Celebration and Reflection at 25 Years

By Ruth Benn

Today NWTRCC is $5 richer! As I looked through old files to review the founding of this now 25-year-old organization I came across an envelope containing $5 in cash—payment for something toward the September 1982 conference that led to the founding of NWTRCC. That was good for a laugh, and also a reminder that small peace groups with overworked staff members slip up now and then.

Nevertheless, despite our oversights and missteps, NWTRCC is still here today doing much the same work that it was founded to do. The 1982 conference was called to “plan a NWTRCC its name (see box page 7). The network has held together for these 25 years with many of the same people involved—and many of the same ideas and differences coming up at each meeting.

Anniversaries are generally a time for celebration, but for peace groups, celebrations are tempered by the state of the world around us. If our message was catching on, perhaps things would look better than they do today. NWTRCC was founded at a time when nuclear disarmament was a burning issue. Just three months before the war tax resistance conference more than a million people had marched in New York City calling for an end to the nuclear arms race. Today the national action the next spring; improve information sharing on a national level; strengthen and develop regional organizing; and perhaps, to develop a ‘census’ of war tax resisters.”

The reports from the meeting show that even at that one-day conference these items were discussed in-depth, modified, or put off to the next meeting, which took place a couple months later and gave NWTRCC its name (see box page 7).

This fall the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee urges all who oppose the Iraq war and occupation to register and prepare for an April 2008 nationwide boycott and redirection of the federal income taxes that fuel the war in Iraq. The Boycott is endorsed by Voices for Creative Nonviolence, The War Resisters League, the National Campaign for Nonviolent Resistance, and the Nonviolent Direct Action Working Group of United for Peace and Justice. Enclosed you will find the Boycott Appeal and Registration form. Contact the NWTRCC office about supplies you can order or visit www.WarTaxBoycott.org and download the materials to copy for outreach and tabling. And, don’t forget to sign up yourself—online is best, or send in the enclosed form.

DON’T FILE IF YOU DON’T HAVE TO!

Eight million individual income tax returns were unnecessarily filed in each tax year from 2003 through 2005. While many showed a lack of understanding of the tax law, there were also returns from millions of individuals whose income did not meet the filing requirement. In 2006 that threshold was at $8,450 for a single person under 65 (see the chart in February issues of this newsletter). However, other factors may require filing at a lower level, such as self-employment income of more than $400, to meet social security requirements. Over half the unnecessary returns were filed by people under the age of 21, and a common problem was overwithholding. WTR counselors should pay particular attention to young people who may not have filed for themselves in the past and may need extra help understanding income tax procedures, and that pesky W-4 form.

— Audit by the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA)

SAMPLE INTEREST AND LATE PAYING PENALTIES

The IRS is showing some new facility at bank account and salary collections. Many resisters are wondering how the interest and penalties add up and considering in more detail how much they will choose to resist. Announced on a quarterly basis, the interest rate as of October 1, 2007, is 8%; it has averaged about that for the last year or so. On overdue taxes the interest is compounded daily (details are on the irs.gov website), so what we offer here is a pretty good sense of how interest and late-paying penalties on refusing $10 and $100 would add up over time— up to 10 years for the statute of limitations on assessed taxes.

Interest and Penalties

Additions for 1, 5, and 10 years based on 8% interest compounded daily.

Late payment penalty is 1/2% a month up to 25%, charged on the principal.

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<td>$100 principal</td>
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<td>8% interest comp. daily</td>
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<td>25% max penalty</td>
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<td><strong>$174.18</strong></td>
<td><strong>$347.53</strong></td>
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(The 1/2% increases to 1 percent if the tax remains unpaid 10 days after the IRS issues a notice of intent to levy, if a late filing fee has been applied, interest is charged on the principal plus that fee.)

Continued on page 7

Many Thanks

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

- Taxes for Peace Not War, Eugene, OR
- Fools of Conscience, Asheville, NC
- National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund
- Western Washington FOR, Seattle

Thanks to all the affiliates who responded to the Affiliate Survey. If you got a phone message and haven’t returned the call, it’s never too late! Please keep us updated on your activities and information.

