

IF YOU WORK
FOR PEACE



STOP PAYING
FOR WAR.

More than a paycheck

NEWS FROM THE WAR TAX RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

December 2003



Julia Butterfly Hill speaking at October 15 press conference in front of the Federal Building in San Francisco.

Photo by Susan Quinlan

Huge War Tax Redirection Announced in San Francisco

By Susan Quinlan

When Julia Hill learned that she had an unanticipated federal tax liability of over \$150,000, she did the only thing her conscience would allow—she decided to refuse to give this money to Bush's war machine.

Taking a strong stand was nothing new to Julia Butterfly Hill. Recognized around the world for her two-year tree sit in the ancient redwood known as Luna, Julia had already shown herself to be an activist with the highest level of commitment. It is not surprising that a woman who withstood the test of wind and weather, as well as the political and physical pressure exerted by the Pacific Lumber Company, would have the courage to take on

the IRS. Nor is it surprising that this activist, having dedicated her career to linking, encouraging, and supporting the efforts of progressive organizations, would choose to take her stand in connection with war tax resisters at the local and national levels.

At an October 15th press conference in front of the San Francisco Federal Building, Julia was joined by a diverse group of peace, environmental, and social justice activists as she read her statement of refusal. Julia began with an explanation of the unusual circumstances that led to her huge tax liability.

It seems that Julia's image as a defender of the Headwater forest had so gripped the nation, that a wireless phone company, Omnisky,

continued on page 4

A Taxing Dilemma

By Zachery Kurtz

Printed here is part of the text of the winning speech in the 2003 C. Henry Smith Peace Oratorical Competition administrated by Peace and Justice Ministries of Mennonite Central Committee U.S. and open to students at every Mennonite and Brethren in Christ college in North America. Zachery Kurtz is a Junior at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. The full text can be read on the web at www.mcc.org/us/peaceandjustice/peace_essay.html.

I appreciate this opportunity to speak today, because the issue I wish to address is of immediate concern to many of us. With our nation at war, I believe that the very idea of the federal taxes we pay being used to support killing should cause any self-respecting Anabaptist earning taxable income to squirm. I'll begin by telling you about my friend, who I'll call Joel.

Joel entered the military right after we graduated together from high school and our Mennonite Youth Fellowship.... Then, last July, he was sent to Afghanistan as a paratrooper.... He wrote frequent but short letters, about a page and a half of scrawl. Here is an excerpt from one of his letters: "How are you doing? I'm doing pretty good. We just got back from a four-day Mission two days ago. Things went very well. It was a battalion-sized mission. My company struck gold on our objective."

My mom pointed out that there was no postage stamp on Joel's letter. He just writes "FREE" up in the right-hand corner, and it gets here. "But Joel's postage is paid for," I said to my mom. Indeed it is. And who pays for it? We do, American taxpayers. When I start earning more than several thousand dollars a year,

continued on page 2

**IF YOU WORK
FOR PEACE**



More than a paycheck

Editor

Ruth Benn

Layout

Ajay Advani / Susan Quinlan

Printing

Lakeside Printing Cooperative

Printed on Recycled Paper

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.

Subscriptions to
More Than a Paycheck
are \$15 per year.

NWTRCC

P.O. Box 150553
Brooklyn, NY 11215
(800)269-7464
(718)768-3420

fax: (718)768-4388

email: nwtrcc@nwtrcc.org

Web: www.nwtrcc.org

A Taxing Dilemma

Continued from page 1

I'm going to be in a tight spot. My government is going to ask me to help pay for a lot more than someone's postage. Soldiers need high-tech clothing a big supply of grenades and bullets, three meals a day, airfare, large military vehicles to travel in, and the \$30,000 the recruiters wave in front of them and tell them they can have money for college once they get out of the military. On average, for each soldier it hires, our government spends as much as half a million dollars for technology and other military needs.

... In a Sunday School class at my church, someone told the story of how wealthy Russian Mennonites long ago avoided serving in the military by hiring replacements. "What's the difference?" someone muttered. Others in the class agreed. It seemed that in the eyes of God, there would be little difference between serving in the military and paying someone else to serve in the military. "Then why don't we talk about our war taxes?" muttered another person in the class. "Because that would be too relevant," was the sarcastic reply.

