SCIENCE FOR PEACE
BOARD MEETING JULY 22/20
MINUTES

Meeting Proceeds Via Zoom

REGRETS: Margrit Eichler

PRESENT: Richard Sandbrook, Rob Acheson, Arnd Jurgenson, Ellie Kirzner, Jorge Filmus, Sorpong Peou, Ali Hashemi, Bill Browett, Lynn Adamson, Janice Alton, Jack Poulson, Adnan Zuberi, Danny Harvey

ABSENCE DUE TO TECH ISSUES: Vladimir Zhagora

MOTION: To adopt the Agenda
Rob A moves, Arnd J seconds

EXECUTIVE POSITIONS
Richard S reports that Judy D has unfortunately resigned from the executive and her role as President, and says he is available to take on the responsibility

MOTION: to elect Richard S President
Arnd J moves; Jorge F seconds
PASSED

INTRODUCTIONS: Board members introduce themselves and explain their interests

REPORT FROM RICHARD S

Key points:

- We are generally less effective than we might be – for example, we don’t properly induct new members, and we aren’t often present on op ed pages
- A lot of time is spent on our website, which is now getting attention, but from a tech point of view, we don’t know much about it
- We need at least two blogs a week to sustain interest, and while the site functions, it lacks pizazz; we need to jazz it up because we are aiming at millennials.
- Many Working Groups have disappeared – Rob’s Nuclear Weapons WG works best, and the Non-Violence and Civil Society WG has hosted two forums
- We’ve started using social media – Rob A handles the Twitter account and Holly E, Instagram, (Bill B, Facebook) – but we’re amateurs and the world has changed
- A great deal has changed since Science for Peace began in the 80’s. Then, much scientific research went to the public good, and joining the organization was an easy step for scientists. But in the 90’s there was a push for scientists to become entrepreneurs – a sort of academic capitalism.
• In the 80’s the galvanizing issue was nuclear disarmament, but now activists are attracted to a range of issues and there is a tendency for Science for Peace to run off in all directions.
• As well, the 80’s were the age of print and SfP generated publications. The digital age, however, offers a different and more direct way of communicating.
• We have the same goals but how we achieve them is different
• There are many technical solutions proposed by experts to the issues we face, but scientists fall short on how to politically effect these changes
• Our role is to understand the science and also to provide hope that there are actual methods of achieving change. The question for us is: how do we get there? Our comparative advantage lies in creating realistic scenarios for change toward a peaceful and sustainable world. How to make what is possible, actual?
• We also need to collate information better, do more popular education on our key issues - nuclear weapons, climate change, NATO - and mentor and put into leadership roles the next generation of peace activists

Richard proposes:
• That we focus the fall term on nuclear weapons – we will already have two paid interns working on the U.N. Nuclear ban campaign – and that we attempt to develop a policy brief, do op eds, and get back in the popular spotlight
• That, in the second term, having learned from the organizing efforts of the first, we expand to encompass the peace and conflict dimensions of Climate Change. We can therefore move forward from our strength, and benefit from the efforts of Rob and Janice in the Nuclear Weapons WG.
• That we remain very open to members working on other areas of interests via Webinars, blog posts, reports, statements, etc.

ENHANCING OUR COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY – Report by Adnan Z
• Three areas require change: 1)the Website 2)the email system 3)the Bulletin
• 1) Website: there is a talented web developer interested in making over our site. Currently we have a 1990’s template. The Millennium Alliance for Humanity and the Biosphere website (MAHB) at Stanford U offers a model – a reader gets a sense of what the site is about right away
• 2) the Bulletin: we need a templated, professional Bulletin, using articles from our members or asking other experts to contribute. This will attract members and boost our influence.
• 3) Email system: Our system was first created in 1988 and currently any member or non-member can email the entire membership, despite the fact that some messages are irrelevant. Because the email was established via the Dept of Physics, we are vulnerable to a “single point of failure” because only the Physics dept. can fix a problem.

