



conscience update

hot news from **conscience** THE PEACE TAX CAMPAIGN
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conscience
THE PEACE TAX CAMPAIGN

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welcome

This **conscience update** comes after a series of highs. Last time, we told how our former campaigner Symon Hill was hailed by *The Independent* as one of their Heroes of 2007. Soon after that, our current campaigner Nick Wilson won a prestigious national campaigning award. And this Autumn we hosted an inspiring meeting of our allies from around the globe under the catchy banner Taxes for Peace not War. In this issue we also look at how legacies boost the campaign, gear up for our annual Peace Tax Return action, and introduce our dynamic board of members, who answer to you.

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.

1b Waterlow Road, London N19 5NJ

t 020 7561 1061 **f** 020 7281 6508

www.conscienceonline.org.uk

www.peacepays.org.uk

Nick Wilson (campaigns and communications)
outreach@conscienceonline.org.uk

Paula Hollings (office coordinator)
coordinate@conscienceonline.org.uk

Sarah Graham Brown (peace and security liaison group)
projects@conscienceonline.org.uk

conscience wins campaign award

Some of you already know that soon after the last issue of **conscience update** our campaigner Nick Wilson was presented with a campaign honour by the Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street. The prize is in memory of legendary activist Sheila McKechnie, who first campaigned against Gordon Brown when they were at university together.

To win it, Nick had to enthuse a tough panel of veteran campaigners led by former Middle East hostage Terry Waite. With expert advice on strategy and media and the chance to access the defence minister, this award is a major boost for **conscience**.

Nick's long track record of peace work helped him win. Including co-leading a pioneering peacebuilding project in a destroyed and divided frontline town during the Balkan wars. But he says 'the judges were really won over by the potential to redouble our work under the banner Taxes for Peace not War. This was



Nick and Mr Brown *SMF*

the title of the recent international conference hosted by **conscience** and is widely used by our allies abroad. Because it makes crystal clear that as well as the right not to pay for war we want our taxes to go towards hard-nosed peacebuilding alternatives that bring real peace and justice for all.'

'This is important because otherwise it's all too easy for the public, politicians and officials to think we just want the right not to pay for



conscience calls at Number Ten

war for the select few who can prove their conscientious objection – so that their consciences can be clean while the endless, hopeless business of war goes on as usual, paid for by most people. And simply insisting on your own right not to pay for war doesn't answer the question that I am asked daily – if everyone refused to pay for the military, how would we deal with conflict and insecurity? As a slogan, Taxes for Peace not War is great because it makes clear from the outset that we have an answer to that question. So instead of just talking about why I should be allowed not to pay for war, we can inform people about the many sustainable, ready-to-go, peaceful solutions to global instability that all taxpayers could

and should be paying for. Solutions that people want to back – once they know about them.'

Since the award ceremony, at which Mr Brown received plenty of stiff feedback, including from one campaigner who superglued himself to the PM, the global banking crisis has made Taxes for Peace not War even more relevant. Says Nick: 'With the prevailing world order sliding into recession, people of all political hues, few of them traditional pacifists, are questioning a set-up in which politicians blow our hard-earned taxes on battering down the symptoms of conflict in defence of corrupt structures, while failing to invest in joined-up, proactive peacebuilding to systematically address the root causes of instability. As Terry Waite said in my grilling for the prize, in these times "you could get a lot of people behind a banner of Taxes for Peace not War", especially in the atmosphere of change created by Obama's election.

To find out more about the award, and to see an interview with Nick at Number Ten, go to www.sheilamckechnie.org, click 'Awards 08' and scroll down to 'Award Winners 2008'.

taxes for peace not war



Bill Glassmire of conscience
Friedrich Heilmann

This September was a highpoint for **conscience** as we hosted the Taxes for Peace not War international conference. Fifty-six activists from our allied campaigns in 14 countries spent three days in Manchester to share experience and plot the path ahead. This was only the second time in 20 years that the conference, which is self-financing, has been hosted by **conscience**. And it was a great chance for our members to mix with campaigners from as far apart as Nepal and Norway, Colombia and Canada, or Ukraine and Japan.



Jannik Augsberg of the Danish Peace Tax Fund *Ed Hedemann*

The name of the conference made plain exactly what we want. Robin Brookes, a **conscience** member and one of the Peace Tax Seven, co-organised the weekend. He says ‘We’re not talking about appeasing our own conscience... we want the money spent on peace’.

Activists around the globe face very different obstacles. Julian Ovalle of Collective Action of Conscientious Objectors described how physical conscription is still the foremost problem in Colombia, overshadowing the issue of taxation for war. Other campaigners from countries where conscription is a



The organisers – Paula Hollings of [conscience](#) and Robin Brookes of the Peace Tax Seven *Ed Hedemann*

thing of the past face a hangover of militarism, with citizens paying for wars from which they are insulated, in the mistaken belief that it is the only way to get security.

