HISTORIAN FOR PEACE

An Interview with Howard Zinn

By Susan Van Haitsma and Ansel Herz

Howard Zinn was interviewed on February 17, 2006 by Ansel Herz and Susan Van Haitsma while he was in Austin as keynote speaker for the inaugural conference of Historians Against the War.

SVH: I’m really grateful for the ways you’ve supported war tax resistance—for example, signing the Appeal to Conscience circulated by NWTRCC in 2003. I wondered if you’ve ever done war tax resistance, and if not, why you haven’t.

HZ: No, I never have—except, during the Vietnam War, I think I didn’t pay my telephone tax—a very minor act of war tax resistance. But, why not—I don’t know — guess I didn’t think enough about it. Maybe I didn’t have people close to me who were doing it and therefore giving me some community to be part of. I was too busy doing other things. So, I have no good reason!

SVH: Would you still consider doing it at some point?

HZ: I might consider doing it at some point.

SVH: Since the military budget is so huge, with almost incomprehensible spending on the war and occupation, I would have expected there to be more of a surge in war tax resistance. But, there really hasn’t been and I wonder if you have thoughts about why.

HZ: I don’t think the actual numbers make a difference. If it’s $400 billion a year or $500 billion, I don’t think people decide to be war tax resisters on that basis. It’s not a quantitative thing, it’s a qualitative thing. So, I’m not surprised that there hasn’t been a surge.

SVH: Would you have advice for war tax resisters as a movement?

HZ: I think the important thing is to publicize what is being done, not in the hopes that the movement will become a mass movement, because WTR is not going to become a mass movement. It’s the kind of movement that will always involve a relatively small number of people. Most people, even those who are vehemently against the military budget and against militarization are just not inclined to go that far and disrupt their lives. It takes real some community to be part of. I was too busy doing other things. So, I have no good reason!

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Counseling Notes

Maintaining Fear

As we know, fear of the IRS is key to their collection efforts, and IRS press releases and announcements are full of proclamations about how their audits, collections, and enforcement efforts are improving — “so many percentage points higher than the previous period.” To make sure that reality is included in the mix, the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC), based at Syracuse University, has provided the public with detailed information about the operation of hundreds of federal agencies since 1989, including the IRS. NWTRCC has referred to their excellent reports in the past.

TRAC has used the IRS’s own data to produce a regular series of authoritative reports about the actual performance of what is today one of the nation’s largest and most powerful agencies, and the reports are posted on TRAC’s web site, http://trac.syr.edu. But, in January 2006, TRAC announced it was suing the IRS for withholding its tax enforcement statistics since mid-2004, in violation of a 1976 court order that forced them to release detailed statistics about how the agency enforces the nation’s tax laws. TRAC has used the data to show that poor people were being audited at a higher rate than rich people (2000) and that corporate audits were down (2004 and 2005), and other such facts not announced by the IRS. More information about the lawsuit is on TRAC’s website.

Current data of interest to WTR’s produced by TRAC shows a marked increase in levies and liens between 2000 and 2004, data that matches experience, at least in terms of calls about bank account and salary levies. While neither levies nor liens are reaching the levels prior to the 1998 Congressional hearings on the IRS, levies in particular have been on a steep climb back up. Seizures, however, dropped dramatically in 1999 and have shown little increase since then.

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Outrage Needed

Continued from page 1

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Portland, Oregon, folks will be holding war tax related “Burma shave” signs on bridges around the city on tax day. In Fort Collins, Colorado, they’re going to hand out pieces of pie to “take back the pie chart.” Milwaukee activists will carry on their tradition of risking arrest while taking their message directly to their Senator’s office and to the IRS office.

Hundreds of others around the country, whether two-by-two or in large groups, will be out handing out thousands of the WRL pie.

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More than a paycheck

Editor
Ruth Benn

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Susan Quinlan

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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.

Subscriptions to More Than a Paycheck are $15 per year.

