



# conscience update

newsletter of **conscience** THE PEACE TAX CAMPAIGN  
issue 134 winter 2007



**conscience**  
THE PEACE TAX CAMPAIGN

**conscience** update  
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return publicity for  
**conscience**

# welcome

This issue of **conscience** update comes at a busy time for the campaign, with outreach to new members, a surge in interest in the **peacepays.org** website, and a new phase in the Peace and Security Liaison Group's quiet talks with government. We hope you enjoy it!

Nick Wilson  
Campaigns and Communications Officer

## about us

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

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# death says 'war slays, peace pays'

In the run-up to the Autumn sitting of Parliament on the 8th of October, Gordon Brown went head to head with MPs, artists, writers and civil liberties groups in an attempt to ban a demonstration by the Stop the War Coalition in Parliament Square. As the police wavered, the Grim Reaper himself, tired of the waste of war, agreed to attend the demonstration on behalf of **conscience** to spread the word that there are hard-nosed alternatives to war just waiting to be funded by our taxes.

The Reaper and his healthier-looking aide were a huge hit, giving out thousands of fliers about our **peacepays.org** website and attracting great attention from the assembled Press and television, including an interview on Arabic TV. Tourists, commuters, demonstrators, politicians and police: everyone was polite to the Reaper, and no-one dared to refuse a leaflet. He even paid a surprise visit to civil servants, military high-rankers and private defence



businessmen gathered at the Royal United Services Institute in Whitehall.

Within hours there was a huge surge in visits to the website, peaking in the following days as demonstrators distributed their own photos of the Reaper and his placard on post-demo photo-sharing websites.

# rights for objectors – at last!



Great news! In a landmark ruling, the UN Human Rights Committee has once and for all made clear that conscientious objection to military service is a human right.

This historic decision came after two Jehovah's Witnesses were jailed in South Korea, just one country where this is still the fate of those who refuse compulsory military service. The independent Human Rights Committee, which monitors the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, decided that this contravened the objectors' rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The South Korean government was therefore obliged to release the pair, compensate them, and not imprison any more objectors. As conscription looks set to continue in South Korea, the government was also encouraged to develop a parallel form of civilian alternative service.

The judgement marks a leap forward in the Committee's thinking. They had previously let governments use

another part of the Covenant to argue that forced military service is vital 'to protect public safety, order, health, or morals and the fundamental rights and freedoms of others'. But in this case they recognised that in fact, 'respect on the part of the State for conscientious beliefs... is itself an important factor in ensuring cohesive and stable pluralism in society'.

Although the immediate ruling only applies to South Korea, it will smooth the way for those resisting physical conscription and, hopefully, financial conscription all over the world. Governments of all 160 countries that are party to the Covenant will now have to take account of this decision in their future treatment of those who object to the military on the grounds of conscience. This will be particularly important for our own Peace Tax Seven in their upcoming case against financial conscription in the European Court of Human Rights. As a spokesperson for the PT7 says, this is 'good news indeed'.

# buddhism and conscience

By being a member of **conscience** you are already campaigning, as every extra member gives added weight to our argument. But over the Summer many members used special events to take extra action. Among others, Phillip Allen ran a stall at the Northern Ireland Green Living Experience, while Sally Ramsden, a journalist and Buddhist who has worked on international development in the Middle East, ran workshops at the BuddhaField festival. Sally, who is just starting to withhold the part of her tax that goes to war, says, 'Many Buddhists are engaged in peace and justice activities in lots of different ways but were shocked to realise that their tax money goes to directly support war and weapons. People were very interested to hear about the option of withholding tax and the work of **conscience**. They were also very surprised to know about the case the Peace Tax Seven are taking to the European Court of Human Rights to try and get the law changed so we can pay into a peace fund if we want to instead.'



## **BuddhaField forest meditation**

*Akuppa*

If you have a group, network or local community who you think would be interested in **conscience**, call the office for advice and posters, leaflets, persuasive arguments, and members in your area who may be keen to co-run an event. You can also print materials yourself by going to our main website, [conscienceonline.org.uk](http://conscienceonline.org.uk), and clicking on 'new display materials'.

# sharing tactics

In 2008 the twelfth International Conference on War Tax Resistance and Peace Tax Campaigns is coming to the UK, hosted by **conscience** at Manchester University. The conference takes place every second year and is a vital opportunity for activists around the world to look up from their local campaigns, share tactics, and forge international strategy in the struggle to make governments use our taxes for peace.

National campaigns like **conscience** take turns to host the conference. It's our turn in 2008 partly because of our successes in promoting peacebuilding alternatives through the **peacepays.org** website, supporting the Peace and Security Liaison Group's quiet talks with government, and backing the Peace Tax Seven's case against military taxes at the European Court of Human Rights.



