

Work For Peace... Stop Paying For War

Conscience Canada

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Spring 2015 Number 108

Issn 1196-9970

Making Sure Conscience Canada Continues

BY BRUNA NOTA

No way can Conscience Canada call ‘time off’! As with many organizations whose goals are achievable only far in the future and generally by a substantive change of the prevailing norms, Conscience Canada’s board and standard bearers are confronting frustration or fatigue, questioning their ability to assure the continued existence of the organization. The people leading CC are not the first ones to experience that “the spirit is strong but the flesh is weak”. Conscience Canada gives me the means and the support to stand for what my conscience demands. The credibility, structures and tools that CC has developed and the many examples of people who have committed to non-violence help to sustain me and to provide a vision of the changes we anticipate, even if long in the future. We need CC and we need each other for the long haul.



Bruna, with husband Ian – “I’m already against the next war”!

As a child during WWII in Italy, I lived through the horrors of bombing and of the cruelty people inflict on others because ... they can, or they do not know better. The most important legacy my parents gave me is the value of respect. Respect for myself, respect for others regardless of their social station, respect for nature, respect for the efforts people put into making a living and a liveable world. This legacy led me to learn more about how to act in ways that make it easier for others to respect each other, to behave decently. It guided me in the discovery of the variety and richness of words and actions that stop the escalation

of violence, that bring conciliation; to savour the deep pleasure of living simply, of sharing.

From time to time in my life I have felt as a fish out of water, uncomfortable being different from my school or work mates. Fortunately, I have also always found like-minded people to sustain me, to strengthen my convictions, to provide me with intellectual and spiritual nourishment, to expand my horizons and introduce me to new opportunities for action. Conscience Canada as an institution, but mostly the people it has attracted, have been a constant

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What of the future of Conscience Canada?

BY JAN SLAKOV

In our last Conscience Canada (CC) board meeting, we discussed the future of Conscience Canada, recognizing that some of us are wondering if this organization can continue. Is maintaining the group a good use of our time and energy? Do we have the energy to keep going, especially when some of us have been on the board for so long, and there does not seem to be that much interest in conscientious objection to military taxation in the wider community?

We see this decision is a big one and we want to call on your wisdom by sharing our concerns with you. Your suggestions for the future of Conscience Canada, and its resources, should it need to be retired, are certainly welcome.

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source of inspiration and of unparalleled nourishment.

Militarism is the most repellent manifestation of the violence which Conscience Canada and I reject. We reject it because it stands in the way of learning, exploring, adopting the many creative alternatives to defuse fear, anxiety, and loss of identity. Similarly, it inhibits our ability to cultivate the spiritual and physical resources to which so many of the world's citizens aspire, and which we need if we are to survive as a species. We cannot afford the often prevailing greedy and adversarial mentality sustaining the powerful structures that are destroying the world economically, ecologically, socially and morally. These structures are inflicting enormous damage and pain on the world and not least on the soldiers and their families. Even as my compassion and fellowship goes out to them, I cannot allow that my financial contribution to the common good, my taxes, be

spent in support of the institution of the military.

All of this is linked together and each one of us lives these links in creative diversity. The community within Conscience Canada strengthens our resolve and provides a conduit for substantive changes, however slowly they occur; changes that represent a fundamental shift, a total conversion probably as much in our individual hearts as in Canada's society, economy, politics and legislation. I want to be part of creating a world where social violence is addressed effectively through systemic remedies, where dysfunctional actions are recognized as being generally rooted in mental sickness or generational exploitation and structural inequalities rather than in terrorism or wilful acts of war. Let's make sure Conscience Canada continues strong.

Bruna Nota has been a conscientious objector to military taxation for many years and was president of Conscience Canada from 2002 until 2008

We asked former president Brunna Nota to write something about her continuing desire to see conscientious objection to military taxation be fully recognized, about what CC has meant to her. She speaks of how vital the connection we build with other like-minded people are, in terms of our own personal growth, and ultimately the shifting of our culture towards something healthier.

"We want to call on your wisdom"

For me, this is ultimately what fuels my commitment to Conscience Canada – the connection with exceptionally thoughtful and diverse people, who have helped me grow strong in my commitment to and understanding of nonviolence, who show me that "another world is possible".

Long time CC member Jan Slakov has enjoyed editing the newsletter, but would gladly pass the baton.

