tax deductions for certain new cars and light trucks; credits for hybrid cars; credits for household energy conservation (insulation, replacement windows, duct seals, etc.) and installing solar panels or other sustainable energy systems; \$1,000 refundable credit for each qualifying child under the age of 17.

Invite A Speaker

Liven up your local war tax resistance programs with a speaker from the new War Tax Resistance Speakers Bureau. The growing list of speakers includes Kathy Kelly, Bill Ramsey, Ed Hedemann, Clare Hanrahan, Pat and John Schwiebert, Randy Kehler, and more! Hosting a speaker program can attract new interest in war tax resistance and also help broaden your own perspectives and knowledge of WTR techniques. Click on the Speakers Bureau icon at nwtrcc.org and find pictures, bios, and contact information at your finger tips! ▼

JOIN US!

Taxes for Peace Not War!

National War Tax Resistance Gathering and Coordinating Committee Meeting

Friday, May 1 – Sunday, May 3, 2009

Community Mennonite Church, 70 South High St., Harrisonburg, VA

Please join us in the beautiful Shenandoah Valley this May for a mini-conference with people from around the country who refuse to pay for war. There will be a special focus on the legislative campaign for a Peace Tax Fund, its current status, and the pros and cons of the bill from a range of perspectives.

Contact the NWTRCC office for a brochure or see www.nwtrcc.org/may2009.html.

Many Thanks



Network Updates

We are grateful to these groups for recent contributions and dues payments:

- New England War Tax Resistance (MA)
- Oregon Community of War Tax Resisters
- Lehigh Valley (PA) WTR Life Fund
- Western Washington Fellowship of Reconciliation

NWTRCC's list of war tax resistance counselors, area contacts, affiliates, and alternative funds and updates to that list appear on the "Contacts and Counselors" page of the NWTRCC website. Print versions of the Network List, which are slightly more extensive, are available on request from the NWTRCC office.

Please let the NWTRCC office know if you are interested in being a contact on our network list. Email nwtrcc@nwtrcc.org or call toll free 1-800-269-7464.

Peace Tax Legislation

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budget. It would require citizen vigilance and action to keep it “honest.”

So what good could a peace tax fund possibly do? We would have a tangible, verified number of taxpayers who oppose war, who know that “military solution” is an oxymoron. This number would be a potential lever (or hammer) to force Congress to represent us and would bolster peace candidates. The waxing and waning of this number would also tell us whether we were effective organizers and educators.

We currently have no good idea how many people feel so strongly against war that they refuse to pay for it. We do know that there are a lot of people who will go to a peace rally or write letters and make phone calls, but who are afraid of the Big Bad IRS. As a member of a group that gives monthly WTR workshops, I can tell you that a lot of people say they’d gladly check off a peace tax fund on their 1040s if it were available. A peace tax fund would open the doors to the fearful. It would not prevent current war tax refusal.

I do not consider war tax resistance (refusal) and redirection an end in itself, nor simply an expression of my conscience. It is one of the tools I use to witness a future that works for everyone. It may not be my future—I’m 63—but it must become Earth’s.

Larry Dansinger, Monroe, Maine

In my 25 years of active involvement in the WTR movement, I’ve always had mixed feelings about the proposed Peace Tax Fund (PTF) bill.

The November 2008 NWTRCC meeting in Eugene reflected that split. Because of the debate, the group did not attempt to reach consensus on whether to extend NWTRCC’s endorsement. Instead it was agreed to postpone the decision until May 2009, while maintaining NWTRCC as an endorser until then.

The notes from that meeting included many of my negative feelings about the PTF and a few more. Here are my interpretations of some of the noted reasons for NWTRCC not continuing its endorsement of the campaign:

- there is a lack of unity among WTRs about the Peace Tax Fund bill;
- the bill needs to be rewritten;
- paying into a peace tax fund gives more money to the federal government than if some peace taxpayers resisted payment;
- there’s a chance that peace tax fund money, like social security, could be “borrowed” for war;



Peace Tax Fund press conference at City Hall in NYC. Photo by Ruth Benn, 2005.

- many WTRs might not “qualify” for it even if it passed because of narrow interpretations of who would be a conscientious objector to military taxes;
- the PTF is inconsistent with war tax resistance because individuals still support a war-making government even if their own money goes for peace;
- there’s not a snowball’s chance in hell of the legislation ever passing.

I agree with every one of these reasons for not supporting the Peace Tax Campaign.

