

Nuclear Disarmament

The Peacemakers

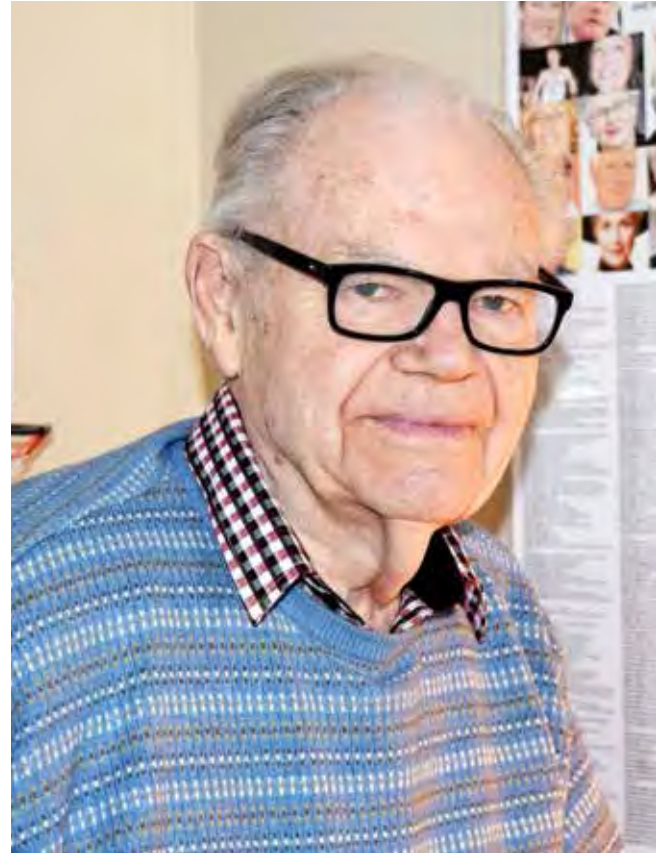
These three Order of Canada recipients are among more than 800 calling for a UN Nuclear Weapons Convention to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons, *Marie-Danielle Smith* reports.



Douglas Roche. Embassy photo: Marie-Danielle Smith



Ernie Regehr. Ernie Regehr Photo



Murray Thomson. Embassy photo: Marie-Danielle Smith

The diplomat: Douglas Roche

This is a pivotal moment in Canadian history, if you ask Douglas Roche.

Now is the time to rebuild Canada's international reputation, to regain its middle power status and to overcome a "meanness of spirit" that pervaded the Canadian electorate during a long, vicious campaign.

The new Liberal government should engage vigorously in a United Nations agenda for peace and "unambiguously re-involve ourselves in the United Nation's full scope of programs and policies," Mr. Roche told *Embassy*.

That can start with the appointment of a distinguished Canadian as ambassador to the UN, to present a renewed foreign policy, he said. At 86, Mr. Roche isn't expecting an invitation, though he wouldn't say no.

But he is plenty distinguished.

He's a former Canadian ambassador for disarmament, ex-Senator and ex-Member of Parliament—one of three Canadians in history to have been honoured with all three types of appointments.

An ex-chairman of the UN's disarmament committee, he has written more than 20 books and garnered even more commendations, including a Papal Medal from Pope John Paul II and a Nobel Peace Prize nomination in 2011.

Now based in Edmonton, he speaks just as fondly about having taught fourth-year undergraduates at the University of Alberta as he does about promoting peace on the global stage.

Mr. Roche has an unshaking optimism about the world.

"I have an essential hope in the world that is based not just on some sort of ephemeral feeling of the day," he said. "I'm looking at history and seeing how we are building gradually, haltingly, frustratingly, the conditions for peace in the world," Mr. Roche said.

"There's no question that by every index we use to measure human progress, whether it's medicine, science, engineering, technology, communications, law, women's rights, every one of these is on an ascending curve...If you look at where the world is now, where the world is 50 years ago, 100 years ago, all those indices of life, human civilization is clearly moving ahead."

Challenges remain. For one thing, as Mr. Roche highlights in his latest book, the world spends \$1.7 trillion on military activity but only \$30 billion on the United Nations, in its entirety—including humanitarian work and peacekeeping.

That's something that Mr. Roche calls a "gross disproportion" and a "scandal."

"It's an outrageous rejection of intellectual thinking that has already arrived at the point where we recognize that wars do not succeed," he said. "We've got to move all the machinery to the point where we are funding the process of peace with the same

determination that we're funding the instruments of war."

The UN offers just the vehicle to do it, though many aspects of multilateral decision-making need to be reformed. One way to make practical inroads would be to increase the membership of non-European states on the UN Security Council and limit the power of the veto, Mr. Roche explained.

