

Civilian-Based Defense

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Exploring a Nonviolent Strategy for Deterrence and Defense

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Los Angeles Conference Explores Issues of Security, Religion, and Civilian-Based Defense

Mel Beckman

During the weekend of November 21-23, 1997, approximately forty persons from the United States, Canada, France, and Taiwan gathered at Westwood United Methodist Church in Los Angeles.

Their purpose was two-fold - to learn more about the concept of nonviolent, civilian-based defense, and to discuss whether religious faith might provide a basis for choosing and supporting such a policy.

The conference was sponsored by the Civilian-Based Defense Association and co-sponsored by several dozen interested groups and individuals. Dr. Sharon Rhodes-Wickett, Pastor of Westwood, welcomed the participants and Roger Bergman, Director of the Peace and Justice Studies Program at Omaha's Creighton University, served as Moderator. Among the participants was a group of Taiwanese students enrolled at universities in the Los Angeles area.

Friday Evening November 21, 1997

The keynote address, "Civilian-Based Defense - A Nonviolent Strategy for National Security," was given by Dr. Ronald McCarthy, Chairman of the Department of Sociology at Merrimack College in North Andover, Massachusetts. Dr. McCarthy is also a co-editor of *Protest, Power and Change - An*



During the opening session, Prof. Ronald McCarthy addresses the participants. Moderator Roger Bergman is at left.

Encyclopedia of Nonviolent Action, and Director of the Fellows Program at the Albert Einstein Institution in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

McCarthy pointed out that civilian-based defense reflects, in some ways, a long-held dream that a people could achieve safety while following a conscientious commitment to refrain from violence. While acknowledging the focus for the weekend (can/should religious faith provide a basis for choosing a policy of CBD?), he noted that, historically, nonviolent action has not depended on religious commitment to inform it or accomplish its effect.

McCarthy stated that two aspects of nonviolent action come together in CBD. The "strategic" aspect seen in Gandhi's use of nonviolence during

the Indian struggle for independence, and the "popular" aspect demonstrated in the spontaneous resistance activities against the Nazis during the second world war.

Defining CBD, McCarthy used Gene Sharp's conception of it as "a policy and practice of deterrence and defense conducted by prepared nonviolent action, by a population confronted by a violent, war-like attempt to subdue it. It is intended to demonstrate to an adversary that the cost of a military adventure would be too high to gamble on, to deny the adversary the ability to achieve military objectives through war and violence, and to compel the adversary to abandon such an adventure once it has been mounted, with or without negotiation."

Whence and Whither CBDA? See features on pages 6 and 7 regarding our future focus!



McCarthy spent a good deal of time discussing the nature of the threat that a policy of civilian-based defense is likely to encounter today. The nightmare kind of invasion by a Hitler or Stalin would be rare. A civilian-based defense policy must be flexible enough to protect not only against invasion and occupation, but also against such threats as an attack on a society's institutions from within the country. The 1923 case of the French and Belgian occupation of the Ruhr region of Germany was cited as an example of the kind of threat a policy of civilian-based defense might need to face. It was like an invasion by an army of bureaucrats, with the appearance of a military invasion being avoided. Control of the country was not the objective. The invaders wanted to control only some persons - the industrialists. The cooperation of only some of the people was needed, not all.

Modern technology offers many possibilities for new kinds of resistance activities, according to McCarthy. There could be a resistance home page on the internet, a list-serve for resistance communications, and electronic archives of state and economic documents, so decentralized that they could only be accessed with the help of many people who would have no intention of giving that help.

McCarthy noted that the concept of CBD outlined by Gene Sharp, with its emphasis on the control of an aggressor's power by denial of popular consent to be ruled, has its critics. On one side, someone like Stephen Flanagan cannot conceive of CBD having any use in the situation of nuclear threat. He would say that the lack of a credible capacity to use violence would tempt an enemy to try to wear down the popular defense. From another side,

progressive nonviolent actors in the feminist, ecology, peace, and other movements tend to criticize the pragmatic approach, the wielding of political power, and the concept of an aggressor. He cites Robert Burrowes book, *The Strategy of Nonviolent Defense, A Gandhian Approach*, as an example. He questions how current social structures, which support too many dominant elites, can ever be defended by the support of the people.

In conclusion, McCarthy asked the participants to think about what it would take to create a society which wanted to defend itself by CBD. And he asked them if they would want to do so.

In the question and answer period afterwards, another type of problem occurring in our times was cited - the threat posed when a large country wants to replace the population of a small country. McCarthy acknowledged the problem and urged the group to not get "hung up" on the limitations of the consent theory of power. Even if the defending population cannot deny the enemy's objective by withholding consent to be



Taiwanese students from Los Angeles area universities took part in the conference.

governed, they might still be able to take the battle to the enemy's own population and influence them to withhold consent for the injustice being done, if the victimized population remains nonviolent.

**Saturday Morning
November 22, 1997**

The Saturday morning program featured presentations by persons from four different religious traditions - Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Buddhist. The intent was to see how the concept of civilian-based defense might be compatible with the values and beliefs of each tradition.

Rabbi Everett Gendler spoke from the Jewish tradition. He was ordained in 1957 at the Jewish Theological Seminary and served as Rabbi for twenty five years at Temple Emmanuel in Lowell, Massachusetts. He also served as Jewish Chaplain and an instructor in philosophy and religion at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. In recent years he has become involved with the Tibetan exile community.

