



Conscience Canada

Work for peace. Defend the earth. Defund the military!

Œuvrons pour la paix. Défendons la Terre. Définançons l'armée!

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From Toxic Nostalgia to Rebirth

Jan Slakov

As we begin another year, our awareness of how the ecological crisis and war are connected intensifies.

CC board member Dr. Linda Thyer is one of the co-authors of a recent Canadian Dimension article, "It's Time for Canadian Environmental Groups to Talk About War as an Act of Climate Denial", linked on our website. It quotes Nigerian writer Nnimmo Bassey, Right Livelihood Award laureate: "The true environmental impact of war is impossible to quantify because it affects a staggering array of sectors



Photo credit: World Beyond War

and every aspect of human wellbeing. Wars kill people, extinguish biodiversity, and destroy the infrastructure that could otherwise provide safeguards in the face of extreme weather events. Warfare is an act of climate denial."

We, who renounce war and militarism, are obliged to look for alternatives: How to protect what we love, to respond to violence? We come to see that militarism itself is an occupying force, of our minds as much as of the earth. It prevents us from valuing life, from building our capacity to nurture life and to use nonviolence.

In this time of monumental change, we need ways to free our minds. We need to learn to recognize what Naomi Klein refers to as "toxic nostalgia", "an enraged and annihilating nostalgia" for Russian and other empires (eg. MAGA), but also a less angry but still dangerous nostalgia typical of 'mainstream' politicians such as Trudeau or Biden, who offer, "as antidotes to surging fascism nothing but warmed-over neoliberalism".

Instead of nostalgia, how about bringing again to life time-honoured truths and ways of being? Foremost in my mind are what Wahihnkpe Topa and Darcia Narvaez refer to as the Kinship or Indigenous Worldview and what nonviolence practitioners like Len Desroches and David Hartsough have been led to do as they explore what "love of enemy" can mean. Another author/practitioner, [Nonviolence News](#)' Rivera Sun, sums it up thusly: be kind; be connected; be unafraid.

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Photo credit: riverasun.com

CONSCIENCE CANADA 2024 Annual General Meeting

Saturday April 20, 2024, 3:30 p.m., EDT – virtual meeting via ZOOM conferencing

Agenda

1. **Business section:**

Approval of minutes of the 2023 AGM (available upon request); Confirmation of board members standing for re-election; appeal for and election of new board members; Presentation and approval of 2023 financial report (available upon request).

2. **Review of CC activities in 2023 and a look ahead**

3. **Discussions on nonviolent actions CC could organize and participate in**

For 10 years, there have been Campaign Nonviolence Action Days between Sept. 21 and Oct. 2, (which is at the beginning of our White Poppy campaign from Sept. 21 to Dec. 10). In 2023, 5,057 actions were planned around the world. Over 60,000 people took part in these actions and events. Read more here:

<https://wagingnonviolence.org/cnv/2023/10/over-5000-actions-campaign-nonviolence-action-days-2023/>

Are there activities CC could effectively organize as part of the Campaign Nonviolence Action Days?

CC board members have come up with some questions to guide our brainstorming.

- ◆ In this period of intense conflict and distrust, of ecological and social breakdown in our society – how can we use nonviolence?
- ◆ In discussions, how can we move beyond misinformed opinions & competitiveness towards understanding and empathy?
- ◆ In peace advocacy, is there a danger of making things worse; how can we work for peace most effectively?
- ◆ CC has a particular focus on how we can withdraw our complicity in war and militarism; how can we empower more people to act as conscientious objectors?

We will have our discussions around these questions in breakout rooms, with 4 or 5 people in each. Then we will return to plenary for a recap of the ideas generated and a final roundtable discussion on CC organizing activities as part of the Campaign Nonviolence Action Days.



NOTE: This constitutes the official annual meeting notice required by the Conscience Canada by-laws.

To attend the AGM please send an email to info@consciencecanada.ca . (you will receive an email reply with instructions for how to set up and register for the AGM Zoom meeting on April 20).

If you cannot personally attend this year's AGM —

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

either **BY POST** to: Conscience Canada, c/o D. Hewitt-White, 57 Malcolm St., Almonte ON K0A 1A0
or **BY E-MAIL** to: info@consciencecanada.ca (please copy and complete the form on the next page)

Proxy for Conscience Canada Annual General Meeting April 20, 2024

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

_____ (please print) as my proxyholder for the 2024 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 (Jan Slakov) 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** (for proxy sent by post, signature not required if sent by email)

Book Appreciation

***Waging Peace* by David Hartsough**

Jan Slakov

David Hartsough has helped and been helped by many other activists. We see that in the many people who contributed to his wonderful memoir. These include Daniel Ellsberg, Starhawk, Medea Benjamin, George Lakey & Joanna Macy, who wrote testimonials... Michael Klare, professor of Peace and World Security Studies at Hampshire College writes: "This is a remarkable, deeply moving memoir: a true story of love, faith, conviction, and courage. You will read it with tears in your eyes, but also with astonishment at what a determined, nonviolent individual has done to make our world a more humane, peaceful place."