Having gone from the World Peace Tax Fund Bill to the U.S. Peace Tax Fund Bill to the Religious Freedom Tax Fund Bill doesn’t give me any confidence either. Many WTRs, myself included, do not consider themselves “religious.” Why would the campaign leave so many of us out?

In spite of my personal disagreement with the Peace Tax Fund legislation, I think NWTRCC ought to continue to endorse it anyway. Why this nutty turnaround?

- Whether we agree with the PTF approach or not, they support us, respect us, usually appreciate us. In many cases, they ARE us. Our goals are similar, even if our paths are different.
- They present WTR to a different group, mostly people of “religious conscience.” People of faith may never pay attention to the war tax resistance movement but will to the PTF Campaign, and then maybe become WTRs.
- In the strategy realm, it’s effective to have some on the far left so those not quite as far left look reasonable and legitimate. WTRs make the PTF look

more legitimate; if they weren’t there, I think we’d be marginalized even more than we are now.

- It’s another way to attack all that military spending. In the unlikely chance of that snowball surviving, it would force every taxpayer to take sides on whether or not to pay for war. I think the WTR social movement (organized, not individual resistance) and the PTF social movement support each other on this issue.
- We need to know when to hang onto our strongly held beliefs and when not to for a greater good. I’m trying to let go of my strong feelings because I think there is a greater good to having both campaigns connected than to go their separate ways.

So, when NWTRCC meets in May, I hope it will continue to endorse the Peace Tax Fund Campaign, warts and all.

David M. Gross, San Francisco, California

The U.S. government threatens everyone with its nuclear arsenal and designs on global hegemony. It fights multiple wars, and as the world’s largest arms dealer fans the flames of many more.

Both war tax resisters (WTRs) and Peace Tax Fund (PTF) advocates want to stop financially supporting this death machine.

PTF advocates hope to wall-off the war-making parts of government and pay only for what remains via the PTF.

But say you pay into the PTF, and Congress, prohibited from spending that money on war, spends it on something nice like the Smithsonian. What prevents Congress from then diverting some other money that it was already planning to spend on the Smithsonian to the Pentagon?

What keeps the PTF from being a shell game that gives taxpayers the illusion of control over how their taxes are spent, while Congress really decides just as before?

Early PTF proposals—like the version NWTRCC endorsed years ago—had safeguards to discourage this “shell game.”

One allowed taxpayers to send their taxes to UNICEF instead of the U.S. Treasury. Another put the PTF under an independent board of trustees who were explicitly not allowed to “release funds for military expenditures which, were it *not* for the existence of the Fund, would otherwise have been appropriated for nonmilitary expenditures.”

But the current bill has *no* safeguards. It allows Congress to spend the Fund on “any appropriation not for a military purpose”—which means Congress could play the “shell game” with impunity.

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War Tax Resistance Ideas and Actions

(The) War Is Not Over

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military budget is an action almost everyone can take.

Listed here are just a few (due to space constraints) of the many actions that will take place around the country. If there's not one in your area, order some pie charts (sample enclosed) and head out to a busy corner to leaflet for an hour. Call or email NWTRCC with your action details, and we'll add it to our web listing (nwtrcc.org/taxday2009.htm) and pre-tax day national press release.

INDIANA

South Bend–Michiana War Tax Refusers.

(574) 289-2126, psmith@saintmarys.edu, or michianapeacejustice.org. Vigil and leafleting at the Main Post Office. 5 pm–9 pm.

IOWA

Dubuque–Citizens' Tax Moratorium.

(563) 583-2586. Vigil and leafleting downtown at Federal Building, 6th and Locust. 5:30 pm–7:30 pm. (Also every Monday, 5:30 pm–6:30 pm.)

MAINE

Across the State – Maine War Tax Resistance Resource Center and other groups.

(207) 525-7776 or roscc@psouth.net. Call or email to help or to connect with others in your area for leafleting with flyers about war taxes, budget priorities, and related issues at post offices and busy places. Before or on April 15.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Across the State – New Hampshire Peace Action.

Tonacki06@nec.edu. The call is out for people to set up tables with penny polls, educational materials, a petition to deliver to members of Congress, and a bookmark to give out in towns across the state at schools, post offices and town squares.