Gendler noted that the Jewish scriptures begin with a very peaceful act of creation, without the mythic creation battles found elsewhere. That memory should be preserved, he said, as we look at other periods of history. He stated that the Bible acknowledges the existence of war but it tries to limit the swath of

destruction that comes from conflict - in ways similar to the doctrine of just war in the Roman Catholic tradition. He cited Deuteronomy, Chapter 20, as an example (in war, fruit trees cannot be destroyed).

During the Rabbinic period, Gendler explained, this effort to limit destruction was further refined. There was a grappling with issues of conscience and "proportion" of destruction allowed. On the basis of such reasoning,

he said, he and others have been able to argue that the individual must evaluate every demand of the state, and selective conscientious objection to war is a right. During the post-Rabbinic period there was a strong

emphasis on the value of "shalom." Whether because they were scattered and powerless, or because they had found a better way, for centuries the Jewish people were associated with no active violence.

Gendler spoke of the modern period as being painful and it was his opinion that the idea of CBD will meet with a very quick resistance, at first hearing, in the modern Jewish community. This is because of the two formative experiences of this century - the destruction of millions of unarmed Jews in the holocaust, and the formation of the state of Israel. The community is still traumatized by the former and will find it hard to hear about the possibilities of unarmed civilian-based defense. Anxiety for the safety of the state of Israel today will also lessen receptivity to an idea which Gendler spoke of as a kind of fulfillment of the prophetic vision ("not by might, not by power, but by divine spirit"). But the bulk of Jewish history, he said, would lead one to expect a positive Jewish response to the idea of civilian-based defense.

speaking Muslim, and not a cleric. He is the Coordinator of peace and disarmament work for the Fellowship of Reconciliation in New York.

Ramey was concerned to expel some myths about Islam. He explained that Islam is the second largest religious community in the world, with over a billion members. More of them are non-Arab than Arab. The largest Muslim nation is Indonesia - not an Arab country. And finally, Muslims reverence a succession of prophets and the revelation given through them, not just Mohammed.

Muslims, he said, are not compelled by religious belief to be violent and engage in terror. Violence is permitted, but only in self-defense and in the instance where the religious expression of Islam must be protected from external aggression. But even then, fighting is restricted - no harm can be done to non-combatants and negotiated solutions are preferred. Anyone who would prepare weapons of mass destruction would certainly be non-Muslim in conduct.

organization of civilian-based defense a possibility. Muslims have a sense of world community - one God of all. They believe in the practice of prayer, and also fasting to restrain passion. And they have a sense of community obligation - the notion of charity. Muslims are a coherent community, connected to each other, with a unity beyond class. They also have a striking example of nonviolence in Abdul Ghaffar Khan - the "Muslim Gandhi," who led a usually violent people to successfully practice nonviolence. Muslims also have many examples of other Muslims working for nonviolent solutions within violent revolutionary struggles.

Ramey spoke of civilian-based defense as being essential for survival of the human race. As practical ways to advance CBD, he proposed that existing literature on the subject be translated into Islamic languages and that we begin seriously to engage in nonviolent struggle for social justice, and against massive armies and weapons of mass destruction. In that way, he said, we will create the preconditions for more rational and nonviolent alternatives to the Pentagon in the Islamic world and everywhere.

Dr. Lourdes Arguelles was the third Saturday morning speaker. Arguelles grew up in Cuba. Her educational background includes work in sociology, psychology, law, psychiatry, and ethnic studies. She studied Buddhism in India, Thailand, Burma, and Japan. She is currently a professor in the Center for Educational Studies at the Claremont Graduate School.

As the sources of her thinking, Arguelles pointed to the Cuban socialist revolution, which she experienced in her youth, and to the "mindfulness trainings" of Buddhism. Arguelles spoke of her consciousness that the privileges she enjoys in this country come at a price - the gap between the rich and the poor, and millions of Americans in the correctional system. She stated that



Participants joined in a final, plenary discussion.

Clayton Ramey, the second speaker, described himself as an African-American, a non-Arabic-

Ramey expressed his belief that the Muslim community has some of the pre-conditions which would make

“war is here,” inviting the audience to “take a walk” a few blocks from the church. She pointed to the prevalence of violence and to race, sexual, and class “terrorism.”

The “mindfulness trainings” of Buddhism, according to Arguelles, could help create the kind of beings who are capable of saying “no” - persons who can look deeply into life - people who are capable of elaborating the theory and practice of civilian-based defense. She considered the trainings as preconditions for the practice of nonviolence: commitment not to kill or condone killing, cultivation of loving kindness and sharing, responsibility in sexual matters, avoidance of words and actions which cause division, and cultivation of good health through responsible eating and drinking.

Maryanne Stevens, RSM was to have given a perspective on CBD from the Christian perspective but was unavailable because of a missed flight. **Roger Bergman and Rev. Al Rhodes-Wickett** agreed to substitute for her.

Bergman explained that Christianity's transition from a persecuted religion in the first three centuries to the established religion in the fourth century gave rise to new questions. Among these was the dilemma posed regarding love of neighbor when one “neighbor” is being attacked by another “neighbor.” How then does one love both at the same time? The solution proposed by Augustine was that the innocent neighbor has prior claim to our help. A Christian not only may use violence to protect the innocent but even must do so if no other way is possible to defend the innocent.