NWTRCC
P.O. Box 150553
Brooklyn, NY 11215
(718) 638-2348, (631) 665-7444, Email: vmfny@aol.com
Web: www.nwtrcc.org

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Many Thanks

We are grateful for the recent contributions and affiliate fees from these groups:

- Taxes for Peace Not War! Eugene, OR
- Oregon Community for War Tax Resistance, Portland
- Casa Maria/War Tax Resistance
- Quaker City Friends Meeting (NH)

Network Updates

Central Region: Change Donald Kaufman’s email to: dekaufman@cox.net

New England Region: Add - New Hampshire, Tom Jackson, Dover, NH, (603) 498-3580, coffeeanon@yahoo.com, Area contact

New Counselors from the October training:
- Oregon: Ann Huntwork, Portland, (503) 281-3697, Email: john@tearsoup.com, Email: pat@tearsoup.com
- California: Doug Mackenzie, Los Gatos, (408) 458-6788, ddmackenzie@gmail.com
- Northeast: Carol Wald, Brooklyn, (718) 638-2349, Email: screwtheright@verizon.net, and Veronica Fellerath, Bay Shore, (631) 665-7444, Email: vmfny@aol.com
Imprisoned for War Tax Refusal

On February 21, Joe Donato reported to the Federal Correctional Institution in Fairton, New Jersey, to begin a 27-month prison sentence for following his religious beliefs against paying taxes for military purposes. Likewise, Kevin McKee began his 24-month sentence on February 13 at FPC Schuylkill in Minersville, Pennsylvania. Joe and Kevin, along with Joe’s wife Inge, were convicted by a jury in federal court in Camden, New Jersey, in December 2004 on charges of “conspiring to defraud the United States” and “willful evasion” of federal taxes. Inge Donato completed her 6-month prison term on February 6.

The Donatos and McKee are members of the Restored Israel of Yahweh, a small Bible study-based religious society located in Mays Landing, New Jersey. Their founder, Leo J. Volpe, was a World War II draft refuser who left the Jehovah’s Witnesses to teach a gospel of pacifism that included refusal to participate financially in the military.

“We would always have gladly paid our full share of taxes if only the government could assure us that the amount we paid would not go to fund war making,” said Joe Donato. “The lack of any provision like that forced us to either violate our religion or risk being branded as criminals. At that point, we saw no choice but to honor our beliefs.”

“I am deeply saddened that these gentle folks wound up being the first pacifist tax resisters to be prosecuted and jailed—possibly ever—for felony conspiracy to defraud the U.S. and attempted tax evasion, the most serious criminal charges in the Internal Revenue Code,” said Peter Goldberger, Inge Donato’s attorney. “The IRS has plenty of power to collect taxes without resorting to criminal prosecution. I look to our government to show more respect for sincere expressions of religious beliefs.”

—National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund. For the full release and more information on what you can do see www.peacetaxfund.org.

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International Notes

BOLIVIA

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights heard the case of Alfredo Dias Bustos, a Jehovah’s Witness requesting conscientious objector (CO) status in Bolivia. He also requested as a CO that he should not be required to pay the military tax which Bolivia, along with many other states, levies on men who do not perform their military service. The State and the Commission came to a friendly agreement on October 27, 2005, that granted Bustos relief on both counts. (The full agreement is at www.cidh.org/annualrep/2005eng/bolivia14.04eng.htm.) This may be the first time that such direct substitution of financial conscription for bodily conscription has been accepted in an international court!

CANADA

Conscience Canada has developed their own version of the Peace Tax Return, available on their website, http://www.consciencecanada.ca, in English and French. “Hopefully, our right-wing newly elected government will get the message in large numbers!” says Marilyn Hébert of Conscience Canada and Nos Impôts Pour la Paix.

From Conscience and Military Tax Campaign (CPTI)

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Outrage Needed

Continued from page 2

chart or similar flyers. Will getting this information into the hands of taxpayers build the outrage? We hope so!

—Ruth Benn, NWTRCC Coordinator

This list will be updated right up to April 17 on the NWTRCC website (www.nwtrcc.org/taxday2006.htm), so if your event is not below or if all the information isn’t there, be sure to get it to the NWTRCC office as soon as possible, 1-800-269-7464 or nwtrcc@nwtrcc.org.

Tax Day events are Monday, April 17, Continued on page 5

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2006 Tax Day Plans

unless otherwise noted.

ARIZONA
Tucson – Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Local Chapter. (520) 312-9988 or susan@susanthorpe.com or www.wilptucson.org. Leafleting at the Sun Station Post Office, 9 am-5 pm, and at the main Post Office, Cherry Bell Station, 5 pm-Midnight.

