

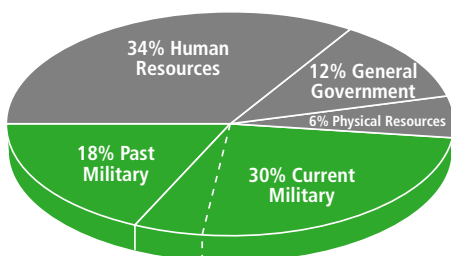
Proclaiming Truth and Healing



(Continued from front)

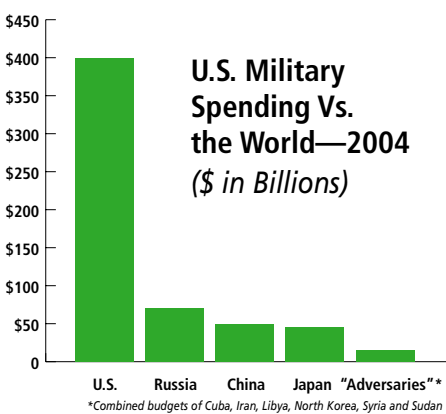
in the army, we also continue to pay for others to do just that. Present military wars and adventures are more dependent on taxes today than on young men and women to serve in the military. The new reality in our world is that war will not end until tax-payers stop paying for it.

For Mennonites, considering whether to pay taxes for war is not new. Between 1980 and 1995, the General Conference Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Church passed six resolutions examining war taxes, withholding taxes, and supporting the National Campaign for the Peace Tax Fund.



**Total Federal Funds (Outlays):
\$2,130 Billion**

Credit: War Resisters League, <http://www.warresisters.org/piechart.htm>



Credit: Adapted from the Center for Defense Information (for some countries, latest figures available are for 2001)

Alternatives to paying for war

1. Live below the taxable limit.
2. Don't file an income tax return. This action carries more severe penalties; however, some individuals feel the need to refuse to be a part of the whole tax system.
3. File a return and send a letter of protest to the IRS and your Congressional representatives.
4. File a return and withhold a portion of your tax. While this option is illegal, thousands of U.S. citizens are openly participating in this form of protest. Some withhold a token amount and others withhold the full 47% estimated to pay for military expenditures.
5. Refuse to pay the federal excise tax on telephone bills. Refusal to pay this tax does not usually result in a cut-off of phone service.

Less for life

Resources spent on war and militarism are a theft from the poor.

Economic and opportunity costs: (as of May 17, 2005)

Congress has already appropriated nearly \$300 billion for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (about \$225 million a day in Iraq). For what the U.S. has spent so far in Iraq—\$173 billion—we could have instead:

- sent 23 million children to Head Start for a year; or
- provided health insurance for 104 million children for a year; or
- hired 3 million public school teachers for one year; or
- provided 8.4 million four-year scholarships to public universities; or
- built 1.6 million new housing units; or
- fully funded global anti-hunger efforts for 7 years; or
- fully funded global AIDS programs for 17 years; or
- provided basic immunizations for every child in the world for 57 years.

Conclusion



We belong to God. We choose to give God our talents, time and money by investing in life.

God gives us imagination to create a different world; Christ, the courage to act on this vision from God. Our congregations are called by the Spirit of God to give support to people acting on the vision that a world that better serves humanity is possible. Grassroots peace and justice efforts through congregations ripple across the community, the state, and the world. **Blessings and courage!**

Credits

"And No One Shall Make Them Afraid" (Zephaniah 3:12-13): a Mennonite Statement on Violence (Mennonite Church, General Conference Mennonite Church, 1997)

Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective
Government Accounting Office Report: GAO-03-1005

Making Peace with Enemies, © 2002 Faith & Life Resources, Scottsdale, PA. Written by Richard A. Kauffman

MCC Washington Office Guide to U.S. Militarism National Priorities Project (<http://costofwar.com>)

Susan Balzer, Susan Mark Landis, Titus Peachey, and Steve Ratzlaff, writers

U.S. Army Recruiting Command Strategic Partnership Plan for 2002-2007

War Resisters League, <http://www.warresisters.org/piechart.htm>

Co-sponsors

- Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America [www.bpfna.org]
- Center on Conscience and War (NISBCO) [www.nisbco.org]
- Christian Peacemaker Teams [www.cpt.org]
- Every Church a Peace Church [www.ecapc.org]
- Mennonite Central Committee U.S. [www.mcc.org]
- Mennonite Church USA Peace Advocate [www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace]
- Mennonite Church USA Peace and Justice Support Network [www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace]
- Mennonite Mission Network [www.mennonitemission.net]
- National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund [www.peacetaxfund.org]
- National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee [www.nwtrcc.org]

This pamphlet is available free of charge as a download at www.mennoniteusa.org/peace. Order additional print copies at www.MennoniteUSA.org/resources or 1-800-999-3534.



Proclaiming truth and healing

The **truth** we proclaim is that our security rests in God's strength and not in military power. The **healing** we proclaim is that we are committed to use our bodies and our money to help our neighbors and enemies, rather than hurt them with violence.

