

IF YOU WORK
FOR PEACE



STOP PAYING
FOR WAR.

More than a paycheck

NEWS FROM THE WAR TAX RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

August 2009

WTR Profile

Journeys Begin with the First Step

By DeCourcy Squires



Courtesy of DeCourcy Squires.

It is late winter in the 1950s. My father is closeted with lots of receipts, trying to figure out the taxes. Although he is a brilliant mathematician, he finds arithmetic, especially in these pre-calculator days, tedious and it makes him cross. My brother and I tiptoe around, careful not to disturb him. Despite the stress, my parents are strong supporters of a progressive income tax which helps the government pay for programs to promote the common good. Years later, they will decline to take an exemption that would allow them not to pay school taxes. Their example instills in me a strong sense of social responsibility—but how to express this takes me on a different path.

It is January 1967, at the height of the Vietnam War. I am on the steps of the Antioch Inn in Yellow Springs, Ohio, where

my friend Gene introduces me to Wally Nelson. Wally is a nonviolent activist who served time in prison during World War II because of his pacifist convictions. As he explains his philosophy of personal responsibility and the mechanics of his tax resistance, it immediately makes sense to me. Later that spring I begin a six-month stint at the Committee for Nonviolent Action (CNVA) farm in Voluntown, Connecticut. There I encounter other tax resisters and activists, take part in nonviolent direct actions, and get involved with Peacemakers, of which the Nelsons, Ernest and Marion Bromley, and Rev. Maurice MacCrackin, all staunch war tax resisters, are guiding lights.

I emerge from CNVA a vegetarian, tax resister, feminist, pacifist-activist, prison abolitionist, and with a philosophy that combines individual responsibility with community involvement and collective action. This is an emergence rather than a transformation: I have grown in the courage to do the things I feel are right, but it feels as if these are things I have known and believed in for a long time. For the next 25 years I live on an income below the taxable level, both as a war tax resistance strategy and as part of a commitment to simple living. From the time of my first telephone in 1970, I refuse to pay the federal excise tax. Every few years I get a letter from IRS about this, but when I respond with a letter explaining my refusal and the added information that I do not have

bank account, car, or house for them to seize, they go away again.

Rochester 1972: Our little band of tax resisters hands out nickels of tax-resisted money at bus stops when the fare is

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END THE NUCLEAR NIGHTMARE

More than 60 years have passed since the first use of weapons of mass destruction, but we must not forget the lives lost at Ground Zero in Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, when the United States bombed Japan, incinerating 100,000 in a single instant. Just a few days later on August 9, another 70,000 were killed by the atomic bombing of Nagasaki. Countless tens of thousands have died of radiation exposure and cancers in years since.

Despite that horror the Soviet Union and United States launched a nuclear arms. Trillions of dollars and countless brilliant minds were wasted to create thousands of weapons that must never be used again.

"In war, truth is the first casualty."
—Aeschylus
Lies about weapons of mass destruction
taunted the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Now the
government promotes fear that a nuclear
weapon will fall into the "wrong hands" as a
reason to continue its open-ended brutal war
against "terrorists." The only country to use
nuclear weapons—the U.S.

Over eight years the Bush administration rolled back four decades of progress (how as it has been) on nuclear arms control. The Obama administration is signaling hope for the elimination of nuclear weapons. This will not happen without continued pressure, and it will not happen if the administration continues to promote nuclear power

as a "green alternative." Nuclear power is the major source of nuclear weapons proliferation. Six decades of the nuclear nightmare is enough. There are hundreds of actions we can take to demand a nuclear-free world, but can we work for peace while paying for weapons? Find out where your tax dollars go and what you can do about it.

The nuclear bomb is the most anti-democratic, anti-national, anti-human, outright evil thing that man has ever made. This world of ours is four billion, six hundred million years old. It could end in an afternoon.
—MARSHALL BERGMAN

The U.S. has spent more than \$5.5 trillion dollars on nuclear weapons since the beginning of the nuclear age, an average of \$16 billion a year of U.S. taxpayer's money.
Discover how not to pay for weapons of mass destruction

National War Tax Resistance
Coordinating Committee
P.O. Box 150553, Brooklyn, NY 11215
800-269-7464 • www.nwtrcc.org

Local Contacts:

War Tax Resistance outreach is not just for April 15. By the time you receive this newsletter commemorative events for Hiroshima and Nagasaki days may already be underway. Take a minute to visit our website and download the updated flyer for outreach at those events. You will also find other new materials that you can print out and photocopy yourself. See page 5 of this newsletter for more details or go to nwtrcc.org/downloadable.htm.

