



COVER SHEET

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Essay

One of the interesting aspects of Canadian politics and society is the wide commitment within Canada, both by civil society and government, to peace and to peace research and education. Evidence of this commitment is quite extensive. Canadian governments have a history of active promotion of the United Nations and United Nations programmes and policies, with the commitment to the United Nations programme for a culture of peace one recent example. Within Canadian foreign policy, there has been active support for and participation in international peacekeeping operations. In September 2000, the Canadian Government established the independent International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, in response to concerns from UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the importance of developing guidelines for international humanitarian intervention. There has been widespread popular support by Canadian citizens for United Nations programmes, such as the International Year for the Culture of Peace in 2000. UNESCO is the prime agency for encouraging education for peace and Canada has a highly active Canadian National Commission for UNESCO, actively encouraging citizens to become involved with UNESCO and UNESCO activities.

Within academia, there is a similar strong tradition of commitment to peace research and education. There are numerous peace research institutes and centres throughout Canada, with the most recent initiative being the planned Toronto Campus of the United Nations University for Peace (UPEACE). In 1966, Canadians involved in peace research formed the Canadian Peace Research and Education Association (CPREA) and since 1969 Canadians have supported a national academic journal within the field, namely the journal *Peace [19/20] Research: The Canadian Journal of Peace Studies*. What is particularly important, however, is the impact of individual Canadian academics within peace research. There is a strong Canadian intellectual tradition in peace research, marked by the work of scholars and writers such as Norman Alcock, Terrance Carson, Anne Goodman, Gerhard Köhler, Larry Fisk, M.V. Naidu, Alan and Hanna Newcombe, Anatol Rapaport, Douglas Roche and Toh Swee-Hin. An obvious question which arises is why there is such a strong tradition of peace education and research in Canada. This essay attempts to provide some possible answers to this question.

One of the interesting aspects of the Canadian emphasis on peace is that this tends to be downplayed by Canadians themselves. Alvin Finkel suggests a major concern in the role of Canada in United Nations peacekeeping missions was the attempt to reinforce the “image ... of an independent and peace-minded nation” (1997,121). Yet such a criticism may miss the overall significance of such a commitment. The point of the involvement, even if we do accept this as largely symbolic, is that the image of being independent and peace-minded is important in the Canadian national psyche. By way of contrast, such values are far less important in the Australian consciousness. Australia, at least as reflected in foreign policy, has tended to be much more closely linked with foreign powers and much more bellicose. Some years ago, military historian Thomas Millar remarked, with masterly understatement, that “Australia is not accustomed to taking independent decisions on matters vital to its own security” (1969,1) and that Australian soldiers regularly fought in overseas wars “whose bearing on the defence of Australia has not always been clear” (1969,183). Since that time,

with Australia's enthusiastic participation in the invasion of Afghanistan and Gulf Wars I and II, at the behest of the United States, it would seem that little has changed.

For Australia, the central role of war in the national psyche is underscored through the Gallipoli experience, that is, the Australian participation in the invasion of the Gallipoli peninsula in 1915. [20/21] The Gallipoli experience is regarded as the founding of Australian nationhood. Each year Anzac Day (April 25) commemorates the commencement of the invasion and is celebrated as a national day. As historian Charles Bean famously wrote, "it was on the 25th of April, 1915, that the consciousness of Australian nationhood was born" (1981,910). It is therefore not surprising that war memorials are central to the Australian townscape, reminding us, in the words of Jock Phillips (2001,675), of the "centrality of war in the Australian national identity". Clearly, Canada does have its war experience and remembrances. However, war is by no means central to the Canadian national identity. Moreover, there is the tradition of Canadian commitment to peace and peace issues which have been identified earlier in the essay. The central question, then, is what makes Canada so peace-minded, at least in comparative terms?

The first factor I want to suggest is the impact of the migration of significant numbers of war resisters to Canada during and after the period of the Vietnam War. As Joseph Jones points out, it is difficult to quantify the total number of war resisters who took refuge in Canada, although generally this is put between 70,000 and 125,000 (2005). Both Canadian and US governments had a vested interest in not publicising the extent of the migration - the USA for fear of publicising war resistance and the Canadians for fear of antagonising the USA. War resisters themselves understandably tended not to seek a high profile. Yet war resisters from the Vietnam-era would self-evidently be expected to be individuals highly motivated for peace. John Hagan, in his study of war resisters in Toronto, concludes that the majority of American war resisters in Canada became "committed, involved and persistent in their social and political activism" (2001,137). It is not surprising that these individuals would be at the forefront of a highly articulate peace movement in Canada.

