BY R.M. BAXTER

I should like to call your attention to an important new book entitled "Bread not Bombs" by Douglas Roche, published by The University of Alberta Press in Edmonton. Senator Roche is well known to Science for Peace and has been associated with us in a number of projects, including a joint seminar with the Canadian Pugwash Group on Canada’s role in nuclear disarmament discussed elsewhere in this Bulletin. The book, in the author’s words, "... is about a peace for the 21st century that can only be obtained by advancing a social justice agenda." It ranges widely over the obstacles that we face in the search for a just and peaceful world, and suggests ways in which these may be overcome. A review by Ron Shirtliff will appear in the next issue of Peace Magazine.

Science for Peace
Annual General Meeting
Saturday, May 27, 2000  1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
International Student Centre
33 St. George St., Toronto
(n. of College, parking via Kings’s College Rd.)

Agenda

PART I
1. Minutes of the May 1, 1999 Annual General Meeting
2. Matters arising
3. President’s Report
4. Treasurer’s Report
5. Blumenfeld Fund Report
6. Report on SFP appearance before DND on NMD
7. Report from the Nominating Committee
8. Election of Board members
9. Election of Nominating Committee
10. Appointment of Accountant/Auditor
11. Inauguration of the Hanna Newcombe Anatol Rapoport Award
12. Any other business

PART II
Remarks by the Hanna Newcombe Anatol Rapoport Award Recipient

(Brief Board Meeting to follow)
"Genetically Modified Food: A Field of Dreams?"

BY PAUL A. HAMEL

This event was held on Wednesday, February 9, 2000, sponsored by the St. Lawrence Centre Forum in cooperation with Science for Peace, the Toronto Food Policy Council and the Toronto Board of Health. Panellists were: Edwin Daniel (Science for Peace, Professor Emeritus, Dept. Biomedical Sciences, McMaster University), Peter Hannam (President, First Line Seeds, Ontario Farmer), Rod MacRae (Food policy consultant; co-author of Real Food for a Change), and Bart Bilmer (Biotechnology Officer, Canadian Food Inspection Agency).

This was an enormously successful event. The entire auditorium at the St. Lawrence Centre was filled (>500 people). Ed Daniel, who is also the co-chair of the Science for Peace Working Group on Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering, began the presentations and outlined the number of aspects of GM foods that warrant concern. These included the unpredictable outcomes of introducing novel genetic elements into plants for large scale use, the probability of transmission between plants varieties and the lack of government regulations controlling the use of GM foods. This latter point is particularly pertinent given that the European Union last week, passed a motion which essentially states that "GM producers...should not be held legally responsible if their food turned out to be harmful for humans or the environment" (The Guardian, April 20, 2000; Vol. 162/No. 17). We learn several pages later in the same issue that an employee at a U.K.-based seed company had been found guilty of altering data in order to make a particular crop appear to perform better than it actually did. Given the reliance of the Canadian regulatory agencies on data concerning yields and safety provided by the seed companies, these issues are particularly important.

Countering Ed Daniel's position, Peter Hannam outlined the beneficial aspects of a number of GM plants in which he has experience. His main position was that the modifications introduced produced varieties of plants which were extremely resistant to pests and are therefore beneficial to farmers in Canada and indeed around the world. He also argued that use of these plants had the desirable effect of reducing overall chemical inputs, specifically in the context of pest control. Finally, he discussed the other potential beneficial uses such as the introduction of rice varieties which contained unique nutrients such as vitamin A. This, he proposed, would be of great benefit to populations existing on limited diets deficient in good sources of these nutrients.

Following the very technical description by Bart Bilmer, of the regulatory process for approving GM foods in Canada, Rod MacRae spent the remaining portion of the panellists' time describing a large number of data that refute the predictions of the benefits of GM foods. He pointed out that analyses of large scale usage did not show increase in crop yields nor a decrease in pesticide use. In fact, many examples opposite to these predictions can be found. These are well documented and quantified in his co-authored book.

