



Conscience Canada

Work for peace. Stop paying for war!
Travaillons pour la paix. Cessons de payer pour la guerre !

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“The urgency of now”

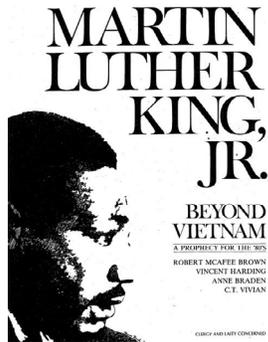
JAN SLAKOV

On April 4, 2019 foreign ministers are set to meet in Washington, DC, to celebrate the 70th anniversary of NATO.

That date is also the 51st anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) and the 52nd anniversary of his famous “Beyond Vietnam” speech.

In that speech, King explained how the same convictions that propelled him to become a leader in the civil rights movement made his opposition to the Vietnam war unavoidable. “The war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit”, he warned. “This is the role our nation has taken - the role of those who make peaceful revolution impossible by refusing to give up the privileges and the pleasures that come from the immense profits of overseas investment.”

It is fascinating, sobering too, to look back on that prophetic speech. In speaking out King alienated some of his closest colleagues. They appreciated the civil rights progress of Lyndon Johnson and “were loathe to alienate the president by opposing his war effort”, as William Pep-



per put it. Pepper was the executive director of the coalition which had hoped to put King forward as a presidential candidate in 1968.

I see a comparable fear now, as many people working to prevent ecological collapse fail

to make the connections between that struggle and the violence, human suffering, and undermining of international law perpetrated by our militaries. As always, people who oppose war and militarism are seen as disloyal and/or naive.

And yet that connection, between militarism and the other ills that plague our society, holds powerful truth. At the time, the power in

King’s position was too much for Lyndon Johnson and others in the US government. It took decades of research but Pepper has shown, beyond any reasonable doubt, that it was elements within the US government, with the help of associates in organized crime, who killed MLK.

We may bemoan living in these times of impending doom, but we are privileged to live in a context where the power of MLK’s vision is alive to us. King urged “all ministers of draft age to give up their ministerial exemptions and seek status as conscientious objectors”. As members of Conscience Canada, we offer that option to all Canadians, those who owe taxes and those who do

continued on p. 4



Elizabeth May to speak at CC AGM April 4

Elizabeth May, seen here leaving the French language leader’s debate in Sept. 2015, will talk to Conscience Canada members on Creating a Peace Culture. Mark your calendars!

In the 2015 debate Ms May exhibited spunk and a commitment to peace and the common good. A more widely seen English

debate did not happen when Harper and Mulcair boycotted it. Not only will she speak at our AGM in April (see page 2) but her participation in federal leaders’ debates is assured for the 2019 election.

CONSCIENCE CANADA 2019 Annual General Meeting

Ottawa, Thursday April 4, 2019, 4:30 pm

at Saint Paul University, 223 Main St. in the Amphitheatre (Room G1124)

AGENDA

1. Approval of the minutes of the 2018 AGM (available upon request)
2. Review of CC activities in 2018 and a look ahead (members' participation invited)
3. Conscience Canada bylaw changes. Special resolution on absentee voting. Motion to approve
4. Confirmation of board members for re-election: All current members are standing again
5. Election of new board member(s)
6. Presentation and Approval of the 2018 financial statements (available upon request)
7. Appointment of auditors for 2019

DINNER BREAK

7:30 pm **Elizabeth May** speaks on "Canada's role: Creating a Peace Culture"

NOTE: This constitutes the official annual meeting notice required by the Conscience Canada by-laws. Please let us know if you want to receive a PDF copy of the by-laws by email.

If you cannot attend this year's AGM in person –

please send your proxy (see form below) for your vote

either **BY POST** to: 515 Langs Drive, Unit J, Cambridge, ON N3H 5E4

or **BY E-MAIL** to: info@consciencecanada.ca (please copy and complete form below)

Proxy for Annual General Meeting of Conscience Canada on April 4, 2019

I, (please print) _____, a member in good standing of Conscience Canada, do hereby appoint:

_____ (please print)
as my proxyholder for the 2019 AGM of Conscience Canada.

NOTE: Your proxyholder is not required to be a member of Conscience Canada.

OR I appoint the current Chair of the Board of Conscience Canada (D. Hewitt-White) as my proxyholder

This person identified above is to act on my behalf as my proxy and is to vote:

as they see fit on all matters identified in the Notice of Meeting and on any amendments to these matters or on any new matters arising

OR

only in accordance with the following specific voting directions on matters identified in the AGM agenda:

This proxy has been completed and confirmed by me on:

date

signature (if proxy sent by post, not required for email)

Divest and Resist

DOUG HEWITT-WHITE

The NoWar2018 conference this last September in Toronto was a great success. The theme of replacing illegal wars with the rule of law was explored by many activists and experts from around Canada and the world. The conference brought together new and long-time activists who formed alliances, strategized plans for future work, discussed education, military propaganda, divestment, and many other ideas for creative actions.



More! More! We must fatten up this hungry feeder.

Conscience Canada had a table laid out with information for conference goers. I led a workshop on War Tax Resistance. And I must come clean here – there was not a lot of awareness or interest in learning about Conscientious Objection to Military Taxation (COMT).