It is easy to look at the war tax problem and be overwhelmed by the huge powerful system in which we live. Our fear of what might happen if we fail to comply with the government blinds us from seeing past the insanity of resistance to the possibility of change. Many Christians say, "Tax resistance is hopeless. I'll just keep donating a healthy portion of my income to charity and verbally pressure the government away from war."

It would be nice if we could trust our leaders

to respect our verbal requests that our tax money not be spent on war....

I believe we should exercise a desperate inventiveness to prevent our earnings from funding the military, especially in this time of war. If we have genuine concern for the victims of war, and if we are to continue teaching the young people in our church not to join the military, we need to be consistent in our Peace stance. The war tax dilemma we face demands that we pray to God for inspiration. ▼

© 2003 Mennonite Central Committee

Peace Learning

Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, offers a 42-hour Master of Arts degree and a 15-hour Graduate Certificate in Conflict Transformation. In addition, the annual Summer Peacebuilding Institute (SPI) offers intensive 9-day courses for professional training or credit. SPI 2004 will be held May 3 - June 15. A diverse community of peacebuilding practitioners from around the world gathers to learn together at SPI every summer. The application deadline for SPI is December 12th; however, we will continue to accept participants until all classes are full. For more information: call 540-432-4490; email: spi@emu.edu; or see our website <http://www.emu.edu/ctp>.

*Many
Thanks*



*Network List
Updates*

Heartfelt appreciation
to all the groups who have given
to NWTRCC since the last newsletter.
Your support makes a difference!

New York City People's Life Fund
Mennonite Central Committee
Heartland Peace Tax Fund (Kansas)
Casa Maria (Milwaukee, Wisconsin)

New network lists of counselors, affiliate groups, area contacts, and alternative funds were updated and mailed out to affiliates in November. The NWTRCC website includes contacts for all listings with offices, and for individuals with email addresses. If you would like the complete national list or the list for your region, please contact the office for a copy.

Two corrections:

Northwest Region — Please change Oregon Community for WTR's email address from nowar@wrlpdx.org to contact@wrlpdx.org. The "nowar" address is their listserve, and you must be a subscriber.

Eastern Region — Please add the website for the New York City People's Life Fund: www.nyccplf.org

PAY FIRST, ASK QUESTIONS LATER

The latest from Robert Randall on late penalty fines: After success in getting the fine removed was reported in the October MTAP, Letter 1382C arrived from the IRS (on Robert's birthday no less), which reads in part: "Before we can consider a request to remove or adjust penalties, the tax must be paid in full. You may write us again requesting reconsideration when the tax is paid...." He will be pursuing this with help from his local Congress person. Stay tuned....

LEGAL ARGUMENTS AVAILABLE

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's (PYM) reply to the U.S. District Court in Eastern Pennsylvania, written by the meeting's attorney Peter Goldberger, is available on PYM's website: www.pym.org. As announced in the previous issue, the U.S. government is attempting to impose a heavy fine, more than \$20,000, on Philadelphia Yearly Meeting for its refusal on religious grounds to cooperate with a levy in connection with the withheld taxes of their employee and war tax resister, Priscilla Adams. The document may provide individuals some background and ideas for talking with their own employers regarding salary levies. ▼

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Pro Mujer

The February 2003 issue of MTAP described a project in Nicaragua that North American war tax resisters were encouraged to support at the 9th International Conference in Berlin, September 2002. Brunhilde Stötzner, one of the German hosts, is in Nicaragua working with the project and sent this report :

I've been living here for half a year now, and time is short, way too short....

I'm working in a project called Pro Mujer here in Nicaragua, which your organization considered to support some time ago. From the beginning, I was impressed by the openness of the Nicaraguans, who will open their door to any stranger who wants to enter their team.

