



## **GOOD NEWS SERVICE #25: EARLY SPRING, 2013**

March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013: PNND? A little-known international organization with a long name is virtually ignored by the political powers today, Headlines and lots of cash are available for those who frequent the meetings of the annual Group of Eight, and the Group of 20. Close attention is given to the annual Economic Forum, and increasingly to global forums on food, water, the environment and the military.

Not so for the Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non Proliferation and Disarmament, or PNND for short, But, sooner or later, it is likely to play an important role in ensuring humanity's future, if we are to have one.. Why is this ? Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, put it plainly:” *The core role of parliaments in ratifying treaties and adopting and implementing legislation gives them tremendous potential to extend the rule of law more deeply into the domain of disarmament*”. And without respect or regard for the rule of law all our efforts to ban weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, will likely come to naught.

In this issue of the Good News Service we have included accounts of the slow progress being made by the PNND internationally, including in Canada, led by its indefatigable global Coordinator, Alyn Ware.

## **1. PNND PROGRESSES SLOWLY ON SEVERAL FRONTS**

On 16 November 2012, PNND opened its new head office in Basel, Switzerland, as part of the Basel Peace Office. The other partners are the Middle Powers Initiative, the World Future Council, Global Security Institute, Swisspeace, IPPNW (Switzerland), University of Basel Sociology Department and the Canton of Basel. One of its first tasks, together with the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) was to host the launching of a **Parliamentary Handbook**, in English and French. The Handbook describes ways that parliamentarians can use it to inform and encourage them on finding ways to advance nuclear disarmament in their parliaments. The video includes parliamentarians from 23 countries.

The **ATOM Project (Abolish Testing Our Mission)**, is a new initiative to build global support for nuclear abolition. It was launched at the PNND annual assembly in Astana, Kazakhstan on the International Day Against Nuclear Tests. The Project highlights the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons – particularly the tests conducted in Kazakhstan that have adversely affected the health and lives of nearly 2 million people.

## **2. GLOBAL ZERO ACTION PLAN LAUNCHED BY 389 MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (MEP)s**

January 2013. From PNND UPDATE #33: PNND member Tarja Cronberg has joined with three other Members of the European Parliament to launch a written Declaration of Support for the Global Zero Action Plan, for the phased and verified elimination of all nuclear weapons worldwide. The Declaration, which currently has the support of 389 MEPs, “encourages the US and Russian governments to reduce their arsenals to a total of 1,000 nuclear weapons each, and to remove their tactical nuclear weapons from the continent of Europe.” The Declaration also “calls on all nuclear weapons countries to participate in multilateral negotiations on the phased and verified elimination of all nuclear weapons worldwide, and the establishment of a verification system that includes intrusive, unrestricted inspections.”

### **3. NEW ECONOMY MOVEMENT EMERGING IN THE US**

January 2013: from “Yes!” Magazine: Social pain and anger at ecological degradation and the inability of traditional politics to address deep economic failings has fuelled an extraordinary amount of practical, on-the-ground institutional innovation by activists, including economically and socially minded business leaders across the US.

A vast democratized “new economy” is slowly emerging throughout the US. The general public, however, knows almost nothing about it because the American press does not cover the developing institutions and strategies. For instance, a sample assessment of coverage between January and November 2012 by the most widely circulated newspaper in the US, the *Wall Street Journal*, found ten times more references to caviar than to employee-owned firms, a growing sector of the economy that involves more than \$800 billion in assets and 10 million employee-owned firms – around 3 million more individuals than are members of unions in the private sector.

Worker ownership was mentioned in a mere five articles. By contrast, over 60 articles referred to equestrian activities like horse-racing, while golf clubs appeared in 132 pieces over the same period. Millions of Americans are members of cooperatives and co-op credit unions. The year 2012 was designated by the UN as the International Year of Cooperatives – an institution with more than one billion people world wide.

### **4. ONTARIO PLANS COMPLETE PHASE-OUT OF COAL PRODUCTION BY END OF 2014**

Jan. 13, 2013. Newmarket, ON. by Gideon Forman: At a Jan. 10<sup>th</sup> press conference, Premier Dalton McGuinty declared that the province would close its massive southern Ontario coal plants a year earlier than planned – a crucial step on the way to 2014’s complete phase-out of this dirtiest of fossil fuels. Though Ontario’s coal abolition may be uninteresting to journalists, health professionals believe it is an accomplishment of national and even global importance.

Consider the position of other provinces. According to the latest Pembina Institute figures, coal provides Alberta with almost 75% of its electricity, In Saskatchewan the figure is over 60%. Even in Nova Scotia, which has a strong commitment to renewables, more than 60% of its power is coal-fired. Pembina says Ontario will be the first jurisdiction on the continent to retire a coal-generating capacity in its entirety.

