

Work For Peace...Stop Paying For War

Conscience Canada



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Commitment that engenders freedom

Jan Slakov

In our last issue (fall, 2008) I invited readers to reply to the question: "What propelled you to take an interest in conscientious objection to military taxation (COMT)?" With no replies forth-coming, I asked two board members, one a Quaker, the other not a member of any faith tradition, to write something.

Our newest board member, Anna Kirkpatrick, wrote:

For the last five years or so I have been feeling a strong moral opposition to militarism. As my interest grew, I spent time reading, talking and thinking about war. However, as a practical person, I found that just thinking about the issues was unsatisfactory. Diverting a percentage of my income taxes allows me the opportunity to express my opposition to war in a concrete way.

I am sure this response resonates with many of us, who feel a need to do more than just denounce war and militarism, and want the way we live to be coherent with our beliefs.



Anna Kirkpatrick, the newest CC board member.

Our president, Don Woodside wrote:

Although I was opposed to unjust wars, like the US in Vietnam, I wasn't particularly a pacifist till my mid forties. I had the good fortune to become part of the Hamilton Quaker Meeting, and met people who had been conscientious objectors in the Second World War, which I had always considered a 'just war', a necessary war. Their stories of the struggle with con-

science, the necessity of taking an unpopular path, and their vision of a world without war were very persuasive. At the same time the cold war was heating up, with the doctrine of mutually assured destruction and talk of the evil empire, and knowing that global annihilation was just the press of a button away. When I heard about conscientious objection to military taxation through the peace tax fund, it was an immediate 'aha' experience for me. Within a short time I was redirecting my military taxes, and soon after began writing about Conscience Canada in the Hamilton newspaper, organizing meetings for Edith Adamson, and handing out info at peace events. It seemed like such an obvious response to the insanity of war, nuclear war in particular.

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With the end of the cold war, and the massacres in Bosnia and Rwanda, I had second thoughts about the need to protect vulnerable populations. However, both of these events highlight the need to end the use of war as a political tool; as well, Conscience Canada has been able to adopt an approach to peacekeeping which is under civilian control and carried out by non military organizations, more like policing in civilian society. War tax resistance has become a constant part of my life; I have been wearing a Peace Tax T-shirt at the YMCA for about twenty years. It takes up even more of my time since I became president!

Both Don and Anna make it clear their position arose out of reflection and dialogue. Looking back over my own reasons for conscientious

objection, I think not just about what propelled me to support COMT, but about where such a commitment leads.

Oddly enough, by restricting ourselves to nonviolence, we make our world larger, we open doors that would otherwise be shut or simply absent. Not only do we free up resources when we opt out of milita-

with the help of the former chief of the Bear River First Nation, Frank Meuse, Jr. and his (deceased!) grandfather, to avert violence. †

It seems to me that the nature of how our world works is often, at its heart, paradoxical. Life cannot flourish without death, in giving, ultimately we gain. Love for others is rooted in love of self, in committing ourselves to nonviolence we find freedom. In a world where might is so often portrayed as right, where we are constantly confronted with a seemingly helpless spiral of violence begetting yet more violence, it's great to remember and share stories of nonviolence.

And so arises a new question: Where has our commitment to nonviolence led us; where is it leading us now?

We hope one way it leads you is to join Conscience Canada's spring campaign to put war tax resistance in the public eye, and to make your MP aware of a groundswell of support for legislation to support conscientious objection to military taxation. There is lots of work to do; see the box on volunteering with CC and call/email us to help us put this issue on the public agenda. Your assistance (and membership!) are vital to our success.

Besides volunteering with CC, Jan is interested in ecological sustainability.

† To find out more about Frank Meuse & the fishery, contact me through consciencecanada@shaw.ca.*



anism, we also free up our minds to see beyond the "enemy" image of the "other" to find our common humanity or "that of God" that is in each being. And sometimes, something happens that frees up the possibility of miracles. There are, for instance, amazing stories in Conscience & Courage by Eva Fogelman, of how people rescued Jews during the Holocaust. I'm also inspired by the more recent story of how native communities and non-native fishermen came together,

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.ConscienceCanada.ca. Please let us know your preference.