...The office of Pro Mujer is shelter (both judicially and psychologically) to many female victims of violence within their families. I also accompany the organization's staff in seminars about laws, prevention of violence, education within the family and much more. Sometimes I accompany my colleague on her personal visits to certain problematic families. These are mostly to be found outside of town or in parts of the town with problems such as unemployment, violence, machismo, drug- and alcohol-addiction. Very frequently one encounters families in which the father doesn't want to pay money to maintain his children, the father is not to be found at all, there is violence resulting in injuries of the weak (mostly women) or even the threat of assassination. Sometimes we have to verify the legal guardians of a child. Often we refer these people to our office and make propositions of how to change their situation. ▼

Tenth International Conference on War Tax Resistance and Peace Tax Campaigns

The Tenth International Conference on War Tax Resistance and Peace Tax Campaigns will be held in Brussels, Belgium, from Thursday evening July 8 till Sunday (lunch at noon) July 11, 2004. The general theme will be our human right to conscientious objection to paying taxes for the military and our human duty to pay taxes for peace and civil conflict resolution.

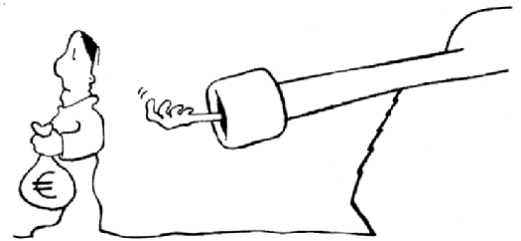
A fringe program will be organized on Sunday afternoon and Monday, July 12 (or even longer if there is sufficient interest). The biennial General Assembly of *Conscience and Peace Tax International* will also be held during the conference. Simultaneous translation is available.

The conference will be held at: Maison Notre-Dame du Chant d'Oiseau, 3a avenue des Franciscains, B-1150 Brussels, Belgium. The "House of Our Lady of the Bird Song"

is a nice conference center with a beautiful garden, lift, and parking space. It is easy to reach by car and public transportation.

This conference is organized conjointly by the Flemish Peace Tax Campaign VRAK (*AKtie VRedesbelasting*) and the French speaking *Contribuables pour la paix*.

For more information contact the conference coordinator: Dirk Panhuis, Bruineveld 11, 3010 Leuven, Belgium, Phone: +32-16-25.40.11 E-mail: panhuis.rojo@pi.be ▼



United Nations

The UN NGO Working Group on Conscientious Objection meets regularly and includes members who represent Non-Governmental Organizations accredited to the United Nations who work to encourage the human right of conscientious objection. Some of the groups involved are Conscience and Peace Tax International, War Resisters' International, the Mennonite Central Committee, Quaker UN office, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Pax Christi International, Amnesty Interna-

tional, Human Rights Watch and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Transcripts of some of the programs they have sponsored to give more visibility to issues of conscientious objection to military service and conscientious objection to military taxes are on the Conscience and Peace Tax International web page: www.cpti.ws. On October 7th, Ruth Benn visited with the Working Group and explained the work of the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee. ▼

Annual Redirection Report Grants Up! Participation Down?

In 2003, thirteen alternative funds gave grants totally \$33,137. This is up from the \$22,000 given in 2002. However, there appears to be a lack of growth among the funds.

The tax dollars were redirected to groups working for peace and justice, giving medical care to veterans, doing relief work in Iraq and with Afghan refugees, housing and advocating for homeless people, providing shelter to battered women, mentoring at-risk youth, sheltering those with AIDS/HIV, supporting alternative media, providing books for prisoners, among many others! Groups from South Dakota to Burundi, St. Louis to Mongolia, benefited from our redirection.

The annual survey of alternative funds in the NWTRCC network was mailed out last summer to our list of 24 funds around the country. Twelve funds returned the survey form, and four others reported

their redirection totals. While five funds reported an increase in activity, four report a decrease, and one has become inactive. Two are uncertain if they can continue, and two more are discouraged.

Many of these funds have been around 20 or more years. The longevity is impressive,

but the lack of growth is a cause for concern at a time when interest in war tax resistance itself is increasing. Perhaps more people are redirecting individually and not using the funds.