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More than a paycheck

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More Than a Paycheck is a bimonthly publication of the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee, a clearinghouse and resource center for the conscientious war tax resistance movement in the United States. NWTRCC is a coalition of local, regional and national affiliate groups working on war tax related issues.

NWTRCC sees poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, economic exploitation, environmental destruction and militarization of law enforcement as integrally linked with the militarism which we abhor. Through the redirection of our tax dollars, NWTRCC members contribute directly to the struggle for peace and justice for all.

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COUNSELING NOTES

Unnecessary Filing

A recent audit by the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) focused on taxpayers aged 65 or older who had minimal income but filed returns without regard to whether they were due a refund from income tax withholding. Besides the time wasted, many paid a tax professional to help with the forms. Taxpayers, especially those with only Social Security income, should discontinue income tax withholding and filing if there is a remote chance that they will have taxable income (WTR arguments might be an additional reason). The IRS agreed to update the information about unnecessary withholding and filings in the *Tax Guide for Seniors* (IRS Publication 554). Some in the NWTRCC network trained as volunteer tax preparers during tax time. This would be something to watch for. The TIGTA audit is available under Audit Reports at <http://treas.gov/tigta>.

Tax-Free

Between the rotten economy and the government's stimulus/recovery measures, more Americans are finding themselves income tax free this year than any time in recent memory. According to the Tax Policy Center, taxpolicycenter.org, which has crunched the numbers, fully 46.9% of American households will pay no federal income tax this year.

Social Security Experience

"...I stopped filing income tax or paying social security in 1980 and, having only worked sporadically for 13 years before that, I was worried that I

didn't work enough 'quarters' to be able to collect SS in 2 years (I'm 60).

"And I'm disabled by a chronic illness, one that is hard to test for.

"Well, I finally called SS and in a minute they had all my info. And I made it—43 quarters, so I'll be collecting \$495/month. A lot of money for me! Whew!

"I think I should tell of my stand about WTR since I'm in a small minority. I decided that to earn or spend more than \$1,500/year (in 1983) is a privilege of U.S. Empire—so except for the past 5 years I lived off the land, no utilities or power machinery and only a bicycle for errands and peddling handmade woodenware around the area.

"Of course, I never expected to lose my health this way."

—PL., Maine

Paperwork Reduction?

"Thank you for your correspondence.... We have not resolved this matter because we haven't completed all the processing necessary for a complete response. However, we will contact you again within 45 days with our reply. You don't need to do anything further now on this matter...." —IRS Letter 2645C

One resister has received this letter three times—in May, June, and July. Each letter was sent from a different IRS office. It's not clear what "correspondence" the IRS is referring to, but it is probably the letter enclosed with the resister's 1040 filed for April 15, 2009. That was the only letter sent to the IRS. Perhaps this is a prelude to a frivolous warning letter? Let us know your experiences, and stay tuned for the next count.

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Many Thanks



Network Updates

We are grateful to these groups for recent contributions and dues payments and to members of the Fundraising Committee who have been busy helping keep NWTRCC going.

Christian Peacemaker Teams (IL)

Las Vegas Catholic Worker (NV)

Louisville Fellowship of Reconciliation (KY)

Maine War Tax Resistance Fund

New England War Resisters League (CT)

Nonviolent Action Community of Cascadia (WA)

Nuclear Resister (AZ)

Princeton Fund for Life (NJ)

NWTRCC's list of war tax resistance counselors, area contacts, affiliates, and alternative funds and updates to that list appear on the "Contacts and Counselors" page of the NWTRCC website. Print versions of the Network List, which are slightly more extensive, are available on request from the NWTRCC office. Please get in touch with the office if you are interested in joining our network as a contact, counselor, affiliate group, or alternative fund. Email nwtrcc@nwtrcc.org or call toll free 1-800-269-7464.

