

# Netzwerk Friedenssteuer

Winner of the Aachen Peace Award 1993



## National Report Germany 2000-2002

### General political situation

Although Germany has participated actively in the operations of the NATO in Yugoslavia and the so-called fight against terror in Afghanistan; and although this means that for the first time since World War II Germany participates actively in a war, the public protest was considerably less than at the time of the Gulf War. At that time *Netzwerk Friedenssteuer* attracted much attention, which has been missing this time. The reasons are many.

The year 2002 is marked by the election campaign for the general election on September 22<sup>nd</sup>. Our forces are still too weak to influence politicians e. g. by public actions. This is limited to individual talks.

However, one workshop during this International Conference as well as the next national meeting of the *Netzwerk Friedenssteuer* in November are dedicated to the topic „Types of tax objections and actions“.

### Opportunities for a „Peace Tax“

**Legal proceedings** almost seem exhausted. Courts always refer us to legislation. Even though the lawsuits by tax objectors are continuing since we are of the opinion that in every time we receive a *judgment* without *justice* being served, and because it is important that our protest is continuously documented by the courts.

**Politically** there are strong reservations and fears shown by jurists and representatives worrying that floodgates will be opened (floodgate argument) and their power restricted (budget autonomy).

### Structure and activities of the *Netzwerk Friedenssteuer* (NWFS)

There are 2 annual conferences. In addition, there are 6 regional groups with their own workshops as well as the union **Taxes for Plowshares** with activities within the Protestant and Catholic churches.

The **task force Legislative Initiative** started a **petition drive** in fall 2000. The basic declaration:

***"I support a legal provision according to which nobody can be forced against his/her better judgment to contribute to an investment in the military and armament with his/her taxes. Instead, it must be ensured that these payments are used for civil operations."***

has been signed 6300 times so far.

In spring 2001 a new initiative started to **prepare another bill concerning the objection to military taxes**. The task force has compiled several drafts for an act. This was done with the intention to achieve a bill which several different parliamentary parties of the German Bundestag are able to support. Simultaneously a comprehensive lobby guide, specimen letters and other argumentation aids have been prepared for talks of objectors with their representatives in the Bundestag. 8-10 people had such talks until June 2002.

**Lawsuits against fiscal agencies** have been carried on by at least three objectors in 2002. A fourth action as well as another complaint have been filed with the Bundesverfassungsgericht (Constitutional Court).

During the spring conference 2001 the military tax objectors joined a **political action** of other peace groups and symbolically „threw money down the drain“ on the Marktplatz in Marburg symbolizing the waste of money in form of national defense spending.

**Developments within the confessions** are very different. The concern is dealt with by Quakers and Protestants. Pax Christi is represented with a workshop at the International Conference 2002. The leading organizations of the Protestant Church in Deutschland (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland), currently represented by Dr. Jürgen Schmude as the chairman of the EKD synod (former justice minister of the Federal Republic of Germany) stated: 'There is no new basis for the admission of your concern.' Nevertheless we are slowly gaining ground here: The synod of the regional Protestant church in Thuringia made a supporting declaration. Individual regional Protestant churches met with the objectors. Several regional Protestant churches made grants for this conference totaling approx. 11 000 EURO.