A couple issues ago we asked individuals to report their own redirection totals. The response was underwhelming

to say the least, but the six (!) responders reported \$7,500 disbursed among the same types of groups as above and spared from Pentagon spending. (And, there's Julia Butterfly Hill's redirection not added to our totals, of course.) So if we could figure out how to extrapolate this information among all the known war tax resisters, we could really begin to count up the guns and grenades and missiles that were not purchased by our tax dollars!

Thanks to Diana Desnoyers for her help with the survey. ▼



Members of Pioneer Valley War Tax Resisters giving redirected tax dollars to a community health center. (L to R) Suzette Snow-Cobb, Micah Snow-Cobb, Dante Pascale, Richard Pascale, and Dr. Sarah Kemble of the community health center receiving the check.

Photo by Eveline MacDougall

Huge redirection

Continued from page 1

decided to use it to sell their product. Their advertisement, which featured a young woman phoning in a request for a "sponge bath" from the top of a redwood tree, was clearly an exploitation of Julia's tree-sit. For this reason, Julia was able to win a significant legal settlement against the company and its associates.

It was never Julia's intention to profit directly from her lawsuit, but rather to channel the funds back into the environmental movement, which had been exploited by the ad. However, in spite of the fact that the settlement itself was being "redirected," she came to learn that the IRS was going to tax it as if it were personal income. With the Bush

Administration's war against Iraq raging, Julia made the only decision that her conscience would allow. She will stand by her original intentions to redirect the entire amount of the legal settlement to groups doing positive work for peace, justice, and the environment. By doing so Julia Hill has enacted the largest single act of war tax redirection in U.S. history. The following is a section of her press statement, which can be found, in full, on the NWTRCC website.

"The greatest accumulations of weapons of mass destruction exist right here—in the United States. These weapons of death are funded by U.S. citizens' tax dollars stolen from the basic necessities that better our society such as social services, education, health care, and the safeguarding of human rights and our environment. For example, under the Bush tax

cuts that help to provide for war funding, Medicaid benefits are cut by \$93 billion; Food Stamps will be cut by \$13 billion; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families will be cut by \$8 billion and in a move that reminds us who truly benefits from war and who loses, \$14.6 billion is being cut from benefits for Veterans, including money for disabilities.

"Furthermore, our tax dollars are not only being spent to build the largest death machine humankind has ever known, but also the largest prison industrial complex in the world. We seem to be able to come up with endless billions for war, yet we have children without textbooks in schools that are falling apart, where it is statistically more likely for a child of color to end up in prison than to get into college, where the laws that protect air and

So, What are War Taxes Anyway?

by Ed Hedemann

Strictly speaking, a war tax is any tax that goes directly to war. Currently, there is no tax that is spent *only* on war. However, there are 18 or so taxes that fund war and the military, among other federal government programs. These are classified by the IRS as “general fund” taxes.

Symbolically at least, the federal excise tax on telephone use is more of a war tax than any other because, since the Spanish-American War, it has been placed on telephone service (which used to be considered a luxury) during war time then removed after the war ended. Furthermore, in 1966, the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee declared the only reason the telephone tax was needed at that time was to pay for the Vietnam War.

But it's the individual income tax that really funds the U.S. military and war—far more than all the rest of the other war taxes combined. The graph displays the IRS collections* for general fund taxes in 2002.

That wasn't always so. Until World War II, the primary taxes that propped up the federal government were customs duties and various “luxury” and “sin” taxes, collectively known as excise taxes.

Two things that war tax resisters need to consider regarding these war taxes: 1) how many people are affected by them, and, 2) how resistible are they. Some of these war taxes are only resistible by not “doing” the product (e.g., tobacco, alcohol, ocean cruises, luxury or gas guzzling cars), while others might be avoided through careful legal plan-

ning (e.g., estate and gift). Some affect very few people (e.g., “special occupations” or alcohol producers, net investments of private foundations). Others are difficult to avoid (such as the manufacturers tax on diesel fuel for trains and buses). Luckily, however, the telephone tax and individual income tax affect the most people, and they are both very resistible.

