

IF YOU WORK
FOR PEACE



STOP PAYING
FOR WAR.

More than a paycheck

NEWS FROM THE WAR TAX RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

December 2006



MARIAN FRANZ

It is with great sadness that we report the November 17 death of Marian Franz, who directed the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund for 24 years. She was at the founding conference of NWTRCC in 1982 and remained a friend ever since. There will be a tribute in our next issue. ▼

A Different Side of Las Vegas

By Susan Balzer

Las Vegas is not the kind of place that this modest Mennonite would ordinarily choose to go to for a vacation, and, except for a few hours on the strip on Saturday night, my visit there November 2-5 was far different from that of a tourist. I saw a side of Las Vegas that tourists rarely see and had the opportunity to interact with people ministering to their neighbors and working to stop war and the preparation for war.

In Las Vegas I spent time with 20 members of NWTRCC, our group's hosts at the Las Vegas Catholic Worker,

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CONCERNS AND HOPE:

Notes on the International Conference

By Larry Rosenwald

Larry served as NWTRCC's representative to the 11th International Conference on War Tax Resistance and Peace Tax Campaigns in Woltersdorf, Germany, October 26-29, 2006. He is active with New England War Tax Resistance in Massachusetts.

To set the scene, first: Woltersdorf is a small town just east of Berlin, reputedly inhabited by German's new "radicals," i.e., neo-Nazis (so I was told by a man I met in the streetcar that took me there), but very beautiful and apparently placid, with a canal running through it. The Mayor of the town showed up for a plenary session on "Responsibility" and spoke very movingly. The conference itself took place at the "Haus Gottesfriede," i.e., the House of God's Peace – a lovely and simple space, its name offering the first suggestion, though not the last, of how religious an atmosphere this conference would have, much more so than any American conference on wtr I've ever attended.

There were 65 participants. The number was lower than average for these conferences; so was the number of participants at the New England WTR gathering I attended in early November. As a person attentive to numbers I found myself wondering whether this reflected a decline in the strength of our movement. About



Street theater workshop at the International Conference led by Berlin-based teachers, Til Baumann and Harald Hahn (standing back left). Participants in the skit included German actors Katharina (victory sign), Gisela (money in her hand), and Ev (right) and Abraham from Eritrea. Photo by Friedrich Heilmann

half the participants were from Germany, most of the rest from other European countries, with a few Americans, one Canadian, and two participants from Ghana, and one each from Eritrea, Nepal, and India. This was a more strikingly international profile than the other conferences I have attended, and the Ghanaian and Eritrean participants in particular had a big effect on the conference, shifting its perspective towards Africa's nine wars and the role of the small armaments industry in making those wars possible.

In this largely European context, U.S.-style war tax resistance turned out to be quite unusual. That is partly a question of demography, of who the participants were. They are, as noted, more religious than we are, or at any rate more religious on the whole than the WTRs I know or know of. More than a few were or had been pastors or deacons or other religious function-

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

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

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COUNSELING NOTES

REFUSED REDIRECTION I

Greg Reagle of Washington, DC, writes: For tax year 2005 I redirected the money I owed to 10 different organizations. One of those organizations is a federal government agency [a national park]. I think you will find the response interesting. I found it amusing as well as frustrating. I chose not to follow up because I suppose their lawyer(s) advised them to refuse. It's actually a very nice letter.

Dear Mr. Reagle:

This letter is in response to your donation of \$200. We appreciate very much your contribution. However, in your correspondence you included a copy of a letter you wrote to the Internal Revenue Service that states you are redirecting your federal income taxes to organizations such as [this park], and that you were doing this as a form of tax resistance.

[We] can only accept donations that are intended solely for the mission of the National Park Service. Many who make this donation use it as a tax deduction. To accept your donation would make us culpable in an illegal act of tax resistance. We believe it was not your intention to involve us in what you define as an act of conscience. However, because of the circumstances it remains impossible for us to accept your donation. Your \$200 money order is being returned to you and is enclosed.

We wish you well, and hope you will continue to appreciate and value [this park].

Sincerely.....

