



Time for an Adult Conversation on Taxes

by Murray Dobbin

The suggestion that we need to raise taxes in this country has become so taboo in the nation's politics that even talking about it is seen as tantamount to political suicide. The benefactors, the wealthy and large corporations, have had the field to themselves for a long time. Their framing of taxes as a "burden" and their promises of tax "relief" (borrowed from the Republicans in the U.S.) has become so imbedded in the public consciousness that the spontaneous reply to the question of whether we should raise taxes is usually "no."

Unless.

Unless you actually get to have an adult conversation about taxes with people one-on-one and re-establish the connection between taxes and a civilized society. That's what the B.C. office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA—disclosure: I am on the board) did this summer [2012]. The results confirm in fascinating detail what other polls have shown: when connected directly with public services and the public good, clear majorities of people support increased taxes, not just on the wealthy and corporations, but even on themselves. Break through the narrow anti-tax propaganda and connect with people's communitarian values and you find a surprising willingness to pay more.

Polling results

The CCPA study (an online poll of 1,023 people conducted by Environics Research and nine group interviews in three B.C. communities) reinforced what most polls now show. Sixty-seven per cent of respondents think major corporations pay less tax than they should and 78 per cent say people in the top 20 per cent of incomes (that's \$85,000 and above) are asked to pay too little. The higher up the income scale the greater the agreement, with 90 per cent saying people who make over \$250,000 should pay more.

(Remember, this was a B.C. survey, but results in most provinces would be similar given the outcomes of other surveys.)

At the root of the results of the survey is a deep understanding of why Canada is (still) one of the best countries in the world to live in. Asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "Taxes are the price we pay for the quality of life we have in Canada," 60 per cent said yes and just 20 per cent said no.

Where the study gets really interesting is when it digs down into people's attitudes towards what kind of country they want and what they might be willing to

pay for it. The results are not without their contradictions. Seventy-one per cent when asked about their own tax level said it was too high. This reflects the dominant framing of the issue by the media and right-wing political parties.

But then the survey listed 11 policy objectives (all but one traditionally identified as progressive) and asked people whether or not they would be willing to pay between 0.5 and three per cent more of their income to achieve them. Sixty-eight per cent said they were willing to pay a higher share of their own income in order

to support four or more of the 11 policies, and 38 per cent were willing to pay for eight or more. Only 12 per cent said they would not be willing to pay more for any of the policy objectives while 20 per cent said they would pay for all 11. On average, respondents were willing to pay for six of the 11 policy options.

Sixty-nine per cent would pay for more access to home and community based health-care services for



Murray Dobbin, journalist.

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seniors; 61 per cent to eliminate Medical Service Plan premiums; 58 per cent to protect B.C.'s forests and endangered species and 53 per cent to increase welfare rates. Forty-seven per cent would pay extra to reduce tuition fees for post-secondary education by 50 per cent.

Conservatives and youth support raising taxes

The survey revealed just how pervasive the connection between taxes and quality of life is, even amongst conservative voters. While people voted in large numbers for the B.C. Liberals while they were slashing taxes (resulting in a loss of over \$3 billion in yearly revenue), many of them would actually pay more for what by any measure are progressive social goals.

The differences between supporters of different political parties were a lot less significant than most would have assumed. According to the study, on average B.C. Liberal voters [*the B.C. Liberal Party is conservative, Ed.*] were willing to pay more for 5.4 of the 11 policies, B.C. Conservative voters for 5.5, NDP voters for 6.5, and Green voters for 6.8.

That wasn't the only surprise in the survey. It is well known that young people aged 18 to 29 demonstrate the lowest voter turn-out rates of any age group. You might conclude from this that they think government is irrelevant to them. Yet they were nearly twice as likely to agree to an increase in taxes as those over 60. It's not clear why there is such a difference, but it might have something to do with the dramatic increase in tuition fees over the past decade. Students know that paying a few hundred dollars a year more in taxes (which might lead to a decrease in tuition fees) is preferable to accumulating \$50,000 in student loans.

No discussion means continued decline

What do the results of this survey, and similar results from other polls, mean for Canadian political culture? It means that if we do not soon have a national (and rational) debate about taxes in this country, we might just as well accept that our collective vision of the country is one of continued gradual decline in our education system, Medicare, infrastructure, science and a host of other measures that together tell us just how civilized we are.