Active Committees in the NWTRCC network are: War Tax Boycott, Video, Fundraising. Volunteers are always welcome!

A Persistent Voice: Marian Franz and Conscientious Objection to Military Taxation

Edited by David Bassett, Steve Ratzlaff and Tim Godshall

Reviewed by Alan Gamble

A *Persistent Voice* is a collection of selected newsletter columns written by Marian Franz over the 25 years that she headed the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund in Washington, DC. Perhaps I am biased, having followed Marian as Director of the Peace Tax Fund (NCPTF), but even though I have read each of these essays several times, they have a remarkable freshness—almost timelessness—to them. Further, the book includes six chapters by associates who worked closely with Marian to advance the cause of conscience (including one by NWTRCC Coordinator Ruth Benn) and an historical summary by David Bassett, whose passionate energy has invigorated many for nearly 40 years. We are gifted with a truly engaging and inspiring book.

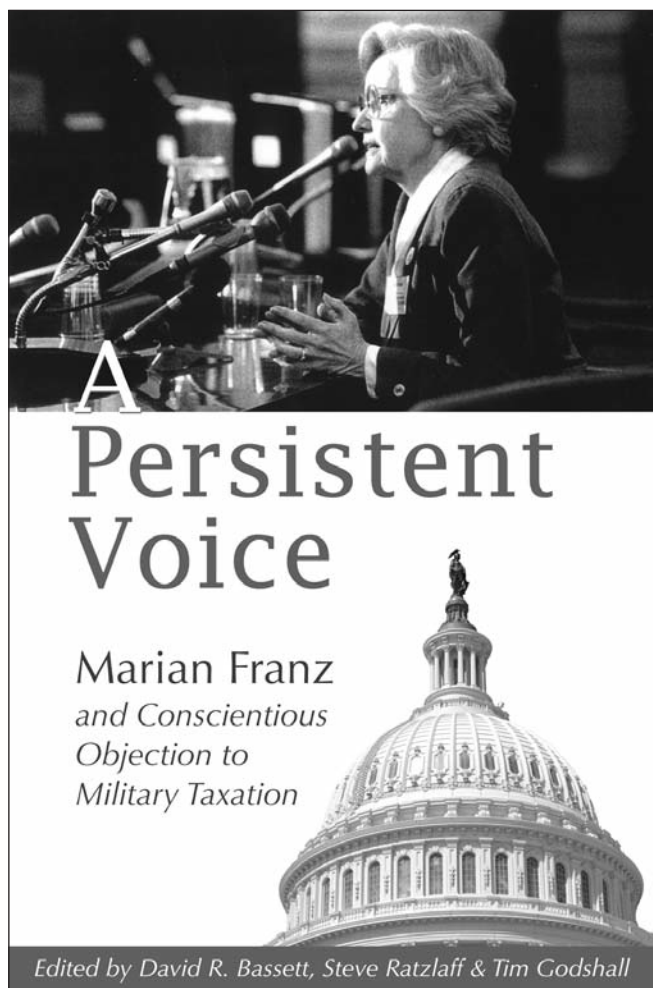
From July to October 2006 I visited Marian at her home a few times, seeking her wish for the book's title. When she passed in November 2006 with none yet revealed, I searched through her writings for clues. "A Friendly Pest" was floated (see p. 104 in connection with Sojourner Truth), yet didn't obviously have the right feel. One day in consultation on this difficulty, my wife Prisca suggested "A Persistent Voice," and I knew immediately it was the title Marian would have wanted. The double entendre wasn't lost on me.

Yes, for 25 years Marian was a persistent voice in the halls of the U.S. Congress. She just kept coming back year after year, such that a senator once called her a friendly pest. He explained that those who are so committed to their cause that they will keep on returning and wear away excuses are the ones who change attitudes and policy. Each of us, too, carries within us "a persistent voice" of conscience that will not go away.

