

– Sorry sir, if you pay a hit man to kill someone it's a crime and I'm going to have to take you in.



– Yet, I can't avoid paying the government to hire people to kill people who have not even offended me in any way.



conscience update

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image – *afternoon conversation* by Cathiehh
text by Veronica Zundel

new grant from jrct

We are delighted and very grateful to have been awarded a grant by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust to carry out a new piece of research.

Good communication is at the heart of a successful campaign, and a big part of that is knowing who to speak to and

precisely what to say that will make them feel our cause is both important and urgent. We know that, in this country, conscription is no longer a motivating factor for most people, but that many people still feel that our obligation to fund killing is wrong. They may be motivated by concern for limited public resources; or by a sense of conscience; by a belief that all human life is incredibly important and must be treasured; or by a conviction that building peace is the only way to build real security. We will work with a marketing consultancy to develop more effective ways to reach out to those people who share our views but don't yet know there is a campaign working for the changes they would like to see.

We will keep you updated on our work over the next year and look forward to building new recognition and support for taxes for peace not war.



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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engaging afghanistan a non-military approach

Tom Furber has kindly written a report for **conscience** about the War in Afghanistan. Below is a summary of his work. For the full report please visit www.conscienceonline.org.uk/resources To make comments or contact the author please contact the **conscience** office.

Introduction

At the beginning of 2011 the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee published a deeply critical report highlighting the current failings of the UK's approach to the War in Afghanistan. It states:

"Although the current international emphasis favours intense military pressure aimed at defeating the insurgency, it is clear that military pressure alone is not enough to bring security and stability to Afghanistan."

(Foreign Affairs Committee, 2011)

Engaging Afghanistan reports on the extent of the misery being faced by the Afghan people and examines its causes. Like the Foreign Affairs Committee, it finds that the emphasis on using military force to defeat the Taliban-led insurgency is deeply flawed as it has

alienated the Afghan people and done little to address their most pressing concerns. More positively, *Engaging Afghanistan* also offers an alternative, non-military approach to Afghanistan inspired by the Good Friday Agreement.

The report contributes to the debate about Afghanistan. Its aim is not to provide one solution that should be followed ardently by government, but rather to help foster debate about what could and should be done at this point in the war. Public debate about solutions to Afghanistan is important as it helps us – and more importantly our political leaders – to remember that we are a country at war and as such we should be actively looking for solutions that bring about peace.

Afghanistan's Problems

Afghanistan has many problems which are not being correctly dealt with through the US/NATO strategy there. *Engaging Afghanistan* outlines the current problems facing the country including: the problems with security; rampant corruption; the Afghan economy's dependence on opium; and most importantly the utter lack of good governance. A lack of good governance is an important cause of civil wars

and insurgency; furthermore, it has a tendency to prolong them.

Good Friday Agreement

Although not without setbacks and returns to violence, the Northern Ireland peace process has been ultimately successful. It was able to produce the Good Friday Agreement which led to the main Republican and Loyalist political parties rejecting violence as a means of pursuing their political goals. This in turn allowed for devolved government in Northern Ireland and ended the longstanding insurgency that had been taking place in Northern Ireland since the 1960s.

There are lessons that can be drawn from the Good Friday Agreement and applied to Afghanistan despite the differences between the two situations, because in both cases the belligerents used or are using a combination of violence and politics in an attempt to meet their goal of state control.

Engaging Afghanistan outlines five lessons that can be applied to Afghanistan. Below is a summary of them.

1. Superior military force can be counterproductive to the goal of stopping insurgent violence. During the 1970s and 1980s the British Army was deployed as a means of maintaining order in Ulster. The

actions of the British in this period, most notably Bloody Sunday, damaged the legitimacy of the British state and prolonged the conflict. In Afghanistan the US/NATO's vastly superior military resources have been ineffective in stopping insurgent violence and have not brought security to Afghanistan.

2. Both state and non-state actors can rapidly lose credibility if their rhetoric is not consistent with their actions on the ground. During the Troubles the British state's refusal to grant captured PIRA members the status of political prisoners cost it the support of moderate Irish Nationalists. In Afghanistan all parties in the conflict engage in activities that contradict their rhetoric. The US/NATO's use of air strikes and their willingness to accept collateral damage as routine undermines their claim that they are protecting the Afghan people. Furthermore, the entrenched corruption of the Kabul government significantly undermines claims that they are acting in the best interests of the Afghan people.
3. The ability of a state to legitimately command the allegiance of all belligerents is vital for negotiated settlement. Northern Ireland peace negotiations sought not to resolve the issue of the six disputed counties; rather, they sought to create a political structure

that would allow the dispute to continue, but in a non-violent form. The ideologues of both violent Irish republicanism and violent fundamentalist Islam combine a narrative of persecution with a revolutionary programme for the creation of a just state. This ideology has led Republicans and the Taliban to contest the legitimacy of the central state on the grounds that it is foreign, imperialist and sectarian.

