



conscience update

issue 127

winter 2004/5

newsletter of **conscience** THE PEACE TAX CAMPAIGN

an exciting year in prospect

This year will be one of the most important years ever for **conscience**.

On 20 January President Bush will begin his second four year term and it seems likely that he will use his new mandate to justify further military adventures and continue his misguided war against terror. As we have seen since the terrible events of September 2001, the US and UK governments' military response to the threat of terrorism has only made the global situation less secure.

It is likely that the General Election will be held this spring with the unresolved situation in Iraq as a backdrop. It is rare that issues of peace and security make it onto the agenda during a General Election, so this year will be an important opportunity to hold MPs to account on issues of conscientious objection and military spending.

In May, the vitally important nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review conference will be held in New York and the commitment of nuclear weapons states such as Britain to ridding the world of Weapons of Mass Destruction will be held up to global public scrutiny. And in the summer we will mark the 60th anniversaries of the end of the Second World War and the dropping of nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Throughout the year we will be following the progress of the Peace

Tax Seven and their Judicial Review. We will be supporting them and are hopeful that their case will raise awareness of the dilemma faced by the many conscientious objectors who see their taxes spent on killing.

In the latter half of the year the UK takes over the presidency of the EU and the government have promised to focus on conflict prevention and development in Africa. We will be working to promote proven non-military approaches in contrast to the counter-productive military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

There will be many opportunities to take action and to promote the **conscience** message in 2005 and we look forward to working with you to make this our most successful year yet.

Tax Day - 31 January

Monday 31 January is the deadline for tax returns and payments relating to the 2003/04 tax year and an excellent opportunity to distribute Peace Tax Returns. During the 2003/04 tax year over £38 billion was spent on the military including £6 billion on attacking Iraq.

If you would like a bundle of Peace Tax Returns to distribute locally, please call **0870 777 3223** or email info@conscienceonline.org.uk

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

Parliamentary developments in Westminster & Scotland

The lobbying side of our work has been very busy recently. There are currently two parliamentary motions instigated by **conscience**, which your political representatives can sign up to.

Early Day Motion 116 was tabled in Westminster by Neil Gerrard MP on the first day of the new parliament, 23 November 2004. The Motion welcomes the action of the Peace Tax Seven in their seeking a judicial review of tax laws. **conscience** hopes to build awareness of the Peace Tax Seven's campaign amongst MPs in the run up to the hearing so please write to your MP to ask them to sign this important EDM. Whatever the outcome of the judicial review the next step will be to engage with parliamentarians - informing MPs and asking for their support is more important than ever.

- Find out who your MP is at: www.locata.co.uk/commons or call the **conscience** office. You can write to you MP at: House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Parliamentary Motion S2M-1967 was tabled in the Scottish Parliament by Chris Ballance MSP in November 2004. This Motion quotes government sources where it notes "it is highly likely that the armed forces will, in future, be more frequently employed on peace support

and counter-terrorist operations where the focus will be on conflict prevention and stabilisation, rather than the defeat of opposing forces" and that "no conventional military threats to the UK are likely to emerge over the period to 2030".

Given these statements the Motion calls for significantly increased spending of taxpayers' money on conflict prevention. The MoD currently spend just 2.3% of the 'defence' budget on conflict prevention. The Scottish Parliament does not have control over military spending priorities, but, nevertheless, it is important to make MSPs aware of these issues so they can apply pressure on the UK government to prepare for peace not war.

- If you live in Scotland, 8 MSPs represent you in the Scottish Parliament. Find out who represents you at: www.scottish.parliament.uk/msp or call the **conscience** office. You can write to your MSPs at: The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP.

We are working with supportive Assembly Members to put down a similar motion before in the Welsh Assembly early in 2005 and will write to all members in Wales when this happens.