Marian's essays show her skill at using a personal story to launch her gentle but firm argument. These stories span her lifetime, from her childhood experiences on a Kansas farm with German prisoners of war to transformative encounters in the halls of Congress. She also brought in stories of other famous and not-so-famous people throughout the ages who lived their conscience, despite the costs. She revealed in the energy she experienced at international conferences, mourned the terrible costs of the bloated military budget, and entreated her readers to act on their conscience, lest they lose it. Marian kindled the fire of conscience within her to such a degree that others who worked with her couldn't help but catch the spark and be ignited too. She seemed to embody the words of Anatole France:

Do not try to satisfy your vanity by teaching a great many things. Awaken people's curiosity. It is enough to open minds; do not overload them. Put there just a spark. If there is some good inflammable stuff, it will catch fire.

I urge you to buy and read this wonderfully rich book. Become rekindled. Then pass it on to a friend and buy another until the whole world catches the fire and the collective conscience of humanity is ablaze. ▼



Alan Gamble was the Executive Director of the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund and Peace Tax Foundation from 2006 to 2008. He is a NWTRCC contact in Michigan and presently serves on the board of Conscience and Peace Tax International, www.cpti.ws.

A Persistent Voice is published by Cascadia Publishing House in association with The Peace Tax Foundation. Purchase it at your local bookstore or online for \$19.95 from cascadiapublishinghouse.com or call Cascadia in Philadelphia at (215) 723-9125.

WTR Ideas and Actions



Composer Harold Moyer plays while NWTRCC folks sing “Paying for War” at the Newton, Kansas, gathering, November 2007. Photo by Ruth Benn.

“Paying for War”

Heartland Peace Tax Group in Newton, Kansas, recently announced the release of the lyrics and music for the ironic song “Paying for War.” It grows out of Mennonite experience in dealing with the “principalities and powers” of our world.

The lyrics are by David Ortman of Seattle, who has published plays and written numerous articles on environmental and peace issues. J. Harold Moyer composed the music. He is Professor Emeritus of Music at Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas, where he taught from 1959–1992. Harold has had a number of church-related compositions and arrangements published by Mark Foster and more recently Shawnee Press.

The words to the refrain are: *I’m a Christian* and I’m told to pay for war / Though that’s half of what our country’s budget’s for / I pay for war to fight and kill our Nation’s foe / I pay for war because the Bible* tells me so. (*Other designations can be substituted.)*

“Paying for War” was copyrighted in 2007, but NWTRCC has permission from the authors to circulate this bit of creativity to interested persons/groups. Please contact the office if you would like a copy of the words and music.

—Donald Kaufman,
Heartland Peace Tax Group

Protest War— No Matter What

In spite of getting around in a reclining wheelchair, Chloe Lietzke was out on the sidewalk in front of the Marine Recruiting Center in Oakland, California, in April. She joined a Code Pink demonstration with her sign featuring, among other messages, a NWTRCC bumpersticker. Chloe’s husband took her down to the demonstration even though their perspectives differ. He was surprised that there was no police presence; she was surprised that the recruiting office was just a small storefront. Still there were young men considering signing up “to serve my country,” so there were many conversations with them and passers by. “It was a wonderful experience,” says Chloe.



Courtesy of Chloe Lietzke.

Tax Day in Bangor

To the Editor:

April 15, 2009: As usual, I arrived at the Bangor Post Office and Federal Building before noon with my WTR leaflets (I like the smaller format; saves paper and is somehow more grabbable). Unlike most years, I was the only leafleter there. We were a bit thin on the ground this year. As usual, most people going in and out of the PO took the leaflet and a few were enthusiastic.

Then some folks started showing up, smiling and taking my leaflets and asking questions like, “Is this where we’re meeting?” I noticed a lot of them were wearing red, white and blue.

Oh yeah, the Tea Party; I’d forgotten. I chatted with them until some other folks arrived across the street with signs and flags. Soon there were probably 100 people lined up. TV crews arrived as did a photographer with the *Bangor Daily News*. They stood on my side of the street to get their crowd shots, so I gave them flyers and explained that I was the one who was here every April 15, not just this one. They listened politely.

When my lunch hour leafleting gig was up, I walked the Tea Party line, offering leaflets and saying in my best projecting voice (adequate for most auditoriums), “Take a look at how your taxes are being spent now; these are government figures. I haven’t paid income taxes for more than 20 years,” (that got their attention) “because there’s an international law, the Nuremberg Principles, which were not only signed by our government but orchestrated by it, that obligates citizens to refuse to support governments engaged in crimes against humanity.”

