

War and the Conscientious Objector

Papers of this conference were published in the 2007 issue of the *Journal of Mennonite Studies*.

On October 20 and 21, 2006, a history conference highlighted the experience of Canadian conscientious objectors in the Second World War. During this time about 60% of Mennonite men who were called to military service agreed with their church and refused to participate in active military service and opted rather for the alternative service program as negotiated by the Mennonite leaders with the Canadian Federal Government. This story, while reflecting Mennonite church teachings, has not been fully told. Many people know nothing or very little about the story, experience, and significance of the conscientious objectors, even in the Mennonite community. In fact it seems counter-cultural to talk about peace and alternatives to war in a time when media celebrates participation in the war and calls on us to remember and honor members in the armed forces and their actions.

This conference took a critical look at the experience of the Canadian conscientious objector in the Second World War, but also included speakers who have carried on that value and stance in recent times. The Conference invited speakers from BC to Quebec, from various Mennonite denominations as well as from the United Church, Jehovah's Witness, Quaker and Brethren in Christ denominations. In addition experts on pacifism in Canada, as well as university students, and actual COs spoke.

The Chair of Mennonite Studies hosted the lectures at the University of Winnipeg's Eckardt Gramatte Hall.

11:00-12:15 a.m.

Canada's Response

Chair: Esther Epp-Tiessen, MCCC, Winnipeg
Ken Reddig, Centre for MB Studies, "Judge Adamson and the Argument Against Conscientious Objection."
Andrew Friesen, Carlton University,
"Judge Embury and Canada's Mobilization Board."

12:00-1:00 p.m. Lunch

1:00-2:30 p.m.

Community Responses

Chair: Lois Coleman Neufeld, MCCC, Winnipeg
Betty Klassen, Abbotsford, BC "Alternative Service in BC."
Victor Kliewer, Winnipeg, MB,
"Experiences in Essex Kent, Ontario."
Laureen Harder Gissing, Waterloo, ON,
"One Photograph, Many Stories."

2:30-3:00 p.m. Coffee

Saturday p.m.: 3:00-4:45

Conscientious Objectors in Recent Times

Chair: John Derksen, Menno Simons College
Sam Steiner, Conrad Grebel,
"A Vietnam War Draft Dodger in Canada."
Lisa Martens, CPT Winnipeg,
"A CPT Member's Link to a WW II CO."
Jeremy Hinzmann, Toronto,
"A US Soldier's Rejection of the War on Iraq."

4:45-5:00 p.m.

Collecting the Voices

Paul Doerksen, MBCI

CONFERENCE MISCELLANEOUS

Conference Planning Committee: Conrad Stoesz, Chair; John Derksen, Esther Epp Tiessen, Royden Loewen, Hans Werner.

We Gratefully Acknowledge the Support of the Following: David and Katherine Friesen Foundation; Mennonite Central Committee Canada; Mennonite Historical Society of Canada; Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society; The University of Winnipeg; Canadian Mennonite University; D.F. Plett Historical Research Foundation.

The Conference was Organized by: The Divergent Voices of Canadian Mennonites (DVCM), a sub-committee of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada. Conferences in future years will include themes on: 1) Family and Sexuality, 2) Environmental Stewardship, 3) Mennonites, Mental Illness and Madness, 4) Money and Class Relations.

Selected Papers from this Conference: will be published in the 2007 issue of the *Journal of Mennonite Studies*. To subscribe email r.loewen@uwinnipeg.ca or phone 204-786-9391

Suggested Parking: (on Friday and Saturday) the Bus Depot and Hudson's Bay parkades off of Colony Street; coin-operated Imperial Parking lots around the University; coin-operated street parking; (on Saturday only) free parking on Lot E, to the south of Homer's Restaurant off of Young Street.

Food Services: food may be purchased at a dozen ethnic and fast-food restaurants within a block or two of the university or at Riddell Hall Cafeteria at The University of Winnipeg

Suggested Lodging: 360 Colony, Holiday Inn, Winnipeg, 204-786-7011; book in advance and ask for the Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg, conference rate.

Reflection: "I have fourteen grandchildren now, and I ask myself, 'What kind of world are they going to face?'...I have gone back to the Bible to restudy what it says about the responsibilities we have as peacemakers. I have seen that we must seek the good of the whole human race, and not just the good of any one nation or race." Billy Graham in *Sojourners Magazine*, March 1979.