I was delighted to learn that CC members, Ernie and Charlotte Wiens, led a book study in LaSalle, near Winnipeg where a group of 11 people read and discussed the book. It was a real encouragement and affirmation, especially for those members of the group who were conscientious objectors to military taxation.

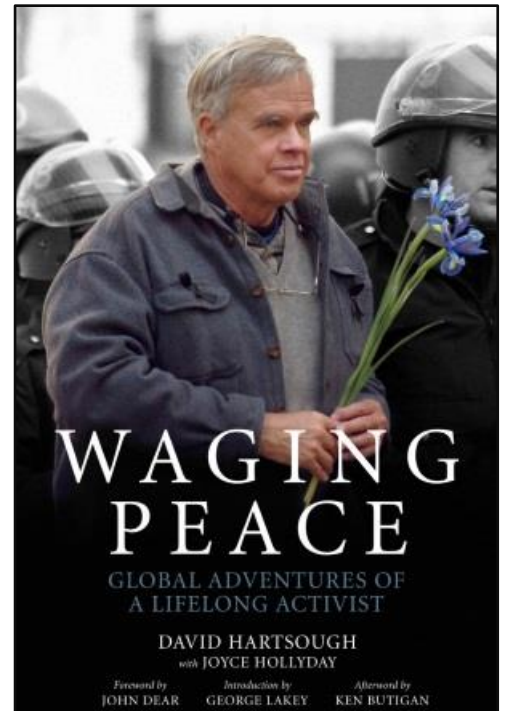


Photo credit: peaceworkersus.org

For Hartsough, not paying war taxes is just one of many actions he suggests. His own experience is inspiring and intriguing: In the late 60s or early 70s, when he was working for the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) he requested that it "honor [his] conscience and not withhold from [his] salary & turn over to the federal government the approximately 50% of [his] taxes that would go for the Vietnam War and preparations for future wars.... Both the FCNL and the American Friends Service Committee had employees who took this position ... both wanted to honor our consciences, but the law required that employers withhold taxes. So [they] filed a lawsuit to get exemption from the law... In the meantime, they took money out of their own resources to pay our taxes, rather than take them from us.

... [My wife] Jan and I have written a letter to the IRS every April since then, explaining why we won't pay the portion of our taxes that funds wars and preparations for killing. I've written about Jesus's command to love our enemies. I've quoted the Nuremberg Principles... adopted as both U.S. & international law..."

When an IRS agent visited David at the FCNL office, they had "a most interesting conversation. He told me that he agreed with my position on the [Vietnam] war & that he supported my decision to follow my conscience. But, he explained, it was his job ... to collect money for my unpaid taxes.

He expressed concern about my family's safety in the neighborhood in which we chose to live, & I assured him that we were fine. He had many questions about the work of FCNL, & he asked for some of our newsletters and other literature. He insisted on paying for them. He gave me a dollar for about 40 cents' worth of material & told me to keep the rest as a contribution to FCNL. It seemed ironic to me that this man who had come to collect my money ended up giving me some instead.

He told me that our interaction was 'off the record'. Then he returned to the subject of my taxes and said, 'It is my job to get this money from you in any way I can. I don't like to do this kind of thing, but I can take any property you have - your car, your house..."

I told him, 'Well, I have a bicycle downstairs.'

'Oh, no, no', he insisted. 'I wouldn't take your bicycle.'

'I have this suit that I have on,' I said.

'Oh no, no, we wouldn't take your suit'. He left without accomplishing his mission."

[Get the book to read more stories about the Hartsough's resistance to paying war taxes!]

He concludes: "The IRS usually succeeds in getting the money eventually - often through liens on the accounts we have... But Jan & I take comfort in knowing that we have not voluntarily given our money to support war....If someone appeared at the door asking for a \$5000 contribution for the war in Vietnam or Iraq ... I believe that most of us would not hand over the money. But the wars continue because the vast majority of [us] continue to pay [our] taxes without question. As former Secretary of State Alexander Haig said famously when he looked over a sea of war protesters at the White House, "Let them march all they want, as long as they pay their taxes."