Michiana WTRs used a “bean” poll at the Martin Luther King Jr. Day Peace and Justice fair in South Bend, Indiana. Penny (or bean) polls are popular tax day activities. See the www.nwtrcc.org/penny_polls.html for ideas on setting up a poll. *Photo by Ellyn Stecker.*

NEW YORK

New York City – NYC War Resisters League and NYC People's Life Fund.

(718) 768-7306 or warresisters.org. Meet and leaflet at Manhattan IRS office, 110 W. 44th Street, at 4 pm and march to main post office at 8th Ave. and 34th St. at 5 pm for vigil, leafleting, redirection ceremony.

PENNSYLVANIA

Bethlehem – LEPOCO.

(610) 691-8730, lepoco@fast.net, or www.lepoco.org. Contact the office to get leaflets and connect with others for leafleting at area post offices.

VERMONT

Burlington – Bread and Roses Committee.

(802) 355-2977 or denisefoote@rocketmail.com. Leafleting at Post Office.

WISCONSIN

Milwaukee – Milwaukee War Tax

Resistance and Casa Maria Catholic Worker.

Lincoln Rice, (414) 344-5745. Demonstration & leafleting in front of the downtown post office, 345 W St. Paul Ave. 5 pm–6 pm.

WTR Movie Nights

NYC war tax resisters held two movie nights in March to introduce people to war tax resistance. The first night was called “War Tax Resistance in the Major Media” featuring part of a “Boston Legal” episode and part of the 2006 feature film *Stranger Than Fiction*. In the TV show “Boston Legal” a young woman didn't pay her federal taxes because of the illegal Iraq war, torture, and curtailing of civil liberties—with surprising results. *Stranger Than Fiction* stars Will Ferrell as an IRS agent sent to audit a war tax resisting/anarchist baker played by Maggie Gyllenhaal.

The second night was a showing of the 2008 British documentary *Contempt of Conscience*, about the conscientious objection to paying war taxes by a group now called the Peace Tax Seven. They are taking their case to the European Court on Human Rights. The free showings included popcorn and home brew “no war tax” beer, and each sparked a good discussion afterwards. Contact the NWTRCC office for more information.

Grant Applicants Sought

The Nonviolent Action Community of Cascadia is seeking grant applications from grassroots groups for activist organizing and education on issues of peace, social justice, and community empowerment. Maximum award amount is \$2,000. Interested groups may download application materials from the website www.seanacc.org, or contact NACC for details at (206) 547-0942, email: nacc@drizzle.com. Application deadline is May 15, 2009, grants awarded June 30, 2009. ▼

The Importance of Gatherings

by Alan Clemence

Here in New England we have several groups of war tax resisters. Once a year the members of these groups, their friends, family, and supporters, and any other interested people from near and far, are invited to our annual New England Regional Gathering of War Tax Resisters and Supporters. Our Gathering begins on a Friday evening with supper and an informational session to which the public is invited. It ends after lunch on Sunday with clean up and fond farewells.

In between is a weekend experience that involves, rejuvenates, educates, and inspires us all. I hope you will read on as I describe our Gatherings, their importance, how we make them happen, and how you and your group can make one happen, also.

For many, this Gathering, and their involvement with it, is a cornerstone of their resister identity. It is an opportunity to reaffirm one's commitment to an ongoing act of civil disobedience. It is a time to be inspired by the bravery and dedication of

others. It is a time for the novice or younger person to witness the veteran resister or the elder, and vice versa. It is a time to lessen the fear and sense of isolation that might arise from time to time as one engages (or disengages with) the power structure, in the pursuit of a life lived ethically and morally. It is a time for education—to teach and be taught—as we share our knowledge and experience while developing answers and strategies for our individual situations. And it is a time for making connections with other peace and social justice issues and people involved with them.

But most of all it is a time to share in the greater energy that groups can create. The whole is far greater than the sum of its parts.

While these noble words are true and accurate, our Gatherings are actually rather humble affairs. We don't utilize fancy conference centers. Our budgets are modest, and we rely on volunteers for our successful events, year after year.

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New England Gathering 2004, Kennebunk, Maine. Photo by Jane Livingston, courtesy of Scott Yoo.

“Where Your Income Tax Money Really Goes”

Pie Chart Flyer from War Resisters League

10¢ each. 200 or fewer order from NWTRCC

WRL handles larger orders:

339 Lafayette St., NY, NY 10012

212-228-0450

WHERE YOUR INCOME TAX MONEY REALLY GOES



2009 War Tax Boycott Palm Cards

3 cents each plus postage. Up to 500 — priority mail, \$4.95, or call for more info.