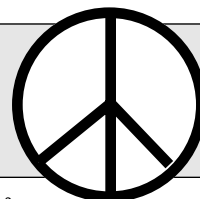
REFUSED REDIRECTION II

Bill and Genie Durland of Colorado Springs have taken their case of "refused redirection" to Tax Court, although the IRS has moved to dismiss the case. The Durlands sent a check of about half of what they owed to the IRS and the other half to the Social Security Administration (SSA). As semi-retired senior citizens the Durlands' livelihood is partly dependent on social security payments; they attempt to live on less, as conscientious pacifist Christians opposed to institutional violence and war making everywhere. They chose to redirect the amount they could not pay for those purposes to a nonviolent branch of the government and one that the Bush administration had said was headed to bankruptcy.

The Durlands contend they met their obligations to the U.S. government. The IRS contends they were not paid the full amount and that the Durlands must pay them again for the amount the SSA deposited in that U.S. government account. The IRS continues its collection efforts, while the Durlands have provided the court with careful arguments concerning the government's efforts at "unjust enrichment" and conscience.

"The exercise of such awesome governmental power desecrates the rights of religious conscience by a political administration which claims to bring democracy abroad while dismantling it here," the Durlands said in their October 2005 press release at the onset of this case. More information and a copy of the court documents are available from the NWTRCC office. ▼

Many Thanks



Network Updates

We are grateful for the contributions from each of you who responded to our November fund appeal (there's still time to respond of course) and to these groups for their recent affiliation fees:

Ithaca War Tax Resistance
Maine War Tax Resistance Resource Center
War Resisters League, National Office

And a few end-of-the-year thanks you to:
Nonviolent Action Community of Cascadia
for hosting the May meeting
Las Vegas Catholic Worker
for hosting the November meeting
Lakeside Press, Madison, Wisconsin,
for printing our newsletter and literature
(not for free but at a very good price!)

Great Lakes Region: New Area
Contact—Bill Ruhaak, Joliet, IL,
billruhaak@hotmail.com

The Network list has been updated for 2006 with most groups and individuals listed on the NWTRCC website at www.nwtrcc.org/contactN2.htm.

Affiliates, counselors, and area contacts may request a complete printed listing from Ruth Benn at the NWTRCC office. ▼

International Conference

Continued from page 1

aries. They are also less likely than we are to be committed to renunciation, to voluntary poverty, to austerity.

They are also more focused on law and legislation than we are, by which I mean several things. First, most of the Europeans are focused chiefly on something like the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund, i.e., on convincing their national legislatures to recognize a right of conscientious objection to military taxation. (It is confusing for them, I think, that in the U.S. we have both an American "national campaign," i.e., the NCPTF, and also a community or movement of war tax resisters who are either supportive or not supportive of the NCPTF but in any case separate from it.) Accordingly, they are more likely than we are to initiate court actions (as opposed to being summoned into them), their goal in initiating such actions being again to change the legal situation, in the court actions as in the legislative campaigns. They are also more focused on the U.N. than we are, and on other international courts, e.g., the European Court of Human Rights.

They are, on the other hand, less focused on building a movement of people who will refuse war taxes, to the extent possible, here and now, in willingness to suffer the consequences. There were few or no stories of houses being seized or defended, of jobs being threat-

ened or changed, or levies executed at banks or workplaces. And there were no stories that I can recall of choosing a life of voluntary simplicity in order not to be contributing to the military budget.

Some notable events at the conference, in more or less chronological order:

a) At the first plenary session, Derek Brett, of Conscience and Peace Tax International, summarized his quite impressive study of conscientious objection around the world. The study is downloadable at http://cpti.ws/cpti_docs/brett/intro.html.

b) Christian Bartolf, a German scholar of Gandhi and director of the Gandhi Information Center, presented his campaign to get signatures for a petition against military conscription. He has at the moment some 12,000 signatories, including several winners of the Nobel Peace Prize (plus Studs Terkel and Pete Seeger). See the text and signers at <http://home.snafu.de/mkgandhi/manifest.htm>.

c) The British case of the Peace Tax Seven was perhaps the case most often and prominently discussed at the conference. (The British national campaign is hosting the 2008 conference, partly in relation to this case; everyone wants to know how it's going to turn out.) In that case, seven British opponents to war are seeking an exemption from being required to pay taxes to the military. Their case has been rejected by all the British courts to which they have turned, and they are now heading for the European Court of Human Rights. They have made a dvd documenting their case and are trying to raise some \$100,000 for their court costs. (See



Larry Rosenwald tells international conference participants about war tax resistance in the U.S.