It should be noted that there are many taxes that should not be classified as war taxes either because they are designated solely for federal trust funds (e.g., social security, gasoline, airport taxes), or they are not federal taxes (e.g., sales, state income, property taxes). In 1993 a number of formerly general fund excise taxes were repealed, such as the ones on furs, jewelry, and motor boats.

*Except for customs duties, which are collected by the U.S. Customs Service.

Sources: *Federal Excise Taxes Reported to or Collected by the Internal Revenue Service, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and Customs Service, by Type of Excise Tax, Fiscal Years 1995-2002* (Table 21), IRS; *Treasury Department Gross Tax Collections: Amount Collected by Quarter and Fiscal Year, 1987-2003* (Table 18), IRS; *Federal Excise Taxes, Fiscal Years 1994 and 1995* Federal Excise Taxes, Fiscal Years 1994 and 1995, Data Release, IRS; *Budget of the United States, Fiscal Year 2004*, U.S. Office of Management and Budget. ▼



water quality and biodiversity are being destroyed, and health services are not equally accessible to all citizens as is the case in every other civilized nation on earth.

“I was raised by Christian parents who taught me about the Ten Commandments, the first of which is “Thou Shall Not Kill.” Paying for the murder of innocent people with my tax dollars is something that I cannot do in good conscience. It goes against every moral fiber of my being to support this cycle of uncontrolled madness, especially at the expense of such critical human necessities.

“I find it especially disturbing to see the Bush Administration having blatant ties to convicted corporate criminals such as Halliburton, which formed 35 offshore tax shelters when Vice President Dick Cheney was

CEO. While Halliburton has been avoiding paying untold millions of dollars in federal taxes, it was awarded a closed-door, no-bid contract from the Bush Administration to secure the oil supply of Iraq. Unfortunately, this is just one example of the many instances where a corrupt system allows politically connected, mega-corporations to avoid paying taxes while the working class is forced to pay subsidies for big business with their hard-earned tax dollars.

“Thousands of others before me have taken this stand. I am not avoiding paying taxes. I have thought through this very carefully, and with a clear mind and heart I am humanely re-directing my tax payments to where they belong, because our current federal government refuses to do so.” ▼

Prepare for March 20

The World Still Says No to War

At the Coordinating Committee meetings in Chicago we agreed that NWTRCC would become an endorser of United for Peace and Justice, which is joining in the call for a global day of action on March 20, the one-year anniversary of the U.S. bombing and invasion of Iraq. Now is the time to plan for WTR contingents in local actions.

See the UFPJ website for their flyer and also for the list of local actions as they are posted: www.unitedforpeace.org. ▼

MINNESOTA

Judith Felker and Dan Lundquist report that M-TAX (Minnesota Military Tax Resistance Network) presented five interactive workshops with 50 plus people in attendance during the Spring and early Summer. The workshops were presented as part of the Every Church a Peace Church conference, the local Vets for Peace July 4th retreat, and for several churches. Flyers announcing the workshops were distributed at metro area events including rallies at weapons manufacturer Alliant Techsystems and the weekly vigils on the official Peace Bridge between Minneapolis and Saint Paul. M-TAX continues to receive inquiries about WTR and to provide referrals to resources available from NWTRCC, War Resisters League, and others.

INDIANA

Michiana War Tax Refusers (South Bend) made sure NWTRCC literature was on display and there for the taking at two conferences in the Midwest this fall. Glenda Rae Hernandez went to the Christian Peacemaker Teams congress in Ohio and helped to lead an impromptu tax resistance session there. In between travels Peter Smith also got literature to a Catholic Peace Fellowship conference on Conscientious Objection at Notre Dame University in October.

PORTLAND, OREGON

The Oregon Community for War Tax Resistance had a packed agenda at their October meeting, and has recently begun to communicate between meetings on their own email listserve. Minutes are sent out on the listserve and between-meeting discussions and announcements appear regularly. "It's wonderful!" reports Tana Hastings.

