



conscience update

issue 131

winter 2006

newsletter of **conscience** THE PEACE TAX CAMPAIGN

looking forward to the year ahead

2006 promises to be a lively time for **conscience**. We are expecting a full day hearing of the Peace Tax Seven, a new website about the positive human security alternatives to the military model of security and the 90th anniversary of the start of conscription and the right to conscientious objection.

The Peace Tax Seven will have their

day in court in the first couple of days of March 2006. After their application for a judicial review was rejected by the High Court earlier this year the Peace Tax Seven appealed and have now been granted a full day hearing in the Court of Appeal. Justice Sedley wants to hear the case 'from end to end' in order to decide if the judicial review can go ahead. If the hearing goes against them it does, however, open the way to taking the case to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

As we campaign and lobby for the right of conscientious objectors to pay taxes for peaceful purposes we find many people new to the concept of a peace tax quickly agree COs should not have to pay for the military with their taxes. After addressing the



The Peace Tax Seven take their protest to the DSEi arms fair in London's Docklands. The government spends £500 million of taxpayers' money each year helping the arms trade. This is just one of the areas where conscientious objectors are made complicit in killing simply by paying their taxes.

Photo | www.guysmallman.com

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

common arguments about opening the floodgates to others who may wish to divert their tax away from particular spending streams on grounds of conscience, and explaining the easily surmountable practical difficulties that people frequently raise, the discussion usually turns to how the military part of COs' taxes could and should be spent. PeacePays.Org aims to answer this question. (see p6)

March 2, 2006 will mark the 90th anniversary of the day that all unmarried men aged 18-41 in Britain were "deemed to have enlisted" in the army at the height of the First World War (see p4). **conscience** will be marking this date with an Early Day Motion in Parliament and encouraging all members to contact their MP.

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conscience

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

veteran war tax resister hits the headlines

Former RAF serviceman, Doug Barker appeared in Chippenham Magistrates Court on 6 December for his refusal to pay £1,100 of his tax bill - the amount destined for use by the military.

He had a good show of support outside the court with more than 20 demonstrators supporting him. Despite being ordered to pay and threatened with prison, Doug was able to make a rousing statement in court to explain why he was withholding tax... so good that he received a round of applause.

He also made national headlines including an article in the *Daily Telegraph* and the front page of the *Independent*. He

said: "If I have to go to jail, I will go to jail. But I don't think they will send me there because that would make me a martyr."

new MP support

We are delighted to Welcome Linda Riordan MP as a supporter of **conscience**. Linda was elected this year as MP for Halifax and is keen to help us campaign against financial military conscription.

- You can find out if your MP supports **conscience** by visiting www.conscienceonline.org.uk
- If your MP is not already a supporter, you can find letter writing tips on our website or by contacting Oliver in the office.

Office Co-ordinator – 21 hours a week

conscience seeks a well-organised person to manage its office, help co-ordinate the work of the four part-time members of staff, administer its membership database, service the committees, organise volunteers, deal with day-to-day finances and ensure the smooth running of the organisation.

Systematic approach to work, attention to detail, high standard of literacy, good written and verbal communication skills, experience of database management and an understanding of accounts and financial systems are essential. Also required are experience of office administration, committee support work, recruiting and managing volunteers, and a sympathy with the peace movement and/or pacifist culture

Communications & Fundraising Officer – 18 hours a week

conscience seeks someone to recruit new members, support existing ones, write, edit and produce newsletters, leaflets, website material and other publications and raise funds through appeals, grants and legacies.

Knowledge of fundraising, an understanding of mechanisms for recruiting and maintaining members and good written and verbal skills are essential, as is a commitment to the aims of **conscience**.

The salary for both posts is £22,257, pro rata and there is some flexibility regarding hours and days worked. For more information, email info@conscienceonline.org or write to **conscience**, 1B Waterlow Road, London N19 5NJ

Closing date: 12noon, 30th January 2006

members' news

diary

welcome

Robin Brookes, one of the Peace Tax Seven, has been co-opted onto the **conscience** Executive Committee. We are sure that Robin's passion and commitment will be a valuable addition to the EC.

thank you (1)

Many thanks to Pauline, Jane, Lorna, Jessica, Pete and Verity for volunteering their time to help in the office during 2005.

- If you are able to help out occasionally with mailings, research or general administrative work, please contact Kat in the office.

good bye

Jon Nott, our Development Officer since 1998, is moving on. For the past eight years Jon has played a major role in the development of the campaign and we wish him all the best in his new job as fundraiser at CND.

hello

We are very pleased that Kat Barton

(who also works part time at Friends House and *Peace News*) has agreed to provide part time cover until we are able to make permanent appointments.