From Augustine's teaching, and its further elaboration by others over the centuries, the “just war” tradition has come to us. Bergman pointed out that this represented an effort to limit Christian participation in war.

Bergman noted that in the 1950s the Church frowned upon pacifism,

but with Vatican Council II, pacifism was acknowledged as an honorable position for individuals but not the state. In 1983, the U. S. Catholic bishops addressed CBD very explicitly as an option worth exploring. It represents, according to Bergman, a solution to the problem Augustine wrestled with - how to defend the innocent while keeping violence to a minimum. Bergman said he was unaware of any Catholic theologian or ethicist who has taken up the challenge of the U.S. bishops in their 1983 pastoral. But he felt that it should be taken up and it should be developed as a primary component of the theology of a just peace.

Rev. Al Rhodes-Wickett ended the morning panel presentations with a story from his teaching days in Zimbabwe. He found there a kind of natural understanding of the possibility of change without violence. He called on participants to “renew our refusal to be in war” and suggested that, if nothing else pushes us in that direction, terrorism will.

A lengthy discussion followed the panelists' presentations, much of which had to do with whether the adoption of CBD depends on certain prior changes in society, such as a strong sense of community and social justice for all groups within the community. Some held that a society, such as the United States, must be “worth defending” before CBD could be used. Others noted that there are few, if any, perfect societies and that we can defend what we value in common even if there are imperfections in our society.

While agreeing with much of the harsh critique of U.S. society expressed by many in the audience, the keynote speaker, Ron McCarthy, stated that we do not have the luxury of waiting for social transformation or individual conversion before we seriously consider adopting CBD. Clayton Ramey expressed strongly the opinion that transformation of society and the possible adoption of nonviolent means of defense must be

talked about simultaneously if the discussion of CBD is to be taken out of the academic world and into the real world. Lourdes Arguelles clarified that she did not see “enlightenment” as necessary before action, but rather that, one should engage the injustices all around oneself and then one can see more deeply into macro issues such as national defense by nonviolent means.

Saturday Afternoon November 22, 1997

Because of the smaller-than-anticipated number of registrants for the conference and the over-run of the morning panel, the afternoon schedule of workshops was discarded. Instead, presentations were given by Dr. Albert Lin on the relevance of CBD for Taiwan, and by Dr. George Crowell on its applicability for Canada. Dr. Ron McCarthy ended the afternoon by leading the participants in an exercise relating to small-nation security and CBD.



Dr. Albert Lin

Dr. Albert Lin, for many years an exile from Taiwan under martial law, lived in Canada and taught at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute in Toronto. In recent years he has served in the Taiwanese Legislative Yuan and has been promoting CBD in Taiwan. He now lives in Taiwan and serves on the board of directors of the Civilian-Based Defense Association.

Dr. Lin began by pointing out that security is a very serious concern in Taiwan. The international status of the country is not yet settled. The Peoples' Republic of China lays claim to Taiwan but the historical basis for the claim is weak, according to Lin. China, however, could take military action against Taiwan in a number of different ways, from all-out attack, not excluding nuclear weapons, to low-intensity warfare. In this kind of situation, it is valid to ask whether military or civilian-based defense is best for Taiwan. Lin described how he and others have been actively trying to bring the concept of CBD into public focus in Taiwan. His efforts have included translations of CBD books into Chinese, arranging for speakers such as Gene Sharp and the former defense minister of Lithuania to tour the country, and efforts to have CBD included in Taiwan's academic military curriculum and in the defense budget (to fund research and development). He described the efforts on behalf of CBD in Taiwan as "inching along" compared to the magnitude of the military threat faced. The audience, however, felt that he and his colleagues had given a marvelous example of what could be done to promote nonviolent defense in a specific country.

Dr. George Crowell was the second afternoon speaker. He received his Ph.D. from Union Theological Seminary and spent several decades teaching at the University of Windsor. While teaching social ethics, he developed a course entitled "The Dynamics of Nonviolent Action." It included material on civilian-based defense.

Crowell stated that he saw little progress toward CBD in Canada. He has felt all along that Canada is a much better prospect for CBD than is the United States. He had hoped that Canadians could someday become interested in this policy, but instead, the movement has been toward subordination of Canadian defense

policy to that of the United States. After the cold war he encouraged the Canadian peace movement to support CBD, but that also has not transpired. Many peace groups have disappeared.

In 1990, Canada's Project Ploughshares published a paper on CBD in the Canadian context, written by Crowell. Before that, Gene Keyes and Hans Sinn had published material in Canada on the subject. Crowell felt that none of this material was read widely. He saw a spark of Canadian interest in the subject in 1991 when the Civilian-Based Defense Association conducted a conference on CBD in Windsor. About 400 persons attended the keynote address by Gene Sharp and about 140 persons were full-time registrants at the conference.

Since the early nineties, Canadians have become more engrossed in economic matters. Crowell said he has been involved recently with the Ontario teachers' strike. He suggested that, if we want to promote CBD in the world today we need to be participating in such opportunities to promote nonviolent struggle for the issues in which people are presently involved.