CALIFORNIA
Chico – Chico Peace and Justice Center. (530) 345-7590 or chris4pax@chico.com. Penny poll and leaflet at downtown Post Office, Broadway and 5th Streets.
Sonoma County – Sonoma County Taxes for Peace. (707) 823-9203. Leafleting at three post offices in the county.

COLORADO
Fort Collins – Center for Justice, Peace & Environment. (970) 484-8039 or strengththroughpeace@yahoo.com. Penny poll and leafleting while handing out pieces of pie to “take back the pie chart.”

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Washington – DC Area War Tax Resistance. info@dcwtr.org. Vigil and redistribution of resisted tax money at IRS Headquarters, 1111 Constitution NW Noon.

FLORIDA
St. Petersburg – Leafleting at one or more neighborhood post offices, 11 am-3 pm. Contact: Ruth Paine, (727) 895-3090, rhpaine@yahoo.com.

IOWA
Dubuque – Citizens’ Tax Moratorium. (563) 583-2586. Tax day vigil and leafleting at U.S. Courthouse, 6th and Locust, 5-7 pm. Anti-war vigil every Friday morning 8-8:30 am, U.S. Highway 20 and South Locust near bridge to Illinois.

MAINE
(April 17 is a holiday; actions April 18)
Bangor, Belfast, Portland (probably other towns too) – Maine War Tax Resistance Resource Center. (207) 525-7776 or invert@acadia.net. Bangor: Post office and Federal Building, Harlow St., Noon-6 pm, leafleting and penny poll, followed by a showing at 6 pm of “An Act of Conscience” at location tba. Belfast: 11:30 am-1 pm and other times, Post Office. Portland: Leafleting at main Post Office, 125 Forest Avenue, time TBA.
Brunswick — Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space. (207) 729-0517 or globalnet@mindspring.com. Protest and leafleting. 11 am-1 pm.

MICHIGAN
Jackson — War tax resistance history exhibit will be displayed at Jackson Community College leading up to tax day. Penny poll. April 15 - Leafleting at Jackson Post Office. Contact: Alan Gamble, (517) 740-8363 or alan_gamble@jccmi.edu.

MINNESOTA
International Falls – Penny poll at Post Office, library, and Court House during the days leading up to tax day. Details to be announced. Contact: Ruth Anderson, (218) 286-5819.

NEW HAMPSHIRE
Portsmouth — Info: Maine War Tax Resistance Resource Center. (207) 525-7776 or invert@acadia.net. Leafleting at main Post Office, 80 Daniel St., time tba.

NEW MEXICO

NEW YORK
New York City – NYC War Resisters League (nycwrl@att.net, 718-768-7306) and NYC War Tax Resistance, www.nycplf.org. April 15 – Solemn procession mourning the use of tax dollars for war between IRS and post office (8th Ave and 34th St.). April 17: Leafleting and vigil at Manhattan IRS office (110 W. 44th Street, just west of Sixth Ave.) from noon-2 pm.

NORTH CAROLINA
Asheville – Fools of Conscience. wncpc@main.nc.us. Leafleting at the Downtown Post Office, Saturday April 15. Time tba.

OREGON
Portland – Oregon Community for War Tax Resistance/WRL. (503) 238-0605 or jgrueschow@comcast.net. April 14: Holding “Burma Shave” signs on the local bridges during morning and evening rush hours. April 17: Redirection ceremony and penny poll at downtown post office. Time tba.

TEXAS
Austin – Austin Conscientious Objectors to Military Taxation. (512) 467-2946 or jeffweb@sbcglobal.net. Leafleting at Central Post Office with “Where Your Income Taxes Really Go” flyer. Late afternoon.
San Antonio – Leafleting with pie chart at weekly peace vigil. Thursdays 4-5 pm, downtown at the main plaza (officially Plaza de Las Islas) on the Northeast corner (Main Plaza and Commerce Sts.) Contact: valliveoak@juno.com.

WASHINGTON
Seattle – Nonviolent Action Community of Cascadia (NACC) and other groups. (206) 547-0952 or nacc@drizzle.com or http://seanacc.org. Leafleting with “Where Your Income Taxes Really Go” flyers at Seattle post offices. Call for locations and times.
Tacoma – Leafleting of the WRL pie chart at the Main Post Office in Tacoma, 8 pm - ?. Contact: George Rodkey, (253) 961-5822 or georod01@msn.com.