Discussion on Adnan’s report:
Rob A – says there is no decent format for the letters he needs to send, and that there are many articles and videos that need to be shared but we lack the format.

Bill B – in changing the email system, we need to ensure we adhere to privacy rules. It’s a challenge being a clearing-house of information – the info needs to be curated and without a sophisticated website, it’s hard to be an aggregator.

Adnan Z – the website developer, Daniel Garcia, can do social media and newsletter as well; he has worked closely with him. We would need to allocate between $2500 and $3500 for this project to accommodate the fact that DG would need more time to do the newsletter and email, as well as the website.

MOTION: to allocate a maximum of $3500 for DG’s help in redoing the website and potentially the newsletter template and new email system. Moved by Jorge F; seconded by Arnd J PASSED

Adnan – a lot of Board members are very competent on digital matters and we will need lots of feedback on developing the site. He invites them to “tag along with me” on this project.

THINKING THROUGH A MORE EFFECTIVE SfP – Adnan reports
  a) There’s a need for Analytics and an understanding of what is working. For example, it’s possible to know how long someone remains watching a Youtube video. Perhaps 5000 people clicked on it but 2000 only watched it for 20 seconds. Analytics provide a more fine-grained picture of effectiveness. We need to ensure we have a proper set of data.
  b) Interns and mentorship: we’ve had good examples of how this might work. For instance, Eric Fawcett (SfP co-founder) mentored Walter Dorn, world leader on Cyber Warfare, inspirer of UN Panel of Experts on Technology and Innovation in Peacekeeping, etc

• There’s lots of space to do mentorship – it can be a core value and a way of contributing to U of T.
• We have to ask what activities can inspire a student – can we create a community feel, get interns to write blogs for the website or a short paper, or organize a panel of experts?
• We want interns to be inspired to become members and to be engaged – we have strong views – on nuclear weapons, NATO – and we want to animate them.
• We could create a 10 week program: collect applications for interns, develop a list of critical readings, set up biweekly touch base points, develop a celebration when they finish the program, a “graduation”

Discussion
Rob A. – the interns for the Nuclear Weapons WG have not yet been recruited. Janice is the best point of contact on this – VOW has had good interns
Richard S – we can use the experience with the Nuclear Weapons WG interns as a way of learning how to run intern programs

Sorpong P – someone has to play the role of internship coordinator or the program will be ineffective

Richard S – responds that Melisa will be playing a larger role and will coordinate interns

MOTION: to adopt the direction of Adnan’s report
Moved by Ellie K; seconded Arnd J
PASSED

Discussion on Richard’s report on priorities for the first and second term:

Jack P – a report is the way of moving a campaign along – when you make a statement, on NATO for example, the scientific authority comes from the report. The report is the “centre of gravity.” Someone needs to build a relationship with the press so that when a report comes out, we can have media impact.

Discussion ensues on extending the Climate Change campaign to include the broader environmental crisis, and broadening the Nuclear Weapons focus to encompass weapons of mass destruction in general.

Rob A – it’s the 75 anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and we can draw on the celebrations and speakers to build our campaign

MOTION: That we focus on Nuclear Weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the first term, and expand to Climate Change and the broader environmental crisis in the second, the executive to determine the exact formulations for these.

Moved: Jorge F; seconded Arnd J
PASSED

Adjournment

PROPOSED BOARD AGENDA
1 Approval of agenda
2. Approval of minutes
3. Executive roles – Judy and Richard
4. Brief introductions by board members
5. Statement of president
6. Enhancing our communication strategy - Adnan
7. Thinking through a more effective SfP – Adnan and Richard
   a) processes of recruitment, monitoring, evaluation of interns and members
   b) What is our contribution to U of T?
   c) Focusing SfP while remaining a forum on diverse issues
   d) program term 1: abolition of nuclear weapons
   E) program term 2: implementing a Green New Deal??
8. Role of Working Groups, blog posts Resources
9. Other business