Dr. Ron McCarthy returned to the podium at the end of the afternoon to lead the audience in a brainstorming session on CBD and small nations. He explained that what makes a "small" nation small is not necessarily size but rather, its dependence on a big, economically more powerful neighbor nation. Adoption of CBD, he felt, could help a small nation reduce such dependence and also give it a defense capacity vis-à-vis the large nation. He noted that small nation defense strategies such as neutrality, alliances, guerrilla struggle, and independent military capacity have all had significant problems. If adoption of CBD would also have some accompanying problems one should not be surprised.

About a half hour of discussion was devoted to ideas about how a

nonviolent defense could be built up for a small nation, given the scenario of impending invasion militarily by a country intent on taking its cities. Accompanying the invading force, in the scenario, is a police unit trained in controlling streets and another unit composed of specialists in document retrieval, trained to locate, assemble, and interpret government and corporate records. The discussion produced numerous strategies and participants were able to grasp more clearly the possibilities of real defense using nonviolent sources of power.

Sunday Morning November 23, 1997

The final sessions on Sunday morning consisted of large-group discussion of possible ways to expose more people to the concept of CBD. The deliberation was useful and resulted in a number of participants resolving to take specific actions during the months ahead. **Jean Marichez** of France was invited to explain the work of a French group in which he and others are promoting "defense by civilian action" as a complementary strategy of national defense. The group is called "*Action Civile Et Defense*."

It has spent some time developing a coherent message and a vocabulary for communicating the idea of civilian-based defense to those who plan national defense, intellectuals, and ultimately, the public.

Conference participants adopted a final "sense of the conference" statement for publication. The statement follows:

Substantial evidence exists to believe that some, and perhaps most nations could gradually achieve national security through nonviolent, civilian-based defense, under which policy they would deter and, if necessary, resist aggression from abroad as well as undemocratic seizures of power from within, by preparing their populations to engage in massive, organized

withholding of the cooperation an enemy would need to govern.

Both the desire for a morally acceptable kind of national defense and the numerous historic examples of the practicality of nonviolent forms of struggle provide basis for the further exploration of civilian-based defense by people of faith. Therefore we call upon religious communities throughout the world:

1. *To teach their people the practicality and the desirability of controlling abusive power at all levels, including the international level, by skillful*

The author of this article, Mel Beckman, is the founder of the Civilian-Based Defense Association, and has served as Executive Director, Chair of the Board of Directors, Editor, and in other capacities from the inception of the Association. Beckman has resigned as Executive Director in order to devote his time and energy to other concerns. At the close of the conference, CBDA Chair Phil Helms (in hat) presented Beckman with a plaque from the Board of Directors, expressing appreciation and gratitude for his years of dedication and service.

use of nonviolent resistance, rather than the use of violent force.

2. *To question, challenge and gradually withdraw their support from governmental defense policies which provide for security only on the basis of being prepared to counter violence with greater violence.*
3. *To witness their preference for nonviolent defense by beginning to provide funding, personnel, and programs for research and development of civilian-based defense.*

While registration for the conference was lower than hoped for, the personal participation of those present was intense. The conference represented an attempt - perhaps the first such attempt - to challenge people of diverse religious groups to look seriously at both the practicality of civilian-based deterrence and defense and their compatibility with religious values and belief. As such, it should serve as a useful reference for future explorations of CBD by religious groups.



Photos this feature by Maryanne Beckman.

Whence and Whither: Considering the Course and Focus of the Association A Message from the CBDA Board of Directors

We are delighted - and even mildly surprised - to be back in publication so quickly. As most readers are probably aware, the Los Angeles conference drew a relatively modest number of participants. As a result, the Association ended the year confronting a deficit which, though minuscule by governmental standards, seemed daunting when compared to our usual budget.

You, the members of the Association and the readers of *Civilian-Based Defense*, responded to our appeal with open hearts and generous pockets. As a result, we have retired all debts and expenses arising from the conference, and we have been able to resume publication after skipping only one issue. Heartfelt thanks to every one of you, for your generosity, your support, and your belief in the amazing concept of civilian-based defense.

Mel Beckman resigned as Executive Director at the close of 1997, after more than 20 years of activism and leadership in the Association and its predecessor organizations. Mel is pursuing other concerns of importance, and we all wish him the best.

With his departure, our Association seems to be at a crossroads. (Perhaps least among elements, please note our new address.) The Board of Directors, meeting in conjunction with the Los Angeles conference, considered the future of the Association at some length, weighing several visions and options for our future course.

The article beginning on page seven arises from these discussions, and was prepared with great care and much thought by George Crowell and Mel Beckman.

(see page 12)

Rethinking the Mandate of the Civilian-Based Defense Association

George Crowell and Mel Beckman

It is not certain that the Civilian-Based Defense Association can survive in its present mode. In order to strengthen the association and to make possible not only its survival but also its increased effectiveness, we propose a change that would broaden its basic goals and provide greater opportunities for useful contributions. We have prepared this paper for discussion by the members and board of directors of the CBDA, and we invite responses. We are encouraged and excited by steps that have been taken in various parts of the world to promote CBD, notably and recently by our own board member, Albert Lin, in Taiwan. We remain thoroughly committed to doing all we can to promote prospects for the development of CBD anywhere in the world. The question is: How can we make our organization stronger, and more effective in promoting CBD?

The Problem

The CBDA has been in existence since 1982. With very devoted members, some of whom worked faithfully for years on the board of directors, the CBDA has managed to produce a quarterly newsletter, providing much useful information on the theory and practice of CBD, as well as a valuable forum for discussion and debate. Circulation, however, has been limited. Most often it has been received by persons who have an intellectual or religious interest in the concept of nonviolent defense and by those who oppose war.