Because Kat is only with us two days per week and will also be managing the recruitment process, it may take us longer than usual to respond to your letters, emails and phone messages.

thank you (2)

Many thanks to those members who responded so generously to our autumn appeal.

keep up-to-date via email

Important news, such as developments in the Peace Tax Seven case don't always fit into the quarterly cycle of our newsletters, so we have launched an email list to send occasional updates to members in between newsletters. We will not send more than one email per month and you can opt in or out whenever you like.

- If you would like to subscribe, simply send an email to: listserv@conscienceonline.org.uk with the subject "subscribe conscience_news"

29 January

Mozart 250 Anniversary Concert for Peace

7.30pm at Hinde Street Methodist Church, Thayer Street, London W1. Organised by Musicians Against Nuclear Arms. Guest Speaker: Bruce Kent.
t 020 8455 1030

18 March

Demonstration - "End the Occupation of Iraq"

March and Rally in central London to mark the second anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. Organised by Stop the War, CND and Muslim Association of Britain.
w www.stopwar.org.uk

7-21 April

Vanunu Freedom Ride

Cycle ride from Faslane to London, to arrive on 20th anniversary of Mordechai Vanunu's incarceration for revealing Israel's nuclear weapons programme.
t 020 7607 2302

more diary dates at networkforpeace.org.uk

contacting the office

general enquiries

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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 Kat

e develop@conscienceonline.org.uk

www.conscienceonline.org.uk

“deemed to have enlisted”

Oliver Haslam

On 2 March 1916 all un-married men between 18 and 41 were “deemed to have enlisted”. This put the Military Service Act into force and introduced conscription to Britain for the first time. Millions of civilians now found themselves to be under military authority.

Despite whipping up patriotism and an extensive programme of propaganda the government could not persuade enough fit young men to voluntarily enlist in the army to make up for the thousands killed on the front line. Millions had already volunteered but as the death toll rose and the futility of the war became clearer, the government conscripted an army after one and a half years of total war.

In an enlightened move for the time a ‘conscience clause’ was included in the Military Service Act. The conscience clause allowed people exemption from conscription ‘on the ground of a conscientious objection to the undertaking of combatant service’.

To gain exemption from military service and to be formally recognised as a conscientious objector it was necessary to make an application to a Local Tribunal. Those with a conscientious objection could apply for complete exemption, conditional exemption on the

grounds of performing ‘alternative service’ or conditional exemption on the grounds of joining a non-combatant unit of the army.

After a very brief hearing the Tribunal would decide whether to reject the applicant outright or if he were found to be genuine to grant some form of exemption. It was then for the applicant to decide whether or not to accept the Tribunal’s decision.

Conscientious objectors who were recognised as genuine, made valuable contributions to peace and security in line with what their consciences would allow. Those performing alternative service worked in agriculture, forestry, road and rail repairs, teaching, social work etc. - activities for the benefit of people, regardless of the presence of war. Those who joined non-combatant units, such as the Non-Combatant Corps or Royal Army Medical Corps, assisted the army as stretcher bearers and ambulance drivers etc. but without handling arms, fighting or taking life.

The system of Tribunals was deeply inadequate, however. Tribunal members were often unable or unwilling to understand the ‘conscience clause’, they had no experience of sitting in a judicial role and frequently were simply biased against conscientious objectors. As a result, thousands of men with a genuine conscientious objection to war were forced into military units. Many of them disobeyed military orders, were court-martialled and languished in prison under sentences of hard labour for the duration of the war.

It can be interesting to compare issues around conscientious objection then and now in relation to military taxation.

First World War COs who did alternative service were willing to work



for the benefit of the country and its people so long as it was not connected to the military. This might compare to current-day conscientious objectors who would be willing to pay taxes for security programmes with no military connection at all. A civilian peace service, for example, wholly organised and implemented by civilians that could go to conflict areas to monitor human rights, to promote the rule of law and to act as mediators. Other work financed by 'alternativist' COs today might include demining schemes and reintegrating ex-soldiers into society.

