



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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More Military Spending Brain Rot

by Jan Slakov

"Brain rot" was, apparently, one of 2024's most emblematic words.

What better example than the clamour for Canada to increase its "defence" spending to 2% of GDP?

Even if increasing military spending would truly help Canada's military become more effective (which is highly debatable), spending more on weapons and military personnel is not the best way to defend our values or even our territory.

If we value democracy, we need reliable, honest information and the ability to correct misinformation, eg. through independent or publicly owned media and an ombuds position as the CBC has. We need better decision-making, starting with a proportional system that fosters cooperation, not partisan bickering (eg. [Single Transferable Vote](#) - STV). If we value peace, we need more justice; high level management should not be getting hundreds of times more compensation than workers and the world's richest 1% should not own almost 50% of the world's wealth.

Please consult the articles and websites linked at the end of this article to better understand the points being made here.

If we want the rule of law, we need to abide by it. If we want to be treated as we wish others to treat us... maybe we should not be dropping bombs but investing in peace-building efforts guided by groups that are committed to fair, effective peace-building. If we want to end war and invest in nonviolent ways of defending what we treasure, there's so much great work that has been done that we can learn from, starting with groups like World Beyond War or the International Peace Bureau.

In many local communities across Canada, people provide a less expensive, less punitive system for addressing crime and for building capacity for consensus-building through restorative justice groups. We know the principles underlying this work apply at larger scales too.

Remember, too, the work accomplished by anti-Nazi resistance workers, who published forbidden truths and hid people targeted by the regime. Around the world, this type of work continues, an illustration of the strength of the human spirit.

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What about dealing with the rise of a seeming trumpster fire next door? Let's use the same principles: provide useful information, set a good example, treat others as we wish to be treated, invest in justice & peace.

Let's act on our desire for a healthier, fairer, more peaceful world.

[Canada's richest CEOs make 210 times more than average worker](#)
[The insanity of spending 2% of GDP on the military](#)
[NDP against increasing defence spending to meet 2% NATO target](#)
[How would Canada pay for spending more on defence](#)
[International Peace Bureau](#)

[Global Inequality](#)
[Trump's Tax Plan](#)
[Inclusive Peace](#)
[World Beyond War](#)

Words Matter

Members of the Conscience Canada board see great value in the research and vision in Carol Off's recent book *At a Loss for Words*. The excerpt below gives some sense of the key role played by media – how we speak to each other – in protecting our humanity:

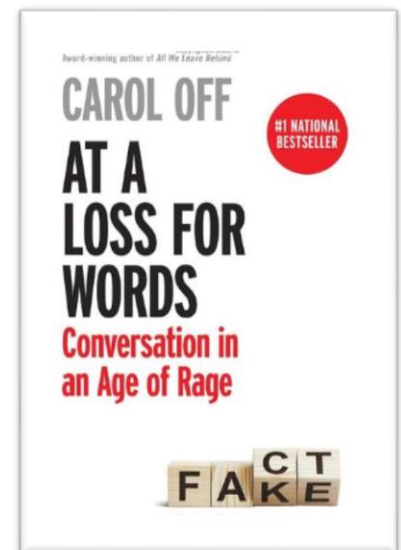
On page 149 :

“Words matter. Truth matters. It's foundational for our lives as social beings, because without it, we can't trust each other. ...

By striving to be painstakingly neutral, mainstream media has become banal; we've been pushed out of the public sphere by those peddling a more exciting product – fear & anger. ...

I think that the truth can recapture the public imagination if it's aspirational, if it gives us some reason to hope, some sense that we have a future. If it allows people to take part in the conversation not as tweeters or Facebook friends or Redditors, but as citizens, as members of a community with shared values that we agree on, values meant to improve all our lives. A number of small upstart news producers are doing just that, in a mini revolution of online media, much of its content tested & reliable. They need subscribers, tax breaks & public support. But it won't be enough....