4. Success requires a long-term commitment to negotiations and may require groups to share a table with those who have been willing to use violence and those whose politics they disagree with. One of the most controversial aspects of the Northern Ireland peace process is that it has allowed unapologetic members of paramilitaries to hold government office. This is arguably the most significant lesson for Afghanistan. Talking to those directly involved in violence is essential, because only those who are using violence have control of it and therefore are able to stop it.
5. Success requires understanding and respecting the rationality and motivations of opposition groups and where possible finding ways to harness insurgents' needs to strengthen rather than weaken state legitimacy. During the late 1980s and 1990s the strategy and

tactics of the Republican Movement were transforming from armed resistance to political engagement. The importance of respecting the rationality of opposition is also especially relevant to Afghanistan. A combination of prejudice and propaganda has reduced the Taliban to 'terrorists' whose defining characteristic is their predilection for violence. Such value judgements neglect the fact that, although the ends the Taliban pursue are at odds with Western values and the values of much of the Afghan people, the Taliban are rational and tenacious in pursuing those ends.

Proposals for Action

1. **Long-term thinking is required for Afghanistan**
2. **Cease large scale offensive military operations**
3. **Fight corruption and build bureaucratic expertise**
4. **Engage in talks with all sincere parties**
5. **Conduct 'police operations' against those unwilling to renounce violence**

The findings, views and recommendations contained in *Engaging Afghanistan* are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of conscience. conscience is not responsible for the contents of this research.

write stories for conscience

conscience would like to extend to our members the opportunity to write for **conscience** update.

conscience members have a huge wealth of knowledge and experience – not only concerning the peace movement – and we wish to tap into that knowledge and share it with the rest of our members, supporters and newsletter readers.

We're looking for short stories about experiences campaigning/volunteering/working for the peace sector or articles addressing issues concerning peace, peace tax and war tax resistance.

- Articles should be between 300 – 1000 words
- All content must be original or properly referenced
- If emailing your article please send documents in either MS Word, OpenOffice or Rich Text format
- If posting your story please type it, we cannot accept handwritten articles.

So, if you're a member of **conscience** please send us your story for the next edition of **conscience** update.

Please email your articles to campaign@conscienceonline.org.uk

or post them to:

conscience
Archway Resource Centre
1 b Waterlow Road
London
N19 5NJ



fountain pen by Phil Hilfiker 2005

hmrc mistreats campaigner

War Tax Resister and member of the Peace Tax Seven (PT7) Roy Prockter has withheld 10% of his taxes for many years. In an email sent to sympathisers at the end of last year he wrote about his latest dealings with HMRC.

HMRC have finally decided to do something about the tax I haven't paid, but this time they sent a man round!

The first time he called I was not at home, so he left a letter and a message on the voicemail...I sent a full reply to the letter by fax to the number given the next day.

Next thing I knew it was Tuesday afternoon, when my wife was startled by a face at the window, peering in. She waved him toward the front door which I opened... He asked me if I knew the tax was unpaid and if I had the means to pay it, and I confirmed that I did and that I could, but that I was refusing to do so.

I told him I had replied fully to his previous letter, and offered to print him a copy, inviting him to step in from the cold for a moment whilst I did so. The printer was off, so it was taking a while to warm up, so I went down and told him it would take a few minutes.

Then he asked me my reasons for refusing, when I said conscientious objection to military taxation he started getting agitated, asking if I objected to paying for schools and hospitals as well - I said that I'd be pleased to pay for schools and hospitals if I could do so without paying for the military to kill people.

He then said that he'd "met some nutters in his line of work, but I took the biscuit!" I decided that his rudeness indicted that I shouldn't leave him alone in the hall so asked him to leave - without the copy of my letter and told him to refer to his own office for that.

So I've made a written complaint about both the sending of an officer when I have clearly stated that I will not pay and why, pointed out that I won't be intimidated, and about his behaviour, and also about the lack of internal communication and briefing by HMRC of someone sent to meet a taxpayer in person.

All in all, I'd welcome a bit of what Quakers call 'prayerful support'.

*Best wishes,
Roy*

killer drones

indiscriminate killing weapons against the poor



Fully Armed Reaper UAV by Defence Images

drones?

Drones or Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVS) are remotely controlled aircraft 'flown' either by people on the ground or increasingly, autonomously following a pre-programmed mission. They are generally used for either reconnaissance and surveillance or they that carry missiles and bombs.

The UK began using armed drones in Afghanistan in October 2007 after purchasing three Reapers from General Atomics in 2007 at a cost of £6m each. As well as armed drones, the UK has several types of surveillance drones, most notably Watchkeeper. The UK is currently purchasing 54 Watchkeeper drones and ground stations at a cost of £860m, and there have recently been reports that Watchkeeper may be armed in the future.

On his blog Chris Cole former Director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation outlines why there is so much concern surrounding Drones:

Traditionally, one of the key restraints on warfare has been the risk to one's own forces and, as the MoD themselves admit in a recent publication, if this restraint is taken away, unmanned systems may make war more likely. The way that unmanned drones have enabled a huge increase in targeted killing is also causing deep disquiet amongst legal experts and scholars. Of particular concern is the way that the CIA is using such unmanned systems to undertake extrajudicial killings in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia – countries against which war has not been declared.

