

Work For Peace... Stop Paying For War
Conscience Canada 

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Laptops in the Service of Peace

Navigating A New World



Linda DeHaan, signing the electronic Peace Tax Return from a laptop at Danforth Mennonite Church, Toronto, ON, with the assistance of Murray Lumley, Conscience Canada board member.

Bryan Berg of Breslau Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ontario, suggested this method of getting more people to declare their objection to paying military taxes to the government of Canada. On two Sundays last spring (2010), at the church, over thirty people took advantage of this opportunity. Conscience Canada board member Benno Barg also as-

sisted. Danforth Mennonite Church, East York, Toronto, picked up on this idea and about ten people responded during a Sunday in April, 2010.



Who else might be willing to put their laptops to the service of peace in this way? A variety of friendly settings would lend themselves to this method of expanding the number of 'military tax resisters'.

BY MARY GROH

Anyone who is interested in foreign affairs and Canada's role in the past and the future world would like this book. Anyone who is working at building a world without armed conflict and war would love this book, and wonder why Lloyd Axworthy never won the Nobel Peace Prize, though he was nominated for it. This 422- page book, entitled as above, published in 2003 by Vintage Canada, is a memoir of Axworthy's years as an MP and Minister of Foreign affairs.

The book is packed with inspiring accounts of The Ottawa Process resulting in the ban on landmines; Canada's stance on the Iraq invasion; the development of the docu-

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CONSCIENCE CANADA 2011 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM) OFFICIAL NOTICE

Date and time: Saturday, 2 April, 2011 at 1:30 pm
Place: Board Room (1301), lower level of Conrad Grebel University College, University of Waterloo
Speaker: Paul Heidebrecht, Director of Mennonite Central Committee Ottawa Office

Agenda:

- I. Approval of the Minutes of the 2010 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 election are: Murray Lumley, Anna Kirkpatrick, Jan Slakov, Don Woodside, Benno Barg, Jonathan Seiling and Mary Groh.
- IV. Presentation and Approval of the 2009 financial statements - (available upon request)
- V. Appointment of auditors for 2011.
- VI. Other business
- VII. Talk by Paul Heidebrecht, starting at 3 PM. Theme: Current Conscientious-Objector Legislation in Canada: C-390, C-440, C-447- Would Such Legislation Contribute to a More Peaceful Society?

All CC members and friends 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@consciencecanada.ca.

I, (please print) _____, a member in good standing of Conscience Canada, do hereby grant my proxy vote for the 2 April, 2011 Annual General Meeting of Conscience Canada to: _____ or in their absence to any Board Member of Conscience Canada.

Signature: _____



Paul Heidebrecht has studied and taught theological ethics and is very interested in how Canadians act on the "will to intervene".

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

History: The importance of what and how we remember

BY JAN SLAKOV

Among members of the board of Conscience Canada and our wider community, the subject of how we remember history is a lively topic. It is clear that our commitment to nonviolence shapes how we see history and, as a society, that the way history is presented and taught shapes how we view war and peace.

Personally, I will always remember how deeply the white poppy symbol resonated with me when I first heard of it, in the February, 1998 issue of the CC newsletter. Conscience Canada is currently involved in an initiative which aims to build understanding and mutual respect between people opposed to war, who have adopted the white poppy symbol, and the Royal Canadian Legion. [See article on page 5.]

In 2004 we joined with other peace groups in expressing reservations about the expenditure of millions of dollars on a national war museum. Given that the museum is now a reality, we endorsed the idea that "its mandate must include displays about the major role Canadians have played and continue to play in war prevention, disarmament and the peaceful resolution of violent conflicts". We also expressed our hope that the museum would "also pay tribute to the history of objection to war in Canada [and would celebrate] one of the deepest roots in Canada, the root of nonviolence".

At that time we were not aware of

a part of Canada's history of nonviolence, which has been documented by John Ralston Saul in his recent book, *Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine and Robert Baldwin*. You can watch a Nov. 9 CBC Power and Politics interview with the author at <http://www.cbc.ca/video/#/News/Politics/1244504890/ID=1638625642>. (You will need to advance the cursor to 1h42min to find the interview.)

Members of the CC board are also involved in efforts to temper events commemorating the war of 1812 with commemoration of the CO legacy connected to that war.

If anyone would like to contribute to our ongoing efforts to improve the way history is portrayed and to build on the roots of nonviolence we can discover in our society, please do share your ideas and thoughts with the board.

Jan Slakov balances editing the CC newsletter with time for family, including looking after a few rather spoiled goats.

