

My big fat letter to the IRS

A number of people have asked me about war tax resistance. The following letter gives my theological and political rationale for this witness; only the financial specifics of the letter have been omitted. Keep in mind that the IRS does NOT recognize the right of taxpayers to redirect the military portion of their tax obligation, and will attempt to collect the amount owed. This is not a legal witness, but in my opinion an important one. As you can see, I have chosen to be very up front and open with the IRS about what I am doing and why. They have been collecting on me for almost 20 years now with liens and levies, but my witness continues.

April 11, 2003
Internal Revenue Service
Fresno, CA 93888

To Whom It May Concern:

Enclosed is my 2002 tax return. According to estimates of the War Resisters League (WRL), present current military expenditures account for about 27% of the Federal budget for Fiscal Year 2004—not including costs for the Iraq war and war on terrorism (see enclosed flyer for information about how WRL determines this figure). Thus as an act of citizen responsibility I am redirecting 27% of my 2002 tax obligation to more human purposes, in order to reflect my refusal to subsidize military expenditures.

As a follower of Christ, and as a U.S. citizen committed to doing my part to contribute to a more just and peaceful national and international order, I cannot in good conscience contribute to the military portion of the Federal budget. My reasons for this are as follows:

1. My religious convictions obligate me to a life of nonviolence. As a Christian I heed Jesus' admonition to discern, in every historical situation, "what belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God" (Mark 12:17). As part of my commitment to follow Jesus' way of nonviolence, I aspire not only to minimize my direct participation in the military operations of any country, but also my indirect participation through financial subsidy of such operations. Refusal of the military portion of my tax obligation is the clearest way to register my conscientious objection to militarism and war.
2. Current U.S. military policies, deployments and technologies are fundamentally immoral by Christian moral standards. I am opposed to the unilateral U.S. military intervention in Iraq, as well as to the Bush administration's unlimited and undefined "war against terrorism," because I believe that military

responses cannot solve political problems. I am also opposed to U.S. military subsidies of wars elsewhere, such as those currently occurring in Israel/Palestine, Afghanistan, the Philippines and Columbia. Finally, this administration's defense posture is predicated upon the threat and use of nuclear and other weaponry of indiscriminate destruction, which violates international law and traditional just war tenets as interpreted today by all major religious bodies. I cannot support these national policies and practices with my tax dollars.

3. Current U.S. military spending is unjustifiable and represents a gross misallocation of national resources. We as a nation lead the world in both domestic military spending and in arms sales abroad. In contrast, our domestic spending for health, education and social welfare is woefully inadequate to meet the needs of our most vulnerable citizens. These distorted priorities are undermining the social fabric of our national life, and represent the true threat to our security.

As a U.S. citizen it is my democratic responsibility to register my "vote" on issues of U.S. militarism in the strongest possible way. I do this through my work as an educator, a writer and an activist, as a matter of vocation. I also express my convictions by conscientiously and openly redirecting the military portion of my tax obligation toward those serving the poor.

My enclosed 1040 form is filled out in full. My adjusted calculation of my 2002 taxable income is, in light of my war tax redirection, as follows:

2002 tax obligation...
Minus 27%, military portion redirected...
My non-military tax obligation...
Minus amount already withheld...
Amount owed...

The redirected portion of my tax obligation has been donated to organizations that provide human services and work for peace and justice.

I stand consciously within the best tradition of our Republic, whose own independence struggle began with a tax protest (the Boston Tea Party). I do not object to paying taxes in principle, which is why I have paid the non-military portion of my obligation. I do support the right of conscientious objection for taxpayers, though it is not yet recognized in our law. I will pay my tax obligation in full when I can be assured that those revenues will be applied only to non-military purposes.

Sincerely, Charles E. Myers