In their book, *Surviving Autocracy*, Masha Gessen describes the post-Trumpist era they see in the future. Gessen writes: "When the time for recovery comes, as it inevitably will, we will need to do the work of rebuilding a sense of shared reality. That will require a new focus on using words intentionally, which anodyne headlines, equivocal statements & the style of extreme restraint have helped avoid. To state directly what they are seeing, journalists will have to reveal where they stand." It is only possible to reclaim our political language if we infuse it with meaning, and that will be the job of political leaders. But, as Gessen writes, "it will be the job of journalists to create a communication sphere in which people feel not like spectators to a disaster that defies understanding but like participants in creating a common future with their fellow citizens. This is the fundamental project of democracy, and the reason it requires media."



CONSCIENCE CANADA 2025 Annual General Meeting

Saturday April 12, 2025, 3:30 p.m., EDT – virtual meeting via ZOOM conferencing

Agenda

1. **Business section:**

Approval of minutes of the 2024 AGM (available upon request); Confirmation of board members standing for re-election; appeal for and election of new board members; Presentation and approval of 2024 financial report (available upon request).

2. **Review of activities in 2024 and a look ahead**

3. **Discussion:** What would an education system that supports peace & justice look like? What can we do to promote this kind of education?

Discussion in breakout rooms, with 4 or 5 people in each. Return to plenary for an idea roundtable on how CC can help with peace & justice education.

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 12.)

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 Box 200, Van Anda, BC V0N 3K0

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

Proxy for Annual General Meeting April 12, 2025

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

_____ (please print) as my proxyholder for the 2025 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)

May Dave Bechtel's Spirit Live On

Thank you to Scott and Mary in the Kitchener Waterloo area, for letting us know that Dave passed away on Oct. 15, 2024.

Conscience Canada is deeply indebted to Dave for helping us through some difficult times, for bringing quiet competence, generosity and wisdom to our work.



As we learn more about what violence, in its various forms of war, colonialism, othering, does, we see how it leaves so many people with a deep need for healing. This need can be an opportunity for people to do much needed work – the opposite of violence. With that in mind, Conscience Canada made a donation to [Beyond Housing](#), as one way to help make sure Dave's spirit carries on in this world.

In his reply thanking us, executive director Dan Driedger wrote: "...we are humbled and honoured to have been identified as a charity that Dave wanted to support [in the same way he supported Conscience Canada]. And how will your gift be used? We have a new project in Kitchener that we are planning to launch at our AGM in January... Your gift will be used as 'seed funding'...."

I think Conscience Canada would have had to cease operations if we had not had the help Dave offered in recent years. May his humble competent spirit live on in all of us.

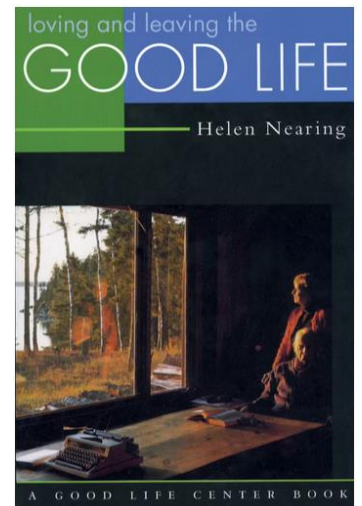
Jan Slakov

When one door closes, another opens

Loving and Leaving the Good Life is an eloquent testimonial of what it means to grow old and to face death quietly and peacefully. Helen Nearing writes in her noteworthy memoir: "When one door closes, another opens." Her book provides profound insights into the question of how we age and die. Below are evocative quotes from C.S. Lewis and Gandhi that she mentions in her book.

C.S. Lewis has written in *A Grief Observed*: "Bereavement is a universal and integral part of our experience of love. It follows marriage as normally as marriage follows courtship or as autumn follows summer. It is not a truncation of the process, but one of the phases, not the interruption of the dance, but the next figure. We are taken out of ourselves by the loved one when he is here. Then comes the tragic figure of the dance in which we must learn to still be taken out of ourselves though the bodily presence is withdrawn."

