

Conscientious Objectors in the Context of Canadian Peace Movements

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Canada has a long, rich pacifist tradition rooted in sectarian non-resistance and liberal Protestantism. It was this religious pacifist presence in Canadian society and its support for conscientious objection that laid a firm foundation for a broader peace movement and remains to this day its core of support. In fact, conscientious objectors have been the very backbone of the peace movement, especially in times of war when they often have been the only ones actively challenging the state. At first limited to a few pacifist religious groups, by the Second World War the right to conscientious objection was extended to all those with a pacifist conscience once alternative service was accepted as a legitimate exemption from military service. In effect, the Canadian State recognized the pacifist alternative – a remarkable tribute to the prominent role played by conscientious objectors in the movement for peace and the non-violent resolution of conflict.¹

The meaning of the term “conscientious objector”, however, has also changed. Generally it has been synonymous with those who, for reasons of conscience, refuse to participate in the military and certainly that has been its principle meaning in Canadian history. But in the course of the twentieth century, and especially after the Second World War, its use broadened to include anyone, men and women, who objected to any support for war, whether it was refusing to serve in the military or refusing to pay taxes.² As well the composition of the peace movement broadened during this time to include a wide variety of groups and individuals with various motivations, especially as the movement was increasingly politicized, but its most prominent supporters over the years consistently remained religious groups that not only strove towards common political goals but were sustained by higher, spiritual values. By the twenty-first century peace activists had successfully launched a number of initiatives to heighten the country’s awareness of the problems and dangers of a war mentality and to offer non-violent alternatives, but, above all, it was the individual conscientious objection to war and violence that defined the peace movement.

As early as the eighteenth century the beliefs of pacifist religious sects were officially recognized in militia acts and immigration guarantees, historic precedents of military exemption that ensured the principle of conscientious objection in Canadian law. The non-conformism of most of these peace groups, including Mennonites, meant they remained inactive in the wider peace movement until after the Second World War even though they accounted for the bulk of conscientious objectors. This left only Quakers who were attracted to the liberal Protestant "social gospel" and its endorsement of reform and the call for world peace and order at the turn of the century.

The Progressive Peace Movement and the First World War

The development of a Canadian peace movement in the nineteenth century was a slow process. Both Mennonites and Quakers refused to serve in the Upper Canadian Militia during the War of 1812, the first example of conscientious objection in Canada. While Mennonites agreed to pay fines instead of serving, most Quakers refused, often resulting in the confiscation of property in lieu of payment. Meanwhile, it was only after that war that liberal peace societies first appeared in British North America and then in the late late-nineteenth century a Canadian peace movement began to take shape within the framework of the North American liberal reform movement and its attempt to achieve order and stability within the world through the practical goals of arbitration and the establishment of an international court. By 1905 the Canadian Peace and Arbitration Society, mainly led by Quakers and Methodists inspired by the social gospel, became the first national peace organization in Canada, but its optimistic promise of world peace through arbitration was shattered by the outbreak of war in August 1914. Gradually most peace advocates were silenced by the rising tide of militant patriotism.³ The leading pacifist voice to emerge was that of J. S. Woodsworth, a renegade Methodist minister who broke with his church over its zealous promotion of the war and conscription in particular. Although Woodsworth had a small group of supporters, their efforts were cramped by the War Measures Act and the fear of incurring the charge of treason.

In other words, there was no equivalent of the British No Conscription Fellowship to spearhead a peace movement in wartime Canada, even though conscription was a dominant issue. It was left up to individual religious groups to maintain their opposition to the war and resist conscription. While the historic right to conscientious objector status of some religious pacifists, specifically those Mennonites, Hutterites and Doukhobors who had received exemption guarantees in the

late-nineteenth century, were recognized in the Military Service Act of 1917, there was no allowance for any other men, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventists, Christadelphians or even Tunkers and, although they routinely petitioned the government to recognize their rights as COs, a number of cases of torture and imprisonment followed.⁴ Unlike most peace advocates as well as the large number of Quebec men who resisted the war effort basically by hiding from authorities, conscientious objectors exercised the ultimate in pacifist dissent. Directly challenged by conscription, these young men steadfastly refused to undertake military service, regardless of the consequences, thereby setting an important precedent for Canadian pacifists in the future.