Early Day Motion 116

Conscientious Objectors and Taxation 23.11.04

That this House recognises that Parliament has traditionally acknowledged and protected the right of conscientious objectors to avoid complicity in killing in times of compulsory military service; notes that compulsory military service is unlikely to be reintroduced; notes that all taxpayers are currently made complicit in killing by the requirement to pay for war and war preparations via tax contributions; believes that a system should be established to enable those with a conscientious objection to war to perform their civic duty to pay taxes with a clear conscience; and welcomes the action of seven conscientious objectors, the Peace Tax Seven, in seeking a judicial review of the current laws on taxation, which take no account of issues of conscience.

conscience update (issn 1474-8789) is the newsletter of **conscience** THE PEACE TAX CAMPAIGN, edited and designed by Jon Nott and printed by Pottle Press on 100% recycled paper

views expressed in this newsletter and in any leaflets enclosed are not necessarily endorsed by **conscience**

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

members' news

diary

Annual Event

The 2004 Annual Event was held in conjunction with Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) in Bull St. Friends Meeting House, Birmingham. All in all it was a tremendous success. We were delighted to have three expert speakers and pleasantly surprised to find our accommodation for the day had been upgraded.

Settling in to the Bull St. Conference Suite we first heard from David Gee, Manager of the Peace & Disarmament Programme at QPSW. David introduced us to the idea of 'sustainable security' by looking at some shocking statistics on US military spending and the impact on the natural environment. If we are to address violent conflict effectively we must also consider the complex interplay of globalisation, poverty and the arms trade.

Diana Francis, author, trainer and current Chair of the Committee for Conflict Transformation Support was the next speaker. Diana addressed war in the most direct terms and overturned the false ideas of the necessity, inevitability and justice of war. Conflict may be part of human nature but to train thousands of young people to engage in warfare

and systematically kill opponents certainly is not 'natural'.

Our third speaker, Mareike Junge of Peaceworkers UK, provided listeners with a long list of simple ways they can support groups in the peace movement, such as **conscience** and QPSW, and thus help us work towards a world of peace genuine security. Administration support, design skills, helping to organise events, and fundraising are all needed by small groups and free up time for staff members to work on developing projects.

After lunch we divided into three workshop groups looking at resolving conflicts, war tax resistance and sustainable security. The workshops were followed by a screening of "Contempt of Conscience", a film by and about the Peace Tax Seven. A brief introduction to the work and aims of the Peace & Security Liaison Group (a group initiated by conscience for engaging in dialogue with government departments) was provided by Sarah Graham-Brown of **conscience** before the final questions of the day.

Many thanks to all of those who attended and took part. It was a wonderful day and we look forward to a similar success in late 2005.

19 March

End the Occupation of Iraq, Bring the Troops Home

Demonstration in London organised by Stop the War Coalition.

t 020 7278 6694

w www.stopwar.org.uk

1 May

Cities of the World Peace Fair, New York

For a nuclear weapons-free future. Organised by Mayors for Peace at the start of the month-long nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review conference at the United Nations.

w www.abolitionnow.org

15 May

International Conscientious Objectors Day

Event in London, full details next issue.

20 May

Concert for peace

7.30pm at St Cyprian's Church, Glentworth Street, London NW1.

Organised by Musicians Against Nuclear Arms, with Gemini, directed by Ian Mitchell.

t 020 8455 1030

more diary dates at
networkforpeace.org.uk

contacting the office

general enquiries

Archway Resource Centre

1B Waterlow Road

London N19 5NJ

t 0870 777 3223 (national rate)

f 020 7281 6508

e info@conscienceonline.org.uk

campaigns enquiries

t as left - ask for Oliver

e lobby@conscienceonline.org.uk

membership enquiries

t as left - ask for Jon

e develop@conscienceonline.org.uk

www.conscienceonline.org.uk

Iraq – casualties of war

Sarah Graham-Brown looks at the implications for civilians of both the current war in Iraq and the wars and sanctions of previous decades.

‘War is bad for your health’ is the message of two recent reports that highlight the vulnerability of civilians in Iraq, the lack of concern shown by the war Coalition for the scale of civilian casualties, and the long-term damage to the health of the Iraqi population.

In the latest of a series of reports on the health impacts of the Iraq war, Medact highlights ‘the need to find alternatives to violence and resolve political differences is paramount’ – and concludes that conflict is damaging the ability of Iraqi society to reverse its declining health status.

In the ongoing conflict in Iraq, civilians have become increasingly vulnerable. The tactics used, especially by US forces, include large-scale aerial attacks that frequently kill and injure civilians and destroy their homes, despite protestations from military sources that they are carefully targeted. On the other side, the insurgents use suicide bombing, inaccurate mortar fire and kidnapping as methods of combat, all of which are likely to kill and injure civilians.

