Thinking about all the most pressing world problems, I keep coming back to the question about why the very people who have enormous power are so cruel, and why they garner sufficient support and collusion to get away with it. In the areas of energy, water, food, mining, pharmaceuticals, military weapons, and so on, several hundred people globally make the crucial decisions that now ruin the planet and render billions of lives intolerable, and they garner more wealth than the GDP of 180 countries combined. [The three wealthiest men earn more than the poorest 48 countries combined.]

Is it possible that people do not know about the cruelty perpetrated through this transnational oligarchic regime? When the crimes are so egregious and vast, the end of the “ostrich” (or “CEO”) defense indicates that not knowing is not a sufficient defense. Moreover, there is a great deal of easily accessible information. Courageous investigators in many countries provide reliable accounts of social injustices and environmental crimes.

Water is one lens for examining socio-economic, political and psychological pathology. At the 7 November 2008 Forum on water, Maude Barlow will no doubt speak eloquently about the grave global threat posed by the privatization and commodification of water as large transnational corporations vie for controlling...
and exploiting each facet of the water process (pricing, pumping, purifying, distributing, sewage, dam-building, wetlands draining).

There are a number of detailed historical studies showing how starvation during droughts, famines, and flooding was largely due to political choices and human irresponsibility, mismanagement, or cruelty, rather than the actual environmental disaster. In these cases, technology was hardly salutary and even at times worsened the situation. Mike Davis writes about how the “newly constructed railroads, lauded as institutional safeguards against famine, were instead used by merchants to ship grain inventories from outlying drought-stricken districts to central depots for hoarding (as well as protection from rioters). Likewise the telegraph ensured that price hikes were coordinated in a thousand towns at once, regardless of local supply trends” (Davis, p. 26).

Alfred Russel Wallace, co-discoverer with Darwin of evolution, wrote that that mass starvation in India and China was an avoidable political tragedy, not a natural disaster, and that it represented “the most terrible failures of the century” (Davis, p. 8).

Paralleling the Victorian holocaust are current oligarchic practices. Monbiot writes about the new colonialism in which Britain covertly consumes Pakistan’s water: to meet Britain’s demands for water-intensive rice and cotton, the Indus valley’s aquifers are being pumped out faster than they can be recharged, at a time when snow and rain in the Himalayas decrease water supplies due to climate change (Monbiot, p. 24. The Weekly Guardian). In Canada and internationally, Canadian mining companies dump toxic wastes into rivers and lakes with impunity and permanently contaminate aquifers.

Depletion of aquifers and loss of fresh water comes from many directions. It takes 15,000 liters of water to mine one ounce of gold. It takes 1700 liters of water to produce one liter of ethanol. It takes 400,000 liters of water to make one car. In the U.S. alone, the computer industry uses 1,500 billion liters of water and produces over 300 billion liters of wastewater each year (Barlow, p 8. The figures are from 2001).

And there is the cruelty. For the Vancouver winter Olympics, the aquifer in Secwepmec territory is being drained to make fake snow for skiers. “What Sun Peaks and other corporations are doing to us is affecting our basic human right to live.” In Palestine, Israel totally deprives Palestinians of water rights. German hydrogeologist Clemens Messerschmid disputes the assumption of inherent water scarcity. He speaks of the gratuitous cruelty towards Palestinians: they are not even allowed to collect rain water in cisterns, and he describes how villagers can sit by a stream with their goats but not touch the water. The Separation Wall is constructed in such a way that rain gutters are angled so that water flows to the Jewish side. The average per capita water consumption for Palestinians is 60 liters/day (the World Health Organization minimum is 100 liters/day). Israel takes water from the West Bank aquifers and sells desalinized water to Palestinians. Desalinization is highly energy intensive; the technology is underwritten by international donors and the treated water is sold to Palestinians with profits going back to Israel.

The waste and degradation of the world’s water supply has accelerated in the last few decades and is caused by human cruelty and negligence. It will take much thinking and working together to shift direction.


Water Crisis
Oliver M. Brandes

Canada stands at a watershed concerning freshwater management and governance. Despite being one of the few relatively water-rich nations of the world, Canada’s freshwater resources are under threat. Pollution, wasteful habits, poor management, increasing urbanization and the looming spectre of climate change conspire to create scarcity. Yet the current approach to water management and governance continues to reinforce the supply-oriented status quo. In Canada a water crisis will be of our own making.