Canada can once again play a major role, he proffered. It should become a

leader in accomplishing Sustainable Development Goals, an active player in the Paris climate change talks and a champion for a law against nuclear weapons. Canada should also immediately sign the Arms Trade Treaty, he said, and repair deficiencies in its Prohibiting Cluster Munitions Act.

If a Nuclear Weapons Convention is to be established, Canada should host a conference with like-minded states to start the process, Mr. Roche said.

But that will require an earnest effort to change how Canada has behaved at multilateral institutions over the past decade. "The right to peace is not some pie-in-the-sky thing. It's actively being worked on, but Canada is resisting it, and I want to see that turned around."



The United Nations in the 21st Century: Grappling with the world's most challenging issues: militarism, the environment, human rights, inequality, by Douglas Roche, Lorimer, August 13, 96 pp., \$14.95

Mr. Roche's belief in peace extends to conflict situations where diplomatic solutions seem more far-fetched. In Iraq and Syria, he utterly rejects bombing, saying, "what bombing does is kill people." A solution will be political, not military, and Canada should open its arms to refugees in the meantime, he said.

As for Canada's \$15-billion sale of light armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia, the idea that Canadian industry needs to sell arms to keep Canadian jobs alive and grow the economy is "a big admission of failure of imagination," Mr. Roche said. He didn't mince words, saying that "making a deal with Saudi Arabia is repulsive" and he was horrified when he heard about it.

People who see a desire for peace as idealistic are wrong, in Mr. Roche's view.

"Those people who think that we can keep the status quo, the present system, wars, inequities, that we can keep this going for our own benefit—they're the idealists," he said. "The realists are those that understand the interplay of forces in the world today and how the West isn't going to have it all for itself."

"I would like to say, with the greatest of respect to my opponents that I've had over the years: I'm the realist in life."

Mr. Roche is also one of those people who will never retire. "I'm not going to quit," he told *Embassy*. He quipped that his latest book is his last one—but then, he's said that before.

"I'll tell you this. If I get provoked enough by something this new government does, they might hear from me again. Never say never...I'm not going gently."

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The scholar: Ernie Regehr

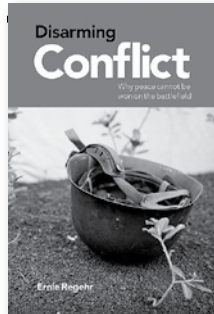
Peace cannot be won on the battlefield. Ernie Regehr is more than ready to explain why.

Per Mr. Regehr, a decorated security expert and peace researcher, good governance, international development, diplomacy and reconciliation should be the focus of international response to conflict—and the focus of Canadian foreign policy under a new government.

Mr. Regehr's fourth book, released this fall, focuses on conflict resolution from an anti-militaristic point of view. He has studied a backlog of conflicts to find peacebuilding patterns.

People think of the First and Second World Wars as "prototype wars in the public mind," he said. "But if you look at the wars of the last 25 years, they just tell a very, very different story. And they really strongly illustrate the futility of military efforts to solve and resolve deeply-rooted political conflicts and disputes."

The difficulty of finding a peaceful solution is compounded when groups are not interested in responding to diplomacy or negotiation. In the case of ISIS, a terrorist group that has taken over territories in Iraq and Syria, Mr. Regehr said that people are acknowledging failures within the military campaign. But it's difficult to know what else to do.



Disarming Conflict: Why peace cannot be won on the battlefield, by Ernie Regehr, BTL Books, September 2015, 228 pp., \$27.95

Focusing on humanitarian aspects, creating safe zones and attempting to find diplomatic solutions through peace talks are all options, Mr. Regehr said. But this is a generation-long struggle.

"We're not, for a generation, going to be able to just bomb targets when we find them. It requires humanitarian work, it requires much greater emphasis on diplomacy—and that's not naive, saying that military fails and diplomacy works. Diplomacy fails a large part of the time, but ultimately, it's an essential component," said Mr. Regehr.

Taking Afghanistan as an example, he said that diplomacy is desperately needed now, and some measure of political accommodation for the Taliban may be one of the only ways to achieve peace there. Canada ended its Afghanistan combat mission in 2011 and its training mission in 2014.

"We find the means and the dollars to spend on extraordinarily expensive military campaigns that produce nothing—and that's the most positive reading of it, is they produce nothing. They may well exacerbate conflict in many instances. But we still find the money and resolve to pursue those," he said. "It's odd that we can't find the money and resolve to pursue diplomatic efforts."

With a new Liberal government getting ready to name a cabinet and set out on its foreign policy agenda, Mr. Regehr pointed out a few areas that could use more attention.

Africa is on the ascendancy, he said, getting stronger and more powerful. It's a region that requires attention and support, and a place where Canada can become a central, active player—rather than focusing on the Middle East, where Canada is "marginal."

