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 and learned about the nonviolent way of Jesus and of people who do war tax resistance, I continued on page 3

If you work for peace.

More than a paycheck.

What are we supposed to do when we have to pay our taxes? TheBush folks like the idea to take him up on it. 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.

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 selected 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 pacifistaxfund.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 resistance 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...
NWTRCC sees poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, economic injustice, and national affiliate groups which we abhor. Through the More Than a Paycheck coalition of local, regional and national affiliate groups working on war tax related issues, NWTRCC's core poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, economic injustice, environmental destruction and militarization of law enforcement as inequities linked with the militarism which we all accept Through the reduction 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
2600 Lakeview Ave., Madison, WI
(608) 251-4220
Fax: (608) 251-3888
Web: nwtrcc.org

COUNSELING NOTES

Ending May 2009

IRS Ends Private Debt Collection
On May 3, 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 had their debt turned over to these private collectors. Now, after extensive review the IRS figured out what research had said to begin with: the work is done best and most efficiently by the IRS employees.

Counsel: In this new IRS orientation, we anticipate hearing about 1,000 new collection cases 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 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, credit earned income tax credit, sales tax deduction for certain cars and light trucks, credits for hybrid cars, credits for household energy conservation (installation, replacement windows, duct seals, etc.) and installing solar panels or other renewable energy systems, $1,000 refundable credit for each qualifying child under the age of 17.

Inviting a Speaker
Living 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 Schwoebel, Randy Kehler, and more! Hosting a speaker program can attract new interest in war tax resistance and also help broaden your own awareness and knowledge of WTR techniques. Click on the Speakers Bureau icon at nwtrcc.org and find pictures, bios, and contact information at your fingertips.

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 the range of perspectives.

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

Many Thanks

NWTRCC's list of war tax resistance counselors, area contacts, affiliates, and alternative funds and updates to that list appear in 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.

Please call toll free 1-800-269-7464.

Join Us!!

Peace Tax Legislation

There is a section in this bill that looks like a safeguard: “It is not the intent of Congress to place 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 the High Lao veterans should be considered veterans for purposes of continuance certain wel- fare benefits.” When courts to military taxes 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 state a “sense” that it should happen.

Because the current PTF Act has no safe-guard that a taxpayer who mounts a legal challenge 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 not 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 tar- gets, and so each one would be more likely to stick. The government, however, would 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 Franklin tried to get the Quakers in the Pennsylvania Assembly to cough up some money to fight the French and Indians. He failed then.

If there be among you that scruple the going of money to support war, there are a great many others thinking as I do, etc., your money shall be converted into these uses, and shall not be dipped in blood.

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

Carolyn Stevens, Seattle, Washington

I want to add my support to Larry Danzinger’s conclusion that NWTRCC 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 conscien- tious 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 always been so as it has many roots from the World Peace Tax Fund bill to the Religious Freedom Tax Fund Bill. But looking behind the cup and I don’t see anyone of any political party, doesn’t think so the left wing of the Democratic party that gets all hyped up about elections. Nonetheless, two organizations, the Nonviolent Peace funds. 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 NWTRCC meeting, I have thought a lot about why we have been so polarized and for 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 impor- tant to me. Obviously, I’m stating our views in the extreme. I’m sure the NCPTF has solidarity is important to the folks who are against the Peace Tax fund bill, and principle is very important to me. It’s just a matter of degree. I guess it’s not a question to us to decide about any question. To me, the non-longstanding collaborations between NWTRCC and NCPTF are critical. We have organized together for decades. They have had a con- sistent 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 seen the Pennsylvania Assembly pass a new bill to authorize a new bill to the next NWTRCC 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 the decentralized methodology that is coming 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

I have regarded efforts to pass a Peace Tax Fund bill in Congress as:

a) essentially futile, because of Congress’s 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 military spending is kept, pending expenditure.

Nevertheless, I recommend that NWTRCC continue to support passage of such legislation because we have always been a wide coalition covering the whole range of conscientious war tax resisters from the most radical commitment to complete nonpayment of Federal Income Taxes, which I advocate, to the least avant-garde of protest. For me, the tax is a token amount of revenue from taxes claimed. We should support the efforts of all others as we hope that they will support ours.

Joffie 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 is a way to keep the money for the State whereas I don’t believe in the State and sup- port/practice resistance as a way of shaming the State, to throw money into the State which organizes it. A nonviolent revo- lution terminates both the constitution and UN Charter which mandate and sustain war. I think the effort for years has given some military tax objectors a rationalization for disarming ourselves from an organization of conscientious war tax resisters. 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.

Joffie Stewart, Chicago, Illinois

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 various decisions and efforts that will come up with 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.