Gandhi wrote in a letter to a disciple: "The more I observe and study things, the more convinced I become that sorrow over the separation is perhaps the greatest delusion. To realize that it is a delusion is to become free. We love friends for the substance we recognize in them and yet deplore the destruction of the insubstantial that covers the substance for the time being. There is no death, no separation for the substance. Real friendship touches and can keep the substance when the surface goes."



Nonviolence as a "teacher"

Thoughts on dealing with tariff (& other) threats

Recently a friend emphasized how important it would be for Canada to stand up and retaliate to the Trump tariff threat.

I think it was my many explorations of how nonviolence can be a power that gave me a way to question that suggestion. I imagine how awful one might feel, to know the harm that is likely to be unleashed by one's nation, with a government like the one that has come into power in the US. Those in the US who are appalled at what is happening need our support.

I realized that, much better than retaliatory tariffs would be for us to do what we can to protect and promote truth. War and fascism feed on lies. So, for Canada to protect the CBC, and strengthen its ability to uncover and share reliable information, also to strengthen its ability to connect people across the geographical and other distances that divide us, would be much more useful in "countering Trump" than engaging in a tariff war.

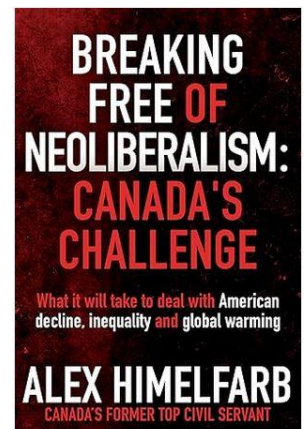
As for rushing to send more police and drones to the border, or sending elected officials down to Mar-a-lago... maybe not! Boot-licking and appeasement aren't likely to help much, I think.

Jan Slakov

Books!

Clearly, education isn't just for students! Bruna Nota and other former and current CC board members keep learning. Bruna strongly recommends we read on the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives website [Bruce Campbell's review](#) of Alex Himmelfarb's latest: *Breaking Free of Neoliberalism: Canada's Challenge*. Himmelfarb, a retired top civil servant and ambassador, is the founding chair of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness and currently chairs the Narwhal board as well as the steering committee of the CCPA (federal). He has a blog that looks like a goldmine of interesting reading: [Alex's Blog](#).

The review is important reading; no doubt the book is too!



There are so many books that have helped us learn and grow. If you'd like to suggest one, feel free to write to us at info@consciencecanada.ca or get in touch with Jan directly: janslakov@proton.me.

Join Conscience Canada

Membership open to anyone supporting CC's objectives.

No membership fee (donations welcome!)

Visit: 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



CC BOARD

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Worth Repeating

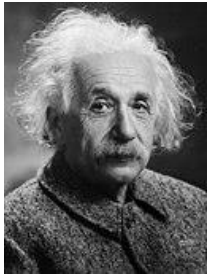
"When fear is used to control us,
love is how we rebel."

Rivera Sun



"I think we're challenged, as mankind has never been challenged before, to prove our maturity, and our mastery. Not of nature—but of ourselves."

Rachel Carson



"I am not only a pacifist but a militant pacifist. I am willing to fight for peace. Nothing will end war unless the people themselves refuse to go to war.

Our task must be to free ourselves by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty.

Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better."

Albert Einstein

"Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that."

Martin Luther King Jr., *Strength to Love*



Kudo to a much appreciated volunteer

Claire Lapointe has been helping Conscience Canada with outreach in French for years; we're all the more grateful that she finds time for us as she also volunteers with [Échec à la guerre](#), the [Fondation Alter-Ciné](#) and she's heavily involved in her intentional community, la Maison des rebElles.

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!).

The Peace Tax Return for the 2024 tax year

is now available online for electronic completion through [CC's website](#).

Fill out the form. Affirm your declaration of conscience. Divert military taxes.