

**Report on Conscience Canada Annual General Meeting, March 31, 2012,
2:00 pm at Friend's House, 60 Lowther Street, Toronto**

Ten members attended this year's AGM with 18 additional proxies. Mary Groh, of Toronto, President of the board, presided over the meeting. Persons willing to remain as board members and be accepted were: Mary Groh of Toronto ON, Anna Kirkpatrick of Nelson B.C., Murray Lumley of Toronto ON, Jan Slakov of Salt Spring Island B.C. and Don Woodside of Hamilton ON. Benno Barg, of Kitchener-Waterloo ON resigned from the board, effective March 31, 2012 and Bryan Eelhart of Toronto ON also resigned from the board, effective March 12, 2012. Newly elected to the board were Dave Bechtel of Kitchener-Waterloo ON, Dwyer Sullivan of Kitchener-Waterloo ON and Eric Unger of Winnipeg MB.

Just after 3:30 pm, Don Woodside introduced our guest speaker, **Jonathan Seiling** of St. Catharines and a PhD in Russian Theological History and a professor at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario. Jonathan is a member of Conscience Canada and a former board member of CC. He is also the chair of The 1812 Bicentennial Peace Committee, primarily active in the Niagara region.

The title of Jonathan's lecture was: **The Experience of Conscientious Objection in Upper Canada during the War of 1812**

Jonathan told about the experiences of the people of the three 'Peace Churches' who lived in Upper Canada from the Niagara region to Waterloo County. They were the Mennonites, the Quakers, and the Tunkers now known as Brethren In Christ. He has done much research of old archives and family histories whose purpose is to find out the Mennonite experience during the war. Jonathan's research disputes much of the war-like narrative of the 'United Empire Loyalists' (UEL) – who left the Thirteen Colonies during and after the Revolution to come to the wilderness of Upper and Lower Canada.

The current celebration of the War of 1812 being promoted (by the Canadian government and paid for by taxpayers) is based on myth and propaganda. You can find out more about Conscientious Objection to the War of 1812 by going to the following website and blog. Look also for Jonathan's book on this topic, to be released in June, 2012 via the Mennonite Historical Society. .

War – and Peace – of 1812, Bicentennial (website) <http://mcco.ca/warpeace-1812>

War Resistance in 1812: Peaceful Christians in War-Full Times (blog) <http://warresistancein1812.blogspot.ca/>

Board report for Conscience Canada for 2011

The board conducts most of its business by e-mail amongst the scattered members. More formal conferences were held January 7, April 2, June 17 and November 23. In April the board, minus the B.C. members, met in Waterloo; and

in November the Ontario members and the accountant were joined in Toronto by Jan Slakov from Salt Spring Island, B.C. and CC member Dominique Boisvert of Montreal. Jonathan Seiling stepped down from the Board at the AGM in April after serving creatively on the board for years.

In 2011 36 Canadians redirected tax money to the CC Peace Tax Trust Fund. This continued drop in the number of peace trusters is disappointing, although 53 used option A on the Peace Tax Return to indicate their objection to having their taxes go to the Department of Defence.

Because operating expenditures are exceeding donations, and because the number of COMTs has not been growing, advertising in periodicals (print and web) has come into question as a worthwhile expense. Still, ads were placed, including on Facebook, during tax season. It also became clear that our audit fees were very high in proportion to our receipts and disbursements, so the board in November took it upon themselves to revisit the decision made at the April AGM to reappoint the same auditor. They decided to look for an auditor who would be less expensive and accomplished this while maintaining goodwill with the former auditor.

Our new board member, Bryan Eelhart, took over the job of webmaster and has updated our website over the past year. New features include an e-mail sign-up list, the capability to accept credit card donations via Pay Pal, and improved styling. Bryan would appreciate any assistance members could provide in translating items into French.

The zine "Take the bang out of your tax buck" was revised by Aiden Enns of Winnipeg, and the basic CC pamphlet was revised to bring the statistics more up to date. These materials were used during the income tax season at a looney poll in Hamilton (where people can vote with loonies how they want their income tax spent), at a Mennonite Church Canada Assembly in Waterloo in July, and at gatherings of several other peace organizations in Toronto in the summer and fall. These printed materials, and DVDs, are available for any supporters to distribute.

Although there were not many entries in the Art and Media Contest of 2010/11, the entries were of good quality and variety. The first, second and third prize entries were announced at the AGM, awards were sent to the winners, and the poem, photo art and painting were published in the fall newsletter, as well as on the CC website.

Following the dissolution of parliament and the retirement of Bill Siksay, M.P., the sponsorship of a new CO bill was ably taken up by Alex Atamanenko, M.P. for British Columbia Southern Interior. He tabled our Private Member's Bill in November in the House of Commons. This bill, now C-363, was revised to bring

the legislation in line with our established practice of re-directing only the military portion of a COs income tax.

The newsletter distribution shifted in the spring from postal to e-mail. All who had e-mail addresses in the data base received the newsletter in this way and were offered the option of getting it by post, but few have expressed their preference for that option. This change makes the newsletter mailing much less labour-intensive, is more environmentally friendly, and can save a lot on postage. The board continued to struggle with the issue of membership and how to keep the most meaningful and useful lists in our data base.

Efforts have been put into partnerships with other organizations. In January Richard Gendron and Dominique Boisvert attended a workshop hosted by the Voices-Voix pro-democracy coalition. CC has signed their declaration and joined their long list of supporters. We joined with the Voice of Women for Peace when they met with members of the Canadian Legion in Ottawa in February. The aim was to assure them that the white poppy campaign was not intended as a threat to them. Another white poppy campaign was mounted in the fall; Jan Slakov prepared a peace education kit entitled Never Again: Peace Education & Remembrance Day – Jamais plus la guerre: L'éducation a la paix et le Jour du souvenir to support the campaign.

The War of 1812 Peace Committee received support and in-put from CC board members as they make plans to put the spotlight on CO's during the bicentennial celebrations in 2012.

Strategic planning at the November board meeting in Toronto directed us to seek for further partnerships with peace organizations which could strengthen the protests of Canadians against the militarization of our country. Following that, thanks to Murray Lumley and Bryan Eelhart, a link was made with Ceasefire.ca, which will greatly increase our exposure amongst war protesters and acquaint them with our way of objecting to military taxation. We expect to see Conscience Canada grow in 2012 and are grateful to all those who continue to support the organization in ways old and new.

Mary Groh, president,
For Conscience Canada Board:
Benno Barg
Anna Kirkpatrick
Murray Lumley
Jan Slakov
Don Woodside
Bryan Eelhart (April 2011 – February 2012)

Bruna Nota
Honorary Past President and 70 Mill Street Office Manager