



International Conference Challenges, Encourages

By TIM GODSHALL | In July, Marian and I had the privilege of attending the 10th International Conference on War Tax Resistance and Peace Tax Campaigns in Brussels, Belgium. Four NCPTF board members also attended the conference: David Bassett, Lyle Jenks, Rosa Packard, and John Randall. Over 70 people from 13 different countries participated in the conference, which is held biennially.



Belgian Conference organizers accept a well-deserved round of applause at the end of the conference. Left to right, they are: Dirk Panhuis, Januario Tavares Silva, Hilde Mariën, Koen Moens, Jan Hellebaut, and Anja Nuttin. Photo by Tim Godshall.

I was very impressed with the organization of the event, which was hosted by the Flemish peace tax campaign (Aktie Vredesbelasting) and French-speaking peace tax campaign (Contribuables pour la paix / Mouvement chrétien pour la paix.) The three-day conference, held at a Franciscan monastery, featured 12 workshops, plenary sessions, and the Conscience and Peace Tax International General Assembly.

in response to changing political climates. The Netherlands has a 500-year history of war tax resistance, so the government has a lot of experience collecting resisted taxes, said Bart Horemann, of Euro's voor Vrede, the Dutch peace tax campaign. In the Netherlands, most federal revenue is collected not as income tax, but as value-added tax on purchases. Value-added taxes are very difficult to refuse because they affect every monetary transaction.

In the plenary session "Focus, Variety, and Change," speakers from the Netherlands, Spain and the U.S. talked about how their movements have shifted over the years

Because of great protest over the U.S. nuclear presence in the Netherlands, war tax resistance was widespread during the 1980s. The Dutch Parliament became aware that thousands of people of conscience were refusing war taxes. Even so, they dismissed the peace tax legislation as too radical because it indicated not only where the money would not go (war), but where it would go instead (specific social programs). The legislation has since been changed to address the concerns of Parliament, yet it still has not been enacted. The problem now is that Parliament does not see nearly as many people actively calling for this legislation. According to Horemann, if the bill in its current state had come before Parliament in the 1980s, the Netherlands would most likely have a peace tax fund option.

For the full conference report, visit www.cpti.ws

No Time for Foolishness! *Reflections on Peace Tax Fund work in NYC*

By NEENA M. DAS | Reverend James Forbes, Senior Minister at the Riverside Church in New York City, often punctuates his sermons with "No Time for Foolishness!" I can see him using this refrain in agreement with Alasdair MacIntyre, who argued that despair is a cultural luxury — a luxury to be categorically dispensed with. This is a timely reminder for those who are considering despairing, depending on the election results. No Time for Foolishness! If we're serious about peace, despair is not an option, whoever is in office.

That said, despair is an old friend of mine. The only thing that has kept it at bay is the thought that I ought to shape up and attend to this world in which 34,000 children under the age of five die of hunger or disease every day. No time for foolishness! Hunger is obviously only one of the many social issues that

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NCPTF Welcomes New and Returning Staff, and Lucy!



Daniel Longwing joined our staff in September, as our part-time administrative assistant. We really appreciate Daniel's computer expertise and his encyclopedic knowledge of random topics.

Photos by Tim Godshall



Kelsey Knight-King returned from maternity leave in October as our other part-time administrative assistant — and she brought along Lucy Olive, born July 7. When Lucy's not busy charming us or doing other baby activities, she helps her mom seal envelopes for important NCPTF mailings.

Inside this *Update*:

Report from 10th International Conference on War Tax Resistance and Peace Tax Campaigns

Italian Courts affirm conscientious objectors' right to pay taxes for nonviolent civil defense

New York City rap duo calls for a Peace Tax Fund



By MARIAN FRANZ
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Rapping About Plowshares and Swords

If you knew my taste in music, you would be perplexed to learn that I led the standing ovation for a rap group rhythmically chanting with loud music. It was startling and gratifying

to hear the Poetics, a rap duo from Harlem, sing "Taxes for peace, not for war. Taxes for books not for bombs. Taxes for housing not for killing...." Never before has rap music been such music to my ears.