A local progressive bookstore coop, Laughing Horse, offers the group space for discussions and workshops, and the schedule is set up for January through April. The discussions are billed as a space to talk about the war, but war tax resistance somehow makes it into the discussion each time. They are also beginning to plan for April 15 actions so that announcements can be made at the upcoming workshops. War tax resistance is part of the agenda of this wider group that also includes the Military and Draft Counseling Project. Ongoing projects include leafletting at the schools to counter military recruiting and lobbying the school board to make parents sign a release form if they want

their kids' information released to the military. Along with action-planning the group took some time to discuss the survey about NWTRCC's work and structure that will be on the meeting agenda in Chicago.

AGAPE COMMUNITY, WARE, MA

Before the invasion of Iraq, The Agape Community in Massachusetts outlined a Campaign of Noncooperation, which includes support of war tax resistance and signing the Appeal to Conscience, promoted by NWTRCC and WRL. Their call states in part:

The American lifestyle requires millions of gallons of oil per day^{3/4}half of it from foreign sources. ... Our military presence in the Middle East and plans to invade Iraq exist to protect U.S. domination of the global economy. "Regime change" in Iraq will ensure that billions of gallons of expensive, ecologically poisonous foreign oil will flow into our homes, cars, corporate offices and military installations. This fact can be summarized: "Iraqi blood for oil."

In the Spirit of nonviolent love, we call all Americans to non-cooperate with oil as a symbol of our war-generating lifestyle.

The community now owns a car powered by vegetable oil as part of its commitment to shifting to alternative forms of energy. Their full campaign statement is available from The Agape Community, 2062 Greenwich Rd., Ware, MA. 01082, (413) 967-9369, www.agapecommunity.org.

TEXAS

Austin Conscientious Objectors to Military Taxation (ACOMT) held several events last spring to educate the public about the negative impacts of military spending on communities here and abroad and to focus on the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Bill, H.R. 2037. A press conference at the Federal Building featured conscientious objectors and representatives from over a dozen local and statewide organizations which have endorsed the bill. Participants spoke eloquently about the need for civil liberties for CO's, in opposition to the war on Iraq and on the effects of the burgeoning Pentagon budget on Austin. A delegation then visited two U.S. senators and a Congressman's office to deliver the groups' endorsements and 500 petition signatures to ask for their support of the bill.

On May 8, Representative John Lewis (D-GA) reintroduced the Peace Tax Fund bill. Two

Texas Congresswomen, Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Houston) and Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-Dallas) became first-time endorsers. They joined repeat endorser Ron Paul (R-Surfside). The projects were a culmination of a year of successful organizing around the Peace Tax Fund, funded by a grant from the American Friends Service Committee New Initiatives Fund.

Much work remains to be done to encourage other members of Congress to support H.R. 2037. Please contact your representative and ask her/him to become a co-sponsor and to call for new hearings. For more information, see www.peacetaxfund.org.

ACOMT members were also invited to a October panel on War Tax Resistance in San Antonio. There, they shared their stories of resistance and answered questions from a crowd of 18. Many of the group will continue to meet monthly. In addition, ACOMT is considering taking on a local version of the One Million Taxpayers for Peace and Axis of Peace ideas called Austin Taxpayers for Peace. For more information on the grant or other activities, contact ACOMT at (512) 467-2946 or email peacetax-tx@ev1.net.

— Andy McKenna

Portions of this article appeared in the AFSC TAO Newsletter, Summer 2003.

NORTH CAROLINA

On Oct. 30th in Asheville, NC, Cicada and Lola of the war tax resistance group "Fools of Conscience" tabled at the event "Halloween with Hightower." Groups were encouraged to do something in the spirit of the season. Lola dressed in a business suit and a Dick Cheney mask. She stood in a black pool of "oil slime" adjacent to our table as the Cheney Creature of the oily black lagoon and heckled passers by, asking for \$87 billion to fund his oil war and encouraging them to have a Halliburton Halloween.

Cicada staffed the table, which was sponsored by the Western North Carolina Peace Coalition, of which Fools of Conscience is a member. Many brochures on phone tax resistance were distributed as well as some of the NWTRCC pamphlet series.