The CBDA has had some success with conferences and consultations in the Washington, D.C. area, in Windsor, Ontario, and in Los Angeles. All three were very useful, but only the Windsor conference achieved an attendance above one hundred. While two or three hundred members have been very loyal to the organization over the last decade, new memberships in the last two or three years have nearly stopped. Delivery of the newsletter outside the United States has been to approximately two dozen other nations, with 50 to 100 copies being sent.

For some years now we have recognized the need to hire an executive director who could concentrate on raising funds for the organization which would enable us to do major campaigns of outreach. Our board members have always been unpaid volunteers too busy with many other responsibilities to raise large sums of money, and insufficiently affluent themselves to provide the initial funding for a major expansion of our work. We have not

been able to make a breakthrough to a new level of increased financial security and organizational effectiveness.

It is now clear, however, that our problem is not simply a failure on our part to develop a more effective organization. The fact is that we have not been able to evoke much interest in CBD, especially in North America, the primary locus of our membership and work. North Americans are little concerned about the threat of external military invasion, or about the danger of internal military coups -- and considerably less now than ten years ago. In the U.S., moreover, it is especially difficult for CBD supporters to imagine that inroads could be made into the huge U.S. military establishment, which is designed not so much for defense of the homeland as for projection of U.S. power around the world. CBD is certainly a more relevant possibility for Canada, but few Canadians feel threatened by external invasion, and the danger of a military coup also appears remote. We believe that Americans and Canadians are excessively complacent about these dangers. Nevertheless, in this context it is very difficult to generate any real, sustained interest in CBD.

We had hoped that the CBDA would draw strength from the enormous momentum developed by the peace movement during the 1980s when people all over the world felt intense concern about the danger of nuclear war. With the reduction of anxiety about nuclear war, however, the great peace organizations have declined without seizing the opportunity to promote CBD as an alternative to the extremely destructive forms of military defense. While concern about war as an immediate danger has diminished considerably, however, concern about economic insecurity and deprivation as a direct, immediate experience has skyrocketed.

The Situation

The Third World has long been subjected to exploitation by transnational corporations based in developed nations, and supported by the military systems of the developed world, especially that of the United States. In more recent years in the developed nations, corporations attempting to increase their profits, and governments attempting to cope with their debts, have been laying off thousands of their employees. Governments have also been reneging on their commitments to people by cutting back sharply on their expenditures for social services. For many years corporations have been shifting their operations from developed to less developed nations in order to exploit their labor and resources, undermining self-sufficient local

economies there, and leaving unemployment in their home countries.

Recently regional and global trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) have given corporations increasing freedom to profit and to grow while abusing human labor and damaging environmental life-support systems. The Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) scheduled for completion by May 1998, if ratified, will strongly reinforce these trends. All over the world human welfare and environmental health are under severe attack.

There is an urgent and growing need for people to mobilize more fully, and to develop more effective strategies to resist and to reverse these trends. Strategies of resistance must necessarily include nonviolent action. Our basic proposal is that the CBDA should broaden its mandate to include education, assistance, and support not only for nonviolent action for the specific purpose of defense against external military aggression and internal military coups, but also for nonviolent struggles of all types. Nonviolent action at present is especially needed for defense of valued institutions, which gives it much in common with CBD. With a broader mandate, we may risk losing our unique emphasis on CBD, but through participation in other types of nonviolent struggle we could gain much experience, skill, and knowledge relevant for CBD.

The Case of Ontario

A specific example can help clarify our understanding of the needs and opportunities for expanding the mandate of our organization. The highly valued social programs of Canada have been under attack since the 1980s. With the election of the Tory (Progressive Conservative Party) government of Premier Mike Harris in Ontario in June 1995, the assault became especially vicious in that province. Welfare payments to the most needy were immediately cut by 22 percent, and to make matters worse, job training programs were also scrapped. Public sector workers were laid off in large numbers -- with reduced unemployment benefits. Legislation reducing the power of labor unions came in a steady stream. Municipalities and school boards were amalgamated, rendering them inevitably less responsive to the concerns of people. As funding was drastically reduced, universities, schools, and hospitals were forced into painful restructuring, with considerable loss of personnel. Overburdened professors, teachers, nurses, and physicians who continue to work have been suffering increasing stress. Especially disastrous has been the understaffing and overcrowding of hospital emergency rooms.

These damaging changes did not come without protest. Indeed protest has been frequent, intense, massive, and largely in the form of nonviolent action. In opposing the "Harris agenda," labor and social justice groups organized

between December 1995 and October 1997 a series of nine "days of action" in various Ontario cities, each with widespread work stoppages on a Friday followed by major marches and demonstrations involving many thousands of people on Saturday. The Toronto action of October 25-26, 1996 closed down the public transit system and most businesses in the city while some 250,000 participated in picketing, marching, and a huge rally. Hundreds of smaller strikes and demonstrations were organized and continue in localities all across the province.

Surprisingly it was the ordinarily apolitical school teachers (including those of the Catholic system which is publicly supported in Canada) who provided the most potent expression of resistance through nonviolent action. On October 27, 1997, nearly all the 126,000 public school teachers of Ontario began walking picket lines in a political protest directed toward preventing passage of Bill 160 ("The Education Quality Improvement Act"), an outrageous piece of legislation designed to concentrate virtually all power over the school system in the hands of the Minister of Education, a key member of the cabinet of the government in power.

