

Conscience Canada **Nonviolent Alternatives to Canadian Defence** **and Security**

***"We demand our governments renounce violence
and war,
instead prepare for peace through justice for all
citizens of the world."***

*Final Statement of the 4th World Social Forum held in
Mumbai (India) 16-21 January 2004,
attended by some 100.000 people from 132 countries.
Over 100 anti-war movements endorsed this
statement.*

Conscience Canada's purpose in undertaking dialogues on security/ defence policy.

In the week of April 19, 2004, Conscience Canada¹ invited its members from coast to coast to consider wide questions that relate to Canadian defence and security². Fifteen communities responded and close to 250 people³ participated in the dialogue around these questions.

CC's overwhelming and primary mandate continues to be working for tax legislation to guarantee Conscientious Objectors to Military Taxation (COMTs) the right to follow their conscience in neither killing nor preparing to kill. While CC's central mandate addresses the needs of personal conscience, the CC Board thinks that at this time CC needs to play a more active and collective role as part of the Canadian peace movement. And because COMTs are not only *individuals* who want to follow their conscience, but also *citizens* who want to take part in the political debates and help address crucial issues, we think that it is time to be heard on our view of the future of our society. Both personal conscience and public policy are well served by a serious evaluation and questioning of the predominantly violent method of settling conflicts that are used throughout the world and that influence Canada's foreign and defence policies.

This consultation on how best to work towards true security for Canada and the world comes at a time when the stakes are very high. On the 100th anniversary of the Nobel Prize, in December 2001, 100 Nobel laureates warned that our security hangs on environmental and social reforms. We desperately need to learn to stop waging war on each other and to wage peace instead, to devote our energies to finding

ways to live sustainably on this beautiful, endangered planet.

We believe that there is no 'just war.'⁴ War is an industry that enriches a small oligarchy but impoverishes the world. It has always and only generated more violence and at best unstable truces. The use of violence (war) to defeat enemies inevitably leads us to take on qualities of the enemy we are fighting; war sows the seeds of violence for the future. As Dr. Albert Schweitzer, a great humanitarian (1875-1965), once wrote:

"In the hearts of people today there is a deep longing for peace. When the true spirit of peace is thoroughly dominant, it becomes an inner experience with unlimited possibilities. Only when this really happens--when the spirit of peace awakens and takes possession of men's hearts, can humanity be saved from perishing."

Canada could do much to help awaken this "spirit of peace." This is where we want to direct our energies; we look forward to working with many others, both within and outside of government circles, towards this goal.

To summarize, the CC Board undertook this initiative because it:

- feels the need to move from a position that "peace is desirable (if possible)" to: "peace is necessary and possible," and we *must* find *how* to achieve it.
- believes that it is also CC's duty to contribute its voice to the collective research of present alternatives to the violent settlement of conflicts rather than just be 'against' war and violence.
- wants to contribute meaningfully, not only to help determine future directions of Canada's foreign affairs and defence policies, but towards a viable future for life on earth.

Summation of the reports received

What follows may at times appear like a "catalogue" or a "grocery list", and we apologise for it. This report is an attempt to summarize, in a sort of organic fashion, most of the material that was conveyed to us through the written reports on the various meetings. Those written reports were of different length, form and substance. That led us not to try to attribute each idea to the originating meeting, nor did we try to assess the

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degree of consensus around each suggestion. We are confident though that the following text represents a fair picture of our collective views to date.

What is security?

Several groups started their reflection by defining what makes them secure. The consensus was that security is provided not by military means but by building a just world, fulfilling basic human needs such as food, clean water, shelter, education, health care, clean air, and a healthy environment. Canada should develop a long-term comprehensive plan to achieve for itself and to help others to achieve peace, order and good government. At present the world is thirsting for clear policies, robust financial commitments, and co-operative multilateral approaches to reclaiming the environment and to redressing the enormous disparities in world food and resources distribution. This view is consistent with the findings of the *Citizens' Inquiry into Peace and Security* and of the *People's Commission on Global Security: Canada's Role* both conducted across the country by the Canadian Peace Alliance in 1991 and 2000 respectively.

