

# nl 120 | spring 2003

## front

### 31 January delivery of Peace Tax Returns

On the day that war taxes are collected we were joined by Neil Gerrard MP outside HM Treasury to help us deliver the first batch of Peace Tax Returns - our alternative tax form. The Peace Tax Return (inserted in the last **conscience** update) is modelled on the Inland Revenue tax return and enables you to declare your conscientious objection to war, and to paying for war with your taxes - whether you pay income tax under PAYE, self-assess your tax or pay no income tax at all.

Many of you have received replies from Inland Revenue in response to sending your Peace Tax Return to HM Treasury. Of the arguments given against the introduction of a peace tax the most facile is that it will be too difficult to implement and administer. The Peace Tax Return shows just how easy the first stage of a Peace Tax would be. It all starts with a simple declaration to Inland Revenue that on grounds of conscience you object to your taxes being used for military purposes. The total number of registered conscientious objectors could then be multiplied by the average individual tax payment. Of this sum, the percentage which is allocated to military spending (currently approximately 10%) should be placed in a fund for developing non-military alternatives to security building. Considering the current complexities of the tax system this should not prove too taxing!

The current tax year is almost over so we will shortly be printing a new Peace Tax return for the tax year ending 5 April 2003. We urge all **conscience** members to complete and send off the form, even if you filled one in for the last tax year. These will be available free from the office (give us a quick call or send an email) or can be downloaded from [www.conscienceonline.org.uk](http://www.conscienceonline.org.uk). If you want extra copies for other people just ask. Let's try to get them piled up on the doormat of HM Treasury!

### EDM 123 "Alternatives to Military Expenditure"

Early Day Motion number 943 entitled 'Alternatives to Military Expenditure' was tabled by John McDonnell MP on 25 March. It notes the increased distress that we currently feel at being forced to pay for the military machine which is acting in our name (full text inside).

## campaigns news

### EDM 123 "Alternatives to Military Expenditure"

An EDM is similar to a petition for MPs - it allows MPs to put on record their opinion on a subject which others can then sign up to. We want to get as many names on the list as possible in order to show the government this is an issue they should reconsider and to show MPs that this is a campaign that many of their colleagues already support. Many MPs, including those that openly support **conscience**, will not sign the EDM until asked to do so by a constituent so this really is a chance for you to help our campaign. We should aim to get all our supportive MPs signed up to the EDM (some MPs are unable to sign for reasons of protocol) plus some that have not previously supported. **Please write to your MP to ask them to sign EDM 943.**

EDM 943 Alternatives to military expenditure

That...

this house recognises that Parliament has traditionally acknowledged and protected the right of conscientious objection to military service;

and appreciates the increased distress felt at this time of heightened insecurity by those who would wish to register their conscientious objection to being forced to contribute through their taxes to military activity;

and thus requests the Government consider providing a mechanism for those who have a conscientious objection to war to have the military part of their taxes spent on peacebuilding initiatives.

### **'Thank you' lobbyists**

A big thank you to all those members who have offered to be lobbyists for **conscience**. We are aiming for at least one lobbyist per MP (659) but we've still a way to go, so if you are willing to write a letter three or four times a year to your MP or a government minister, please let us know in the office.

### **still waiting for Human Rights Act test case**

We are still hoping to support a war tax resister in a test case using the Human Rights Act. If you are planning to resist paying taxes for war, are eligible for legal aid and would be willing to take your case through the courts as far as you can (we know it's a lot to ask), please get in touch with Oliver at the office.

### **can you help conscience in your area?**

We feel sure that many thousands of people in the UK support the aims of **conscience** and are deeply disturbed at being forced to contribute to the military through their taxes - but most of them are unaware that **conscience** exists and even fewer are members. We would like to have a **conscience** presence in more places around the country, to increase our membership and to use that additional support to increase the pressure we put on the Government to finally recognise the rights of COs. **Can you help?** Distributing leaflets, collecting signatures for a petition or running a stall at a local event (or whatever other good ideas you come up with) will all help **conscience** in its work.

We would like to build a network of local campaigners who are willing to campaign in their area on behalf of **conscience**. We aim to create a list of campaigners in each region who are able to contact each other in order to work together at local events of your choosing. As the warmer weather approaches (at last), campaigning opportunities increase. Summer fetes, fairs and festivals are held. There are local parades, marches and a myriad of other events in every region of the country. But you know your area best - certainly better than we do in the office in London - and you know which events are likely to be most suitable for you to go to.