### **5. CHINA UPGRADES ITS “ECOLOGICAL PROGRESS”**

From Corporate Knights Winter 2013. China's ruling party appears to be getting serious about addressing the country's environmental problems – so much so that it amended its constitution in November to give ecological progress the same priority as economic, political, cultural and social progress. Achim Steiner, exec. director of the UN Environment Programme, hailed the development as an important step with global implications.

## **6. HUMANE FARMING IN AUSTRALIA: FACTORY FARMS ON THE WAY OUT?**

Sydney, Australia. From the Good News Page, CCPA Monitor. Compiled by Elaine Hughes: In one of history's most stunning victories for humane farming, Australia's largest supermarket chain, Coles, as of January 1<sup>st</sup>, stopped selling company-branded pork and eggs from animals kept in factory farms. As an immediate result, 34,000 mother pigs will no longer be kept in stalls for long periods of their lives, and 350,000 hens will be freed from cages.

Not to be outdone, the nation's other dominant supermarket chain, Woolworth's, has already begun phasing out factory-farmed animal products. In fact, all of Woolworth's house-brand eggs are now cage-free, and by mid 2013 all of their pork will come from farmers who operate stall-free farms. Coles and Woolworth's together account for a dominant 80% of all supermarket sales In Australia. -- *Common Dreams*

## **7. FIRST POST-TALIBAN ORCHESTRA IN AFGHANISTAN PLAYS VIVALDI IN CARNEGIE HALL**

Jan. 29/13. Al-jazeera Network via Randy Weekes: In a crowded rehearsal room at Afghanistan's National Institute of Music, the country's first post-Taliban orchestra prepared for its international debut. Conductor William Harvey took the musicians through their paces, practising the "Four Seasons of Afghanistan", adapted from Vivaldi's Four Seasons. "It's based on the original Four Seasons", he said, "but also includes Afghan instruments, the rubab, sitar, tanbur, dilruba, gilchak and tabla."

The Taliban did its best to silence these instruments by banning music when it took control in 1996, burning instruments in public. Dr. Ahmad Sarmast says those days will never come back. The first Afghan to earn a Ph.D in music, he founded the Afghanistan National Institute of Music. "We want to use music as a source for social changes and for building bridges between our country and our friends outside of Afghanistan", he says.

"Your bird sounds tired", Harvey tells the pianist. "He needs coffee to wake him up".

The other musicians giggle. Harvey leads, pleads and cajoles them in a mixture of English and Dari. He waves his arms and brandishes his baton, keeping time to the score. His classical Vivaldi is about to give way to an Afghan passage. But he brings it all to a halt when a musician misses his cue. “Sitar, koja asti? he asks. “Sitar, where are you?” They start over from the beginning.

The musicians are confident they will be ready for a US concert tour including the Kennedy Centre in Washington and Carnegie Hall in New York. As the orchestra breaks for lunch, children, teenagers and staff spill into the halls, many with instruments tucked under their arms or slung over their shoulders. They each collect a plastic bag with a Styrofoam container of rice and cooked meat. Everyone eats the same lunch. In a rare quiet moment, conductor, arranger, and music teacher Harvey reflect on the impending US tour. “Music has come back to the only country in living memory where it was banned entirely. And that’s a cause for celebration!”

“After the Vivaldi arrangement, I’ll leave the stage, and they will play Shakoko Jan”, he says, a traditional Afghan song written by Salim Samast, the school founder’s father. Harvey thinks his departure from the stage will be symbolic. “To see this American conducting the orchestra; then he walks off, and then the Afghans lead themselves. I think that’s the model for the reconstruction of Afghanistan.”

## **8. A NEW KIND OF LEADER FOR MALAWI**

Feb, 25/13. Ottawa Citizen, by Robert Rotberg: When President Joyce Banda decided last month to sell the fancy official jet that her male predecessor had purchased wantonly in 2011, all Malawi cheered. International donors were relieved and another spike was driven into the ostentatious and irresponsible masculine manner of leading impoverished African states. President Banda promised to devote the savings from the sale of the jet to poverty reduction.

In October, she cut her official salary back by 30% to a mere \$42,000 a year, saying “we have a nation to build”. Previously, President Banda sacked a national police chief who was widely feared and disliked, and who had enforced many of her predecessor’s more authoritarian actions. The minister of information was discharged after she called Banda “unqualified”. One of Banda’s first acts last year was to promise to arrest President Omar al-Bashir of the Sudan, indicted as a war criminal by the International Criminal Court if he came to Malawi. She also overturned her predecessor’s curbs on the media, welcoming transparency...

President Banda says she intends to uplift Malawi in sustainable ways, to minimize the corruption which has long sapped the national vitality, to diversify the economy, to build roads and to demonstrate that a woman can lead Malawi with integrity and dignity toward prosperity for all.