The watershed is the logical starting point for sustainable water management. To maintain reliable future water supplies and healthy aquatic ecosystems, all actions must be considered for their cumulative impact on watersheds. Resilience and ecological function must be the foundation to ensure sustainable water for prosperous communities now and into the future. This requires that we move to demand management and the development of a water ethic from being an “add-on” solution to becoming a foundational tool for watershed managers, water planners and all water users up and down the watershed. Watershed governance takes a holistic approach and requires that we shift the focus from managing water resources toward managing how people live as watershed citizens. To achieve this vision of sustainability and prosperity will require leadership at all levels of society and most importantly a commitment to action.

NOTE: The Global Issues Project’s Roundtable on Water will be held 8-9 November following the public forum on water, 7 November.

6 http://www.palcast.org/tag/clemens-messerschmid
Public Forum

Fresh Water Problems
Emerging Threats and Urgent Priorities

sponsored by Science for Peace and
the Canadian Pugwash Group

Friday, November 7, 2008
7:30 – 9:30 pm
George Ignatieff Theatre
Larkin Bldg. 135 Devonshire Place, University of Toronto

Introduction: Annual Eric Fawcett Public Forum
• In memory of Eric Fawcett: Dr. Walter Dorn, Chair, Canadian Pugwash Group,
• Welcome from Trinity College:
  Provost Andy Orchard, Trinity College

Keynote Speakers
• Maude Barlow: President, Council of Canadians
• Bob Sandford: Director, Western Watershed Climate Research Cooperative; Canadian Chair, United Nations Water for Life Decade
• Aharon Zohar: Inter-Disciplinary Centre, Herzelia, Carmei Yosef, Israel

After the keynote speakers, join the discussion between experts and audience members on how to manage international and national water problems

Followed by a post-forum reception at the Buttery

Everyone Welcome -- No Charge!

Pre-registration strongly recommended to ensure your seating in the theatre.
Register by email at mail@pugwashgroup.ca
Every time we fill our tanks with gasoline we think about petroleum. I think about oil and gas in global terms. I spent my life doing this. Those global aspects are under-reported in our media.

In thinking about petroleum, fear and conflict as well as the challenges for Canadian public policy. One particular conflict puzzles me – Afghanistan. Why has Afghanistan become the major focus of Canadian defence, aid and foreign policy? I found petroleum - natural gas - has a role in Afghanistan. In their book “The unexpected War – Canada in Kandahar” Stein and Lang say Canada went to Afghanistan to placate the Americans. Our leaders knew little of Afghan tribal divisions or history of expelling foreign armies.

Petroleum equals power. Energy fears are driving rivalry and conflict today. World energy issues present challenges for Canada too.

Petroleum, Power and Fear: Challenges for Canada
John Foster

We usually think in terms of military power, economic power or even soft power. What does the world look like in terms of petroleum power?

The Middle East still dominates with the most oil. The United States is highly dependent upon oil imports – 60% of its consumption. Economic and military power depend on reliable supplies of oil and gas.

Europe is the world’s largest gas importer; and imports to Japan, China and India are growing fast as well.

What happens when supplies can’t keep up with demand? Oil prices rise and governments get antsy. Oil companies go farther afield, deeper offshore, and into the Tar Sands, wildlife preserves and the Arctic.

In a new book on the geopolitics of energy Michael Klare writes that global competition over energy will be “A pivotal feature of world affairs for the remainder of the century.”

An Oil Corridor extends from the Middle East north to the Caspian region and is watched over by US Central Command. The Middle East alone has 60% of the world’s oil reserves and 40% of natural gas. The US has military bases all over the Middle East except in Iran, but surrounding Iran. The Bush administration pushed for global domination through overwhelming unilateral power. Kazakhstan is the largest Central Asian country and has the largest oil reserves in Central Asia. Turkmenistan may have the world’s fourth largest reserves of natural gas.
Azerbaijan is a significant producer of oil and gas.

These countries sent their oil and gas north to the Soviet Union. Now the New Great Game is among countries who want energy to flow in directions under their control. So the Russians are building new pipelines north, the Chinese are building east while the US promotes pipelines west to Europe and south through Afghanistan to Pakistan and India.

Pipelines are important today as railways were important in the 19th century.

Washington has long promoted a pipeline to take natural gas from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan and India. Realistic or not, construction is planned to start in 2010 and Canadian Forces are committed to be present in Afghanistan until 2011.