B O A R D

Benno Barg, Anna Kirkpatrick, Murray Lumley, Jan Slakov, Carol Wagner, Don Woodside. Newsletter design: Jan Steinman.

Volunteer with CC!

There's lots to do:

You could arrange to show our DVD at a community meeting, pot luck or other event.

Interested in getting young people into the act? Share Marguerite Bilodeau's play, STOP (aka Samuel s'en va en guerre in French) with a local school or youth group.

Writing a letter to your MP is good and visiting him or her with some of our excellent outreach materials is even better. (Check our website or contact us for help getting appropriate materials for such a visit.)

A great way to help people learn about CC is by writing a letter-to-the-editor. Again, contact us, if you'd like to discuss ways to write succinct letters that make interesting links to the news of the day.

Make copies of the Peace Tax Return (PTR) included in this newsletter and share them with friends. The PTR can be used by those who are withholding the military portion of their taxes as well as by those who are not withholding any taxes but wish to make their desire for peace tax legislation known.

Use our website to download the PTR (English or French) or to submit your declaration electronically.

Security of our trust account

Conscience Canada's trust and operating accounts are at Alterna Savings in Toronto, the third largest credit union in Ontario. The deposits are covered by \$100,000 deposit insurance via the Deposit Insurance Corporation of Ontario, a provincial government body. This is substantially more than Conscience Canada has on deposit. Credit Unions are closely regulated, are required to have higher reserves than banks, and are largely funded by member deposits not by borrowings. In other words, money sent to Conscience Canada's peace tax Trust fund is well protected from the vagaries of the financial turmoil many banks are currently experiencing.

Don Woodside

We look forward to hearing from you! -> Conscience Canada, 901 - #70 Mill St., Toronto, ON, M5A 4R1 (416) 203-1402, consciencecanada@shaw.ca, www.consciencecanada.ca
President Don Woodside: (905) 522-8048

Marguerite Bilodeau wins peace award

Author, Musician, CC Member Marguerite Bilodeau Wins Peace Award

When Conscience Canada member Maryse Azzaria invited CC to support the nomination of Marguerite Bilodeau for the 2008 YMCA of Quebec peace award, the board did so enthusiastically; Marguerite has worked for peace in many ways throughout her career.

She is the author of the play, STOP (in English)/ Samuel s'en va en guerre (in French), which focuses on the question of conscientious objection and personal responsibility for war. The play raises these fairly complex, even philosophical, questions in a way that most audiences, from high school age on up, would find thoroughly engaging. Marguerite wrote the play so it

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G E T I N T O T H E A C T !

If you are planning a special event to present Conscience Canada's DVD "Work for peace, Stop paying for war;" you might like to take a look at "-STOP-," a new play written for Conscience Canada by Montreal book and song writer Marguerite Bilodeau. This 40 minute play (available in English and French) blends information and humour. The action takes place in a Montreal family living room and revolves around income tax, military spending, peace marches, Afghanistan, army recruitment and Raging grannies. It ends with the showing of Conscience Canada's DVD.

Linking this play with the "Work for peace, Stop paying for war" DVD would be a great way for schools, colleges and other groups to offer a positive alternative to military recruiting efforts. You can order a copy of the DVD through the Conscience Canada website. To order the play, please contact: Margueritebilodeau88@sympatico.ca.

Q U O T A B L E

"I spoke earlier about 'a tapestry of lies' which surrounds us. President Reagan commonly described Nicaragua as a 'totalitarian dungeon'. [...] The totalitarian dungeons were actually next door, in El Salvador and Guatemala." —Harold Pinter

would fit in naturally with a showing of our 11 minute DVD (Work for Peace; Stop Paying for War); it offers groups a way to incorporate the arts into peace-oriented outreach work. You can download a copy of the play from our website at www.consciencecanada.ca or contact us directly for more information.