Included in Bill 160 is a provision removing any meaningful power from local school boards--set up early in the last century as an expression of local democracy--by eliminating their ability to raise taxes from local property assessments. Bill 160 gives control over school funding entirely to the provincial government. It enables the Minister of Education to fire elected members of school boards and also employees of school boards--including, of course, principals and teachers--for nothing more than disobeying his orders. The potentialities for abuse of power through this legislation are extraordinary.

The government along with its supporters proclaimed that it was rescuing the education system from serious decline, that teachers with their long vacations and short work days, including preparation time, should be working harder, and that the teachers' "illegal strike" demonstrated their indifference, or at least that of their powerful union bosses, to the welfare of children. While a large proportion of the public appeared to support the government position initially, within a few days, despite the inconvenience to parents, public support moved strongly toward the teachers.

One factor in this swing was the leak of a document indicating that the government planned to cut \$667 million from the \$12 billion dollar education budget after some \$2 billion had already been cut over the last five years. The teachers effectively called attention to the impact of recent cuts to continuing and adult education, junior kindergarten, special education, library resource programs, summer school education, gifted education, and programs that emphasize sports, music, and the arts. Few people were accepting the government claim that it would reduce recently swollen class sizes, especially after it was forced to admit its intention to reduce funding by \$667 million,

bragging that it would indeed honor its election promise to cut taxes by 30 percent while also eliminating the deficit. Already teachers are working under great stress. After further reductions in numbers of teachers, the stresses on those remaining will increase.

It is becoming increasingly obvious that a major goal of this government is privatization -- turning over any potentially profitable public-sector activity to profit and growth-oriented corporations in the private sector. This goal is quite explicit in the case of the Liquor Control Board even though it clears some \$745 million for the government each year. But the goal is less than candid in the case of schools and hospitals. As the government withdraws funding from public systems (claiming that it is implementing improvements), they deteriorate, and people who can afford to do so seek private alternatives. The result, as indicated, for example, in New Zealand, is two-tiered systems -- excellent for the rich and miserable for the poor. Under the rules of NAFTA and potentially the MAI, when foreign corporations are involved in the privatization, as is certainly the case in Canada, it becomes essentially impossible for governments to take back into the public sector any enterprise that has been privatized.

By the end of the first week of the teachers' political protest, a provincial judge rejected the government demand for an injunction to end the "illegal strike." Public support for teachers was growing, and the teachers were persisting in their action with less than two percent having crossed the picket lines despite the wearing difficulties of doing without pay. On November 5, however, leaders of three of the five teachers' unions, without consulting either their colleagues in the other unions or much of their own membership, announced that the battle for public opinion had been won, and that their members would return to work on November 10, and would use other means to fight Bill 160. The remaining two unions decided reluctantly to give up the protest, since unity had been broken. Bill 160 passed shortly thereafter, and went into effect on January 1, 1998, although funding cuts are not to occur until September.

Thus was lost not only the battle to prevent passage of Bill 160, but also the best opportunity yet to defeat the destructive Harris agenda. There is much bitterness among most of the teachers at having suffered such a costly defeat. It was reported to me that one of the two persisting unions had been about to propose to the government that teachers would return to work if Bill 160 were put to a referendum. Such a creative tactic would certainly have put Harris in a bind. Who knows what may have happened next?

Harris may have been quite willing to refuse to allow a referendum, despite further discrediting his position, or his government may have been in such disarray that it would soon have been forced to back down. Could the teachers have held out long enough? And how much support might they have received from the labour movement, some of

whose leaders had been proposing a general strike? It is widely believed, however, that the government was very close to collapse, and that another week or two of persistence on the part of the teachers, combined with support from other unions and the public, would have forced Harris to call an election.

Strategic Nonviolent Alternatives for Ontario

Not only was the major mistake of prematurely abandoning the political protest made, but added to this was the further mistake of abandoning nonviolent struggle altogether. The teachers' unions could have announced that they were only making a temporary strategic retreat, and that if Bill 160 were passed they would take additional actions, including the possibility of another work stoppage in order to prevent implementation of the legislation.

In order to prepare for further nonviolent struggle, the teachers' union leaders could have moved immediately to overcome a weakness in their top-heavy organization. They could have directed that the teachers in each local school form "affinity groups," whose members would try to anticipate the impact on them of any further action their union might take, and would prepare to provide mutual support for each other. Arrangements for rapid and full communication between local and top leaders, and for local participation in decision-making would be necessary. Such groups could be encouraged to think creatively about varieties of strategies and tactics that might be used, primarily in their own local situations, but also for an entire campaign.

Strategic thinking should go far beyond the usual tactic of the strike combined with picketing of the workplace. Bill 160 removes principals from the teachers' unions and takes away the protection of their seniority. This gives the government the power to turn them into petty dictators enforcing edicts from above. Until recently the principals had the choice to accept this or to return to being teachers. They might have united in refusal to serve as principals under such conditions. In defiance of the government, each school might then have elected from its teachers those who would be responsible for administrative functions. Even now teachers might consider continuing to teach if laid off. Those who are still paid might help make this possible by sharing their salaries with their laid-off colleagues. The parents' groups who have supported the teachers might seek signatures to a pledge indicating that signers would save a few dollars daily or weekly to be made available to the teachers through their unions in case their struggle to save public education places an excessive financial burden on them.