Many of the participants supported the replacement of the Department of National Defence with a Department of Peace working under the overarching mandate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This clear reordering of governmental priorities to reflect changing world conditions and public opinion would need to be accompanied by a drastic conversion of the economy, which is now four square behind the military/ industrial/ research complex and is depleting the resources of our society and our world. It was underlined that a policy that makes sense for Canada needs to grow out of an emerging international consensus on how force is to be deployed. This international consensus coalesced in the year before the invasion of Iraq with a growing clear rejection of all wars and violence.

Defence and Foreign Affairs

It may be helpful, since defence policy is (and should always be) subordinate to foreign policy, to recall the three pillars DFAIT (Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade) proposed as the basis of Canada's Foreign policy: *prosperity, security, and bringing Canadian values to the world*. To shape our report, we will organize the material around the three concepts that are key to present Canadian defence policy: '**development**', '**diplomacy**' and '**defence**.' All the participant groups made recommendations indicating that development and diplomacy are the main tools that Canada should use, and that these tools should inform the meaning and direction of defence.

In the **development field**, the recommendations are that Canada invests the full amount of international help it has pledged to the international community (0.7% of annual GDP), since global security will increase as disparities between 'have' and 'have not' are lessened. We know that this relationship applies both domestically and internationally. Canadian aid should help increase local autonomy (cultural, economic, political), build essential infrastructure, transfer internally local goods and resources, preserve food and water, stimulate medical research, support non-violent movements in conflict areas, and develop green energy, and it should be provided without economic, political or military strings attached. A vigorous stand in the development and conservation fields would also create jobs both at home and abroad, as they are labour intensive with low capital requirement. Conversely, such a stand would require the termination of all subsidies to manufacturers of weapons or weapons components. This kind of development policy would also properly *build sustainable prosperity*, since we know that Canada can fully enjoy security and prosperity only in so far as the rest of the world can partake in it.

Canadian diplomacy should demonstrate a full understanding and appreciation of all cultures, with no paternalism or patronizing. Diplomacy is crucial to the solidity of the second pillar of Canada's foreign policy –*security*– as well as for the promotion of universal values of peace, dignity, and justice. Diplomacy should give high priority to the early detection of potential conflicts and outbreaks of violence to control and limit their development in the spirit of the prevention roles indicated in the report *The Responsibility to Protect* (see note 4). If we are serious about wanting to protect innocent people from being attacked, we need to get out of the arms trade, including weapons research, production, sale, deployment and use, and participation in military trade and air shows. It would require the enactment of treaties to define and ban a larger array of weapons. It would also imply increasing efforts towards eradicating anti-personnel land mines, opposing/ preventing new weapons development such as the ballistic missile defence systems, providing support, including funding, to national and international NGOs studying and promoting disarmament. Canada should be a broker for peace, re-establishing its credibility in that field, by abiding to the spirit and not only to the wording of all International Treaties, including promoting treaties defining and banning a larger array of weapons. Many dialogue participants urged Canada to continue the work towards the democratization of the UN Security Council including the mandatory peace NGO presence at the table when military policy or decisions are made. The full involvement of peace women to achieve gender balance in all peace-related matters should be

implemented in Canada and in all international forums, in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolution # 1325 (Oct. 2000)⁵.

Canadian diplomacy should be deployed to set up mechanisms to de-escalate potential conflicts and to train an international police force skilled in nonviolent approaches. It should be used to advance, domestically and internationally, truly independent, uncensored, decentralized media reporting. Our diplomatic efforts should seek to counteract the effect of, and bring an end to hate propaganda and to encourage alternative information and news media to increase local sources and improve understanding of others' perspectives and of global implications.

Our conception of defence

Most participating groups in the CC dialogues, **redefined defence** as 'defending the world from hunger, cold, aggression, ignorance.' They ask that Canada move towards full conversion from military to civilian defence, to shifting the focus to non-violence, to conflict prevention, transformation, resolution, conciliation, mediation; to understanding underlying causes and reasons for conflicts; to listening to all sides of an issue before acting. To this end mandatory and transparent assessment of the negative impacts, loss of opportunities and costs of research, production and use of military equipment needs to be initiated. The arms trade should be replaced with medical, transportation and emergency disaster relief.