One way to do that is through international development. The foreign aid budget, down to 0.24 per cent of GDP, could be increased.

"It isn't just a matter of sending cheques

someplace, but the capacity for engagement for nongovernmental groups in African society, and strengthening civil society and contributing to security sector reform," Mr. Regehr said. "There's a whole lot of requirement for reconciliation efforts."

Co-operative development efforts can help societies such as South Sudan, which has suffered from decades of ethnic enmity, begin to work more cohesively and develop good governance. Canada's military can play a role, too, not fighting for one side or another in a conflict, but through UN peacekeeping efforts, maintaining law and order where local forces struggle to do so.

At the UN and other multilateral institutions, Canada has abandoned its role as a heavyweight supporter for peacekeeping and disarmament, Mr. Regehr said.

Mr. Regehr added that he speaks with foreign diplomats who've been confused about Canada's change in direction over the past decade. "They would ask you, 'what has happened, or is happening, in Canada?' It's so un-Canadian, so unlike what we've been historically accustomed to in Canada." So, it's not only ourselves who recognize that we went through a bad patch.

Though it'll take a while, Mr. Regehr said the damage can be undone and Canada can return to being a very active actor multilaterally. "There's a huge openness to return to multilateral engagement and that's on a whole range, from humanitarian to economic development to diplomacy and arms control," he said.

Mr. Regehr calls Canadian arms sales to Saudi Arabia "a flagrant violation of the basic human rights principles of the Arms Trade Treaty" with "not a lot of wisdom" behind it.

The most recent \$15-billion agreement is not the first arms deal with that country, however. "It's been a lucrative market for Canada for a couple of decades," Mr. Regehr said. "So that's not going to be an easy thing to wean ourselves off."

Mr. Regehr is the co-founder, with Murray Thomson, of Canada's Project Ploughshares. He's a recipient of the Pearson Peace Medal presented by the United Nations Association in Canada. His current work, with the Simons Foundation, focuses on Arctic security and Canadian security policy.

The Arctic is one area of the world where Mr. Regehr notes that diplomacy and co-operation are in full force, despite existing rivalries.

It's a "pretty good model" for peace.

The activist: Murray Thomson

There's an urgency to the way Murray Thomson talks about nuclear disarmament. You can almost picture the mushroom clouds.

Mr. Thomson, a prolific member of Canadian civil society, equates the nuclear threat to climate change, saying it's essential for the human race to deal with both problems as soon as possible.

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, staffed by nuclear experts, has set its "Doomsday Clock" to three minutes before midnight because of those two threats. That's where Mr. Thomson got the idea for a book he is self-publishing, called *Minutes to Midnight*.

It compiles the voices of more than 800 Order of Canada recipients who are calling on the world to put together a comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Convention through the United Nations.

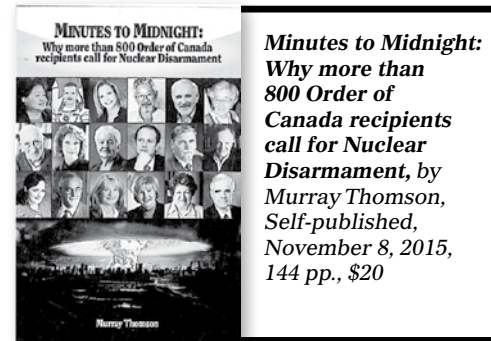
A multilateral convention is widely seen as the most reasonable way to get the world's major military powers on board with nuclear disarmament—and willing to get away from major projects to modernize nuclear weapons and make them more effective, something that the United States and Russia are both known to be working on.

"There's a gradual realization of how idi-

otic it is to be living in a world in which, at any moment, it could be destroyed by any number of missiles that are standing ready to be used," Mr. Thomson told *Embassy* at his Old Ottawa South retirement home.

"The whole idea of mutual assured destruction, it's not exactly a security policy. I kill you, you kill me—is that a security policy? Not exactly."

Mr. Thomson said it's easy to be pessimis-



Minutes to Midnight: Why more than 800 Order of Canada recipients call for Nuclear Disarmament, by Murray Thomson, Self-published, November 8, 2015, 144 pp., \$20

tic about the nuclear arms race. Besides the US and Russia, many other countries possess nuclear weapons or are expanding their nuclear capabilities: China, India, Pakistan, Israel, North Korea, he listed.

But momentum for disarmament has been building, too. "You've got to be hopeful. What else can you do? You've got to be hopeful, somehow."

There are direct links between nuclear disarmament and climate change. Militaries are the world's worst climate ravagers, he said, using the most oil and taking up huge amounts of land for their activities. Defence activities use up about one per cent of the world's land, equivalent to the size of the United Kingdom and France combined, he explained.



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