Medact’s report calls for an independent commission to investigate casualties and the state of health in Iraq. Soon after the report was launched on 30 November, Tony Blair brushed aside a call from a group of military, religious and academic figures for such an investigation. In their letter to the Prime Minister, they emphasised the obligation of the UK and other Coalition governments under international humanitarian law to monitor civilian casualties.

Medact further calls on military forces to desist from attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructures, and re-evaluate the consequences of weaponry used in populated areas.



Medact *Enduring effects of war: health in Iraq 2004* (London, November 2004)

THE LANCET

Les Roberts, Riyadh Lafta, Richard Garfield, Jamal Khudhairi & Gilbert Burnham ‘Mortality before and after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: cluster sample survey’ *The Lancet* 2004; 364: 1857-64

IRAQ BODY COUNT
www.iraqbodycount.net

This last point is also emphasised in the report published by *The Lancet* on civilian deaths since the 2003 war. The findings of this survey, undertaken by the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University in Boston and carried out in Iraq during September 2004, have annoyed politicians in the US and UK.

The researchers used a well-recognised statistical technique – extrapolating from a clustered sample survey – to estimate the scale of civilian casualties caused by the Iraq invasion and its aftermath (19 March 2003-early September 2004), comparing the figure with the pre-war period from 1 January 2002-18 March 2003.

They came up with an estimate of 100,000 civilian deaths since the beginning of the war, much higher than other counts which have relied on hospital mortality figures (Iraqi Ministry of Health) or deaths confirmed by media reports (Iraq Body Count). Government ministers and spokespersons have spoken of the ‘unreliability’ of the *Lancet* figures, while not admitting the limitations of the lower estimates.

Two points stand out – first, that the occupying powers have made no attempt to commission any survey or count of civilian casualties, beyond the limited figures provided by the Iraqi Ministry of Health; and second, that the majority of violent deaths recorded were caused by aerial weaponry.

The Fourth Geneva Convention states that protected persons (i.e. civilians) ‘... shall be at all times humanely treated, and shall be protected especially against acts of violence...’ (Article 27).

The report comments ‘It is difficult to understand how a military force could

monitor the extent to which civilians are protected against violence without systematically doing body counts or at least looking at the kind of casualties they induce.’

The *Lancet* survey concentrates on deaths as a result of violence. It does not cover the potential risks to life caused indirectly. The only area it examines is infant deaths caused when the mother could not reach a hospital or medical help because of the security situation.

Medact’s report fills this gap, cataloguing a wide range of health deficits in Iraq, and demonstrating the profound economic, social and psychological effects of war and conflict. It examines not only increased mortality, but ill-health due to injury or disease, loss of access to health services and the mental health issues created by trauma – leading to increased physical, psychological and social disability.

The current war and its chaotic aftermath have magnified the problems of a health service already eroded, underfunded and overstretched by wars and by economic sanctions in place between 1990 and 2003.

Iraq has a disease pattern that at first sight resembles that of a very poor country – including acute and chronic malnutrition among children under five. At the same time, its chronic disease patterns – including diabetes, heart disease – are more characteristic of developed countries. These diseases can often be managed, but only if medications are consistently accessible and affordable.

The 2003 war has further affected the health system’s ability to cope with this range of problems, depleting the number of health facilities operating, especially at primary care level.

Restoration of services since May 2003 has been patchy. Security problems restrict access to health facilities – a particular concern for women and girls, often preventing women and their children seeking health care, including mother and child health services.

Furthermore, much of the rehabilitation of healthcare was put in the hands of private contractors and NGOs under the control of the US Department of Defense, which has little expertise in rehabilitation or humanitarian response. UN agencies, which usually play a key role in providing health response and monitoring in humanitarian crises, were marginalised.

The health impacts of this war will affect generations of Iraqis, but these reports also reflect legal, humanitarian and political concerns. They reflect a trend in US policy towards a climate of impunity, pushing aside international humanitarian law in pursuit of military goals, ignoring the rights of civilian populations, prisoners and others.

The British government has been unwilling to challenge this trend publicly. The government has increasingly emphasised that it went into Iraq to ‘liberate’ its people, especially as the justifications associated with weapons of mass destruction fell away. If this is the case, it should be a matter of particular concern that civilian population is not subjected to further harm.

