



# Conscience Canada

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

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## All or Nothing Syndrome

By Ruth Benn

Our thanks to Ruth Benn and the [National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee](#) in the U.S. for this article first published in their December 2020 issue of **More Than a Paycheck: Refusing to Pay for War** the bi-monthly newsletter of the NWRCC.

Over these decades of doing war tax resistance, being in meetings about war tax resistance, counseling current or new resisters, etc., I've tried to argue against something I will call the "all or nothing syndrome."

"I can't live below taxable income so I can't resist."

"We're having a baby so I have to stop resisting."

"I'm applying for a loan so I have to stop resisting."

"The IRS just took my bank account so I have to stop resisting."

"I like the idea but I can't risk my job by becoming a war tax resister."

I don't want to be snooty and judgmental about it. People hit a wall and feel there is no way around it for all kinds of reasons. But I do feel there is this "all or nothing" attitude that needs to be confronted. People see the risks before they consider all the options.

The all or nothing argument always makes me think of an old video clip of an interview with NYC resister Betty Winkler, who in her quiet way questioned why not "one fucking dollar?"

Somehow that always makes me laugh, because she is a rather quiet person, so her insistence on this point is a bit surprising.

My partner in resistance, Ed Hedemann, often brings up in workshops that he'd rather 1,000 people were resisting, for example, \$10 each than a single person resisting \$10,000, though the amount of money is the same, the impact is much greater. "It's the act of resistance that the IRS hates, not so much the amount resisted."

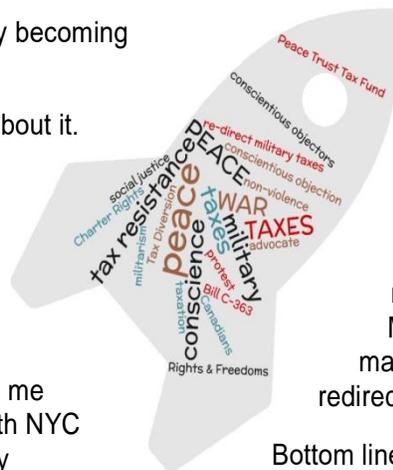
I often point out that many of us who are resisting, as best we can, 100% of federal income taxes owed started at a low level. We often dipped our toes in with telephone tax resistance or some percentage of what was owed. [There used to be a U.S. federal tax on all long distance and local calls, but with the advent of flat rate services and cell phones this tax has been dropped.] As we felt stronger in our resistance (or began to earn more money), we began to feel we could not send anything to the government—or we began to figure out how to live without reported income or below the taxable level. And as Betty also says in that interview "Everybody who has done and everybody who is doing it for the first time, I think, would feel a renewed sense or a new sense of self-empowerment."

For myself I know that over the years being a war tax resister has strengthened my non-cooperation and made me less afraid to "question authority."

In the end I don't believe that war tax resistance is about the amount. If I look at my own resistance since 1987, the numbers add up to *not* buying about fifty M16 rifles by Pentagon standards (but with many organizations benefiting from my redirected taxes).

Bottom line for me, it's the protest, the resistance — that's what the government does not want you to do. They don't want anyone to think about refusing \$5. It might encourage 100 others to refuse \$5, and then those 100 might encourage....

Well, I can dream anyway.



# CONSCIENCE CANADA 2021 Annual General Meeting

Saturday May 1, 2021, 3:30 p.m., EDT – virtual meeting via ZOOM video conferencing

## Agenda

1. Approval of the minutes of the 2020 AGM (available upon request)
2. Review of CC activities in 2020 and a look ahead (members' participation invited)
3. Confirmation of board members standing for re-election
4. Election of new board member(s)
5. Presentation and Approval of the 2020 financial statements (available upon request)
6. Appointment of auditors for 2021
7. Invited speaker will talk about a current and instructive peace issue followed by a Q & A session

**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.

**To attend the AGM** please send an email to [info@consciencecanada.ca](mailto:info@consciencecanada.ca) . (you will receive an email reply confirming your registration and including a link for joining the Zoom meeting on May 1).

## 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](mailto:info@consciencecanada.ca) (please copy and complete form below)

### Proxy for Annual General Meeting May 1, 2021

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

\_\_\_\_\_ (please print) as my proxyholder for the 2021 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:

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**This proxy has been completed and confirmed by me on:**

\_\_\_\_\_ date

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

# Conscience Canada Faces Tough Choices

## *Can Transition, Adaptation, Regeneration Spark a Rebirth?*

The cycle of life brings us through many phases. The life of an organization and movement goes through many phases, including birth and growth, stable performance, and decline. Death or regeneration can take on different forms. A fallen tree provides nutrients to the forest floor and shelter for small animals. The legacy of a well-loved person can provide inspiration to new generations, even as they adapt to a new context.