## **9. TO-DAY'S YOUNG & SOCIALLY AWARE; THREE MORE EXAMPLES**

June 5, 2012, Toronto Globe & Mail via Globe Life. Here are three more examples of socially conscious Canadian youth with a heightened sense of community concern.

**1) Jaxson Khan, 18, Mississauga, ON:** As co-founder of The Student Voice initiative, a national movement that aims to get students more involved in the educational decision-making process, Jaxson Khan believes young people have an important voice that needs to be heard. "A lot of youth just need a spark to get going, but they also need a venue", says Mr. Khan, the CEO of The Ontario Student Trustees Assn. (OSTA), and past president of the Gay-Straight Alliance in his high school. Through OSTA, he also became an advocate for youth mental health, and with mental health experts and educators from across Ontario helped co-author the Student Charter of Rights: Children and Youth Mental Health and Well Being.

### **2) KELLY LOVELL, 19, CAMBRIDGE, ON**

Volunteering often gets a bad rap with young people, but Kelly Lovell set out to change that last year with an original youth volunteerism campaign called Passion for Progress P4P). A City Youth Ambassador, Ms. Lovell successfully launched the initiative as an inter-school competition that got students in nine high schools in the Kitchener-Waterloo area volunteering for activities that matched their interests. Next, inspired by the power of a dollar in developing countries, she created Dollars for Dreams (D4D) to help children in Africa. With the Ontario government matching the money, Ms. Lovell and her team raised \$4,000, which was donated to Save the Children, a non-profit organization.

Ms. Lovell is taking a dual degree in biomedical science and honours business at the University of Western Ontario. She is also a recipient of the Ontario Newcomer Champion Award, given by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

**3) Danny Huang. 18, Edmonton.** University student Yuhao (Danny) Huang is driven to better the physical and mental health of others. He is intent on defeating

cancer. In Grade 11, Mr. Huang and fellow students became involved in prostate cancer laboratory research at the university. A year later, his role in a project focusing on the progression of cancer earned him and a fellow student the Best Project Award at the 2011 Canada-wide Science Fair, as well as other honours. Mr. Huang later co-authored a chapter on the progression of prostate cancer that's included in the peer-reviewed textbook *Prostate Cancer: From Bench to Bedside*. He also spearheaded the founding of the Kids Help Phone Student Committee, the first student chapter in Edmonton of the Crisis Hotline. The committee works with Kids Help Phone at the U of Alberta in fund raising and outreach events to help better the mental health of youth.

## **10. OSLO CONFERENCE ON HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS ATTRACTS 127 GOVERNMENTS**

MARCH 13/13: OSLO. FROM TIM WRIGHT: On March 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Norway hosted an international conference on the humanitarian impact and consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. Whether intentional or accidental, a nuclear explosion could have catastrophic short and long term humanitarian, economic, developmental and environmental effects, with global implications.

This is the first time that governments had come together to discuss this issue from a humanitarian, rather than political perspective. The five largest nuclear powers boycotted the conference; this only meant that the discussion became much more focused. There was now a clear sense that non-nuclear weapon states must take the lead in outlawing the use, production and possessing of nuclear weapons, and establishing a framework for their elimination. Mexico announced that it would host a follow up meeting.

## **11. SHELL ABANDONS 2013 ARCTIC DRILLING**

Christy Ferguson, Arctic Campaigner for Greenpeace, has announced that Shell has just announced it will abandon its Arctic drilling program in 2013. She writes from Greenpeace Canada:

“It is clear that Shell’s multi-billion dollar Arctic investment lies in tatters, along with its reputation. The power of our movement combined with a series of dangerous

mistakes have finally forced Shell to face the fact that it cannot operate safely in the Arctic. But there is still a long way to go. Shell has paused its Arctic plans but not stopped for good. Companies like BP and Exxon still want to drill in Canada's Arctic

"We will take this opportunity to push even harder to protect the Arctic by demanding a ban on offshore oil drilling and the creation of a permanent sanctuary in the area around the North Pole. We have started a huge global movement to oppose Shell and save the Arctic."

## 12. "HONESTY SHOPPING" THE BRITISH WAY

February 2013, CCPA Monitor's Good News Page, compiled by Elaine Hughes: London's unique Honesty Shop is bringing out the best in people and raising money for charity. The Honesty Shop is a retail experience with a difference. Located in a 50 year old double-decker bus in the docks area next to the Tower of London, it's a shop with no staff, where payments are made in "honesty envelopes" placed into a custom-made letterbox.

The Shop sells a range of British-made souvenirs, knitted clothing, toys, gardening tools and kitchen ware. The items are all priced; the idea is that customers are ethical enough to add the correct money to an honesty envelope and post it into the letterbox without being asked. "Bus conductor" Barnaby, who manages the stock, sits upstairs to keep an eye on the proceedings just in case, and looks after the shop's social media campaigns. --from *Economics and Innovation*

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