

How do people resist paying for war?

How do people resist paying for war?

Many people are deeply troubled at being forced to pay for war through their taxes. However, it can be difficult, psychologically and practically, to resist paying taxes for war. People in different countries and at different times have grappled with how to resist. This may depend on their personal circumstances e.g. whether they are employed or self-employed, it may depend on their stage in life e.g. whether resisting is likely to affect them solely as individuals or whether loved ones will also be affected. It may depend on the particular system for paying taxes in the country where they live. People have come up with a variety of ways to resist paying taxes for the military, raising awareness of the issue of financial conscription in the process.

“Getting through medical school gave me the courage to begin resisting payment of war taxes ... When I was in family practice, I lowered my salary to below the taxable income level to prevent collection. As a contract physician, I paid what I owed in self-employment taxes (SET) every year, but “redirected” all of my federal income taxes (FIT) to peace / justice groups and organizations that meet basic human needs.” (1)

Paula Rogge, USA

Withholding taxes destined for war



‘I refuse to pay any federal income tax, because I know that 50% of every dollar I send to the IRS will go to the military. Each year I do my taxes and send my completed tax forms to the IRS with a letter explaining why I refuse to pay for war, usually itemizing all the countries we are waging war. on that particular year. For the first ten years of resisting taxes, I worked in a hospital as an Intensive Care Unit nurse, and the IRS garnished my wages. The hospital took \$25 out of my paycheck every week and sent it to the IRS, but since I owed them several thousand dollars it would have taken them the rest of my life to ever get the full amount.’ (2)

Kathy Labriola, USA

Redirecting the military proportion of tax to a peace tax fund

“A few years back, I withheld the portion of my federal tax (as a public-school supply-teacher) that was heading toward national defence and re-directed it toward a peace tax fund that was and is being maintained by Conscience Canada. The year after that, the Canada Revenue Agency simply took the amount it was ‘owed’ from my subsequent return’s balance. It slowed things down, which was alright, and I did get a chance to write to the Finance Minister, Bill Morneau, at the time and hear from him how I had to pay income tax and could not re-direct my taxes without the support of a law from Parliament’.⁽³⁾

Joshua Weresch, Canada

Noncooperation



Similar to some conscientious objectors to military service, some war tax resisters follow a path of non-cooperation and non-compliance:

“On January 26, 1960, in Chicago, Eroseanna Robinson ... was carried into Federal Court by U.S. Marshals and ordered to provide information about war taxes she had not paid. She refused, began fasting from both food and water, and refused any cooperation with the process of imprisonment. She was cited for civil contempt, jailed, and, when she continued noncompliance, was sentenced to a year in prison for criminal contempt ... After 108 days of total fasting and noncooperation, Eroseanna was released from prison ... ’⁽⁴⁾ ⁽⁵⁾

Paying in alternative ways⁽¹⁾

In 1990 war tax resister Nigel Wild was in court for refusing to pay £182 income tax to the Inland Revenue. He offered 182 bread buns in lieu of pounds. “I am being sent to prison for refusing to pay income tax until I am given an assurance that none of it will be used for military expenditure. I am quite prepared to pay an equivalent amount in bread as I am a baker, and people are in need of bread not bombs.”⁽⁶⁾

Simple living as a way to refuse to pay for war

‘This is all part of why I’ve gravitated towards consciously reducing my tax burden through simple living. For me, it’s easier. Living simply aligns with so many of my other values that it’s an obvious choice. My guess would be that a lot of other people who hate war and violence would be attracted to simple living as a way to refuse to pay for war, but that refusing to pay calculated taxes would be a bridge too far for them’.⁽⁷⁾

Lindsey Britt, USA