

Work For Peace... Stop Paying For War

Conscience Canada



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Introducing this Conscience Canada newsletter

Tardy but together, nonetheless

BY JAN SLAKOV

First, an apology – I put off getting this issue of the CC newsletter ready because of a whole series of more urgent things that needed doing, compounded by some serious computer problems I have had this past year. Because of the timing, we did not have time to proof-read and format the newsletter with the usual level of attention.

But we persist nonetheless. We live in a time when there is a great need for people to be aware of and make use of the leadings of their conscience. This issue features several stories of conscience, stories which can help us remember that freedom of conscience is not limited to conscientious objection to conscription. Respecting freedom of conscience means allowing, even

fostering the development of moral consciousness in everyday life.

One ongoing story is that of Tamara Lorincz, who started her “Wednesdays Against Warships” protest on Dec. 19, 2012, because of her deep concern for the state of the planet. Imagine the conviction it took for Tamara to stand in opposition to the National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy, at \$35 billion, the largest federal program and defence procurement in our history, when there was unanimous support for it in the Nova Scotia legislature as well as from all federal parties, including the Green Party, and a reluctance to oppose it even among fellow activists.

Besides the sometimes inclement weather, Tamara has endured her

share of antipathy, as she stood, sometimes alone, at the gate of the Irving shipyard in Halifax with her placards. But she is also garnering more support than she could have hoped for. In February Karl Risser, the president of the union of shipyard workers came out to meet her and they realized there was much they could agree on. Karl said the workers would rather build fast ferries and light rail and that the warships are part of the government’s militaristic agenda. The only way things will change, he argued, is when more Canadians work to push the government in a different direction. Sometimes even strangers have come to join with Tamara in her protests.

Now relocated to Shipley, England with her family because she was selected for the Rotary International World Peace Fellowship at the University of Bradford, Tamara will continue to keep her www.demilitarize.ca website updated. I encourage us all to keep checking it out; it is a beacon of conscience for Canada and the world.

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Christian
Peacemaker
Team member
Chris Sabas
speaking at the
Conscience
Canada AGM –
6/4/2013

Conscience Canada

Statement of Receipts and Disbursements

For Period Ended August 31, 2013

By Dave Bechtel

	Fiscal Year to Aug 31/13		Fiscal Year to Aug 31/12		2,013
	Operating	Trust Funds	Operating	Trust Funds	Budget YTD
Receipts					
Peace Tax Deposits Received		5,822.18		9,123.64	
Donations	2,515.00		1,308.55		2,000.00
Interest and Other Receipts	683.02		664.26		666.64
Total Receipts	3,198.02	5,822.18	1,972.81	9,123.64	2,666.64
Disbursements					
Peace Tax Deposits Refunded		3,375.06		8,937.50	
Newsletter	860.52		982.39		1,200.00
Special Projects (CPTI Conference)	432.57		-		450.00
Outreach	307.00		140.97		133.36
Advertising	675.00		1,506.07		1,066.64
Website	55.00		153.88		133.36
Professional Services	28.90		195.00		-
Directors and Officers Liability Insurance	-		918.00		950.00
Administration	468.16		231.13		266.64
Donations to Sister Organizations	-		100.00		233.36
Total Disbursements	2,827.15	3,375.06	4,227.44	8,937.50	4,433.36
Excess (Deficiency) of Receipts Over Disbursements	370.87	2,447.12	(2,254.63)	186.14	(1,766.72)

CC AGM 2013 notes:

- CC invited to participate in efforts to counter the militaristic propaganda campaign the government will soon roll out to commemorate WWI
- Musical performance provided by Din Yalonen, CC's faithful newsletter formatter
- US Attorney and full time CPT Aboriginal Justice Team member Chris Sabas gave a talk on new (and old) problems associated with the use of drone warfare

The board report and more details about the CC AGM are available on our website.

Mary Groh cuts the cake celebrating the 30th anniversary of Conscience Canada (CC)'s incorporation in BC and 10 years since the group was reconstituted and headquartered in Ontario.



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

Dave Bechtel, Mary Groh, Anna Kirkpatrick, Murray Lumley, Jan Slakov, Dwyer Sullivan, Don Woodside, Eric Unger

Neill von Gunten's story of conscientious objection

Please note: a fuller version of this story is available on our website.

I was born and raised in a Swiss community in the United States that was settled in the early 1800s by mainly European Anabaptists and my parents were members of the local Mennonite Church. Living in the United States at that time meant that as an 18 year old boy I had to register with the American military so that I could be conscripted into service whenever needed. As I look back now, that is a young age to make such a life-changing decision.

As a 17-year-old young man, I knew that I had to make a choice. I believed that war and killing was wrong and that Jesus is the true Peacemaker. I knew that that was what God wanted me to do! I also knew that I would be the first one in my peer group to declare as a CO and there were no other young adult COs that I knew of in the

As a 17-year-old young man, I knew that I had to make a choice.

church for a number of years. I was followed by my brother and a cousin.

