

Canadian Quakers and “Just Peace”

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I am delighted and excited by what I have been reading about the World Council of Churches and the “Just Peace” direction. That the Churches have come to consensus on "the affirmation that war can no longer be considered an act of justice" is a wondrous and joyous thing.

Quotations from the “Just Peace Companion” which
are in tune with Quaker Practice:

Responding to violence in the spirit of Just Peace aims at building and strengthening just relationships through prevention of violence, transformation of conflict, and healing through restorative justice and reconciliation. (pg 39)

Basic to all efforts for preventing violence is the ceaseless work for justice in society and the relations between communities. (pg 39)

Tracing the way of just peace does not aim at a condition of life in community without conflict. Conflicts of interest or basic value orientation need to be engaged publicly rather than avoided or repressed. (pg 40)

... use of natural resources and the conflict between the need of securing the life of the human community and the imperative to safeguard the integrity of creation. (pg 40)

...vigilant... not to succumb to the tendency of interpreting either justice or truth in a self-righteous manner. (pg 41)

I am not a theologian. I was first introduced to what I call “the Peace Gospel” as I was growing up in the United Church of Canada, and, after a period of atheism, came to Quakers in search of a community that would reinforce my on-going commitment to peace. Since 1998, I have worked as the program coordinator of peace work overseas and in Canada at Canadian Friends Service Committee, the peace and service agency of Friends in Canada. I coordinated the nation-wide consultation that resulted in the Canadian Yearly Meeting’s policy on Responsibility to Protect¹. Reading *An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace* and the *Just Peace Companion*, I find many points of consonance between them and Quaker peacebuilding practice.

Let me list some of them:

- The Peace Gospel: The first two chapters in the Just Peace Companion.
- The *Way* of Just Peace: That means and ends must coincide, that Peace is a journey, a culture, a way of living, not a destination state, a product, an absence of war. Many of the opening sentences of the paragraphs in the section “Ethical considerations on the way of just peace” could be Quaker statements. (see text box above)
- Emphasis on the experience of people building peace in situations of violent conflict.
- Refusal to accept the role of victim. That is, in all circumstances, people have some kind of power.
- Recognition of ecological and economic context.
- To go beyond the attempt to reconcile pacifist theory and just war theory, and to create a new paradigm, through learning from the practice of non-violence. (pg. 44, Just Peace Companion)
- Peace work is profoundly spiritual work.

Having celebrated the World Council of Churches “Just Peace” direction, I will now offer you two reflections on the experience of Canadian Quakers in peacebuilding. The first focuses on the concept of Responsibility to Protect and the case of D. R. Congo, where local Quakers are doing courageous peacebuilding work. The second provides a framework for understanding the different types of peacebuilding work that are common these days.



Gianne Broughton (third from left) at “Just Peace” Project Ploughshares seminar.

State Sovereignty as Responsibility: Our Experience Accompanying Congolese Quakers

There are roughly six times as many members of the Friends Church in Burundi as there are members of the Religious Society of Friends in Canada. 6000 Evangelical Friends in Burundi, 3000 in Rwanda, about 1000 in North and South Kivu, the provinces of D. R. Congo most afflicted in the conflict that has been going on since 1994. Also, there are about 100 Quakers in Kinshasa, the distant capital of the country. Kinshasa Monthly Meeting worships the way we do here in Canada: waiting in silent expectation, seeking together that which is divine. The Rwandan, Burundian and Kivu Friends have programmed worship, preaching and singing and dancing the Peace Gospel. All four of these Quaker entities undertake peacebuilding work. In this section of the paper, I first present the case of the Congo, then reflect on its implications with respect to the on-going debate within the World Council of Churches about Responsibility to Protect. Paragraphs 21 and following in *An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace* seem to be more supportive of military intervention in the last resort than the relevant section in the *Just Peace Companion*. Church and Peace, an ecumenical network of Christian communities, churches and

organisations in Europe committed to the peace church vision, has issued a statement asking for clarification on where the World Council of Churches stands on this matterⁱⁱ.