If the impact of the migration of war resisters was a significant factor in encouraging the development of peace research in Canada, so too was the general impact of the Vietnam War. The foreign policy of Canada with regard to the US involvement in Vietnam was [21/22] ambiguous. Canada was a member of the International Control Commission for Vietnam and officially was not committed to the war. Yet Canada arguably was implicated in the war through numerous companies providing logistical support to the war effort and through the number of Canadians enlisting in the US forces to serve in Vietnam. Historian Fred Gaffen suggests that some 12,000 Canadians served with the US forces in Vietnam (1990). And, as was the case in other countries, the futility, brutality and injustice of this war, underscored by unprecedented media coverage and by dissident military personnel, encouraged a widespread commitment to seek to ensure that war is not a cyclical part of everyday experience. The origins of much contemporary peace research and education in Canada can be traced to the Vietnam War era.

A third possible factor in the emergence of Canadian peace research and education is the geographical proximity of Canada to one of the two global superpowers during the period of the Cold War. For Canadians, the proximity underscored the dangers of global nuclear confrontation and the importance of working to avoid this. I would argue that what made the Cold War experience of Canadians different to the experience of citizens of the USA is the

element of nationalism. For most citizens of the USA, the Cold War was always filtered through the lens of nationalism; the view that the USSR posed a specific threat to the USA as a nation. This sense of superpower rivalry was not relevant to the Canadian experience. Thus within Canada there was an atmosphere more conducive to developing a more critical approach to the notion of superpower politics and towards nuclear war, as well as more specifically towards the nationalism dominant within US foreign policy. In other words, the unique relationship of Canada to the USA encouraged the development of a more critical approach to power politics.

It is possible to identify individuals who have been prominent in peace research and education in Canada. In addition to those noted at the beginning of this essay, the former Prime Minister of Canada, Lester Pearson, was a staunch supporter of the United Nations. The [22/23] leadership of individuals, moreover, may be taken not merely as evidence of the prominence of peace research in Canada, but as one of the major causes. Normally there are powerful institutional forces acting against having peace research and education as an academic endeavour within any country. The nation-state is linked very much to the concept of violence, in that it is through military conquest that borders are often established and it is through the threat of military deterrence that the safety of borders is maintained. Moreover, peace research and education is an interdisciplinary endeavour and thus often implies a challenge to the established disciplines of academia. The very fact that those within academia may be positively disposed to peace may paradoxically make the formal establishment of peace research and education more difficult, as it is seen that such establishment is unnecessary. Under such circumstances the strength of purpose and vision of individuals in establishing peace research may be crucial.

The final identifiable factor is the importance of official government support. This may be by way of making funding available or by way of legitimating peace research through government policy. The planned establishment of the United Nations University of Peace in Toronto is an instance of both. The Canadian Government has designated funding for this operation and in doing so has also indicated the importance and legitimacy of peace research and education. Similarly, the World Peace Forum scheduled for 2006 has been supported by the Vancouver City Council. The interplay between government and social change may at times be a subtle one. Peace research and education is separate from government. Yet social pressure can work to change government policy and initiatives. Similarly, governments can support social change and social movements. It seems both have happened in Canada. There has been a strong movement for peace, which has impacted upon the Canadian Governments. This in turn has led to official government support which has assisted and nurtured the growth of peace research and education. [23/24]

What then are some lessons for Australia and New Zealand? I would suggest that organisation is a key to influencing both public and governmental opinion. For Australia, two important organisational initiatives would be the establishment of a national peace research and education organisation and reform of the Australian National Commission for UNESCO. For New Zealand the task is perhaps less daunting, as there is a more independent and peace-minded political tradition - indeed, one might well be tempted to draw parallels between the US-Canadian and the Australia-New Zealand relationships. For Australia, however, the challenge for the important task of encouraging a culture of peace is that the country remains highly nationalistic and links its identity very much with military involvement. However a specific and ongoing commitment to peace research and education is at least one way of

meeting that challenge.

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