Postcards are coming back from counselors, contacts, affiliates, and funds to update our network listings. Please send yours if you have not done so yet. The website contacts will be updated shortly. The NWTRCC office keeps a printed list for the full country and also by region; call if you would like a copy mailed to you. When someone contacts NWTRCC for information, we send out a packet of brochures and include the network list for their region. ▼
Perspectives on WTR from Youth

From activists who are about the same age as NWTRCC, excerpted from presentations at NWTRCC’s 2005 Strategy Conference

Lincoln Rice, Milwaukee
A lot of the people joined [Casa Maria Catholic Worker] because there were other young people in the community. If they had come when I joined they might have said “this is nice” but I don’t want to be here. I don’t know if that’s something that young people see with NWTRCC, but with Catholic Worker the more young people you have the more seem to come.

I learned about war tax resistance through the community. If I had not met them I would like to think that I would still have become a war tax resister, but it would have been a longer path to learn about it and be less intimidated by the repercussions.

Alice Liu, San Francisco
Young radicals are involved in a lot of groups, and they don’t need to join this one. I’m interested in going to different groups and talking to them about war tax resistance, but not saying “come to our group.” They already have groups, so they should just know about it.

One thing that got me into war tax resistance was hearing about how someone mailed a coffin to the IRS as their check. I’m into more artsy things. I don’t feel like writing the IRS an articulate letter actually, so maybe thinking about communication styles and the ways people want to come up against something. Maybe the NWTRCC newsletter information could be in a different format to communicate to young people more imaginatively.

It’s hard for me to really guess what other young people who make taxable incomes are thinking, but I can hypothesize a little bit. There are lots of reasons that people don’t do WTR—there are the obvious risks—but there’s also this all-or-nothing pressure. There are a lot of people who don’t do it, because resisting $10 seems pretty wimpy but resisting thousands a year for the next 40 years is kind of intimidating.

Sherill Crosby, San Francisco
I’m 25, and I just became aware of war tax resistance, mainly because my mom is a CPA and she always did my taxes for me. As you get older and you have to take care of it yourself, then you start thinking about it. Another reason why I became really interested in it is that a lot of young people go to marches. I feel like they are fun but I don’t feel like they are effecting what’s going on. So I was looking for something else to be more active. In the same sense I’m not normally part of a group either and coming to a conference is not something I’m really comfortable with. If I’m communicating with people directly or be email or phone that’s still a live communication, and I don’t have to gather with everyone in a space. That’s maybe a social and generation thing. People grow up with electronic devises and they’re not used to being in a group full of people. Even though young people are not here they’re still aware of what is going on, and if the message and ideas and avenues are communicated they’ll act on it, even if they’re not represented in this group.

25th Anniversary
Continued from page 1

U.S. and Russia still stockpile nearly 20,000 nuclear weapons, with another thousand held among Britain, France, China, Israel, India, Pakistan, and South Africa. Other countries still aspire to be counted among the nuclear states.

Over these 25 years, peace-loving people who have been moved to war tax resistance cite various issues that motivated them: nuclear weapons, the Reagan military build-up, budget cuts to social program, U.S. aid to military dictators in Latin America or to Israel for its occupation, or the first Gulf War. It goes without saying why people are turning to tax refusal today. It is no time to sit back and relax.

As we continue all our efforts to end war and work toward peace, it seems appropriate that we celebrate our 25th year by launching a new campaign, the 2008 War Tax Boycott. We hope that you will find the new outreach materials useful in introducing people to this form of resistance, which can be so personally empowering and politically powerful.

25th Anniversary

Marian Bromley and Juanita Nelson at the 1982 conference. Photo by Ed Hedemann

R.J. Macani, Brooklyn
I think the idea of redirecting our money away from what is either increasingly a police state or a war machine, redirecting to things that people really need, would resonate with the people that I work with. I was specifically thinking about redirecting money to some of these grassroots funds that are trying to rebuild New Orleans. Another thing is about communications technology. The new movements are on the internet. Younger movements are text messaging each other, and most of them are against the war. You have to think about how to be part of that.
Contempt of Conscience DVDs

Contempt of Conscience is the title of the 14-minute documentary about the Peace Tax Seven, war tax resisters in Britain who are taking their case to the European Court of Human Rights. The film is a good presentation of the reasons for refusing to pay for war, the risk of having funds seized, and why this group feels they must go to court. Copies are available from the NWTRCC office for $15 plus $2 postage.