Conscience and Peace Tax International

Conscience Canada is a member of Conscience and Peace Tax International (CPTI) and as such, we were represented at the 2010 general meeting by former board member and long-time CC supporter, Huberte Gautreau.

The meeting, held July 2-4 in Skiringssal, Norway, produced a letter stating that "a thriving democracy deserves consideration of a peace tax alternative". This letter, which was sent to many governmental and faith leaders around the world, as well as a report from the conference, are available at the CPTI website: <http://www.cpti.ws>

One particularly encouraging development at the international level is that the World Council of Churches Central Committee adopted a minute reaffirming their endorsement of the right to conscientious objection to military service and calling on member churches "to study and address the issue of military or war taxes".

"The violence in Canadian politics was among the worst in the western world.

But these men [Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine & Robert Baldwin in the mid-1800's] believed the answer was non-violence."

~ John Ralston Saul

CC Members Write

Your policies are draining away our country's international capital, that is to say, our reputation as peace-keepers and honest brokers. Whether that reputation is deserved or not is another question! But we should be trying to live up to it, not destroying it.

We need a Department of Peace, so that when policy is discussed, there will be someone at the

cabinet table to argue for peace. And we need Bill C-390 (or something like it) to enable conscientious objectors to have their taxes spent only for peaceful purposes. Maybe then the myth of Canada as Peace-keeper will become reality.

Elizabeth Block. New Brunswick

Depuis des années, des Canadiens et des Québécois refusent de financer la guerre par le biais de leurs impôts, mais réclament des

autorités canadiennes un moyen de pouvoir financer plutôt les alternatives positives et nonviolentes[...]

Ces citoyens, regroupés dans Conscience Canada et Nos impôts pour la paix, cherchent à montrer qu'un Ministère pour la paix et des Forces civiles canadiennes pourraient faire davantage, et à un moindre coût tant en argent qu'en vies humaines, pour une contribution canadienne efficace et novatrice aux efforts internationaux pour la paix et les secours d'urgence.

Translation: For many years, some Canadians and Québécois have objected to paying for war through their taxes, and claim the right to an officially sanctioned method for financing positive, nonviolent alternatives...

These citizens, members of Conscience Canada and Nos impôts pour la paix, believe it could be demonstrated that a Department of Peace with a Canadian civilian Peace Force could accomplish

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Conscience Canada membership application / renewal

Membership is open to any person committed to supporting Conscience Canada's objectives. Persons sending in this application before March 1, 2011 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 a full or symbolic amount of their military taxes 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: _____ **Date:** ____/____/____

Address: _____

Phone: (____) _____ - _____ **Email:** _____

There is no membership fee but donations in support of CC operations would be greatly appreciated. Receipts will be issued for all donations. Persons completing this membership application will receive membership privileges indefinitely unless removal from our mailing list is requested.

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.)

CC NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION WILL BE MAINLY ONLINE!

To conserve time and financial resources, we encourage members and supporters who have email to read the online version of the newsletter and to complete our interactive membership application on our website.

Unless we hear otherwise, we will send the newsletter out via email to all members who have email addresses and we will not be sending out paper copies unless a request is made for those.

- If you want a paper copy of the newsletter, please check here, and tell us how many copies you want: _____
- Please remove my name from your membership list.

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



Photo: Acadie nouvelle. Justin Dupuis

Part of the New Brunswick Day festivities in Richibouctou, NB, August, 2010 - A Canadian Forces display.

If you are concerned about CF recruitment tactics, you may want to get involved in efforts to promote more peaceful options for young people. Contacts for these include: matthewbd@mennonitecc.on.ca, cfsc@cfsc.quaker.ca, www.antirecruitment.info.

CC White Poppy Statement

The board of Conscience Canada wishes to endorse efforts by peace activists in Ottawa towards building a relationship of mutual respect for the red and white poppy, for all those who have died and suffered in war, and for all those who participate in Veterans Week and Remembrance Day events, regardless of the colour of the poppy or poppies they wear.

As we consulted to come up with a statement, we realized that it is important to recognize that the white poppy tradition continues to be rooted in deep concern with the "subtext" or assumptions that underlie mainstream Remembrance Day discourse and events. We would like to question some of these assumptions. For instance, to what degree do we owe our freedoms to people dying and killing for us? We encourage people to wear both a red and a white poppy, the red to symbolize our respect for the great sacrifices made by many in the armed forces, the white to rededicate ourselves to create a true culture of peace and to remember others caught up in war, including those who have struggled nonviolently for a better world, helping humankind to see and embody the best of what is meant by the word "humanity". There is the ancient maxim: "If you want peace, prepare for war"; we are convinced that "if you want peace, prepare for peace and work for justice."

