



**1 VETERANS AGAINST NUCLEAR ARMS  
VÉTÉRANS CONTRE LES ARMES  
NUCLÉAIRES**

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**Ontario Québec Region**

**November 2011**

**VANA KEEPS MARCHING ON:**

VANA members attending the October 4 meeting at St. Andrew's United Church to discuss the organization's future voted unanimously that VANA should continue. A new co-ordinating committee consisting of Bruce Mutch, Phyllis Creighton, Anton Wagner and Audrey Tobias was elected. See the attached minutes of this important meeting and Phyllis' report on VANA's past programming 2009-2011 on the next pages.

**REMEMBRANCE DAY, Friday, November 11:**

VANA will again be laying a wreath at the Old City Hall Cenotaph, 60 Queen Street West, at Bay and Queen. Please arrive no later than by 10:30 a.m. for the Ceremony at 10:45. Bruce Mutch will lay the VANA wreath this year.

The **Veteran's Bench** is on the east side of the square. Whoever gets there first, please try to save a few seats for us in the first couple of rows. **WHITE BERETS** all. There will be a luncheon reception in the new City Hall after the ceremony.

**VANA MEMBERSHIP LIST AND DUES FOR 2012:**

A membership list as of November 2011 is enclosed with this Newsletter.

**Dues for 2012**

Please make your membership cheque  
payable to:

VANA ON-QUE (\$20) and mail to:

The Rev'd Bruce Mutch  
63 Albany Avenue, Toronto, ON M5R 3C2

## **VANA Minutes for October 4, 2011:**

The meeting was held in St. Andrew's United Church.

Present: Phyllis Creighton, Marion Frank, Jean Gordon, Bill Harasym, Lois James, Bea Levis, Lee Lorch, Bruce Mutch, Eileen Swinton, Audrey Tobias, Anton Wagner. Regrets: Mac Makarchuk.

Opening Remarks: Jean Gordon expressed her thanks to all the individuals in VANA who have done a yeoman's job in keeping the organization going. Phyllis Creighton stated VANA could never have continued without the great amount of work carried out by Audrey Tobias. Eileen Swinton and Phyllis recalled the great warmth of the late Joyce Sutherland in encouraging new VANA members. Marion Frank, who led the organization after Peter Davies, recalled being caught up in the enthusiasm of 70 or 80 members and the feeling of accomplishment at meetings on the part of veterans in the political struggles of the time.

Program: Phyllis Creighton read a two-page report commenting on our stimulating speakers and program history of the last few years. This report will be circulated in the next VANA newsletter.

Treasurer: Bruce Mutch presented a financial report showing an October 26, 2010 bank balance of \$3,344 and income since then of \$1,203 for a total of \$5,047. Expenses to October 4, 2011 totaled \$2,969 leaving a current bank of \$2,078. The October 2011 VANA membership list included 67 names of which 25 had paid their dues for the year. Several of those present renewed their membership for the next year.

Chair Report: Audrey Tobias indicated she was stepping down as the VANA co-ordinator because of physical fatigue setting in. The job of the co-ordinator is to organize membership meetings, convene co-ordinating committee meetings, keep in touch with members and with other peace organizations, honour VANA's "vision," and keep on top of peace activities, concerns and campaigns.

VANA needs a newsletter editor and publisher, a membership secretary and a regular secretary and a social convener. Audrey had done all these jobs by herself in the past and asked how do we go on from here.

Audrey read a letter from Harold Keeton who thought that the passion with which the organization had been founded is now gone but also mentioned that Jordan Bishop was eager to continue representing VANA on the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. She was proud of VANA's 25-year history and of successfully working together with other peace groups such as the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace over the last few years.

Reflection from Members: Bill Harasym stated that we are living in a difficult ideological period. Because of age considerations and other personal and political commitments, he was not sure what he could contribute. He still talks about VANA at other meetings and thought there were still things we can do. Could we publicize VANA by publishing a booklet?

Anton Wagner thought that instead of publishing a booklet, we could revive the VANA website and add excerpts from the video oral history interviews he and Eddy Cabrera had filmed with VANA members.