2008 War Tax Boycott

Stock up on new outreach materials! They can be downloaded from wartaxboycott.org, or contact the NWTRCC office if you would like single copies mailed to you. We will also be stocking bulk copies, which will be available at low cost plus shipping.

- Appeal and Registration Form
- Getting Started in War Tax Resistance, 2-sided, 5-step explanation
- Business card with boycott logo (front of this issue) and the web address

There is a page on the NWTRCC website with other resources that can be downloaded, including information sheets, flyers, and ads.

Recently Robert Riversong in Vermont sent his “Not One Red Cent for War” label sheet, a Word file that prints on the standard sheet of 30 mailing labels. Check it out at http://www.nwtrcc.org/downloadable.htm.

Continued on page 6

Life Fund Gala

The New York City People’s Life Fund is part of the “beautiful nonviolent anarchist revolution, making change by replacement of big government structures by smaller more realistic dedicated groups,” said Judith Malina of the Living Theatre. Crystal Field of Theatre for a New City told about years of federal and state budget cuts and how they received a small but important grant from NYC PLF. “I can’t tell you what it did for our spirits. They cared about what we were doing,” she said.

The First-Ever NYC PLF Gala Benefit, celebrated in New York City on September 17, 2007, was an evening of theatre, poetry, and music interspersed with testimonies from organizations that have received grants during the past 36 years. A drop-in center for homeless people, NY Committee for Occupational Safety and Health, and the Neighborhood Economic Development Advocacy Project were among the groups that thanked the fund for believing in their work when almost no one else did. “Banks look at the food coop as not such a great investment—not so the PLF!” said Elisa Jiji from the 4th Street Food Co-op.

Founding members Sallie Marx, Michael Gasster, and Susan Gasster were honored for their vision in setting up the fund, and Sallie along with Robert Hieger and Joanie Fritz Zosike and a handful of others have kept it going over the last decade. Times are lean now, so the Gala was organized to boost their own spirits and spark new interest in the fund itself.

The event was held at the Living Theatre, which was founded by Malina and Julian Beck in 1947 and has its own history with the IRS. In 1963 its theatre space was seized by the IRS during a run of “The Brig,” a play about the ritual cruelty of a Marine Corps brig (in revival now). It’s an interesting story, which we’ll have to write about someday. Meanwhile, congratulations to NYC PLF for all its great work for so many years. ▼
Hit the Streets This Fall!

October 27, Regional Demonstrations

United for Peace and Justice is calling for 10 massive, regional demonstrations to end the war in Iraq. Nine of the locations have been announced: Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, and Seattle. Here’s a great opportunity to let people know about the 2008 war tax boycott. Put your favorite war tax resistance slogan and “wartaxboycott.org” or your local group’s web address on a sign and join the march. The publications page at nwtrcc.org and the tools page on wartaxboycott.org have downloadable ads and flyers, ranging from business card size to full sheets. Produce what your pocketbook and back can handle and help spread the word. Some items are available free or low cost from the NWTRCC office. Call or email for details.

November 16-18, Columbus, GA

War tax resisters will be among the 20,000 converging on Fort Benning to demand the closing of the School of the Americas/Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation. NWTRCC will have a table staffed by volunteers, and you are invited to help! Please contact the NWTRCC office if you expect to go. A plan usually develops to share housing in a local motel. This will be a great time to do outreach for the 2008 War Tax Boycott.

Responding to Collection—Ideas Needed!

The NWTRCC office is getting regular calls and emails from resisters who are facing collection from bank accounts or salary levies in amounts from a few hundred to thousands of dollars. Sometimes the seizures are from pension funds or investments that are held in accounts at a distance from the resister’s home. Do you have ideas for bringing more attention to these stories of refusal to pay for war voluntarily? Many resisters are frustrated by the quietness with which the government can steal the funds, without a hearing.