Absurd? Perhaps. But if actionists are to maximize the power they are capable of exercising, they must become open to all possibilities for action in situations of oppression including even unlikely options. They must then consider their own inclination and ability to carry out

various possible actions, and to respond effectively to the opponents' probable reactions. These are essential ingredients for engaging in strategic nonviolent conflict.

At present the Ontario Federation of Labour is planning to resume its "Days of Action" with a one-day general strike in October in twenty-five cities across the province. This is impressive, but we are concerned that strategic mistakes will be made unless some creative, strategic thinking is applied. It is not presently clear that specific concessions will be demanded, or that there are any arrangements for maintaining pressure on the government after this day. If the government knows in advance that the protest makes no specific demands and will end after a single day, it is unlikely to be deterred in the least from pursuing its agenda. With essentially the same resources, a more effective strategy could be designed. Rotating strikes could be held in each of the 25 cities on each of 25 consecutive working days beginning after Labour Day in the smaller cities, and moving to the largest. The escalating action would be in the news for five weeks, and not just a few days. But the action would have to be open-ended, with the threat to continue indefinitely until concessions were granted, or until the government called an election.

We think that this current case of Ontario illustrates a widespread need for a far more thorough understanding of the strategic factors involved in political power struggles, including the ability to recognize when nonviolent action is required, and what nonviolent strategies and tactics are likely to be most effective. Let us recall that the CBDA has consistently understood nonviolent action in the manner that Gene Sharp defines it, as the waging of conflict by nonviolent means. Nonviolent action is not to be confused with conflict resolution, as important as this is, nor should it be confused with working through established institutional structures, such as elections and the judicial system. It is worth noting that those leading the struggles against the Harris agenda never seriously even contemplated the use of violence. There was some remarkable use of nonviolent tactics. But there was insufficient recognition of the power that people have at their disposal through nonviolent action if they draw on the full variety of tactics that human imagination can devise, and if they persist even against determined opposition.

It could be argued that it was not ignorance of the possibilities, but lack of commitment and unwillingness to make the necessary sacrifices that brought defeat to the teachers. Perhaps. But ignorance can lead people to become prematurely discouraged. An awareness that much more is possible can increase courage and commitment. Moreover, knowledge of other people's sacrifices in nonviolent struggles and of the successes that their sacrifices have made possible can inspire some people to new levels of heroism themselves.

To their credit the teachers' leaders were not passive after the two-week political action was called off. They initiated several legal actions through the courts. Notable was their effort to nullify that section of Bill 160 which took principals out of the unions and eliminated their seniority, making them totally vulnerable to arbitrary firing in case they opt to disobey the Minister of Education. This and all other appeals to the courts for rulings which would protect democracy in education except one still in progress, however, have been fruitless. This is further strong indication of the need for nonviolent action. Even in well established democracies, democratic institutions can fail or be destroyed. Then people have nothing to rely upon but themselves and their own collective ability to wage conflict. They are wise if they opt for nonviolent action which can be made a very powerful and effective means of struggle.

The teachers' unions also are planning to become intensely involved in the next provincial election. This is essential, but hazardous. Electoral politics are insufficient to combat the destructive aspects of the corporate agenda as implemented by governments like that of Harris which come to power deceiving the public about their intentions. Such governments can be remarkably immune even to massive expressions of public opinion. The teachers of Ontario, however, have made the mistake of concluding that nonviolent struggle must be abandoned for electoral politics. With three parties competing for power in Ontario, the Harris government could be re-elected even with less than 40 percent of the popular vote. After the next election nonviolent struggle may be the only viable option available. But teachers and their supporters may still not recognize this fact, and may give in to a process which destroys Ontario's venerable institution of public education.

An Expanded Mandate for Our Association?

Given the urgent need all over the world for nonviolent struggle to defend the interests of people and to preserve and restore the environment, we recommend that our association expand its mandate beyond our attempts to promote CBD. We recommend limiting the expansion of our activities to promoting nonviolent action, that is, to promoting the waging of nonviolent conflict. This certainly includes CBD, but it also includes all other types of struggle where nonviolent action is needed. Conflict situations calling for nonviolent action are emerging with increasing frequency all over the world. Human welfare and the environment have been subjected to increasing devastation largely because people have not recognized their power to resist effectively by nonviolent means.

While calling for the expansion of our mandate, we recognize the need also to set clear limits. We would not attempt to promote all types of nonviolence. We would not work in the very important areas of nonviolent conflict resolution, or reconciliation, or prevention of conflict, or

peacekeeping, or the art of achieving compromise, or arms control, or disarmament, or nonviolent policing. That is, we would not work in these areas except in so far as nonviolent action were needed to achieve some goal in these other areas -- as, for example, in opposing arms production by blocking trains shipping weapons. These other valuable activities, even though intended to reduce violence, would lead us much too far from our original mandate, which has been to promote CBD.

How might our association function after expanding its mandate to include all types of nonviolent struggles? We see four basic areas.

