

Workshop 10

Lobbying in National Legislators

Moderator and report: Marian Franz

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN LOBBYING for Peace Tax Fund Legislation

Prepare Yourself

- Remember why you are lobbying for Peace Tax legislation. You are lobbying because of the *victims of violence*. Keep them in mind.
- *Enjoy* the experience! The legislation gives you access to members of the legislative body and allows you to raise issues of conscience and war. Lobbying is a privilege!
- Remember, *deep commitment communicates*. Your listener will be swayed by your serious-mindedness.
- You are expressing a *belief*, not an *opinion*. There is a difference. Remember you are explaining your deep beliefs.
- Remember, you are the world's leading expert on your own beliefs. This is a matter of conscience.
- You are not asking anyone to necessarily *agree* with you. You are asking them to *understand* you.
- The lobbying experience is emotionally expensive. In some instances you may feel you are casting your pearls before unappreciative persons. Protect yourself from injury. If the listener attempts to belittle you, respond with your arguments about the victims of military violence.

The Lobbying Session

- Your listener's own conscience may be painfully aroused by what you say. You may engender profound internal conflicts in the persons you lobby as they confront their own consciences. Be prepared to play a pastoral and supportive role. Never belittle.
- Know when to quit. Don't try too much in one session. No one, including you, changes his mind 180 degrees at one time, but rather by repeated exposure to a new idea. You will make additional contacts with those you lobby.
- If you don't know an answer to a question, say you'll get the answer and make sure that you follow through later.
- No persons who are the objects of your lobbying are hopeless. All need to hear from you: (1) Those who already agree need to be thanked. (2) Some can be persuaded to support your legislation. (3) Some can be persuaded not to work against you (4) Those who will work against your goals need to at least understand who you are and the nature of your beliefs.
- It may be tempting to raise side issues, but stay on your subject.

SOME LOBBY ARGUMENTS

- Your argument is not with paying taxes, but with their military use.
- Tell stories of the penalties that are given to war tax resisters. Put a human face on those who cannot pay war taxes.
- You are not tax evaders. You are seeking a legal option.
- Point out that the country's constitution provides for freedom of conscience.
- You may wish to mention the positions of one or several religious bodies.

MAKE SOME ARGUMENTS FROM CAESAR'S POINT OF VIEW

- Peace Tax legislation will

..... increase revenue through increased voluntary compliance and decreased collection costs.

..... reduce the present administrative and judicial burden created by conscientious objectors who violate the tax laws rather than violate their consciences.

- Ask this important question: *Is there a way* to accommodate these moral and religious beliefs in law? This takes the attention off certain particulars in the legislation, and asks for the thoughts of the listener on possible options.

GROUP LOBBYING

- Agree on your central purpose and your main points.
- Decide ahead of time which person will make what points.
- Do an evaluation afterward. Talk to each other about what points were positively and negatively received.
- Plan your next steps.

AT THE END

- Leave some literature which summarizes your concern.
- Send a thank you letter later.
- Write a report of your visit naming the positive or negative turns taken in the conversation and what steps need to be taken next; share your report with your group; gather momentum.
- Continue the contact. Show you care about the person you lobbied. Continue to make your arguments and ask for responses.

Remember, no witness for conscience is ever lost. Martin Luther King said, "The Church is not the master of the State or the servant of the state. The Church is the conscience of the State."