To the Editor—

My sister has 2 DVD players that refuse to play Aaron Russo’s America: Freedom to Fascism but from her granddaughter’s player I could see that Mary Loehr’s review (MTAP 6/07) is more skeptical than need be about payroll tax being a legally baseless fraud perpetrated on the working class, out of sync with the theory of business as found in Proudhon (What is Property?) as well as in high court decisions. But the weakness of this argument is that criminality can be legalized, so that as war tax resisters we would be right where we are now or even worse off. The DVD does vastly not enough to show how payroll tax enables these...wars of which world government totalitarianization is a ruling class function. It reeks of patriotism and therefore of the racism inherent in presenting slave-owners as liberators. Civil disobedience is part of this unrevolutionary patriotism. CD does not end the state.

—Joffre Stewart, Chicago, IL
Responsibility

by Grace Paley

It is the responsibility of society to let the poet be a poet
It is the responsibility of the poet to be a woman
It is the responsibility of the poet to stand on street corners
giving out poems and beautifully written leaflets
also leaflets you can hardly bear to look at
because of the screaming rhetoric
It is the responsibility of the poet to be lazy to hang out and
 prophesy
It is the responsibility of the poet not to pay war taxes
It is the responsibility of the poet to go in and out of ivory
towers and two-room apartments on Avenue C
and buckwheat fields and army camps
It is the responsibility of the male poet to be a woman
It is the responsibility of the female poet to be a woman
It is the poet’s responsibility to speak truth to power as the
Quakers say
It is the poet’s responsibility to learn the truth from the
powerless
It is the responsibility of the poet to say many times: there is no
freedom without justice and this means economic
justice and love justice
It is the responsibility of the poet to sing this in all the original
and traditional tunes of singing and telling poems
It is the responsibility of the poet to listen to gossip and pass it
on in the way storytellers decant the story of life
There is no freedom without fear and bravery there is no
freedom unless
earth and air and water continue and children
also continue
It is the responsibility of the poet to be a woman to keep an eye on
this world and cry out like Cassandra, but be
listened to this time.

Author, poet, activist, and NWTRCC friend Grace Paley died in
August at age 85. Grace became active with the War Resisters League
in the 1960s and took her “combative pacifism” to streets and podiums
in the decades that followed. She was a signer on the Appeal to
Conscience circulated by NWTRCC and WRL in 2003. ▼

Join NWTRCC In Kansas!

25TH ANNIVERSARY
GATHERING
November 2-4, 2007 • Newton, Kansas

Mini War Tax Resistance Conference
and Coordinating Committee Meeting

The program will begin with dinner in Newton on Friday
evening followed by a talk at Bethel College with Alan
Gamble, Director of the National Campaign for a Peace Tax
Fund. Saturday workshops and evening party, the Sunday Coordinat-
ing Committee meeting, and housing will be at the Meadowlark
Center, a nascent institution on the Kansas prairie.

Plan you travel now! The closest airport (and bus station) is
Wichita. Amtrak arrives in Newton in the early morning hours,
but our Newton hosts will arrange to meet train travelers.

Call the NWTRCC office at 800-269-7464 for the brochure and regis-
tration form or see the Programs and Gatherings page on our website. ▼

ANNU NCING THE 2007
War Tax Resistance
Video Contest

Building on the success of the 2006 contest, NWTRCC is
once again sponsoring a video-shorts contest and calling for
entries. We hope that readers have been able to see and use
last year’s winners. They can be viewed on YouTube at http://
/www.youtube.com/user/nwtrcc or go to nwtrcc.org and
follow the video contest links. We also have the winners on a
CD, available from the NWTRCC office for $5.

The flyer announcing the 2007 contest can be down-
loaded from the video contest pages on our website, or call
the office if you would like copies mailed to you. Get them out
to high schools and colleges near you. This is a great way to
promote war tax resistance among young people.