At this point someone started saying something abusive to me on the order of “Amerika love it or leave it.” I stopped and looked at him. “We’re all on the same side here,” I said, and walked away. Still, I know some people I gave those leaflets to read them.

This is a moment of incredible opportunity. I wish I could have thought to say to that guy, “Do you really NOT see any difference between a hunting rifle that can provide food, or even a gun you keep at home for protection, and government-ordered warfare that kills thousands, often many of them innocent civilians?” Maybe we would have started a dialogue if I could have taken that step toward his point of view.

But I didn’t think of it, because I don’t subscribe to hunting or keeping a handgun. And because I keep forgetting that, as a great organizer I know once said, “Democracy is not the same thing as getting your own way.”

If the peacemakers are not the ones leading the bridge building, who will? I believe it is partial knowledge clouded by propaganda and fear-mongering that prevents most people from taking a stand against war. Opposing war



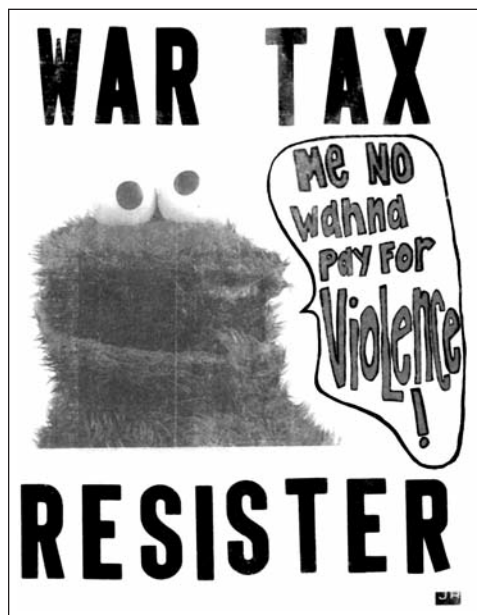
is an act of reason as well as of conscience. We are not promoting illegal behavior. We are upholding international law and—I believe—ultimately human sanity.

Thank you for the newsletter. The courage, humor and humanness of war tax resisters/refusers/redirectioners is as precious as their dedication, competence and compassion.

Hasta la pasta,
Jane Livingston, Maine

Spanish Redirection

Activists in Spain, upset at their government's economic stimulus plans, which they describe as "socially and environmentally regressive" have begun a tax resistance campaign. The participants are redirecting 84 Euros apiece—symbolizing the 84 most impoverished countries on the planet—to more responsible spending priorities. <http://sniggle.net/Experiment/index.php?entry=19Jun09>. ▼

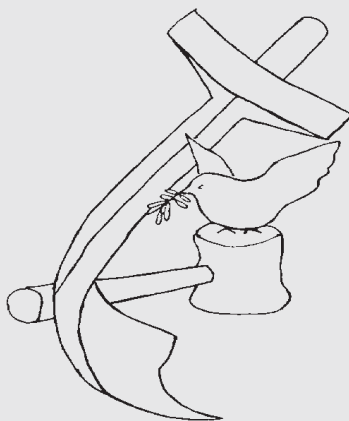


Jason Rawn up in Maine wonders if Cookie Monster could be a war tax resistance icon. Whether Cookie leans in our direction we don't know, but Jason is having fun producing postcards for his own use showing something besides cookies on the famous puppet's mind.

RESOURCES

Updated and Online

NWTRCC has updated the "Students and War" flyer, an outreach tool for young people that connects military recruiting and war tax resistance, and the short flyer about **W-4 resistance** that is also targeted at young employees. We do not print these flyers in bulk, but they can be downloaded for copying from the NWTRCC website, nwtrcc.org/downloadable.htm, or ask the office for a copy that you can use for reproduction.