The conference will take place from the evening of Friday 5th to 4pm Sunday 7th October 2008. Full board cost is £150 and all **conscience** members are welcome. We are also looking for people in the Manchester area and further afield who can help to organise the practicalities – a great way to deepen your knowledge of the international peace movement. If you want to attend the conference or help to organise it, please contact Robin Brookes on 01380 812 294, [robin@robin-brookes-design.co.uk](mailto:robin@robin-brookes-design.co.uk)

# give an activist a break

Attending the International Conference on War Tax Resistance and Peace Tax Campaigns can be particularly supportive for activists from the global South and East. Many of these brave campaigners struggle not only against paying for war, but also against forcible conscription into their local army, and run serious risk of imprisonment and maltreatment.

With such pressures, it is often impossible for them to fund a trip to the affluent West to recharge their activism. We are therefore appealing to organisations, individuals, faith groups and others to support an



*Viv Quillin, New Internationalist*

activist for part or all of their attendance. This can be a mutually enriching experience. Perhaps you could host your activist before or after the conference, or invite them to speak about their work for peace?

If you are interested, or just want more information, please contact the office as soon as possible.

## resistance around the world

Many of the activists who attend the International Conference are members of the Conscience and Peace Tax International. This global alliance is a way for activists to co-ordinate international action between Conferences. To help with this, activists have recently published

a comprehensive survey of the state of conscientious objection to conscription and war taxes in countries all over the world.

If you want a copy of this fascinating resource, contact the office or visit [www.cpti.ws](http://www.cpti.ws)

# talks in progress

Three years ago, conscience founded the Peace and Security Liaison Group to bring British government officials together with non-governmental organisations who are expert in arms control, disarmament, peacebuilding, and conflict prevention, transformation and resolution. This helps those in power to understand the range of alternatives to war, and gives extra weight to our demand to have our taxes put towards these peaceful solutions.

Last time, we reported that the Group had won major funding to run a two-year programme of round table meetings with officials. After a pause for the change in Prime Minister, these are now under way.

Sarah Graham-Brown, who coordinates the Group from her desk at [conscience](#), says ‘Thanks to the efforts of the last three years, we are now actively engaging with officials from several government

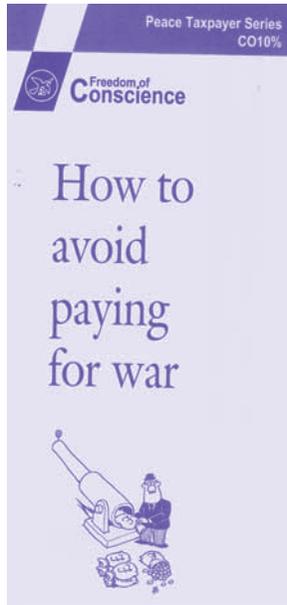
departments, who are beginning to consult us on their responses to conflict. We have also been able to create an online forum where members of the Group can pool their knowledge of the government structures and policies on conflict prevention, peacebuilding and national security.’



Upcoming round tables will focus on the meaning of conflict prevention, the use of incentives and sanctions in peace processes, community involvement in peacebuilding, and health and conflict. Another key theme will be: What is national security and how can the UK achieve it?

# assess yourself !

Many thanks to everyone who sent off our spoof Peace Tax Return 'How to Avoid Paying for War' earlier this year. Due to the unprecedented response, the Treasury received as many of these protests in one month as they did in the whole of 2006. The authorities do notice these actions, and many of you received official replies that noted the size of the protest. Special thanks to everyone who also encouraged non-members to fill out a Peace Tax Return. We hope to write to all those friends and acquaintances to invite them to become members. As promised, one of those who sent off a Peace Tax Return was picked at random to receive the book by the former head of the UK nuclear squadron, now a member of CND, which was reviewed in the last newsletter. Congratulations to Dave Midgley of Macclesfield.



With this newsletter we enclose a Peace Tax Return for the 2007 tax year. Taxpayer or not, employed or self-employed, please take a moment to complete Part A and send it to the Paymaster General (details on the form) to remind the powers that be that you would still prefer taxes to be spent on peacebuilding, not war. If you are self-

employed and want to actively withhold the military part of your taxes, complete Part B and send it with your next official tax return. If you want advice on this, please call us. Whatever part you fill in, send us the Freepost slip from the foot of the leaflet. On 31 January (official tax deadline day), we will draw out one slip and send that person a copy of CND Chairperson Kate Hudson's absorbing book 'Now More than Ever – The Story of a Peace Movement'.

# the magnificent seven

**conscience** constantly gives advice and moral support to ‘war tax resisters’ – people from all walks of life who protest against war by withholding the part of their tax that goes to the military. The State’s attempts to make them pay creates lots of chances to make the case for funding real, non-military security instead.



