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# Canadian universities and nuclear weapons - an appeal

**Please get involved in working for the abolition of nuclear arms.**

by *Pierre Jamin and Adele Buckley*

The attention of Canadian academics to nuclear weapons seems to have fallen from the radar at a time when nine countries maintain a Cold War mentality which threatens our existence: their 17,000 nuclear weapons represent a permanent danger of death or blackmail, since they could be launched by false alarms, faulty electronic short-circuits, human error or terrorist theft. A "limited war," involving only a few of these weapons, would destroy civilization, due to crop failure induced by long term residence of particulates in the upper atmosphere. The purpose of this article, written for our colleagues at Canadian universities, is to ask for your involvement towards the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Sixty years after President Eisenhower named the industrial-military complex as the biggest threat for world security, North American universities have, alas, become fertile ground for contracts with arms-selling corporations, such as Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman selling their F-35, armed drones and nuclear bombs. The [international web site](#) (PDF) reveals direct or indirect involvements by our university administrative boards. It isn't a surprise in a world where the five permanent members of the United Nations' Security Council still claim that nuclear weapons are "essential" for their security. The U.S. invests an estimated \$70 billion per year in their nuclear weapon business, despite President Obama's recent speech in Berlin, reiterating his famous 2009 Prague anti-nuclear speech. It would be easy to succumb to cynicism and inaction but instead, the academic community, individually and in groups, should be taking steps, like some of the models presented here, on international, American and Canadian levels.

## Numerous international players press for abolition of nuclear weapons

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has to be mentioned first for his 2008 Five Point Plan to eliminate nuclear weapons, his main motivation for accepting a second mandate at the helm of the UN. The first ever UN High Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament, to take place Sept. 26, 2013 in New York, will represent a very important occasion to support his efforts. Canadian Douglas Roche's [How We Stopped Loving The Bomb](#) (James Lorimer, 2011), with a foreword by Roméo Dallaire, is subtitled *An insider's account of the world on the brink of banning nuclear arms*. American historian Lawrence Wittner recognizes the effectiveness of nuclear weapons' opponents in his 2009 book [Confronting the Bomb](#) (Stanford University Press). The optimism of these scholars seems to be supported by the success of the March 2013 Oslo Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons. Despite a boycott by the Security Council's five permanent members, the Oslo conference was attended by 127 governments, thanks to the efforts of both the Norwegian government and the organizers of the [International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons](#) (ICAN). A follow-up meeting will be hosted by Mexico in early 2014.

Alyn Ware, Global Coordinator of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), has reported that "a new and exciting United Nations nuclear disarmament process got off to a very positive start in Geneva from May 14-24. The [Open Ended Working Group on Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations](#), established by the United Nations General Assembly, injected a breath of fresh air into the political environment that has for the past 17 years prevented any substantive work being undertaken by the Conference on Disarmament (CD)." These new developments were adopted without dissent in Istanbul, on July 3rd, by the [Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe](#) (OSCE), thanks to a submission by Uta Zapf PNND co-president and deputy leader of the German parliament delegation.

Concerned NGOs intend to shake the world into awareness. The [International Red Cross](#), always reluctant in engaging in political issues, has produced an alarming report, demonstrating that any nuclear war would have devastating consequences, overwhelming all medical facilities and doctors worldwide. The 1996 Advisory Opinion of the [International Court of Justice](#) stated that any use of nuclear weapons would be illegal since there would be disproportionate effects on the environment and on civilian populations, because they cannot be contained in time or space. The mere threat of using them, for example, by NATO or countries in possession of nuclear weapons, from Israel to North Korea, through India and Pakistan, as well as the P5, is punishable under International Humanitarian Law and binding Customary Law (Dr. John Burroughs, UN office of the International Association of Lawyers against Nuclear Arms).

Last autumn, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a global network of 800 parliamentarians from more than 80 countries, including members of the PNND, held their 127th meeting in Quebec City. A guide produced by Rob van Riet and Alyn Ware, called *Supporting Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament*, introduced at that meeting, will be distributed to Canadian university libraries.

A delegation from the [Abolition 2000 Global Network](#) visited the Clyde Naval Base in Faslane, Scotland this past April, where they released the [Faslane Declaration](#) (PDF). Their call on the U.K. to remove the nuclear weapons based in Scotland in Trident submarines, abandon nuclear deterrence and negotiate for global nuclear abolition was echoed by [A Declaration for Zero Nuclear Weapons](#) signed on March 6 by over half the members of the European Parliament.

A major new movement, [Global Zero](#), has presented a plan for eliminating nuclear weapons by 2030. The Nuclear Abolition Forum has given a space for scholarly dialogue on the process to achieve and sustain a nuclear weapons free world. Mayor Tomihisa Taue issued the Nagasaki 2013 Peace Declaration. The InterAction Council and the Middle Powers' Initiative, both grouping former heads of state and senior political leaders, support nuclear abolition. The list could go on and on against those weapons, last "used" in 1945, that cost so much, now targeted by strong opposition. But where are the voices of our universities and our faculty members?