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, Eric Unger, Don Woodside

CONSCIENCE CANADA

2015 Annual General Meeting

(AGM Official Notice)

Date and Time: Saturday, March 28, 2015 at 2:00 pm
Place: Friends House, 60 Lowther Ave, Toronto, ON (St. George Subway Stn, exit Bedford Rd)
Speaker: Richard Preston, emeritus professor of anthropology, McMaster U
Topic: Canadian Peace Initiative (dept. of peace initiative); How it Thrives

Agenda:

- I Approval of the minutes of the 2014 AGM (available upon request)
 - II Review of the work done by CC during 2014
 - III Confirmation of board members standing for re-election: David Bechtel, Mary Groh, Anna Kirkpatrick, Murray Lumley, Jan Slakov, Dwyer Sullivan, Eric Unger, Don Woodside
 - IV Presentation and Approval of the 2014 financial statements (available upon request)
 - V Appointment of auditors for 2015
 - VI Discussion about the future of Conscience Canada
- Break**

3:30 Talk by Richard Preston on The Canadian Peace Initiative, known to most of us as the Department of Peace Initiative, focusing on how it has carried on and even thrived in a difficult atmosphere for peace organizations.

On the genesis of the Hamilton chapter of the Canadian Peace Initiative, Richard writes: The Hamilton Quaker Meeting has a Peace and Social Justice Committee for as long as I can remember, which is about 40 years. But we usually lacked a focus, and instead would meet every month to discuss the major concerns we are aware of, and write a letter to an M.P. or Minister with a c.c. to the P.M. One evening, our senior member urged us to just pick one, and concentrate on it. At the time I was the “clerk” or convenor of our group, and my peace testimony was substantially influenced by my years of getting to know the Cree people of northern Quebec and Ontario. They have for ages had the task of living well together, sometimes two or more families in a single tipi for months at a time. In such circumstances, one must develop the personal skills of living peacefully. And when Europeans came and began the fur trade, the Crees developed working relations of mutual dependency and respect that continue to this day, though in more complex circumstances. We spent two years of the Peace and Social Justice Committee on the UN policy “The Responsibility to Protect” but when the Government of Canada let the initiative diminish, we chose the Department of Peace as our focus. That was a decade ago, and in that time the Hamilton Chapter was formed, going well beyond the Quaker Committee.

Featured speaker for the 2015 CC AGM, Richard Preston, of the Department of Peace Initiative, with family



Richard Preston is a retired (mostly) professor of anthropology whose focus of study over the past 40 years has been the Cree of northern Quebec. He is a Quaker and a peace activist and has been involved with the dept. of peace initiative both in Hamilton and nationally since its beginnings. Considering the difficulties Conscience Canada is having, the board thought that a presentation about another organization which is having more success in recruiting support would be useful.

This notice 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: info@consciencecanada.ca &/or janslavkov@shaw.ca

I, (please print) _____, a member in good standing of Conscience Canada, do hereby grant my proxy vote for the March 28, 2015, Annual General Meeting of Conscience Canada to: _____ or in their absence to any Board Member of Conscience Canada.

I wish to direct my vote on items on the agenda as follows:

Or

I wish to convey discretion on the user of the proxy to vote on matters on the agenda or amendments.

In addition, I do / do not (please circle) wish my proxy to be used to vote on appointment of directors and /or auditor.

Signature: _____

Who We Are

On Technology & Resistance, & CC's Special Contribution

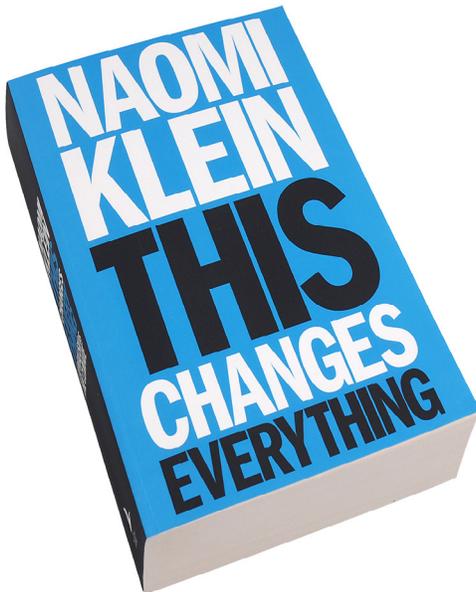
BY JAN SLAKOV

Recently Elizabeth May pointed out that our electoral system tends to push parties which are closest to each other in terms of policy to be the most “at war” with each other. Stating this so clearly helped me see how I have a choice to make: just as I have done my best to resist the way our economic/political system pushes us to be complicit in war, destruction of the earth, human rights abuses etc., I plan to resist the way our electoral system seems to push political competitors (including some of my activist friends who are working with other parties) to become enemies. We really, really need to be working together as much as we can!