Photo by Friedrich Heilmann

<http://www.peacetaxseven.com> for more details.)

d) One prominent theme had to do with reaching young people. Some conference participants were young, to be sure, but most were between 50 and 70, so one could feel the urgency of the theme just by looking around the room. One response came from a Dutch group headed by Bart Horeman and associated with Euro's Voor Freede; this group presented its website (not yet up and running), which is aimed at young people, interactive, with lots of cool images. The focus is mostly on lifestyle choices, and there is also a digital penny poll, frankly borrowed from U.S. practice

A second response was a workshop led by two young, Berlin-based street theater teachers, Til Baumann and Harald Hahn. It turns out to be both challenging and feasible to create images illustrating paying taxes for peace. (Harald's website is at <http://www.harald-hahn.de/>, and the section to look at is the one called "Politisches Aktionstheater," which is in German but has some wonderful photographs.) Of all the workshops and presentations at the conference, this was the one that left me most hopeful in its direct relation to wtr and in its capacity to engage young people.



Karin Gottschalk, administrator of the conference center, welcomes participants at the opening session. Left:

Irene Auerbach, interpreter.

Photo by Friedrich Heilmann

RESOURCES

Back in Stock!

Two books by Donald Kaufman, NWTRCC friend, member of the Heartland Peace Tax Fund and the Mennonite church, are back in print and updated. *What Belongs to Caesar? A Discussion on the Christian's Response to Payment of War Taxes* has a section exploring three basic arguments against the voluntary payment of war taxes. *Tax Dilemma: Praying for Peace, Paying for War* includes in this edition the insights of 42 other writers. The royalties from sales of each book benefit either the Peace Tax Foundation or NWTRCC—another incentive to purchase these books for your peace action library—or for your public library!

Order from *Wipf and Stock Publishers*, 199 West 8th Avenue, Suite 3, Eugene OR 97401, (541) 344-1528, or online at www.wipfandstock.com.

Inserts in this Issue

An extra sheet is inserted with the issue. One side is a new sign-on statement for people who pledge to refuse to some or all of their 2006 income taxes. Please copy and use this form at your tables and events and send the sheets to the NWTRCC office. We will publicize the numbers of war tax resisters who sign on during the coming tax season.

On the reverse is the flyer to promote our video contest. Please make copies and mail to students, video teachers, colleges, high schools, and any special film and video programs in your area. NWTRCC needs your help to make this project a success! The flyer is also downloadable at www.nwtrcc.org. ▼

War Tax Re

Successful Outreach at SOAW

Those of us who worked the war tax resistance table at the School of the Americas Watch (SOAW) weekend, November 17-19, were blown away by the response to our survey effort. We got in the neighborhood of 1,000 war tax resistance surveys filled out! When added to the ones already in hand, we're now about 30% of the way towards our goal of 5,000 (see the NWTRCC meeting report on p. 6).



Photo courtesy of soaw.org

Thanks to Daniel Woodham, Mary Regan, David Waters, Adele Kushner, and Peg Morton for their hard work in Columbus. Beth Lavoie of the Georgia Peace & Justice Coalition helped us get surveys completed by folk hanging out at their table. And of course we're grateful to Bill Ramsey for putting together a wonderful survey kit with all the clipboards and trays.

I think it was one of the most exciting presences we've had at SOAW. Asking people to fill out the survey gave us much more interaction than leafleting, which we've done in past years. (Our message did get out to everyone because NWTRCC had an ad in the SOAW printed program, which was handed out to all of the 20,000 people who came; we even found it available in the lobbies of the motels in town.)

People asked questions, got a little on-the-spot mini-counseling, were given the materials they needed (most often the new flyer on W-4 resistance, which we used up and had to re-copy), and sometimes went away with a local contact from our network list. About 50 people signed up for introductory packets, and we got 16 names on the "Don't Pay for War in Iraq!" call to tax resistance. Our literature sales matched the best we've done in the past.