1. We could make use of our newsletter (or "magazine") to provide information on nonviolent campaigns anywhere in the world. This could be an enormous job, because there are nonviolent campaigns springing up constantly, and each has many complexities. Since many of them receive very little publicity in the mainline media, we could perform a valuable service simply by announcing in our publication the existence of such campaigns, mentioning their goals, providing some description of their basic strategies, and specifying contact persons who could provide further information. More important, we could select some campaigns to report in detail, attempting to evaluate their strategy and tactics, and possibly offering suggestions for further actions -- along the lines that we have done in this article.
2. We might participate actively in nonviolent campaigns. Our organization could come to have available the services of people who have developed sufficient expertise in the dynamics of nonviolent action to serve as consultants for groups for whom nonviolent struggle has become necessary. Such consultants would not ordinarily attempt to take over key leadership roles in nonviolent campaigns, but would serve to inform and inspire people about the remarkable power of nonviolent action, would help them to analyze their own resources and the power realities of their situation, and would encourage them to think creatively and shrewdly about the strategy and tactics they might employ, and would help train them to participate in nonviolent actions.
3. We should also be promoting the notion that people need constantly to prepare themselves for nonviolent struggle even in situations where there is no immediate need for such action. The better prepared people become, and the more quickly they are able to move into action, the less suffering and loss they are likely to experience. All people need to understand that their well-being may be threatened at any time by exploitive and oppressive institutions, domestic or foreign. In promoting preparations to defend against abuse by such institutions, our work would especially be an extension of what we have already been doing by

promoting CBD. But we would not be restricting ourselves to dealing with the particular situations involving threats of external military invasion and internal military coups. We certainly would continue to emphasize the need for CBD. But we would also stress the need for people to prepare for nonviolent action to defend against other threats as well--such as trade agreements or changes in monetary policy which would destroy the livelihoods of people and damage the environment. A thoroughly prepared people could even come to deter oppression just as they might deter military aggression. The same types of preparation would enable people to engage in nonviolent struggle in either type of conflict. If we should stimulate people actually to make such preparations, we might be making a more effective contribution to the development of CBD than we have ever made in the past.

4. We would continue explicitly to promote CBD when possible, relevant, and appropriate. This activity might move along the same lines as we have taken in the past. But an expanded mandate would very likely open new opportunities to promote CBD. If people anywhere should actually achieve effective preparations for nonviolent defense against damaging aspects of the corporate agenda, such preparations might be extended to include CBD. It might be easier for people to maintain a state of preparedness for nonviolent struggle if their preparations included CBD. But we could not expect this to happen automatically. A strong, articulate campaign promoting the concept of CBD would remain essential.

A New Name?

If we were to expand our mandate, we think it would be advisable for us to take on a new name that would more accurately express our goals. Here are some suggestions to begin with:

Association for Strategic Nonviolent Action

People Power and Civilian Based Defense Association

Association for Nonviolent Action in Conflict and Defense

In many ways, the kind of program we are proposing for CBDA would have the same focus and objectives as the Albert Einstein Institution and the former Program on Nonviolent Sanctions in Conflict and Defense, now the Program on Nonviolent Sanctions and Cultural Survival, based at Harvard. We have informed them that we have been preparing this proposal, and we hope that in the next issue of this newsletter it will be possible to publish their reactions to it. We have always had cooperative relationships with these organizations founded by Gene Sharp. Perhaps, if this proposal is seriously considered by the CBDA Board of Directors, possibilities for closer

cooperation with these organizations can be considered. We think that maintaining separate identities would probably be desirable, but perhaps some new, mutually beneficial and reinforcing working relationships might be established. We would certainly want to avoid any duplication of efforts and misunderstandings about goals and activities.

This is a crucial time in the history of the CBDA. We need to give very careful thought to our future without

delay. We look forward to your reactions to our suggestions!

Mel Beckman is the founder of CBDA, and has served as Executive Director, Chair of the Board of Directors, Editor, and in other roles.

Dr. George Crowell is a former member of the CBDA Board of Directors.

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Civilian-Based Defense is published quarterly by the Civilian-Based Defense Association (CBDA) to provide information about civilian-based defense (CBD) as an alternative policy for national defense and to make available international news, opinion and research about CBD. The Association is a nonprofit membership organization founded in 1982 to promote widespread consideration of CBD and to engage in educational activities to bring CBD to public attention. CBD means protecting a nation against invasions or *coups d'etat* by preparing its citizens to resist aggression or usurpation by withholding cooperation and by active noncooperation rather than military force. Tactics include strikes, encouraging invading forces to desert, encouraging other countries to use sanctions against the invader, etc. Citizens would learn how to use CBD before aggression starts, which distinguishes it from spontaneous resistance. Prior preparation and publicity would enhance its effectiveness and also make it a deterrent to attack.

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Whence and Whither from page 6

Please consider this article, and the changes proposed therein, with care. Your thoughts and ideas on these issues are of great importance to the Association, and we hope you will share them with us. In the next issue, we plan to publish a cross section of response and comment received, to further the discussion and consideration of the future of our Association and our mission. The Board of Directors plans to fill the post of Executive Director, and the Personnel Committee is presently considering the existing job description for the position. However, it seems clear that the nature of the position and its duties are subject to revision if we broaden the Association's mandate and focus.

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Your input will help to guide us in this process as well.

We look forward to hearing from you; you are the Association, and we need your thoughts and guidance.

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Whence and Whither CBDA? See features on pages 6 and 7 regarding our future focus!