The first step is to let Oliver (in the **conscience** office) know you are happy to help and to give us your consent to share your contact details with other **conscience** campaigners in your area. We will then give your contact details to other campaigners near you and give you their details in return. We will support you from the office by providing leaflets, posters, stickers, information, support and whatever else we possibly can - after that it's up to you! We will rely on you to choose which events you attend and to decide how to promote **conscience's** work. Be as creative as you like.

Hopefully, with your efforts, more people will realise they are not alone in their objection to paying for the military and more people will appreciate there are more effective ways to achieve international security than preparing for war. Please get in touch if you can help.

## **members news**

### **annual event**

This year's annual event entitled "conscientious objection in the 21<sup>st</sup> century", will be held on 19 July in Manchester Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, from 10am to 4pm. It will take the usual form, with a mixture of speakers, workshops and opportunities to meet other **conscience** members.

We will publish full details in the next **conscience** update, but please put the date in your diary now.

### **thank you**

A big thank you to all those who contributed to our Iraq crisis appeal. It has raised over £5,000 to date and enabled us to produce thousands of leaflets using the "Lord KitchenBlair" graphic which were distributed on the anti-war demonstration of 22 March.

If you have in the past opted out of appeals, but would now like to opt back in, please contact Jon in the office.

### **annual review & membership questionnaire**

The annual review and membership questionnaire which are normally sent out with the spring edition of **conscience** update will this year be sent out separately, because of an unavoidable delay in the production of our annual accounts.

### **spending your donations wisely**

The sharp-eyed and cost conscious among our members will have noticed that the last edition of **conscience** update appeared to have been sent first class. We would like to reassure you that this was the Post Office mistake. We always send mailings second class in order to enable us to spend as much as possible of your donations on campaigning.

### **data protection notice**

Just a reminder that **conscience** keeps your details on our database in order to administer your membership. We do not sell or pass this information to other individuals or groups.

if you have any questions about our data protection policies or if you wish to request a copy of the details we hold (there is an administrative fee for the latter), please contact Jon in the office.

## **diary**

### **22 April**

#### **the really big blockade**

Annual peace movement closure of Faslane, home to the UK's weapons of mass destruction. w [www.banthebomb.org/rbb](http://www.banthebomb.org/rbb) e [big\\_blockade@hotmail.com](mailto:big_blockade@hotmail.com) t 0141 422 2083

## **15 May**

### **International Conscientious Objectors' Day**

A ceremony will be held at 12 noon next to the commemorative stone in Tavistock Square, London WC1. Ceremonies are also being held in Cardiff, Oxford, Ipswich and Bradford.

## **Thursday 12 June**

### **The Erskine Childers Lecture**

Speaker Caroline Lucas MEP on Crisis in the UN, EU and NATO. 7pm, Friends House, Euston Road, London, NW1. No ticket required, contact Action for UN Renewal w [www.action-for-un-renewal.org.uk](http://www.action-for-un-renewal.org.uk)

## **19 July**

### **conscientious objection in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

**conscience** annual event, Manchester Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, 10am - 4pm

## **centrepeace**

**As the US and UK declare the war against Saddam Hussein over, Jon Nott looks at what is likely to come next for the long-suffering people of Iraq and for the other countries on George Bush's "axis of evil".**

### **aftermath in Iraq**

There are three urgent and interlinked issues facing the people of Iraq and the US/UK occupation/liberation forces. The most important of all is the need to restart the flow of humanitarian aid on which millions of Iraqis depend. This is made extremely difficult by ongoing fighting and civil disorder, which is the second issue. There is a need for a stabilising force – a role the US forces are neither prepared for nor willing to take on – in order to establish an interim civilian administration prior to UN/Arab League supervised elections which are an essential part of the long-term settlement.

The stabilisation force must operate under a UN mandate and needs to be work closely with civilian agencies rather than being solely run by the military. As we have seen in Afghanistan, an inadequate International Stabilisation Force has meant that most of the country is back under the control of warlords and, in some places, the remnants of the Taliban. What efforts towards nation-building have been made in Afghanistan have been hampered by US insistence on "force protection" – reducing the risk of US casualties – being the primary aim of the mission rather than focusing on co-operation with the fledgling organisations that make up Afghan civil society.

It is far from clear that the war in Iraq is over. Over 10,000 US troops are still engaged in regular combat in Afghanistan more than a year after the conflict there was deemed to be over. A similar situation may well develop in Iraq as groups rise up against what they see as an occupying force and as the various ethnic, religious and political groupings vie for autonomy and/or their share of power in the new administration.