We recognize the value of much of the work done with monies collected through the red poppy campaign and do not wish to compete with the Legion's fundraising efforts. We applaud the fact that, in Canada especially, white poppies are often home-made, often with recycled materials, and we discourage the selling of white poppies. If money is donated as part of any white poppy campaigns, we feel those collecting the money are honour-bound to put any money not needed for modest expenses associated with the campaign towards community and peace-building efforts, especially those which help alleviate the suffering of war.

We also recognize that the way we commemorate Veterans Week and Remembrance Day has a real cultural effect. We wish to contribute to building a culture of peace and feel strongly that the white poppy tradition is a part of that culture, one we wish to foster.

It should be remembered that, for some people, Remembrance Day has become more meaningful because of the white poppy tradition. Rather than seeing the white poppy campaign as detracting from the red poppy campaign, we see it as promoting remembrance, reflection and dialogue - something which will surely encourage more Canadians to become engaged in efforts to promote peace at home and abroad.

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ment “The Responsibility to Protect” vulnerable populations from their own oppressive governments (as in Rwanda and Kosovo) and how this responsibility impacts environmental issues, disarmament, and refugee issues; the establishment of the International Criminal Court; Canada’s observer mission at the election in Sierra Leone; and many more events in which Canada took an important role.

The period between the publication of the book and today’s world has been a time of grievous decline in Canada’s profile in matters of peace and human security. As our policies become ever more aligned with those of USA our independent voice becomes dimmer and dimmer. The last chapters of the book optimistically lay out what could be done to make the world a global community, and the leading role Canada could and should take in various initiatives. One wonders how long such opportunities will remain open to Canada if we don’t switch back to the track we were on in Axworthy’s day, the years

around the turn of the century.

To give you a sense of the author’s voice and his philosophy here is a quotation from the chapter on The Ottawa Process:

“No proposition of mine garnered more derision among the chattering classes than my advocacy of soft power—until the Ottawa Process showed that it worked. No one was threatened with a bombing. No economic sanctions were imposed. No diplomatic muscles were flexed by the treaty’s proponents. Yet a significant change was achieved in the face of stiff opposition... Using human security as a concept and soft power as a tool kit had produced a treaty [ban on landmines] that set out global norms for the protection of people. Could this lesson be translated to fit other global challenges?” (p.154,5 in 2004 edition of *Navigating a New World*.)

Reading books such as the above supplies fuel for the steep learning curve Mary has had to negotiate since becoming president last March.

Editor’s Note: Great news: On December 7th, 2010, the Canadian House of Commons voted unanimously, calling on the Government of Canada to engage in negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention as proposed by the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon. Canada’s role in nuclear proliferation and disarmament is rather complex and it will surely take plenty of citizen pressure for this “great news” to be acted on sincerely. But, as Axworthy’s question suggests, surely the “soft power” option can be adapted to work in other contexts as well.

For more information on current efforts towards nuclear disarmament, please contact consciencecanada@consciencecanada.ca or bryaneelhart@gmail.com.

letters continued

more, with fewer resources, both in terms of money and human lives, to provide an effective and innovative contribution to international peace and emergency assistance efforts.

Dominique Boisvert (quote from a press release which aroused quite a bit of interest in Quebec)

As a Quaker and a brother of the White Eagle Lodge, I cannot in con-

science support the activities of the Department of National Defence. For this reason, I am diverting a symbolic portion of my 2008 income tax to Conscience Canada’s Peace Tax Trust Fund. By this gesture, I consider I have paid my taxes in full, but have put a “condition” on this portion until such time as the government provides me with an alternative to paying for war.

I am well aware that the Department of Finance will simply recoup its “loss” through gar-

nishing my GST cheque. I consider this to be a shameful act, given the Charter of Rights and Freedoms’ promise of rights to me as a conscientious objector.

Daphne Davey, PEI

I was delighted to discover this grassroots organization [Conscience Canada] some years ago because it offers a practical, tangible way to take action. At present, roughly 9% of our income tax dollars are directed to the

military. If you object to war, that’s a hard fact to swallow.

Anna Kirkpatrick, BC (quote from an article published in *The Smallerholder*)

Patriots always talk of dying for their country and never of killing for their country.

~Bertrand Russell