I went to the Selective Service Office in the neighbouring town right after my 18th birthday because I needed to fill out a declaration form and hand it in to the receptionist. When the Army



Neill von Gunten beside the inukshuk he and his wife Edith built as a reminder of their years working with Aboriginal people.

man read my form, he barked at me and belittled me in front of the others in the room – calling me a chicken, a sissy, a wimp, and other things. He tried his best to intimidate me and asked if I realized that he could send me in front of the draft board for questioning. I answered that I knew that. He told me to sit down and he went back into his office.

When he re-entered the room, he gave me my registration card and my CO designation.

Once the Vietnam War started my wife and I volunteered for two years] at the Woodlawn Mennonite Church -- in the black ghetto of southside Chicago, where the Mennonite Biblical Seminary used to be before it moved to Elkhart,

Indiana. There were more people living in the block across the street from us than there were in all of the town I came from!

I was called a maintenance engineer – doing everything from shovelling coal, to fixing sinks that came off the wall when someone sat on it, to cleaning up the church basement whenever the sewers backed up from a deluge of rain, to taking out the garbage and having a huge sewer rat jump on my chest!

I also had a boys club and worked with some gang members and those times have many stories of their own!

I found it interesting that some

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Donna Stocker

Learning from conscience ... & mistakes

In the 1980's when Trudeau was PM, someone started a huge Peace Petition that was taken door to door across Canada.

I had a big area to do within a certain time limit and just as I was about to begin I got the flu. I put it off until I couldn't wait any longer so one evening I took the petition and went to knock on some doors. I must have looked like a wreck and the first door I went to a man answered and when I told him what I was there for he started yelling at

me and told me I should take the first boat back to Russia. As I was about to leave he hollered "You're stupid!" and I hollered back "You're stupid!" (couldn't think of anything better to say). Oh great! I'm taking around a Peace Petition and the first thing I do is get into a fight!

After knocking on doors for weeks on end and encountering all kinds of responses I developed a thick skin and volunteered to go to the army barracks, where no one else wanted to go. I was told by one young man that he wasn't

allowed to sign the petition, and at another door a very distinguished 'gentleman' looked at me like I was a worm on his doorstep and said in a very quiet voice "Get off my porch". I thanked him for his time and left.

But two young soldiers stopped me on the street because I was wearing a button that identified me and asked if they could sign the petition. That was heartening.

Donna Stocker
Cawston, BC

Stouffville

Historical and Current Witness for Peace

As we have noted in previous issues of this newsletter, under the Harper Conservatives, the traditional Canadian inclination towards fairness, restraint and peace-building is being devalued, while war-fighting is being promoted as central to the Canadian identity. For example, the government spent \$11.5 million to commemorate the War of 1812, more than was saved by cutting Katimavik and cutting governmental support for the Canadian Environmental Network.

There is, of course, a solid undercurrent of resistance to this trend. Following last June's commemoration of the War of 1812, several Stouffville area residents got together to create a parallel event, reinforcing their commitment to peace. The government-orchestrated



Landon Wideman designed this logo for the Stouffville Peace Festival

ed event completely overlooked the area's historic peace church roots, the fact that in no other area of Upper Canada had all three historic peace churches, Mennonites, Brethren in Christ and Quakers, lived in

such concentration and such close proximity.

This year Stouffville is hosting its first Peace Festival on the weekend of September 21, the UN International Day of Peace. It promises to be a wonderful event, with the unveiling of a peace plaque near the marker which honours the Mennonite founders of Stouffville, Abraham and Elizabeth Reesor-Stouffer, a peace panel with Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish and Dr. Gerry Caplan, a performance by the beatifically inspired Theatre of the Beat, which "aims to live in sustainable and inspiring ways" and to provide audiences with a chance to "ponder some of the more important issues which affect our communities" and more.

Way to go, Stouffville!

Board Members Unlimited

BY MARY GROH

Our board members are active in diverse peace-related projects across the country.

Murray Lumley spent two weeks mid-summer on a Christian Peacemaker Team in New Brunswick. CPT is supporting a Mi'kmaq First Nation's resistance to an energy corporation which is aiming to do seismic testing near their reserve. Southwest Energy Canada hopes to find oil and gas by fracking, but the local First Nation know it would be destructive of their groundwater and are actively but non-violently engaged in trying to hold the company off.

Eric Unger's local (Winnipeg area) efforts to unearth CO stories have not endangered the natural environment and have brought up a couple of gems. One is Neill von Gunten's story in this issue. Another is the bizarre story of some young men who refused to do military service, for religious reasons, during WW II, and as an alternative were trucked to the Jasper, B.C. area to cut blocks of ice from a frozen lake to build an "unsinkable" ship—the Pyke's ice ship.