In 2005, when I first visited North Kivu Friends, in Goma, I asked them about Responsibility to Protect. “Should international law be changed to allow the international community to send in soldiers as a last resort to protect civilians from crimes like the genocide?” I asked. Their answers were, “If the international community abided by the declaration of human rights, there would be no crimes like that.” And “the UN peacekeeping mission has been here for two years, and they have not been able to stop village massacres and mass rapes.” And “Debating about changing international law is a distraction from doing the things that really need to be done.”

At the time, I did not really understand what “things really needed to be done.” Now I am beginning to identify concrete, practical things that the international community really needs to do.

In 2005, the Quaker peacebuilding organizations of Central Africa mobilized a large number of local election observers and did a lot of public democracy education. There was a lot of support for this kind of work, and the UN and International NGOs were working hard to help Congo carry off a credible election. But the promise of better governance and peace never materialized. In late 2010, Severine Auteserre published *The Trouble with the Congo*, a book that explained whyⁱⁱⁱ. Her key point, backed up by exhaustive research, was that the UN and key Western countries based their objective of a credible election upon a false narrative that denied the ongoing conflicts and also defined themselves as incapable of addressing the community based conflicts over land that underlie the various armed rebellions.

Essentially, during the Belgian regime and the Mobutu period, the colonial and dictatorial governments created conflicts between populations in order to control them, weaken them. For instance, when the Belgians couldn't get local South Kivu people to work on their plantations, they imported Rwandans as indentured workers. The South Kivu people had enough clout at that time to insist that these incomers would not be allowed to own land. But a generation or so later, the plantation economy collapsed, and the Belgians were able to dispossess some of those South Kivu people of land and grant that land to the descendants of the Rwandans. Then Independence came, and the elected prime minister was assassinated, and Mobutu the dictator was supported by the West to deny the Congo to their cold-war rival. Mobutu played these two populations off against one another, sometimes granting land rights to one, and sometimes to the other, or to segments of one or the other. In a barely-industrialized place, access to land is access to food. Land is life. Can you think of a more effective formula to create deep-rooted ethnic-associated conflict? Mobutu repeated this formula in many parts of this huge, diverse country, compounding the damage by not developing a system of travel or communication, so that each community remained isolated from help.

Mobutu was overthrown as a result of armed rebellions begun in 1994 and supported by foreign troops from Rwanda and Uganda. In opposition, Mobutu invited armed support from Zimbabwe and Angola.

What the Congo needed, after the foreign troops were withdrawn and a peace accord was signed by the Congolese belligerents in 2002, was international help to establish a land-tenure conflict resolution process that would patiently and transparently work through each case to the satisfaction of the all sides. This need was communicated to the UN authorities, but ignored. Instead, in 2005, they got an election in the midst of massacres and mass rapes. No land claims resolution process was attempted after the election.

The UN made some attempts at dealing with the material basis of the armed conflict. There was an Expert Panel that identified companies that were complicit in the exchange of minerals for arms, but their recommendations were barely implemented. There was an international arms embargo agreement, insisting that the elected government would be the only legitimate destination for arms sales, and that all sales would be properly monitored, but both the US and China were found to have delivered arms that were never accounted for.

The Peacekeeping Mission was unprepared, unable to develop useful peacebuilding relationships. At one so-called consultation meeting between the mission and local community spokespeople in Goma, the Quaker peace workers who happened to be present had to mediate to prevent fisticuffs. In Uvira, a unit of the Congolese army was quartered upon the town, and abused some locals enough that some banded together to attack some of the soldiers. They caused some injuries and were able to flee, but the local police found some people that they said were the same ones, and held them at the police station, and the army prepared to invade the police station to execute them. The Peacekeepers stationed there withdrew to the safety of their compound. The population came out en masse to impede the army from carrying out the executions, and the population and the army came face to face in the street in front of the main hotel which was near the police station. Some Quaker peaceworkers happened to be overnighing in that hotel on their way from a rural town to Bujumbura. Three middle-aged women: two Canadians and a Congolese. They heard the fracas from their windows. The Congolese woman went down and placed herself between the army and the population, and managed to convince the army to abandon the idea of execution, and the population to disperse, and the police to release the prisoners. The Canadians watched from the windows, cell phones in hand.

