



GOOD NEWS SERVICE #27: JULY-AUG 2013

July 1, 2013: Sunset over a summer lake. It's summertime again and our beautiful natural world seems to be telling us something. Can we hear it? Meanwhile, the human struggle of ideas continues. In this issue there is a story about a church and a mosque, one in which kindness trumps hostility. The author of the story asks the reader: Which works better in volatile conflict situations, such as in Pakistan today, good neighbourliness or the use of drones? What's going to

win the hearts and minds of people in that embattled country of 166 million people, who had nothing to do with 9/11 but who know a lot about drones? What's going to make them and all of us safer: more drones, more nukes, more tanks, more "boots on the ground"? Or, no drones, no nukes, no tanks - but lots more food, more health, more trust, more disarmament?

1. OBAMA PLEDGES ONE-THIRD CUT IN NUKES IF RUSSIANS CUT, TOO

June 20/13. Berlin via Toronto Globe & Mail. By Julie Pace: Summoning the harsh history of this once-divided city, President Barack Obama pledged to cut the United States deployed nuclear weapons by one-third if Cold War foe Russia does the same. Speaking against the soaring backdrop of the Brandenburg Gate, Mr. Obama said that "bold reductions" by the US and Russian nuclear forces were needed to move the two powers away from the war posture that continues to seed mistrust between their governments.

Despite this welcome development, Elaine Grossman on the Global Security Newswire reported that the President directed the Defence Department to hang onto some notable mainstays of the Cold War. The guidance on a nuclear employment strategy re-affirms American commitment to core Cold War posture characteristics, such as counterforce targeting and retaining a triad of strategic nuclear forces. Also to be retained are the 200 non-strategic nuclear weapons in five countries of Europe. The term counterforce is Pentagonese for nuclear attacks against an enemy nation's atomic weapons delivery systems.

2. UN OPEN ENDED WORKING GROUP (OEWG) OFF TO GOOD START

June 4, 2013. Basel Peace Office, by Alyn Ware: A new UN nuclear disarmament process got off to a positive start in Geneva, from May 14-24. The Open Ended Working Group, on taking forward nuclear disarmament negotiations established by the UN 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),

the world's primary multilateral disarmament negotiating body. The delegates discussed key issues of establishing the framework and undertaking negotiations for a nuclear-weapons-free world.

The chairman, Ambassador Manuel Dengo, organized the first two weeks primarily as informal sessions, rather than formal sessions seeking government positions. Delegates could open up by asking questions and discussing undeveloped ideas without feeling bound by any comments made.

Another refreshing aspect of the OEWG was the openness to civil society organizations to participate in the same way as the government delegates. They were not confined to the usual practice of only being able to make comments and interventions in a special session dedicated to their views. Now they could intervene with questions, reflections and proposals just like any government. The next session will be held in June and the final one in August.

In addition, there was a special session on the role of parliaments and parliamentarians in promoting and supporting multilateral negotiations for a nuclear weapons free world. It was organized by the Inter Parliamentary Union and Parliamentarians for Nuclear NonProliferation and Disarmament.

3. US CONFERENCE OF MAYORS CALLS FOR U.S. TO LEAD GLOBAL EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE ALL NUKES AND REDIRECT SPENDING TO DOMESTIC NEEDS

June 26/13, via Jackie Cabasso, North American Coordinator, Mayors for Peace: The US Conference of Mayors, at its 81st annual conference, adopted a unanimous resolution calling for U.S. leadership in the global elimination of nuclear weapons, and redirecting military spending to domestic needs. The Resolution, introduced by Akron Mayor Donald Plusquellic, a former Vice President of Mayors for Peace, with 29 additional sponsors, was adopted on the heels of President Obama's June 19 Berlin speech. It highlighted several important new multilateral disarmament initiatives not mentioned by Obama in Berlin. It called on the President and the U.S. Government to demonstrate good faith by constructive participation in those initiatives, namely: 1. The first ever

High-Level Meeting of the UN General Assembly on nuclear disarmament, to be held on September 26, 2013 at U.N Headquarters in New York; 2. A UN Open Ended Working Group (OEWG), described in item #2, above; 3. A follow-on Conference to the February Oslo Conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, to be hosted by Mexico in early 2014. The US Conference of Mayors expressed deep concern that both the May session of the new UN disarmament working group and the Oslo conference took place without the participation of the U.S, or the other four nuclear-armed Permanent Members of the UN Security Council.

Mayors for Peace, an international organization, founded in 1982, now has 5,645 cities in 156 countries and regions, with nearly 200 U.S. members – in all, representing some one billion people.