Three years ago, **conscience** went a step further, gathering together seven resisters who decided to extend their personal stance with a legal counter-attack on the insistence that all UK taxpayers must pay for the military – even if they see it as a cause of conflict, rather than part of the solution. This group, the Peace Tax Seven, are now probably the highest profile war tax resisters in the world.

In short, the Seven asked UK judges to review the law that forces all taxpayers to pay for war regardless of

their conscience. Judges refused a review three times in a row. Yet by appealing against each refusal, the Seven ensured that the entire legal argument for a peacebuilding alternative to military taxation was heard in a UK court for the first time.

After listening, the judges explicitly said that there was substance to the

Seven’s argument. However, they refused to rule on it, and denied permission to appeal to the House of Lords. This effectively directed the Seven to go to the European Court in Strasbourg, which judges cases under the European Convention on Human Rights. The UK Human Rights Act allows British judges to rule on such cases here, but they seemed to prefer that the Seven’s argument should be decided at European level, rather than make a ruling that would put Britain out of step with other EU countries.

The Seven's case is now in the queue at the European Court, where we expect it to be examined in writing in a few months. This may result in a full hearing. The written case is well constructed, with supporting statements by Quakers, Anglicans and Buddhists, and the Seven also have barristers expert in European Human Rights law, including Kier Starmer QC, who helped the McLibel Two prepare their defence of the action brought against them for criticising fast food giant McDonalds.

While we wait for the Seven's case to be heard, you can read more on their own website [peacetaxseven.com](http://peacetaxseven.com). Don't miss their well thought through responses to pro-military critics on the online 'forum'.

Meanwhile, their case is inspiring war tax resisters around the world. In the USA, resisters are now preparing to launch a similar case with ten or so people representing different states, generations, beliefs and ways of life. US war tax resistance has been around since the War of Independence and there are currently about 8,000 resisters, many of whom have put the military part of their taxes into

legally binding funds until their government can assure them it will not be used for war. Many more keep their income below taxable levels to avoid paying for the military. In a parallel move, there is also a Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Bill before Congress, supported by New York and Providence City Councils, 200 religious and political organisations and 45 congressmen. We'll keep you informed!

## our number's up

You might have noticed that our 0870 number is disappearing from our publications. This is because new charges make the number uneconomic. From now on, please use our previous number, 020 7561 1061.

## conscience labels

Our pads of 100 envelope reuse labels are a great way to save resources while promoting **conscience**. They are free from the office but we welcome donations towards the £3 cost of printing and postage.

# thank you kiri

At the end of this year Kiri Smith steps down from the **conscience** Executive Committee. Kiri first came to **conscience** as a Quaker Peaceworker in 1993, and has since completed two stints of several years on the voluntary Committee, which oversees all aspects of the campaign.

We will miss Kiri's energy as she goes on to other activism. But on the bright side, her departure gives someone else the chance to get involved. Kiri says: 'It has been a privilege to serve



on the Executive, to witness the growth of the campaign, and to have a hand in shaping it. I really

recommend it to anyone who wants to deepen their involvement in peace work.'

If you are interested, contact Robin Brookes for an application form: 01380 812 294, [robin@robin-brookes-design.co.uk](mailto:robin@robin-brookes-design.co.uk). The

Committee meets in London on four Saturdays each year, with travel reimbursed.

## cydwybod!

That's **conscience**, in Welsh! As part of our work with the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly we would like some Welsh members to distribute our special Welsh language Peace Tax Return (Ffurflen Dreth Heddwch) in

offices, shops, post offices, pubs, clubs, churches, eistedfodds... These really grab the Treasury's attention, and are a good way to publicise the campaign in your community, especially if you are on hand to talk about them. Give us a call!

## christmas cards with a conscience

- proceeds to **conscience**
- remounted pictures from old cards
- £3.50 for 4, includes envelopes and p&p
- categories: assorted, religious, children, santa, snowmen, decorative, angels, animals, christmas trees, snow scenes, birds, humorous, carols, doves, old masters

**Orders by 10 December** to 16 North Cottages, Trumpington Road, Cambridge CB2 8EZ; tel: 01223 840 882. Enclose your name and address, 1st and 2nd choice of category, and a cheque payable to Ursula Stubbings.

## don't miss out

Many thanks to everyone who responded to our July appeal. We raise more than ten per cent of the money needed to run the campaign through our two annual appeals, so every donation is much appreciated. But appeals are about more than money – they are also a chance to let you know about recent



developments in between issues of **conscience** update. Especially if you don't get the **conscience** email bulletin. So, if you have opted out of one or both appeals, please consider contacting the office to opt back in – there is no obligation to donate, and it will help us to keep you informed.