The third issue is that of unexploded ordnance and the contamination left by the use of Depleted Uranium weapons. Thousands of Iraqis have been killed or harmed by the remnants of the 1991 war and this problem will only increase unless the US forces undertake a clear-up of the large numbers of unexploded or toxic munitions used in this war, in the 1991 war and in maintaining the "no-fly zones" for the 12 years in between.

### **who's next?**

Even before they had claimed victory in Iraq, the US leadership were making it clear that they had their sights set elsewhere. Both Syria and Iran have been the subject of threats from senior US officials and although the US is currently engaging in diplomacy to try to deal with North Korea's nuclear proliferation, this is by no means certain to continue.

This war and the actions threatened or planned against other countries in the "axis of evil", are part of the new paradigm of American foreign policy, based on the idea that US domination of the globe is best not only for the US, but for the people of other nations as well. The driving force behind this new direction is the much-talked-about Project for a New American Century(1), which has been run since 1997 by a group of President Bush's closest advisers, including Vice-President Cheney, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and the President's brother Jeb Bush.

When considered alongside the US administration's plans for National Missile Defence(2) and the Pentagon's stated objective of "full spectrum dominance"(3) it is obvious that the perceived success of the offensive against Iraq is likely to lead to more "preventative" wars in areas where the US sees its strategic interests under threat. We should not forget the links between this "force projection" and the US economy, which is heavily dependent on imported oil, the availability of cheap overseas labour and the arms industry.

### **target UK?**

Unfortunately for the people of the US and the UK, we are just as likely to suffer from the consequences of this wrongheaded security agenda as those who live in the countries on the "hit list". One of the strongest, if slightly self-interested, arguments against the attack on Iraq was that it was likely to produce "new Bin Ladens" and lead to an increase in support for organisations like Al-Qaeda. We are being told that the war was a "success" and those who opposed it are wrong, but even if the war has been prosecuted "successfully" it has also provoked huge anger in the Arab world and predictions of increased hatred of the US and the UK have also proved to be true.

The UK is seen as a willing collaborator with what is seen by many as a US attack on Islam. It is vital for our own security, as well as for the wider reasons discussed below, that our government ceases its support for the current US foreign policy and puts its efforts into multilateral peace initiatives for the Middle East.

### **building real security**

The actions of the US and UK governments in the run up to this war have seriously undermined the authority of the UN and are likely to have long-term repercussions. Both for the practical reasons set out above and in order to show their faith in the legitimacy of the UN, the US and the UK need to support a UN-led stabilisation force in Iraq, working closely with civilian agencies.

The aftermath in Iraq is one of the first opportunities to test the non-military part of the EU's Rapid Reaction Force and to take advantage of the work being done by some European governments to develop Civilian Peace Services. Our government should seize this opportunity to show its support for a multi-lateral, non-military led, response to conflict, distancing itself from the "peace through strength" attitudes of the current US administration.

This multi-lateral approach is vital if we are to truly rid the world of weapons of mass destruction, whether developed by Iraq, the US, Britain or anyone else. As Michael Rebehn says in his excellent *OpenDemocracy* article, "verification protocols for weapons proliferation simply cannot work in a climate of confrontation."(4)

The world is truly at a crossroads and we in the UK have a key role in deciding which path is taken. There is potential for things to get far worse, but the actions of other European countries and of the millions of people opposed here in Britain, offer hope not only that another way exists, but that there is a real chance that the opportunity which has been left hanging since the end of the cold war will finally be seized.

(1) [www.newamericancentury.org](http://www.newamericancentury.org)

(2) <http://abolition2000uk.gn.apc.org/MD.html>

(3) "Full-spectrum dominance means the ability of U.S. forces, operating alone or with allies, to defeat any adversary and control any situation across the range of military operations." [www.defenselink.mil/news/Jun2000/n06022000\\_20006025.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jun2000/n06022000_20006025.html) The full document can be viewed at [www.dtic.mil/jointvision](http://www.dtic.mil/jointvision)

(4) [www.opendemocracy.net/debates/article-9-86-1128.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/debates/article-9-86-1128.jsp)

## war tax resistance update

So many people are crying out against this war, saying, "Not in my name, not in our name!" There is a way to show it is truly not in our name: tax resistance.

During the Vietnam war, many people in the USA refused to pay the telephone tax that was specifically imposed to help pay for the war. It had some effect.

And what was it that finally brought down the last British megalomaniac prime minister, Margaret Thatcher? Resistance to the Poll Tax.

