



conscience update

issue 128

spring 2005

newsletter of **conscience** THE PEACE TAX CAMPAIGN

Clippings | Accountancy Age, Daily Telegraph, The Friend, Morning Star

conscience hits the headlines

conscience was front page news courtesy of Shadow Chancellor, Oliver Letwin. A *Scotland on Sunday* journalist discovered Oliver Letwin's support of **conscience** via our website while working on a story about the Peace Tax Seven. He decided that this was a story in its own right. The *Daily Telegraph* agreed and ran it on their front page, along with a leading article on the comment page. The story was also covered by the *Morning Star* and the *Guardian* website.

Staff were kept busy as Radio 2 DJ Jeremy Vine, Talk Radio and Radio 4's PM programme followed up the story. Oliver Letwin confirmed his support, but was not available to talk to the media, so **conscience** spokespeople were given numerous opportunities

to spread the **conscience** message to audiences far beyond our usual reach. This flurry of media attention led to some lower profile, but highly significant coverage, including a series of letters and articles in the professional journal *Accountancy Age*.

The events of those few days showed, once again, how much interest there is in our issue when people find out about it. The biggest obstacle is that most people, and many MPs, have never heard of **conscience**. As we enter the General Election period, please use any opportunity to raise the profile of **conscience**.

See inside for details of how you can use the election to raise the peace tax issue.

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

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conscience

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conscience

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

General Election

We've included a four-page election briefing with this newsletter designed to help you find out where your candidates stand on issue of conscientious objection to taxation for military purposes.

You can also use the letters page of your local newspaper to raise the issue or call in to radio and TV debates during the election. Because of the war in Iraq, issues of peace, security and conscientious objection will be discussed far more than is usual at a General Election. Please mention our website, conscienceonline.org.uk - more and more people are visiting the website and joining **conscience** as a result.

KitchenBlair poster

Another way to raise the profile of **conscience** is to display the *Lord KitchenBlair* poster enclosed with this newsletter.

The poster is designed to be displayed either in your window or on a noticeboard at your workplace, place of worship, school or college, shop window or any other high-profile location.

- You can get more copies of the poster by contacting the office (see page 3 for contact details).

new Peace Tax Return

A copy of the 2005 Peace Tax Return is enclosed. We are encouraging all our members to complete one and send it to the Treasury or your own tax office. If you would like additional PTRs for your local peace groups, friends or colleagues, please get in touch with the office. We supply multiple copies free of charge, but if you would like a large bundle we would welcome a contribution towards postage.

As before, the PTR comes in two parts, A and B. Part A is for those people who are taxed at source (those of us

taxed under PAYE) and are unable to withhold the military part of their taxes. Part A is also for those people whose tax is self assessed (those of you who fill in an Inland Revenue Tax Return) but do not wish to withhold the military part of their taxes. Part B is for people whose conscience directs them to withhold the part of their taxes destined for military expenditure. If you complete Part B you should send your PTR, attached to your Inland Revenue Tax Return, to your tax office.

new display materials

In late January, a couple of days before tax returns were due to be sent to Inland Revenue, **conscience** launched its new display materials in the lobby of the new Scottish Parliament building.

With information on human rights, peace tax and non-military security, the display proved to be of much interest to the various parliamentarians, support staff and visitors to the Parliament. Oliver Haslam was joined by Liz Law of the Scottish Centre for Nonviolence to jointly promote ideas on non-military security and civilian peace services.

- The display material will shortly be available to download and print from the **conscience** website. We are encouraging members to use this display at events over the summer.

Welsh memorial for COs

A new monument to Conscientious Objectors will be unveiled in Wales on 15 May 2005. It will take the form of a boulder engraved with the words, "If the right to life is the first of all human rights, being the one on which all other rights depend, the right to refuse to kill must be the second". The inscription will be in English and Welsh.

Fundraising for the stone was undertaken by Cynefin y Werin, a Welsh

network of civil society groups working for peace and social justice. The memorial will be placed in the Peace Garden of the Temple of Peace, Cathays Park, Cardiff, home of the Welsh Centre for International Affairs and the United Nations Association Wales.

- If you would like further details, or to attend the unveiling ceremony, please contact:
e clare@wcia.org.uk
t 029 2082 1055.

members' news

thank you (1)

A big thank you to our regular office volunteers, Pauline Atkins and Peter Lockley for their help throughout the year. Thanks also to Patricia, Jessica and Verity for the occasions when they were able to volunteer in the office.