See the full list of resources, including posters and bumperstickers, at www.nwtrcc.org/publications.htm. Website orders can be paid through Paypal with credit card or bank account debit.

Order from NWTRCC, PO Box 150553, Brooklyn, NY 11215 or call 1-800-269-7464.

Gatherings

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We have a tradition of moving the Gathering around to different places and different states within New England from year to year, so we do not necessarily decide on a particular geographic location because of the existence of the “best” facility. Rather, we usually try to target a geographic location associated with a local group and then find a place that is adequate—adequate, not perfect.

While our planning process is a little different each year, this distinction between adequate and ideal is important to remember for anyone considering or planning such an event. All venues that we choose as a Gathering site have strengths and weaknesses. Lower budget places tend to be that way. Yes, we need meeting space, simple sleeping space (and, perhaps, a few nearby host homes), a place to cook and to eat, and bathroom facilities, but it is not unusual to have a few minor shortcomings in these areas. We just adapt and make do.

The glorious result is that each Gathering has its own unique identity—a life of its own. The small community that forms over the three days, as we all contribute to the event, is real, it's unique and it carries forth into the future! So, if you're thinking, “How can we possibly afford to rent a suitable meeting space for a whole weekend?” you can relax. It is the people that make the Gathering, not the venue.

How We Do It

At some point during our weekend together we try to get a sense of what folks think about the next year's Gathering—where it should be held and who might be interested in being involved. As disorganized as this seems to be at times (and as vaguely committal as people might tend to be at times), in New England we are very fortunate to have a WTR community that takes an attitude of responsibility toward this service work. Usually, we come away from the current Gathering with a targeted geographic location and a small handful of

volunteers who have stepped forward to be involved with the next year's event.

Our Gatherings are held in the fall, usually a weekend between October and early December. By the end of February or March it's a good idea to have a confirmed location and date for the upcoming Fall Gathering. Once the new location is confirmed the whole thing takes on a more concrete nature. A new Gathering has been scheduled and has come into existence!

From that point, “the committee” (usually pretty informal) develops a theme and a program for the weekend and proceeds to work up an 8½ by 11 tri-fold flyer. Over the years we have had a wide variety of themes, some of which by themselves are not necessarily unique to war tax resistance. The task of program development, of course, is to link it all together through the planned combination of group discussion (large and small), panels and other presentations. Another thing, worthy of mention here, is that usually during our Gatherings, and planning processes, there is a fervent interest in working to link the military economy, and its displaced priorities, with a variety of important social justice issues. One of the challenges for organizers is how to be sure to include these links while at the same time maintaining a clear singleness of purpose relevant to war tax resistance.

A registrar and mailing address must be designated, and by early June we try to get

the flyer finished and available for distribution to our various mailing lists and to many other peace and social justice groups. Within the flyer will be all the basics including information on sleeping arrangements, directions, food, registration, cost (sliding scale), and the theme and program. After it is released, work continues on developing the program, publicizing the event and seeking volunteers for helping during the Gathering.

Try It, You'll Like It

These are the basics. Both the planning process and the Gathering itself are a wonderful opportunity to be a part of a greater organized effort to resist state-sanctioned war and violence in our society. These efforts are an opportunity to bring a public face and public witness to our ongoing noncooperation with the supposed requirement that taxpayers are to provide funding for the immoral activities of war making.

In New England our Annual Gathering has become a rich tradition for more than 20 years, and we encourage other folks to try their hand at creating this type of positive event. A number of us from New England have agreed to share our experiences with anyone who would like to learn more about possibly organizing their own WTR Gathering. Please get in touch with the NWTRCC office for contact information.

And we would love to have you visit us! This year the New England Gathering will be October 9-11, just outside Brattleboro, Vermont. Subsequent issues of this newsletter and the NWTRCC web site will have more details. ▼

Alan Clemence lives in Maine and has attended many New England gatherings over the years. He is motivated by the massive misallocation of our society's resources for the execution of violence, abuse and other clearly immoral activities, and the axiom that it is immoral to pay someone to do something you would not do yourself.



Alan Clemence

Note: NWTRCC has been given a grant from Pioneer Valley War Tax Resistance to help fund a regional gathering in another region. Please contact the NWTRCC office for details, 800-269-7464.

Peace Tax Legislation

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There is a section in this bill that *looks* like a safeguard: "It is the *sense of Congress* that any increase in revenue...shall be allocated in a manner consistent with the purposes of the Fund."

