

# 17125      **We Will not Pay**

The Guardian    15/02/17

Andrew Newman always pays his taxes, even if he hates what the government is doing with them. But not this year. For him, Donald Trump is the dealbreaker. He'll pay his city and state taxes but will refuse to pay federal income tax as a cry of civil disobedience against the president and his new administration.

Newman is not alone. A nascent movement has been detected to revive the popularity of tax resistance – last seen en masse in America during the Vietnam war but which has been, sporadically, a tradition in the US and beyond going back many centuries.

“My tax money will be going towards putting up a wall on the Mexican border instead of helping sick people. It will contribute to the destruction of the environment and maybe more nuclear weapons. I think there will be a redistribution of wealth from the middle class to the wealthy elite and Trump's campaign for the working man and woman was an absolute fraud. If you pay taxes you are implicated in the system,” said Newman, an associate professor of English and history at Stony Brook University on Long Island.

“The government wants our money and if a lot of people were thinking about this kind of peaceful protest, it would get their attention,” he added.

Newman, 48, will be following the example of one of his heroes, Henry David Thoreau, who refused to pay tax that would fund wars and slavery and was jailed for it in 1846, and whose famous essay, *Civil Disobedience*, Newman often reads to his students. Martin Luther King Jr was a huge admirer of Thoreau's argument about civil disobedience, and Mahatma Gandhi led salt tax protests and resistance that helped spur independence for India.

“I've been discussing this with friends and colleagues and they are extremely interested,” he said. “People are very responsive but they also say ‘I don't want to go to jail.’”

He is far more likely simply to be fined and charged interest on the unpaid taxes by the IRS.

“There have been very few people who have spent time in jail for not paying taxes as an explicit act of political resistance,” said Ruth Benn, coordinator of the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee, a campaign group that encourages federal tax boycotts in the name of peace and advises citizens on how to go about it.

The committee was created in 1982 as a protest against the nuclear arms race during the cold war.

413 words