Meanwhile Iran has offered an alternative route to supply Iranian gas to Pakistan and India avoiding Afghanistan. The US-promoted pipelines bypassing Russia and Iran are the jewels in the crown of US strategy. So Russia plans a line under the Black Sea to Bulgaria.

President Bush claims the increase in US troops to Afghanistan is to protect Afghanistan’s “infrastructure” and democratic institutions and ensure access to services like education and healthcare”. When asked if Canadian forces were in Kandahar to defend a pipeline, Peter MacKay said, “We are not there specifically to protect a pipeline across Afghanistan. “Canada is supporting US policy through NATO, But does Canada want NATO to be a worldwide energy protection service?

PR efforts to convince Canadians to stay in Afghanistan emphasize development. Downplayed are violence and US involvement. Energy issues are avoided altogether.

We are on course to participate in the militarization of energy through NATO, a recipe for disaster.

International trade, cooperation and diplomacy as well as a foreign policy that respects other countries works. The Cold War is over. Let it remain so.

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The Race for the U.S. Presidency:
What does it mean for Canada?

Rose Dyson

Election fever is now upon us on both sides of the Canada/US border. In June, the Canadian International Council held a conference on the potential impact of the 2008 U.S. presidential election on Canadian politics. It began with an examination of Canadian perspectives on a changing US. Discussion of border issues focused on implications for trade, security and immigration. Speculation on emerging shifts in foreign policy priorities for a new US administration included an analysis of the situation in Iraq from Michael O’Hanlon, senior fellow from The Brookings Institute. Too abrupt a withdrawal before the Iraqis themselves can take over would be disastrous in his view.

The second day began with a keynote address from the Premier of Nunavut on Arctic priorities. It was followed by a panel on Arctic Waters and the urgency for action. Suzanne Lalonde, an international lawyer and expert on Law of the Sea issues from the University of Montreal and Rob Huebert, CIC Research Fellow at the University of Calgary both spoke of Canada’s woeful inattention to these matters. According
to Lalonde, the US and Russia are amenable to cooperation in resolving issues concerning the Northwest Passage as it opens up due to melting Arctic ice. It appears that Canadians will probably end up relying heavily on the US Navy for assistance in maintaining our best interests.

The final panel on Canadian responses to energy shortages and climate change was no more reassuring. The entire emphasis was on the promise and need for nuclear energy and tapping of new sources for fossil fuel production. Panelist, Annette Hester, from the Centre for International Governance Innovation read a statement from the US Senate which identified Canada’s tar sands production as being the dirtiest fossil fuel site in the world. There was a puzzling lack of response to this observation, from other panelists, despite probing questions from the audience. Nor was there any attempt to examine federal Liberal leader, Stephane Dion’s announced plan for carbon taxes.

Wenran Jiang from the University of Alberta who spoke on China, said that country is awakening to the growing environmental crisis and energy shortages. It aims to “leapfrog” over the West with technological innovations that will provide similar living standards but avoid the environmental devastation created by western habits of consumption and waste. On the subject of communications technologies and content he pointed to China as the world’s largest dumping ground for e-garbage. It seems that the world’s obsolete, unwanted TV sets, computers, X-boxes and playstation sets are coming back to haunt both the Chinese and the Japanese whom they seek to emulate. Surely it was inevitable that their thriving economies could saturate the global market with these electronic gadgets until the effluent started backing up. In Canada, both Edmonton and Toronto have recycling plants for old tube style TV sets to extract the mercury and lead before they are crushed but, as pointed out in the Globe and Mail last December, for every old TV set dismantled in Toronto, 600 new ones are produced for distribution worldwide in China.

Thomas Homer Dixon, now with the Balsillie School of International Affairs, gave the final keynote address. He reinforced the earlier call for nuclear sources of energy and exploration of remaining sources of fossil fuels “in as clean an environmental way as possible” because alternative sources, “simply will not kick in soon enough to avoid economic and social chaos”. He lauded Dion for at least coming up with a plan for carbon taxes, concluding that we may be faced with the need for some kind of authoritarian government in the future as chaos accelerates. He has evidently changed his mind on who will suffer the greatest impact from climate change and the coming energy crisis. He now thinks people who have always lived a subsistence kind of lifestyle will find it easier to adapt. It is those of us in the developed nations who will have the farthest to fall.
In Memory of

Alan F. Phillips MD

Alan F. Phillips MD died peacefully surrounded by his family on 11 August 2008 from complications of a chronic illness. He remained the picture of grace and courage to his last moments.