But "sense of Congress" sections of bills are just unenforceable decoration. Congress once passed a law that said: "It is the *sense of the Congress* that Hmong and other Highland Lao veterans...should be considered veterans for purposes of continuing certain welfare benefits." When these veterans tried to get benefits, the courts refused them, saying that if Congress wanted these veterans to get benefits, it should have enacted a law to mandate this—it isn't enough to just indicate a "sense" that it should happen.

Because the current PTF Act has no safeguards, every taxpayer who gives money to its PTF would, ironically, *increase* the amount of taxpayer money available for Congress to spend on war. Every "peace tax" payer would be financially supporting the war machine.

Some WTRs would stop resisting and pay into the fund, believing that their dollars would not pay for war. This would mean fewer WTRs, the IRS would have fewer targets, and so each one would be more likely to be targeted. The government would also have a new way to discourage resistance: "Why don't you just pay into the Peace Tax Fund?"

This divide-and-conquer tactic would be so effective that the government itself might come up with it if the WTR movement in the U.S. ever threatens business-as-usual.

It wouldn't be the first time: In 1693, Pennsylvania governor Benjamin Fletcher tried to get the Quakers in the Pennsylvania Assembly to cough up some money to fight the French and Indians.

He assured them:

[I]f there be any amongst you that scruple the giving of money to support war, there are a great many other charges in that government...: Your money shall be converted to these uses, and shall not be dipped in blood.

The Quakers knew a shell game when they saw one, and they didn't allocate any war money. I suggest we follow their example and *not* support the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Act.

Carolyn Stevens, Seattle, Washington

I want to add my support to Larry Dansinger's conclusion that NWRTRCC should continue to support the Peace Tax Fund legislation. I think that Larry nails it

when he writes, "In many cases, they ARE us." Why would we want to disassociate ourselves from an organization of conscientious war tax resisters? When is political correctness more important than solidarity and community? That's what it comes down to for me. Yes, of course, the legislation is imperfect. It was from the outset and has gotten more so as it has morphed from the World Peace Tax Fund bill to the Religious Freedom Tax Fund Bill. But looking around, I don't see anyone who is a closer ally. Not the left wing of the Democratic party that gets all hyped up about elections. Not most grassroots peace organizations. Not the traditional CO groups or historic peace churches. The NCPTF is one of our closest and most consistent national allies, and I don't want to turn my back on them because the bill isn't perfect.

Since the Eugene NWRTRCC meeting, I have thought a lot about why we heard such polarized opinions for and against the NCPTF. I've decided that it's a question of priorities. For some folks, political purity is the litmus test. I respect that, but it's not me. Community and solidarity are more important to me. Obviously, I'm stating our views in the extreme. I'm sure that solidarity is important to the folks who are against the Peace Tax fund bill, and principle is very important to me. It's just that we break differently when it comes to deciding about this endorsement. To me, the long-standing collaboration between NWRTRCC and NCPTF is critical. We have organized together for decades. They have had a consistent attendance at our meetings. These are our friends. These are, for the most part, conscientious war tax resisters. These are our allies. "In many cases, they ARE us."

I haven't decided if I will come to the next NWRTRCC meeting, all the way across the country, to be part of our continuing NCPTF endorsement discussion. So I appreciate the opportunity to share my views in this issue of the newsletter. I have great faith in the power of consensus decision-making to come to the right decision, regardless of who is actually in the room when a decision is made. I'm sure that my viewpoint will be reflected whether I'm there in person or not.

Karl Meyer, Nashville, Tennessee

From its earliest days, I have regarded efforts to pass a Peace Tax Fund bill in Congress as,

- a) essentially futile, because of Congressional reluctance,
- b) possibly counterproductive because the effort for years has given some military tax objectors a rationalization

for continuing to pay military taxes while they advocated for passage of such enabling legislation, and

- c) an ineffectual fig leaf, even if enacted, because it would have no necessary effect on the level of military appropriations or spending, merely rearranging the drawers in which total revenues from taxpayers are kept, pending expenditure.

Nevertheless, I recommend that NWRTRCC continue to endorse passage of the bill because we have always been a wide coalition covering the whole range of conscientious objectors to military taxation, from the most radical commitment to complete nonpayment of Federal Income Taxes, which I advocate, to the least assertive forms of protest, and nonpayment of token amounts of taxes claimed. We should support the efforts of all others as we hope that they will support ours.