Jan & I contribute the war portion of our taxes to humanitarian causes that we believe in. The amount that we submit to the federal government we send by [cheque] written out to the Dept. of Health & Human Services, explaining that we want our taxes to support education, low income housing, & other critical needs."

Quotes are from Waging Peace by David Hartsough, pp. 86 – 88

To purchase David's book please go to pmpress.org

News and Nexus

One inspiring action from 2023 took place during Halifax's Nocturne art festival. It is described, including more great photos, on the vowpeace.org website: "The Peace Protector Uniform was an interactive display . . . [that] included a reconstructed military uniform, a recruitment office run by Raging Grannies and an activity table. The military uniform will continue as a display piece."

Nova Scotia Voice of Women for Peace member, artist Kathrin Winkler, pointing to a doomsday watch set at 90 seconds to midnight on the Peace Protector Uniform
Photo credit: Kathrin Winkler



Photo credit: World Beyond War

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and VOW are organizing an "On to Ottawa Peace Caravan" to arrive in Ottawa by May 28 for a rally. They are calling for Canada to Demilitarize Decarbonize and Decolonize.

Also on May 29 and 30 Ceasefire and the Canada-wide Peace and Justice Network will be organizing rallies to oppose the CANSEC trade show in Ottawa.

You are welcome to endorse the rally, join or create caravans, arrange meetings for them across Canada or join them in Ottawa.

The Vancouver caravan will leave from the Vancouver Art Gallery on Mother's Day May 12 at noon and will stop along the way to talk about their work.

They look forward to hearing how they can work with you. Donations are very welcome.

CC BOARD

Scott Albrecht, Doug Hewitt-White,
Bruna Nota, Renée Nunan-Rappard,
Jan Slakov, Terri Sleeva,
Charles Small, Dwyer Sullivan,
Linda Thyer

Join Conscience Canada

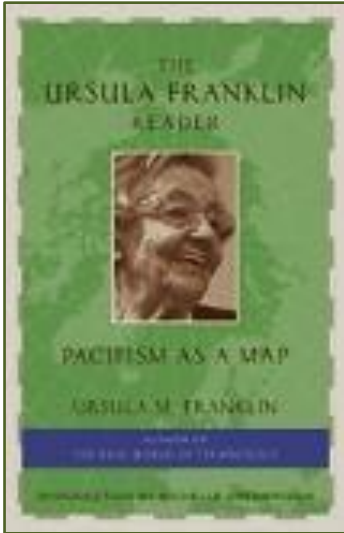
Membership open to anyone supporting CC's objectives.
No membership fee (donations welcome!)

Visit: www.consciencecanada.ca/membership

Let us know if you can help out as a volunteer.
We need website and social media contributors.
New thinking & viewpoints are always welcome.
Email : info@consciencecanada.ca



Worth Repeating



“...every war needs an enemy, ... the new enemy is us - *people*: not a people identifiable by any one passport, but ordinary people, and their institutions, who stand in the way of a takeover by the global marketeers.

The goal of the new war is control of “the commons” and the strategy is “privatization”. In the most brutal terms it entails providing and opening up investment opportunities in all the areas that people had previously set aside as commons: publishing, culture, health care, prisons, education. ...

In my picture of what is going on, we are being occupied by the marketeers, just as the French and Norwegians were occupied by the Germans during the Second World War. We have, as they did, puppet governments who run the country for the benefit of the occupiers.”

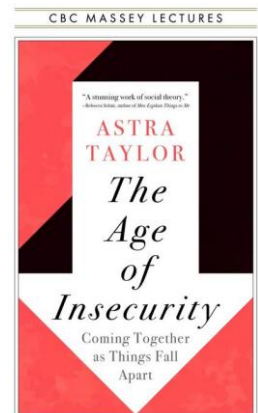
Ursula Franklin (p. 124 of *The Ursula Franklin Reader*)

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<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=7834112>

“Insecurity is what makes us human, and it is also what allows us to connect and change. . . . Recognizing our shared existential insecurity and understanding how it is currently used against us, can be the first step toward creating solidarity. Solidarity in the end, is one of the most important forms of security we can possess—the security of confronting our shared predicament as humans on this planet in crisis, together.”

Astra Taylor (pp. 49, 50 of *The Age of Insecurity*)



“Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it. Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. Life is either a daring adventure, or nothing.”

Helen Keller

A B O U T

This newsletter is produced by Conscience Canada, an NGO working since 1978 to empower our members and all of society:

- to assert their conscientious objection to having their money conscripted, and earth’s resources exploited, to pay for war and preparation for war;
- to champion the peace and well-being of all humankind; and
- to demand an end to all complicity and support for war and militarism

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, let us know if you would prefer the on-line e-version (in colour, less expensive to produce!).