

Work For Peace... Stop Paying For War

Conscience Canada

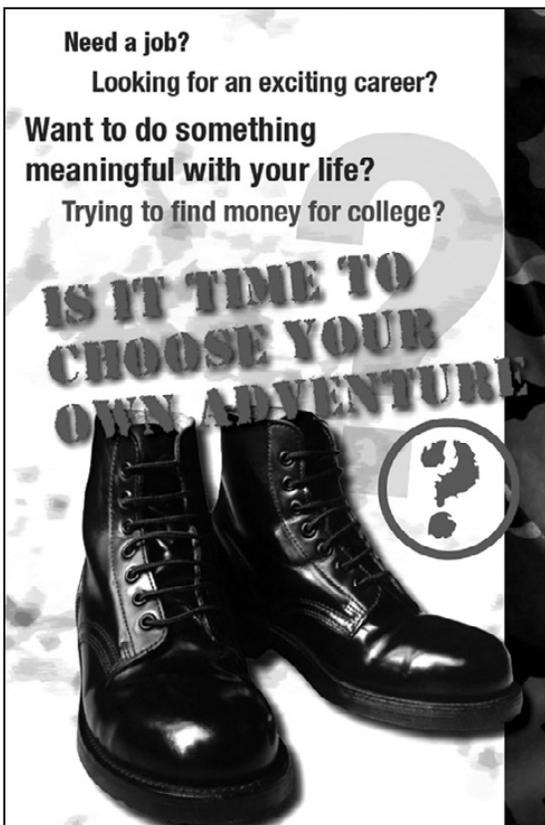
901-70 Mill St. Toronto, ON M5A 4R1 Tel. 416 203 1402

consciencecanada@consciencecanada.ca — www.consciencecanada.ca

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Anti-Recruitment Action



Editor's note: In our last issue one article focused on efforts in Canada to resist military recruitment. Since then, we found out about some inspiring efforts undertaken by the Mennonite Central Committee in Ontario:

By **MATTHEW BAILEY-DICK**

Three years ago, Mennonite Central Committee Ontario (MCCO)

decided to launch a peace education project in response to increasing militarism in Canada.

For the first two years, MCCO focused on joining the broader counter-recruitment movement by doing presentations, advocating to local school boards in response to military co-op programs, and raising awareness about the realities of military recruitment. A brochure entitled "Is it time to choose your own adventure?" was printed and distributed across Canada as a way of encouraging young people to think twice about the messages they hear from military recruiters.

Over the last year, MC-

CO's counter-recruitment work has continued, although a new project called "Training for the Skill and Soul of Nonviolence" takes the educational effort to a new level. MCCO Peace Animator Matthew Bailey-Dick explains, "As a Christian peace agency, we continue to

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Finding Conscience Canada

Who was fighting whom? What were they fighting for? Who stood to gain? Who suffered most? Over the years, as I began to take more interest in human history, these questions continually came to the forefront as one thing became abundantly clear - human history is fraught with violence and war.

For me, it seemed that history was repeating itself continuously; those with military backing manipulate national pride, religious fervour, fear, greed or racism to rally support to use this power in order to try and impose their will on others, primarily for their own gain, which leads to death of soldiers and civil

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CC Joins Call for More Democracy



CC president Mary Groh was one of the participants in this prayer vigil/demonstration at the G20 summit in Toronto. Like most of the G20 protest actions, it was nonviolent. But reports in the mass media left many with the impression that the protests were violent and warranted the outrageous police response that ensued. Perhaps this newsletter can contribute to the "not mass" media efforts to make the truth known.

Photo: Bob Holmes

In June, a new coalition of people and groups concerned about the erosion of democracy in Canada released a petition called "Raise Your Voices". The petition sums up some of the most egregious attacks on democracy that our current federal government has made, and calls on the government to:

1. Respect the right to freedom of opinion and expression. Therefore,

- Cease to deliberately target those who speak out against government policies with the use of smear campaigns, dismissal from employment, funding cuts, blatant and subtle threats, regulations designed to obfuscate and prevent public debate, and other acts of bad faith.
- Commit to parliamentary hearings in the Fall of 2010 that address widespread concerns about the loss

of democratic space in Canada.

2. Act in accordance with Canada's democratic traditions and values. Therefore,

- Actively promote and support political diversity and public debate, instead of avoiding it.
- Recognize and respect the vital role, expertise, and necessary independence of civil society organizations.

3. Be transparent. Therefore,

- Demonstrate full respect for and accountability to the Parliament of Canada and the Canadian People.
- Allow complete access for Canadians to information regarding public policy decisions.
- Base funding decisions for government and civil society organizations on fair standards and democratic principles, instead of partisan agendas.