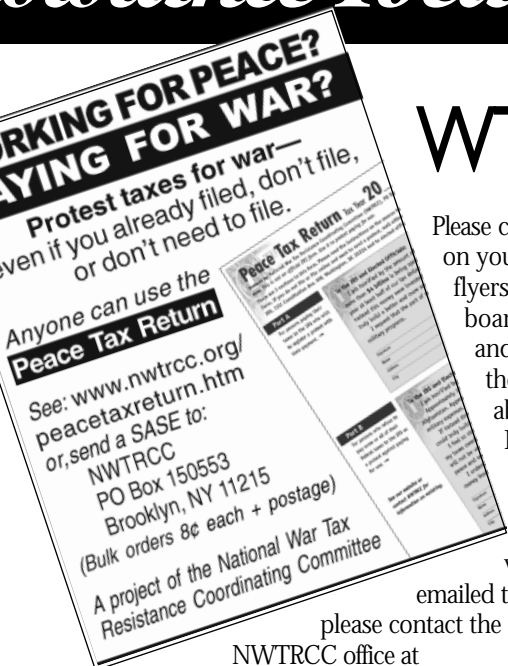
For more about the whole weekend and the campaign to close the school see www.soaw.org.
—Robert Randall, Brunswick, GA ▼

WTR on the Big & Small Screen

"Boston Legal" (ABC, Mar. 14, 2006) In the episode called "Stick It" Melissa (Marisa Coughlan)—in a legally highly unlikely sequence of events—is arrested and put on trial for tax evasion because she put a note on her 1040 return saying "stick it" when she refused to pay her war taxes. One of the best parts of this episode is the jury summation given by her lawyer, Alan Shore (James Spader)—a terrific defense of why someone might refuse to pay as a matter of conscience. The speech is linked from the music note on the NWTRCC homepage.

"Stranger Than Fiction" (Sony Pictures, Nov. 2006) This film features an IRS agent (Will Ferrell) who audits Ana Pascal (Maggie Gyllenhaal), a war tax resisting hippie anarchist baker. It turns out that the agent realizes that he is the fictional creation of a writer (Emma Thompson) who is seeking to kill him off in her novel. While not much more than a mention in the film, we are impressed that the idea of war tax resistance has appeared in a major studio film. ▼

Resistance Ideas & Actions

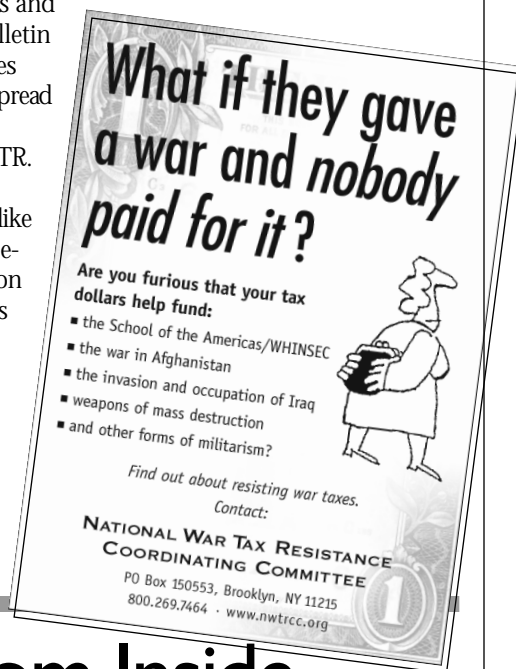


WTR Ads Available

Please copy and use these ads in your publications, on your letters and flyers, on bulletin board notices and help spread the word about WTR. If you would like high resolution versions

emailed to you, please contact the

NWTRCC office at nwtrcc@nwtrcc.org. Ads are also posted for your use on our website at <http://www.nwtrcc.org/publications.htm> Click on the link for "Downloadable Outreach and Information Flyers." ▼



Letters to the Editor

Dear MTAP:

The article on obedience in the recent newsletter was interesting. I think the root of our obedience is in childhood*, when we are totally dependent on adults for survival and are conditioned to obey, as are all animal young. But there is always the spark of self-determination there also!

*In other words it's biologic—animals also have packs with leaders.

Aanya Adler Friess,
Albuquerque, NM

Dear MTAP:

The era of Empire is coming to an end, one way or another, because for human beings great concentrations of power are self destructive. We need egalitarian democratic culture, what David C. Korten (The Great Turning) calls "Earth Community," to survive.

Where Korten goes wrong is in basing his "new story" on goofy New Age spirituality. Ambiguous obscure concepts don't work for teaching cooperation and shared responsibility. Esoteric ideas give the upper hand to con artists and charlatans. He says, "Earth Community enjoys the ultimate advantage, because the natural human drive—if not blocked—is to grow in capacity and understanding and to connect with ever expanding circles of life. Political extremists must engage in manipulation and deception to thwart this natural impulse." (p. 330).

