

CAMPAIGN TO STOP PAYE MILITARY CONSCRIPTION

PEACE TAX SEVEN JUDICIAL REVIEW GROUP

We are all conscripted through our taxes.
Join our struggle to liberate this money to
finance peaceful ways of resolving conflicts.



"We are a group of seven tax-paying citizens. We want to make a positive contribution to society by paying our taxes in full. We object in conscience to paying others to kill on our behalf, but current tax laws force us to do just that. We have each tried to direct our income taxes to be used for peaceful and non-military purposes. In each case we were denied the right, and each of us has faced a dilemma: either to pay our taxes and so become complicit in killing, or to follow our consciences and break the law by withholding payment of a portion of our taxes.

In Britain, Quakers have been at the forefront of war tax resistance. Several people, Quakers and others, have been prosecuted, and forfeited money and possessions for opposing war taxation. A few have been imprisoned. Following our consciences has led us to court or the threat of prosecution. We object to this financial conscription, and believe that its legal basis is questionable. We are seeking a judicial review of current UK tax policy on this issue."

Brenda Boughton (retired teacher); Robin Brookes (traditional toy designer); Siân Cwper (Buddhist); Simon Heywood (university lecturer); Joe Jenkins (author/film maker); Roy Prockter (chartered management accountant); Dr. Birgit Völlm (psychiatrist and university lecturer).

THE LEGAL CASE

The right to conscientious objection to conscription to military service has been recognised in most democracies, including in the UK in the Military Service Act 1916. The right not to pay taxes for military purposes is a logical extension of the right to refuse to take part in active military service. Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) recognises freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

The ECHR is part of UK law under the terms of the Human Rights Act 1998. Since October 2000, it has been in force and therefore unlawful for a public authority to act in a way which is incompatible with the ECHR. Compelling conscientious objectors to contribute to military expenditure is a disproportionate interference with these basic human rights.

If we win, the law will not change at once, but the British Government would be under obligation to devise measures which resolve the incompatibility. We believe that the outcome of such a review would be to allow conscientious objectors to have the military proportion of their taxes diverted to peaceful purposes.

Our legal representative is Phil Shiner of Public Interest Lawyers. The case is likely to take up to 12 months and may entail costs of up to £50,000. We, the seven war tax resisters, are liable personally for these costs.

FINANCIAL CONSCRIPTION TO WAR

7-10% of all our taxes are spent on military resources. At present about £31 billion per year are spent on the military, over eight times the amount spent on international development. In an age of sophisticated and very expensive military technology, financial conscription to war has replaced the conscription of human beings. A part of everyone's tax is spent on military preparation for war and then on war itself so we are all therefore responsible for both.

CAMPAIGN UPDATE

The latest news on the Peace Tax Seven Campaign is that the initial application for Judicial Review was rejected by the examining judge on the basis of a half-hour consideration. However, this has given the seven the opportunity to appeal, which means their case will be considered again in a 2-hour hearing. This hearing will take place on July 25th in London. Anyone interested in attending should contact Brenda Boughton on 01865 515589 as soon as possible and no later than July 17th, as the court has to be informed of likely numbers in the public gallery.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Please give your financial support to the Peace Tax Seven and help to spread this information. The knowledge of your support will directly strengthen our case in court. Cheques should be made payable to **Peace Tax Seven** and sent to the Treasurer at the address below. Please tell him if you want a receipt, or more information as it becomes available. Alternatively you can contribute online at www.peacetaxseven.com.



The Peace Tax Seven with their lawyer Phil Shiner and assistant solicitor Nusrat Chagtai.

THE PEACE TAX SEVEN...

... are opposed to the compulsory use of individual tax contributions for military expenditure and seek a judicial review of UK tax laws to introduce alternative provisions for conscientious objectors.