The board of Conscience Canada decided to sign on and urges others to do likewise. To do so, visit the www.voices-voix.ca website.

Why did we feel it was important to sign on? For Conscience Canada in particular, we need respect for human rights and democracy in order to move forward with our goals. Our ultimate goal is a more peaceful and more just world. Peace and justice cannot thrive where human rights and democratic standards are

being undermined and eroded.

It is important that we notice how the reverse is also true: that violence and the shutting down of democracy are mutually reinforcing. It is ironic, as Adam Davidson-Harden has pointed out, that some police

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Reaching Out - In New Ways

In preparing this newsletter, I looked over some of the articles, letters and press releases members of the CC board produced over the past year. It's impressive: for example, articles were written for *Iskra*, a Doukhobor publication, the *Canadian Mennonite* and the *Smallholder*, letters sent in to the *Globe and Mail*, the *Ottawa Citizen* and press releases sent to many newspapers and journalists across Canada.

There are other ways to dialogue with people about conscientious objection to military taxation that are certainly worth exploring. For instance, Benno Barg, CC's treasurer, has spoken about the issue during the sharing time at his church. He also produced a questionnaire for members of his church and, in April, he and others brought in lap top computers so that those who wanted to use the on-line Peace Tax Form we produce each year would be able to do so easily. This method proved to be very successful; we hope others will "steal" some of these ideas in time for next tax season.

~ Jan Slakov

From Willing Soldier to Peace Activist: A challenge to taxpayers

BY MARY GROH

He joined the US Army believing in its mission and trusting his government to make the right decisions. He took the training to de-sensitize soldiers to human suffering and to de-humanize the enemy they were being prepared to fight against.

For Ethan McCord the training did not work as intended. He was dispatched to Iraq in 2007, and during his 8 months there his belief in war changed completely. It happened most dramatically the day his brigade took part in a home search for militants which turned unexpectedly deadly. Shooting broke out somewhere, and the Apache helicopters fired from a distance killing people on the ground. Ethan heard the cries of a child when his group came upon the bodies. He discovered a 3-year-old girl, badly wounded, a 7-year-old boy who appeared to be dead, and their father slumped over them lifeless. He picked up the girl and ran with her to a medic, then back again and discovered that the boy was still alive. Thinking of his own children back home and doing his best to save the lives of two innocent Iraqi children, he heard the orders from his commander up in the Apache to forget the kids and pay attention to the security of the soldiers.

The incident had a profound effect on Ethan. The sights, sounds, smells and emotions he had experienced haunted him waking and sleeping. Sometime afterward when he requested assistance for traumatic stress he was simply told

to get on with his job. No help was given at that time.

One day, after he returned to Wichita, Kansas following an injury, he was watching the news on TV, and he saw a replay of the incident which someone had caught with a video camera. Seeing a soldier running across the screen, he recognized himself instantly, and it brought back vividly all the emotions of that horrendous day.

By this time Ethan was a convinced opponent of war, and he and a like-minded buddy who had been on the same mission decided not to just go with the flow, but to make some waves. They wrote an open Letter of Reconciliation and Responsibility to the People of Iraq, apologizing specifically to the family who had been at the focus of the video. (The two children have survived, but the boy brain-damaged.) They got over 3000 signatures for their letter, which included "We did unto you what we would not want done unto us."

In an interview on CBC's The Current on April 28, Ethan McCord told Anna Maria Tremonti that, although soldiers try to justify their actions, there is no justification for war. Other ways of solving conflicts must be found. Many soldiers feel as he does, not to mention civilians. People must stop suppressing their convictions, and must stand up and say "No More!" He blamed the bad policies of political leaders, **and the compliance of taxpayers**, for the destruction of war. "I saw no accomplishments whatever in Iraq. We are causing more harm than good." The

harm to the people and their homeland is compounded by the harm caused to many soldiers who suffer Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and much of this damage is just "swept under the rug" when the soldiers get back home.

Most of us who have never served and never will serve in the military do not get the "benefit" of a moment of truth such as Ethan McCord got on duty in that village in Iraq. But we have all seen enough, heard enough, read enough to have arrived at the same conclusions about war. How do we stand up and say "No More"?

Mary Groh retired last year after 38 years of piano teaching in Scarborough, Ontario. Since then she has found working with Conscience Canada as a member of the board, and since March as president, a challenging new occupation. Writing has always been a sideline, and rejection of war an important value in her life.

"A culture of peace transforms the cultural tendencies toward war and violence into a culture of dialogue, respect and fairness."

