

PEACE TAX SEVEN NEWS

JUNE 2007



OUR CAMPAIGN DEVELOPS

Hello again - and apologies for the long wait for this newsletter! There's lots to report ... See the website (www.peacetaxseven.com) for details, and drop us a line as we campaign and fundraise for our European Court action.

Many thanks and best wishes - *Birgit, Brenda, Joe, Robin, Roy, Sian and Simon*

EUROPEAN COURT ACTION

Our application has gone off, supported by five senior British judges, Quaker Peace and Social Witness, and Conscience and Peace Tax International. Strasbourg usually takes months to reply ... which, of course, means months longer to campaign and raise funds.

OXFORD PEACE TAX SEVEN BENEFIT CONCERT 17th NOVEMBER

A benefit concert for the Peace Tax Seven will take place in Oxford on 17th November, at the Holywell Rooms, courtesy of Ruth Underwood and Margaret Lion of MANA (Musicians Against Nuclear Weapons). We hope to put on other events during the day. Keep watching our website for further details www.peacetaxseven.com

CONTEMPT OF CONSCIENCE

Joe's feature-length documentary *Contempt of Conscience* should be wrapped by summer. The film narrates the history of conscientious objection, and follows the Peace Tax Seven through the British courts and beyond.

Joe's 12-minute DVD (also *Contempt of Conscience*) has been extended and subtitled in Dutch, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Welsh. We are distributing it across Europe, through CPTI and the Quaker Council for European Affairs. It won Best Documentary at the 2005 Strasbourg Film Festival (so we've won once in Strasbourg already ...)

FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS

Is Oxford now the UK Peace Tax Capital? After consultations with the PT7, journalist Sally Ramsden's peace group has begun two cases of tax resistance. More may follow. The group will be at Devon's *Buddhafield* festival in July, and at our November concert, and will launch their campaign around the January 2008 tax deadline.

Quaker author Christopher Gilmore will donate profits from his new anti-war book *Alice in Welfareland* to the Peace Tax Seven, after a launch at a military bunker in Cheshire. Christopher, author of *Soul Centred Education* and the *Dovetales* series, aims to hold signings at other military bunkers ... so get in touch if there's one near you! See www.christophergilmore.com

Donations have been received from two more trades unions: Amicus ... and the Professional Footballers Association!

UK: CONSCIENCE AND PEACE TAX INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2008

The UK will host CPTI's annual conference in 2008 - a meeting-point for war tax resisters from all over the world. Robin is on the planning group, so get in touch if you're interested in helping with the planning stages of this important event.

ROBIN GOES TO AMERICA

In February, Robin attended New York (Quaker) Yearly Meeting's Conference on Conscientious Objection to Military Taxes, inspired by the Peace Tax Seven High Court action. We conclude with edited extracts from his journal.

DAN JENKINS' HEARING - 22/02/2007

Dan was appealing a lower court decision that dismissed his defence for withholding taxes and fined him \$5,000. Dan's basic argument is that he wants to pay his taxes but that he also seeks an accommodation for his religious conscience and faith. The New York State Constitution has (in the distant past) exempted those persons with religious 'scruples of conscience' from supplying armament or personal service to military activity.

The hearing took place in a huge courtroom and was short by British standards. Lawyers were given about 20 minutes to present their case and Fred Detmer [Dan's lawyer] was given not one (rarely awarded) extension to his time, but two. The judges listened carefully and asked sensible questions. When Fred presented Dan's argument, two of them nodded in agreement. We all came away feeling positive about the hearing. I hoped that at least they would drop the punitive fine. I would have thought Dan's 9th amendment argument would have qualified, but unfortunately that was not to be the case, and two weeks later his appeal was rejected.

ON TO PURCHASE MEETING HOUSE - 23/02

In the afternoon we went on to the main event of the trip, New York Yearly Meeting Conference on Conscientious Objection to Military Taxes. So far hundreds, probably thousands of Americans have gone to court to defend their action in withholding taxes. No-one has taken the government to court in the way that PT7 are doing. This is because the US legal system is very different from ours. Over this weekend about 20 people, mostly Quaker, discussed ways to bring a case. They looked at bringing a group case or a class action.

It was decided to work towards bringing a group action, involving a variety of people of all ages, walks of life, religion and none, from different states etc. - about 10 all together. Besides the 10, who have yet to be found, many more will be involved in publicity, fund-raising, and research. The wider context of this action includes campaigning in their meetings and churches to raise awareness and support, lobbying congress, and writing personal statements of conscience. The participants and groups will continue to develop their strategy and will meet again in June to take their plans forward. I am impressed by their energy and organisation and I am sure they will succeed - by some route.

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