We can wake up to the reality of what jettisoning billions of dollars in yearly revenue through virtually useless tax cuts actually means for our quality of life. Or we can quietly become

California North. You remember California. It used to boast amongst the best social services and education in the U.S. (its education results were consistently in first place). Liberal governors used progressive taxes to build the best public college system in the country, generous social assistance, and a system of aqueducts to bring water from the wet north to the dry south.

Then in 1978 came Proposition 13, a populist referendum on taxes which established a threshold of two-thirds in the state legislature for any tax increase. The result decades later: crumbling infrastructure, one of the highest student-teacher ratios in the country, and a near-declaration of bankruptcy in 2009. Republican Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger threatened in 2010 to completely eliminate the state's social welfare program.

What is so stunning about California is that the whole population seems to have drunk the anti-tax Kool-Aid even as their lives get measurably worse every passing year. Political cowardice on the part of the Democrats means there has been literally no push-back against the self-destructive populism at the root of the Proposition 13 syndrome.

The lesson for Canada

The lesson here for Canada's (New) Democrats is brutally simple. (There is no lesson for the Liberals; they're the tax-cut champs.) If the NDP, both provincially and federally, does not find the courage to start a national debate about taxes they simply can forget about ever establishing a social democratic government worthy of the name.

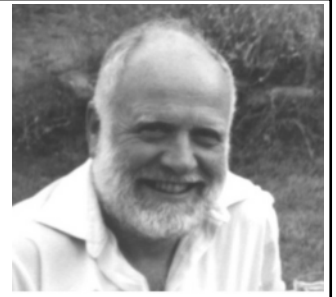
Thomas Mulcair, if he actually wins the next election, will take over a country in dire fiscal straits with a \$50-billion hole in annual revenue caused by Liberal and Conservative tax cuts. People worry about Mulcair's commitment to social democratic policies. They needn't bother. If he doesn't address the need for more revenue through higher taxes that question will be irrelevant. His role will be pre-determined: managing a severely diminished national government created by Stephen Harper.

Posted on Murray Dobbin's Blog: 05 Dec 2012 04:24 PM PST. Dobbin is an author, commentator and journalist, author of five books and a former columnist with Financial Post and Winnipeg Free Press. He is a board member of Canadians for Tax Fairness and on the advisory council of the Rideau Institute. He lives in Powell River, B.C.

From the Editor

Two resolutions were brought to this year's Canadian Unitarian Council's Annual General Meeting. One, on pervasive surveillance, passed without problem; the other, a resolution to study the Israeli/Palestinian situation with a view to developing a motion on the topic for the 2016 AGM ran into trouble, as explained in this issue of JUSTnews.

I have always felt the Israelis are between a rock and a hard place: a U.S. Government report states that the population of Palestinians living in Israel, the Occupied Gaza Strip, Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied West Bank combined now exceeds the number of Israeli Jews. The Palestinian population stands at over 5.3 million while the Jewish population stands at 5.2 million. Given the animosity between the two peoples, how could the Israelis agree to a single, combined democratic state in which Palestinians might hold the power? At the same time, the two-state "solution" as it now exists is not working for either side, particularly not for the Palestinians. The Palestinians and Israelis unfortunately appear little more ready to talk amicably now than they have been in the past. And so it has proved also for Unitarians at their AGM. This problem can never be resolved unless all those involved, both directly and indirectly, can speak and listen to one another patiently and with respect.



CUSJ
AGM
group
photo

CUSJ Membership Dues Due

Please check your financial records to see if you have sent your membership dues to CUSJ Treasurer, Bob Staveley (email: stavesbob@ncf.ca; postal address: P.O. Box 40011, Ottawa, ON K1V 0W8).

Every year our hard-working Membership person, Joy Silver, sends notices, first by email then by post, to dozens of members who are late renewing their membership (due May 1st, and at the latest by the CUSJ AGM later that month). The additional work causes Joy no joy at all, and in addition enriches Canada Post at the expense of CUSJ.

If you plan to renew your membership but are late for some reason, please notify Joy you will be renewing (email: odetojoy@telus.net).

Equally, if you are planning to end your membership, please also notify her; she will regretfully remove you from the list, but you will be spared the dunning emails and letters.