Without the dedication of our volunteers, whether regular or occasional, **conscience** would not be the organisation it is today.

having your say

Early in May you should receive your copy of the annual review and membership questionnaire.

The membership questionnaire is your chance to have your say in the running of **conscience**, so please keep

MAKE POVERTY HISTORY

conscience has joined the Make Poverty History coalition which brings together hundreds of organisations campaigning about issues at the root of poverty, such as trade justice, international debt and conflict.

- You can get a white band, the symbol of the coalition, from your local Oxfam shop or by visiting
w www.makepovertyhistory.org

an eye out for it and take the opportunity to let us know your views.

annual event

This year's annual event is likely to be held in Edinburgh in the autumn. The exact date and venue will be confirmed in the next newsletter.

thank you (2)

Thank you very much to all those members who generously responded to our autumn appeal to raise funds for our work around the general election and in support of the Peace Tax Seven.

The appeal had raised over £3,500 for this vital work and enabled us to produce new materials like the *Lord KitchenBlair* poster.

diary

23 April

Making War History

Network for Peace AGM. Guest speakers include Prof Robert Hinde, co-author of *War No More* 10am – 5pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, (near Holborn Tube), London WC1.

15 May

International Conscientious Objectors Day

London - 12noon at the CO Stone, Tavistock Square, WC1.

Edinburgh - 2pm, West Parliament Square.

Cardiff - see article, p2.

There will also be events in Manchester, Birmingham, Oxford, Bradford and possibly Bristol. If you would like information about these events or to hold an event in your area, please contact:

Edna Mathieson on
t 020 7237 3731

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

non-military security - a means or the end?

Should **conscience** regard the promotion of non-military security a means to an end or an end in itself? Jon Nott looks at some of the arguments.

“we’re a single issue campaign”

The Peace Tax Campaign began in 1978 to work for the right of conscientious objectors who wanted their right to refuse to be made complicit in killing to be modernised following the replacement of conscription and national service with a professional military paid for out of general taxation. Although the name was changed to **conscience** in the early 1990s the organisation has always been a single issue campaign – and that single issue is the right to refuse to be made complicit in killing.

As we get closer to achieving our aim, people want to know what conscientious objectors’ taxes would be spent on if they didn’t fund the military and it is important that we have examples to show that COs can contribute to national and international security without paying for killing. However, our campaign is based on the human rights of conscientious objectors, the international declarations, the parliamentary precedents and now the Human Rights Act, which incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights into British law. Promoting non-military security is a good way to show how COs’ taxes can contribute to the common desire for peace and security, but the idea will always be a secondary concern for **conscience**.

“human rights are indivisible”

The human right to refuse to kill is derived from the most fundamental of rights – the right to life. We cannot look at the rights of conscientious objectors in isolation. We must also consider the rights of those who are on the receiving

end of British foreign policy and ultimately British military action. Even the most convinced pacifist would concede that the right to life of the victims of war is of a different order to their own right to freedom of conscience – you cannot exercise your conscience if your life has been taken.

It will be a long haul to get the rights of COs updated to reflect the reality of modern warfare – indeed we have already been at it for 25 years. Thousands have died in unnecessary wars in those years and many more will die before we achieve our aim. If we really care about human rights, we should see the campaign for the rights of COs as part of a wider campaign to prevent wars and practise non-military solutions to international crises.

“we are part of a wider movement”

conscience has a very specific role within the peace movement – to re-establish the rights of COs – and it is right that we work closely with others through the Network for Peace and the Peace & Security Liaison Group to pursue the wider goal of a more peaceful world. But to use a military metaphor, we must avoid “mission creep” and remain focused on our single issue rather than trying to be all things to all people.

“the peace movement is changing and so is our role”

We do have a specific role – we are on the cusp of the peace movement and the human rights movement. Our groundbreaking work in establishing the Peace & Security Liaison Group means that we have a fantastic opportunity to

shift the focus of the peace movement as a whole away from constant opposition - to specific wars, or specific weapons systems - and towards the promotion of positive, peaceful alternatives.