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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 key is that many New England Gatherings have 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 is unique and it carries forth into the future! So, if you’re thinking, “How can I possibly afford to go to a weekend gathering and a place to meet 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 weekends 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 disaggregated as this seems to be at times (and as vaguely communal 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 priorites, with a variety of important social justice issues. One of the challenges for organizers is how to be sure to include these threads while at the same time maintaining a clear singleness of purpose relevant to our tax resistance.

A regular 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 process and the Gathering itself are 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.

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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 gets spent; 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 Religious Freedom 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?

I 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 that there’s not quite as far left too 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 be so rigid. I’m trying to let go of my strong feelings because I think there is a greater thing to have both campaigns connected to go to their separate ways.

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

David M. Gross, San Francisco, California

The U.S. government, even with its nuclear arsenal and designs on global hegemony, it fights multiple wars, and, as a result, the largest arms dealers fairs the flames of many more. Both war tax resisters (WTRs) and Peace Tax Fund (PTF) advocates want to stop military spending, but the PTF advocates hope to wall-off the war-making parts of government and pay only for war. 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 monies off the already planned spending to 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.
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) 325-7776 or ros@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.
Tonachito@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.

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, 110W. 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.

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.

continued on next page
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The more the WTR movement as a whole has gathered, the more the 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 meeting space for a whole weekend?” you can relax. It is the people that make the Gathering, not the venue.

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In New England our Annual Gatherings have been 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 and insights 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! The next 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 Clenonce

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, 800-269-7467.

Peace Tax Legislation

continued from page 5

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

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

Larry Damsinger, 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 notes regarding the PTF, not continuing its endorsement of the campaign:

- there is a lack of unity among WTRs about the Peace Tax Fund; 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;
- we need to know when to hang onto our strongly held beliefs and when not to hang onto them. I’m trying to let go of my strong feelings because I think there is a greater thing to have both campaigns connected to 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 NWTRCC government, even with its nuclear arsenal and designs on global hegemony, fights multiple wars, and large, large, large, large, large, large, largest arms dealers fascinates the flames of many more.

Both war tax resisters (WTRs) and Peace Tax Fund (PTF) advocates want to stop funding the war. But say you pay into the PTF, and Congress, prohibited from spending that money, spends it on something else (on something nice like the Smithsonian. What prevents Congress from then diverting some other money and paying for a museum already planning to spend money 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 UNIFED 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” but 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 pay the “shell game” with impunity.

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COUNSELING NOTES

IRS Ends Private Debt Collection

On May 3, 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 had debt sent to 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 the IRS employees. IRS Commissioner Doug Shulman also noted that the IRS anticipates having over 1,000 new collection personnel in FY 2010.

Reducing Taxable Income

For those who file and look closely at credits and deductions to lower their taxable income, a variety of 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
- EARNED income tax credit
- Sales tax deductions for certain 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 renewable 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 Hedeman, 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.

Peace Tax Legislation

There is a section in this bill that looks like a bargain: “It is senseless and 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 only grown more so as it has mulled through the TPCF and moved to the Senate. What worries me is the right wing of the Democratic party that gets all hyped up about elections. No conceivable group of 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 NWTRCC meeting, I’ve been talking to taxpayers who’ve heard about the 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 solidary is important to the folks who are against the Peace Tax Fund bill, and principle is very important to me. It’s just that showing solidarity may not be the correct way to do it. So here’s the question: Is the NCPTF still relevant to the times we’re living in? If it isn’t, then why are we paying it? If it is, is there a way to do it that’s more effective? That’s what it comes down to for me.

Many Thanks

Many Thanks! 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

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 1-800-269-7246.

PeaceTaxLegislation

There is a section in this bill that looks like a bargain: “It is senseless and 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 only grown more so as it has mulled through the World Peace Tax Bill fund to the Religious Freedom Tax Bill. But looking ahead, I don’t see anyone of any consequence in Congress. Not the right wing of the Democratic party that gets all hyped up about elections. No conceivable group of 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.”

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Live and Love

By Mimi Copp

Jesus says to love your enemies and your neighbors.

I 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 studied Peace and Conflict studies at the Master’s level; and while I had protesting publicly, I was also paying taxes. However, I do owe self-employment taxes, which will be paid. 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 quiet the moments of anxiety and fear I have as I refrain from paying taxes. I will live day by day as someone who does this type of resistance 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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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-roots 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.

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Peace Tax Legislation and NWTRCC

I ast fall the National Campaigns 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 selected 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 web site peacetaxfund.org or call the NWTRCC office for a brochure.

Pam Allee, Portland, OR

I am a war tax resister and redirecter. I am also in favor of a Peace Tax Fund.

I feel very strongly that neither my resistance nor the Peace Tax Fund are perfect solutions to creating peace. Both are simply steps on the way towards 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. I am also in favor of a Peace Tax Fund.

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