



Science for Peace

September 30, 2021

President's Column



Dear Members,

We've been busy over the summer.

The Action Plan Committee met four times in August, in various parks in the city, to devise a draft strategic plan. Board member Glenys Babcock, who has professional experience in strategic planning, instigated the process, though she did not attend the final meeting. Board directors Danny Harvey, Elie Kirzner and Richard Sandbrook rounded out the committee. The plan works back from long-term outcomes (30 years) to medium-term outcomes (10 years) to short-term outcomes (five years) to arrive at a set of priorities in the "decisive decade". Board members are currently commenting on the draft. We will seek your input soon.

We've announced the Blumenthal Peace Essay Contest (see below for details) The Blumenthal Fund has languished during the past few years. Now, it is coming to life. Boosted by a bequest from the estate of long-time member Eryl Court, the fund will offer a prize of \$500 for the best essay, in English or French, written by an undergraduate student on the topic of Canada's accession to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Do please publicize the contest, if you have access to prospective contestants.

Tom Deligiannis is heading a committee to organize a virtual university student symposium on the dangers of nuclear weapons. Our two interns this term, along with Samantha Tristen of the SFP Campus Group, are working with Tom. What makes this project more exciting is that Voice of Women for Peace is co-sponsoring it. The preliminary meeting with student leaders to arrange the format of the symposium is to be held in late October. The

symposium will take place in late January. Again, do what you can to publicize this event among undergraduates and masters students.

Board member Michel Duguay continues to be the most prolific member in sharing his insights via the SfP blog. Thanks for that, Michel, and may others follow your example. You can find a link to Michel's reflections on Elton Musk and Tesla below.

In all, we enter the fall with several projects in hand. Do continue to support us in whatever way you can.

Richard Sandbrook
Professor Emeritus of Political Science
University of Toronto

Upcoming Events

Student Forum on Reducing the Dangers of Nuclear Weapons

The forum will be a student-led initiative, guided by an advisory panel of experts and activists working on nuclear issues. In late October, a steering committee meeting of interested student participants will convene virtually to help plan the forum and its agenda.

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2021 Blumenthal Peace Essay Contest on Reducing the Dangers of Nuclear Weapons

How can humanity reduce the dangers and risks of nuclear weapons? As the world grapples with the Covid pandemic and an increasingly serious global climate crisis, thousands of nuclear weapons remain in arsenals around the world. Many of these weapons are ready to be launched within minutes, threatening humanity with nuclear catastrophe.

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Recent Activities

100 Debates on the Environment September 9, 2021

Find out what commitments our Toronto-St. Paul's candidates are making to create a net zero emissions future, safeguard the environment, build a green and just recovery from COVID-19, and further national Indigenous healing and reconciliation.





SCIENCE FOR PEACE

Recent Articles



Michel Duguay: Tesla, SpaceX, and the Quest for a Fantastic Future: A Review

In *Elon Musk, Tesla, SpaceX, and the Quest for a Fantastic Future*, science writer Ashlee Vance has described a prodigy who has revolutionized three industries at once – space-capable rockets, electric cars and solar energy. Elon Musk is now one of the wealthiest men on the planet. His electric car company, Tesla, is now producing about 800,000 cars yearly.

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Science for Peace: 10 Things You Need to Know about Nuclear Weapons

WARNING: The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has moved the hands of the doomsday clock to 100 seconds to midnight (human extinction) because of the risks of nuclear war and climate disruption.

ORIGINS: Nuclear weapons were developed by the US, UK, and Canada in the Manhattan Project in World War II. The US dropped a 15 kiloton atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, on 6 August 1945, and a 21 ktn bomb on Nagasaki on 9 August, causing an estimated 214,000 deaths, and excruciating injuries by radiation.

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Focus on Members



Why I am a member of Science for Peace

Arnd Juergensen

I have been a member of Science for Peace just over three years now. I was introduced to S4P by the late, long-time member, Margrit Eichler, who after a talk I gave elsewhere, on the demise and corruption of international law, asked me if I would give the same presentation to Science for Peace. Although I had heard of and admired S4P I knew relatively little about it. Looking over the distinguished list of members, I have to confess, made me rather nervous about my presentation but to my delight, I found the experience immensely rewarding. Those attending seemed very attentive to my talk and the questions and discussion afterward demonstrated their profound knowledge and experience in matters of war and peace, earned through decades of being active in the peace movement. This impressed me all the more since most of those in attendance were not experts in international relations or political science but from numerous disciplines. The insights they offered enriched my understanding and appreciation for the challenges we face in moving toward a more peaceful world. I have been a member ever since.