Several hundred people attended the event, which featured an appearance by Jim Hightower, as a part of his Down-home Democracy tour to encourage the feeding of the grassroots and to put the party back into politics.

On December 9th, as part of the Peace Coalition's monthly education series, Lola is organizing a Giving Peace Gifts presentation

continued on page 7

Join NWTRCC's Administrative Committee!

Between now and next May, NWTRCC is seeking nominations for war tax resisters who are interested in serving on the Administrative Committee. This group of six people (four full members and two alternates) works closely with the Coordinator between national meetings, keeps updated on her work by phone and mail, consults with her when issues need clarification, and prepares for and facilitates the twice yearly Coordinating Committee meetings. Full members are expected to attend both meetings, which are always the first full weekends in May and November. NWTRCC pays the transportation costs to these meetings of full members (or alternates filling in for full members), and the group meets all day on the Friday before the Coordinating Committee meetings.

Full members serve for two years; alternates serve for one year and generally move into full positions for one term (three years total). Members will be chosen at the May 7-9, 2004, meetings, and terms start June 1.

Current members of the committee are pictured on this page. Because of a glitch from the past, three members are rotating off (Paula Rogge, Sasha Vodnik, and Jessica Stewart). Thus, this year one of the three new people will jump right in as a full member. Women, people on the coasts, and in the Southeast are encouraged to apply to keep our geographical and gender mix (but don't let that stop you!).

Please contact the office ASAP or by early March if you are interested, or if you or your group has someone to nominate. We will follow up with more details. ▼

Local Group Reports

Continued from page 6

and boutique featuring nonviolent gift ideas and alternatives, such as donations to groups in the name of the giftee, fair trade gift sources, and local artisans.

The January event will be presentations about the effects of the Patriot Act. In February, Cicada is organizing a WTR presentation and roundtable. ▼

Are You Signed On?

www.hanguponwar.org is up and running on the web. Be sure to join this web-based, national phone tax resistance campaign, initiated by the Iraq Pledge of Resistance, NWTRCC, and War Resisters League, and launched November 11,

2003. We'll have more on this in coming issues, but if you are a war tax counselor, please read through the website as a way to be prepared for any calls from new resisters. Contact the NWTRCC office if you have questions or campaign ideas. ▼



The NWTRCC Administrative Committee met in Chicago before the November 7-9 weekend gathering and Coordinating Committee meeting. Pictured here (back row, L-R) Peter Smith (IN), Paula Rogge (TX), Lincoln Rice (WI); (front row) Jessica Stewart and baby Finian (NY), Ruth Benn (NWTRCC Coordinator), Rick Bickhart (CO), and Sasha Vodnik (VA).

We'll have more on the November weekend and meetings in the next issue, but first of all we want to thank our hosts in Chicago: Brad Lytle, Quaker House, Mike Bremer and Katey Feit (our great cooks), and the Chicago Area War Tax Resisters group.

Legal Volunteer Needed

NWTRCC subscribes to *Federal Taxes Weekly Alert*, a publication that reports the latest news on IRS regulations and related court cases. A volunteer reviews these issues and reports any changes

that might affect wtr's to the NWTRCC office and writes them up for "Counseling Notes" in this newsletter. We are in search of a new volunteer for this task. *If you are interested, please contact Ruth Benn at the NWTRCC office.*

Conscientious Objection and Encounters with the IRS

Continued from page 8

it was good to have the opportunity to talk face-to-face, as a further part of the peace testimony. The agent even gave me a printout of something that came across his computer screen about Philadelphia Friends [Quaker] Yearly Meeting countering the IRS when it tried to collect from an employee's wages—the issue obviously intrigued him.

I have given him a definitive answer: I cannot agree to his terms, so he will have to go

ahead and do what he has to do to collect the money.

I was struck again how sophisticated the system of carrots and sticks is—from the basic withholding tax, to the offer of lenient collection terms if I simply don't think about my money going to kill people and agree to cooperate in sending them the amount "owed." It's insidious, really. We are part of a culture of death that has become normal. ▼

Conscientious Objection and Encounters with the IRS

By James Satterwhite

"If we could read the secret histories of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility."