## let us send you an email

More and more **conscience** members are signing up for our regular email bulletins. These include links and tips to help you put the case for peace, and can be emailed on to your acquaintances. If you want to subscribe, or have changed your email address, send an email to [outreach@conscienceonline.org.uk](mailto:outreach@conscienceonline.org.uk).

# how we spent your money last year

**conscience** is not a charity, but we still produce transparent public accounts that meet charity law. You can get the full accounts from the office, but here is a summary.

## membership and fundraising

The majority of our income comes from members, both through donations to appeals and member subscriptions (currently 2,415). We are also grateful for annual core funding from Quaker Peace and Social Witness. In addition, in 2006/07 the Peace and Security Liaison Group received repeat funding from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, plus new backing from the Allan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust and the Polden-Puckham Charitable Foundation.

## staff

**Paula Hollings** Office Co-ordinator (from March 06)

**Sarah Graham-Brown** Peace and Security Liaison Group Networking

**Oliver Haslam** Campaigns and Parliamentary Officer (to July 06)

**Symon Hill** Campaigns and Parliamentary Officer (July 06 to April 07)

**Nick Wilson** Communications and Fundraising Officer (from March 06), Campaigns and Communications Officer, and Fundraising Officer (from October 07)

Past staff remain close: Oliver Haslam as web designer to the peace movement, Symon Hill as Press Officer at Campaign Against the Arms Trade, and former Development Officer Jon Nott as fundraiser for CND.

## volunteers

Pauline Atkins, Helen Dymond, Nikki Packham, Caroline Hume, Alison Turner, Jose Rijnaard, Jane

Power, Alun Morinan and Jez Smith all helped in the office. Thank you.

## executive committee

The Committee consists of Sinead Allan, Robin Brookes, Monica Frisch, Mary Lou Leavitt, Roy Prockter, Phil Rimmer, Adam Simon

and Kiri Smith (representative of Quaker Peace and Social Witness to November 2007). In May 2007 they were joined by Simon Heywood, who is a member of the Peace Tax Seven and was a Quaker Peacemaker with **conscience** in 2005, developing the **peacepays.org** website.

## statement of financial activities for the year ending 31.12.06

	2006 unrestricted £	2006 restricted £	2006 total £	2005 total £
<b>incoming resources</b>				
donations and legacies	54,361	-	54,361	54,310
grants	3,500	47,400	50,900	36,360
interest receivable	250	-	250	217
sundry	267	2,100	2,367	1,486
<b>total incoming resources</b>	<b>58,378</b>	<b>49,500</b>	<b>107,878</b>	<b>92,373</b>
<b>outgoing resources</b>				
membership support	3,172	7,604	10,776	8,097
office costs	2,175	1,341	3,516	2,267
premises costs	2,929	1,000	3,929	3,729
staffing costs	39,038	20,672	59,710	49,562
<i>costs in furtherance of objects</i>	<i>47,314</i>	<i>30,617</i>	<i>77,931</i>	<i>63,655</i>
fundraising costs	602	-	602	535
membership recruitment	449	17	466	5,720
governance costs	8,391	638	9,029	13,669
<b>total outgoing resources</b>	<b>56,756</b>	<b>31,272</b>	<b>88,028</b>	<b>83,579</b>
surplus/(deficit)	1,622	18,228	19,850	8,794
total funds brought forward	19,435	7,858	27,293	18,499
<b>total funds carried forward</b>	<b>21,057</b>	<b>26,086</b>	<b>47,143</b>	<b>27,293</b>

These figures will be reformatted to meet the requirements of SORP 2005, then examined.

# join **conscience** today

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

please PRINT your details below

first name/s \_\_\_\_\_ last name/s \_\_\_\_\_

address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ postcode \_\_\_\_\_

telephone \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

**suggested annual membership donation** £1 per £1,000 of annual income up to £15,000, plus £2 per £1,000 of annual income over £15,000

I enclose a cheque for £\_\_\_\_\_ (payable to **conscience**)

**help us plan ahead** – instead of writing a cheque, you could join with a standing order, which saves us time and money for campaigning. just £3 a month can make a huge difference. if you give £5 a month or more, we'll also send you a free copy of Peretz Kidron's *Refusenik! Israel's Soldiers of Conscience*

## standing order

please PRINT your details below

name of bank \_\_\_\_\_ address of bank \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ postcode \_\_\_\_\_

account number 

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 sort code 

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please pay £10  £5  £3  other £\_\_\_\_\_ monthly until further notice, starting on \_\_\_\_\_ payable to **conscience** a/c 50452200 s/c 08-90-37,

Co-op Bank, Wood Green, London

please cancel any existing standing orders to **conscience**/the peace tax campaign

signature 

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date 

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

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we treat all your information in confidence and do not share it with other organisations or individuals.