WISCONSIN
Madison – Madison Area War Tax Resistance. 608-255-1800 or jerry@lakesidepress.org. Public distribution of resisted tax dollars with location and time tba.
Madison – Madison Branch of WILPF and Health Writers, (608) 238-5740 or lz14@juno.com. Leaflet at the Post Office on Tax Day to educate filers on where their tax money goes.

What Belongs to Caesar?

Cost of War
National Priorities Project is an excellent source for budget information, and their newest publication is Cost of Iraq War Rises, with local and state taxpayer costs of the Iraq War.
To find information for your city, county, or state, or obtain additional analysis of the administration request, go to www.nationalpriorities.org/iraqwarcost, or contact: NPP, 17 New South St., Northampton, MA 01060, (413) 584-9556.

New WTR Poster Series
The SF Print Collective has produced a series of hand printed silk screen color posters highlighting a variety of creative WTR messages and images. Check the NWTRCC web page for more information about purchasing one or a complete set.

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Howard Zinn  
*Continued from page 1*

commitment to do that. So, without expecting other people to do the same, the important thing is to let people know who is doing it. Even if persons don't want to do WTR themselves, I think it is inspirational for them to see other people doing it.

I have faced the same issue with my Catholic anti-war friends—the Berrigans and Elizabeth McAllister and those people, and they do very daring things that will get them prison sentences, and most people will not do that. And I will not do that, although I've been jailed 10 times in the course of demonstrations and so on. But, I would not deliberately put myself in a position of going to jail for several years, and it's the same sort of situation where the people who do it are an inspiration to other people. And it's important for the people who do it not to make other people feel guilty, not to make them feel that somehow there's something lacking in them if they don't go that far. The practicality is that most people will not go that far, but they may go in another direction or they may do other things. And they may do other things because, at least partly, they've been admiring of those people who do go that far.

AH: The third anniversary of the February 15 worldwide protest just passed. I wondered what you thought was effective and what was ineffective about that protest.

HZ: Well, it was a historic act ... it gave some indication how people all over the world were opposed to the impending invasion of Iraq ... there's never been anything like it ... simultaneous demonstrations of 10-15 million people.

SVH: I also see a lot of hope in the counter-recruitment movement, with students saying "no," and I wondered if you also feel hopefulness about this.

HZ: Oh, yes, I think that the movement against military recruiting in the high schools is a very important part of the movement because the government has been desperate about recruiting young people.  
*Continued on page 7*
Dear Computer:

Yes, you’re just a computer just like the ones that direct nuclear warheads. You have no heart or hands or eyes or feelings. You don’t see destruction or civilian casualties. You don’t feel the agony of death and suffering. No, you’re just programmed to get more dollars. Dollars to build bigger bombs and feed the military mania. Dollars to build more nuclear weapons every day. Dollars to bring destruction to the whole world. Dollars to bring hell on earth. Don’t expect me to pay for that. I sent my [money] to Mennonite Central Committee. I want to help build a better peaceful world. I want to be a faithful follower of Jesus. Jesus even said, “Love your enemies.” Unfortunately, computer, you’re not alone. The whole U.S. Government buys your inhuman logic. Legislators, Administrators, Judges all say I must pay for war. But I’m a Christian conscientious objector to war. So I wonder, are they all computers, too?

For humanity,
James Klassen
Austin, Texas

Howard Zinn

SVH: I wanted to share with you this photo of a recent demonstration organized by Youth Activists of Austin held in front of our school district headquarters as part of our joint campaign calling for a district policy limiting recruiter access in the schools…

HZ: “Better Well-Read Than Dead.” Yes, that’s good! I may refer to it in my talk tonight… [and he did!—to applause].

AH: I know that you’re interested in anarchism and you wrote a play about Emma Goldman. I’m sort of an anarchist and I was wondering if you see a greater role for anarchism in the U.S. in the future.

HZ: I think that’s the only direction in which we can go if we are going to create a better society — without calling it anarchism. The great thing about anarchism is that the idea of anarchism pervades so many people’s minds and so many things people do who don’t consider themselves anarchists. Anarchism gives the fundamental idea of being suspicious of authority and wanting people to have direct control over their lives—that is something that is a very strong impulse in people, and people have been struggling to make that impulse real. Of course, the government and corporations have been struggling against that impulse, but I think it will always be there because it speaks most closely to people’s natural desires and natural needs.

SVH: Do you think there will be a time when this country will stop using our youngest adults in war?

