

# Churning

**Address by Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.  
to Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons  
September 27, 2019, Ottawa**

The Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons is in firm hands and I give my unreserved support to its new leader, Earl Turcotte, and the team he has gathered around him. To Bev DeLong, one of the most dedicated civil society activists I have ever met, I give my deepest thanks. To Ernie Regehr, that sage and unshakeable champion of nuclear disarmament, I give a respectful salute.

From the encomiums you have just heard, it might appear that I should just smile sweetly and depart quietly, in other words, quit while I'm still ahead. But I'm not sweet and I don't intend to be quiet. In fact, I'm raging within me at the colossal stupidity of the so-called political "leaders" who are fiddling while the dangers grow daily that the world will be burned up or blown up.

Much of my public career has been marked by dissent, and I'm not stopping my protest now. I dissent at the anti-humanitarian policies of militarism. I dissent from the perpetuation of poverty through the greed of the rich. I dissent from the despoliation of the planet by short-sighted industrialism. Most of all, I dissent from the fabric of lies spun by the proponents of nuclear weapons who would have us believe that these heinous instruments of mass murder make us safer.

I lament that Canada no longer provides leadership in the great debate of our times: how to climb down from the nuclear mountain erected by the major powers. When Canada brags about increasing our defence budget by 70 percent but remains silent at the dismantling of nuclear disarmament architecture, that is a cause for deep concern about what is happening to our country's values.

It isn't that globalization is just too much for us to figure out, that we lack the brainpower or the international instruments to bring stability to a reeling international order. Far from it. We have immense stores of knowledge and, in the United Nations, we have the essential machinery to address the problems of armaments, poverty, pollution, and human rights violations. But the captains of our society — the politicians, the diplomats, the media and corporate structures — cannot, do not, will not, all to varying degrees, lift up their vision and work together to make the world a fitting habitat for all humanity.

So we, on the leading edge of civil society, must maintain our pressure on governments to develop public policies that emphasize the core values of a culture of peace, starting with nonviolence. I have found that for me, personal creativity is the best way to overcome political intransigence. Parliamentarians for Global Action and the Middle Powers Initiative provided outlets for me to inject energy into the political systems. The Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, Canadians for a Nuclear Weapons Convention, and the Canadian Pugwash Group are instruments worthy of our finest efforts.

All this work has made me realize that the human journey cannot be stopped. We are engaged in the raising up of our civilization. Patience is needed, for we are involved in the biggest transformation the world has ever seen — moving from a culture of war to a culture of peace.

Time is running out for me, but I am not unhappy about that. I have had a marvellous life and I know how blessed I am. To have had the opportunities I have had as a journalist, educator, Member of Parliament, ambassador and senator is a rare privilege. To have participated in the struggles of our time to advance human security has developed me as a person. To have been sustained by the love and support of my family has enriched me in countless ways.

Though often in turmoil at the news of the day, I am at peace with the world, and I think I have found peace within myself. That is the peace I wish you.

So now we go on, distressed with the present and uncertain about the future. Perhaps the fable of the optimistic frog can keep us going.

Two frogs, one an optimist and the other a pessimist, were jumping through the fields and came upon a dairy. They smelled the milk and jumped over a fence to get it. But they landed in a vat of milk and couldn't get out because the walls of the vat were too high. "What shall we do?" they both exclaimed. The pessimist looked around and saw that the predicament seemed hopeless, so he folded his wings, gave up and sank to the floor. The optimist frog, however, said to himself, "You never know what might happen," and began churning its feet to keep afloat. He churned all night long, and when morning brought some daylight, the frog discovered that he had churned a great block of butter, which he could stand on to escape. So I would say, with the optimistic frog, let's keep churning...and churning...and churning.