Although the founders of **conscience** were primarily concerned with the rights of COs, many newer members have joined because of the prospect of diverting the military part of their taxes to something positive, rather than because of an opposition to all things military. **conscience** was founded to address the impact on conscientious objectors of changes in the way wars are fought – and the world is still changing.

The protests against the war in Iraq were a sign of the huge appetite for positive alternatives, but the anti-war movement has found it very difficult to move beyond saying “No.” We have the opportunity to promote the kind of positive alternatives that could prevent future wars, but waiting until war is almost upon us is a recipe for failure. Our message should be that we can pay for peace and that peaceful solutions work. Once the principle of significant government spending on peace is established - on both principled and pragmatic grounds –securing the right for COs to pay for this rather than the military will become a much easier task.

“keeping focused leads to success”

The vision of **conscience** as the leading light of a revived peace movement is an engaging one, but the specific change in the law that **conscience** was founded to achieve is much more likely to come if we keep our feet on the ground than if we allow ourselves to have our heads in the clouds. We are a small

organisation with limited resources and we will achieve success only by focusing our energy on a clear single goal.

It is a huge leap from people opposing a specific, illegal and unnecessary war which is about to be launched, to the commitment and energy needed to create and sustain a new peace movement organisation. If such an organisation were to be created it should be founded on its own principles, not by the mutation of an existing campaign like **conscience**.

“we are agents for change – we should not fear it”

Our campaign has always been about changing the law and, more fundamentally, about changing public and government attitudes in order to bring about the legal change. We are a membership organisation and we can only do what the members want. If there is a desire for **conscience** to develop our founding principles into a new vision for promoting peace and human rights then that is what we should do.

The dialogue above sets out some of the discussions we have been having in the office and Executive Committee recently. We’d really like to hear from members about your views on this. We’ll be using the membership questionnaire and future issues of the newsletter to continue the debate about our long term strategy throughout the year.

- Send your comments to:
strategy@conscienceonline.org.uk
or write to: Jon Nott,
conscience
1 B Waterlow Road
London N19 5NJ



Lord Kitchenblair's diary

a quarterly round-up of war tax resistance

Mrs Kitchenblair and I recently threw caution to the wind and logged on to the internet - in particular, the homepage (as they call it) of an outfit called Conscience & Peace Tax International. Like most Lords, I find my heart belongs to dear old Blighty, but even I have to admit that it's not just Britons who are lifting up their voices against financial conscription. So are the French, Germans, Swiss, Italians, Danes, Norwegians, Swedes, Spanish, Hungarians, Belgians, Canadians, Americans, Australians, New Zealanders, Japanese, Colombians, Ghanaians and Indians too. It was all frightfully interesting.

Our friends in Italy, for example, have been quietly diverting their taxes away from the military since 1983. If you make a donation to charity, the beneficiary can claim the tax back from the Italian government. So if one gives enough to a peace organisation - and there are several in Italy, including the government's own civilian peacekeeping force, and a number of church groups - then they can claim the tax back, and it all offsets your donations to the military, in effect. Clever, eh? Problem was, the government found out, and prosecuted campaigners for incitement. They appealed, it all dragged on for years, but last year the appeal was upheld, and now they can broadcast the details of this ruse as widely as they like.

There are several national bodies for war tax resistance on the Continent, such as the Netzwerk Friedenssteuer (Peace Tax Network) in Germany; VRAK (Peace Tax Action) in Belgium; and EvV (Euro's for Peace) in the Netherlands. Most date from the 1980s. A few, including VRAK and EvV, keep up a central peace tax fund to collate

objectors' withheld taxes. Frightfully good way to make a point - Conscience Canada currently holds about \$20,000 in its peace tax fund, collected from about 40 objectors. VRAK recommend withholding 7% of the total tax bill, or a symbolic €12.5, and EvV estimate that Dutch taxpayers fork out €472 each year for the military, yielding a military budget of about €8bn, compared with a peacebuilding budget of €64m. Persistent resisters in these countries face seizure and public sale of goods, but, as elsewhere, considerable persistence is required to bring matters to this head, and the national peace tax campaigns are always there to offer support.