HZ: Do I think there will be a time when we will renounce war as a way of solving problems? I think that time must come — I don’t know how soon. I think there will be a point reached where war will be seen not just as immoral but as impractical, and the morality and practicality will join — the two motives will join and create a situation where governments won’t be able to carry on a war because — Iraq is an example of it — it becomes more and more clear that war doesn’t even achieve the objectives of the people who initiate it. And so, I’m hopeful about that.

Howard Zinn is an historian, speaker, writer, and author of many books, among them A People’s History of the United States and You Can’t Be Neutral On A Moving Train, which is also the title of a 2005 film about him.

Ansel Herz is a journalism student at the University of Texas at Austin and is active with Youth Activists of Austin.

Susan Van Haitsma is active with Austin Conscientious Objectors to Military Taxation and Nonmilitary Options for Youth.
April 2005
Dear Fellow Human Being,

Enclosed you will find my tax returns for the 2004 tax year, and my payment voucher. You will notice that I have not included payment.... It was a really hard decision for me, and now I am going on faith that there is actually a person at the other end of this letter, someone who feels things, maybe felt the sun today, or noticed the grass getting steadily greener as the spring deepens.

... in my heart, I cannot honor the demands of the Internal Revenue Service of the United States of America. Because, you see, at some point, I do actually believe that it IS up to me. It is up to all of us who have a conscience, who feel the tug of some Deeper Meaning for Being Here -- to listen to the tender dreams and dare to question what is impersonal and impenetrable. So, rather than honor the demands of an institution whose authority I can no longer recognize, I will honor the call of my heart. I will honor the cry of the poor, the pleas of those we have bombed, the tears of children and mothers, the moans of the slaughtered men in Fallujah, the fear of the soldiers who return under cover of night to the U.S. because they are wounded and the media doesn't report those stories. I will honor the future generations of the land we call Iraq, whose blood and bones and soil and water will be contaminated with Depleted Uranium from our weapons for more time than we can fathom....

I recently spent one month in Australia with an amazing group of people from all over the world who are dedicating their lives to serving Life, ministering to the magical unfolding of Creation, its miracle and mystery....

When I came back to the United States, the first newspaper I picked up in my town spoke of Congress approving billions of dollars for more funding for the war effort in Iraq. On the same front page, there was a picture of children from my town, with a headline declaring that childcare services would have to be cut at a federally funded childcare site. There just wasn't enough money.

I know you know as well as I do: there is SO MUCH money. There just isn't enough to pay for endless, illegitimate, illegal, unjust wars AND care for our children, not to mention pay for education and healthcare. If our government can't make what seems like the obvious choice here, then the IRS has lost its mandate to demand any money from me.

I will henceforth be solely responsible for where my money goes. I will voluntarily tithe myself, because I long to live in a society that cares for each other and I believe that starts with me. I will send half of what I tithe to the Social Security Administration, because I believe wholeheartedly in a culture that cares for those who cannot care for themselves, and social insurance is an evolutionary triumph for ordinary people here in the United States. The same people who lied about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq (while developing new nuclear weapons here) are lying to us about Social Security. So I will gladly and joyfully stand in opposition to such a cold-hearted attempt to steal security from those who need it. Next, I will send annual donations to a Veterans hospital of my choosing, since the U.S. government does not seem to care very much for its soldiers once they can no longer fight. Third, I will send money to both the Post Office and the Public Library in my town, because I believe the free exchange of information and ideas is of crucial importance. Fourth, I will continue to support the Ithaca Health Fund, which is a community fund of money for health care, since the U.S. government does not consider the health of its (non rich) citizens to be a top priority. Finally, I will strive every day of my life to live lightly and lovingly on this beautiful, bountiful Earth. I will share what I have been given, care for elders, and teach children to respect the mysterious unseen things that make our lives possible, like the ozone layer, ocean plankton, whatever it is inside seeds that makes them sprout and grow, and the microbes in good, clean soil. I will ride my bike, rather than own a car. I will support what is small and local. I will vote every minute with my body, my heart, my spirit, my money, my work, my play, my food, my smile, my tears, my life—for a country that has the courage to tell the truth.

May you be blessed, and may you get home soon,
Rebecca Nellenback, Ithaca, NY

IF YOU WORK FOR PEACE
NWTRCC
P.O. Box 150553
Brooklyn, NY 11215
(800)269-7464
(718) 768-3420

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