The extremely proactive audience at this event asked a wide range of questions, most of them biased against genetic modification of plants and food for human consumption. It was also pointed out that the concentration of patent rights in the same companies that control seed and food distribution as well as pesticide and energy production create a dangerous situation for many populations on the planet who have already been marginalized due to aggressive agricultural and economic policies of the northern nations. In addition, it was suggested to Bart Bilmer that introduction of modified foods to populations living in poverty was unlikely to change their overall lack of health since the lack of a reasonable diet is but a symptom of the problem of poverty. Readers are encouraged to look at the Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology Working Group Web Site for more information and action in this area.
Science for Peace Speaks to the Standing Committee on National Defense and Veterans Affairs.

BY PAUL A. HAMEL

On Tuesday, April 4, 2000, I made a presentation on behalf of Science for Peace to a hearing of the Standing Committee on National Defense and Veterans Affairs. This hearing, entitled "Revolution in Military Affairs - National Missile Defense" is meant to consider the opinions of Canadians concerning Canada's possible participation in the development and deployment of the National Missile Defense System currently being tested and assessed in the U.S. In collaboration with Terry Gardner and John Valleau, I submitted a written brief followed by an oral presentation by myself in Ottawa (this brief can be read or downloaded from the Science for Peace Web Site; transcript of the oral presentation is posted on the committee web site: http://www.parl.gc.ca/36/1/parlbus/cmpbhous/e/CommitteeMinute.asp?Language=E&CommitteeDID=72 and is also posted on the home page of the Science for Peace Web Site).

The three fundamental points in the brief sent to this committee were:

1) Deployment of a National Missile Defense (NMD) System is illegal under the terms of the Anti-ballistic missile treaty, a treaty which Canada has stated must be maintained.

2) Development and deployment of a NMD System, in combination with the First Strike capability and stance of the U.S., represents a significant offensive military posture.

3) As proposed, the NMD system is incapable of protecting the U.S. and, as such, is predicted to be the initial deployment of a far more robust system. Indeed, as I responded to the committee's questions, the proposed NMD system, rather than being considered the "Son of Star Wars", this system would more accurately be called the "embryo of Star Wars".

After presentation of the paper to this parliamentary committee, the aggressive questioning by all members of the committee revealed that they have decoupled the NMD system from the U.S. first strike capability in order to justify the NMD as a purely defensive system. By this elementary and erroneous train of logic, this committee refused to consider seriously that the NMD system represents a serious offensive military threat. Furthermore, as was articulated during the final remarks of Pat O'Brien (committee chair), this committee is very concerned that failure of Canada to agree to join in the NMD program will atrophy Canada's role in NORAD, potentially precipitating an end to this alliance. My view at the time of writing this summary is that unless very substantial public pressure is applied to this committee, they will recommend that Canada participate in the development of a military system which will further contribute to the aggressive military posture of the U.S., NORAD and NATO, leading to an inevitable arms race.

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Fourth Annual DFAIT Peacebuilding Consultations
Ottawa, March 1 and 2

BY ERIC FAWCETT

These Consultations arose from Lloyd Axworthy’s policies of pursuing "human security". The program was organized by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee (CPCC) a group of NGOs (Non Governmental Organizations). Representatives of about 300 NGOs and a good number of independent consultants participated.

The opening Plenary Session was addressed by Lloyd Axworthy and by Maria Minna, Minister for International Cooperation. They both arrived late and left early, pleading urgent business - Axworthy’s excuse was the Cuban diplomat who was being hounded by the USA and had taken refuge in the Canadian Embassy! Axworthy spoke of Canada’s good deeds but left before any questions could be asked - the first, about Canada’s failure to implement the recommendations of the Harker Report on the Sudan, especially deserved a proper response.

There were five concurrent panels on Kosovo (the one I attended), East Timor, India/Pakistan, Colombia and Sierra Leone, but no plenary session where one could get a comprehensive view with discussion.