CUSJ membership dues are whatever you wish to contribute. The average contribution is about \$60, but CUSJ is in good financial status so there is no need to feel guilty if you cannot approach this amount. Just feel guilty if you ignore the notices!

If you wish to change the manner in which you receive JUSTnews (paper copy or electronic) please take this opportunity to notify Joy. She and the Treasurer are grateful for your attention and cooperation. PEKS

The New CUSJ Board of Directors 2014-2015

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM CUSJ'S 2014 AGM IN MONTREAL

by Margaret Rao

Rev. Jeffrey Brown set the tone for the AGM with Marge Piercy's 'To Be of Use,' urging us to 'jump into work head first' and 'do what has to be done, again and again.' Working together with persistence and patience, one task at a time, will bring about a more just and democratic world in due course.

The Rev. Frances Deverell spoke of writing to the presidents of UU congregations about divestment from fossil fuels, a campaign begun by 350.org. Frances noted that it was largely due to Alastaire Henderson's patient persistence that a 'Resolution to Divest from Fossil Fuels' was passed at Ottawa First's spring AGM.

Coalition building with 'Leadnow.ca' to regenerate Canadian democracy, combat climate change and create an economy that works for everyone has proven to be a productive partnership and will continue to be so leading up to the federal election in 2015.

Recent anti-pipeline rallies across the nation, with thousands taking part in the streets of Vancouver alone, plus a door-to-door campaign in Kitimat culminated in a victory plebiscite over the Northern Gateway Pipeline. Copies of the Broadbent Institute's Training Program for organizing grassroots campaigns, which Frances took part in, were made available at the CUSJ table.

Chapter reports from Toronto, Ottawa, Calgary, North Shore and emerging Chapters in Halifax, Montreal and Edmonton included environmental ties, to groups such as ClimateFast and Citizen's Climate Lobby. Check out their websites and commit to contacting your MP on the first of the month as well as a one-day food and/or carbon fast. Personal, handwritten letters to MPs are given greater weight than online form letters and petitions, according to Green MP Bruce Heyer, one of several CUSJ dinner guests at Christina Duvander's house party on Saturday night. 350.org's 'Do the Math!' screening also hit home if we care about creating a liveable planet for future generations.

We were very lucky to have Chief Gilbert Whiteduck, Chief at Kitigan Zibi Algonquin Community in Maniwake, bring us up to date on the situation for First Nations people, particularly relating to the First Nations Education Act and the need for an inquiry for murdered and missing Aboriginal women. Look for a link to his full speech on our AGM page on the website. His speech was informative, personal, and candid as he expressed his frustration with issues that have gone on, unresolved, for years. He emphasized the central importance of culture and languages for the well-being of his students. Now is the time for Unitarians to act. Find a sample letter you can use on our web-site's First Nations page.

Our final thanks went to our beloved, dedicated President, in the form of gift cards, a cash donation and a heartfelt round of applause. Devoted as Frances is to the well-being of CUSJ, she will stay on as an advisor to the Board and also contribute her time and talent to the website. Thanks for your continued support Frances. We are lucky to have you on board.



Margaret Rao presents a rose to Chief Whiteduck.

Margaret Rao is the newly elected president of CUSJ and is a member of First Unitarian Church of Toronto.

Live Streaming of AGM Monday May 19, 2014 in Montreal

by Ellen Papenburg - web master

When the live-streaming worked, it was great! Paul Fortis-Mair with Sabrina and Debra took charge of it and the chat. Jim Sannes was assisting with the projection whilst I was a moderator on the chat and online voting to check participants with the membership list and keep the vote tally. There was about a 20 second delay, but we could work with that.

The meeting room's internet connection was not working, so Paul had to run the stream over the hotel's wifi. The connection was then good, but it started acting up during Chief Gilbert Whiteduck's engaging speech. However, most of his presentation was recorded, which Paul recently compacted, after which he downloaded the recording to our channel on YouTube. This is time-consuming and took a few days. The recording of the AGM and Chief Whiteduck's keynote address are on the CUSJ website under the AGM menu and submenu item Video CUSJ AGM and Chief Whiteduck.

During the AGM the following members were online: Ahti Tolvanen, Bill Woolverton, Adina Lyon, Susan Stratton,

and Karen Wylie, with eight others in Calgary and six in Victoria. Adding all up we had 19 online voters!