I knew, in that special moment on a September Saturday afternoon at New York City's Riverside Church, that our campaign to pass a law allowing conscientious objection to military taxes had reached a point of great significance.

Why would a Harlem rap group compose a song exclusively to promote the Peace Tax Fund bill in the U.S. Congress? Their intent was to broadcast clearly and unmistakably the connection between military spending and the growing needs they see around them. Fortunately, a radio station was recording the entire program for re-broadcast to a wide audience. This remarkable gathering, "A Forum on the Peace Tax Fund," also featured a church choir from Harlem and an informative panel discussion. The meeting was sponsored and planned by the New York City Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund, now less than a year old.

Fifty percent of African American men in New York City are unemployed. That appalling statistic, verified in a number of studies, is reported by NYC Councilman Bill Perkins, who represents the Columbia University and Harlem areas. Problems grow worse as military spending increases. Some communities inhabited by the poor look as if bombs have already fallen. The groups in society that suffer most because of "defense" spending see their livelihoods increasingly siphoned off. Many view this economic death as silent murder. Yet, the country's military policy seems to be more of the same ... much, much more.

No wonder that Councilman Bill Perkins introduced a resolution in the NYC Council in support of the Peace Tax Fund Bill in Washington, DC. The connection between military spending and growing hardships of citizens is clear in his "Resolution in Support of the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Act." Resolution

367 states in part: "... whereas, these advanced weapons perpetrate violence not only due to their incredible destructive powers, but also due to the devastation they cause in our communities by draining essential financial resources needed to address basic human needs; ..."

When Councilman Perkins came to Washington, DC, last month, he and I spoke at length with Rep. Charles Rangel and Rep. Edolphus Towns. By the end of the day, four members of Congress who represent New York City (Reps Rangel, Towns, Owens, Serrano) had signed a letter urging the NYC Council to pass the resolution of support for the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund bill.

The Biblical vision to turn swords into plowshares has been reversed and turned upside down. Beating swords into plowshares produces food. Beating plowshares into swords, however, pays defense contractors handsomely. Military contractors do everything within their considerable power to ensure there will always be a need for new missiles, fighter planes, tanks, ships, arms, bombs, helicopters, etc. Powerful members of Congress lard the skids.

Against those odds, we see in New York City a way to solidly grasp a handle with leverage. Whencitizens see the connection between "books and bombs" exposed, they act. Here are some suggestions to help your own community understand the connections:


- Study the NYC resolution and adapt it for your own community, town or city. Find it at www.peacetaxfund.org.
- Learn the actual cost of war to your community. A great resource to start with is www.nationalpriorities.org.
- Enlist the cooperation of your local council of churches, peace and civil liberties groups.
- Hold a hearing which presents testimonies of those who resist paying war taxes for reasons of conscience.
- Use these efforts as a way to get your congressional delegation to support the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Bill.

If you think these ideas would work for you, or if you have other ideas, please let us know.



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10th International Conference, from page 1

The International Conference did much to rid me of my idealized picture of Europe as a socially just, environmentally friendly, and non-militarized place. Even so, military spending in most western European countries hovers around 10%, a far cry from the estimated 49% that the U.S. will spend on war and war debt in 2005. The relatively "low" level of military spending in Europe (low only when compared to the U.S.) means that European peace tax campaigners don't have the same startling numbers to refer to when trying to convince people of their point. The portion of taxes that goes toward social programs is generally much higher in Europe than in the U.S. This is a good thing, of course, but it means that European campaigns cannot rely as much on a public outcry against misplaced spending priorities, and must rely more on the argument that humans have the right not to pay for war.

