

nl 119 | winter 2002/3

time for action

We start 2003 with the US government seemingly set on attacking Iraq and committed to a missile defence system which looks set to start a bigger arms race than the cold war. The Chancellor, Gordon Brown, has set aside £1 billion for war on Iraq and in the next few weeks the UK government is likely to make decisions to support a US attack on Iraq and to authorise the siting of missile defence installations in North Yorkshire.

But UK agreement with US plans is not inevitable – as citizens of the world and members of the peace movement we can and must take action to prevent what many are portraying as inevitable. Throughout this issue of **conscience** update you will find information about actions you can take, invitations to join other people's action and resources to help you in your peace work.

Included in the mailing is our new, alternative tax form, which we would ask you to send to the Inland Revenue later this month. There are two sections on the form, one for those who are submitting self-assessment forms and one for those whose tax is deducted at source.

Over the page you will find details of our "tax day" action in London on 31 January and the new edition of "My conscience directs me not to pay for war", our guide for those considering withholding the military portion of their taxes. The diary lists just a few of the key events coming up in the next three months along with details of where to find more.

... CENTREPEACE ...

To finish off, instead of a single book review we have a round up of recent reports and other useful resources which cost just a few pounds each and provide an antidote to the one-sided reporting of the mainstream media.

... ACTION ...

STOP PRESS another war tax resister in court

Quaker, accountant and **conscience** executive committee member, Roy Prockter, appeared in Colchester Magistrates' Court on 7 January for non-payment of taxes. Roy had sent a cheque for the military portion of his taxes made out to the UK Government Non-Military Conflict Resolution Fund, but this was returned. Roy was previously taken to court in 1993 for his refusal to contribute to war preparations.

Roy considers that the passing of the Human Rights Act changes the legal position, and that the current law which recognises conscientious objection to physical military service but fails to address conscientious objection to payment for military preparation contravenes his Human Right to practice his religion.

Despite Roy's hope that his appearance in Court would lead to him being able to pay his taxes with a clear conscience, in the knowledge that he is helping to resolve the world's problems without any death or destruction, the magistrates would not even let him make his case under the Human Rights Act and ordered him to pay £176.25 including costs.

campaigns news

31 January 2003 is 'Tax Day'

To mark the day on which many war taxes are actually collected by the Inland Revenue, **conscience** will be staging a press stunt in Whitehall, London. Please join us, if you can, to add your support. The aim is to draw attention to the fact that 10% of all your taxes are forwarded to the armed forces in order to wage war in your name. The vast majority of those killed in wars are innocent civilians – despite the so called 'smart' weapons and 'surgical' strikes of modern warfare. As taxpayers we are personally drawn into war by being forced to pay for killing and our consciences are injured. Those on the receiving end of 'our' bombs are drawn into war by being forced to flee for their lives and their families and friends are injured, maimed and killed. Help us make the link between paying war taxes and the deaths of innocents by joining us on Friday 31 January 2003 in Whitehall. If you are planning to come, please contact the office for more details and to give us an idea of numbers.

My Conscience Directs Me Not to Pay for War

Our new pamphlet 'My conscience directs me not to pay for war' is now available from the **conscience** office. In it you will find detailed guidance on how to withhold or divert the military portion of your income tax. Of course, this action is currently illegal and we are campaigning for a change in the law so that we do not have to make the difficult choice between following our consciences and obeying the law. It is a dilemma which none of us should have to face – we should not be forced to be complicit in state sanctioned killing with no legal means of withdrawing our support.

If you are already a war tax resister, or you are considering withholding or diverting war taxes, the section of the pamphlet on the likely legal consequences of doing so should be of interest to you. There are also suggestions on what you can do to resist war taxes if you are taxed under PAYE, some useful statistics and a list of resources for further information.

If you would like a copy of 'My conscience directs me not to pay for war' please contact the office.

Are you a war tax resister?

conscience is hoping to support one war tax resister in a test case in court using the Human Rights Act. If you are resisting the payment of war taxes, or you are planning to resist in the future please get in touch with Oliver in the office. We can assist in the legal backing required to fight such a case and find a barrister to represent you. Ideally you should be eligible for legal aid (disposable income less than £601 per month and disposable capital assets less than £3000) and be willing to put your case in court.

