

Fiscal Conscription

Peg Tittle

It's income tax time. Do you know where 7% of your taxes will go?

Well, let's just say that you bought the bullets. (Out out damned spot, you say?)

Then again, \$250 (if your taxable income is about \$20,000) might buy more than a few bullets. Maybe you can pay for a whole box of screws for one of our nuclear submarines. Or maybe you even can buy a bit of gas for one of the planes still practising over the Innu. (By the way, d'ya think they've got it right yet?)

Sure, better your money than your life, but wouldn't neither be better still? Wouldn't it be good if at least you had a choice about serving the military?

I mean, it wouldn't be so bad if it really were the Department of Defence. There are many arguments in favour of waging a war and, in truth, I find a few convincing; sometimes killing is the best of a bunch of really bad options.

But we live in a world in which countries routinely sell weapons to their enemies. Doesn't that make the whole thing just a little bit of a farce? (Hey you. Yeah you. I'm gonna blow your face off. Yeah. What? You ain't got nothin to fight with? Hey Vinny, sell the man one of your bazookas. No not that one, the other one. Yeah. Well he can pay us later. Put him on our don't-pay-till-May plan. Okay? You all set now? Okay then. Now I'm gonna blow your face off.)

Oh but we can't just start letting everyone choose what portion of their taxes they'll pay and what they won't! Agreed. So everyone will still pay that 7%. They'll just get to say whether or not it supports military endeavours.

But if we let people choose not to direct that 7% to the military, we'd have to allow choice for the other 93%! Well, would this be such a bad idea? Maybe it would be a good thing to be able to put our money where our minds are. I, for example, would choose not to put any of my tax money into subsidizing big corporations; let them take a cut in profits first; better yet, let

them pay taxes first. I especially wouldn't subsidize Ontario Hydro; I'd rather fund jobs in solar industries than support the nuclear industry. And I'd rather pay for ViaRail than for the four-laning of every highway in the country. And so on. Oh, and how about mandatory sensitivity training and a conflict resolution course for every male between eighteen and twenty-four.

You think we don't have the draft in Canada? Check your wallet next time you see a convoy of khaki jeeps en route to somewhere. (other than Toronto in winter.)