

**Activities concerning
Conscientious Objection to Military Taxes and Peace Tax Initiatives
on the international Level**

John Randall reported on the World Peace Forum (Vancouver/Canada, June 2006).

The refusal to pay military taxes was never mentioned there. All that happened were reports on conscientious refusal of military service from a group called *Veterans' and War Resisters' Working Party*.

The final declaration of the World Peace Forum contained, amongst other things, the following sentence which had been phrased by this group: „We demand respect for the human right to refuse military service, including „selective refusal“ concerning specific conflicts and means of waging war, and we encourage Canada and all other nations to grant asylum to soldiers from countries which deny them this right.“

Many participants from the USA learnt what the Canadians are working on, and these in turn heard what is going on with US-American attempts to undermine recruitment.

The biggest game of the Forum was the opportunity to meet people and to speak with them. Many had already heard of Conscience Canada and the Peace Tax Seven (UK). Many people picked up the CPTI booklet and appreciated the existence of a version in French.

Gertie Brammer took part in the Conference of the War Resisters' International / WRI (Paderborn/Germany, July 2006).

The aim of her participation was to establish contacts with organizers and participants from WRI; to see whether she might latch on to existing interest, and/or to win people for our subject of conscientious objection of military taxes.

- There were just a few people who had vaguely heard of our topic.
- There's one group that knows exactly what we are on about: the MOC (Movimiento de Objeción de Conciencia) in Spain.

Other WRI groups had vaguely heard of it, but not from its own members.

- There's just one single person who is actively involved in the refusal to pay military taxes: Andreas Speck (Executive Officer of the WRI London office). Every month he withholds the military share of his taxes. The bailiff then comes to collect it. Andreas does not yet want to take matters further; he is waiting to see how the Peace Tax Seven are going to fare. He says that he has not heard of any other example of refusal to pay military taxes in or with WRI.

- Listening to the papers read in plenary sessions, Gertie did not hear any mention of the refusal to pay military taxes.

- From CPTI attended Derek Brett (4 days) and Hannelore Morgenstern (1 day); from the CPTI members (national groups) nobody was there except Gertie.

So in this respect we've got a major uphill task before us.

Gertie offered a workshop, in which Hannelore Morgenstern as well as Derek and Rachel Brett were able to support her at times, but only eleven people had been directly told about it, amongst them Stephanie Astner, who then also attended the Woltersdorf Conference.

In the work group "The right to refuse to kill", which was held over 5 days, participants were too pre-occupied with topics connected with conscientious objection to military service, to

find space for the refusal to pay military taxes.

The best thing about the conference were the breaks - in these Gertie was able to speak to several people who were interested and who then also took away some of our printed materials.

Suggestions

Gertie suggests to work more closely with WRI - with CPTI as the official partner and with the individual national groups actually doing the work. We should try getting across to WRI that conscientious objection to military service and to military taxes are two sides of the same coin. Additionally, fewer and fewer countries actually have conscription, something proven by Derek Brett's study, whereas there is a constant need for more money for (professional) armies. It's not only that we need new active members - WRI, in its turn, will need new topics. We should also consider the possibility of holding our own conferences jointly with those of WRI. For if we do not manage to fill WRI members with enthusiasm for our topic - whom else will we win over??

Arguments in favour:

1. We'd attract more international attention.
2. We'd be together with those people with whom we have to keep in touch anyway in order to be listened to by national governments and the United Nations. Particularly as we strive to get recognized both conscientious objection to military service and to military taxes as human rights, this would make sense.
3. From the point of view of organizing such events, this should be easy: WRI is used to planning events for 200-300 people.
4. Our conferences would then take place every third year instead of every other year. This saves the respective organizations time, which they could use for their ongoing tasks.

Arguments against

1. Yet again we'd have to invest additional time, energy and money, both in CPTI and in the national groups
2. The next WRI conference is planned to take place in South Africa. How many people from our national groups would be prepared to go there? Costs!
3. In countries like South Africa, we do not yet have national groups which could help organize our share of a joint conference.

Sarah Barnett reported on the activities of QCEA/Quaker Council for European Affairs

QCEA is an international not-for-profit organization under Belgian law, based in Brussels. It aims at spreading the Quaker vision in matters of peace, human rights and economical justice at European level.

QCEA and Peace Tax

At the International Conference in Brussels 2004 QCEA discussed with the CPTI-Board a draft resolution of QCEA on the right of Conscientious Objection to the payment of taxes for military purposes. This draft resolution was introduced to the Human Rights Grouping of NGOs with participatory status at the Council of Europe on 26 January 2005. The official

presentation followed on the 27 April 2005. This was supported by a series of Briefing Papers (available from www.quaker.org/qcea).

Unfortunately the draft was not very warmly received. The usual questions and objections were raised e.g. military service is a good thing for young men, hypothecation is not possible etc. Since then, QCEA has approached a number of MPs to investigate whether they would be interested in tabling a resolution or a motion for a recommendation to the Parliamentary Assembly at the Council of Europe and eventually being the rapporteur if it were referred to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights for a report. So far the response has been negative. QCEA encourages anyone to get in touch who may be able to recommend (a) national MP(s) who is/are in their country's delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly at the Council of Europe and who might be sympathetic to the Peace Tax cause. Similarly, if anyone has any contacts with NGOs (which have participatory status at the Council of Europe) who might be interested in supporting the campaign, then this information would also be greatly appreciated.

The other major way in which QCEA is involved in the Peace Tax campaign is through its **case law project**. At the last CPTI conference, QCEA said that it would take part in this project with Professor Denys from the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. The project's aim is to map out the countries where there have been cases of war-tax resistance going through the courts, and to summarise the main legal arguments against these cases. So far, QCEA has gathered information from the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and the US. This project will continue into 2007 and will hopefully result in a short report to summarise the main European and US legal arguments which have been used against war-tax resisters in the past. Once again, QCEA would welcome any information or input from those with knowledge of particular legal cases which could feature in this report.

Aside from this project and its work at the Council of Europe, QCEA also **translated the script for the Peace Tax Seven's DVD *Contempt of Conscience* into Dutch, French and German.**

QCEA is also in the process of updating some of its briefing papers about Peace Tax, including a **Frequently Asked Questions** document, which should be available from our website by the New Year.

The Peace Tax Seven showed a DVD about their work, named *Contempt of Conscience*

This DVD is highly suitable for motivating new recruits and for showing to groups. Multilingual versions will be ready in March / April 2007.

Price: 6 pounds 50 pence within Great Britain; 7 pounds for European countries and 8 pounds for countries outside of Europe. Address:

The DVD can be ordered here:
Treasurer, Peace Tax Seven
Woodlands, Ledge Hill
Market Lavington
Wiltshire SN 10