The Interwar Peace Movement

The two decades following the First World War were marked by an upsurge in the popularity of pacifism and a thus a broad interwar peace movement took shape. Including organizations such as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Student Christian Movement, and the Fellowship of Reconciliation, it focused on eliminating cadet training in schools, militarism in school textbooks, and the manufacture and sale of war toys.

Meanwhile, in Parliament J. S. Woodsworth publicized the issue of disarmament, as did his colleague Agnes Macphail, and by the early 1930s, 500,000 signatures had been collected on the International Disarmament Petition. Another major development came in 1933 with the founding of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), a democratic socialist party, under the leadership of Woodsworth. For all practical purposes it became the political arm of the peace movement, reflecting the philosophy of a broad range of organizations formed in reaction to the Great Depression. The social radicalism of this expanding peace movement was broadened even further with the Canadian League Against War and Fascism (later renamed the Canadian League for Peace and Democracy), a Communist Party front organization founded in 1934. Together, the various interwar peace activists staged peace rallies, torchlight parades, and protests against the persecution of Jews in Europe.

It is interesting to note that also in 1934 the World Student Christian Federation sponsored a questionnaire among Canadian university students to determine what students thought about war and under what circumstances, if any, they would support a war. The results revealed that 35% of the students polled would not support any war while the great majority responded that they would refuse military service but

render humanitarian service. Obviously, conscientious objection was no longer confined to pacifist religious groups and would certainly be an important issue for peace activists in any future conflict.

The Second World War

By 1937, however, largely in response to the Spanish Civil War, a number of peace activists abandoned their commitment to non-violence for the fight against fascism and by the beginning of the Second World War the peace movement was reduced to a small core of Christian pacifists organized through the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). As in the first war, official constraints during the Second World War limited pacifist activities. The most dramatic anti-war protest was the 1939 publication of the Witness Against War Manifesto signed by 68 (ultimately over 75) United Church Ministers. It resulted in a public outcry, an investigation by the Ontario Attorney General, and the loss of their churches by some of the signatories.

Several of these ministers ensured that the FOR registered a pacifist voice through the war years. They also turned their attention to the plight of men being conscripted. As in the first war, only members of historic pacifist churches were exempted from military service and they continued to account for the great bulk of Canadian conscientious objectors. However, as we have seen with the popularization of war resistance in the thirties, by 1939 a growing number of young men from mainstream denominations also claimed to be conscientious objectors. As Gordon Toombs has recalled, he and Doug McMurtry were part of that generation.⁵ Consequently, a coalition of pacifists, largely made up of Mennonites, Quakers, and United Church representatives pressured the Canadian Government to make allowance for alternative service.⁶ There is no need to recount that whole episode here, especially the tension between the *Kanadier* and *Russlaender* Mennonites that has been covered in other conference papers, except to point out the necessity and future importance of the arrangement and that, as a result, the Second World War was a watershed in the history of conscientious objection as well as the peace movement in Canada. The alternative service program forever changed the relationship between government authorities and pacifists and it pulled into the wider peace movement various religious groups that until then had remained separate from mainstream society and somewhat aloof from political lobbying.

The conscription law, the National Resources Mobilization Act of 1940, only ensured conscientious objector status to the descendants of those religious pacifists who had been guaranteed exemption

from military service by historic orders-in-council which meant that large numbers of Mennonites, especially the *Russländers* who had immigrated from the Soviet Union in the 1920s, as well as all other denominations, were left unprotected. Alarmed, pacifists worked together to secure the right to CO status of all individuals who conscientiously opposed military service, regardless of religious affiliation, in exchange for some form of alternative service. From that point on there would be no turning back to any complete exemption of certain religious groups. Also, while it is generally agreed that Canadian Mennonites did not become actively engaged in social causes until after the Second World War, probably in the 1950s and early 1960s, here they were cooperating with other Canadians in a lobbying campaign that would ultimately change public policy.⁷