As a musician, a member of the Raging Grannies and les Mémés déchaînées, les Artistes pour la paix and other groups working for peace and justice, Marguerite continues to find creative and thought-provoking ways to bring the topic of "peace" to life. ... Maybe that's part of why she cares so much: she knows how fun and enriching life can be and is doing her utmost to prevent it from being destroyed through war and militarism.

Q U O T A B L E

"It is quite proper to resist and attack a system, but to resist or attack its author is tantamount to resisting and attacking oneself. For we are all tarred with the same brush, and are children of one and the same Creator, and as such the divine powers within us are infinite. To slight a single human being is to slight those divine powers, and thus to harm not only that being but with him the whole world." —Mahatma Gandhi

Esther Epp-Tiessen: Responding to Militarism

Excerpts from: Armed and ready? Responding to Canadian militarism, by Esther Epp-Tiessen, published in the Mennonite Brethren Herald, Volume 46, No. 11, November 2007



"Canada's snipers are said to have the highest number of confirmed kills of any regular army unit in the battle."

I read this quotation on a recent visit to Canada's new War Museum in Ottawa. The words are those of Canadian journalist Stephen Thorne who has spent considerable time with Canadian troops in Afghanistan over the past few years.

[...]As I wandered through the exhibit, [...] I wondered how many "confirmed kills" Canadian snipers were responsible for. I wondered who they had been - old men? young men? confirmed Taliban ideologues? or simply people who have legitimate grievances with the current government and its foreign supporters?

[...]There's something deeply troubling about the language of "con-

firmed kills" and the obvious pride behind it. Walter Dorn, professor at the Canadian Military College and a strong proponent of Canadian peacekeeping, says an "enemy mentality" is creeping into our Canadian Forces. This mentality is reflected in the comment by Chief of Staff, General Rick Hillier, "We are the Canadian Forces and our job is to be able to kill people."

This enemy mentality goes along with a significant shift in how Canada perceives itself and its military role in the world. We see evidence of this shift in the following:

- Canadian Forces moving away from peacekeeping and peace support operations towards combat and counter-insurgency, such as in Afghanistan;
- a dramatic drop in financial and troop support for UN-mandated peacekeeping operations over the past decade;
- promises of significant increases in military spending, from \$14 billion this year to \$19 billion by 2010, along with significant new weapons purchases;
- a major new recruiting campaign, along with the implementation of co-op programs that provide high school students with academic credit and payment for training for the Army Reserve;
- government priorities that place Canadian defence expenditures at quadruple the level of overseas development assistance;

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Conscience Canada membership application and DVD order

Member: Open to any person committed to supporting Conscience Canada's objectives and who pays an annual membership fee of \$10. This entitles you to receive CC's newsletters and to vote on all issues at the Annual General Meeting. All "life memberships" dating from an earlier system are honoured.

Conscientious Objectors to Military Taxation (COMT): Member who, in addition to the membership fee has deposited funds into the Peace Tax Trust account maintained by Conscience Canada.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Annual membership: (\$10.00/yr) \$ _____
 Donations to Conscience Canada \$ _____
 Peace Tax Trust Deposit (full or symbolic) \$ _____
 total funds enclosed \$ _____ cheque payable to Conscience Canada

Receipts will be issued for donations of \$ 25 or more and for all Peace Tax Deposits.

Send me a free copy of the Conscience Canada DVD (donations are welcome)

I'd like to help. Please contact me about vounteering with Conscience Canada. *Address correction requested. Please let us know if you desire Conscience Canada information material, or more or fewer copies of the newsletter (or e-newsletter only).*

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

Feb. 2009 AGM notice

CONSCIENCE CANADA _2009 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM) OFFICIAL NOTICE

Date and time: Saturday, 28 February 2009 at 3 pm
 Place: Friends' House, 60 Lowther Ave. Toronto
 Speaker: Dr Jane Pritchard, Christian Peacemaker Teams

Agenda:

- I. Approval of the Minutes of the 2008 AGM (available upon request)
 - II. Review of the work done by Conscience Canada during the year;
 - III. Election or confirmation of board members. The four officer positions required by our by-laws are: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, in addition there can be Board members at large. Standing for re-election are: Murray Lumley, Jan Slakov, Don Woodside, Benno Barg, Carol Wagner and Anna Kirkpatrick
 - IV. Presentation and Approval of the 2008 financial statements - (available upon request)
 - V. Appointment of auditors for 2009.
 - VI. Other business
 - VII Talk by Dr. Jane Pritchard
- All CC members and friends in the Toronto areas are warmly invited to attend the AGM.

