



conscience update

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The Taxes for Peace Bill Debated in Parliament

Ruth Cadbury MP leads call for a radical new vision of conscientious objection

The role of the radical is to say the unsayable and challenge the status quo. The **conscience** campaign has always been part of a radical movement, raising the uncomfortable truth that everyone who pays for war is complicit in it.

On the July 16th July this was raised in the Westminster Parliament discussed this and a solution proposed - The Taxes for Peace Bill. Ruth Cadbury brought forward this legislation just one day after the House voted to renew Trident nuclear weapons programme - a poignant reminder for MPs of the expense and destructive capability of our military forces.

Ruth powerfully put forward the case for conscientious objection to military taxation by speaking of the history of the Military Service Act 1916 when the United Kingdom led the world in bringing the first right of conscientious objection for its citizens.

Ruth also spoke of her family's experience in being part of the Friends Ambulance Service and undertaking alternative service. Ruth drew a direct parallel between the Conscientious objectors (COs) of World War One and modern day financial COs quoting one of our statements of conscience from **conscience** supporter Diana Warner:

"As a GP I work every day for the health and well-being of my patients, and as a taxpayer, I must do the same for the security of people in the UK and elsewhere. I insist on the right as a Conscientious Objector for my taxes to be used to forge peace and not to be used on the mechanisms of war."



Ruth Cadbury MP with the Conscience team

It was an argument rarely heard in the House of the Commons and we are delighted, that MPs whether they supported our bill or not, will now consider the view of the millions of UK citizens that consider themselves conscientious objectors.



Ruth Cadbury MP with Conscience staff in Parliament

As Ruth Cadbury, reflecting on the wartime history of COs, put it in the Westminster debating chamber: *“If we can recognise conscientious objection in wartime, why not in peacetime?”*

By bringing together and sharing her experiences as a Quaker, peace activist, your statements of conscience, brought a new vision of conscientious objection to Parliament - So we were absolutely thrilled to see the bill pass the first reading: a landmark achievement for the **conscience** campaign.

Thanks to the support of our members for the first time in 17 years the Westminster considered that there is a different way in which we could approach foreign policy. The Bill is scheduled for a second reading on the 9th December 2016.

Unfortunately due to a packed Parliamentary timetable and lack of support from the government it is unlikely the Bill will be given time in Westminster for a second reading.

Whilst this is no doubt disappointing, **conscience** will continue to work to change the political landscape in order to pass the Taxes for Peace bill at a future date. This campaign has enabled to gain support from the Green Party, the Scottish Nationalist Party and the Labour Party. Supporters of **conscience** are now leaders of Her Majesty's Opposition and Shadow Chancellor.

We are slowly building a movement for change and will continue to work in Westminster to promote a more peaceful politics. Conscientious objectors took many years to have their rights recognised - and this bill took a significant step towards achieving the right to pay for peace, and reject war.

Is military spending an issue of faith?

conscience brought together representatives of the faith community to discuss one of the big issues of the day - is military spending an issue of faith? We were joined by representatives of the Religious Society of Friends, Association of British Muslims, Anabaptist Network and Pax Christ (A Catholic Peace Group) to discuss this and many other issues surrounding conflict and faith.

Held at Friends House in London, our speakers brought together a wealth of experience both in religious practice, but also the reality of peacebuilding across the world.

Chris Venables as well as being a Quaker previously worked as a Programme Manager for the organisation MedAct which for 20 years has been educating, analysing and campaigning for global health on issues related to conflict, poverty and the environment. MedAct has been at the forefront of mobilising the health community in fighting for economic justice and peace and security concerns.

Micheal Nimz of the Anabaptist Network laid out the Mennonite tradition. His journey began in the US Marine Corps where he won a scholarship for university. In his second year, Michael came to the understanding that he was a pacifist and could no longer continue on that path. Michael resigned his position and gave up the scholarship.