Iraqis have already endured decades of Saddam Hussein’s rule and 13 years of economic sanctions. Showing this kind of indifference to civilian casualties is unlikely to convince even those who were relieved to see the fall of Saddam Hussein, that Coalition forces have their interests at heart.

Medact has just launched a Count the Casualties campaign, asking people to write to the Foreign Secretary or their MP – further details are on the campaign website: www.countthecasualties.org.uk



Lord Kitchenblair's diary

a quarterly round-up of war tax resistance

After a break from my column in the last edition of **conscience** update I have returned. Sorry to have let you down but I was helping with a new campaign - no, not the invasion of another oil rich state, I mean a war tax resistance and peace tax campaigning.

This year has seen the development of the Peace Tax Seven. With the advice and assistance of my friends at **conscience**, their campaign has gone from strength to strength. It is amazing what seven individuals, driven by conscience, can do... and all in their spare time! Given the current state of the law, a Judicial Review, which PT7 are seeking, appears to be the only legal forum in which a conscientious

objection to paying tax for military purposes can be addressed.

Those who have previously appeared in court for withholding tax have all faced the same problem - the only admissible evidence in court is a statement from Inland Revenue saying the tax is due. Legal arguments concerning human rights, legality of war cannot be accepted in a case concerning non-payment of tax. This leaves Judicial Review as the only option available to war tax resisters if their arguments on human rights grounds are to be heard.

So what about those others who, on grounds of conscience, withhold or try to divert tax? What is the point if the courts always refuse to listen? War tax resistance is just what it says it is: resistance. It is a protest and a demonstration of the depth of one's feelings. Ideally it should be a public and vocal protest. Like other forms of civil disobedience, (sit-ins, blockades, occupations) war tax resistance is unlikely to have an immediate effect but it does put a spanner in the works and makes it more awkward for those in power to disregard us. War tax resistance raises public awareness, builds pressure and encourages others to press for a change in the law: essential components of any campaign.

Please do not be disappointed if you 'fail' in your war tax resistance, as one recent resister said to me having been forced to pay taxes for war. You have not failed if you take part in a sit-in outside a military base and are physically moved: you have played a valuable role as a resister. The same is true of those who withhold war tax and are forced to pay by the courts and Inland Revenue.

Over & Out, KB



'Connecting people who make the world of difference'

<http://www.greennet.org.uk>

Ethical about your communications, we provide services for home and organisational use:

- domain names
- web hosting
- connectivity

All with personal support via a local call rate number

Website design & dynamic services

GreenNet's expertise is providing tools for NGOs and campaigners to get their message across online. We offer low cost solutions for your website, with features including:

- fast, easy and flexible uploading of information
- easy to manage - no knowledge of html needed
- search facilities

If there is a service you need that we haven't listed, or if you would like further details, please contact:
Joanne: **0845 055 4011** email joanne@gn.apc.org

GreenNet, a collective not-for-profit Internet Service Provider since 1986

review



from p8/ war effort. The eventual victors in these wars overcame a traditional force disadvantage by relying on the idea of war as the political will of a people.

From this basic idea flows an arresting revisit to a number of well-known armed revolutions - British, French, and Russian - arguing that, it was nonviolence, not the threat or use of force, that was crucial in each case. Schell's point is that the decisive nature of nonviolence characterises both brutal wars and the nonviolent campaigns of Gandhi, the Velvet revolutionaries of Eastern Europe, Mandela, and Martin Luther King. These were leaders of grassroots movements, but the same possibility is suggested by Woodrow Wilson's high-level internationalism. In such methods lies the possibility of peace. Finally, Schell surveys a future clouded by the US reaction to the hijackings of 2001 and by the continuing economic domination of the world by the west.

Schell is one of those numerous conservative writers who can turn from a description of colonial brutality, to wistful reflections on the liberal democratic tradition, without apparently allowing knowledge of the one to inform judgement of the other. This gives *The Unconquerable World*, for all its erudition, an oddly incomplete feel and, at times, an incongruously sanguine tone. "Hold on," I want to say at a typical point. "Machine-gunning 13,000 men armed with spears? That's not 'lopsided casualty figures,' it's an atrocity." Nevertheless, a readable general survey of modern peace politics, based on the common ground of Mao and Gandhi, and the nonviolent nature of the Bolshevik Revolution, is certainly an illuminating read.