To the contrary, the natural human tendency probably is to form dominance hierarchies as do all other social apes. Manipulation and deception to gain and hold power is the norm, the default condition, where people have not been carefully taught to practice egalitarian democratic principles.

Dale L. Berry, G
rants, NM ▼

To NWTRCC from Inside

Dear Friends,
So glad to hear from you all. I am pleased to let you know that as some of you have wished for me to have, a peaceful stay, that is what it is. I count my blessings for that, and all of the support and comforting letters I have received. Many people write to me with such comforting, encouraging words. Some are even inspiring. Some are so kind and thoughtful that I am refreshed in my heart, and grateful for the humanity of it.

I am doing as well, I think, as one can do under these circumstances. And while I see no end in sight for our plight, I feel strong and convicted. As you may be aware, the government is going to insist that we compromise our faith and convictions for peace and morality. Our Godly motives are trumped by the Department of Justice and the Tax Codes—a tax as we all know, that finances murder. How can we ever surrender to that!

I pray that our stands produce some fruit on which we can all benefit. I have no doubt that we are doing the right thing. It may take some time to reach our goals.

Whatever happens, I feel a comfort in my heart that comes from a clear conscience. I know you can all relate to that. Your letter and thoughts are most comforting. I must agree with Mr. Hedemann who wrote that "the need to imprison us reflects the fear this government has of our belief." I without a doubt believe that. All they have is brute force—while we trust in Yahweh (God). I will always be satisfied with the latter, and find strength in those who share the same.

Love to all,
Joseph Donato #40884-050,
FCI Fairton-Satellite Camp,
PO Box 420, Fairton, NJ 08320

Editor's Note: Joe Donato and Kevin McKee are members of Restored Israel of Yahweh in New Jersey. They are serving 27- and 24-month sentences on charges related to their refusal to pay for war. (See MTAP August 2005.) Please continue to write them.

Kevin McKee, #40886-050,
FCI Schuylkill Satellite Camp,
PO Box 670,
Minersville, PA 17954 ▼

NWTRCC Launches Video Contest

AND OTHER HIGHLIGHTS OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING

Since the Strategy Conference in 2005 a small committee has been developing plans for using more video clips on the NWTRCC website or as advertising for war tax resistance, along with plugging away at plans to make a longer piece for use in workshops and community showings. In order to create these video shorts that are so popular these days, the Coordinating Committee (CC) accepted a proposal to launch a video contest.

The "Don't Pay for War" video contest asks for entries of 30 seconds - 2 minutes that will appeal to U.S. taxpayers, especially young people who are starting to get paychecks. All the information about the contest is on our website at <http://www.nwtrcc.org/videocontest.htm>. We are asking all readers to help get out the word about this contest. Please copy the enclosed flyer and email the link to everyone you know—especially teachers and students who can help spread the word into new networks. We hope that all of you will think of the schools and colleges near you that have video programs, and send them the contest information. The video contest website includes links to sample videos and information about war tax resistance for those new to wtr. We hope to have winners by early April so that we can announce them

before tax day. There are prizes of \$300, \$200, and \$100 for the top three entries.

Other exciting news from the meeting is that our Practical #5 on Low Income War Tax Resistance is getting a much-needed update. David Gross of San Francisco volunteered for this project and has solicited ideas and updates from people who were involved in the current edition and people new to our network. A rough draft was presented at the meeting and a committee has formed to review a final draft in mid-December. We hope to have a new version printed early in 2007.

The War Tax Resistance Survey led to a lively discussion in a small group about the merits of the survey itself and whether the results we had received thus far were enough to make an educated decision about whether to proceed with a one-year resistance campaign or not. About 300 surveys were received by the time of our meeting, and it was agreed that we should set a goal of 5,000 surveys returned by our next meeting in May 2007. At that point we will be able to say more definitively what percentage of those responding would participate in a national campaign; if a high percentage is positive, this information will be taken to peace movement leaders to impress upon them the need to move to a new level of resistance and refuse to pay for war.

Enclosed with this issue you will find the results of another small group's work in Las Vegas (no time to hit the slots for us!). NWTRCC last initiated a sign-on statement before the war in Iraq began, and it is time to make our refusal to pay for this war more public. Please copy the statement and help collect signatures; use it with your local groups and in local newspapers. If you have contact with well-known persons who would increase our visibility, please secure their pledge, and let the NWTRCC office know right away. We will plan publicity around this statement with the coming tax season. Return signed copies to the NWTRCC office, and tell us how you are using it.