Conscience Canada was born out of the work of people who went before us, including Conscientious Objectors (COs) to military service when Canada conscripted men in the world wars. The work of the broader peace movement, the realities of the 1970s and 80s, inspired a number of Canadians some 40 years ago to form our organization to promote Conscientious Objection to Military Taxation (COMT).

This past year, my brothers and I encouraged and helped my parents move from their house where I grew up, and into a seniors' condominium. While they are still very healthy and active, they realized it was better to make a transition while they were still in control, and not wait for a crisis to force them to move.

It feels like Conscience Canada is at a stage like that of my parents. Indeed, most of the board members are closer to my parents' age than to mine. We are still operating well enough, with enough money in the bank to cover the small

financial deficits we incur each year. While the crisis is not upon us yet, the reality is that there is not enough energy to expect an increase in vitality.

The number of people completing Peace Tax Returns and making deposits into the Peace Trust Fund is small and not growing. We have not been able to engage younger generations of people in war tax resistance or tax diversion. Four years ago, Doug Hewitt-White joined the board and helped us determine some strategic foci as an organization. However, we have not had the resources to make much headway on fundraising, a court challenge, or political advocacy.

The board has reluctantly come to the conclusion CC cannot continue as it is. New energy and ideas are needed to take the idea of COMT forward. We need fresh skills and talent to tweet and blog and media socialize – to organize and animate new generations. So we are sketching out plans to seek a partner to take on the PTR/Trust Fund and further war tax resistance, and dissolve CC as a separate organization. The only alternative is a significant number of new board members coming forward with new ideas at our AGM on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

When my grandfather passed away, my dad called me in Colombia where I was serving with Christian Peacemaker Teams, telling me that his father was a pacifist in his own way. Even though I wasn't able to return for the funeral, I sensed that I was honouring his legacy in taking risks for peace.



**#NOWAR2021 VIRTUAL CONFERENCE:  
JUNE 4-6, 2021**

**From Weapons Fairs to War Zones: Unraveling the War Machine**

The peace movement in Canada is active and varied, with many people living out their strong convictions of nonviolence and resistance to warmongering. Conscience Canada is getting ready to pass the torch. Of course we cannot predict just how the ideas of war tax resistance may find new life in the future.

Scott Albrecht, on behalf of the CC Board

## The Conscientious Objector to Military Taxation as a Revolutionary Pacifist

by Bruna Nota

The very institutions of war and killing are abhorrent to the people who choose peace as their way of being in society. The Conscientious Objector, both physical and fiscal, is objecting to the prevailing acceptance of the concept that it is acceptable or useful to kill to defend our country. There is great consensus in the world that 'peace' is a desirable good. Why is it that there is no consensus on how

to achieve it? I found it very useful to reflect over the thesis presented by Prof. Anatol Rapoport.

He maintains that the way people perceive the problem of lack of peace determines the solutions sought and all the actions and means used (see table below). By becoming aware of this fact we are better able to both situate our efforts and to engage in meaningful dialogue with others whose actions are rooted in a different perception of reality. We may also become more effective in our work.

### Conceptions of Peace and Their Concomitants *(Adapted from Anatol Rapoport "PEACE, an Idea Whose Time Has Come")*

	Peace through Violence	Balance of Weapons	Collective Security	Peace through Law	Personal Pacifism	Revolutionary Pacifism
<b>Problem</b>	External Threat	Disequilibrium	Aggressor States	International Anarchy	Human Aggressiveness	The Institution of War
<b>Solution</b>	Military Might	Balance of Weapons	Collective Sanctions	World Law	Self-perfection	Abolition
<b>Principal Actors</b>	Military Elites	Military and Diplomatic Elites	Statespersons	Jurists, Political Scientists	Individuals	Grassroots Movements, Community
<b>Types of Social Control</b>	Threat	Trade Threat*	Trade Threat* Integration*	Integration	Integration	Integration
<b>Induced attitudes</b>	Pugnacity, Fear	Prudence	Solidarity, Vigilance	Civility	Love, Steadfastness	Global Awareness
<b>Peacekeeping Role</b>	None	Low to Moderate	High	Very High	None	Low

\* Factors regarded as secondary

As a Conscientious Objector to Military Taxation (COMT) I situate myself in the last column. I perceive the central problem to be the institution of war. If in some way, at some level, we accept the need for the institution of war, we in the peace movement spin our wheels when we oppose the latest atrocity, the newest weapon. We will be truer to ourselves and more effective in our activism if we totally reject the institution of war. It is only when we totally reject the institution itself that we are true to ourselves and in the bargain we start to be effective. The establishment of the rule of law, and an ongoing effort towards personal improvement are necessary but not sufficient elements to achieve and maintain peace. The missing and essential ingredient is the total rejection of the very institution of war.