To be more specific we will use as a framework the generally accepted understanding of **defence** as **protecting Canada's right to self-determination** (often called Canada's sovereignty,) providing support to international **peacekeeping**, and availability to help domestic civilian powers in **emergencies**.

In regard to **protecting Canada's right to self-determination**, a solid consensus among the participants is that Canada, due to its size, location and remoteness of parts of its borders, cannot be effectively or efficiently defended militarily from any significant invasion or from the appropriation of our resources that at present is most likely to come from the USA. Alternative defence strategies are:

- Strengthen nationally and internationally the constituency of people who believe in the centrality of common and global human security; hold public meetings to increase the knowledge of alternatives.
- Build on the present abundance of small peace and justice groups that coalesce in times of emergency (e.g. demonstrations against the invasion of Iraq) towards the creation of a stable

and permanent critical mass that would come to the fore as the present violent structures are more and more explicitly repudiated.

- Strengthen the political will to refuse to bend to threats; use the leverage of Canada's strong economic and resource positions and have the courage to say 'no' to the USA.
- Develop a sustainable, local and richly diversified national economy to enable Canada not to be held hostage by one other country or by one significant global disaster.
- Deflate the myth of 'terrorism' used to justify increases in military preparedness and repudiate the laws that are infringing on human rights and freedoms in the name of security. The protection of human rights *is* our best defence.
- Move towards unarmed civilian defence trained in conflict transformation and resolution, starting in the schools, and extending to all institutions.
- Lessen the world's economic and opportunity disparities and simplify our lifestyle, restoring and maintaining the health of the global environment.
- De-legitimize war domestically and internationally by including a provision in the Canadian Constitution and initiating reform of the UN to eliminate the conditional acceptance of war included in Article 51 of the UN Charter.
- Create a corps of people trained as civil engineers, linguists, health professionals, lawyers, technicians, academics, etc., to go to areas of the world requesting their help. The aim would be not to impose western values and cultures but to find and apply their own local solutions, including the creation of civilian based defences.

Canada must change its definition of 'defence' and of 'army'. This shift would also imply a gradual reduction of specific equipment, including artillery and navy with a view to a full conversion from military to non-armed, non-violent civil defence, and the related re-allocation or reduction of the military budget. It would also imply stopping arms research, production and trade.

The participants perceived military alliances such as NATO and NORAD as obsolete and more a hindrance to, than a protection of Canadian right to self-determination.

We must adopt the six principles of UN *Manifesto 2000 for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence*⁶ as the guiding principles of the Canadian foreign policy. DND -- which is and should be subordinate to Foreign Affairs -- would be charged with putting them into

practice, thereby helping to define the mandate and the training of Canadian defence personnel. Participants recommended to transform the Ministry of National Defence into a Ministry of Peace or a Ministry of International Affairs and Global Security. In addition Canada should adopt the absolute policy/principle never to use the military against its First Nations.

This way of protecting Canada's right to self-determination fully recognizes the interdependence and inter-relationship of people and environments. It places Canada as part of an interconnected web where no peace or well-being is acquired by any one member at the expense of any other. And conversely, each member's well-being is enhanced when all other members thrive.

It is in this context, in the recognition that we are citizens of a complex and interrelated world, that Canada's '**international peacekeeping role**' can best be defined. Canada would become the most secure and the most helpful country around the world if it were to:

- Re-establish its credibility as a peace-maker and a builder of a just world in *deeds* and not just in words.
- Increase its understanding of broader, global perspectives.
- Shift trade agreements to favour human security and sustainable development for the whole world.
- Refocus all its international missions completely as peaceful interventions and abandon all forcefully offensive or defensive action.
- Take on only peaceful, non-military, multilateral peacekeeping missions under the control of the UN General Assembly (rather than Security Council).
- Develop strict terms of reference for its peacekeepers and international missions, using creative means and methods to prevent and de-escalate conflict situations so that there is never need to have recourse to the use of weapons.