The present AGM Notice, included in the newsletter and sent to all the members' address on record, constitutes the official notice, as required by the Conscience Canada Inc. by-laws. Please let us know if you want to receive a copy of the by-laws electronically or by mail.

If you cannot attend the meeting in person, do not forget to send your proxy below for your vote, either by post or by e-mail to: consciencecanada@shaw.ca.

I, (Please Print) _____, a member in good standing of Conscience Canada, do hereby grant my proxy vote for the 28 Feb. 2009 Annual General Meeting of Conscience Canada to:

_____ or in their absence to any Board Member of Conscience Canada.

Signature: _____

Q U O T A B L E

"Let me be clear. The mission is not simply to end war. It is to expose and transform structures of domination and oppression through active nonviolence in order to make possible a world grounded in respect, justice and love, even of enemies. As Gandhi once said, in the face of injustice if the only choices are between doing nothing and using violence, then choose violence."

— Stewart Vriesinga, member of Christian Peacemaker Teams, Colombia

- a preoccupation with responding to terrorist acts rather than seeking to understand and address those things which cause people to embrace terrorism.

I believe that Christians who are committed to Jesus' way of peace should have something to say about the new military realities that we're witnessing in our nation. [...] We can't expect our government's policies and actions to be guided by God's revelation in Christ Jesus, nevertheless we can urge our elected representatives to pursue peace and security through peaceful means - because such policies make sense.

[...] And perhaps someday our children or grandchildren will visit a new Peace Museum and read the proud words, "Canada's soldiers no longer engage in killing their enemies, because they've found better ways to build security."

Esther Epp-Tiessen is the peace ministries coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee Canada. Among the peace-building actions she suggests is to "consider withholding the military portion of your income tax and filing it with Conscience Canada's peace trust fund. Join Conscience Canada's efforts to press the government for legal means to designate income taxes for peaceful purposes."

Introducing new board member / webmaster

Anna Kirkpatrick lives in Nelson, B.C. Last year, she assisted CC with its tax season campaign as Outreach Coordinator. She joined the Board this fall and looks forward to facilitating volunteering within the organization.

Anna enjoys riding her bike and digging potatoes. She is especially interested in the connections between peace, social justice and sustainable agriculture.



Robbie Shepard has offered his considerable computer skills (most of which we won't need!) to Conscience Canada, which means our long-time previous webmaster, Joshua Goldberg, will be freer to get more involved with outreach work for CC.

When Robbie first got involved with computers, PCs were still in

the realm of science fiction, and punched paper tape and vacuum tubes were still in the realm of high tech. This goes to show, he says,

CPTI (Conscience & Peace Tax International) update

The 12th international conference on War Tax Resistance and Peace Tax campaigns was held in Sept of 2008 in Manchester, UK, hosted by members of Britain's Peace Tax Seven and supporters. Former CC board member Huberte Gautreau attended on behalf of Conscience Canada, Canada being one of 15 countries represented at the conference.

The next international conference is slated to be held in Sweden or Norway in 2010.

that "Realms don't Stay Put for very long!" Robbie grew up in Texas and graduated in 1964 with a degree in physics from Rice University. In 1968, he moved to Canada because of the U.S. war against Southeast Asia (et al). His interests include graphic design, sustainability, nature, music, wordplay, and figgerin' out how to figger stuff out.

I N T E R E S T E D I N H E L P I N G ?

New board members for Conscience Canada are most welcome and your contributions will be much appreciated. Even if you are not able to help, please think of someone who cares deeply about ending war and militarism and invite them to become a member and maybe even join the board. For more information, contact Don Woodside woodside@mcmaster.ca / (905) 522-8048 or Jan Slakov js@saltspring.com / (250) 537-5251.