Today we face at least three overlapping, existential crises: militarism, the climate crisis and the collapse of biodiversity. While interrelated in many complex ways, these are separate threats, in that solving one will not

eliminate the others. Climate change is certainly exacerbating the decline of species in countless ways. However, stopping climate change (if that can be done) would not stop other drivers of mass extinction, such as the destruction of habitat, pesticide/chemical pollution and overfishing of oceans. Militarism is likewise one of the main drivers of climate change (the Pentagon being the largest institutional user of fossil fuels on the planet), but eliminating it and the nuclear weapons that directly threaten our existence will not solve the climate crisis. It goes without saying that overcoming the biodiversity and climate change crises will not create peace on earth, though it may diminish some of the drivers of conflict, like migration.

Addressing any of these threats in a meaningful way will require levels of cooperation among the nations of the world for which there is little precedent. Through the efforts of individual citizens (especially Greta Thunberg) and groups (especially Extinction Rebellion), there is growing awareness of the dangers of climate change and mass extinction in the global public. Yet governments and corporate elites lag far behind. The dangers of nuclear weapons and militarism by contrast, have gotten far less attention since the end of the last “cold war”. Yet it is the rise of militarism and the developing new “cold war” between the U.S. and China that makes the cooperation necessary to deal with climate change and biodiversity collapse so difficult to achieve. With the globe dividing into hostile camps and national budgets being devoted to expanding the military, investment in building carbon neutral infrastructures or setting aside nature reserves shrinks. Thus, even if this rise in military competition does not result in war and nuclear winter, we are still in deep trouble. We are indeed in the “decisive decade” that, if wasted on geopolitical competition, will doom us to runaway climate change and ecological collapse.

It’s in this context that the importance of Science for Peace is most clear to me. As our name suggests, we above all aim to put the members’ scientific expertise in the service of promoting peace. Our efforts to highlight climate change are not a departure from this goal, but an attempt to draw attention to the extent that the former too is a threat to peace. It is a threat to our collective survival as a species on this planet that should unite us in a common struggle regardless of citizenship, ethnicity or race. Instead, we see a return of hostile military alliances and “cold war”. This rise in militarism is to a considerable extent facilitated by a media environment in which coverage of international affairs is driven by government and corporate interests closely connected to military institutions.

As for Canada’s role at this critical juncture, it is telling that in our most recent elections foreign policy issues were rarely mentioned, either by party leaders or the press. Where was discussion of Canada’s role in raising tensions with China, or promoting regime change in Venezuela, or supplying arms used to attack civilians in Yemen, or increasing tensions with Russia? Despite the nightmare heatwaves and wildfires hitting our west coast, or the drought afflicting farmers in the prairie provinces, and elsewhere in the world, environmental issues likewise received short shrift.

Bleak as our situation appears to be, I think there is hope. More of the public is recognizing the threats we face; this awareness allows a small group of committed citizens like Science for Peace to have a larger impact than its membership or budget would indicate. We have among our members a deep pool of knowledge and experience and through our affiliation with educational institutions like U of T, access to highly motivated students who will be the opinion makers of the future. The seminars/webinars we have organized as well as “SfP discuss” provide invaluable counterpoints to the dominant narratives being presented in the mass media. By building alliances with other likeminded groups, such as World Without War, Voice of Women for Peace, and The Leap, we further amplify our voices.

Over the last decade or so, those among us that have studied the environmental/climate crisis have become very familiar with the notion of tipping points. These are the points at which a process that was predictable and linear suddenly crosses a threshold to exponential growth. Such tipping points are a frightening reality in the natural world, especially in relation to the CO₂ that is accumulating in our atmosphere. We may be approaching tipping points of a social, economic and political sort as well. Points at which giant investment funds begin to dump stocks of companies with a business model that depends on the burning of fossil fuels, or producing chemicals that poison our world, or destroying natural habitats on land or at sea. Points at which the growing number of citizens demanding action to rein in corporate greed and militarism can simply no longer be ignored by those contending for public office. I believe that Science for Peace and its partners are getting us closer to these tipping points, which by their very nature arrive with surprising speed.

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