Canada's defence forces could be very helpful in conflict zones nationally and internationally, but **only** if they are deliberately trained for peacekeeping/ conflict resolution and not for military action. Canada has the wherewithal to develop a curriculum to teach skills for non-violent intervention, conflict transformation, conflict resolution and constructive non-violence, both to domestic and international forces. In this light, the UN peacekeeping forces Canada has often advocated

could be authentic forces for peace and not for violence. In the interim, Canada should start to have its own military forces trained at the Lester B. Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, repudiating the assertion that 'they should be soldiers first'. It should create small mobile, fast reaction/ preventive units and concentrate on flexible equipment and training to respond to the multiplicity of defence roles presently demanded of the military.

In the immediate future, it was suggested that 'Canada initiate a coalition for peace in Iraq' as it has a wealth of experience with groups such as the Peace Brigades, and the Christian Peacemaker Teams, who could be used as models for the type of intervention needed. This, as well as all the recommendations we are formulating in this report, would help provide an alternative to the equally unacceptable positions of doing nothing, and responding with armed force, which was mentioned in a number of communities. It also addresses the profound faith tenet of non-violence common to many of the participants in the CC dialogues.

The participating groups also addressed the issue of responding to **domestic emergencies**. They were unanimous in their assessment that only civilian, non-violent institutions should be charged with this mandate, and that such an approach would probably be more efficient and less costly.

Emergency response personnel certainly do not need offensive equipment. Local multiple-applications equipment such as helicopters, water-tank planes, earth removal machinery, emergency medical and housing equipment, could be supplemented by more specialized equipment stored in centrally located communities across the country for rapid dispatching to the scene of the disaster. Emergency response personnel also do not need to be trained to undermine or kill an enemy. Recruitment and training of locally based people could be modelled on the volunteer fire fighter brigades trained for a wide range of emergencies in most communities of this country. Full-time emergency trained personnel could complement their contingents in cases of acute needs. Larger municipalities or higher risk localities would have a permanent core of well trained and dedicated personnel. We already have the nuclei for these emergency response forces to forest fires, ice storms, chemical spills, epidemics or floods. We need to improve their training and increase their numbers. This approach would provide more robust, constant and flexible security to the whole country and could eventually also supply rapid and specific response to international calamities. It could also be used in environmental reclamation.

The last question most groups addressed was to **identify the first steps** we can take towards security and defence without violence. Several groups

identified steps that were specific to their locale or situation. The CC Board had the privilege of reading all the local reports and to reflect on their content. We have agreed, for the moment, to propose to our membership/readership that the first steps that we should pursue should be:

Collectively (for Government and Conscience Canada),

1. **to push for government's enactment of a Conscientious Objection Act;**
2. **to present the results of the CC dialogues to Federal Government** as CC's input in the present examination of the role of the DND;
3. **to advance the idea for the establishment of a Department of Peace** in order to "institutionalize" some peace leverage and budget and priority within our government, and through that, within our universities, peace research centres, etc.
4. **to work with all others to block Canada's participation in any aspect of the US BMD (Ballistic Missile Defence) project;** such participation would take us backwards in the arms race, militarization of space, and Canadian dependency on the US foreign and military policy;

Individually, we suggest working around three "poles" that are all parts of the same priority:

1. **to be as coherent as possible,** within our personal, family and community lives, with an ethic and practice of the culture of peace and non-violence we are trying to develop during this UN and UNESCO Decade 2001-2010. This coherence involves simple living, openness to other cultures or points of view, nonviolent conflict resolution at local levels, a critical approach to information, sharing with others, community building, etc.
2. **to promote peace education around us** in whatever format or environment available, through schools, churches, communities, etc. (A peace education kit for use in schools has been prepared by one of CC Board members, Jan Slakov. To find out more about this particular initiative, please contact her at <js@saltspring.com>.)
3. **to work on a permanent basis on delegitimizing, de-normalizing war,** both within ourselves and around us, both as an institution and in any of its specific instances. This is a fundamental, long term and permanent effort each of us can initiate to replace the violent concepts

that have been the basis of our collective thinking for so many centuries.