Bea Levis, speaking as a wife of a veteran, thought we had to look at a new stage of our existence. She liked the suggestion of putting the oral history video excerpts on the internet. She was extremely grateful to all the VANA members who made the organization go and hoped we could keep the VANA memory alive in a different form.

Lee Lorch stated that he came to the meeting out of respect for people such as Audrey who have been an inspiration. He doesn't want to see this disappear and thought we can continue to work with younger people and other peace organizations.

Bruce Mutch said he was willing to continue as treasurer and hoped we could continue to enable the voices of 67 members to be heard. Phyllis stated she was willing to continue with programming and reported on all the current government lobbying for nuclear weapons abolition and against nuclear power generation. Jean

Gordon and Bruce felt we needed to preserve progressive public consciousness and keep the converted motivated and activated. Marion mentioned the organizing by native groups against uranium mining and dumping. Lee said the consequences of a nuclear accident staggers the human imagination and recalled Three Mile Island and past accidents with nuclear weapons.

Phyllis thought she sensed that we wanted VANA to continue. Jean volunteered to participate on a telephone committee, tackling the out of town members. Bea thought she could help in this way too.

Motion: Moved by Anton Wagner, seconded by Jean Gordon, that VANA continue in existence and that a new VANA co-ordinating committee consisting of Bruce Mutch, Phyllis Creighton, Anton Wagner and Audrey Tobias be elected. Carried unanimously.

Bill Harasym moved, seconded by Bea Levis, that Phyllis Creighton be added as a signer of VANA cheques. Carried unanimously. It was agreed that the \$20 membership fee be collected for 2012. Anton volunteered to help Audrey with sorting the VANA archives. It was agreed that Jordon Bishop in Ottawa continue to represent VANA on the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

November 11: Bruce Mutch will lay the VANA wreath. The next VANA newsletter should go out the beginning of November.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned.

## **A MESSAGE FROM AUDREY TOBIAS:**

1Dear friends:

I have stepped down as Chair, VANA, effective October 4, at our VANA meeting. (A certain fatigue has set in). It has been a fulfilling and demanding time, but well worth it.

A small number attended that meeting, (about 12) but they voted to continue because they felt that the need for our voice was still there. A new Co-Ordinating Committee has been elected, consisting of Anton Wagner, Bruce Mutch and Phyllis Creighton. I agreed to stay on as a Member at large. Jean Gordon undertook to telephone all the out-of-town members, to put them in the picture. Please give this group your support.

Of the 67 members on the list, we only heard from 26 in 2010-2011 with dues. We do not know about the others. Are they well? Have they died? We have no idea. Please let Anton know - or the Treasurer. I shall organize VANA records, then turn them over to the Toronto Archivist.

Best wishes to you all, Audrey Tobias, VANA

### **VANA REPORT ON PROGRAM 2009-11 by Phyllis Creighton**

Audrey suggested that I give you a reflective overview of our programs over the past couple of year – an analysis of their purpose, effect, and positive influence.

Looking at 2009, in April we had the just released film *The strangest dream*, the story of Josef Rotblat. The purpose of showing it was to take us back to the creation of the atomic bomb and tell the story of the origins and nuclear disarmament work of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs (usually just known as Pugwash). The film brought back the 1940s and the Manhattan project, which developed the atomic bomb. It chronicled the beginnings of the struggle against nuclear weapons, who took up the cause, and why. It showed Rotblat walking away from the Manhattan Project and his role in founding Pugwash, an organization sparked by and focused on the abolitionist message of the Russell-Einstein Manifesto, which Rotblat signed: “Remember your humanity and forget the rest.” The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Sir Josef Rotblat and Pugwash was a peak moment for the abolition movement. Showing the history and the success was an encouragement to the activists gathered who work for the abolition of nuclear weapons. That meeting was using history to raise our spirits and spur us to keep up the struggle. Making the film and its availability known was a service to the peace community, and since the event was publicized, the film was shown to a diverse audience.