Housmans Peace Diary 2005

Housmans Peace Diary enters its 52nd edition with a celebration of the 60th birthday of its publisher, Housmans Bookshop, which opened in 1945 under the name of the Shropshire poet's pacifist son, Laurence. As always, every week has an inspiring or sobering quotation and every day has a peace anniversary.

The second half is a directory listing nearly 2,000 national and international peace organisations. An indispensibly rich and compact source of what should be common knowledge.

The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence and the Will of the People, Jonathan Schell, Penguin, 2003, isbn 0-7139-9766-4 418pp £20.00 (hardback)
Paperback available April isbn 0-1410-1686-8 £8.99

Housmans Peace Diary Housmans, isbn 0-85283-260-5 £6.95

standing order help us plan ahead

we'll send you a free copy of Peretz Kidron's *Refusenik! Israel's Soldiers of Conscience*, when you give £3 a month or more

please PRINT your details below

name(s) _____

address _____

_____ post code _____

telephone _____

email _____

name of bank _____

address of bank _____

_____ post code _____

account no. sort code

please pay £10 £5 £3 other £

monthly, until further notice, starting on

to **conscience** a/c 08-90-37 50452200, Co-op Bank Wood Green, London
please cancel any existing standing orders to **conscience** / the peace tax campaign

signature date

please return to **conscience** NLI27
FREEPOST LON 18505, London N19 5BR

REVIEW

Simon Heywood reviews **The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence and the Will of the People** by Jonathan Schell

As a journalist for the *New Yorker* in the 1960s, Jonathan Schell wrote *The Village of Ben Suc*, a description of US atrocities in Vietnam. His 1982 book *The Fate of the Earth* became a handbook for US nuclear unilateralists. Such work established him as a conspicuous Cold War advocate of peace. *The Unconquerable World* is his view on the post-Cold War world of overwhelming but fragile US dominance, nuclear threat, insurgency, and people power. Schell expresses a sense of living through a transformation in the nature of war.

The objective of war has always been, not violence, but power: warmakers kill some people in order to control the survivors. Modern war is also said to seek, not simply the advantage of a single ruler, but the political will of an entire people. Schell has done more than most to describe wealthy states' capacity for violence: not only nuclear war, but also the relatively cautious

bluffing-game of nuclear deterrence, was conducted according to logic which was inescapable given the sheer power of the weapons, and was, at the same time and for the same reason, simply cold-bloodedly and barkingly insane.

Thus, the violence of the imperial powers ceased to be a means to any rational end. But violence is only ever a means, not an end. In this truth, Schell sees the possibility of change. Anti-imperial warmakers were the first to find other means to fight wars, based on the insight formulated by Hannah Arendt, that the essence of military power is not the armed force to back up threats, but the often unarmed decision whether or not to heed them. South-east Asian communists used propaganda and organisation to politicise whole populations and defeat invaders. In Vietnam, the importance of political will was further illustrated when US public opinion played a crucial part in disabling the US /to p7

join **conscience** today

- I/we want to join **conscience**
- I/we want to renew my membership

please PRINT your details below

name(s) _____

address _____

_____ post code _____

telephone _____

email _____

MP/constituency _____

suggested membership donation

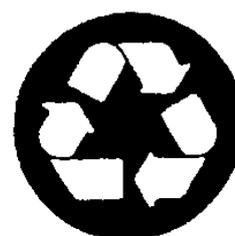
£1 per £1,000 of annual income up to £15,000, plus
£2 per £1,000 of annual income over £15,000

**free book when you give £3 per month
see page 7 for details**

- I/we have filled in the standing order form overleaf
- I/we enclose a cheque for £ _____
(payable to **conscience**)

NL127

spread the **conscience** message
and save trees at the same time



conscience envelope re-use labels are available free to members in pads of 100.

A pad of labels costs £3 to produce and post, so donations towards the cost of production are welcome.

To request your labels, please contact
Jon in the office: **t** 0870 777 3223
e develop@conscienceonline.org.uk
conscience, 1B Waterlow Road
London N19 5NJ