Conclusions from the CC Board

The citizens of the world have more and more fundamentally questioned the political, philosophical and technological practice of war, at what may be a turning point in history. World citizens have demonstrated, as never before strong, compelling, self-evident consensus on the unacceptability of the means chosen by the world's superpower to change a situation we all agreed was far from acceptable. This opposition to the invasion of Iraq was expressed in terms of principles -- principles of justice, reciprocity, conservation, reversibility...⁷ The violent means used by the US did *not* promote justice, did *not* empower the Iraqi population, did *not* respect life, did *not* minimize destruction... In *PEACE, An Idea Whose Time Has Come*, Anatol Rapoport writes: "...the adaptability of the war system to its social environment has been most impressive, [but] there may be a limit to this adaptability. If there is, the opportunity to take advantage of the mortality of the war system should not be missed, since the coexistence of the institution of war and the human race seems no longer possible." (p.108). We may have come to the point when we have the opportunity to take advantage of *the mortality of the war system*.

At a time when we see the horror of war in its intrinsic and absolute evil we must heed the call of the millions of people who around the world are clamouring that war is obsolete. War has no legitimacy under any condition. The stakes are just too high, with a real possibility of annihilation of all life. War as an institution and all that nourishes it must be forsaken, must be totally and completely rejected. If Canada wants to be true to its values and principles it must radically change the mandate of its Department of National Defence. The two hundred and fifty people from across the country who joined Conscience Canada in the search for non-violent national and personal security, for alternative means of conflict resolution, have provided strong and credible options Canada can and should adopt.

¹ Conscience Canada (www.consciencecanada.ca) was founded in 1978 to: defend freedom of conscience; support conscientious objection to military taxation; promote a change in law to allow all Canadians the right to object to military taxation as a right of conscience guaranteed in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms; educate Canadians about freedom of conscience and conscientious objection to military taxation.

² * What kind of defence/security strategy makes the most sense for Canada?
* How could non-violent defence strategies be effective in situations such as national emergencies, aggression, peacekeeping? How can the provision of food, energy, health be ensured in case of local or national emergency?
* What mandate should Canadian defence structures have, and how would they be trained/equipped?
* Can we identify some initial steps we could work towards, individually and organizationally?

³ Charlottetown, Moncton, Halifax, Quebec, Montreal, Ottawa, Peterborough, Toronto, Mississauga, Kitchener; Hamilton, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Edmonton; Victoria.

⁴ See *The Responsibility to Protect – The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty* report of December 2001- <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/iciss-ciise/report-en.asp> - If prevention as the first of the three specific responsibilities (prevent, react and rebuild) is fulfilled appropriately, very seldom if ever, will there be a need for reaction (i.e. intervention). In addition, if the principles for military intervention are seriously considered and fully respected, no military action will likely be considered.

⁵ The text and the progress in world implementation of UN SC Res. 1325 is available at: www.peacewomen.org

⁶ UNESCO: *Manifesto 2000 for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence*. Six principles: 1. **“Respect all life.”** Respect the life and dignity of each human being without discrimination and prejudice. 2. **“Reject violence.”** Practice active non-violence, rejecting violence in all its forms: physical, sexual, psychological, economical and social, in particular towards the most deprived and vulnerable. 3. **“Share with others.”** Share time and material resources in a spirit of generosity to put an end to exclusion, injustice and political and economic oppression. 4. **“Listen to understand.”** Defend freedom of expression and cultural diversity, giving preference always to dialogue and listening without engaging in fanaticism, defamation and the rejection of others. 5. **“Preserve the planet.”** Promote consumer behaviour that is responsible and development practices that respect all forms of life and preserve the balance of nature on the planet. 6. **“Rediscover solidarity.”** Contribute to the development of communities, with the full participation of women and respect for democratic principles, in order to create together new forms of solidarity. (<http://www.unac.org/peacecp/manifesto.html>)