Over the pond, peace tax campaigns tend to be a bit older. Conscience Canada was founded in 1971. South of the border, Priscilla Adams reports that the Yearly Meeting of Quakers in Philadelphia challenged a lawsuit brought by the Justice Department over \$42,000 of withheld taxes. Although the court ordered the Quakers to pay, the judge refused the government's request for a penalty surcharge, on the grounds that conscientious objection was a reasonable stance to take. Very heartening. Still, half of all US taxes go to the military and the USA accounts for half of the whole world's military spending, so groups like the National War Tax Resistance Co-ordinating Committee have plenty to keep them busy. But the War Tax Resisters Penalty Fund, founded in Indiana in 1983, has collected almost \$220,000 to help cover resisters' expenses.

So peace tax is a worldwide phenomenon, as they call it. Mrs Kitchenblair says it's globalisation. I think it's just common sense!

Over & Out, KB

review



from p8/ battlefield to the conference table. Instead, he argues that conflicts must be transcended, just as the bi-national park transcends a problem based on the belief that there has to be a border somewhere.

Having stated this simple-seeming formula for peace, he applies it to conflicts at all levels, from those within and between individuals to those which fill the world. In his famously slapdash style, and without mundane concessions

such as footnotes or references, Galtung describes his arguments with his wife, the theories of Marx, Freud and Adam Smith, the bullfight as an example of Spanish culture, the significance of the location of the kitchen in western houses, Northern Ireland, Hawai'i, Israel/Palestine, Gandhian India, September 11th, the reason why there has never been a war in Switzerland, and the likelihood of another Cold War between the west and a new bloc in south and south-east Asia. Galtung is a visionary and challenging thinker who puts himself sharply at odds with his contemporaries, by talking what sounds like the common sense of the future.

Transcend and Transform: An Introduction to Conflict Work, Johan Galtung, Pluto Press, 2004
isbn 0-7453-2254-9
188pp £15.99
(paperback)

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REVIEW

Simon Heywood reviews **Transcend and Transform: An Introduction to Conflict Work** by Johan Galtung

A peace book which is recent enough to mention the 2003 invasion of Iraq - and suggest a peaceful alternative - will be worth a timely look, in the estimation of many **conscience** members. Galtung's alternative is a Conference for Security and Cooperation in the Middle East, with possible outcomes including a federal Iraq; a federal Kurdistan; and a Community of Middle Eastern states along (some of) the lines of the EU. "But that," he concludes, "demands a holistic view often found in world civil society and only rarely in governments."

Galtung should know. Founder of the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo in 1959, and currently director of the TRANSCEND Network for Peace and Development, he has been something of a professional outsider in world peace politics for half a century. In 1967 an affronted Council of Europe committee chairman pronounced that "a Monsieur Galtung"

had proposed sitting down and talking over the problems of Europe with the communists. Twenty years later, Galtung points to the influence of his own work on Gorbachev's "New Thinking," which hastened a peaceful resolution to the Cold War. His solution to the Ecuador-Peru border conflict (a bi-national zone with a natural park) was pronounced "too creative" by a former Ecuadorean president, three years before it was adopted, in 1998.

Before he rejected Galtung's solution as too creative, the Ecuadorean leader was impressed enough to ask about the thinking behind it. In this fascinating book, Galtung provides the reader with a basic answer to this question. He rejects the assumption that in any conflict, one of two sides must win at the other's expense. He also mistrusts negotiated compromise, in which the logic of winning and losing is simply transferred from the /to p7

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NL128

Quaker Peace & Social Witness **Peacemaker in Britain**

We are seeking to appoint three enthusiastic people in sympathy with the values of the Society of Friends who wish to develop their strong interest in peace and conflict transformation through secondment to a national peace group in Britain. The aim is to match the interests and skills of the worker with the receiving organisation. These recently have included Campaign Against Arms Trade, Conscience and War Resisters International/ Peace News. The work will be varied but sometimes routine and should include involvement in a specific project. Applicants should be able to demonstrate a commitment to peace and justice, adaptability, an ability to work on their own initiative and as part of a team. Transferable skills, such as administration and IT skills, would be an advantage

QPSW will pay a remuneration of £14,187 for the 12-month placement plus allowance for a preparation period and other employee benefits. Membership of a pension scheme is available. The successful applicant is expected to complete a medical questionnaire.

For more details and application pack contact:

HR Section, Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ. Tel: 020 7663 1111 Email: viviens@quaker.org.uk
www.quaker.org.uk Please quote ref. QPSW25

Closing date for completed applications: 29 April 2005
Week of interviews: week beginning 23 May 2005