Stages of Conscientious Objection to Military Taxes

Members of Conscience, Militarism, and War Tax Concerns at Philadelphia Yearly Meeting updated their 4-page leaflet "**Stages of Conscientious Objection to Military Taxes**," an excellent outline for those who are starting to think about taxes and war. The "stages" it covers with thought-provoking quotes and ideas include: Making the connection: support for the military conflicts with our peace testimony; Recognizing personal involvement; Deciding to act; Saying yes; and Saying no. The online file includes links to many other groups and resources. Again, we have not as yet printed this flyer in bulk, but it can be read or downloaded at the link above.

Online users will also find text versions of all the booklets in the "**Practical War Tax Resistance**" series. When you receive counseling questions and do not have all the materials at your fingertips, don't forget to ask people to check out our website and see what's online. Booklets in the Practical series answer many questions about the how tos and consequences of war tax resistance and provide much food for thought as individuals consider WTR. Most of the "Practicals" are available to download as PDF files that can be neatly printed out, or you can order printed versions from the NWTRCC office for \$1.00 each plus .61 postage (or call for bulk rates).

"Practicals" in the series are: #1, *Controlling Federal Tax Withholding*; #2, *To File or Not To File an Income Tax Return*; #3, *How to Resist Collection, or Make the Most of Collection When it Occurs*; #4, *Self Employment: An Effective Path for War Tax Resistance*; #5, *Low Income/Simple Living as War Tax Resistance*; #6, *Organizational War Tax Resistance: Employers, Contractors, and Financial Institutions*; #7, *Healthy, "Wealthy," and Wise: Aging and War Tax Resistance*. Suggestions for #8 are always welcome!

For orders and more information:

NWTRCC, PO Box 150553, Brooklyn, NY 11215
1-800-269-7464 • www.nwtrcc.org/publications.htm

Save the Dates!

Deconstruct War

Use tax dollars to
CONSTRUCT PEACE

NWTRCC Gathering and Meeting

The Nehemiah Center
6515 Bridge Ave., Cleveland, Ohio
Friday, November 6 – Sunday,
November 8, 2009

NWTRCC's fall weekend includes a mini-conference about cutting off war's money supply and funding life-affirming programs. The program includes stories of individual resistance, discussion about consequences and effectiveness, strategizing about all of our work against war and creating the world we hope to see. The NWTRCC business meeting is Sunday morning, November 8 (open to all). Along with local activists, people from around the country who refuse to pay for war will participate in the mini-conference. Come for the whole weekend or one session.

The program and housing will be at the Nehemiah center (nehemiahmission.org) and is hosted by Dorothy Day Peace Tax Fund, Cleveland Catholic Worker, the Cleveland Nonviolence Network, and the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee. For more information see nwtrcc.org/meetings or to have a brochure mailed to you contact the NWTRCC office at nwtrcc@nwtrcc.org or (800) 269-7464.

Note: Proposals regarding NWTRCC program or finances to be included in the November meeting agenda must be submitted in writing to the NWTRCC office by September 21, 2009.

Meet Interesting People

NWTRCC expects to have information/sales tables during some upcoming conferences and events. If you are going to the conference or are in the area, stop by. If you would like to help, please contact the NWTRCC office for more information. Either way, you meet interesting people!

- **Veterans for Peace Convention**, August 6–8, College Park, MD, veteransforpeace.org
- **Christian Peacemaker Teams Congress**, September 17–20, 2009, Denver, CO, cpt.org



The gang at the end of the Coordinating Committee meeting in Harrisonburg, VA, May 2009. We're modeling the "Foreclose on War, Invest in People" scarves that NWTRCC will be selling again this fall as a fundraiser. Of course, you can order before the cold weather sets in. \$15 each plus \$1.73 postage. See nwtrcc.org/scarves.htm for details or call the office at 1-800-269-7464. Photo by Ruth Benn.