Michael attended seminary in his 40s and found his way into the Anabaptist tradition while he studied. Michael became a pastor of a Mennonite Church in rural Alberta, Canada. More recently, Michael has been working with the Anabaptist Network in the UK, in connection with Mennonite Church of Canada.

Pat Gaffney has been General Secretary of Pax Christi, the International Catholic Movement for Peace since 1990. Her work as General Secretary involves lobbying and campaigning within the church and political networks on peace and security issues. Pat is also a practitioner of active non-violence. Since 1986 she has been involved in non-violent protests against the arms trade and the Government's nuclear weapons program.



Aneeqa Malik from the Association of British Muslims spoke about Islamic contributions to peacemaking across the world

Aneeqa Malik represented the Association of British Muslims (AoBM) the oldest organisation of its kind in the UK, established in 1889 as The English Islamic Association by William Henry Quilliam, a Liverpool solicitor. Since 2010 the AoBM has worked with Muslims across the UK to develop the British Muslim community, encourage dialogue, promote education and bring about community cohesion.



An audience member contributes to our inter-faith discussion evening

Aneeqa spoke about how peacemaking must be considered a priority for all Muslims as war is becoming one of the biggest problems across the Islamic world. She spoke of the fact that Muslims are far more likely to be peacebuilding in conflict zones than they are to be committing acts of violence.

The wide-ranging discussion focused a huge number of issues and included:

- History of different faith views on military spending
- How individuals can contribute to peace work
- How faith is increasingly being used to justify war, rather than condemn it
- How military spending damages inter-faith relations
- How faith communities can work together to promote peace

The Quaker and Mennonite speakers reminded our audience that military spending is still a profound issue of conscientious objection in their communities with individuals choosing to withhold their taxes rather than participate in financial conscription.

We would like to thank everyone who came along to our event. In times when groups are becoming increasingly marginalised both in the UK and abroad it's important that we bring different communities together to talk about issues that can divide us. It was nice to see such support for the Peace Tax Bill from different parts of the faith community

In November we'll be kick starting our new series of events in Friends House in Euston, London focusing on the wider societal cost of war in the 21st century.

Conscience in the Media

Pacifists can opt out of war. So why can't their taxes do the same?

Giles Fraser



A 1916 act recognised the right of individuals to refuse to fight; Ruth Cadbury's bill would recognise our right to opt out of paying for war with our taxes

Giles Fraser wrote about **conscience's** Taxes for Peace Bill in The Guardian. He highlights the fact that the timing of the bill is symbolic, as well as overdue; the century-old Military Service Act needs updating to reflect the reality of modern warfare.

When we have no option to avoid paying for munitions and the military with our taxes, we are all financially conscripted. As Giles points out, 'for pacifists, taxation for the technology of war is just another version of conscription. It's just killing by proxy.'

The full Op-Ed can be found here:
www.conscienceonline.org.uk/150a

conscience appeared as a guest on Share Radio discussing the Taxes for Peace Bill. The presenter, Marc Shoffman, discussed with Ruth Cadbury MP, Symon Hill of the Peace Pledge Union and Shaughan Dolan, **conscience's** Campaign Manager, why the renewal of the Trident nuclear weapons programme makes the Bill more relevant and necessary than ever.

The full interview can be found here:
www.conscienceonline.org.uk/150b

Independent Catholic News, Red Pepper Magazine, and Ekklesia have all covered the reading of the Taxes for Peace Bill.

In response to the Giles Fraser article in The Guardian, Graham Davey had a rebuttal published in the Guardian called 'Pacifism is not Passivity' which argues that Mr Fraser presented a false choice between doing nothing and military intervention - that the Taxes for Peace Bill represents a form of active pacifism.

