

The Conscience Canada Annual General Meeting for 2011 was held on Saturday, 02 April 2011

Ten members attended this year's AGM with 14 additional proxies plus two guests. Mary Groh, of Toronto, President of the board presided over the meeting. The other board members willing to stand and be accepted were: Benno Barg, of Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, Anna Kirkpatrick of Nelson, B.C., Murray Lumley of Toronto, Ontario, Jan Slakov of Salt Spring Island, B.C. and Don Woodside of Hamilton, Ontario. Bryan Eelhart of Toronto was newly elected to the board. Bryan volunteered to overhaul CC's website to make it more interactive. He will also act as the webmaster for the new CC website. Jonathan Seiling of St. Catharines, Ontario announced his resignation from the Board at the board meeting held just prior to the AGM. The board officially thanked Jonathan for all his great ideas and hard work on behalf of Conscience Canada since 2009. Jonathan will continue as a member of CC.

At 3 pm in the Grand Hall of Conrad Grebel College, guest speaker Paul C. Heidebrecht of Mennonite Central Committee Canada, Ottawa Office, spoke to an audience of 30 to 40 people. Paul describes himself as a 'Christian Ethicist'. He also has a degree in Engineering. A summary of his speech follows:

'Pacifist-Friendly Legislation in Canada: Can Bill C-390, C-440, and C-447 Contribute to a More Peaceful Society?'
by Paul C. Heidebrecht

Paul spoke of the value of Private Member's Bills to forwarding human rights, environmental protection and issues that are of importance to individuals or groups. He explained the parliamentary procedures that govern the passage of any legislation – the three 'readings' and referrals to committee for hearings and refinements. Paul pointed out that the success rate of PMB's is very small. Out of 2790 PMB's since 2001 only 35 have succeeded. Government sponsored bills are far more successful. Of 344 Government sponsored bills since 2001, 289 have succeeded. But this does not mean that PMB's are total failures. On the contrary, defeated PMB's may eventually be taken up by a government as their own and succeed in some form. PMB's have been used to improve our country – the attempt to increase foreign aid to 0.7% of GDP; to embarrass the government – the Climate Change Accountability Act which passed the House but was defeated in the Senate; the passion of an MP about an issue.

Paul used three bills as examples of the impact of PMB's – Bill C-390: An Act respecting conscientious objection to the use of taxes for military purposes; Bill C-440: An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (war resisters); and Bill C-447: An Act to establish a Department of Peace. Paul commented on 200 years of Canadian history for C-390 even though it has been brought forward many times and the negative implications for 'conscience' of the defeat of C-440. C-447 joins an international initiative of 35 countries and is

seconded by 20 M.P.'s, the maximum number allowed. It was sponsored by M.P. Bill Siksay who has also sponsored the 'objection to military taxes' bill several times. Paul pointed out the connections between these three bills, the critique arguments that can be brought against them – eg. don't we need a strong military to defeat a Hitler? He spoke of critiques that are preoccupied with effectiveness and faithfulness. But they allow a 'speaking truth to power' by Pacifists and can have a success by the public and media attention they draw to an issue that cannot be ignored by legislators. Paul said, "PMB's are a tactic, not an end in themselves, they are a nudge to government, in a good way." Paul encouraged people of peace to ask the candidates during this election if they would initiate private members bills in the interest of peace and non-violence.

The speech was followed by a question period. Please click [here](#) for Paul C. Heidebrecht's notes for this presentation.

If you would like further details of the meeting, please contact us:
info@consciencecanada.ca.