**Peace Tax Seven, Woodlands, Ledge Hill,
Market Lavington, Wiltshire, SN10 4NW.**

**WPJF has a DVD about the Peace Tax Seven's
Campaign available for loan. ■**

CATCH 'EM YOUNG - ARMY TARGETS CHILDREN



In the wake of the illegal invasion of Iraq and the continuing resistance to the long-term occupation, along with a whole raft of other embarrassing fiascos, disasters and damning reports, the Army is finding it hard to recruit enough cannon fodder to keep the show on the road. A recent article in the *Daily Telegraph* (1/5/05) reported that almost all (95%) of the Army's infantry battalions are under-strength and that some regiments will not be able to be deployed to Iraq without "significant reinforcements from other parts of the Army." Senior Officers are predicting a 35% drop in numbers joining up this year compared with last, and a television advertising campaign has failed miserably to reverse this trend. In the US, the picture is much the same. With recruitments rates plummeting, desperate army recruiters have been up to all sorts of tricks, from misrepresenting sign-up agreements to encouraging would-be recruits to lie about their drug history, to threatening a young person with arrest if he didn't turn up for a recruitment interview. Complaints about such practices have increased so dramatically that the US Army was forced to suspend all recruitment activity on May 20th to enable commanders to 'remind' their staff about 'proper conduct'.

In places like Wrexham, recruitment efforts have previously produced the desired results (from the Army's point of view, at any rate). Opportunities for kids, especially those with few qualifications, are pretty scarce and the Army can seem like a way of escaping to a better life. Local schoolchildren are subjected to Army careers visits; Yale College students take part in military training days at local barracks; NEWI invites the Army to carry out officer recruitment within the college. All of these questionable activities have been going on for years unchallenged. Yale College spokesperson Margaret Cronin, for example, commented on the military training day thus: "It is important that they [students] are given the opportunity to find out about all the opportunities available to them... so they can make an informed decision about which path to take." *Wrexham Mail* 19/5/05.

The problem is, of course, that Army recruitment events paint a rosily tinted picture of these "opportunities", and students may well go away afterwards and make a dismally uninformed choice to join up. Sergeant Major Paul Edwards of the Royal Welch Fusiliers recruitment team was quoted as saying that the aim of the Yale College training day "was to get the students thinking, communicating and working together - as well as having a bit of fun." This all sounds very nice, but we know that many recruits have found the Army experience far from this enjoyable, co-operative idyll. There are those whose lives have been made a misery and some who have lost their lives in the bullying regime at army training barracks such as Deepcut and Catterick. There are the soldiers who found themselves out in Iraq without adequate training, clothing or equipment, some of whom were killed as a result of these failings. There are those who objected to being sent to fight illegally but who couldn't find a way to refuse to take part in these war crimes. There are the veterans suffering from Gulf War

Syndrome, and those whose children are born with deformities caused by genetic mutations following exposure to Depleted Uranium. There are more and more soldiers returning from war zones suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The list goes on.

The *Telegraph* report indicates that officers are well-aware of these factors, blaming "a series of public relations disasters including the controversy over the legality of the Iraq war and prisoner abuse incidents there, the deaths of recruits at Deepcut barracks and defence cuts" for the steep decline in recruitment. The question is whether they should be mentioning these issues to recruits who are unaware of them. It seems probable that they don't - just as they often fail to ensure that recruits are properly aware of the small print in their contracts, their right to conscientious objection and their responsibilities not to obey illegal orders - but someone needs to, and at the moment no-one does. Organisations like *At-Ease* will offer impartial and confidential information and advice, but only if recruits happen to find out about the organisation and take the initiative to make contact before it's too late. However, the current recruitment crisis offers some hope that information about the reality of Army life is filtering through to young people, who are voting with their feet and finding other career paths.

It is in this context of falling recruitment, poor image and desperation that the Army in North Wales launched its "Operation Dragon's March", a two-week long extravaganza designed to convince young people that the Army is the most exciting career choice they can make. Pupils from across North East Wales were helpfully bussed by their schools to Chirk Airfield, where they were treated to a huge display of tanks, guns and other military hardware. Members of WPJF staged a daytime protest outside the airfield during the school visits, with a large banner (above) which posed the question: DYING TO JOIN OR JOINING TO DIE?

During the evening of Wednesday 25th May, the display was open to the public. Other WPJF members made use of a convenient public footpath to gain access to the site, carrying a large rainbow PEACE flag which stood out beautifully against all the green and khaki (picture on front page). We handed out dozens of leaflets from Military Families Against War and our own "Thinking of Joining Up?" flyers, mainly to young people including many Army Cadets and without encountering any hostility, until the Police arrived and asked us to leave the site. Bizarrely, they claimed to be trying to "prevent a breach of the peace" although they very nearly caused one. Peaceful campaigners are so often charged with threatening the peace, while the Army killing machine is presented as being all about peacekeeping. I think they've got peace muddled up with status quo. Anyway,