There was no discussion whatsoever of conflict prevention that would critique the role of Canada and its allies in the Kosovo panel, which spoke only of rebuilding, with no willingness to question the bombing or discuss ways of defusing tensions by diplomatic means and preventing future wars of the same nature. Representatives from NGOs in the peace movement who asked searching questions included Judith Berlyn of the Centre de Ressources sur la Non-violence and CPA, Hanna Newcombe of the Peace Research Institute Dundas, Mel Watkins of Science for Peace, and Barbara Burkett of Physicians for Global Survival, but they were frustrated by the failure to get satisfactory answers.

The mandate of a good number of NGOs who participated is development, and the large budget of CIDA for supporting overseas development (not to speak of the Export Development Corporation with an even larger budget, which if it was represented remained anonymous), as well as that of DFAIT for supporting peacebuilding and human security projects perhaps explains the generally uncritical views of the participants. The striking exception was the Plenary Session on "Youth Perspectives on Peacebuilding and Visions of the Future," where young people showed promise of creating a less acquiescent community of NGOs in the future.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty, NATO and Canada: The Future of Nuclear Weapons

This joint seminar of the Canadian Pugwash Group and Science for Peace was held on Saturday March 18, 2000 at the International Student Centre, University of Toronto. In addition to members of the Pugwash Group and Science for Peace, it was attended by Dr. David Viveash from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade on behalf of Mr. Lloyd Axworthy. The participants were pleased to have an opportunity to exchange views with him on the role that Canada can play in the vital task of achieving the eventual total abolition of nuclear weapons.

It was pointed out that in spite of the end of the Cold War the nuclear powers still insist that these weapons are necessary for their security.
The participants urged that Canada should continue to foster the human security approach and a worldwide culture of peace to replace the current dependence on weapons of mass destruction.

The American National Missile Defence (NMD) could possibly lead to a new arms race, and the Canadian government should oppose it as strongly as possible and refuse to participate in any phase of this project (See the article by Paul Hamel elsewhere in this Bulletin).

There is a need for increasing public participation in the discussion of nuclear questions, including the NPT Review Conference in 2000.

A report on the conference was prepared by the rapporteur, Walter Dorn, and incorporated in a letter to Prime Minister Jean Chretien signed by Douglas Roche for the Canadian Pugwash Group and Mel Watkins for Science for Peace. This letter is available in the Science for Peace office.

Should Talisman be in Sudan?

Corporate Responsibility and Human Rights

This was the title of a discussion under the auspices of the University College Lectures in Peace Studies held on Tuesday March 21, 2000, at the International Student Centre, University of Toronto. Participants included: Professor Len Brooks, from the Rotman School of Management and Executive Director of the Clarkson Centre for Business Ethics; Gerry Barr, Department Leader of Humanity Fund from the United Steelworkers; and Mel Watkins, President of Science for Peace and Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto.

This discussion followed the announcement earlier this year by Mr Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Foreign Affairs, that his Department will not act on the Harper Report, which submitted evidence that Talisman Energy is facilitating human rights abuses in Sudan. Georgette Gagnon, one of the authors of the report, said that Talisman adds legitimacy to the military dictatorship.

Gerry Barr of USW suggested that Talisman had shown no interest in negotiating with peace and human rights groups since it moved into Sudan about two years ago.

Professor Brooks preferred to deal with general issues. He suggested that not enough is known yet on how to deal with situations like Talisman’s, but that it appears that actions of Non-governmental organizations and unions are likely to be more effective than actions by governments, which should be considered to be the last resort.

Professor Cranford Pratt, a political scientist at the University of Toronto, suggested that energy conservation measures on the part of western nations would eventually lead to a drop in oil prices and the fall of the dictatorship. This suggestion was not well received by many members of the audience, including Osman Bileya, a student in Computer Engineering and a former resident of Sudan, and Georgette Gagnon, who continued to urge that the Canadian government should take action of some kind.

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