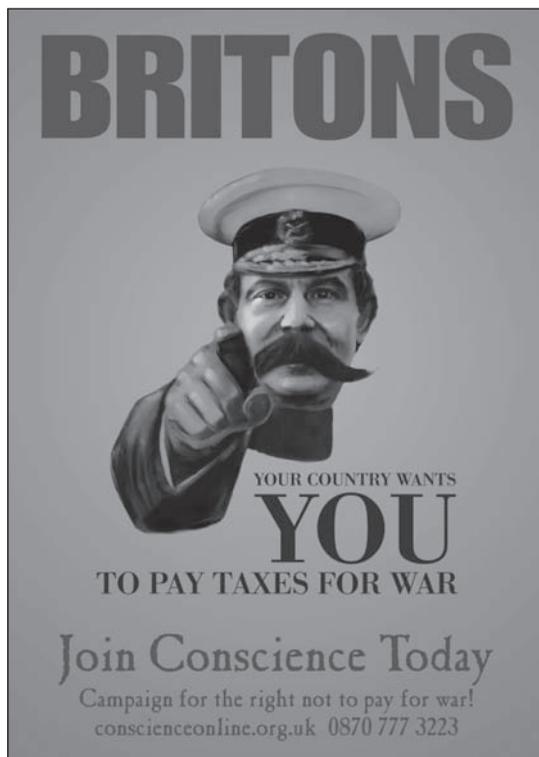
Conscientious objectors in non-combatant roles worked closely with the army in the First World War. Today those with similar beliefs might be willing to pay taxes which contribute to military peacekeeping forces, for example. Although peacekeepers are usually armed and able to return fire if attacked their mission is to protect civilians or keep warring parties apart. They may be involved in arms collection schemes to remove weapons from circulation or take part in accompaniment of peace and human rights activists. Other work financed by 'non-combatant' COs today could include disarmament and demobilisation programmes.

The Tribunals which aimed to test the sincerity of applications for conscientious objector status could be compared to today's Parliament. Some Members of Parliament (but by no means all) are unable or unwilling to understand the motivations and views of those people who object to paying tax for military use or to understand **conscience's** proposals for a change in the law. They see a moral distinction between killing someone and paying for somebody else to kill and believe a system which recognised conscientious objection to military taxation to be unworkable. Because there is no adequate provision for conscientious objectors who object to paying for the military some today feel forced to withhold the military part of their taxes and are taken to court, visited by bailiffs and on rare occasions are jailed.

Conscientious objectors in the First World War came with a variety of views and the same is true of those conscientious objectors now who object to military taxation. Some were (are) unwilling to provide any assistance to the military while others were (are) prepared to work with (finance) the military on non-lethal programmes. 90 years on and there is still no agreement amongst COs on what level of involvement with the military conscientious objectors should have. Conscientious objectors are still united in the view, however, that the taking of life is wrong and that there are better ways of building peace and security than engaging in war.

Military conscription is unlikely to be re-introduced in the UK but if it were a conscience clause of some kind would probably be retained. We want to make conscientious objection in this country meaningful again. **conscience** is calling for a change in the regulations which govern taxation that would enable conscientious objectors to pay the military part of their taxes according to their beliefs, just as provision was made for First World War conscientious objectors to contribute according to their beliefs.

The 90th anniversary of conscription is just around the corner on 2 March, 2006. **conscience** has set itself the target of ending financial conscription in 10 years. We believe that 100 years after the right to conscientious objection to physical military service was recognised in this country it is high time that COs stopped having to pay for the military to kill and hurt people.



Our new website, PeacePays.org, is aimed at a younger audience with a view to encouraging a positive message that peace is possible and that war is not inevitable. We want to engage the mass of people who are 'anti-war' and provide them with ideas and inspiration on how to be 'pro-peace'.

We hope to help people understand that being a conscientious objector is not about simply saying 'no' to the military model of dealing with conflict but is also saying 'yes' to the range of positive alternatives which focus on human rather than national security. Crucially, we aim to raise awareness not only that peaceful alternatives are there but also that they are a more effective and cost-effective of dealing with conflict.

Many people are not aware of the possibilities of dealing with conflict in a non-lethal manner. Most do not know of ways to challenge violent conflict without exacerbating the situation by using armed force and few people know about the conflicts that were resolved before they developed into violence. Although most people are aware of the dire need for reformed international economic structures and for development assistance in many countries to avert hunger and disease, few are aware of the fact that action in this area also leads to less violent conflict.

The website is organised into several sections navigated to via a number of doors. The 'think tank' contains ideas and information on how to address conflict non-violently. In the 'tool-shed' are some of the various mechanisms to implement peacebuilding programmes

while the 'workforce' focuses on the people and organisations who could take this work forward. The 'map room' opens the way to case studies in many parts of the world where violence has been redressed and peaceful initiatives have been successful.

