



# conscience update

issue 123

winter 2004

newsletter of **conscience** THE PEACE TAX CAMPAIGN

## “move our money from war to peace”

Thank you to all of our supporters who have worked hard to collect signatures for our ‘move our money from war to peace’ petition. You collected 1378 signatures in total.

The petition has two aims: one is to show the government that many people around the country object to paying taxes that contribute to war. The other aim is to publicise the campaign and provide a means by which supporters of **conscience** can engage with people who have never heard of our campaign, or thought about how their taxes are spent. I believe we can be sure this has been achieved. The petition was delivered to the Paymaster General, Dawn Primarolo MP, on 10 December, Human Rights Day. We await a response from the Paymaster General and will let you know what it is in due course.

*Oliver Haslam*



**Oliver Haslam with the petition, before presenting it to the Paymaster General, Dawn Primarolo, at the Treasury.**

photo | Jon Nott/**conscience**

### **conscience**

campaigns for the legal right for those who have a conscientious objection to war to have the military part of their taxes spent on peacebuilding initiatives

## preparing for “Tax Day” - 31 January

Inland Revenue advertisements have already started to appear reminding people to get their tax returns to Inland Revenue by 31<sup>st</sup> January. Two days before the deadline we will be delivering some of the Peace Tax Returns that have been completed by conscientious objectors from around the country.

The Peace Tax Returns enable people to declare their conscientious objection to war and request that the

military part of their tax is allocated to a non-military security fund. We will be accompanied on the 29<sup>th</sup> by a cross-party delegation of MPs, which will add weight to our message to the government, that those with a conscientious objection to war should be provided with a mechanism allowing them to pay their taxes in good conscience.

Please see page 2 for suggestions for local activity around “Tax Day”.

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**leaflets** and adverts  
are included in the  
newsletter to gain return  
publicity for **conscience**

## ideas for “Tax Day” actions

We strongly encourage members to use the week leading up to Saturday 31st January as a day of demonstration - organise a demonstration outside your local Inland Revenue offices, or deliver some Peace Tax Returns yourself.

- Contact the office if you would like some more PTRs.

Remember, you can still use the current Peace Tax Returns and they will remain valid beyond the end of January. Please continue to find new people to complete them and send them to the Treasury and Inland Revenue.

- If you would like more copies for a stall please contact the office.

We hope to be able to distribute a Welsh language version of the PTR soon.

- If you can help us with translation and/or distribution please get in touch with Oliver.

## international conference

The Tenth International Conference on War Tax Resistance and Peace Tax Campaigns will be held in Brussels, Belgium, from the evening of Thursday 8 July to lunchtime on Sunday 11 July 2004. The general theme will be our human right to conscientious objection to paying taxes for the military and our human duty to pay taxes for peace and civil conflict resolution.

A fringe program will be organised on Sunday afternoon and Monday. The biennial General Assembly of *Conscience & Peace Tax International* will also be held during the conference. Simultaneous translation will be available.

The conference will be held at *Maison Notre-Dame du Chant d’Oiseau* (The House of Our Lady of the Bird Song), a conference centre with a beautiful garden, lift, and parking space. It is easy to reach by car or public transport.

- Please contact the **conscience** office for further information.

## PQ answers

In answer to recent Parliamentary Questions tabled on behalf of **conscience** by Adam Price MP, the Armed Forces Minister confirmed that just 6% of the MoD budget is spent on conflict prevention operations and activities. This demonstrates the government’s commitment to fighting in conflicts rather than preventing them.

In another response, this time from the Department for Work & Pensions, it was stated that “Jobseeker’s Allowance Regulations specify that a person is considered to have a good cause [to turn down a job] where, among other things, they have a sincerely held religious or conscientious objection to taking up the employment being offered”. So at least conscientious objection is recognised by DfW&P. We will keep working on the rest of government.

## adjournment debate

We are hoping to secure an adjournment debate in the House of Commons on positive alternatives for tackling conflict. There are many more effective, and cost-effective, ways to achieve peace than the traditional military approach.

Using war in an attempt to achieve peace (as in Iraq) is a costly and often ineffective approach. Despite setting up conflict prevention funds (see our centre-page article) the government only spends a fraction of the Ministry of Defence budget on conflict prevention. We hope, by means of an adjournment debate, to raise the issue of spending priorities on security and to encourage MPs to put pressure the government to spend more on conflict prevention.

Oliver will be in touch with all **conscience** lobbyists in the near future to ask them to write to their MPs about the adjournment debate.

- If you would like to be a lobbyist for **conscience** please contact Oliver.

# members' news

# diary

## thank you (1)

A big thank you to our regular office volunteers, Pauline Atkins and Jane Chattell for their help throughout the year. Thanks also to Patricia, Danika and Kessler for the occasions when they were able to volunteer in the office.

