

BUXX HASSLES

US Bank Visa Buxx cards are a scam. Teen accounts at US Bank seem to be ideal for parents seeking a way for their teens to have a way to get some money in case they get in a pinch. It's unfortunate that no source of news covers such an important topic.

Visa Buxx cards seem to be a great way for parents to transfer money onto their kid's debit card for instances like gas or food. What US Bank doesn't tell you is that if you pay at the pump at a gas station, they will put an automatic \$75 hold on your account for seven business days. Not only that, most fast food places such as Taco Bell and McDonald's as well as most restaurants will not accept the card. The few restaurants that do accept the card also put an automatic hold of a few dollars on the account.

Arguably food and gas are the main reasons for adolescents to need money in

their teen years. After thinking about all of the hassles that come with a Visa Buxx card, it doesn't seem to live up to what it's supposed to be.

Cody Valenzuela
Eugene

CUT THE CAP

Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley was appointed to the new budget committee to work out a budget deal. I would like to share a letter I sent to him. And I would encourage anyone with similar sentiments to contact him as well.

Senator Merkley: I hope that you will argue forcefully, along with all other Democrats in the room, for elimination of the cap on earnings subject to Social Security withholding. Additionally, it would be easy to argue, I think, that in the name of fairness all income from all sources should be subject to this taxation. When the vast majority of Americans

will pay this tax on all their income all their lives, those who have reaped all the rewards of income growth over the last 30 years pay virtually nothing to support this system that is so important to most Americans.

I would also like to see you call for elimination of the special retirement programs for members of Congress and others in the federal system. Social Security would be better protected for all Americans if lawmakers and policy makers had their own skins in the game.

David Peden
Florence

BE A FRIEND TO BEES

I have a dream and it is to make Eugene's gardens and lawns pesticide free. With all the new evidence that pesticides are playing a major role in the decline of the honeybee and all pollinators, we need to act now! Many of us rely on our locally

grown, organic, healthy food to sustain us, and without these pollinators we are all doomed. Local farms didn't have enough bees this year!

We can use the bees as a way to get all of our neighbors to unite to insure our local natural food will be abundant year after year. In order to do this we must protect our local pollinators. I suggest we ask our neighbors that use pesticides to stop in the name of the honeybee. If they say no, at least they are aware they are poisoning our natural world. I would like to speak for all beekeepers when I say please stop the use of pesticides in your yards and gardens. Do we have to wait till all our bees are dead and there is no food left?

We also all need to set aside a native flower garden for bees to insure they have a food supply that lasts throughout the year. I hope you all inspire your neighbors to sign the Honey Bee Friend Pledge, plant a garden and personally do your part to

VIEWPOINT

BY STEVE MCQUIDDY

What Is It Good For?

WAR AND HOW TO AVOID IT

As I go around giving talks for *Here on the Edge*, my book about how a small group of World War II conscientious objectors on the Oregon Coast helped plow the ground for the social and cultural revolutions of the 1960s, I sometimes encounter people who ask if I am a conscientious objector. Others ask if I believe that we should all refuse to fight any war under any circumstances.

I tell them that I was not a conscientious objector when I was draft age, and that because I was never called to military service, I was never forced to face such a decision. My guess is that I probably would have gone but not been very happy about it.

Now that I am older and have seen the effects of war on my friends and neighbors, and now that I have had the opportunity to thoroughly research the history of war and peace in this country, I think it's fair to say that our treatment of dissent in America shows a mixed record. We have spoken of and even proposed some of the highest ideals. Yet we have brutally and sometimes openly indulged our most base impulses.

Conscientious objection in the U.S. is as old as the country itself, with the earliest records from the colonial days and the American Revolution showing that members of the three "historic peace churches" — the Friends (or Quakers), Mennonites and Brethren — petitioned government leaders to excuse them from military service on the grounds that their religion forbade them to participate in war. Some were excused, usually for a fee.

When Congress was debating this fledgling nation's Constitution, a clause regarding conscientious objection was introduced by none other than James Madison. It was proposed to be part of the Second Amendment: "The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed; a well armed and well regulated militia being the best security of a free country: but no person religiously scrupulous of bearing arms shall be compelled to render military service in person."

No reference to conscience survived to the final version.

Throughout the first half of the 19th century, as the U.S. expanded across the continent, various states' constitutions adopted language recognizing conscientious objection. Pennsylvania, Alabama, Texas, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky and Kansas all allowed some manner of exemption for the CO, usually in the form of alternative service or restitution paid to the state.

This exemption continued into the Civil War. But as the battles grew bloodier, more bodies were needed, and in 1863, the fee for being excused was set at \$300, an incredible sum at the time.

This set off rioting in New York City, requiring 2,000 policemen and five army regiments to disperse the crowds, angry at what was considered a "rich man's act." What came to be known as the New York Draft Riots, along with disturbances in other northern

cities, took much-needed infantry and sometimes artillery away from the battlefield. According to one source, the Union army was so short-handed because of this that when they defeated the Confederates at the pivotal Battle of Gettysburg, they did not have enough men to pursue General Robert E. Lee's forces retreating south.

COs who could not pay the fee were tortured in both Union and Confederate armies. Punishments included being forced to march hours loaded down with gear and with weapons hung around their necks, being tied to four stakes in the hot sun with arms and legs stretched into an X, being hung by the thumbs with feet barely touching the ground, and being stabbed exactly 4 inches deep with bayonets.

WWI brought together the scientific advances of both mechanical and psychological warfare. Airplanes, nerve gas and long-range artillery made mass slaughter more efficient. Psychoanalysis, bulk printing and the burgeoning medium called radio made mass behavior easier to manipulate.

This was necessary and even good for the country, argued those in positions of power. Edward Bernays, nephew of Sigmund Freud and the man who later invented the term "public relations" as a euphemism for propaganda, summed it up succinctly:

"The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society," he said. "Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country. We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of."

The society as a whole was complicit, he added. "This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized. Vast numbers of human beings must cooperate in this manner if they are to live together as a smoothly functioning society."

Of the 2.8 million men inducted into the armed forces during WWI, barely 4,000 were accorded true conscientious objector status. Most were imprisoned and some endured tortures similar to those of the Civil War era: beatings, stabbings, jerked about with ropes on their necks, dunked in latrines and another method now familiar to us in the 21st century: the "water cure," in which prisoners were held with their mouths open beneath a water faucet.

WWII brought an alternative, the government-church partnership called Civilian Public Service, in which 12,000 men in 150 locations across the country worked in lieu of military service at camps similar to the 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps.

CPS didn't last beyond that war, but the contacts made and messages developed laid the foundation for the next generation, facing their own war in Vietnam. When enough young people in the 1960s learned enough about how and why nations go to war, there was no turning back.

Or was there? The '60s supposedly changed the world — and in many ways they did. But in other ways the machinery of individual gain through mass psychological and economic manipulation continues unabated.

What is war good for? It's a simple question, and the immediate answer might seem simple. But if it is that simple, why do we go to war — again and again and again?

Only when we are willing to address the deeper questions, only when we are able to understand the relationship between our highest and basest urges, only then can we discover and bring to light those underlying truths that make America not just a nation but an ideal. Only then might it be possible to create that world of freedom, decency and peace — of which we speak so much, but as yet remains a dream.

Steve McQuiddy is the author of Here on the Edge: How a Small Group of World War II Conscientious Objectors Took Art and Peace From the Margins to the Mainstream. He will give a slideshow presentation at 7 pm Wednesday, Nov. 6, in the UO Knight Library Browsing Room.