There are several 'fronts' in the on-going war over whether it is acceptable to use armed drones. Does the geographic and psychological distance between the operator and target make a positive or negative difference? Does using unmanned systems mean attacks happen more often? Does the supposed accuracy of drone sensors and cameras mean that commanders are more willing to undertake 'riskier' strikes (in terms of possible civilian casualties) than they would previously

have undertaken? All of these questions and many more need to be debated openly and honestly and require careful analysis and clear-headed judgement based on the available evidence. Unfortunately, that evidence, is being kept strictly under wraps.

The Drones Campaigns Network sets out to:

- to raise awareness generally about the growing use of armed drones
- to share information between organisations and individuals working on the issue
- to take collective action on the issue where appropriate

It was agreed that we would initially work together to challenge the secrecy surrounding the use of armed drones and the following statement was agreed:

The military use of unmanned aerial vehicles, commonly referred to as drones, has grown rapidly over the past decade. Increasingly armed forces are using drones controlled via satellites communication to launch missile and bombs at distances of many thousands of miles. There is considerable concern at reports of high civilian casualties resulting from drone strikes and at the use of armed drones in connection with targeted assassinations. 'Perhaps the core concern with regard to the use of armed drones is the 'Playstation mentality', whereby the geographical

and psychological distance between the drone operator and the target lowers the threshold to launching an attack and makes it more likely that weapons will be used.

The Drone Campaign Network calls on the UK Government to be more transparent in regard to the circumstances of the use of drones and to make public the number of casualties resulting from British drone attacks. We urge that there is a serious, informed and open discussion about the use of armed drones by British forces.

conscience has agreed to support the network and help in a very limited capacity, mainly by spreading news of the network and its actions to our members. We believe that the use of unmanned aerial vehicles is wrong and that the horrific nature of these weapons shows that they should not be used for security. Ultimately, conscience does not believe that anyone with a conscientious objection to war and the preparations for war should be paying for these weapons.

During the international 'Keep Space for Peace' week (3rd – 9th October) the Drones Campaign Network will be organising a 'Week of Action on Drones'. For more information visit www.dronewarsuk.wordpress.com.

financial position 2010

conscience is not a charity, but we still produce transparent public accounts that meet charity law.

	2010	2010	2010	2009
	Restricted	Unrestricted	TOTAL	total
INCOME				
Donations and legacies	0	56,621	56,621	49,513
Grants, including QPSW	0	5,500	5,500	20,115
Sundry, including interest	0	902	902	357
TOTAL	0	63,023	63,023	69,985
EXPENDITURE				
Premises	0	-4,594	-4,594	-4,674
Office costs	0	-3,110	-3,110	-5,678
Staffing	-4,680	-45,568	-50,248	-73,472
Fundraising	0	-845	-845	-920
Membership	0	-1,730	-1,730	-656
Campaigning	-2,650	-3,677	-6,327	-13,919
Governance	0	-1,635	-1,635	-2,043
TOTAL	-7,330	-61,159	-68,489	-101,362
Net income/ (expenditure)	-7,330	1,864	-5,466	-31,377
Total funds brought forward	7,330	5,122	12,452	43,829
Total funds carried forward	0	6,986	6,986	12,452

The figures to the left are a summary of our Statement of Financial Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2010. If you would like a copy of the full, examined, accounts or if you have any questions, please contact us at info@conscienceonline.org.uk or phone 020 7561 1061.

Note that the figures for 2009 differ slightly from those given in **conscience update** issue 139 (spring 2010) as a result of adjustments following examination.

It will be obvious that our financial position is much worse than at the end of 2009. Part of the reason is that the final activities of the Peace and Security Liaison Group were funded

by grants received in previous years. The other factor is that for several years the Executive Committee deliberately decided to invest in the campaign, setting deficit budgets which drew on our reserves, in the belief that investing in promoting **conscience**, in campaigning and in recruiting new members would result in an increase in income. However this has been slow to have an effect and at the end of 2010 the Executive Committee decided to cut expenditure, partly by reducing staff levels, in 2011. Fundraising efforts are, of course, also continuing and we anticipate a steady improvement in finances over the year.

Monica Frisch, Treasurer
July 2011

For maximum transparency and accountability we always ask our members to approve our annual accounts. Please take a moment to look at page 9 of this issue and then answer the question below, tear of the slip and return to:

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Do you accept the accounts on page 9 of **conscience update**?

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conscience EC recruitment

conscience: TAXES FOR PEACE NOT WAR is looking for new members to join its Executive Committee (EC), which manages the work of **conscience**.

EC membership involves: attending EC meetings to discuss and make decisions on matters such as policy, strategy and finance and working with other EC members and the staff to agree the framework that guides the activities of staff.

We are looking for someone who is enthusiastic and committed to helping **conscience** achieve its aims of ensuring taxes are used for peace not war; and who can bring their skills, experience and new ideas to contribute to the broad range of people that makes up the EC

If you think you could contribute to the work of **conscience** then we would love to hear from you. Please contact us at info@conscienceonline.org.uk or call 020 7561 1061.