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

In 1969, as I was graduating from college in Florida at the height of the war in Vietnam, I faced a dilemma. Should I go into the military to fight in Vietnam, or was there another option for someone who had come to the position that violence and war are wrong? At that time I was fortunate, as I was able to do "Civilian Alternative Service" as a Conscientious Objector under the Selective Service guidelines in effect at the time.

After I completed my alternative service I began wrestling on and off with the issue of war in a different way. I no longer faced the dilemma of whether or not to physically participate in fighting, but I found that now I was being asked to fund the military even though I had not participated in it for reasons of conscience. Over the years I grappled with this dilemma, and increasingly came to the conclusion that I needed to make a statement against the use of my tax money for the purpose of killing people my country designated as enemies. This conviction became clearer in the last 6 years, so my wife, Olwen, and I decided to "withhold" about 20% each time we filed our Federal taxes, since that is the approximate amount that goes directly to support the military (if you count other costs that figure is much more than the 20%). We are asked to "pray for peace and pay for war." Despite many attempts to get a bill through Congress, there is as of yet no "alternative service" option for taxes that serve the military.

A week or so ago there was a note in our door from an IRS Collections agent, who wanted to speak with me. We met on a subsequent day at a coffee shop in town, with a local attorney friend of mine as witness. The upshot of this meeting was as follows:

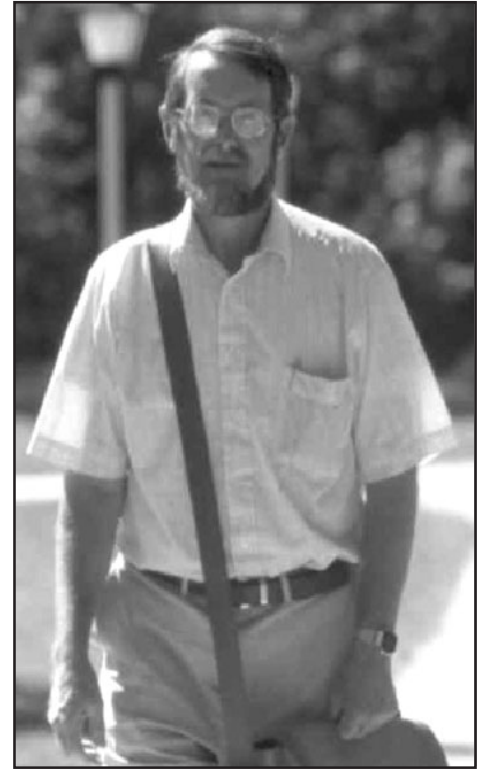
We can strike a deal with them whereby they will only take about \$300 per month for 36 months from my paycheck until the about \$10,000 we owe is paid. This offer of theirs is the carrot. If, however, we were to continue our "protest," this action would invalidate such a deal, and they would take the maximum (probably close to the whole paycheck, as Olwen is working full time, and the house

is paid for). This means that for 5-6 months we would be living on one income. This part is the stick.

The agent talked about possibly going after Olwen for the amount that I owed from those years that we had filed separately by calculating my share of the equity before I transferred my interest in our house to her this year. This was part of the stick—to essentially threaten to make life difficult for Olwen if I did not cooperate. (The agent even asked clearly "Do you want to make life difficult for her?") He did say that the IRS would have to decide whether it would be worth the effort for them to go this route, but the threat was clear in any event.

The IRS agent was very sympathetic, but "just doing his job." He indicated several times that he had not encountered a conscientious objector to war taxes before, and that he himself had not made choices of conscience in the past at several junctures when he had had the chance. I gave him a copy of my cover letter that goes with my tax returns. I felt that

continued on page 7



NWTRCC

P.O. Box 150553
Brooklyn, NY 11215
(800)269-7464
(718)768-3420

PLEASE NOTE: If there is a red circle around your address label, this is the last issue of *More Than a Paycheck* on your subscription. Send in a renewal ASAP!

Address Service Requested