## Even the United States is moving forward

Under the two Bush administrations, movement on nuclear disarmament went backwards, to the point of contemplating battlefield use of "small" nuclear weapons. Now, American voices promoting disarmament are growing stronger. PNND co-president Ed Markey was elected to the U.S. Senate on June 25, winning the Massachusetts seat vacated by John Kerry (now U.S. Secretary of State). He was always active on nuclear disarmament initiatives in the House of Representatives, most recently with the [Smarter Approach to Nuclear Expenditures](#) (SANE) Act of 2012 that aims to cut \$100 billion over next decade from U.S. nuclear weapons programs. Mr. Markey issued a strong statement: "Our current nuclear warheads and delivery systems are designed for winning the Cold War and do not reflect the threats we face today. Maintaining these outdated weapons costs hundreds of billions of dollars. When sequestration has led to a reduction in critical government services, (...) in Social Security and Medicare, education and research investment, we cannot continue to waste resources on the obsolete idea that a large nuclear arsenal keeps us safe."

These words seem bold to us because we do not remember speeches by former presidents John Kennedy in 1962 and Ronald Reagan in 1984<sup>1</sup>. On June 17, Russian President Putin and U.S. President Obama met, despite many conflicting views, with a common resolve to remove more nuclear weapons from their respective arsenal.

A group of well-known American actors recently produced [a video](#) denouncing nuclear bombs. The international 5,000 [Mayors for Peace](#) congratulated the U.S. Conference of Mayors for its unanimous adoption of a bold resolution on June 24 "calling for U.S. leadership in global elimination of nuclear weapons and redirection of military spending to domestic needs."

## Recent Canadian initiatives

Noted peace activist Murray Thomson, a former pilot during the Second World War, has collected 700 signatures from members of the Order of Canada (an example later followed by Order of Australia members), all pleading for their respective government to initiate an international meeting to set the groundwork for negotiating a Nuclear Weapons Convention. This plan calling for a universal verifiable treaty banning nuclear weapons surprisingly got unanimous consent in motions put forward in the Canadian Senate and the House of Commons.

Canadian peace activist groups, separately and jointly, have sponsored keynote speakers, symposia, and expert international meetings; resulting issue briefs have been delivered to the government of Canada, and op-eds have been in Canadian newspapers. PNND Canada – supported by NDP MP H  l  ne Laverdi  re, NDP critic for External Affairs Paul Dewar, leader of the Green Party Elizabeth May, Conservative MP Scott Armstrong and Liberal MP John McKay – has periodic seminars for politicians and government officials.

The Canadian Network for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons, with their Calgary-resident lawyer president Bev Delong, has intensified its action, supported by several member groups<sup>2</sup>. Its latest seminar on May 31 discussed Canada's role in building a nuclear weapons-free world. Department of Foreign Affairs officials provided a briefing on Canadian government activities.

There are seven Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZs), covering virtually all the southern hemisphere and parts of the northern hemisphere, in accordance with Article VII of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Canadian Pugwash, at its international expert workshop (Ottawa, October 2012), urged that non-nuclear circumpolar countries adopt policies leading to an Arctic NWFZ. The Nuclear Abolition Forum, the World Future Council and many civil society organizations support this.

But control of nuclear weapons as a main or subsidiary theme seems to be absent from any political sciences curricula across the nation. To our knowledge, only a few universities, including Western, Waterloo, Carleton and Ottawa, have professors with expertise. With its distinct pacifist tendencies, the province of Québec seems reluctant to tackle this "federal issue", a lame excuse for inaction, since a nuclear winter would affect every human being on earth, independent of any real or putative borders.

#### **In conclusion, an appeal**

In the last 12 years, university researchers have made immense technical progress in producing refined instruments and radars to make sure that, under the umbrella of the UN Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, no subterranean aborted nuclear explosion in North Korea can escape detection, nor can uranium enrichment in Iran go totally undetected by the (officially still un-adopted) Fissile Material Control Treaty.

We witness solidarity in many German and Japanese universities, where the antinuclear movement has gathered irresistible momentum. We cite "the UNESCO mission to build peace and security through better links between education, science and culture, to ensure universal respect for justice, law, human rights and fundamental liberties". Only with a strong civil society involvement, will humanity be able to beat the military-industrial-academic complex.

We therefore appeal to university colleagues – professors and students – to take action:

- **Become engaged** and up-to-date on issues concerning nuclear weapons, particularly their totally diminished value as strategic components for state security.
- **Take a stand**, as individuals and as academic groups and inform the government of Canada and the public of your concerns.
- **Advise your university** to avoid investment, directly or indirectly, in military industries.
- **Advise your university** to avoid academic "research" supported by military industries.
- **Ensure** that relevant political science courses have substantial content on nuclear arms control and disarmament.
- **Recognize** the expertise held by civil society groups and invite their experts as guest lecturers in class and in public seminars on campus.
- **Encourage** formation of student groups and assist them to find an academic adviser.

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1. "The world was not meant to be a prison in which man awaits his execution. Nor has mankind survived the tests and trials of thousands of years to surrender everything - including its existence - now. This Nation has the will and the faith to make a supreme effort to break the log jam on disarmament and nuclear tests -and we will persist until we prevail, until the rule of law has replaced the ever dangerous use of force." --- John F. Kennedy, 1962.

"People of the Soviet Union, there is only one sane policy, for your country and mine, to preserve our civilization in this modern age: a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. The only value in our two nations possessing nuclear weapons is to make sure they will never be used. But then would it not be better to do away with them entirely?" --- Ronald Reagan, 1984.

2. Such as Canadian Pugwash Group, Project Ploughshares, The Rideau Institute, Voice of Women for Peace, Physicians for Global Survival, Artists for Peace, Veterans Against Nuclear Arms, Science for Peace, Canadian Peace Alliance, Religion for Peace, United Nations Association – Canada, and the World Federalist Movement - Canada.

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