By refusing to contribute to finance this institution we work for its total abolition and we open the real possibility of peace. Peace as absence of fear. Peace is integral to a community of equals, in which the dignity of each is fully respected. It is a revolutionary position.

### Join Conscience Canada

Membership open to anyone supporting CC's objectives.

*No membership fee (donations welcome!)*

Visit: [www.consciencecanada.ca/membership](http://www.consciencecanada.ca/membership)

Let us know if you can help out as a volunteer. We need website and social media contributors.

Email : [info@consciencecanada.ca](mailto:info@consciencecanada.ca)

# A Good War

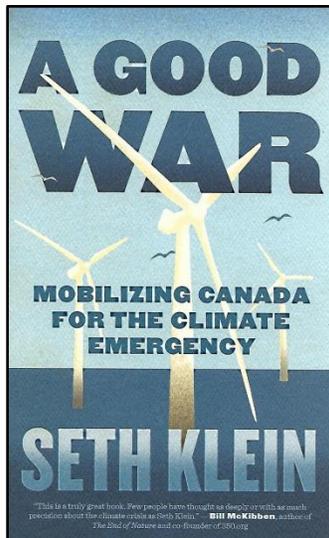
by Seth Klein

Book Review by Doug Hewitt-White

I'll admit I had reservations on starting into this book. A good war? When can anyone call war a good idea? But I knew this was not about a shooting war. Klein's premise is that the climate emergency can only be overcome by a full-blown all-hands-on-deck confrontation of our world's addiction to fossil fuels – the sort of approach that is exemplified by Canada's all-out home-front efforts in world war two. He does a thorough, well-argued job. His research is impressive. The storytelling of the challenges, triumphs and failures during the war are captivating. And I do get his premise. I don't dispute it.

But Klein's book misses essential elements.

1 – Climate change causes war; war causes climate change. Food shortages, environmental disasters, masses of people seeking safe havens – are all instances where climate change causes transnational conflict and military responses. Now consider the military's heavy usage and reliance upon fossil fuels. In a war the military's major inputs to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions become catastrophic. Add in the world's major powers' reliance on nuclear deterrence as a military strategy and we face the real prospect of ending all life on earth. On and on it goes – climate



change causes war; war causes climate change. The imperative of terminating this vicious circle goes unmentioned in *A Good War*.

2 – Militarism is an essential buttress of our carbon intensive industrial system. This system extracts and exploits our earth's natural resources to enrich the rich and uphold our addiction to consumerism – all the while plunging us deeper into a climate emergency. We need a radical social transformation. We must stop the rape of mother earth. We have to cease seeing security as a military issue. We just cannot get to net zero without ending militarism. *A Good War* utters not a word on this.

3. – The world's militaries are gorging on our financial, physical and intellectual resources. We cannot afford militarism. It is impoverishing us. In its silence, *A Good War* leaves the impression we can take on the heavy burden of societal transformation and still keep feeding the military industrial machine.

By failing to describe and document the corrosive effects of militarism on our world and our climate Klein oversimplifies the challenge of tackling the climate emergency. He reinforces a mindset that sees climate solutions as technical, organizational and political when really we need a change in our human soul. *A Good War* is a good read. It just could have been so so much more.

## A B O U T

This newsletter is produced by Conscience Canada, an NGO working since 1978 to:

- increase Canadians' awareness of the connection between taxes and war;
- divert taxes away from war and to peace work;
- support creative non-violent 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](http://www.consciencecanada.ca). If you are receiving a printed copy, let us know if you would prefer the e-version (in colour, less expensive to produce!).

## 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 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the Global Days of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS) will take place from  
**April 10 to May 9, 2021.**

**Save the dates. Spread the word. Take action!**



<https://demilitarize.org/actions/gdams/gdams-2020/>

*From GDAMS' April 2020 Statement:*

### **The military could not and will not stop this pandemic**

Such a crisis can only be addressed by supporting healthcare and other life-sustaining activities, not with military equipment and personnel prepared for war . . . **we need fewer soldiers, jets, tanks and aircraft carriers and more doctors, ambulances and hospitals** . . . military spending has taken a huge amount of public resources to provide a false notion of security that has nothing to do with people's needs and rights to healthcare, education, and housing, among other essential social services.

### **It's time to move the military budget to human needs**

Major reductions in military expenditure would free up resources not only to provide universal healthcare, but also to tackle climate and humanitarian emergencies, which also take thousands of lives every year, especially in countries of the Global South, which are suffering the worst consequences of an economic model that has been imposed upon them.

We must rethink international politics, reconsider the real threats to our security and provide public civil protection services with the funding they need to properly work . . . **Reallocating defense budgets would help finance a much needed transition toward more peaceful, just, and sustainable societies and economies.**