

MINUTES OF VANA (Ontario-Quebec region) MEETING

What will be VANA's legacy?

21 May 2013, St Andrew's United Church, Toronto

PRESENT: Everett Barclay, Phyllis Creighton, Bill Harasym, Anton Kulchin, Mac Macarchuk, Frank Showler, William Sinclair, Audrey Tobias, Anton Wagner
REGRETS: Edwin Abbott (Oro Station), Connie Gardner, Joan Francis, Marion Frank.

1. Welcome: As chair for this meeting, Phyllis Creighton welcomed the members at 10.30 a.m. and reintroduced the coordinating committee: Audrey Tobias, Anton Wagner, and Phyllis.

2. Notice of deaths in the past year: Audrey noted the deaths in the past year of VANA members Eileen Swinton, who long served on the coordinating committee; George Rosamond, our treasurer and membership secretary for many years; the Rev. Douglas Brown; Robert Hansen; Jim Buller; Shirley Farlinger; and in April, the Rev. Bruce Mutch, our treasurer. In remembrance of all they have done for VANA and for our common cause, we observed a minute's silence.

3. Introduction of VANA interview video: Anton introduced the 25-minute video of short selections from interviews of 18 VANA members (half of whom have since died) that he had conducted and filmed in 2005-6 to build an historical archive for VANA. These interviews explored the reasons why members had supported the cause of nuclear weapons abolition in light of their experiences in war and their values. In the ensuing discussion, it was clear that the video was well received and it was agreed that it should be part of VANA's legacy online, with the suggestion that information and the url for it be put on the website of the Hiroshima Day Coalition.

VANA AGM

1. Treasurer's report: Audrey reported that we have \$2,445 in the bank. She noted that expenses today will include room rental and lunch.

2. Census refusal legal case: Audrey reported that because the Canadian census contract for data storage was given to the American company Lockheed Martin she had refused to fill it out. The US company is known for its production of F-35s, drones, revolving doors with US government officials working for it after leaving government service, and tentacles reaching across the world with bribes, and contracts and jobs in every US state. She objected to our government's financial support to an arms manufacturer rather than seeking peaceful solutions in international relations."The *Toronto Star* carried a piece, with a picture of Audrey, on the legal case she is now fighting.

MOTION, Harasym/Kulchin, that VANA support the legal defence fund for Audrey's census refusal case, the coordinating committee to determine the amount as VANA is financially able. Carried, unanimously.

3. Uranium transport: support of a resolution of the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility (CCNR): Anton had sent out with the agenda a two-page resolution dated 15 May 2013 from the CCNR, copies of which were available at the meeting. The resolution sets out, in 15 clauses beginning "Whereas", information about the proposed, novel transport weekly, from August 2013, of 23,000 litres of high-level liquid radioactive waste from Chalk River Laboratories in Ontario to the highly contaminated South Carolina Savannah River Site. The purpose of the transport is to rid Canada of weapons-grade uranium and the risk of nuclear weapons proliferation. The objectives could be met, however, by "denaturing" the weapons grade uranium on site at the Chalk River Laboratories, by the on-site solidification used since 2003 at Chalk River. The resolution then states, in three separate paragraphs, that the organizations listed are opposed in principle to any shipment of radioactive liquid waste over public roads and bridges or on any navigable waterways or by air; urges the halting of such shipment pending the outcome of public consultations on environmental risks and alternative solutions; and urges the governments of Canada, the US, provinces and states and municipalities, as well as indigenous and sovereign governments in both countries to disallow and prevent such shipments.

MOTION, Wagner/Macarchuk, carried. It was also proposed that copies of the resolution, indicating our support, be sent to all the political parties in the federal and Ontario houses of parliament, and to the major newspapers and CTV and CBC.

4. VANA (Ontario-Quebec region) future:

Audrey gave a brief history of VANA, covering the history and reasons for the wind-down several years ago of VANA national, as well as the proposal and discussion in October 2011 of VANA (ON-QUE) closure she had initiated. The meeting considered the reasons for closure and to make final arrangements for the disposition of our documents and any remaining funds.

MOTION, Tobias/Macarchuk, “In light of decreased mobility, reduced energies and ability to participate in meetings and peace actions, and loss of members in the Toronto region because of moving away and of illness or death, the Ontario/Quebec chapter of Veterans Against Nuclear Arms authorize its coordinating committee to take all necessary steps in a timely manner to dissolve the organization, wind down its affairs, establish a VANA Memorial on the internet, disperse remaining funds, and notify the VANA membership when the organization has been dissolved.” Carried, unanimously.

In the discussion, Mac clarified that it is understood the people making the decisions will use common sense in the dispersal of funds.

5. Other business: Audrey raised the concern highlighted by recent discussion on drones (see Ceasefire.ca): the move towards automated robotic weapons without human intervention beyond their invention, production, and acquisition, which raises critical ethical issues. Killing fellow human beings without personal intervention and accountability is the height of immorality, a denial of our collective humanity implicit in abandoning participation. The seeds of this trend are already firmly planted in drones. She warned us of the need to pay close attention.

6. It was agreed that the minutes of this meeting be sent to the paid-up members of the chapter. The meeting adjourned for lunch around 12.15 p.m. Respectfully submitted, Phyllis Creighton.