



Conscience Canada

DVD Discussion Guide

Below are some questions and comments for group discussion. You may decide to use only a few of these. We recommend that if you have more than six participants, you break off into smaller groups. A spokesperson can then recap the main points when people gather together again.

WORK FOR PEACE, STOP PAYING FOR WAR

The Canadian charter of rights and freedoms guarantees freedom of conscience and religion. Canada has respected conscientious objection to military service on religious grounds since 1793. Historically, Canada has permitted some people to avoid conscription for reasons of conscience. Today the military recruits volunteers but we are all obliged to pay for war through our taxes. Although Canadians are not drafted into the army our money is drafted to pay for guns, warplanes, tanks or bombs which will be used to destroy other people's homes, villages, and resources for living.

1. Discuss the ethics of paying others to fight a war while you oppose the violence and killing of war.

There are many examples of places where non-violent protest has produced major change in an oppressive regime.

2. Discuss the pros and cons of an army of a hundred thousand people trained and skilled in non-violent techniques, versus an army of a hundred thousand people trained to kill, in diffusing a violent insurrection.

3. What are the strengths needed to respond to violence in a non-violent way? Consider the personal arena as well as the political.

Wars are not started overnight. When war is imminent, the signs are there for all to see. This was true of the Second World War, the genocide in Rwanda. and other wars.

4. What kind of peacebuilding techniques could be deployed at the first sign of conflict to try to avoid war?

Children are not brought into the world to become agents of destruction. Yet nearly 1 million people were killed in Rwanda, thousands are being killed in Darfour, in Palestine, in Afghanistan, in Iraq and other parts of the world. Some informed estimates place Iraqi civilian casualties at over 600,000 since the American invasion.

5. If you look at the results achieved by most of our modern wars can you think of how alternatives could have change the course of the aggression?

In Iraq, the US is spending more than \$250 million daily. The total U.S. defense budget for 2008 is estimated at \$800 billion. The cost of deploying one U.S. soldier for one year in Iraq is \$390,000.

6. What do you envision could be done with such an enormous budget, which is now used for killing people, polluting the environment and depriving so many people of the essentials of life?

In 2006/07 Canada spent \$1.4 billion on the mission to Afghanistan, and only \$6.4 million on UN peacekeeping. In 1991, Canada provided 1100 UN peacekeepers; in 2006, only 56. At the same time in 2006 Canada had 2300 soldiers in Afghanistan

7. What must Canada do to regain its reputation as a peacekeeping nation?

After the discussion

Distribute the Peace Tax Return to the participants interested and explain very briefly how to use it.

Every year, Conscience Canada updates the Peace Tax Return which is designed to guide you through a number of options for active participation: 1) diverting the percentage of your tax money going to the military; 2) diverting only a symbolic sum, like \$25; 3) not diverting money but expressing your objection to paying for war. It also provides assistance for those without tax to pay or expecting a refund. It is very important to understand that Conscience Canada needs people like you to support it visibly, even if you don't redirect your taxes.

*For more information on Conscience Canada, including the answers to Frequently Asked Questions, and a link to our dvd on YouTube, go to:
www.consciencecanada.ca*