- **Gandhi-King Conference on Peacemaking**, October 23–25, Memphis, TN, gandhikingconference.org
- **International Peace Bureau Conference**, November 14–18, Washington, DC, ipb.org
- **School of Americas Watch**, November 20–22, 2009, Fort Benning, Georgia, soaw.org

2010 International Conference

NWTRCC Rep Nominations Open

The 13th International Conference on War Tax Resistance and Peace Tax Campaigns

will be held July 2–4, 2010, in Sandefjord, Norway. NWTRCC sends a representative to each international conference and covers their registration, room and board, and travel up to \$1,000. Representatives are expected to present a NWTRCC report to the conference, might facilitate a workshop or participate in a panel, and must write a report for the newsletter and the following NWTRCC meeting. We will choose our delegate at the November 2009 Coordinating Committee meeting. If you are interested in applying, please send a short write up (mail or email) to the NWTRCC office describing your interest in going, your willingness to fulfill the tasks mentioned, and anything else you think relevant. Deadline is September 21, 2009. ▼

24th Annual New England Gathering of War Tax Resisters and Supporters

October 9–11, 2009 · Amazing Planet Farm & Justice Center
Williamsville, Vermont

"Telling Our Stories, Part 2" picks up on the success of last year's theme and presentations. All seasoned war tax resisters and explorers welcome. For a brochure and further information please contact: WTR Gathering, c/o Erik, 270 Bullock Rd., Guilford, VT 05301. Ph: (802) 257-5725, or email: andbefree@yahoo.com.

WTR Profile

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threatening to go up—this is where our tax dollars should be going. Then on to Boston: I am part of a women's collective which bails people out of jail using money placed in escrow by war tax resisters.

In the 1970s it is not hard to live on a non-taxable income while sharing expenses in communal households. In 1980 I move to Nebraska where the cost of living is even cheaper. I am working on the abolition of the death penalty and supporting myself by teaching adult basic education. When the funding for adult basic education dries up, I start looking around for another occupation I can do part-time to fund my activism. I end up going back to school to become a physical therapist.

What I find in the 1990s is that even working part-time as a physical therapist, I am making more than a taxable income. To prevent withholding, I put down extra allowances on my W-4. This is a tactic which sent my friend John Leininger to jail in the 1970s, but the rules have changed somewhat. I put money into a socially responsible IRA; I make major (tax deductible) donations to organizations I used to be only able to donate a pittance to and become a life member in several; I find ways to use part of my income for work-related purposes. I have less money left to live on than when I made a nontaxable income. I spend hours with many receipts, stressing about whether or not I have gotten my income down to a nontaxable level. I think of my father.

I move to Minneapolis. The cost of living is higher. There are a couple of years when I end up "owing" the government money. I send money orders instead to government programs of which I approve, such as the Indian Public Health Service. We have a war tax resistance support group. Each April 15th we go with our signs and flyers to the post office, which is open until midnight for people to file their returns. Cars stream past while post office workers stand outside with large barrels to collect the envelopes. Inside people frantically fill out forms and schedules. It reminds me of crowds of last minute Christmas shoppers. I find myself wishing that we were all united together, citizens gladly contributing our money to the com-

mon good. Why can't paying taxes, even if stressful, feel as good as making donations and giving gifts?

The IRS starts harassing me for money. I write, I phone, I explain my conscientious objection. Although I do not convince any of the agents with whom I converse (and never get a face-to-face meeting), each phone call and letter, to my surprise, seems to delay things yet further. Eventually in the fall of 1998 they begin to steal money from my paycheck. I feel robbed, invaded, helpless in a way that having my apartment broken into did not make me feel. I resign from my job because I need to move to help take care of my parents who are in failing health.

The new millennium begins. I am in Atlanta, which is expensive. I am helping to take care of my parents, which is expensive. I am struggling to fill out my taxes and knowing that I have not gotten my income to a nontaxable level. It occurs to me briefly how much easier it would be just to pay the taxes. I am emotionally drained and tired. There is not a war on. I feel demoralized from the garnisheeing in Minneapolis.

But when it comes down to it, I cannot do it. Is my weariness more important than the lives of people who will be killed in far away wars? True there is no official war just then, but the money is going to prepare for future wars, it is funding the School of the Americas and new weapons systems. I cannot *unknow* this. I compose one of my tax resistance letters.

In the years that follow, there is indeed a war to demonstrate against and to refuse to pay for. I am relieved that I did not give in to my moment of weakness when I was at such a low ebb. I write my yearly letters to IRS and continue to refuse to pay. But I am submerged in the care of my parents. I get letters from IRS, eventually threatening to garnishee my wages again. My parents die. In 2008 in lieu of taxes I am able to send a large donation to MADRE for their work with women in Iraq. In January 2009 the IRS begins taking huge hunks of my paycheck. I am not ready to leave my job. I am grateful that none of my money went to IRS during the horrifying Bush years, to pay for war, for torture, for the erosion of human rights and civil liberties. But I still don't see that there is a radically changed budget priority that would justify beginning to contribute to the national coffers.