~ Doug Roche, former Ambassador for Disarmament



Jonathan Seiling with his wife, Melissa and son Simeon.

INTRODUCING

Jonathan Seiling, CC board member

Jonathan, who has a degree in Peace and Conflict Studies from Conrad Grebel U.C., recently completed his PhD in History. He teaches in the area of Christian history and one area of focus concerns violence and nonresistance in the Reformation period. He is currently working on a collection of texts, translated from German and Latin, that indicate the lively debate in Europe during the 1500's concerning religion, government and nonviolence. His teaching and research take him from the University of Waterloo to the University of Toronto, Brock University, the First Mennonite Church in Vineland, ON and he has also found time to focus on questions of particular interest to Conscience Canada. But guess what? He says, "My real full time job is husband/new dad, one for which I'm constantly uncertain if I have the right qualifications, although it's lots of fun most of the time." He hopes to help raise the profile of CC within the arena of academia.



Dave Bechtel, CC book-keeper

Dave has been very helpful to Conscience Canada, mainly in book-keeping and other financial matters. He is also the treasurer of MennoHomes Inc., a non-profit charitable organization committed to building and managing affordable rental housing in the Waterloo region. www.mennohomes.com. Dave and his wife Muriel attend Preston Mennonite Church in Cambridge, ON. They have two adult children and two grandchildren to keep them young. Dave is retired from his careers in business, management, financial planning, administration and accounting.

To get a copy of CC's financial statements, our 2009 board report or minutes of the 2010 AGM, just contact us. See contact info on page 1.

Conscience Canada

membership application / renewal

Membership is open to any person committed to supporting Conscience Canada's objectives. Persons sending in this application before December 31, 2010 will be included as a member, will receive the newsletters, and will be entitled to vote on all issues at the Annual General Meeting of members in the spring of 2011.

People who have sent tax money (full 9.2% or a symbolic amount) earlier this year to the Peace Tax Trust Fund are considered members of CC.. All "life memberships" dating from an earlier system are honoured. If you prefer NOT to be a member of CC kindly inform the office to remove your name.

Send in your new or renewed membership today. Address correction requested.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

The \$10.00 fee for membership is not required, but donations in support of CC operations would be greatly appreciated. Receipts will be issued for all donations.

Let us know if you would like to get involved in helping as a volunteer, or if you would like more (or fewer) copies of the newsletter, or if you would like other informational material.(specify or give purpose).

Mail to: Conscience Canada, 901-70 Mill St., Toronto, ON M5A 4R1

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tactics are no doubt contributing to the very violence the police are supposedly trying to thwart. One militant group he knows of, AW@L, was almost certainly infiltrated by police agents. In order to gain trust, these agents would have had to support the aims of the group, including its intent to use violence. "Thus the agents have been complicit in helping nurture the kind of culture of support for violence that I and others criticize..."

Why would our government want police to infiltrate a group advocating violence? Perhaps so that it can "justify" squandering tax money on strong arm tactics and human rights violations - so we see Prime Minister Stephen Harper, referring to the "actions of a few thugs" saying: "I think that goes a long way to explaining why we have the kind of security costs around these summits that we do." But, as Naomi Klein pointed out, the money spent on "security" will have long-lasting effects. Toronto police now have water cannons and other "crowd control" weapons, which may be used to quell protests as the gap between "have" and "have not", between a powerful elite and a disenfranchised citizenry, widens.

We need not be a disempowered citizenry! There is lots we can do to promote non-violence and strengthen democracy. For instance, when George Bush was coming to Halifax in 2004, members of the Halifax Peace Coalition worked with local police to make sure the protest would

be non-violent. Muriel Duckworth, highly-respected, in her 90's, led the protest. Police had been convinced not to distance themselves from the crowd with riot shields and other gear, but to connect with people, handing out leaflets about the right to protest and the responsibility of police to protect people, including visiting heads of state.

In a recent interview on CBC's The Current, Ursula Franklin spoke of how it was through a process of "scrupling" that many Quakers deepened their opposition to slavery and got an effective abolition movement underway. We, on the CC board, have been excited to see that many other people and groups share our "scruples" about the way democracy - and peace and justice - have been undermined in recent years. We hope that the formation of the Voices-Voix coalition, with its "Raise Your Voices" petition will contribute to the reflection, discussion and action which will turn the tide; Ursula Franklin has a very useful way of describing what "democracy" could be: it is the "public sphere in which the issues of peace and justice will have priority over the issues of profit".

Jan Slakov has been a member/supporter of Conscience Canada and its precursor for approximately 30 years.