There will also be a campaigning element to PeacePays.Org. Visitors to the site will be encouraged to send a digital photo of themselves holding a message to the government about how they would like the military part of their taxes spent on promoting peaceful resolution of conflict (visitors will also be able to leave written messages) This will act as an online petition to be presented to the Chancellor in 2007.

It will also be possible to write to your MP via the website and to download a campaign pack and a new leaflet. The campaign pack and leaflet will also be available in printed form for those who prefer it.

By using the new website as a key part of **conscience's** campaign to win a change in the law so COs can pay tax in good conscience, we hope to attract a new audience who are more used to campaigning online. At the same time we will ensure that **conscience** members and supporters who are more at home with traditional ways of campaigning are still provided with all they need.

The website will be published in time for the 90th anniversary of the introduction of conscription and conscientious objection on 2nd March and there will also be a launch party.

■ If you would like to be informed of the exact dates please contact Oliver at the **conscience** office.



review

from p8/ human security. The report raises the question whether the US response since 2002 may in fact lead to a rise in violent conflicts, rather than protect people from threats of violence.

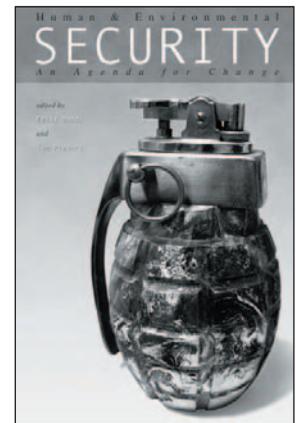
The report notes that most violent conflicts now take place in poor regions of the world, though it does not include poverty as a source of violent conflict. A contributor to Dodds' volume points out that not only poverty but factors such as climate change and disease are also drivers of conflict.

Importantly, the report argues that the more proactive pursuit of peace by international and other bodies since the beginning of the 1990s has made a significant contribution to ending or pre-empting wars. And this is despite the many problems with, for example, UN peacekeeping mandates and the often ambivalent efforts of states and regional bodies to intervene to prevent or end wars. If these efforts were more coherent and better directed, further progress could be made towards a more peaceful world.

The hope, as one author in the Dodds volume comments, is the reform of the UN's role, including a stronger role in promoting peace and security. So far, the UN Millennium Declaration acknowledged the importance of disarmament, peace and security alongside development and human rights, but the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set development targets that were not linked to the declaration's peace and security goals and did not take into account the threat that armed conflict poses to them.

Discouragingly, the Millennium

Review Summit in September 2005, which looked at progress on the MDGs, and was expected to address most of issues raised by the High Level Panel, largely failed to deliver, particularly on peace and security issues. Disagreements between blocs of states and last minute attempts by the US to introduce drastic changes to the outcomes document led to watered down statements. One positive outcome was the endorsement of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, which, if member states show political will, is one of the most promising ideas to combine security and development activities and could contribute to a further lessening of conflict.



Human and Environmental Security: an Agenda for Change, Felix Dodds & Tim Pippard (eds), Earthscan, 2005 isbn 1-84407-214-2 270pp, £19.99

Human Security Report 2005: war and peace in the 21st century, www.humansecurityreport.info

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REVIEW

Sarah Graham-Brown reviews the **2005 Human Security Report and Earthscan's Human and Environmental Security: An Agenda for Change**

'Human security' is a concept widely used in UN and civil society circles, and has now been taken up by some governments. A human security network at government level was founded by Canada and Norway in 1999. But the term means different things to different people. In its narrower definition it focuses on the security of individuals and communities rather than on the 'national' security concerns of states, allowing for the inclusion of internal violent conflict, whether involving the state or non-state actors.

The broader definition of human security looks at other threats to individuals and communities, including poverty, malnutrition, disease, climate change and natural disaster as well as violence. A collection of articles edited by Felix Dodds and Tim Peppard stresses the links between environmental issues, poverty and conflict as elements that threaten human security, themes that

were also addressed in the UN High Level Panel Report on Threats and of December 2004.

The *Human Security Report 2005*, the first of its kind, offers a new view of the state of global human security. Employing the narrower definition of human security, it reaches the conclusion, surprising to many, that violent conflicts have diminished in number and scale rather than increased since the 1940s.

This runs counter to the current perception that the incidence of wars and the threat of unpredicted attacks is increasing, heightened by 9/11 and the response to it: in particular the US focus on the 'war on terror' and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. This perspective is common in the US and Europe though it is not clear how widely this view is shared worldwide.

Furthermore, the perceived strategic interests of individual states can often serve to undermine /to page 7

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