4. GRANDMOTHERS ADVOCACY NETWORK BECOMING GLOBAL FORCE FOR PEACEFUL CHANGE

June 21/13. Ottawa. By Peggy Edwards: A Grandmothers Advocacy Network connects grandmothers in Canada with those in sub Sahara Africa whose families have suffered terrible losses from HIV/AIDS and civil wars. These courageous women have buried their own children and are now raising the majority of the 14 million children and young people who have been orphaned by AIDS, more than all the children in Canada and Norway combined.

Grandmother groups across Canada work with the Stephen Lewis Foundation to support projects led by African grandmothers. The Grandmothers Advocacy Network also advocates for change in policies and treaties in Canada and international forums that promote development, health and social justice for all. African grandmothers talk about the importance of human connections at all levels. They call it “Ubuntu”, meaning “I am because you are”.

When one thinks about actors or movements for global peace, older women do not immediately come to mind. This might also apply to mayors of cities whose primary concerns run to street lights, roads, sewers, transport and other local needs. But in August, 1945, two terrible happenings reduced two Japanese cities

to radioactive rubble, and out of their ashes Mayors for Peace was born. Today, more than 5,000 cities have endorsed the call for the abolition of nuclear weapons, and the movement continues to grow (see item #3, above).

If mayors, then why not grandmothers? asks the Grandmothers Advocacy Network. Though the focus is very different, the purpose of both movements is to affirm and preserve a common humanity: I am, because you are. Ubuntu!

To learn more, contact: Grandmothers Advocacy Network:

www.grandmothersadvocacy.org

Also: Grandmothers Campaign www.grandmotherscampaign.org

5. STORY OF A MOSQUE AND A LITTLE CHURCH IN MEMPHIS

By Jim Wallis, founder of *Sojourners*, which challenges people to think first of justice for the poor and oppressed: In a suburb of Memphis, Tennessee, a little church called “Heartsong” learned that an Islamic cultural centre was coming to their neighborhood. So Pastor Steve Stone, aware of latent hostility toward Muslims, put out a big sign on the front lawn of the church: “Welcome, Memphis Islamic Centre”. The Muslims were astonished: “Why are you welcoming us?” they asked. “Jesus said we should welcome our neighbours; we hear you are going to be our neighbours, so welcome, neighbours!

Before long, the church pork barbecue is serving halal meat, the kids are playing with each other and the adults are tutoring inner city kids and feeding the homeless together. On CNN, the imam and the pastor are featured guests and you can tell they have real affection for each other. Then the pastor called to say he heard from a group of Muslim men, who had come from the violence-racked part of Kashmir-Pakistan, and who had seen the segment on CNN. One of the Muslim men had gone to the little church and “had cleaned and scrubbed it, outside and inside both. And we called to tell your congregation, Pastor, we don’t hate you, we love you. And because of what you did, for the rest of our lives we’re going to help take care of that little church.”

6. VANCITY, IN 2013 “THE BEST CORPORATE CITIZEN IN CANADA”

The Vancouver City Savings Credit Union is the top dog in *Corporate Knights'* annual Best 50 rankings for 2013.

“We are a different kind of financial institution”, said Tamara Vrooman, its chief executive. “We are a financial cooperative and we are owned by the people we serve. So we are very much in tune with the needs and desires of our members and the communities in which they live.”

Vancity ranked especially high in narrowing the gap between the pay of senior executives and other employees; the strength of its pension fund, and the diversity of its board and management.

Financing low-income housing makes up a sizable part of its business. And it has not shied away from taking sides on hot-button issues. Two years ago it joined the Global Alliance for Banking on Values (GABV), a Netherlands-based group of 22 financial institutions which “have a shared commitment to find global solutions to international problems – and to promote a positive, viable alternative to the current financial system.”

Vrooman insisted that Vancity’s focus on social responsibility “not only builds better communities, but also builds a better bank.” She pointed to a study published last year by the GABV and the Rockefeller Foundation which showed that a group of 17 “sustainable” banks outperformed 29 traditional global heavyweights on almost every measure, including return on assets, growth in loans and deposits, and capital strength. “It’s because we’re more directly connected to the people we serve”, she said. We don’t grow at a pace that the community can’t withstand, or the planet can’t withstand.”

7. BIGGEST U.S. RALLY ON CLIMATE MOVES THE ISSUE FORWARD

Yes! Magazine, Summer 2013. On Feb. 17, approximately 50,000 people gathered on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. for “Forward on Climate!”, the largest climate change rally in US history.