Emphasizing human rights makes a lot of sense in Europe, where the rulings of international bodies are more respected than in the U.S. To be a member of the Council of Europe a country must not use the death penalty and it must recognize conscientious objection to military service. All European countries, except Belarus, are members of the Council of Europe. We heard from the Quaker Council on European Affairs about their work with the Council of Europe to pass a resolution on the human right to conscientiously object to paying for war. If passed, this resolution would instruct

all member countries to honor this right in the same way that they must honor the right to conscientious objection to military service.

This conference continued the tradition of selecting an international project to support. This year, the discussion about alternative forms of security emerged as a priority during the conference, and was approved as an area of focus for national movements in the upcoming years. (See related article on page 3).

While the information I learned was very interesting and valuable, the highlight of the conference, for me, was simply meeting a lot of inspiring people working for this same cause in so many places. We had time during meals and in the evenings to talk about what we do and to get to know each other. One night we had a talent and cultural show that featured songs, poems, stories and a collective strategy game where the conscientious objector seeks to elude various authorities. After the show I decided to be social and fought off my jet lag-induced impulse to go to bed early. I'm glad I did, as I spent the next few hours with a group of people singing folk songs from all over the world. The evening of singing symbolized the larger truth of which I was reminded at the conference: We are not alone in this struggle.

Tim also very much enjoyed eating authentic Belgian waffles, which, he claims, are richer, denser, and tastier than their U.S. counterparts.



Photo by Marian Franz



Photo by Tim Godshall

Following the conference, the organizers planned a 2-day visit to World War I sites in the Flanders region of Belgium, where hundreds of thousands of soldiers died in the war. As our tour bus drove through the idyllic countryside, the cemeteries dotted all across the landscape were reminders of past suffering. Thousands of tombstones such as this one (far left) mark the graves of unidentified British soldiers. After her son, Peter, was killed in Flanders, German artist Kathe Kollwitz worked for over a decade on "Mourning Parents" (left). The figures, modeled after herself and her husband Karl, kneel facing Peter's grave among the thousands buried at Vladslo German military cemetery. The trip was an intense look at the horrors and "innovations" of WW I, which claimed over 9 million lives.

Alternative Security Means Buying New Tools

BY TIM GODSHALL Because of my conscience against participation in war, sometime I feel like I have surrendered, by default, my voice in the debate about national and world security. The terms of this debate are generally based on the assumption that military force is necessary as a "last resort." (I use quotes because in actual practice, as we continue to see, military violence is employed long before all other options have been exhausted.)

Though conscientious objection to participation in war is a personal matter, my refusal to participate in it won't make war go away. I wear a "War is not the Answer" sticker on my backpack, but what *is* the answer? If I refuse to participate in military-based security, is there a type of security in which I would participate? How do I propose we protect ourselves in a violent world? I am often at a loss to answer this question with anything more practical than "love your enemies," which seems laughable, even to me, on an international level.

While love of enemies is at the root of what my faith tells me about how to achieve a peaceful world, I don't believe we can get to that point from where we are now without some intermediate, practical steps. I was very glad this concern was addressed during the 10th International Conference in Brussels in a workshop titled "Alternative forms of security: What *do* we want?"

Deanna Douglas from Conscience – the Peace Tax Campaign in UK – led this workshop. She began by identifying the assumptions that underlie any security policy. These assumptions are based on the answers to two questions: 1) From what do we need to be secure? and 2) Who needs the security? Whereas most politicians focus on national security, an alternative security program focuses on human security. Human security is concerned with keeping people safe, regardless of their nationality. When you start with this assumption, war doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

If we seek alternative service for our drafted dollars, we must also have an alternative vision for how security is achieved. Politicians who are skittish about the idea of a peace tax fund are afraid not only of enemies who might attack, but of their own constituents who might not re-elect them if they aren't "tough" on security issues. Politicians have been trained to think that security = military. Our job is to educate them about other ways of achieving security. Alternative security means using the entire "toolbox" to solve problems, rather than just reaching for the hammer. Unfortunately, the hammer is the biggest, easiest-to-find, and sometimes *only* tool in the box. We can't expect governments to give up their hammer without having other tools to reach for.