In this manner, the mandate of the credibly elected president was frittered away without the root conflicts being addressed at all. Eighteen months before the legal end of his mandate, President Kabila's majority in the national assembly started to stack the electoral process in his favour. They changed the constitution to allow for a single-round presidential election, instead of the two-round process which would have allowed the supporters of several alternative candidates to line up behind one or the other of the two strongest. The changes in the electoral procedures were passed into law but not published until very late. The courts to adjudicate claims of mal-practice were not established. The Independent Electoral Commission was headed by partisans of the president and not launched or equipped until late. The budget was not approved or released on schedule. During all this period, the international community raised only small noises. When people were falsely arrested to intimidate them from their legal activities in support of opposition candidates, the UN monitor reported it, but only asked that the practice

stop, he did not insist that the wronged-against be recompensed or the people responsible be dismissed.

In early February 2011, eight months before that year's national election, I attended a consultation with Roger Meese, the head of the UN mission (called "MONUSCO"^{iv}). I was surprised to learn that there had been some anxiety about whether the Kabila regime would continue to accept the presence of the mission. The mission considered their continued presence in itself to be an accomplishment. It did not seem to me that the UN's respect for the sovereignty of the Congo was affected by the regime's manifest failure to prevent armed conflict or to protect civilians.

In November 2011, CFSC had five Canadians accompanying the 100 local people organized by the Kinshasa Quakers to monitor the elections. The climate of fear was high. The actual casting of votes and counting, and posting results outside the polling stations was quite faithfully done. But the Electoral Commission did not collect the results transparently or with any due care for the procedures and safety of the materials. The population overcame obstacles that would have discouraged most Canadians in order to get to the polling stations and vote, but the Electoral Commission betrayed that good will. The ensuing conflict has been in the news since.

Now, if the international community is willing to think about sending in military troops to "protect" in cases where a government is "unable or unwilling", why can't it consider setting up a land claims commission? That would be a sovereignty-overriding intervention to some purpose. Or, in the wake of the voting, why not set up a commission to retrieve what election result materials were available and determine whether a fair result could be obtained or whether a new election would be necessary? Given that the signs of an attempt to steal the election were clear well in advance, why was the international community so unprepared to respond to its eventuality? With these questions, my reflections on the implications of this experience begin.

Within the framework of state-based membership that is the foundation of the UN, outside intervention, whether military or non-violent, is very difficult. Within that framework, interventions that actually build peace can barely be practical. R2P cannot deliver what it promises. So, Friends in Goma were right. Debating it is a waste of time. The churches can put their energy into insisting on the responsibility to *prevent*. In the Congo case, that would mean: closing the gaps in the arms embargo; pursuing the cases of the miscreant mineral developers; Canadian companies being held responsible by Canadians for the ecological and human rights abuses that they perpetrate overseas; and uncovering and sanctioning the role of Rwanda and Uganda (There are suspicions of Rwandan assistance to Congolese armed groups; Uganda accepts contraband minerals over Lake Edward). None of these actions require military intervention. Most of them rely on permissions that were already in effect before R2P.

In the face of the UN failures, it is encouraging to note that community based peace work can address the land-tenure conflicts. In Burundi, successive cycles of ethnic-identified massacres have led to much of the rural land being in dispute. Members of one ethnic group would flee during a period of massacre, and members of the other would come and occupy the land. Then

the descendants of the refugees would return and claim the land. The documentary evidence of ownership is often in doubt. The Friends Church in Burundi joined with other churches and the Muslim structures to form and train neighbourhood peace committees with representation from different elements of the local community. Among other functions, the peace committees mediate between the claimants, and arrive at a satisfactory arrangement. Sometimes the land is divided. Sometimes one family stays on the land and provides a dowry portion for the other family. Different accommodations arise according to the particulars of the situation. The peace committee mediators help both sides to become aware that neither is guilty for the situation, because the overall conflicts of the past were beyond their control. Also, that the conflict over the land is a burden in the lives of both families, and that both families need the substance of life. So both sides surrender some of their claim, and both sides get some benefit in every solution. Once the arrangement is worked out with the mediators, the details are legalized with the municipal authorities, and there is a community ceremony to publicly clear the air and put the conflict behind them.