The emergence of Mennonites, especially the *Russländer*, in the wider peace movement was a gradual transition. In the meantime, during the war, Mennonite communities faced a difficult challenge as many of their young men wanted to remain faithful to their Anabaptist beliefs but at the same time wanted to help in the war effort. This personal dilemma, facing not only Mennonites but all COs, was later explained by the Mennonite writer Rudy Wiebe in his novel *Peace Shall Destroy Many*: “Given a war situation, we Mennonites can practice our belief in Canada only because other Canadians are kind enough to fight for our right to our belief . . . Further, is it even possible for us not to participate? Ultimately even the farmer works for the War because he produces the food that makes fighting possible.”⁸ It was an especially difficult choice for Mennonites that actually divided church congregations and in the end a fairly large number of Mennonite men, between five and six thousand of the so-called “lost boys”, enlisted and donned military uniforms.⁹

In Ontario Quakers joined with the Brethren in Christ and Mennonite Churches in their Conference of Historic Peace Churches in order to lobby the government. In this effort, they were joined by United Church pacifists and, from western Canada, by the Mennonite Central Relief Committee. In the end, after some heavy pressure and passionate discussions, their proposals became the blueprint for alternative service. At first limited to Alternative Service Work camps in national parks across the west, at two forest experimental stations, and at an old logging camp on the Montreal River in northern Ontario, all under the supervision of the Department of Mines and Resources, it was later expanded with numerous forestry camps in British Columbia. Although a number of wives and children resettled in nearby BC towns in order to be close to the camps, the COs grumbled: some Mennonite men tended to miss their families and yearned to return to their farms while the *Russlaenders* and liberal Protestants continued

to demand some type of useful humanitarian service. Again, Rudy Wiebe captured these contrasting sentiments when one of his fictional characters reports: "He's sick of CO camp. He writes that to hear the news is awful for him, yet he can't tear himself away from the radio when it comes on. Buzz-bombs falling on London, the French ruined, Germans killing in retreat, the Chinese starving, while they sit in Jasper planting trees that could wait as easily as not. But the worst is the way some of the men, our people too, don't understand or care what is really going on outside in the world. They're happy that their own conscience is satisfied – they care for no more."¹⁰

As these calls for more worthwhile service coincided with an increasing shortage of manpower in 1943-4, alternative service was transferred to the Department of Labour and diversified even further with work on farms, in hospitals, in schools, in Aboriginal communities, in Japanese-Canadian relocation camps, in the Civilian Corps of Canadian Firefighters and the Friends Ambulance Unit. The firefighters were sent to the United Kingdom and the members of the Friends Ambulance Unit were sent to China where they took up non-combatant duties in the Canadian Armed Forces medical and dental units. The new active role of conscientious objectors was in keeping with the traditions of the *Russlaender* Mennonites as well as the convictions of the COs from the mainstream denominations regarding humanitarian service. Consequently, all those involved saw alternative service as a huge success and it certainly set an important precedent for the future as a legitimate exemption from military service. By the end of the war, over 12,000 men were classified as conscientious objectors; over 10,000 of them performed some type of alternative service and contributed over \$2 million to the Canadian Red Cross.¹¹

Throughout the war conscientious objectors were the main concern of pacifists and they worked tirelessly on their behalf. Moreover, they organized support for international relief projects, offered assistance to refugees, and spearheaded the defense of civil liberties. But again, as in the first war, it was conscientious objectors, some twelve thousand strong, who successfully said no to war and kept alive the pacifist alternative.

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

Conscientious objection to military service, however, is only a reality in its traditional sense when confronted with conscription, something Canada has not imposed since the Second World War even though it has been engaged in various conflicts since. Rather than just a refusal of compulsory military service, therefore, pacifists began to

see conscientious objection and the role of the conscientious objector in a wider context of opposition to war. The Cold War years, which literally began with the dawn of the nuclear age, certainly encouraged this view. Almost immediately attention shifted to the dangers of nuclear destruction and the urgent need to prevent it. Pacifists of all stripes, but still led by United Church activists, were anxious to join together in a broad campaign to ban the bomb and they launched a national campaign for nuclear disarmament through the Canadian Peace Congress headed by James G. Endicott, a former United Church missionary in China who was forced to resign from his missionary post and from the ministry because of his outspoken support for the Chinese communists. Despite this background and his ties to the Soviet-sponsored World Peace Council, it was hoped that Endicott, a politically seasoned, dynamic speaker, would be able to attract wide public support to the peace movement and he did. There were mass rallies, demonstrations, parades, annual peace picnics and 200,000 signatures were collected in support of the Stockholm Appeal, the "Ban the Bomb" petition. It was the largest outpouring of public support for the peace movement to that date in Canadian history.