War and the Conscientious Objector:

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

A Weekend
History Conference
20-21 October 2006
Eckhardt Gramatte Hall,
The University of Winnipeg

Hosted by: The Chair in
Mennonite Studies
www.uwinnipeg.ca/academic/as/mennstudies/

Sponsored by: Mennonite
Historical Society of
Canada (Divergent Voices),
Mennonite Central
Committee Canada,
Manitoba Mennonite
Historical Society.



CONFERENCE PROGRAM

During the Second World War, 10,000 Canadians refused to participate in active military service. Instead, they became conscientious objectors and sought the option of alternative service. Their story, having been largely relegated to short print-run books and contributions to archival collections, remains virtually untold.

This history conference highlights in particular the experience of Canadian Mennonite conscientious objectors during that time. These COs constituted about 60% of Mennonite men who were called to military service. This conference takes a critical look at this experience, considering its theological, gendered, and regional variations. It compares it to the experience of other religious groups and interprets it in today's context, a time in which war is widely offered as a way to peace, justice and democracy.

The story of the Second World War conscientious objectors offers one model of dealing with war in today's world and compels people to ask, "What is the right response today to war and violence?"

For more information on conscientious objectors visit www.alternativeservice.ca

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2006

8:30-8:35 a.m.

Introducing the Conference

Conrad Stoesz, Centre for MB Studies/Mennonite Heritage Centre

8:35-10:30 a.m.

Models of State and Church Negotiations

Chair: Pamela Leach, Canadian Mennonite University

Lawrence Klippenstein, Winnipeg,

"Revisiting the Russian-Era Forstei and Sanitaetdienst."

Abe Dueck, Winnipeg, "B.B. Janz and Mennonite Negotiations with the Government."

John H.A. Dyck, Trinity Western U, "Kanadier/Ruslaender Differences at Winkler, 1939"

10:30-11:00: Coffee

11:00-12:00 a.m.

Researching the Conscientious Objector

Chair: Hans Werner, University of Winnipeg

Conrad Stoesz, Centre for MB Studies/Mennonite Heritage Centre,

"Primary Sources for Researching the CO Experience."

John Derksen, Menno Simons College,

"Secondary Sources for Researching the CO Experience."

12:00-1:00: Lunch

1:00-2:40 p.m.

Gender and Race in the CO Experience in Canada

Chair: Alvina Block, University of Manitoba

Marlene Epp, Conrad Grebel,

"Mennonite Women and the CO Effort."

Leonard Doell, MCC Saskatchewan,

"COs in Northern Aboriginal Communities."

Lucille Marr, Montreal Mennonite Fellowship,

"Women, Wartime and Ontario MCC."

2:40-3:00: Coffee

3:00-5:00 p.m.

Religion and Conscientious Objection in the Wider World

Chair: Gerald Gerbrandt, Canadian Mennonite University

Koozma Tarasoff, Ottawa, "Doukhobors in World War II."

Jim Penton, U Lethbridge,

"Jehovah's Witness in World War II."

Gordon Toombs, U Manitoba, "The Social Gospel and the CO."

Tamara Fleming, U of Winnipeg, "Quakers in World War II."

7:00-8:30 p.m.

Voices for Peace: Keynote Address and Drama

Chair: Royden Loewen, Chair in Mennonite Studies

Welcome: Dr Alaa Abd-El-Aziz, University of Winnipeg

Thomas Socknat, University of Toronto, "Conscientious Objectors in the Context of Peace Movements in Canada."

Drama: "Mis(s)placed: Echoes of the Montreal River Conchie Camp" Written and Produced by Suzie Martin, University of Winnipeg

Reception: Hosted by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2006

Saturday a.m.: 8:30-10:30

Theological Bases

Chair: Sheila Klassen-Wiebe, Canadian Mennonite University

Tom Yoder Neufeld, Conrad Grebel,

"A Theological Basis for a Kind of Pacifism or Non-Violence."

Ken Bechtel, MC Saskatchewan, "Dispensational Theology of Key Swiss Mennonite Leaders and the Peace Position."

David Schroeder, Canadian Mennonite University,

"Theological Reflections of a Conscientious Objector."

10:30-11:00 a.m. Coffee/Cookies