Supporters held solidarity rallies in 28 cities across the United States on the same day...The demonstrators urged President Obama to follow through on the commitment to tackle climate change he made in his State of the Union address, to set carbon standards for power plants, and to deny permission for the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline.

Robin Harper attended Forward on Climate as a member of Earth Quaker Action Team. He said he was impressed by the “spirit of creativity” at the rally, and compared it to the March on Washington he attended in 1963, saying both had a similar feeling of urgency.

8. CRAIK, SASKATCHEWAN: THE GREENEST TOWN IN CANADA

Craik, SK. From *CCPA Monitor*, May 2013, compiled by Elaine Hughes: A *Reader’s Digest* competition has cited the central Saskatchewan community of Craik as the greenest town in Canada. It’s an honour which doesn’t surprise residents of Craik’s eco-village. They have long since been trying to serve as a model for sustainability and environmental stewardship, with wind turbines, solar panels, straw bale and clay houses and other sustainability projects. But Craik’s eco-village is about more than just sustainability; it’s also about creating a less toxic environment.

“I lost my first wife to cancer,” said resident Kelly Taylor-Faye. “She was just 30 years old. And when I remarried with Audrey, we decided we had to live in a healthier environment and with a healthier life-style.” The Taylor-Fayes have lived in the eco-village of Craik with their two sons since 2006. They produce homemade soaps and body products and live off the grid in a home made from natural building products. Their neighbour, Brent Krueger, says that a lifestyle of using less and eating what you produce tends to become “addictive”.

9. ECO-FRIENDLY HOUSING COSTS DOWN IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

CCPA Monitor. June 2013. Compiled by Elaine Hughes: South Shields, UK. Residents living in the most eco-friendly social development housing in the UK,

are reporting huge reductions in their energy bills. Sinclair Meadows was launched six months ago, and already the average costs have been cut by 75%. One of the first things you notice is the light, woody scent coming from the timber-clad homes which are facing the sun. The solar panels, together with a boiler that runs on recycled wood pellets, provide the 21 properties with all the energy they need.

Inside, the toilets use rainwater, and there are vents which take in a room's heat and re-circulates it around the home. Each kitchen has an energy monitor that shows how much energy is being used and how much it costs. Early findings from this two-year experiment indicate that house bills are down to about 30 pounds per month, compared to 30 pounds per week in an average UK home. The housing experiment itself is due to end in 2014, but residents say they plan to stay here for many years to come. – *BBC News*

10. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT SIGNED INTO U.S. LAW

Yes! Magazine, Summer of 2013. By Katrina Rabeler: After nearly two years of debate in Congress, steady advocacy from the Department of Justice, and intense pressure from activists, the updated Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was signed into law on March 7, 2013... One important new provision of the VAWA is that it grants tribal courts authority to prosecute non-natives in cases of domestic assault on reservations. Previously, federal courts held exclusive jurisdiction on reservations, but they did not have the resources to pursue domestic violence cases effectively.

According to Department of Justice Statistics, Native American women are more than twice as likely to be victims of sexual assault as other women in the United States. Non-native men commit more than 80% of those crimes; 65% of reported rapes on reservations go unprosecuted, most assaults against native American women are unreported, and sexual predators and sex traffickers are often attracted to tribal lands...So the updated VAWA addresses the problems of sex trafficking and sexual assault through new funding to tribal non-profits, research and legal aid. The Department of Justice will help tribes implement their new jurisdiction, which will take effect in two years.

11. FAIR TRADE COFFEE SOARS IN CANADA AND THE U.S.

Oakland, CA, June 2013, CCPA Monitor, via Planet.org: Coffee beans from farms certified as environmentally and socially responsible by Fair Trade USA and the Rainforest Alliance reached a record high last year. Production of Rainforest Alliance certified coffee rose to 4.5% of global output in 2012, up from 3.3% in 2011. Certified Fair Trade imports to the United States and Canada rose to a record high in 2012, up 18% from 2011.

Much of the recent growth of certified coffee was attributed to significantly larger quantities purchased by large companies, such as McDonald's, Second Cup, and Green Mountain. McDonald's in the US recently began sourcing 100% of its espresso beans from Rainforest Alliance certified farms.

12. NORTHERN QUEBEC CREE ENACT A URANIUM MINING MORATORIUM

Spring 2013, *Turning Point*, a Quarterly of Physicians for Global Survival: The Grand Council of the Cree, representing all 10 Cree communities in Northern Quebec, has enacted a permanent moratorium on uranium mining in its territory.

This follows a temporary moratorium announced by the Marois government of Quebec, pending an independent study on the social and environmental impacts of mining uranium.

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