Finally, we passed a budget for the new fiscal year that begins December 1 and set our work objectives for the coming year. The minutes of the meeting and accompanying papers are on our website at <http://www.nwtrcc.org/nov06minutes.htm>, or contact the office if you would like a paper copy mailed to you. ▼

NOMINATIONS NEEDED!

NWTRCC's Administrative Committee (AdComm) seeks 2 new alternate members to help with organizational decision-making and process. New members will be selected at the May 2007 meeting with terms starting after the meeting. Alternates serve three years total: one year as alternate plus two as full members. Meetings are twice a year with occasional emails and phone calls during the year. Current members are Susan Balzer* (KS), Daniel Woodham* (NC), Alice Liu (CA), Clark Hanjian (MA), Robert Randall (GA, alternate), and Pam Allee (OR, alternate). Susan and Daniel complete their terms in May. Please contact the NWTRCC office for a job description, or send in nominations and we will follow up with further details. Affiliate groups should make a special effort to offer nominations. Self nominations are welcome. Deadline is March 14, 2007.



Breakfast at Las Vegas Catholic Worker. (l to r) Esther Freeman, Joffre Stewart, Steev Hise, Laura Pope, Lincoln Rice, and Mike Butler. Photo by Ruth Benn

LOCAL REPORTS AND CONTINUATIONS

...Las Vegas

Continued from page 1

and people active in the Nevada Desert Experience and Peace e Bene.

Las Vegas is a glittering city at night. Its replicas of the Eiffel Tower, Pyramids, and Space Needle rise high into the sky. The daring can ride a roller coaster around the top of the Needle. Some gamblers risk more than their money, such as the man who enters a glass-enclosed lion's den to feed the female lion and tempt it to go right up to the glass to show its teeth to the guests at the MGM Grand Hotel.

Behind the scenes, some people live normal, middle class lives. Others are not so blessed.

Our host said there are 4,000 children in foster care in the city. The Catholic Worker and other charitable organizations run soup kitchens and give shelter to many of the city's homeless people.

An hour away from the city, the U.S. government continues to do subcritical nuclear testing in violation of the



Fr. Louie Vitale, Nevada Desert Experience and Peace e Bene, and Eszter Freeman during NWTRCC's Friday afternoon vigil at the test site. Photo by Susan Balzer

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty that the government signed in 1992. According to the Nevada Desert Experience, the U.S. is currently spending more on its nuclear weapons' program than it did at any point in the Cold War.

During the NWTRCC meetings participants worked on plans for producing educational videos, contributed to editing a practical booklet on simple/low income living, talked about the roles money plays in our lives and society, connected war tax

refusal to other peace and justice issues, saw a video produced by Common Ground in New Orleans about the Hurricane Katrina disaster, witnessed at the Nevada Test Site, heard a report from the international conference on War Tax Resistance and Peace Tax Campaigns, wrote notes to encourage fellow war tax resisters in difficult situations, helped with the soup kitchen and conducted biannual business.

NWTRCC accepted the Heartland Peace Tax group's invitation to host the November 2007 meeting here in central Kansas. Our setting will look different from Las Vegas, but the objectives will be similar: to provide a time and place for active war tax resisters/

refusers/redirectors to meet and fellowship with each other and people active in the local peace community and to encourage people who pray for peace to take the next step and not pay for war.

This is a slightly edited version of an article that was published in The Harvey County Independent (KS). Susan Balzer is a journalist and member of NWTRCC's Administrative Committee. ▼

Annual New England WTR Gathering

War tax resisters from several parts of New England converged at the Voluntown Peace Trust in eastern Connecticut for the 21st annual New England Regional Gathering of War Tax Resisters and Supporters. The theme this year was "Resisting Militarism and Materialism: Our Lifestyles and the Roots of War."

The turnout was smaller than usual, about 25-30 people and mostly veterans of several or many previous gatherings; it provided a friendly and supportive atmosphere for reunion visits with WTRs we hadn't seen in a year or two. In our Sunday evaluation, we recognized the value of support but also the need to bring new WTRs into the loop. We hope to sponsor more local and statewide one-day

clinics and events in addition to the annual gathering.