Without the dedication of the **conscience** volunteers, whether regular or occasional, the staff would surely by now be buried under a mountain of Peace Tax Returns.

## having your say

After a successful experiment last year, the Executive Committee has decided to send the annual review and membership questionnaire in a separate mailing again this year.

The membership questionnaire is your chance to have your say in the running of **conscience**, so please keep an eye out for it and take the opportunity to let us know your views.

## annual event

This year's annual event will be held in Birmingham in June. The exact date and venue will be confirmed in the annual review mailing.

## executive material?

Although much of the work of **conscience** is done by the staff and volunteers, the organisation is led by an Executive Committee drawn from the membership.

We are always looking for new blood on the committee and at the moment are particularly looking to recruit some more London-based members who may be interested in serving on the Management Committee.

The EC meets four times per year on a Saturday and is responsible for strategic planning, policy and budget-setting. The MC meets up to eight times per year to monitor and support the work of the office.

■ If you would like to find out more about the committees, please call Jon in the office.

## thank you (2)

Thank you very much to all those members who generously responded to our autumn appeal to raise funds for our parliamentary campaign, based around a new Peace Tax Bill.

The appeal had raised over £2,500 at the time of going to press with more donations coming in daily.

## 7 February

### concert for peace

7.30pm at Regent Hall, 275 Oxford Street, London W1. Organised by Musicians Against Nuclear Arms. Mark Padore (tenor), Roger Vignoles (piano) and the Johnson String Quartet play Schubert, Britten, Tippett. Speaker - Kate Hudson (CND). Tickets £10 (£8 concs) t 020 8455 1030

## 20 March

### Global Day of Action against war and occupation of Iraq.

Activities to mark the anniversary of the start of the war on Iraq.

w [www.stopwar.org.uk](http://www.stopwar.org.uk)  
[www.unitedforpeace.org/article.php?id=2136](http://www.unitedforpeace.org/article.php?id=2136)

## 15 May

### International Conscientious Objectors' Day.

Events in London and around the country. More details next issue.

## 8-11 July

### 10th International Conference on War Tax Resistance and Peace Tax Campaigns

See article on page 2.

### more diary dates at

[www.networkforpeace.org.uk](http://www.networkforpeace.org.uk)

## contacting the office

### general enquiries

Archway Resource Centre  
1 B Waterlow Road  
London N19 5NJ

t 0870 777 3223 (national rate)

f 020 7281 6508

e [info@conscienceonline.org.uk](mailto:info@conscienceonline.org.uk)

### campaigns enquiries

t as left - ask for Oliver

e [lobby@conscienceonline.org.uk](mailto:lobby@conscienceonline.org.uk)

### membership enquiries

t as left - ask for Jon

e [develop@conscienceonline.org.uk](mailto:develop@conscienceonline.org.uk)

# security - more than just not going to war

Deanna Douglas looks at the security picture in the UK and asks: what are we doing to protect ourselves – and from what?

Last year many **conscience** members joined protests against the Iraq war. The “pre-emptive war” we opposed was an extension of the traditional security model of maintaining an “armed peace” to keep potential enemies at bay. While “armed peace” is an approach to national security that we are very familiar with, many people feel that continuing to rely on such a model is unacceptable.

But how many of us spent the Christmas holiday afraid a cousin would wave a fork of turkey (or tofu) in our face and ask the dreaded question: what is it that we *do* want?

## human security

There are of course many international security models, which are now changing in response to the new realities of rapidly advancing technology, increased potential for biological or chemical weapons use, greater economic disparities, American hegemony, and terrorism.

One response takes a global perspective that focuses on civil society. It has various names, but the term favoured by past and current UN Secretaries-General, Boutros Boutros-Gali and Kofi Annan, is Human Security. It asks the question, “what do we need to be secure *from*, and *who* needs that security?”. The basic premise is that all people have the right to freedom from fear and want. Applied globally, it challenges many aspects of current political, economic, and military realities.

## nothing but a dream?

While it may sound too idealistic to be taken seriously, some very good work has been done in the last 10 years to pragmatically advocate and develop

this holistic approach. It combines the three primary elements of civil society discourse; peace, ecological work, and development/human rights. While there is no country which operates purely from this paradigm, a dozen countries (primarily from Europe but also including Jordan and Canada) have formed a Human Security Network and have begun the slow process of changing their national security policies to reflect that. Their multi-faceted approach has become particularly applicable since 9-11. It is hoped that over the next decade, this and other similar initiatives can serve as a catalyst for real change.

The difficulty for human security advocates in the UK is that the model represents such a radical change for a nation that sees itself as benefiting from a position of pre-eminence in international affairs, has a strong military tradition, and was until recently a global empire, that it is unlikely to gain much of a foothold here - particularly under the current administration.