Joffre Stewart, Chicago, Illinois

No to endorsement of the bill of the National Campaign for a "Peace Tax" Fund. There is not and cannot be a peace tax. Taxes are collected with the same violence that makes war. The bill would raise money for the State whereas I don't believe in the State and support/practice resistance as a way of shutting down the War System by getting rid of the State which organizes it. A nonviolent revolution terminates both the constitution and UN Charter which mandate and sustain (tax) law-enforcement which penalizes our antiwar direct actions both as tax resisters and otherwise. Moreover, there may be a danger of discrimination against harmless resisters who don't fit a religious definition. Our resistance is ethics based, not law based.

Kelly Suttles, Durham, North Carolina

I was sort of surprised when I read that your group had to discuss the endorsement of the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund. It kind of seems like a no-brainer. I think ultimately all of the NWRTRCC supporters would want a bill like this to pass Congress, so that we can all pay our taxes once and for all with a clear conscience. It's a campaign that I feel badly that I have not been more involved with. Is the organization ineffective? Is that why the endorsement has to be discussed? I don't see any useful reason for NWRTRCC to distance itself from a legal option to resist paying for war unless that is the case. ▼

Please continue to send (mail or email) in comments, which we will post on the NWRTRCC website and listserve and take to our May 1 meeting.

Live and Love

By Mimi Copp

Jesus says to love your enemies and your neighbors.

In some ways, that is all that needs to be said as to why I have decided to redirect my federal tax dollars away from war-making and towards life giving initiatives. I can't figure out how to justify the killing of those who Jesus says to love. How am I loving them if I'm a part of their destruction? I am a Christian; a follower of Jesus and therefore I believe that I cannot support the things that make for war.

It has taken me many years to come to the place of redirecting my federal tax dollars. For the first time last year, at the age of 33 and after many years of paying my federal taxes, I redirected the money to two organizations suggested by the 2008 War Tax Boycott.

I grew up in the Church of the Brethren and learned about the nonviolent way of Jesus and of people who do war tax resistance based on their understandings of how Jesus calls us to live in this world. When people flew airplanes into buildings in the U.S. in Sept. 2001, killing many people, my government responded with the very violence it decried. It was at this point that I discovered the depth of my commitment to the nonviolent, third way of Jesus; a way that calls us to find an alternative to using violence or doing nothing at all when faced with violence and injustice.

I believed war and militarism were not the answers to our security, but I continued paying for it. While I prayed for the U.S. occupation of Iraq to cease; while I wrote my statement of conscientious objection to war at the beginning of the 2003 "Shock and Awe" campaign; while I studied Peace and Conflict studies at the Master's level; and while I have protested publicly, I was also paying for the U.S. government to wage acts of extreme violence. In 2007, I could no longer do it.

I was self-employed for the first time in 2007 and so I owed the IRS money, which made redirection easier for me to do. In April, I paid my self-employment taxes and then redirected the money I owed in income taxes to an organization that provides healthcare for Iraqi refugees and to another organization that provides healthcare for people in New Orleans who are still

suffering from the effects of Hurricane Katrina. By May, I received a letter from the IRS saying I owed them money. In the middle of June, the IRS sent me a letter stating that the arguments I made for not paying my income taxes are "frivolous" and making such arguments can result in fines of \$5,000. At the end of June, I got another letter saying that the amount I owed the IRS would be taken out of my economic stimulus check. The exact amount that I had redirected was in fact taken from my stimulus check and that was the last I heard from the IRS.

My resistance to militarization is different this year. I lived below the taxable level and therefore do not owe federal income taxes. However, I do owe self-employment taxes, which I will be paying. This was made possible in part by living in an intentional community and doing volunteer work in exchange for room and board.

From where I sit right now, I feel like I am following my conscience and religious convictions. This feels well with my soul. This sustains me in these beginning steps as I try to wrap my head around the details of how to do war tax resistance and as I put in the time and energy it requires. It also quiets the moments of anxiety and fear I have as I reframe how I will live day by day as someone who does this type of resistance



Photo courtesy of Mimi Copp.

and redirection. I seek out the stories of others and find courage in learning about them. The support from my community and other war tax resisters that I've met in the Philadelphia area has been a blessing and monumentally important in helping me take new and bold steps to show that war-making is not acceptable to me and to show another way to security by redirecting money to the things that will bring about Shalom. ▼



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