With the Chancellor steadily ratcheting up the amount of tax money to be spent on the war – on top of the £1.5 billion wasted each year on the Trident absurdity – it is time to slow down, even if we cannot fully stop, the collection of our taxes.

How? Well, those of us who have to fork out money ourselves for direct taxes can just refuse, or go slow on it. It took five years before they actually came for my money in my first tax resistance! One suffers extra charges, of course, but a price well worth it if it helps to keep the peace.

Then there are employers who withhold taxes on behalf of those they employ; and those who collect VAT on their billings. These monies are all submitted to the state *by people*, many of whom, to judge by the millions opposed to the war even before it started, could easily slow down the collection. And the same with business taxes. All these people could say, "Can Pay, Won't Pay" for as long as possible. If the penalties become too punitive, then some can concede. But lots of people going slow on tax might well help halt the march of war.

With so much of the population against the war, there must be many tax collectors who could decide to go slow on their collecting. (Back in the 1980s, the union of the tax collectors was affiliated to CND).

So, let's starve the warfare state of funds, and show we do not want this war. Not in our name – not with our taxes! May the spirit of Henry David Thoreau live on.

Roger Franklin

## review

Alun Morinan reviews *People, Peace and Power: Conflict Transformation in Africa* by Diana Francis.

*“Top level decision-makers may be able to declare wars and sign treaties, but only people can build peace.”*

Readers of book reviews that have appeared in **conscience** update over the last two years would have come across the name of Diana Francis as both a contributor (*No Alternative?* reviewed in No. 111) and author (*Lessons from Kosovo/a* reviewed in No. 114). Dr Francis chairs the 'Committee for Conflict Transformation Support' and is regarded as one of the leading practitioners in her field. As the quotation from the concluding chapter of this book (above) makes clear, it is up to the ordinary people, and not the politicians and military, to build peace in communities torn apart by a lack of respect, mistrust, injustice and violence. Nonviolent conflict transformation should address the needs of all parties, affording them equal participation in the process and treating each with dignity and respect. Such an approach has a better chance of success by producing a 'win-win', rather than a 'win-lose' or 'lose-lose' outcome.

In eleven chapters, the author describes the theory and practice of conflict transformation, drawing extensively on her own considerable experience of running workshops on three continents. The first chapter introduces some of the often confusing and apparently similar terms used: conflict **transformation, management, prevention, resolution** and **settlement**, and the differences between dialogue and training workshops. There is also a very useful list of 27 examples of people power in action, from Gandhi's campaign for independence for India to the setting up of an inter-ethnic radio station in Kosovo/a. The next two chapters examine the theory of, and the importance of culture to, conflict transformation, a subject that Francis returns to in her accounts of some of the workshops she has facilitated over the years. I have to admit finding the theoretical discussion somewhat heavy going but for activists and students in the field it, together with the extensive Bibliography, is a valuable resource.

It is the second part of the book where she describes in detail, including unedited extracts from contemporaneous notes, her experiences of the workshops, which I found particularly interesting. After an introductory chapter on aims, content and methods, three different training workshops are discussed: one on 'Living with Differences' (in Geneva) was open to participants from all over the world while the other two were for women from Africa (in Harare) and former Yugoslavia (in Hungary). These accounts make you aware of the amount of time spent by the facilitator in planning, reviewing and problem solving and how emotionally and physically exhausting, as well as encouraging, it must be. Diana Francis is very candid about her successes and failures and reading her diary entries in particular, gives you empathy for people like her who often find themselves in a very lonely role. The fourth workshop is an on going dialogue between Serbian (from both Serbia and Kosovo/a) and Albanian (from Albania and Kosovo/a) ethnic groups held in various locations in the Balkans, which at the time of writing was in the process of seeking further financial support to enable its continuation. In the final chapter, she reflects on these workshops and concludes that mutual respect is the essential to conflict transformation and transcends all cultures.

In Part III, Francis returns to a more general discussion of the subject by commenting on aspects of good practice and the challenges we face now and in the future. The two chapters are illustrated with examples of past and current successes and failures but perhaps most significantly in terms of helping to achieve the aims of **conscience**, is that we “*need to learn from all the experiments and experiences which have been and are being accumulated in nonviolent alternatives at all levels, and to document and publicise them.*” This book provides one of the signposts on that road to finding these alternatives and to where we may direct the proportion of our taxes currently spent on the military.

People, Peace and Power:  
Conflict Transformation  
in Africa, *Diana Francis*,  
Pluto Press, 2002  
isbn 0-7453-1835-5  
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