Although hugely popular, the peace movement had become highly politicized. Religious pacifists questioned Endicott's motives and his inconsistency in working for peace while at the same time supporting revolutions of national liberation and they began to distance themselves from the Peace Congress. By the mid-1950s and the beginning of the American Civil Rights Movement, committed pacifists, including Mennonites, turned their attention to humanitarian work. But their brush with Cold War politics had also taught them that in the nuclear age pacifism was as much a political as a moral or religious belief and could attract a large number of supporters.¹² Consequently, even faith based pacifist groups, such as Mennonites, adopted an increasingly political activism.

It took time to rebuild a base of support and it was not until the 1958 crisis concerning the deployment of nuclear warheads in Canada that an anti-nuclear campaign was renewed. The Canadian Committee for the Control of Radiation Hazards, soon renamed the Canadian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, was launched in 1959 while university students were organized through the Combined Universities Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. The movement was further broadened with renewed interest in the Student Christian Movement and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). Intellectual and scientific support for disarmament was added in 1961 with the publication of the journal *Our Generation Against Nuclear War* and the founding of the Canadian Peace Research Institute.

Another noteworthy addition in 1960 was the Voice of Women (VOW). The new women's organization mobilized ordinary housewives and mothers by holding local neighborhood meetings and public forums. The Voice of Women wrote letters to newspapers, lobbied politicians, and staged dramatic twenty-four hour vigils on Mother's Day. It demanded that Ottawa declare Canada a non-nuclear country, it raised a quarter of a million dollars for the Canadian Peace Research Institute and, above all, it initiated research into the effects of nuclear radiation from the atmospheric testing of atomic bombs by collecting children's baby teeth and testing them for strontium-90.¹³ These women, and all the other politically and religiously motivated peace activists, conscientiously objected to the buildup of nuclear armaments and successfully exposed its environmental impact. Furthermore, in 1963 they flexed their muscles in the national election campaign in which the major issue was nuclear weapons on Canadian soil. While the Conservative Prime Minister, John Diefenbaker, dithered on the issue, victory went to his Liberal challenger, Lester Pearson, who promised to negotiate Canada's way out of its NORAD and NATO commitments to employ such warheads. Although they had failed to actually ban nuclear weapons, peace activists quickly refocused on the environmental consequences of weapons testing and lobbied for a nuclear test ban treaty until the Vietnam War took center stage.

The Vietnam Antiwar Movement

During the Vietnam War the nuclear disarmament network was restructured into an antiwar movement. Antiwar feeling ran high in the 1960s, fueled in part by blanket television coverage of the war's horrors and later by the presence of many American conscientious objectors. Through the late 1960s and early 1970s mass antiwar rallies were common, especially those at the U.S. Consulates in Montreal and Toronto.

Canadian opposition to the war surfaced in the spring of 1965 once the United States began to bomb North Vietnam and American combat troops began to fight there. The center of anti-war activity was on university campuses where students and professors circulated petitions, organized demonstrations, and conducted teach-ins against American war policy. The old Combined Universities Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament was reborn as the new left Student Union for Peace Action (SUPA), the Canadian equivalent of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in the United States, and it was the major force behind antiwar demonstrations in Canada, especially those that coincided with big protests in the United States.¹⁴

Canadians were also mobilized by VOW, WILPF, the Canadian Friends Service Committee, the Toronto Committee of Clergymen for Vietnam, and newly engaged Mennonite groups. Certainly, faith based groups provided the core leadership of the movement. By 1966 various Toronto groups united together in the Vietnam Coordinating Committee and in 1967 Rabbi Abraham Feinberg of Toronto's Holy Blossom Temple, a well-known peace activist, joined American pacifist A. J. Muste and former South African Bishop Ambrose Reeves on a month-long fact-finding mission to Hanoi. Upon his return, Feinberg made an emotional plea, later published in his book *Hanoi Diary*, for people to do everything possible to stop the war.¹⁵ The Canadian movement, however, was already in decline. Toronto's Vietnam Coordinating Committee had disbanded, as did SUPA, leaving the organization of future demonstrations in the hands of ad hoc committees representing various fringe groups.