Alan was born in China in 1920 of British parents. The family returned to England, and he grew up in Norfolk, where his father was the vicar at Great Plumstead. He attended boarding schools as a boy, but greatly enjoyed his visits in Norfolk where he developed a love of the sea, and farming from the local community. In 1938 he went to Cambridge (St. Catharine’s College) on scholarship to study physics. Beginning in 1941, after rejection as a pilot due to a heart murmur that was never detected in later examinations, he worked with the British military on the development of radar.

In 1945 he moved to Edinburgh to study medicine. He met Joyce Douglas, a psychiatric social worker in training. They married in 1949.

Alan and Joy returned to Cambridge in 1951 where he pursued basic research in the new field of radiation therapy, and subsequently clinical radiotherapy. They moved their young family to Western Canada in 1958, and to Flint, Michigan in 1962 where Alan practiced medicine as the first radiation oncologist in the region. He completed his career as an oncologist in Hamilton, Ontario.

Alan had many interests that he pursued with great energy. He was a gardener, sailor, avid reader and polymath; and he enjoyed sharing these pursuits with his family. Always practical, analytical and without pretension, he had excellent adventures and achievements in all of his endeavors, driven by a sense of fairness, generosity and justice.

In the early 1980’s he turned his attention to the misuse of radioactivity for military purposes. He became an activist, applying the same energy, rigorous thought and generosity to the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons. He supported the movement with carefully researched, thoughtful articles, speeches and policy proposals, working with local, national and international groups in the peace movement. He selflessly donated his thoughts, energy and considerable resources to the cause assisted by his wife Joy.

Donations in his memory may be made to International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, 727 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA 02139 USA, (617) 868-5050.
Announcements:

The International Day of Peace on September 21 took many forms. It seems to have caused a decrease in the fighting in Afghanistan.

On Oct. 4 Science for Peace was one organizer of a day-long event “Climate Catastrophe and Social Justice” held at the Earth Sciences Auditorium at the U of T. A great mix of all ages with a student focus from the Sierra Youth Coalition and the Canadian Federation of Students. The student campaign to green the U of T is impressive. Go to www.cfs-fcee/sustainability.ca to get involved. Keynote speaker was John McMurtry “Action is Understanding”.

On October 22 at Newtonbrook United Church, 53 Cummer Ave., authors Bill Phipps and Caroline Pogue will speak on “Social Justice in Changing Times” All welcome at 6 p.m., program begins at 6:45. Books, food, music, worship and discussion. Cost $15, or what you can pay.

On Oct. 23 Media Democracy Day workshops will be held at the International Students’ Centre with Maude Barlow and Linda McQuaig.

The proposed Arms Bazaar in Ottawa was cancelled as no military trade shows are allowed on municipal property.

Book Nook and Events

Roche, Douglas. *Creative Dissent: A Politician’s Struggle for Peace* was launched in Ottawa on October 16.

Michalos, Alex C. *Trade Barriers to the Public Good: Free Trade and Environmental Protection* 2008 McGill and Queen’s University Press.

Hurtig, Mel. *The Truth About Canada: Some important, some astonishing some truly appalling things all Canadians should know about our country*. McClelland & Stewart. 2008.

Falk, Richard and Krieger, David. “At the Nuclear Precipice”.

“The Harper Record” produced by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives a compilation by 47 writers.

Victor, Peter, *Managing without Growth: Slower by Design, not Disaster*. Book launch on November 18 at The Distillery, Boiler House, 55 Mill St. 5-7 p.m. Also present Miller, Mayor David, Kraft Sloan, Karen and Suzuki, David.

Glantz, Aaron and Iraq Veterans Against the War. *Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan*.

A plea from member Gombay, Brydon to support Omar Khadr.

Also note the conferences to respond to the plea from the Small Island States to address climate change.
Treasurer’s Message

There are still a few members who have not made any contribution this year. It is not too late. Our normal membership rates remain at $60 (full membership) $40 (retired) and $20 (students). Tax receipts are sent out in February. If you have questions about your most recent donation, please email farp@sympatico.ca, or sfp@physics.utoronto.ca

Welcome to our new office manager, Maryam Bambad who is replacing Donya Ziaee who has gone on to a new, full-time job. We thank her for all her past work.

The Bulletin was compiled by Shirley Farlinger and completed by Maryam.