When we say YES! to Christ, we turn over our life, our will, our trust, and all of our talents and treasures to Christ. With the power of the Holy Spirit we can actively love our enemies and overcome evil with good, as Jesus did. All ages can offer Christian truth and healing to the world. Whenever we make peace with our lives, at whatever age, we are choosing to follow God: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

- **Children:** Refuse to bully others and learn ways to prevent others from bullying.
- **Twins:** Learn conflict management skills; befriend people who are different from you.
- **High school students:** Take a stand against guns in school, including for JROTC use; consider refusing to register for the military draft (this is an illegal action).
- **All youth and adults:** Refuse to play video or arcade or paintball games that make shooting or killing look like fun. Don't watch violent movies.
- **Young adults:** Volunteer in a church-related service program, peace delegation or contribute your talents to make your home community a better place.
- **Wage/income earners of all ages:** Choose ways to keep the money from your labor from supporting war—live below taxable income; refuse and redirect the military percentage of your taxes; make pretax donations to church and charities.
- **Seniors:** Mentor younger people and tell the stories of your life choices.



The Bible

Shiphrah and Puah are the midwives who saved the lives of Moses and other babies. This brave act is the first account of people who refused to obey the law of the government in order to follow their conscience. God honored their decision to disobey the government and gave the formerly barren midwives families. (Exodus 1:15-21)

Daniel, Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego were told to worship gods other than the true God. They had faith that even if they were thrown to the lions, their God would save them or give them the courage to suffer

The **truth** we proclaim is that our security rests in **God's strength** and not in military power. The **healing** we **proclaim** is that we are committed to use our bodies and our money to **help our neighbors and enemies**, rather than hurt them with violence.

Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective

Article 22

We believe that peace is the will of God. God created the world in peace, and God's peace is most fully revealed in Jesus Christ, who is our peace and the peace of the whole world. Led by the Holy Spirit, we follow Christ in the way of peace, doing justice, bringing reconciliation, and practicing non-resistance, even in the face of violence and warfare.

Article 23

We believe that the church is God's holy nation, called to give full allegiance to Christ its head and to witness to every nation, government and society about God's saving love.

"And No One Shall Make Them Afraid" (Zephaniah 3:12-13): a Mennonite Statement on Violence

In response to global violence, we call the church to...be steadfast in our refusal to participate in, train for, pay for, or profit from the use of military violence.

and stay strong. (Daniel 3)

Jesus is our clearest example of the ways of God and lived these four principles of peacemaking.

1. **God loves enemies.** Jesus taught us that God loves enemies and treats them justly: God "makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous." (Matthew 5:45b; Luke 6:35-36)
2. **Jesus makes peace possible.** Jesus didn't just teach his disciples the way of peace. Jesus is our peace. (Romans 5:6-11; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Ephesians 2:14, 17-18; Colossians 1:20)
3. **God's family makes peace.** God makes peace with enemies and so do God's children. (Matthew 5:9)
4. **We disarm our enemies.** Jesus taught his disciples to respond to enemies in unexpected ways—ways that sometimes "disarm" them. (Matthew 5:39-41; Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27; Romans 12:17-21)



Our situation in the United States

Since we live in the United States, the most militarized society in the world, let's examine the military's influence on our lives and the well-being of our society.

The military asks of

us our bodies for the making of war and our money for the paying of war. It takes courage for us to say no to this death power, and yes to doing what Christ asks of us: follow our God-given conscience and use our money and bodies for life.

Recruitment of bodies

There are now more than 15,000 military recruiters in the U.S. approaching young people in high school cafeterias, sporting events, and shopping malls. With a recruitment budget of nearly \$4 billion, the military entices youth with glossy brochures and high-tech computer games filled with promises about money for college and job training. Behind the gloss are these sobering realities:

- Very few enlistees actually complete four years of college on the GI Bill.
- Nearly 25% of enlistees leave or are discharged after serving only two years.
- Much of the training for military jobs does not transfer to the civilian job market.
- Military recruiters deliberately target areas of poverty.
- Military recruiters are concentrating on Latino communities since this group is currently "underrepresented" in the military.
- Many combat veterans suffer from post traumatic stress disorder, physical injuries, and other combat-related problems for the rest of their lives.

Perhaps the deepest questions center around the purpose for which our bodies are recruited.

The mission of the military is to intimidate, dominate, and kill the enemy. Military and government leaders define the enemy and determine who should be killed. Every enlistee is trained to kill and is expected to kill on command and without question.

*What makes the grass grow?
Blood, blood makes the grass grow.
What makes the blood flow?
Marines make the blood flow—
ub-rab, Marine Corps!*

In contrast, Jesus invites us to courageous acts of love and service. Everyone is included in God's embrace. As followers of Jesus, our mission is to heal and to restore so that the reign of God will become a reality in our world.

Recruitment of money

The money to make weapons and to recruit and pay soldiers comes directly from our taxes. Many people do not see a distinction between using their own body to kill and using their taxes to pay someone to kill.

During WWII, Mennonites and other conscientious objectors to war were officially granted the right to participate in alternative service rather than in the military (Selective service Act of 1940). However, Mennonites have developed somewhat of a split personality when it comes to paying for war. While we find it abhorrent and impossible to fight

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