It was at that crucial time in 1967 when American conscientious objectors, otherwise known as draft-dodgers and deserters, began to pour into Canada, something that was certainly encouraged the next year by new Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's announcement that Canada would be a "refuge from militarism". Since it was difficult to be recognized as a bona fide CO in the United States, coming to Canada was the safest option and Canadian peace activists across the country rallied to assist them. However, as Mennonite scholar and activist Frank Epp noted: "an enormous burden of providing hospitality, offering food and friendship, finding jobs, and interpreting the whole movement has fallen onto the shoulders of relatively few people and small assistance groups."¹⁶ By the end of the decade there were an estimated 80,000 American war resisters, both men and women, in Canada and they quickly assumed a commanding influence in Canada's peace movement. Although there were active groups in Montreal, Ottawa, Waterloo, Winnipeg and Vancouver, Toronto was their center of activity and where they published the magazine, *AMEX: The American Expatriate in Canada*, and the pamphlet, *Manual for Draft Age Immigrants to Canada*. The Toronto Anti-Draft Program counseled an average of 50 to 80 new men daily and activists continued to organize demonstrations and lectures for the next several years until the war ended in 1972.¹⁷ Yet again conscientious objectors, this time American men and women, had become the center of the Canadian peace movement.

The Resurgent Anti-Nuclear Movement and Beyond

Since the Vietnam War had diverted Canadians from the nuclear arms build-up, popular interest in disarmament only revived in

1979 when NATO responded to the Soviet build-up of medium-range nuclear missiles with plans to station Cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe. Mass demonstrations erupted across Europe and in Canada protest rallies drew record numbers – 35,000 in Vancouver and 15,000 in Winnipeg. But it was American plans to test the Cruise missiles in Canada that resulted in a mushrooming of peace groups across the country in the “Refuse the Cruise” campaign. Most prominent were three organizations heavily supported by Mennonite Churches, the United Church and the Society of Friends: Project Ploughshares, which assumed an educative function, Operation Dismantle, which proposed an international referendum on nuclear disarmament, and Conscience Canada, which called for the withholding of taxes earmarked for war preparation, a new form of conscientious objection. There were also loud outcries from Science for Peace, Physicians for Social Responsibility, the Committee for Non-Violent Action, the Voice of Women, and various churches as Canadians from various walks of life registered their objections. Even the Canadian government responded with the creation of the independent Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security, to conduct research and inform Canadians.

There was still little coordination of peace groups until they cooperated together in the Peace Petition Caravan Campaign during the 1984 general election. Then by 1985 the new Canadian Peace Alliance, representing 135 regional and national organizations, organized demonstrations and acted as a political lobby group. The end of the Cold War, however, almost instantly drained the movement of popular support, again reducing it to a small core of largely Christian pacifists. Peace groups turned their attention to NATO’s low-level flight testing over Innu land at Nitassinan as part of their anti-weapons testing agenda and during the early 1990s staged some protests against the Gulf War while the peace movement struggled to find some way to take a pro-active stand in the war as they already had done in areas of the world hit by natural disasters, such as earthquakes, and abuses of human rights.

When the United States invaded Iraq in 2003 peace activism resurfaced and the Christian Peacemakers adopted new tactics such as sending members to the war zone itself, another version of conscientious objector activism. But these protests never reached the magnitude of the disarmament demonstrations of the 1980s or the antiwar rallies of the late 1960s. Also, unlike the Vietnam years, American military deserters were not welcomed by the Canadian government and had their refugee claims denied. While there certainly was opposition in Canada to the Iraq War it was difficult for anti-war organizers to mount a sizeable campaign, partly because of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in September, 2001, but

also because there was no conscription and therefore no conscientious objectors in the traditional sense. Indeed, this point was emphasized in July 2006 when Vietnam era American war resisters held a four-day gathering called the "Our Way Home Reunion" in Castlegar, British Columbia, an area where many of them had settled. Those in attendance, including former U.S. presidential candidate George McGovern and activist Tom Hayden, someone who had visited Canada numerous times during the turbulent 1960s, not only reminisced about the old days but also tried to revitalize an ailing campaign. The lack of a more robust peace movement in the United States, Hayden concluded, was due to the absence of conscription.¹⁸ The same could be concluded about Canada. Yet again, it appears, conscientious objectors are the driving force of peace movements in times of war.