There is value, however, in the concept that state sovereignty is responsibility, not entitlement. The Canadian legal framework regarding access to mineral deposits displays an attitude of entitlement, not responsibility to respect human rights, and is the basis of many on-going conflicts with aboriginal peoples. In order to implement state sovereignty as responsibility, accountability of all states has to be strengthened, and clearly, the voice provided by non-governmental organizations, including faith-based organizations, is a key element in bringing states to account. The voice of the NGOs is credible because of their peacebuilding effectiveness, because they are involved at the community base. Western governments are guilty of conflict-producing behaviour, and their moral leverage with other governments would increase if they stopped that behaviour. Taking the plank out of your own eye first – it is a revered Christian attitude.

The world has inherited a system of international relations based on conceptions of national interest and competition that Machiavelli observed and expressed. What we need is a system of international community-builders, people who do social work between nations, building cooperative relationships, and are accountable for their actions. Carne Ross' *Independent Diplomat: Dispatches from an Unaccountable Elite*^v describes the dysfunction of the current mind-set and proposes the antidote. The staff of the Quaker UN Offices work as community-builders within the diplomatic community, as I am sure the staff of other church offices at the UN do. There is much experience to build upon.

Also, we can join with the majority of the member states of the UN who are much more comfortable with the responsibility to prevent than with the responsibility to intervene militarily. The Secretary-General's 2009 report "Implementing the Responsibility to Protect"^{vi} greatly emphasizes the responsibility to prevent, and gives lots of practical examples and recommendations, some of them echoing advice we gave to the consultant who did the study on which it was based.

And the peace education and human rights defence work that looks like prevention work actually does protect people in the midst of conflict. The Congolese Quaker who prevented the massacre in Uvira was a skilled peace worker, deeply educated in conflict de-escalation, and also deeply grounded in her faith, from whence came her courage and her humility. There are now more and more people of this calibre available, but they are under-utilised because funding is so scarce. In every armed and deadly conflict situation there are people working non-violently to de-escalate the conflict and protect non-combatants. In the global militarized culture, their stories are seldom told. I am delighted to see some of their stories told in the *Just Peace Companion*.

And, as the WCC's *Just Peace Companion* points out, it is the world's financiers who are really pulling the strings, not the institutions of the UN.

So the churches might consider that the "military intervention in the last resort" conversation is a misdirection of energy, and cease debating whether it is ever justified.

In the last few days, I have spared a little time to read about the events of the last year in Libya. I notice that Libya is, and has been for some generations, as divided and conflict-exacerbated as Congo, and that, in the aftermath of a military intervention justified by R2P, civil war is escalating. Also, that the arms embargo was disrespected, as it was in Congo.

The concept of "Just Policing" comes into the World Council of Churches literature about responsibility to protect. I have a comment. Police only function in a peacebuilding way if they are held to account to human rights standards, and if there is a restorative justice system to handle the people who are arrested. Recently in Canada we have seen the erosion of the community oversight of the police. The treatment of peaceful protesters during the G20 summit in Toronto is one example, and the bizarre behaviour of CSIS and the RCMP in the case of Maher Arar, Ahmad El-Maati, Abdullah Almalki and Muayyed Nurreddin and nine^{vii} others that we know of, is another. It is a very difficult task, and if Canada, where more peace has reigned for more generations than most places in the world, cannot sustain the necessary level of community oversight, then how can we hope to have adequate oversight from the UN or the "international community" for an international "Just Policing" capability?