So for now, I live frugally on the money I began putting by when I started getting the warnings of the garnisheeing. I contact the phone company about my ongoing resistance to the federal excise tax. When I talk to friends and co-workers about my tax resistance, I try to distinguish it from the people who just hate taxes. I am committed to continuing to do what is within my power to direct my money and efforts towards building a better world, and for me tax resistance is still the first step in that process. ▼

Counseling Notes

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Editor's Update

It's been more than a year since I wrote about my encounters with a revenue officer in the Abusive Tax Avoidance Transactions (ATAT) program of the IRS. Because the IRS's interest seemed to be both personal and organizational, it was a bit worrisome for a time. The revenue officer called both myself and Ed Hedemann and had looked into our organizing activities. One problem with dealing with the IRS is that everything takes so long that you are never sure if your case has been dropped or is still on someone's desk. However, we carry on and assume that at least at this point we are not a high priority case.

I hadn't thought about ATAT for a while, but another (see page 2) TIGTA report found that IRS collection actions on abusive tax avoidance transactions are generally effective. However, it was also noted that ATAT does not have good measures in place to properly evaluate the program's results. None of this has too much effect on war tax resisters, although we still watch what's happening with ATAT because the definition is broad: *transactions or schemes that reduce tax liability by taking a tax position that is not supported by the Internal Revenue Code or by manipulating the law in a way that is not consistent with its intent*. The government has great fear of any activity that could undermine "voluntary compliance" in the tax system.

—Ruth Benn

Thanks to David Gross, who updates his tax resistance blog frequently at <http://sniggle.net/Experiment>. ▼

Organization Says No to IRS— Supports War Tax Resister

By Patricia Finley

In an inspiring example of worshipful discernment, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's governing body (Interim Meeting) has decided to support staff member Priscilla Adams' act of war tax resistance, refusing to cooperate with IRS demands to garnish her wages.

In May of this year, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) placed a \$29,000 levy on Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM), directing us to garnish the salary of Priscilla Adams, who serves as the Haddonfield Quarter Regional Secretary for Quaker Concerns.

Since 1987 we have had a policy to support such acts of conscience. The policy is a complex set of instructions on how to respond to the different actions the IRS might initiate.

In this case, the policy directed Priscilla to write a letter to Interim Meeting articulating her wishes as to how Interim Meeting should respond. Interim Meeting, in turn, was directed to discern whether to accede to Priscilla's request or to comply with the IRS demand. Priscilla requested that Interim Meeting, acting for Yearly Meeting, support her "... spiritual leading by implementing its war tax resistance policy ... [she asked] Philadelphia Yearly Meeting to discern its own corporate leading and refuse to cooperate with IRS as strongly and as long as [it] is led."

At its regularly scheduled meeting on 13th day sixth month, Interim Meeting was given a review of the case by our lawyer, Peter Goldberger; they asked clarifying questions, and then settled into a worshipful consideration of the issues.

Interim Meeting had only one task; choose between two competing options: discern whether to support Priscilla's act of conscience, or accede to the IRS demand. At a later date, Interim Meeting could decide whether and how our policies needed revising or if we agreed with war tax resistance for ourselves or our Yearly Meeting.

During the time of worship some concerns were expressed about the costs of standing in witness against the IRS. Some Friends spoke of costs and sacrifice as a necessary component of spirit-led witness. Others mentioned that though we may not be able to refuse the IRS indefinitely, we could refuse for a while at least.

I listened in worship as one Friend after another rose to speak. Friends listened to each other and the messages built on one another. I was moved and inspired by the depth of the responses. Finally the members of Interim Meeting discerned that it was right to support Priscilla's act of conscience. Friends said "no" to the Internal Revenue Service. ▼

This article was posted on the website, pym.org, on June 29, 2009.

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Priscilla Adams. Photo by Ruth Benn.



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