The full letter can be accessed here:

<https://www.theguardian.com/global/2016/jun/28/guardiwn-weekly-letters-oil-markets-global-industry>

The popular left-wing news site The Canary did a full write up of the Taxes for Peace Bill, discussing how it would work in practice and the context in which it is being debated. Feedback from the article has been very supportive - with one person commenting '**This Bill is almost too sensible to be true.**'

Full article can be found here:

www.conscienceonline.org.uk/150d

Lastly, blogsite Women's Views On News covered the reading of the Bill on their website with a full report on the history behind the Bill. Helen Drewery, representing Quakers in Britain, is quoted as saying:

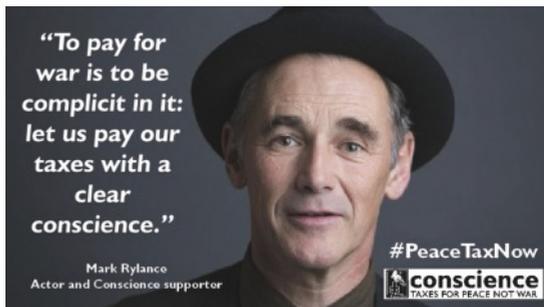
“To prepare for war is failure; instead, we want to invest in nonviolent solutions to conflict.”

Full article is here:

www.conscienceonline.org.uk/150e

Mark Rylance fills in a statement of Conscience

BAFTA and Oscar award winning actor Mark Rylance took time out from his tour promoting his new film 'The BFG' to fill in one of our statement of conscience forms. In a very moving statement he outlined the influence of his childhood, Shakespeare and his experience growing up during the Vietnam War.



It's great to have Mark onboard supporting the campaign - we hope to see him at a [conscience](#) event sometime soon!

Your Life, Your Legacy

Leave a gift in your estate and transform the future

Have you thought about leaving conscience a gift in your will?

Gifts in wills, called legacies, are a wonderful way to support the right of conscience now and into the future. Leaving a gift in your will is something everyone can do in a way which suits your particular circumstances.

After providing for your family and friends, why not consider whether you would like to leave a gift, of any size, to **conscience**?

Support the future of conscientious objection

At **conscience**, we want to see the day when we can choose for our taxes to be spent on peacebuilding, rather than warmaking. We want to be sure that there is a campaigning organisation continuing the struggle for the right not to pay for war.

You can be part of making that possible.

conscience has had a tremendous year, having secured a debate on the future of conscientious objection in the face of significant opposition. The Taxes for Peace Bill passed its first reading because we had the opportunity to discuss the bill and persuade MPs. This is because **conscience** members took the time to support us - and one of the most effective ways in which you can do this is leaving a legacy.

**“The world is over-armed and peace is under-funded”
Ban-Ki Moon UN Secretary General**

That goes for **conscience** too! Did you know that most of our income comes straight from our supporters? We aren't reliant on big donors or charitable trusts - most of our income comes from ordinary members just like you. Even one legacy gift makes a tremendous difference in what we can do.



How to leave a gift in your will

If you have a will already, you can replace your will with a new one, or add a codicil to modify the existing one. If you want to write a will for the first time, it may be helpful to consult a legal professional, although this isn't a legal requirement.

There are lots of sources of information available about how to write and amend your will. We recommend The Co-operative Legal Services www.co-operative.coop/legalservices and the UK Government website www.gov.uk/make-will as helpful starting points. You may also find The Natural Death Centre www.naturaldeath.org.uk a useful resource about dying and funerals.

Types of Legacy

Residuary bequest

A gift of the remainder of the estate after all other bequests have been made and debts cleared.

Pecuniary bequest

A gift of a fixed sum of money in your will. The value of pecuniary legacies will decrease over time, as the cost of living increases.

Specific bequest

A particular named item left as a gift in your will, is known as a specific bequest for example a piece of jewellery.