Using the current crisis in Zimbabwe as a case study, Douglas detailed 10 different tools that could be used there, or in other corrupt, violent, and dangerous situations that are short of all-out war: 1) Civilian accompaniment, 2) Control of international weapons trade, 3) Trained human rights inspectors, 4) Law enforcement reform, 5) Bringing militias under control by finding out what it is they actually want, 6) Talking with all parties affected by the power dynamics, 7) Mediation training, 8) Reconciliation Committees, as were used in South Africa, 9) Supporting civil society, and 10) Supporting a free press. Douglas expanded on all these ideas and recommended *Rethinking War & Peace*, by Diana Francis, as an excellent resource on the non-inevitability of war.

None of this will give me a witty sound bite to respond to the clerk at the store who looks at my War is not the Answer sticker and says "So, what *is* the answer?" I may not even be able to convince my friends that war is not inevitable. But I'll start with convincing myself and go from there.

The 10th International Conference adopted a proposal calling on national movements, over the next two years, to discuss concrete alternatives to war and traditional military defense. Please contact NCPTF if this is a discussion in which you would like to participate.

National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund & The Peace Tax Foundation



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Membership in the NCPTF costs \$35 annually. Since NCPTF advocates for the legal recognition of conscientious objection to military taxation, membership dues and gifts to NCPTF are not tax-deductible. Tax-deductible contributions can be made to the Peace Tax Foundation, which educates the public about issues of taxes and war.

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No time for foolishness, from page 1

relentlessly call on us. Currently, we are torn between attending to the bleeding that results from social neglect and that which results from waging war. This general state of affairs continues no matter who is in leadership. So the question at the forefront of our moral consciousness should always be: What can I do? What can we do?

Not-knowing, Bearing Witness, Loving Action

The Zen Peacemaker circle, a global network of spiritual activists who work in different areas of social welfare, is bound together by three tenets: 1) Not Knowing — letting go of all fixed ideas, 2) Bearing Witness — embracing all that is given in its rich complexities, and 3) Loving Action — emerging empowered with a compassionate response. If you're concerned about something, plunge into the problem. Begin by letting go of all that you know of the "why" and the "how to", bear witness to the suffering, and stay true to yourself as a peacemaker.

Children in poverty have always been a special concern of mine, but generally, I've despaired of the entire mess. However, over the years I've reluctantly plunged into the entire mess: our histories, the state of the world, and my life. I took in all the details, and trusted deep down that something would emerge. My aim wasn't to find "The Solution" to the world's problems, but to discover my role in it. For now, I've found my role in helping organize the New York City Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund.

A terrific idea . . . For the sake of conscience

It's easy to be overwhelmed with the gory details of how shameless profiteering and aggressive war mongering control the direction of the global agenda. Although war profiteering has escalated to record levels in this country, haven't we always known that "The Man" is well organized and up to no good? What we need to do now is to direct our attention to organizing ourselves. That is the promise of the Peace Tax Fund. It not only provides a way to give expression to the voice of conscience; it also provides a concrete tool to "organize the forces of peace." To echo Reverend Martin Luther King's sentiments, "Those who love peace must learn to organize as effectively as those who love war."

There's a moral clarity that comes from acting out of love, and the Peace Tax Fund follows suit in this regard

because it brings into focus two simple and forceful elements in our lives: paying taxes and the inner voice of conscience. Focusing on these two elements helps answer the essential questions: What can I do? What can we do? For some, participation in war through taxes has always been morally objectionable. For the rest of us, only when we realize that almost 50% of our taxes pay for war is the decision made obvious. When I look at the pie chart of our income taxes divided almost equally between military and non-military uses, it says to me: "Look, stupid, how plain can I make the logic of warmaking? . . . No time for foolishness! Where do you stand!?" For many individuals and institutions concerned about social welfare and social justice, the Peace Tax Fund has created a blessed union: it allows us to assert our stand against warmaking and address our creative need to build a world of peaceful tomorrows.