Here are the entry details:
Length: 30 seconds to 4 minutes
Topic: Taxes for Peace, Not for War!
Deadline: Jan. 15, 2008
Prizes: 1st-$300, 2nd-$200, 3rd-$100
For more info:http://www.nwtrcc.org/videcontest.htm ▼
22nd Annual New England Gathering

The longest running regional gathering of war tax resisters meets December 7-9, 2007, at the Woolman Hill Conference Center, Deerfield, Massachusetts. “Taking Control of Change—Embracing Simplicity” is this year’s theme. This gathering is for experienced WTRs and those who are just testing the water. $60 for the weekend includes food and housing. For more information, a brochure, registration form, and/or directions, contact: Erik Schickedanz, 270 Bullock Rd, Guilford, VT 05301, (802) 257-5725, andbefree@yahoo.com.

While filing and paying taxes in full, and should not generate such a fine. We hope that the fine will be lifted. Stay tuned.

Phone Tax Refunds

If you are someone who paid the federal excise tax on long distance phone calls, you can still request the excise tax refund. People who do not need to file a regular return can use a special short form, Form 1040EZ-T, to request the refund. Those taxpayers who have filed without requesting the refund can file an amended return using Form 1040X.

Private Collection

H.R. 3056, the “Tax Collection Responsibility Act of 2007,” was introduced in Congress in July 2007. The bill would repeal the use of private debt collection companies to collect federal income taxes. It is sponsored by Charles Rangel (NY). Its progress can be tracked online at http://thomas.loc.gov/
Lily Dalke
Brooklyn, NY

I first heard about war tax resistance as a child in Quaker meeting. It was not a form of resistance I could engage in until after I graduated from college and started filing my own returns. I thought about resisting the first year I paid taxes, in April 2006, but I wasn’t sure how to go about it and delayed taking any steps toward resistance until later that year.

At Brooklyn Friends Meeting in July 2006, I learned about Dan Jenkins’ war tax witness and his related appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit in Manhattan with the support of New York Yearly Meeting. This reminded me of my need to make decisions about my own tax activity, and I began attending war tax resistance meetings in New York City shortly afterwards. At these meetings I gained a better sense of the wide variety of approaches used to resist paying war taxes.

By the time my taxes were due again this past April, I had already paid a percentage of taxes through federal withholding. However, I was still able to refuse payment of the remaining amount I owed (almost half of the total). I also changed the W-4 form I had on file with my employer, so that I will have more control over what I pay in 2008.

I turned 25 this year and recently found out that 2007 also marks NWTRCC’s 25th anniversary! It seems appropriate that my own resistance should have begun this year. War tax resistance has provided a valuable clarifying lens at a time in my life when I have had to make a number of decisions about what I want to do for work, where I want to live, how I want to manage my finances, and how I want to spend my free time. I have had to ask myself questions about the ethics of receiving dividends and interest from the investments and savings accounts I hold and of purchasing private property, as well as my responsibilities to communicate honestly with my employer and my government. It has reminded me of the ways that most of the institutions in my life—even the nonprofit organization I work for, dedicated to protecting and promoting human rights around the world— are complicit in funding our military and has made me carefully consider my ties to these institutions.

I don’t hold any expectation that the few thousand dollars I withhold yearly from the federal government and invest in community organizations will lead directly to the end of our country’s dependence on the military. Most of the questions and doubts about my resistance that are expressed to me from friends and family circle around this concern, that I am making a choice that puts me at great personal risk in exchange for little in the way of practical results.

The greater risk, I believe, is to get stuck in a perspective where I accept that moral compromise is a necessity of my modern life. As an impatient idealist I don’t believe that I contribute towards ending war and violence by trying to find the most “efficient” solutions to these problems, by distracting myself from taking any action at all with all the reasons for why it won’t work. War tax resistance reminds me that following the rules is not required, that our current systems are not inevitable and not all-powerful. It reminds me that I can live life on my own terms and that there are solutions and options to problems other than the ones that are presented to me by the government and media.

I think my willingness to take the risks involved with war tax resistance is in many ways tied to my privilege in having a strong support system. I am lucky to have loving family and friends, many of whom are financially stable. I

Continued on page 7