Please contact Shaughan Dolan, Campaigning and Membership Officer, with any questions about legacies, to let us know if you plan to make a bequest, or to request further information. **Request a legacy pack today.**

Get in Contact Today

Please call 020 3515 9132 or email Campaign@conscienceonline.org.uk, or write to us at:

conscience TAXES FOR PEACE NOT WAR
Freepost LON18505 London
N19 5BR

An average taxpayer will work
30 years to pay for this



It'll be used once - to kill people

conscience
TAXES FOR PEACE NOT WAR

Worship War No More

conscience Volunteer Rebecca Elson shares her vision of what Remembrance Sunday could look like: a commemoration of the everyday heroes in our NHS, Fire Service and Police Force

When it comes to heroism, there seems to be an imbalance of gratitude, remembrance and reverence, skewed greatly in favour of the armed forces. Acts of courage, bravery and valour are, by the very nature of the environment, endemic to the field of conflict, but not exclusive to it. Soldiers are not the only heroes, but we seem to forget that when it comes to showing our collective gratitude to others who are equally worthy of such.

The first group to spring to mind are the emergency services. When we compare the duties and risks faced by soldiers and firefighters, there are some obvious similarities; both professions are asked to put their work ahead of their personal lives and families and to risk their lives in the line of duty. Both risk life-changing injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder, and difficulty re-adjusting to 'civilian' life. Both are woefully underpaid. But only the firefighters are grievously and systematically under appreciated.



Fire Service Memorial at St Pauls

There are approximately 100,000 war memorials in Britain. Many are dedicated to those who lost their lives in the two World Wars, and they are everywhere from rail stations to universities. War memorials are a common feature of our national landscape, proving we are good at remembering the sacrifice of others. Yet are there painfully few memorials to firefighters who have died in the line of duty.

The National Firefighter's Memorial, placed a few yards from St Paul's Cathedral, is both imposing and impressive, but doesn't tell the whole tale. When it was originally unveiled in 1991, the Memorial only commemorated the 997 firefighters who lost their lives during The Blitz. In short, their service was only seen as valid of commemoration when seen in the context of war.

It was not until 2003 that the Memorial was rededicated, with the addition of another 1,192 names, to all fire service personnel who have lost their lives. Humanity seems to want to remember harming each other, more than we want to remember helping each other.



Remembrance poppies at the Tower of London

The emergency services save lives, change lives, and often put themselves at risk of significant physical and emotional harm in the process; around 300 firefighters have died in the line of duty since the end of WW2, and around 100 a year are seriously injured. But come Remembrance Sunday, the fire service is grouped into the armed forces parade like another regiment of the army and Whitehall is never closed just to thank the emergency services.

Why then, do we revere soldiering, which at its core, is about taking life, while at best ignoring and at worst condemning firefighting? This is not a uniquely British phenomenon. Even countries that have no military still indulge in militaristic hero worship; Samoa celebrates Anzac day, despite never having had a military.

Comparatively, International Firefighters' Day is rarely celebrated outside of the firefighting community; most people simply don't know that the 4th of May is a day to give thanks to these everyday heroes.

We can all imagine needing the emergency services. Every day of our lives we walk past ordinary heroes without realising it; domestic violence counsellors, paediatric nurses, coastguards, the list goes on and on. But these heroes receive little or no recognition from society as a whole. We need to start a dialogue about this glaringly disproportionate hero worship.

We need to start paying attention to all of our heroes, not just the armed ones.

Volunteer for **conscience**

conscience could not function without the help of its volunteers whose help is vital to the success of the campaign.

There are a range of volunteering possibilities at **conscience** including:

Help in our North London Office

As part of our volunteering programme you could be involved in campaigning, fundraising, political lobbying, membership and general support. We are currently in need of regular office admin assistance.

Executive Committee membership

Our Executive Committee meets four times a year to make decisions on matters such as policy, strategy and finance. We are also currently in need of a volunteer pensions specialist and volunteer pensions fund trustee(s) with Pensions Regulator experience.

Ad hoc help

There are certain times during the year when the office needs additional help with mailings and other activities. Add your name to our volunteer list and help the campaign for half a day a few times a year!

If you are interested in any of our volunteering opportunities please contact us at campaign@conscienceonline.org.uk or call 020 3515 9132

conscience TAXES FOR PEACE NOT WAR works for a world where taxes are used to nurture peace, not pay for war.

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