I care about helping organize our community, particularly clergy and faith communities, but my central motivation remains the realization I came to after 9/11: No time for foolishness! I cannot, should not, and will not participate in war.

Neena M. Das organizes Peace Tax Fund work in New York City.

Two More Cosponsor H.R. 2037

Reps. Michael Honda (CA-15) and Edward Markey (MA-7) added their names to the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Bill in early October, bringing the number of cosponsors to 44, an increase of 15 since the bill was introduced in May, 2003. For a full list of cosponsors, visit www.peacetaxfund.org.

NCPTF Receives Grant from One Million Taxpayers for Peace

NCPTF is grateful to One Million Taxpayers for Peace for their recent donation to our work. Organized as a response to U.S. military action following 9-11, OMTFP collects money from people who, for reasons of conscience, choose to redirect a symbolic portion of their owed taxes toward life-affirming purposes. OMTFP chose us as one of 10 organizations working for peace, justice and conflict resolution to which they forwarded redirected tax money. OMTFP has recently turned their website over to the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee. For more information, visit www.onemilliontaxpayersforpeace.org.

Success in Italy: C.O.'s Achieve Nonmilitary Tax Option

BY MARIAN FRANZ | The peace tax campaign in Italy has won the right to pay taxes for peaceful purposes rather than for military use. It is called the Campaign for Objection to Military Spending and for a Popular Nonviolent Defense (*Campagna di Obiezione alle Spese Militari per le Difesa Popolare Nonviolenta*). They won this right not through legislation, but through the courts.

Fourteen people who refused to pay the military portion of their tax for reasons of conscience were brought to trial. They were tried not merely for their refusal, but for the more serious charge of incitement, of inciting others not to pay. They were acquitted in each case. The government appealed. Again, in a higher court, they were all acquitted.

As a result, Italian conscientious objectors against taxation for military purposes are now able to make tax payments to one of four Italian non-governmental organizations actively working for peace in different parts of the world. Among these groups are: The Peace Constructors, Solidarity for Justice and Responsible Collaboration between People, and the Community of Pope John XXIII Service for Conscience and Peace.

In addition, some Italian citizens have chosen to pay the military portion of their tax directly to a government bureau, the National Bureau for Civil Service and Nonviolent Popular Defense, instead of to the Ministry of Defense. To date that action has not been challenged in court.

The fact that the governmental Nonviolent Civil Defense Commission exists is the work of the Italian Campaign. Among the heads of this Commission are friends of the Italian Campaign. The Commission's task is to devise a working non-armed civilian defense. The Italian Campaign is seeking more funding for the Commission and is asking the Commission to embark on a national project on conscientious objector education.

Peace Tax Seven Challenge UK Law

A group of British conscientious objectors, calling themselves the Peace Tax Seven, are challenging current UK tax policy in the High Court with regard to military expenditure. Individually, each of the seven has already challenged the law as it stands, facing prosecution and legal penalties, sometimes repeatedly, and sometimes over a period of many years. Some have been to court for non-payment of taxes, only to see their defenses ruled out; one was told that his defense was logical, but not legal.

Now, coming together as a group, the Peace Tax Seven are seeking a judicial review of current policy in order to establish the legal right for individual taxpayers to direct a relevant proportion of their tax away from unaccountable military uses, and towards peacebuilding, nonviolent conflict resolution, international development, and the many alternatives to war.

Over the years there have been several attempts in the UK courts to uphold freedom of conscience regarding military taxation. So far, these have been overruled.

However, like other aspects of UK law, the legal basis of UK tax policy is pervasively affected by the incorporation into UK law of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Peace Tax Seven believe that the Convention creates a new context for legal thinking and policy-making about war taxation. Accordingly, they are seeking to safeguard their long-proclaimed freedom of conscience, which, they believe, is guaranteed under the terms of the European Convention.

This article was excerpted from the Peace Tax Seven's website. To read more, visit www.peacetaxseven.com. The Peace Tax Seven receive support from Conscience - the Peace Tax Campaign in the UK.