## peace support and the UK

A review of the Ministry of Defence website reveals an awareness of the need for conflict resolution, peacebuilding, close links with development, and an holistic approach to terrorism. The general term favoured by the MoD is Peace Support, and it is best expressed in the Global Conflict Prevention Pool (GCPP). The Pool is a cross-departmental initiative combining related projects of the MoD, Department for International Development, and the Foreign Office. Projects include election monitoring, security sector reform, and post-conflict dialogue, and are

“The only place a very powerful nation can be stopped is from within.”

*Noam Chomsky*

staffed by civilians, military personnel, and NGOs.

## lots of challenges

The UK is doing some work for peace around the world, which is something **conscience** members can support. There are problems, however, that need to be addressed. They can form part of potential campaigning efforts for the organisation - and for us as individuals.

1. The government response still relies on national military strength

Peace Support work can serve as an add-on to existing strategies, thereby allowing the continued reliance on the current huge, expensive and intrinsically violent system.

2. Some of the "Peace Support" spending is questionable

Conflict prevention-related funds are not being consistently used for appropriate projects. Tony Blair's decision to use the Pool to fund military helicopters for Nepal, a country with a poor human rights record, is an example. Other problems include funding small arms in parts of the world (while funding small arms collections in others), and the fast relief fund being used to rebuild Iraq.

3. Budget realities do not match policy statements

The MoD and other Ministries clearly identify a multi-faceted approach to conflict as a key priority, both for humanitarian reasons globally as well as to prevent terrorism nationally. One of the eight Public Service Agreement objectives of the MoD is peace support-related work - but all related spending by the three Ministries combined account for less than one fiftieth of the MoD's budget.

4. Counter terrorism is too complex to rely on force

The UK's experiences with terrorism in Northern Ireland should be a firm

reminder of the need to consider all angles, rather than reliance on intimidation and aggression. As well, alternate methods are much more cost effective - making them both better and cheaper. However, while various Ministries are addressing security in creative ways, the bulk of the budget as well as of government attention is focused on traditional defence methods - and result in increased spending.

5. A much stronger central commitment is needed

The Pool is a good start, but it represents a tiny fraction of the national security budget. The war in Iraq and the need for an improved response to terrorism clearly demonstrate the fact that we need to invest in alternatives. There is informed expertise available to facilitate such a shift.

6. A civilian approach to security is needed

While there are projects being funded by the government that involve civilians in conflict prevention and related fields, if there is to be a real shift in thinking about security something much more concrete needs to happen. Several alternatives present themselves; the best approach is probably a combination. They include the establishment of a trained civilian peace force (which might be just the place for the taxes diverted by conscientious objectors) and conflict resolution training for all UK military personnel.

## an answer to your christmas dilemma

For better or for worse, the post-Cold War world is complex - culturally, economically, politically, and militarily. The 'us' and 'them' model is clearly no longer useful (if it ever was). Once efforts such as those above are underway, we just might be able to see a way forward.

And a way to answer your cousin waving a fork and demanding a response.

"When Serbia was being bombed, my email was full of Serbian human rights organizations saying why on earth is the West doing this, when they didn't give us so much as a photocopier to help our resistance to Milosevic."

*Scilla Elworthy,  
former Director of  
Oxford Research Group*



# Lord Kitchenblair's diary

## a quarterly round-up of war tax resistance

If you feel you have to pay then make a song and dance about it, that's what I say. That's (well, almost) what a couple of war tax resisting doctors did in Liverpool in November. Dr Lis Davidson and Dr Janet Price decided to pay the £1,608 of tax they had been withholding but not without some protest.

They went along to the local Inland Revenue office, accompanied by a group of supporters, with oversize cheques splattered with blood. "We both believed very strongly that it [Iraq] was an illegal war and we objected to our taxes being used to kill people. We think that the 10% should be used to make the world a better place, by funding aid and development projects. We want to make it clear that we do not want to dishonour the soldiers who have died, we just don't want any more to be killed" they said.

Labour MP, Bob Wareing added his support: "I have every sympathy for these two women who are protesting by not paying their tax. It is very difficult to say what proportion of people's income tax goes towards funding the war and the current occupation, but I support their intention"

I have recently heard of other interesting ways to pay amounts of money. How about writing your cheque on the side of a cow? How on earth they cash it I do not know, but that is not my problem.

Your cheque written on a mock gravestone is also an option to consider. I'm sure there are many other possible alternatives which are worth a try.

Unfortunately, as I am taxed at source, I am unable to take advantage of these novel ways to pay Inland Revenue, but for all those of you out there who are forced to write a cheque

that will eventually contribute to military spending why not be creative?