One might say that this kind of resistance is what Conscience Canada is all about. We insist on being present to our participation in the wider world, even if that participation is indirect. We refuse to be mere cogs in giant systems like our food, financial, electoral, economic or defence systems.

Through our resistance, we make a profound statement about who we are – we are beings capable of transforming our world, perhaps most importantly, ourselves. We are participants in life, who make conscious choices. Ursula Franklin can help us understand better how our choices and worldview make a difference. She invites us, in particular, to be aware of how our technologies (“the way things are done around here”) impact who we become, how society evolves: During the Massey Lectures on the

“*Real World of Technology*” I tried to illustrate relationships between the development of military technologies and the economic policies of national governments by pointing out two distinct tasks for any state wanting to use military production as an infrastructure for the advancement of technology and employment. The state must ensure funding for the military-industrial complex, and at the same time ensure the ongoing presence of an enemy to justify massive outlays of public funds for research, development and procurement of instruments and infrastructures of “defence”. [...] The technological infrastructures of the West were not dismantled [with the end of the Cold War]; their new use,



I suggest, is a new form of war [...] that is now called globalization and global competition. In other words, the technological tools of control and conquest function as before but in a new key, creating a new form of war. [...] You may ask, “If what



Ursula Franklin

we experience today is indeed a war without national boundaries and defined territories, who, or where, is the enemy?” [...] In the war of global competition the enemy are people. By this I mean not the people [...] but all people who look at community, at work, at nature, and at other human beings as sources of meaning and interaction rather than as commodities. Whatever cannot be merely bought and sold, whatever cannot be expressed in terms of money and gain-loss transactions stands in the way of the “market” as enemy territory to be occupied, transformed, and conquered. (*The Ursula Franklin Reader*, pp. 117-118)

In her most recent book, *This Changes Everything*, Naomi Klein picks up on this theme, speaking about how our vision of who we are deeply affects how we interact with each other and our world:

... somewhere inside each of us dwells a belief in their [neo-liberal] central lie – that we are nothing but

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selfish, greedy self-gratification machines. [This] bleak vision has isolated us enough from one another that it became possible to convince us that we are not just incapable of self-preservation but fundamentally *not worth saving*. (p. 62)

[...] we are products of our age and of a dominant ideological project [...] one that too often has taught us to see ourselves as little more than singular gratification-seeking units [...]while simultaneously severing so many of us from the broader community whose pooled skills are capable of solving problems big and small. [...] what is overwhelming about the climate challenge is that it requires breaking so many rules at once – rules written into national laws and trade agreements, as well as powerful unwritten rules that tell us that no government can increase

taxes and stay in power, or say no to major investments no matter how damaging... (p. 460)

I find it fascinating that this discussion of “who we are” is a theme we can find in the thinking of leaders in the nonviolent struggle for life, a healthy future. Elizabeth May even used that phrase as the title of her latest book. On p.190 she describes working on the Earth Charter with “Kamla Chowdhry, who had worked with Gandhi. She urged us to make the point that ‘*having* more can never replace *being* more.’” She continues, urging us to “wake up and smarten up. We do not lack solutions. We lack only the awareness of our situation, the courage to choose the right priorities (survival over short-term profits, life over money), and the political will to embrace them. [...] We need to remember who we are.” (p. 204)

Who We Are: a courageous example from Syria

There is a website: www.alharak.org, where we can learn of the Syrian Nonviolence Movement, “founded inside Syria by hundreds of peaceful protesters in April 2011 [which] continues to work towards true and lasting change in Syria, from the bottom up and by Syrian hands, through nonviolent struggle. [...] *We do not wait for the regime to fall in order to be free; we are already free Syrians. Freedom begins on the inside, and Revolution begins in the self.* [emphasis added] [...] Our series, ‘Prisoners of Conscience in Syria’ tells the stories of a few prisoners of conscience. We salute their courage. Because petitions and demands for accountability have gone nowhere toward the release of such prisoners, all we are asking you to do – people of con-



Emar Nassar, grand-daughter of imprisoned physician & teacher of nonviolence, Dr. Mouhammad Alammar: may she grow up in freedom and nonviolence.

science everywhere – is to find a way to express your solidarity in their struggle, nonviolently. [... One way is to email a] photo, narrative, or short video of your solidarity action to Syrian Nonviolence Movement at: info@alharak.org.”