Lobbyists needed

A big thank you to all those members who have contacted the office to say they would like to be lobbyists for **conscience**. We now have 160 members around the country who are ready and willing to write to their MPs or other decision makers, to call for the recognition of conscientious objectors' rights in the tax system. Every letter makes a difference – sometimes small, sometimes big. However, there are over 650 MPs in the UK. That means that only one in four MPs will receive a letter from a **conscience** lobbyist, or to put it another way, each one receives approximately a quarter of a letter. To become a lobbyist please contact Oliver in the office. I will contact you occasionally asking you to write a letter, and I will include a sample for you to copy or adapt. Remember, MPs are there to represent your views and are the best chance we have of achieving a change in the law.

members news

heading north again

It is five years since our AGM decided to abolish itself, moving formal business such as approving accounts into the membership questionnaire and giving us the freedom to hold far more interesting annual events. The first of these new-style events was held in Newcastle in 1999, but since then we've ventured no further north than Oxford, so in 2003 we are looking to hold our annual event in a northern city such as Manchester, Leeds or Bradford. The event will be held on a Saturday in July and full details will be published in our spring newsletter.

We are looking for a **conscience** member (or a group of members) who would like to help us host the annual event in their city. This doesn't involve a huge time commitment, but it will save **conscience** significant amounts of time and money if we can reduce the number of visits our London staff have to make in preparation for the event.

Please contact Oliver in the office if you would like to find out more about helping with the annual event.

having your say

As mentioned in the previous article, formal business such as approving the accounts and appointing the Executive Committee are now done in the annual membership questionnaire, which also provides an opportunity for you to have your say on campaigning priorities and future plans. We value your input so please look out for the questionnaire in your next edition of **conscience** update.

without whom...

Much of the work of **conscience** relies on the efforts of volunteers and we are glad to be able to take this opportunity to express our thanks to our volunteers in 2002; Pauline, Irene, Jane, Patricia, Monica, Pete, Cynthia, Lorna, Mary Lou, David and Jessica.

If you can spare a few hours every now and again to help **conscience**, please contact Jon in the office.

goodbye, hello?

At the end of 2002 both our Treasurer, Gerald Drewett, and our long-serving Quaker representative, Eleanor Barden, stood down from the Executive Committee. Gerald and Eleanor have been involved with the campaign in many different ways since its inception, both giving huge amounts of time and energy over the years. We wish them both well and thank them for their immense contribution to the campaign.

The **conscience** executive committee is made up of members who give up four Saturday's each year to help guide the campaign. If you are interested in finding out more about joining the executive, please contact Jon at the office.

diary

In the event an attack on Iraq

At 6pm on the day war is announced

In the event of war breaking out against Iraq, go to your own town centre to protest: If you live in London, go to Downing St, Whitehall, London SW1.

On the following Saturday

make your way to Downing Street, Whitehall, London for 12 noon to show your opposition to this war.

See www.networkforpeace.org.uk or www.stopwar.org.uk or www.cnduk.org for details

Saturday 18 January

Network for Peace Annual Meeting, London.

1.30-5.00, Friends House, Euston Road, London. Speakers will include Iraqi exile Mundher Adhami. Meeting will also discuss a crisis response strategy and include the NfP AGM.

21 January 2003

Lobby of Parliament "No war on Iraq".

Organised by CND and Stop the War coalition. From 2.30pm. t 020 7700 2393 w www.cnduk.org

Saturday 15 February

"Don't Attack Iraq" demonstration, central London.

Assemble 1pm. Organised by Stop the War Coalition. t 020 7053 2155 w www.stopwar.org.uk

Monday 12 March

LONDON. Annual Lobby of Parliament organised by United Nations Association UK and many other organisations. The theme will centre on human security and the importance of the UN for global decision making, including issues such as access to resources such as clean drinking water, and the trade in small arms; final details will be agreed to by all organisations that choose to get involved. Contact: Peter Dyson, UNA-UK, 3 Whitehall Court, London SW1A 2EL. Tel 020 7930 2931. Email: info@una-uk.org website: www.una-uk.org.

Tuesday 22 April 2003:

FASLANE. Blockade: STOP TRIDENT: Info. www.Tridentploughshares.gn.apc.org

more diary dates at www.networkforpeace.org.uk/events.htm

centrepeace

non-military security, dealing with terrorism/asymmetric warfare

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[ADVERT – in Garamond]

Treaties Day School 2003

9.30am - 4.30pm Saturday 8 February

University of London Union, Malet Street, WC1

Admission: £5

Following last years successful Day School, Christian CND and Abolition 2000 present another, with workshops on:

Running an effective campaign

Influencing parliamentarians

Dialogue with decision-makers
Effective letter-writing
Treaties - what's still important & what's fallen by the wayside
The Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the Non-proliferation Treaty Preparatory
Committee 2003

Guest Speaker: Dan Plesch (RUSI)
Round table discussion: "Is the NPT doomed?"