I spent six years researching a book on philanthropy, and I became convinced tax dollars, wisely deployed, can help diminish the gap between rich and poor -- as is done in Scandinavian countries. Our government freely spends tax dollars on prisons, police and war machinery, while insisting "taxes" is a dirty word. After the G8 summit in Italy in July 2009, Harper opined, "I don't believe that any taxes are good taxes." Globe and Mail columnist Jeffrey Simpson rightly called it "one of the most stunning, revealing and, frankly, ignorant statements ever made by a prime minister ... very, very scary socially and politically."

~ Lawrence Scanlan, author of *A Year of Living Generously: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Philanthropy*. He also wrote an article, "A Less Proud Country: Apathetic Canadians have allowed their government to trample freedoms - but opposition is mounting", published July 28 in the Ottawa Citizen



Conscience Canada
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New Art/Media Contest:

Web-based Materials on War Tax Resistance

Deadline for Submissions: January 31, 2011

All web-based media are eligible, for example: visual art/poster, photographic slide show, video, music, written verse, or any combination of these.

Conscience Canada is the organization that advocates for the right of Canadians to redirect the military portion of our federal income tax to peace-making. Conscience Canada will create a **web-based gallery of creative arts materials/communications** using those entries that express the need for a 'peace tax' as an alternative to the current military tax. See the 'reason for our existence' at www.consciencecanada.ca. Prizes will be awarded for the most effective submissions, although all entries will be eligible for inclusion in the gallery.

Spread the word!

Eligibility Criteria and Submission Guidelines: Individuals and groups of all ages and backgrounds who are Canadian residents must submit original entries via email to: contest@consciencecanada.ca

Please specify:

a) the name of the individual or group; b) contact info (address, phone); c) title

Three prizes:

1st Prize = \$400

2nd Prize = \$250

3rd Prize = \$100

Finding Conscience continued

ians on a massive scale. Over time, little is achieved through this ultimate exercise of violence. The real improvements in society always seem to take time and an active citizenry.

Like everyone else I know, I feel that murder is terrible and reprehensible. I could never fully understand how someone could kill other human beings knowing that they must also have feelings, dreams, a family who loves them and the will to live, as I do. It could never feel right for me to participate in the military as I do not believe that violence is a way

of resolving conflict. I also feel that it is not right that I should support military action – even indirectly through my taxes.

Having just finished the outstanding book *War* by Gwynne Dyer, and with Dwight D. Eisenhower's warnings about the military industrial complex occupying my mind, I put my favourite internet search engine through its paces on the Canadian military and its history of military conscription. I quickly stumbled across the Conscience Canada website and found that this organization has been working towards the creation of a system that would allow

citizens to choose not to support 'politics by other means'. Within the system proposed by Conscience Canada, citizens could compel the leaders of the country to build peace rather than prepare for war. I feel that a society whose citizens can choose whether or not to fund a military is a more democratic society and one that will engage less frequently in the act of war.

Bryan Eelhart is a property manager in Toronto and proud to be a new member of Conscience Canada.

Anti-Recruitment continued

raise awareness about militarism, but there seems to be a lot of enthusiasm for our nonviolence training because it's a way of stepping forward with a positive vision and a proactive way of preventing violence. In other words, it's one thing to say no to militarism, but what are we going to say yes to? Non-

violence is both a pragmatic and a faithful way of building peace in our troubled world."

For more information about non-violence training, or to receive copies of the counter-recruitment brochure, contact Matthew Bailey-Dick at matthewbd@menno-nitecc.on.ca.

Want to Help, Share Ideas? This blog is for you!

Conscience Canada now has a volunteer blog: <http://ccvolunteers.wordpress.com> ! This site is a place for CC's active volunteers to network and share information about ongoing projects. Browse the blog's long list of possible volunteer tasks..or feel free to create your own job! Use the blog's comment feature to communicate with other volunteers.

Curious about what work needs to be done? Want to share your letter to the editor? Looking for advice or support for a project? Check out the blog! To register and receive regular email updates, scroll down and click the "sign me up" button.

A B O U T

This newsletter is produced by Conscience Canada, a non-governmental organization which has worked since 1978 to:

- increase Canadians' awareness of the connection between taxes and war
- divert taxes away from war
- support creative nonviolent conflict prevention and resolution
- promote conscientious objection legislation

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions of Conscience Canada.

An electronic version of this newsletter is available at www.Conscience-Canada.ca. Please let us know your preference.

B O A R D

Benno Barg, Mary Groh, Anna Kirkpatrick, Murray Lumley, Jonathan Seiling, Jan Slakov, Don Woodside