[conscience](#) activists were keen to show that it is possible to remedy this hangover by giving people and politicians information about tried-and-tested peacebuilding alternatives to war. And as ex-[conscience](#) campaigner Oliver Haslam said in preparation for the conference, even if the right not to pay for war is won, ‘the general public will still go on paying for war until they are convinced by a Taxes for Peace not War campaign that killing people is

wrong’ – which is why our [peacepays.org](#) website, co-created by Oli, is so important.

Veteran [conscience](#) member Olive Powell was at the conference. With long experience of campaigns and conferences, she says ‘I was surprised – and delighted – to find the British contingent ahead in thinking for once’, and promptly upped her donation!

If you would like a copy of the overall report from the conference, please contact Paula Hollings on 0207 561 1061 or coordinate@conscienceonline.org.uk

with one voice

Nick Wilson – **conscience** campaigner

It is a military cliché that the best laid plans never survive first contact with the enemy. And as we see in the current economic crisis, though politicians and civil servants strive to plan ahead, government policy is often formed in the chaos of fire-fighting.

This sounds disheartening. But it is also a chance for those who can present clear solutions to policy makers just when they need them. And if those of us working for a holistic, just and therefore sustainable peace want to succeed, we have to make sure that when the panic is about global insecurity we are ready with solutions that address root causes. Or we can hardly complain when leaders revert to old thinking and keep on bashing the symptoms of conflict with ever greater firepower.

Forged in the crisis of 9/11, the War on Terror, as the name suggests, is a war on the symptoms of conflict, not



Paul Rogers at our recent conference *Ed Hedemann*

the causes. And in the last few years, conflict analysts at the Oxford Research Group, one of the UK's top think-tanks, have made clear that the obsession with terrorism has pulled attention away from four underlying, interlinked causes of current and future insecurity: climate change, increasing competition for resources, global militarisation, and marginalisation of the majority world (meaning both poor countries and the poor in rich countries).

At the Taxes for Peace not War conference reviewed on page 5, Professor Paul Rogers, a member of the Oxford Research Group and Bradford University Peace Studies, stressed that this leaves us in a risky position. ‘Unless urgent action is taken in the next five to ten years, it will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to avoid a highly unstable global system by the middle years of the century.’

This makes it vital that those who advocate peace policies – whether to President Obama or Gordon Brown – speak with one voice. A view echoed in *An Open Letter to Peacebuilders*, written earlier this year by Lada Zimina and Simon Fisher, the founder of Responding to Conflict, which has provided conflict transformation training for over 1,800 people from war-torn areas. Amongst other things, the *Open Letter* called for campaigners and on-the-ground peacebuilders around the world to look up from their work and create an understandable shared manifesto of ‘policies founded on co-operation, not domination’, to catch those fleeting moments when the public and politicians realise that old thinking is making matters worse, and say ‘Okay. What can we do

differently?’ In the case of **conscience** this means not just objecting to paying for war but having a clear focus on where we want our taxes to go.

The Peace and Security Liaison Group set up by **conscience** in 2004 is a step in this direction. This year alone, it brought diverse British organisations that work on peace and security together for five round table meetings with UK government officials, covering how the government can contribute to preventing conflict, ways to support efforts to resolve conflicts peacefully, and the hard lessons learnt from efforts to rebuild war-torn societies. Sarah Graham Brown, who coordinates the Group from her desk at **conscience**, says ‘The aim is to encourage a greater investment of funds and effort in non-military ways to deal with violent conflict, as the best long-term contribution to Britain’s security.’

For more on this topic see www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk for their excellent book *Beyond Terror: The Truth About the Real Threats to Our World. The Open Letter to Peacebuilders* can be found at www.lettertopeacebuilders.ning.com

contempt of conscience

Many of you know that since 2004 the Peace Tax Seven, all of them members of **conscience**, have been taking their refusal to pay for the military to its logical conclusion. After working up through the UK courts they are now awaiting a hearing at the European Court in Strasbourg. At every step they have stressed their positive vision of a world where taxes pay for work that nurtures real security and justice, instead of being wasted on endless war. Work that is already proving itself in conflicts all over the world yet is still grossly underfunded. For more about the Seven, see www.peacetaxseven.com

Joe Jenkins, one of the Seven and a theology teacher and film-maker, made a short film about their protest which has now become a 50 minute documentary, *Contempt of Conscience*. It premiered at this year's Milan Film Festival and is featured in the Beyond TV international film festival (www.beyondtvfestival.org). You can see a preview of the film online at www.booserver.com/