Jan Slakov also has been working to bring to the light some things the government would

prefer to keep underground. She has been busy in Salt Spring Island, B.C. collaborating with Elizabeth May and others in efforts to stop the ratification of FIFA, the China-Canada trade treaty. She also is hoping to expose some serious problems of the RCMP she has learned about. And she has written a most informative and inspiring article about the White Poppy which Conscience Canada people should all know about as we prepare for Remembrance Day. You can read it in the Oct. - Dec. issue of Peace magazine.

Don Woodside has spent many hours, days and weeks this year on the inglorious job of "fracking" the new rules the federal government has laid out for non-profit organizations. A primary requirement is a list of members. In an attempt to compile a definitive list of CC members you will be receiving a letter before the end of this year asking you to consider your relationship to Conscience Canada. We hope all will read it and respond thoughtfully.

Editor's note: Mary herself is a goldmine – and got some recognition when her MP, Dan Harris, presented her with a Diamond Jubilee medal in February, 2013.

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of my former friends that visited us thought that it was very scary in the ghetto and they would rather be in the Army reserves!

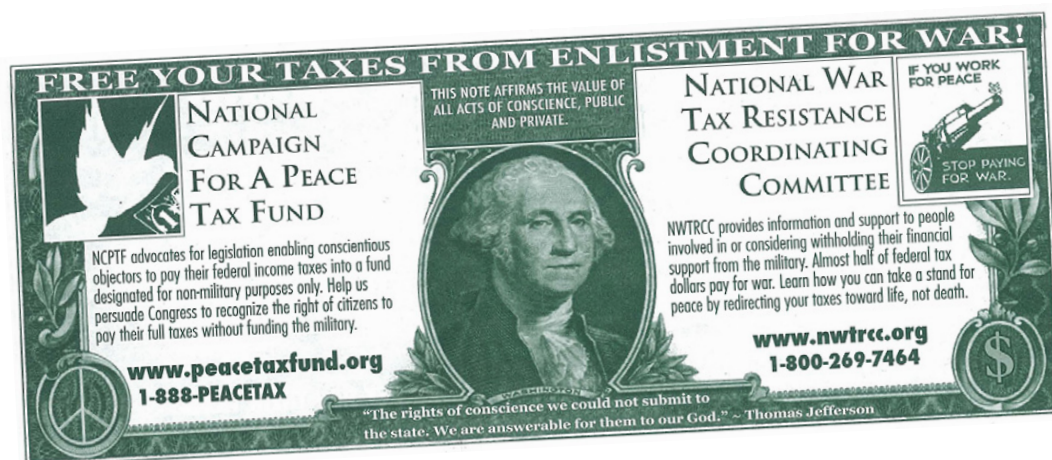
Those were also the days that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Jesse Jackson, Ralph Abernathy and other black leaders worked for justice in Chicago. A number of us at Woodlawn Mennonite Church got involved in anti-war demonstrations, too. My pacifism was tested at a demonstration in downtown Chicago. I was jumped by four men, Nazis we were told, who broke my glasses and bruised me in the struggle. I did not swing back.

Some years ago I talked to a youth Sunday School teacher in my home community and he asked me, "Why do our Mennonite lessons always talk about peace?" So, I asked him, "Where else are the youth going to hear about peace? Not in school for sure – there the Army recruiters make their presence known regularly. Will their parents teach them if no one taught their parents?"

When I look back on that decision that I made at age 18, I feel thankful. It has influenced my whole life, and has made me stronger in my beliefs regarding the Christian faith and Biblical peacemaking, and has prompted me to aim for actions that reflect that in my daily life. Conflict resolution and reconciliation has also become a real part of my personal life and my career path.

Megwich.

Neill von Gunten
Winnipeg, Manitoba



Dwyer Sullivan has worked with US activists to resist injustice (including gross human rights violations in Central America, nurtured out of the "School of the Americas" aka WHINSEC or "school of the assassins"). On one of his trips he brought back this clever dollar bill, produced by the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund.



Maryse Azzaria, active with CC/ Nos impôts pour la paix & Échec à la guerre, partisane de la non-violence with her husband Louis, at their 50th wedding anniversary

In 2012 alumni from the hospital where Maryse Azzaria studied as a student nurse held a reunion. Maryse suggested to the organizing committee that she

could bring some white poppies to share but they declined, citing concerns about controversy and the possibility it would be seen as disrespectful to the families of veterans.

Maryse replied:

I am sorry you took it that wearing a White Poppy may be disrespectful to the families of veterans. My father was a veteran in the Second World War. When I work for peace, I am not disrespectful to his memory. The White Poppy wants us to remember ALL victims of war, the dead, the wounded, the psychologically disturbed, the refugees, be



White poppies are part of the undercurrent of dedication to peace and justice. For more info, contact janslakov@shaw.ca

they military or civilian. Wearing a White Poppy means NO MORE WAR. It is definitely not meant as an insult to the veterans. It is oriented towards the future, working for a world at peace.