Staff of the Voluntown Peace Trust entertained and educated us on Friday night with a theater piece on "Toward a More Holistic Resistance." We focused on the connections between militarism and materialism in discussions during much of Saturday, although most WTRs there were living near or below taxable level. We recognized that not all WTRs want to scale back their lifestyles and that we need to address their concerns also.

I enjoyed an exercise where we identified several problems preventing us from ending materialism (such as capitalism and a glut of information), naming the pillars that held up those problems, and finding ways to nonviolently tear down those pillars.

Our annual Talent Show on Saturday evening included music, stand-up comedy, and skits created especially for our weekend by former NWTRCC coordinator Karen Marysdaughter. In one of those, Juanita Nelson "beat" three other reality show contestants to be declared "The Biggest Resister."

Staying at the historic Voluntown Peace Trust (formerly the Community for Nonviolent Action) was a treat, as was delicious food compliments of Pacifeast Caterers (aka New England War Resisters League staff Rick Gaumer and Joanne Sheehan).

We left with renewed friendships and more energy to continue and promote WTR in our local communities.

—Larry Dansinger, Maine WTR Resource Center ▼

A Correspondence with the IRS

LATE PENALTY SAGA

Some time ago David Ahlfeld of Amherst, Massachusetts, sent us the sequence of steps he and his wife Victoria Dickson went through after the IRS sent them a letter that their 2003 tax filing, which had included a cover letter about refusing to pay for war, constituted a frivolous return (an inaccurate reading of the frivolous designation by the IRS). As we often hear, persistence can pay off with the IRS, at least in releasing improper fines. In addition, many people ask how long it takes the IRS to respond or to collect, so this might be of interest from that angle. Finally, it serves as a good example of keeping a timeline of correspondence with the IRS, which can be helpful when questions arise.

April 15, 2003 – filed IRS forms to Holtsville, New York, with a cover letter stating why the amount due cannot be paid to the IRS.

July 11, 2003 - received letter from Ogden, Utah, office indicating that we had filed a frivolous claim. We refiled copies of the same forms and learned that we had gotten a late filing penalty. The notice indicated we should write to Holtsville if we had any questions or problems.

November 4, 2003 - we wrote to Holtsville with an appeal.

December 3, 2003 - we received letter from Holtsville saying they hadn't gotten to our letter yet (I guess they are supposed to respond within 30 days).

January 22, 2004 - we received a letter from Holtsville saying they had sent our file to Ogden, and that we should be hearing from Ogden soon.

June 6, 2004 - having heard nothing from Ogden, I wrote back to Holtsville to inquire of the status of our appeal.

July 13, 2004 - received a letter from Philadelphia IRS office saying that the appeal was denied because we could not justify our late filing (for example, because of serious illness). Of course, this was not what we had been appealing!

DECODING IRS ADDRESSES

Because the IRS has begun to organize its "service centers" according to function (e.g., "frivolous" fine letters apparently all come from Utah) rather than geography, we are trying to determine what function correlates with which service center. We would appreciate your help by telling us what kinds of IRS letters you get from which IRS offices. Please send copies of your letters by mail or send a short description of their purpose to NWTRCC (nwtrcc@nwtrcc.org), and be sure to mention your location (city and state).

July 28, 2004 - we write a new detailed letter clearly stating our appeal. "As I understand, the IRS believes that our original return, filed April 15, 2003, was frivolous. The IRS believes that the same return filed in August of 2003 was not frivolous. The IRS imposed a late filing penalty based on the determination that we did not file until August of 2003. Our position is that the return filed April 15,

2003 was not frivolous. Hence, there is no need for a late penalty since we did not file late."

August 18, 2004 - get letter from Philadelphia saying they are sending our appeal to IRS Holtsville Appeals Team.

September 13, 2004 - we get letter from Appeals team saying they will consider our appeal.

January 3, 2005 - get letter from Holtsville Appeals Team removing the penalty.

January 2006 - we got a call from the collections office saying that they were about to seize assets. We decided to just ignore this.

March 2006 - they issued a levy on funds that we had in the bank and took them a few weeks later. So, that ends that chapter.

I continue to work at a job in which taxes are withheld. We try to minimize the taxes with pre-tax savings plans and by giving away the money that we don't need.

—David Ahlfeld ▼

**IF YOU WORK
FOR PEACE**



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