By the late twentieth century there had also been two parallel developments among peace activists that encouraged new forms of conscientious objection. Just as pacifists had embraced social justice issues during the 1930s, by the 1950s they had come to recognize the dangers to peace inherent in the military industrial complex and environmental degradation. It was the cold war stockpiling of nuclear weapons that revealed the link between corporate profit and the war machine. In the 1960s peace protesters targeted companies, such as Dow Chemical because it produced napalm, and later by the 1980s they launched non-violent actions against Lynton Industries because of its association with the cruise missiles to be tested in Canada. Meanwhile, the atmospheric dangers of testing nuclear weapons began to link peace with environmental concerns, but it was the birth in the 1970s of a new activist organization, Greenpeace, which helped ensure the greening of the peace movement. As Greenpeace activists heightened awareness of various environmental dangers and social scientists argued that future violent conflict would be fought over depleting natural resources, peace activists placed a new priority on global environmental issues.¹⁹

Conclusion

Certainly, as argued above, peace movements tend to unravel in times of war, leaving the burden of the pacifist witness on the shoulders of conscientious objectors. In fact, the Canadian tradition of the legal protection of the pacifist conscience is the direct result of the stalwart stands taken by conscientious objectors in the past. In both world wars COs and their supportive community pushed the limits of the law, ensuring the broadest allowance for COs possible and in doing so they moved beyond non-resistance and towards a pro-active role reflected

in various humanitarian activities and certainly in the provisions for alternative service during the Second World War. The importance of the Canadian government's acceptance of alternative service as a legitimate exemption from military service cannot be over emphasized for it set an important legal precedent for the continued recognition of a pacifist alternative in the future. But, of course, it was not without some risks. In the event of another major conflict the government would almost certainly incorporate COs into a national effort through some form of alternative service, not necessarily of a humanitarian nature, and thereby challenge anew the pacifist refusal to support war. It is also probable that the next time around women as well as men would be liable for this type of national service.

In addition, the historical record raises some concerns for the two religious groups who most strongly resisted even alternative service during the Second World War: Jehovah's Witnesses and Doukhobors. In his official report on alternative service completed for the Department of Labour in 1946, J. F. McKinnon concluded that the authorities were "quite definitely sure" that Jehovah's Witnesses were not conscientious objectors in the true sense of the term and that "they should not be so classified in the even of another war."²⁰ As for the Doukhobors, the Chief Alternative Service Officer, L. E. Westman, actually recommended that they be expelled from Canada. In a confidential letter to the Deputy Minister of Labour, Arthur MacNamara, Westman proposed a bizarre scheme of encouraging the resettlement of B.C. Doukhobors in some Central American country, such as El Salvador, in exchange for migrant Mexican labourers.²¹ Although nothing ever came of that idea, both instances underline the fact that Canadians conscientiously opposed to war need to be vigilant in order to protect their historic right to conscientious objection, some newer forms of which, such as withholding taxes, have not been tested in a time of war.

The fact remains, however, that the pacifist, non-violent alternative is now a part of the Canadian tradition, thanks in large part to those Canadians who actively sought to protect and extend the principle of conscientious objection. Those most instrumental in this campaign were various religious groups, such as Mennonites, the Society of Friends, the United Church and others. At first out of necessity to protect their own beliefs and later to more broadly advance the cause of peace, they cooperatively ensured that the peace movement was an effective political lobby. For over a century, with varying degrees of success, they pressed for alternatives to military service, exercised political pressure for disarmament, exposed the environmental dangers of nuclear radiation, emphasized the interdependence of peace and social justice, condemned the senseless wartime slaughter

of innocent civilians, and organized humanitarian relief efforts. Like all those in social movements, peace activists employed a wide array of tactics, from letter writing campaigns, boycotts, silent vigils, and protest marches to mass rallies, but the most important weapon at their disposal remained the principle of conscientious objection – simply saying no to war support, military duties in particular. Today, however, there is little tangible evidence of that pacifist past. It appears that in the country's collective consciousness the legacy of conscientious objectors in particular and that of the peace movement in general is in danger of being either selectively forgotten or dismissed as irrelevant.²² This is why conferences such as the one on “War and the Conscientious Objector” are so important. The papers presented in Winnipeg on that October weekend in 2006 stand as a significant corrective to our national lapse of memory.