Further details:
Treaties Day School
c/o CCND, 162 Holloway Road, London N7 8DQ

UPDATE GREENNET ADVERT

review

Jon Nott rounds up some high value, but low cost resources for campaigners

Housmans Peace Diary 2003

The quintessential peace movement resource reaches its 50th edition this year and is as valuable as ever. The second part of the diary, the World Peace Directory, includes over 150 international organisations and 170 country listings from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, including over 200 entries for Britain.

isbn 0 85283 257 5, £6.95 or £7.95 inc. p&p from Housmans, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX

War on Iraq: What Team Bush doesn't want you to know

Scott Ritter and William Rivers Pitt

This 80-page in not as comprehensive as Milan Rai's War Plan Iraq (reviewed last issue), but it is straight from the horse's mouth. Scott Ritter is a US Marine and former UN weapons inspector with a personal and in-depth knowledge of the situation in Iraq. Sub-titled "what Team Bush doesn't want you to know" the bulk of the book is the transcript of an interview with Ritter, who despite his history in the American military and voting for Bush in 2000, is completely opposed to an attack on Iraq.

What makes his arguments so powerful is his personal involvement. For example, when he states that Iraq has no facility to produce VX nerve gas, he backs this up, "They'd been hiding it from the inspectors. We found it in 1996, and destroyed it. With that, Iraq lost its ability to produce VX." William Rivers Pitt plays devil's advocate throughout the interview and Ritter's answers are convincing every time. At under five pounds, this book is almost cheap enough to buy several copies so that you can give them to people who think that Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction is a valid reason for war.

Profile Books, 2002, isbn 1 86197 636 4, £4.99

Collateral Damage: the health and environmental costs of war on Iraq

MedAct (Medical Action for Global Security)

If further reasons not to attack Iraq were needed, there are 4 million provided in the MedAct report Collateral Damage. This is the estimated number of casualties if the war escalated to involve the use of nuclear weapons. Even without this nightmare scenario, the report shows how even a limited conflict could result in half a million deaths. In either case the majority of casualties would be civilian.

Researched and written by health professionals, the report is well presented and communicates the health, environmental and even financial risks of a war with great clarity.

Available for £3 from MedAct, 601 Holloway Road, London N19 4DJ or at www.medact.org

Unfortunately launching an attack on Iraq is not the only destabilising activity that "Team Bush" are planning for 2003. As two new reports explain, the US administration is committed to pressing ahead with its missile defence plans.

Disarmament, not Defence!

Abolition 2000 UK

The third in an occasional series of papers in memory of Frank Blackaby, Disarmament, not Defence, written by two German scientists outlines US plans and the dangers these pose as the start of the weaponisation of space and the catalyst of a new arms race. There is a wealth of useful detail - you will certainly be better informed than most MPs after reading this.

US Missile Defence: Ten Reasons for UK Concern

Missile Defence Working Group

Written by David Gee of Quaker Peace and Social Witness and Helen Hughes of the United Nations Association, this report focuses on the implications for Britain of our government support for and planned involvement with US missile defence plans.

£2.50 each from Abolition 2000 UK, 162 Holloway Road, London N7 8DQ or at <http://abolition2000uk.gn.apc.org>

The three reports mentioned above are all available on the web as well as on paper, although you will need Acrobat Reader to view them. For those of you with web access, here are four other sites that really worth a regular visit.

Paul Rogers' column on www.OpenDemocracy.net

Since October 2001, Paul Rogers, professor of Peace Studies at Bradford University has contributed an excellent column to the OpenDemocracy site. Full of the sorts of details that slip through the mainstream media net and backed up with some of the best analysis of security issues in the country, this column is a must-read. You can even sign up to be sent a weekly reminder when a new one is published.

www.justicenotvengeance.org

The website of Active Resistance to the Roots of War (ARROW) is home to the pledge of resistance and mobilises for and reports on various nonviolent actions to prevent war. It also contains an archive of Milan Rai's excellent Anti-War Briefings including four updates to his book War Plan Iraq.

www.stopwar.org.uk

The stop the war coalition, organisers of the huge demonstration last autumn are planning another demo on 15 February and this site provides information and resources for this along with news of other anti-war activity.

www.networkforpeace.org.uk

Although not as pleasing to the eye as the other sites mentioned, this peace movement site has a comprehensive diary of events all over the country.