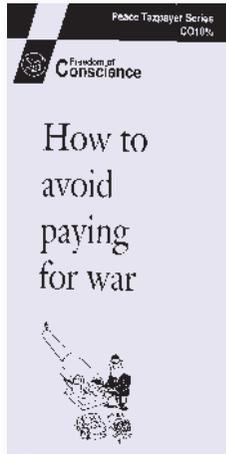
projects.php?ProjectID=3167. If you want to have a showing in your area call Carina Wilson at Clarity Productions, 0141 221 8821, www.producingclarity.com, and if you want a speaker to go with it contact Robin Brookes, another of the Peace Tax Seven, on 01380 812 294, info@peacetaxseven.com.

harry patch

We have had lots of positive feedback about the life story of Harry Patch, the last veteran of the Great War. Many of you were moved by the way in which Harry, without the advantage of education or political awareness, tried to resist total war even while serving as a machine gunner at Passchendaele. Catherine Jeffrey of London and Jack and Ann Snowden of Hull were picked at random to receive copies of Harry's book, *The Last Fighting Tommy*. Jack and Ann were particularly pleased, as they have been members of **conscience** for over 20 years!

many happy tax returns

Dark evenings, tinsel in the shops, yes – it's time to fill out your **conscience** spoof Peace Tax Return! Enclosed you will find the leaflet for the tax year that ended in April 2008, for which the government is now collecting self-employed taxes.



However, this action is not just for the self-employed. As of October we have a new Paymaster General, Tessa Jowell MP. Taxpayer or not, employed or self-employed, child or pensioner, you can use the Peace Tax Return to let her know that you want our taxes to support efforts that bring lasting peace and justice, not more futile war. Just fill out Part A and send it to her (details on the form).

If you are self-employed and want to actively withhold the military part of your taxes (about 10% of the

whole), complete Part B and send it in with your official tax return. You can get an online version from our website www.conscienceonline.org.uk. If you want advice on this, just call us!

Whether you send part A or B, let us know by sending back the Freepost slip at the foot of the leaflet. On 31 January we will draw out one slip to receive *Guantanamo*, a carefully researched novel written from the point of view of a young German Muslim caught up in the War on Terror.

send us your email

Using email to administer your membership saves money on phone calls and postage. If you haven't yet given us your email address, please send it and your name to outreach@conscienceonline.org.uk. We promise not to besiege you with messages or pass on your details.

leave a legacy of peace

Stephen Thomas is Director of the Welsh Institute for International Affairs and a long time **conscience** member. A few years ago he decided to take this commitment further. He says: 'Much though we strive, and would like to believe otherwise, the campaign's goal may well not be achieved in my lifetime. It is to acknowledge this that I have left a modest legacy to the campaign in my Will.' Such bequests are hugely important. As our annual accounts show, our costs are kept low. So a sudden injection of funds has a big effect, allowing us to create a living memorial with lasting impact, such as our internet campaign peacepays.org.

A legacy can also help you avoid leaving a windfall for the military. Nothing is certain but death and taxes, and Inheritance Tax links the two. This year, anyone who leaves assets over £312,000 to anyone except their legal partner has to pay 40% Inheritance Tax. A tenth of which goes straight to war. And even with the credit crunch, many

average UK houses are now worth well over £300,000. However, although the work of **conscience** is considered political, our research and education work is charitable. So whatever you leave to the campaign won't be taxed and won't go to war. And the more you leave to **conscience**, the more chance that the rest of your assets will fall below the Inheritance Tax threshold.

If you already have a Will and want to leave **conscience** a fixed sum, fill out the Codicil overleaf, cut it out and place it with your Will. However, fixed sums decline in value as inflation rises. So you may want to leave the campaign a percentage of your estate, a named asset such as land or property, or whatever is left after other bequests. Ask your solicitor for advice or call us. Whatever you do, please let us know if you plan to remember **conscience** in this way. Not only are we very grateful, but it helps us to plan ahead.

Thank you.

codicil to add conscience to an existing will

Simply fill this in and place it with your existing Will, but do not attach it to it.

I (your full name) _____

of (your full address) _____

_____ Postcode _____

declare this to be a (first, second, etc) _____ Codicil to my

existing Will, dated the (date of your Will, in words) _____

(date) day of _____ (month) Two thousand and _____ (year).

In addition to any legacies given by me by my said Will, I give, free of taxes, to the Lansbury House Trust Fund, or its successor in title, registered charity number 306139, 5 Caledonian Rd, NI 9DX, www.lansburyhouse.org.uk, for research and education into conscientious objection to military taxation by **conscience** – The Peace Tax Campaign, or its successor in title, of 1b Waterlow Rd, London N19 5NJ, www.conscienceonline.org.uk, the sum (in words first, then in figures) of _____ pounds, £ _____, and I direct that a receipt of the Treasurer or other authorised officer for the time being of the Charity shall be a full and sufficient discharge to my executors for the said gift. In all other respects I confirm my said Will and any previous Codicils thereto.

In Witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand this (today's date, in words) _____

(date) day of _____ (month) Two thousand and _____ (year).

Signed by the said (your full name) _____ as a codicil to his/her (delete as appropriate) last Will, in our joint presence and by us in his/her presence.

Your signature _____

First witness's signature

First witness's signature

Name _____

Name _____

Address _____

Address _____

Occupation _____

Occupation _____

walk the talk and help run conscience

conscience is overseen by a voluntary executive committee. Together with the staff they decide how your money is spent, so each year we ask you to approve them. Please take a moment to read their biographies, then answer the questions at the end and return that slip. One response will be picked out to receive the inspirational book *Unarmed Heroes*. Compiled by our close allies Peace Direct, it is packed with testimonies from brave peacebuilders doing ground-breaking work to bring sustainable peace in conflicts around the world. Exactly the sort of underfunded solutions that we want to support with our taxes.

To mix new energy and continuity, executive committee members serve three year terms with no bar on repeat service. The proposed 2009 committee is:

year one of three: Susan Turnbull, Christopher Sykesud, Bill Glassmire.

year two: Monica Frisch, Roy Prockter, Robin Brookes.



Walk the talk – join the EC!

year three: Mary Lou Leavitt, Phil Rimmer, Simon Heywood.

Robin Brookes joined **conscience** in 1993 and the committee in 2005. A peace campaigner since 1980, he has been withholding the military part of his taxes since 2003, currently as one of the Peace Tax Seven. A freelance designer of toys and other products, he lives in Wiltshire with his wife and three cats.

Monica Frisch has been on the committee since 1991. Active in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament for many years, she is Treasurer of **conscience** and Network for Peace

and a former war tax resister. Her interests include publishing, copy-editing, botany and the environment.

Bill Glassmire moved to England from Oregon in 2004, joined **conscience** in 2006 and the committee in 2008. He has been resisting US war tax since the early 90s, and has served on the Administrative Committee of our US allies, the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee. In the first Gulf War he was arrested for blocking the entrance to a US military recruiting office. And soon after September 11 2001 he and other anti-war activists began a daily vigil at the courthouse in Corvallis, Oregon, which still continues. He now lives in Cornwall with his wife Leslie, who worked several years with a women's weaving co-operative in Guatemala, and their dog Max.

Simon Heywood teaches creative writing at the University of Derby and has been on the committee since 2007. He is a member of the Peace Tax Seven and was a Quaker Peacemaker with **conscience** in 2005, developing the **peacepays.org** website.

Mary Lou Leavitt has been on the committee since 2002. A lifelong Quaker, originally from the USA, she has lived in Britain since 1976 and has an MA in Peace Studies from the University of Bradford. She worked for Quaker Peace and Service for 15 years and until recently was Co-Director of Responding to Conflict, which provides conflict transformation training to people from areas of conflict.

Roy Prockter has been on the committee since 2000. A Quaker, self-employed charity finance consultant and chartered management accountant, he was a war tax resister in 1993 and 2003 and now uses legal means to keep his income below the tax threshold. Roy is also Secretary and Treasurer of the Lansbury House Trust Fund which funds peace work, finance contractor to Quaker magazine *The Friend*, a trustee at Peace News and the Trust for Research and Education on the Arms Trade, and is one of the Peace Tax Seven.

Phil Rimmer worked for **conscience** from 1988 to 1998 and has since served two periods on the committee. He says 'Our work is important because it offers solutions

rather than simply protest'. Active in party politics since his teens, Phil is Business Manager at a national health charity and is also on the executive committee of Tranmere and Wirral Football Supporters' Trust.

Dr Christopher Sykesud joined **conscience** in 2002 and the committee in 2008. A scientist, he has worked in research and development in industry and universities, taking care to avoid activities which he considers unethical. He is now head of department at a boys' school. Christopher has been involved in

the peace movement for many years, most recently over the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. He says 'Never has there been such folly. I simply wish not to pay for war, and to do something about it.'

Susan Turnbull joined **conscience** in 2003 and the committee in 2008. An economist, she has been a European Consultant with Arthur Andersen and a tutor at the Open University. She has six children, eight grandchildren, and recently stood as a local councillor for the Green Party in Oxfordshire, attracting a third of the vote.



Do you approve these people for the executive committee 2009? **yes** **no**

Your name and any comments:

The committee meets in London on four Saturdays a year. Anyone can serve after a simple recruitment process and we reimburse travel from anywhere in the UK.

If you want to observe the committee with a view to joining it, please tick

Please detach this slip and return it using the enclosed pre-gummed freepost label. Thank you!

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*

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