Notes

- ¹ This paper is a revised version of the keynote address presented at the conference “War and the Conscientious Objector: Historical Perspectives” Conference, held at the University of Winnipeg, 20-21 October 2006.
- ² The broader definition of conscientious objection is evident in a variety of papers presented at the “War and Conscientious Objector” conference papers, especially those by Marlene Epp and Lucille Marr. Even Peter Brock, the foremost historian of pacifism in the strictest sense of the term, included two women who refused war work as conscientious objectors in one of his last books: *These Strange Criminals': An Anthology of Prison Memoirs by Conscientious Objectors from the Great War to the Cold War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).
- ³ Thomas P. Socknat, “Canada's Liberal Pacifists and the Great War,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*. 18: 4 (1983-84), 31.
- ⁴ Thomas P. Socknat. *Witness Against War: Pacifism in Canada, 1900-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), Chapter 3. A fuller discussion of much of what is summarized here can be found in this book.
- ⁵ Gordon Toombs, “The Social Gospel and the CO,” a paper presented at “War and the Conscientious Objector” Conference.
- ⁶ See the “War and the Conscientious Objector” conference papers by Koozma Tarasoff and by the conference paper of Jim Penton published in this issue.
- ⁷ T. D. Regehr. *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970: A People Transformed* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Leo Driedger and Donald B. Kraybill, *Mennonite Peacekeeping: From Quietism to Activism* (Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1993), 124.
- ⁸ Rudy Wiebe, *Peace Shall Destroy Many* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972), 60.
- ⁹ See Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada* and his article “Lost Sons: The Canadian Mennonite Soldiers of World War II,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 66 (1992), 478.
- ¹⁰ Wiebe, *Peace Shall Destroy Many*, 92.
- ¹¹ J. F. MacKinnon, “Historical Account of the Wartime Activities of the Alternative Service Branch,” Unpublished Report, Department of Labour, 1946, National Archives of Canada, 20; Socknat, *Witness Against War*, 256; For more on alternative service see: A. J. Klassen, ed. *Alternative Service for Peace in Canada during World*

- War II, 1941-1946* (Abbotsford, BC: Mennonite Central Committee, 1998), and Lawrence Klippenstein. *That There Be Peace: Mennonites in Canada and World War II* (Winnipeg: CO Reunion Committee, 1979).
- ¹² Thomas P. Socknat, "The Dilemma of Canadian Pacifists during the Early Cold War Years," in Harvey L. Dyck, ed., *The Pacifist Impulse in Historical Perspective* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 422.
- ¹³ Thomas P. Socknat, "Waging Peace," *Horizon Canada*, 8:88 (1986), 2107.
- ¹⁴ Thomas P. Socknat, "The North Country Fair: Canada and the Vietnam Antiwar Movement," a paper presented at the Vietnam Antiwar Movement Conference, Toledo, OH, 5 May 1990.
- ¹⁵ Abraham L. Feinberg, *Hanoi Diary* (Toronto: Longmans Canada), 1968.
- ¹⁶ Frank H. Epp, ed., *I would like to dodge the draft-dodgers, but . . .* (Waterloo, ON: Conrad Press, 1970), 7.
- ¹⁷ Socknat, "The North Country Fair," 11.
- ¹⁸ Gary Mason, "Tom Hayden's still venting after all these years," *The Globe and Mail*, July 8, 2006.
- ¹⁹ For instance, see: Thomas Homer-Dixon. *Environment, Scarcity and Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).
- ²⁰ MacKinnon, "Alternative Service Branch," 25-6.
- ²¹ Thomas P. Socknat, "Conscientious Objection in Canada," in Peter Brock and Thomas P. Socknat, eds., *Challenge to Mars: Essays on Pacifism from 1918 to 1945*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 266.
- ²² A case in point is the Canadian War Museum that has so far ignored the wartime role of COs while limiting coverage of the peace movement to a small display that deals mainly with anti-nuclear protests and opposition to the Vietnam War (a war in which Canada was not officially involved). It was encouraging to learn from Dr. Amber Lloydlangston, Assistant Historian, Canadian War Museum (who attended the "War and Conscientious Objector" conference), that the Museum has plans for an exhibit on COs and the peace movement scheduled for 2009.