News Notes

Mairead Maguire, Nobel Peace Laureate, made an appeal to Pope Francis to replace the Just War Theory with a Theology of Peace, Nonkilling and Nonviolence in Dec. 2014.

Part of her appeal reads: I believe there is a self-delusion at the heart of humanity which says we have a right to kill each other, the longstanding defect in our Christian just war theology feeds this myth of justified violence, militarism and war. [...] Western militarist geopolitics has proved a total failure, the destruction of countries and populations must end and we must assert that it is time to try another path. Genuine all inclusive, unconditional dialogue, including talking to Islamic state fighters, Taliban, etc., and all others using force of arms is the only way forward. As His Holiness has said in respect of the possibility of dialogue with such groups ‘Never close the door. It’s difficult, you could say almost impossible, but the door is always open.’

Peace activist, Kathy Kelly, is serving a 3 month jail sentence for protesting the US’ drone wars, which kill many more civilians than fighters. She is the co-ordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence, a campaign to end U.S. military and economic warfare.

The Oil Coup?

An article by Mike Whitney on the CounterPunch site quotes the Guardian newspaper: John Kerry, the US Secretary of State, allegedly struck a deal with King Abdullah in September under which the

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News Notes continued

Saudis would sell crude at below the prevailing market price. That would help explain why the price has been falling at a time when, given the turmoil in Iraq and Syria caused by Islamic State, it would normally have been rising. Whitney alleges: Here’s what’s happening: Washington has persuaded the Saudis to flood the market with oil to push down prices, decimate Russia’s economy, and reduce Moscow’s resistance to further NATO encirclement and the spreading of US military bases across Central Asia.

White Poppy Update

It seems, 16 years after the article on white poppies appeared in an edition of Conscience Canada’s newsletter, the tradition is now well-rooted in Canada. Many different people, including Heather Menzies at a convocation at Concordia University, veterans, Raging Grannies, MANY francophones, people who want to work for peace in every province and territory, participate in the white poppy campaign, often taking time to make their own poppies. In 2013,

doctoral candidates J. Weier and C. Schultz penned an article for the National Post: “Why we wear poppies, both red and white”.

Conclusion to a great letter-to-the-editor supporting the white poppy campaign (@ lapresse.ca):
 Si j’apprenais, un jour, que toutes les usines du monde qui fabriquent des bombes vont fermer leurs portes, je sauterais de joie ! Malheureusement, ce grand jour n’est pas près d’arriver. Et c’est une des raisons pour lesquelles je porterai en boutonnière, aujourd’hui, un coquelicot blanc. Pour moi, comme pour tant d’autres qui souhaitent une paix désarmée plutôt qu’une paix des armées, cela restera le jour du Soupir. - Philippe Labelle.

Quick translation: If one day I were to learn that all the bomb factories in the world were shutting down, I would jump for joy! Sadly, this great day is not near at hand. And this is one of the reasons why I will wear, today, a white poppy. For me, as for many others who wish for peace in disarmament, rather than the peace of armies, this day [Remembrance Day] remains “the day of the Sigh” (a pun in French).



Philippe Labelle

Compassionate Communities

The Charter for Compassion movement is inviting people to create “compassionate communities”: What is a Compassionate Community?

“A compassionate city is an uncomfortable city! A city that is uncomfortable when anyone is homeless or hungry. Uncomfortable if every child isn’t loved and given rich opportunities to grow and thrive. Uncomfortable when as a community we don’t treat our neighbors as we would wish to be treated.” - Karen Armstrong, Founder of the global movement, The Charter for Compassion.

Conscience Canada

membership application / renewal

Membership is open to any person committed to supporting Conscience Canada’s objectives.

Address correction requested.

Name: _____ Dated _____

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 for two years 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.