Robin Brookes, my war tax resisting friend from Wiltshire, attended his court case in Chippenham Magistrates Court in October. In his statement to the court he said "The British Government has flouted international law by going to war with Iraq. If I voluntarily pay my taxes I am endorsing their actions. I do not endorse their action; I believe it was a criminal act of the worst kind". Predictably, Robin was ordered to pay the outstanding amount but he also secured radio interviews and several articles in local press. Media coverage is always extremely welcome and helps to inform the general public about our campaign.

Another doctor, this time in Manchester, was in court over her decision to withhold the military part of her taxes in December. Dr Birgit Völlm said before the case "I would like to emphasise that I fully accept the fact that as a citizen I have to make my contribution to the running of the state ... however, in an age of sophisticated military technology, it is not so much people but financial resources that are conscripted for war and its preparations".

I wonder what 2004 will bring. I like to think that this year there will not be a single case of a conscientious objector having to go to court for their war tax resistance because the government will finally see sense and change the law.

If, however, they do not make provision for all you COs out there I will continue pointing my gloved finger at Inland Revenue, the Treasury and pressing for recognition of your rights.

*Over & Out, KB*

# review

from page 8/ Curtis's passionate outrage is palpable throughout.

In his final chapter Curtis offers some brief prescriptions for what a truly "ethical" foreign policy might look like. However he is under no illusions that effecting such change will be easy. Indeed in Curtis's view no fundamental improvement in foreign policy will take place unless policy-making is transformed from "elitist, secretive and totalitarian [as it is at present] to popular, open and democratic". Consequently, "establishing democracy in Britain, alongside deepening the sense of global interdependence among people, is the big challenge in transforming Britain's foreign policy".

If Curtis's book manages to open a few more eyes to these realities he will have performed a valuable service.

## Syria: Neither Bread nor Freedom

The day the statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad's Firdos Square was pulled down, Donald Rumsfeld accused Syria of sheltering senior Ba'athists, leading many to believe that Syria was next in line for attack.

These plans appear to be on hold for the moment, but anti-war activists in the US, Britain and elsewhere will want to learn more about Syria, and Alan George's new book provides a good place to start.

George's book divides into three parts: a brief overview of Syria's post-WWII history; an account of the rise and subsequent repression of the "Damascus Spring" civil society movement that sprang up with the death

of Hafiz al-Asad; and a devastating account of modern day Syria's media, economy, parliament and legal system.

George is fond of comparisons with George Orwell's 1984 and successfully paints a vivid picture of Syria's totalitarian political system, corrupt bureaucracy and economic malaise. However he is also quick to point out that external threats have served only to bolster the hardliners within the regime.

Activists will need to go elsewhere for the facts about Syria's alleged WMD programmes or links with "terrorism", but George's book will provide them with valuable background reading.

*Web of Deceit: Britain's Real Role in the World*, Mark Curtis, Vintage, 2003  
isbn 0-099-44839-4  
256pp, £7.99

*Syria: Neither Bread nor Freedom*, Alan George, Zed Books, 2003  
isbn 1-84277-213-9  
224pp, £13.95

This issue's reviews were first published in *Peace News*.

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# REVIEW

Matt reviews Mark Curtis's **Web of Deceit** and Red reviews **Syria: Neither Bread nor Freedom** by Alan George.

The reality of US foreign policy has been dissected by a large range of analysts but the grim realities of British foreign policy appear to have received comparatively little attention. Mark Curtis is one of the few to have subjected Britain's post-WWII role to proper critical scrutiny.

The basic thesis of *Web of Deceit* is that "Britain's basic priority – virtually its *raison d'être* for several centuries – is to aid British companies in getting their hands on other countries' resources" and that the policies of British elites are "helping to make the world more insecure, unequal and abusive of human rights".

These conclusions will not surprise many **conscience** members. However what is impressive about *Web of Deceit* is its broad sweep and the huge array of evidence - including declassified government files housed at the Public Records Office - that it presents to support its claims.

The book is divided into four parts. In part one Curtis examines Britain's relations with Iraq, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Israel, Russia and the US, and New Labour's policy on arms exports. In part two Curtis examines Britain's role in promoting what he terms "liberalisation theology", as well as Britain's "forgotten past" in the Middle East, supporting corrupt and repressive elites – a policy which persists to this day.

Part three uses declassified documents to examine Britain's role in the overthrow of governments in Iran and British Guiana and Britain's brutal counter-insurgency wars in Kenya and Malaya. Finally, part four examines the role of the media, British complicity in mass murder in Indonesia, and the ongoing outrage of Diego Garcia (whose indigenous population was dispossessed in order to turn the island into a US bomber base). /to page 7

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