The fall meeting had a presentation by me – because no Pugwash experts were available! -- entitled “An Arctic Nuclear Weapons Free Zone: why is now the time?” The focus on an Arctic NWFZ is a practical one: it’s an entirely feasible proposition and the campaign for it is an educational effort to wake up the Government of Canada (as well as those of other countries). Again, because we publicized the event we had a broader audience than just VANA members, and outreach to stir interest and energy for abolition is VANA’s purpose, its witness against war. The presentation brought to the meeting the best research from earlier

Pugwash conferences, which the paper drew on. In terms of education, it was published in the *Science for Peace Bulletin* in January 2010 and as it's an easily read piece with enough references to lead people into the subject, it's useful outreach on the net. I know from experience that such pieces get read quite widely – even by friends in Russia!

The April 2010 meeting, with Shirley Farlinger and Barbara Falby doing a presentation entitled “Militarization and the Climate Crisis: Time to be Bold,” drew a full house. Helen Chilas did a great poster and the peace movement – Voice of Women and Science for Peace, in particular – responded with interest. The two women brought us vital little known information – for example, the fact that the military are the biggest polluters in the world, playing a huge role in creating the greenhouse gases inexorably leading to climate change, yet these are not counted in the tally for any nation. The military get a free ride on carbon emissions. The two women really stirred discussion. A motion was developed, presented, discussed, and adopted, and subsequently it was communicated to the government and various ministers. So VANA enabled some pioneering education and raised the issue publicly, confronting the government. VANA, in my experience, has put more pressure on government, worked harder to educate Ottawa and to get it to adopt intelligent policies than any other anti-nuclear weapons group except the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, of which VANA is a member.

The October 2010 meeting had great publicity with an eye-catching poster, and we were privileged to have the best known Hiroshima survivor in Canada, Setsuko Thurlow, and the new film *Flashes of Hope* in which she plays a significant role. It introduced us to the Peace Boat and the educational work it does while travelling around the globe and stopping at ports of call. It also gave a glimpse of the work that non-governmental groups do at the United Nations, since it showed Setsuko's October 2008 speech to the First Committee at the UN (it's the committee that deals with disarmament). Learning more about the Hibakusha – the survivors – and their experience, work, and views is always interesting and provides highly useful insights and information. The realities they speak about are the reason why we must get rid of nuclear arsenals before they devastate other cities and also a strong incentive for disarmament action by governments.

In April 2011 we had a widely attended and interesting meeting with Tamara

Lorincz, a Maritime member of the VOW, speaking on “Canada’s Military Spending: Folly or Fallout.” She gave a fast-paced, fact-filled speech with graphs and data. It was an eye-opener, an education badly needed that provided important information which should be publicized much more widely. The audience was broad and diverse and people were really engaged in the subject and the discussion. Unhappily, it seems there was a breakdown in the follow-up, however, and our proposed communication to the government did not get completed and sent.

Audrey can perhaps add some more information about such communications to the government on the conclusions we have drawn from the presentations we have heard.

In the main, I think that the meetings over these two years broadened our knowledge of the complex problems we face – nuclear arsenals, militarism, climate change -- and got us thinking about solutions to work on as we struggle for a way forward to free the world of nuclear weapons and of war before they foreclose civilization and the future. They fulfilled VANA’s mandate and kept our vision alive. With the Harper Government at best indifferent to nuclear disarmament – as Doug Roche points out in his new book *How we stopped loving the bomb* -- our enduring witness is important.

In that connection, I would finish by reminding you of another permanently valuable program achievement: the film done in 2005-6, *Veterans Against Nuclear War*, which records VANA members’ analysis and rejection of nuclear weapons, their questioning of militarism and war, and their passionate rejection of them, their views and the reasons for them. It gives glimpses of what we have done – for example the annual November 11 witness at City Hall. Archival video records of interviews with VANA members that were created by Anton Wagner, a VANA member, and his camera man Eddy Cabrera, and served as the basis of the film, are a valuable resource for the future too. (There will be a screening of *Veterans Against Nuclear War* at Christ Church Deer Park, 1570 Yonge Street, Tuesday November 15 at 7 pm. The Church is on the North West corner of Yonge and Heath, a 5-minute walk north of the St. Clair Station of the Yonge subway).

I invite you to reminisce and tell us your views of the programs.

## **VANA Ontario/Quebec Region Newsletter:**

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Advisors – Audrey Tobias, Phyllis Creighton, Bruce Mutch.

We welcome your thoughts and submissions on VANA's future and other peace topics for inclusion in future issues of the VANA Newsletter.