I am plagued by the question: why are not more peace activists eager exponents of war tax resistance. I am reminded of the assertion of US General Haig: “Let them demonstrate, just as long as they continue to pay their taxes”. That goes to the crux of the challenge for war

resisters. War is fuelled by money – taxpayer money. While it is true that corporations pay some of those taxes (while hugely profiting from war), the largest tax share (about 50% in Canada) is contributed by individuals. Every year, every tax-paying citizen has the chance to stand up and say “No, I will not pay for war!” Why do not more people, who yearn and advocate for peace, not seize that opportunity?

At NoWar2018 I saw great deal of interest in the workshop entitled Divestment from War Profiteers. That workshop was packed with people wanting to know more about divesting from weapons manufacturers like Lockheed, Boeing, Northrop, and others (corporations making a killing on killing). It would seem that, in the parlance of spin doctors, divestment is sexy.

So why do many peaceniks hesitate, demur and shun the call to resist military taxation, to divest from the government war industry? Answering this question is vital if we are to get more people to take action, to use CC’s Peace Tax Trust Fund, to demand from our politicians the passing of CO legislation.

Is divesting from the arms business just the new attention-grabbing kid on the block? Or is there a fatal flaw in the COMT concept?

I hope that you readers have some thoughts on ways to enliven and expand how COMT is viewed by the peace community. How do we make COMT more striking and stimulating? If you have ideas, I am all ears! Just drop me an email at info@consciencecanada.ca

continued from p. 1

not - all are able to declare ourselves as conscientious objectors.

Let’s seize this opportunity: let’s organize solidarity events in our communities, inviting federal candidates to learn about and speak to the realities that King called “the urgency of now”. If we start preparing now we can do the outreach necessary to organize events that speak truth powerfully.

I invite you to connect with me (janslakov@shaw.ca or (250) 537-5251) so we can plan 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
- press for military tax re-direction legislation in Canada

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

This newsletter is available on-line at www.consciencecanada.ca. If you are receiving a printed copy please let us know if you would prefer the e-version (in colour, less expensive!)

B O A R D

Scott Albrecht, Dave Bechtel, Charlie Diamond, Mary Groh, Doug Hewitt-White, Murray Lumley, Jan Slakov, Dwyer Sullivan, Eric Unger

The Military Return on Investment

ERIC UNGER

What should you expect as a payback on your tax investment in Canada's military? Here's a short list of six predictable returns:

Return #1: The military brass will lie to you. Truth is the first casualty of war. In virtually all military contexts you can be sure that the news we hear coming from the military will be carefully screened, skewed, enhanced, or altered as the military downplays the destruction it causes, glorifies its own successes, or claims the need for secrecy.

Return #2: High ethical standards are out the window. A successful recruit (which is, after all, what we want from our investment) will be instructed in the most efficient means of annihilating the enemy. Family and community moral standards will take second place to obedience. Our young people, having been taught during their formative years to think independently, will now be re-trained to set aside their own points of view and moral perspectives in order to be reduced to efficient armed robots operating under the never-to-be-questioned instructions of a superior.

Return #3: Top military officials will deny all responsibility for crimes and misdemeanors of their young be-

wildered cadres. The two previous 'returns' on our military investment pave the way for the third. The same organization which makes patriots of men and women who are willing to risk their lives on our behalf will also shun any blame when a soldier 'goes rogue' and slaughters an innocent citizen, family, or village. To save their own skins, to protect the integrity of the "mission", military authorities will utter whatever lies they feel they must. In this way, they presume to protect the honour of the uniform they hold so dear.

Return #4: The promise of new skills and a secure future for young recruits evaporates. An often unspoken return on investment is the comforting reassurance parents receive that their young ones are receiving free "quality employment and training". What is not emphasized is that this training is rarely for the children of the rich and influential and most often for our less financially empowered young citizens. And what is this training? – powerful new skills – an ability to focus their hatreds, methods for dealing with 'human vermin.' – they will learn how to kill and, with practice, do it efficiently. For those (and there will be many) who, upon their return to civilian life, find their futures bleak, will these skills find

useful purpose as they learn to survive as civilians? Note: The fact that many of our young recruits will ultimately end up in prison, mentally ill, addicted to drugs, out on the streets, or contemplating suicide, is never part of the recruitment pitch!

Return #5: Our oceans, rivers, forests, earth, and skies will become toxic. Among all the agents that threaten our planet's survival, the military machine is Number One – not just Canadian but all military forces. It is almost impossible to visualize, let alone quantify, the collective harm that military ventures do to the earth. Beyond the damage caused to society through psychological and material destruction, our planet's environment is strained beyond its ability to recover as a direct result of war. The biosphere is being destroyed faster than we dare to imagine. The largest contributor is conflict. Oceans, skies, and soil are polluted by armies everywhere preparing for and engaging in war. And, because truth has been banished, we may never know how great this damage is until it's too late.

Return #6: A common bond through grief and loss. We have the comforting privilege of knowing that when our patriotic sons and daughters are injured or lost in some government-decreed conflict, the enemy is just as likely to suffer as we are. Ceremonies will be held, speeches about the injured and fallen will be given, and medals will be pinned to uniforms. Patriotic sacrifice, national honour, and glorious victory will be the themes of our farewells. We will all grieve deeply, together. Guaranteed.

Join Conscience Canada



Membership is open to anyone supporting CC's objectives.

No membership fee (donations are welcome!)

Visit: consciencecanada.ca/membership/

Let us know if you can get involved as a volunteer. Email us: info@consciencecanada.ca