When I survey the public discourse in Canada now, I am concerned that there is a growing mass from all walks of life that do not understand the basics of peaceful governance or our interdependence on one another. I think that it is time for people of faith to engage together and establish community peace committees, just like in Burundi!

Four Components of Peacebuilding

The dispute resolution literature identifies three kinds of work: power-based, rights-based, and interest-based. CFSC's experience accompanying First Nations peoples in Canada, and community-based peacebuilders in Central Africa, southern Asia, and elsewhere, shows that, in the case of peacebuilding, there is a fourth type, which we have called "compassion-based". Because space is limited, I have not drawn the links between this four-part model and the Congo case that I presented above. I offer the model as a tool that "Just Peace" workers may find useful.

This is how the four types are linked together. **Power-based work** is the work of arresting, stopping the people who are doing the hurting. There is an element of coercion. There is non-violent power-based work which uses non-violent coercion, and there is the work of a just police using minimal physically hurtful force. Power-based work has to take place within a connected system that includes all four kinds of work, or it is not peacebuilding. Power-based work isolated (or separately directed) from the other three types is damaging, if not actually war-making. Non-violent coercion often involves people publicly suffering the hurts of injustice and thus appealing to the conscience and compassion of the people misusing power in an unjust system. Active nonviolence is based on an analysis of power which recognizes a broad range of powers, many of which are available to those who have thought of themselves or been defined as “powerless”. When we act in solidarity with communities that are using non-violent coercion to address an unjust power structure, we are doing power-based work.

Rights-based work is the work that provides the trustable justice system to which the just police can deliver the people they have arrested. In order for their work to remain at minimal force, the people they are arresting have to believe that the justice system they face will treat them fairly, and maybe even help them start a just life. The rights-based work also provides the accountability framework for the non-violent power-based action. Even non-violent coercion has to be guided by human rights and related values, and often involves insisting that just laws or recognized rights be fully applied. Rights-based work is linked to the human faculty of conscience. When a human right is violated, our conscience is alerted. Peoples’ conscience is often engaged by encounters that arouse compassion.

Interest-based work is where concrete agreements are mediated or negotiated. These agreements organize the community’s daily life, and that apply the principles promoted by the rights-based work. Diplomatic work that culminates in peace talks is mostly interest-based work. In order to be peacebuilding, interest-based work has to bring the opposing sides to recognize common interests. Sometimes non-violent coercion or applications of a justice system are required in order to bring recalcitrant parties to negotiate. Mediations are interest-based work. To be peacebuilding, the negotiated or mediated result has to be sincerely win-win, and often needs a compassion-based step to reach final closure.

Compassion-based work is what changes hearts. When we are in conflict, even if the conflict hasn’t become deadly, our hearts are changed. They have to change again for new peaceful, respectful relations to be born and grow. Sometimes a change in heart can motivate people to negotiate in good faith, or to recognize rights or abide by just laws, reducing the need for power-based work. Trauma healing and healing of memories work are compassion-based work.

In conclusion, I note that all four types of peacebuilding work appear in the examples that are presented in the Just Peace Companion. I celebrate again the direction in which the World Council of Churches is moving.

ⁱ For Canadian Yearly Meeting policy on Responsibility to Protect: <http://quakerservice.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/summary-of-discernment-R2P.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.church-and-peace.org/declarations.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Autessere, Severine (2010) *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding*. Cambridge Studies in International Relations (No. 115). ISBN:9780521156011. Notably chapter 3 and pages 183-186.

^{iv} <http://monusco.unmissions.org/>

^v Ross, Carne (2007) *Independent Diplomat: Dispatches from an Unaccountable Elite*, London: Hurst & co.

ISBN:9780801445576

^{vi} UN Doc. A/63/677

^{vii} Abousfian Abdulrazik, Benamar Benatta, Omar Khadr, Adil Charkaoui, Mohamed Harkat, Mohmoud Jaballah, Mohamed Zeki Mahjoub and Hassan Almrei, Jose Figueroa