This might not seem worth the cost, but considering the carbon footprints we avoided whilst maintaining accessibility and democracy I suggest it is completely worth-while. Also, numbers on-line have grown, and, with promotion, the number will undoubtedly grow in the future.

We had unexpected conversion problems with Apple (Mac) to Windows. We should have foreseen this, but we'll know for next time, and the problem was solved in a timely way during the meeting.

Paul is now compacting the recording so I can download it onto our private CUSJ YouTube channel and our website. Video takes a lot of resources and technical time on the computer, but with luck we'll have it online by mid-June, latest.

Ellen Papenburg is a member of Elo-ra & Fergus Unitarian Universalist Church



Resolution on Human Rights in Palestine and Israel proposed at the CUC ACM May 2014

Brief report of what happened at the CUC (by the Rev. Frances Deverell)

The first version of the resolution presented to congregations leaned heavily towards a pre-determined resolution of the discussion toward joining the United Church and other Churches by supporting boycott, divestment and sanctions of companies producing goods in illegal settlements in the West Bank. The resolution team accepted feedback requesting a more balanced process and presented a rewritten resolution in April, but very few delegates were aware of this.

Most arrived at the AGM prepared to discuss the first resolution. Those who disagreed with it had little faith that the committee members could lead an open process when they had already made up their minds. Opponents found the wording ambiguous and they didn't know what they were voting for. They accepted a motion to postpone indefinitely in order to give the team room to come back with a better worded and clearer resolution.

Feelings ran high after the meeting because activists thought the vote showed a lack of will to take action on the injustices occurring in Palestine. On-going discussions emphasize that, because this issue is so sensitive, joining the United Church may have a negative effect on some of our members' ability to do effective interfaith work where different approaches might be needed for effective bridge-building. Others are suggesting we become actively engaged with peacemaking groups such as <http://www.theparentscircle.com/>, Bereaved Families Supporting Peace, Reconciliation, and Tolerance, or <http://cfpeace.org/>, or TA'AYUSH <http://www.taayush.org/>.

As a result of the resolution process, there is an active and vital conversation taking place in congregations and on lists across the country. Whether we passed the resolution or not [*a motion was passed to table it. Ed*], the conversation has begun. May it be engaging, respectful, and fruitful.



Past CUSJ president
Frances Deverell

Background to the resolution as amended March 7, 2014

1. The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians has a long history with regrettable actions by both sides.
2. Since Israel was granted membership in the United Nations in 1948, it has breached numerous United Nations resolutions, which has angered the Muslim world.
3. Israel has felt under threat from its powerful Arab neighbours and feels it has to protect itself. In 1967, Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza. Since that time, there have been two Intifadas which included suicide bomb attacks, and rocket fire into Israel by the Palestinians. Israeli actions have included various armed incursions into Gaza, settlement building in the West Bank along with check points and a barrier wall. Negotiations have not produced any solution to the situation.
4. At this time in 2014, the occupation has continued for 46 years.
5. Why act now? The Palestinians have felt abandoned by the rest of the world for many years. They have felt some optimism recently due to Europe's involvement in the "Boycotts, Divestments, Sanctions" (BDS) movement that is spreading to the United States and the rest of the world. In very recent years, some Canadian Christian churches and liberal Jewish groups have made official statements regarding the importance of boycotting goods produced in the West Bank, which seems to be having some effect. The European Union has given the boycott some support, and the Israeli press has talked about the powerful effects of this boycott.
6. Since 2008, there have been no suicide bombings by the Palestinians who have been using non-violent protest methods, which include the BDS movement. Rocket attacks from Gaza to Israel continue. Israeli deaths up to November 2012 have included 20 adults, 3 minors and 3 soldiers. Palestinian deaths include 558 adults (81 were minors), and 36 targeted assassinations.

AS UNITARIANS WE AFFIRM:

The inherent worth and dignity of every person, justice, equity and compassion in human relations, and the goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all.

Guided by these principles we have a history of promoting justice. Our denomination here and abroad has previously spoken to this matter:

Unitarian Universalist Association of the United States - 2002 Action of Immediate Witness: Rev. Bill Sinkford, Past President of the Unitarian Universalist Association, issued a pastoral letter regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on March 27, 2002.

Two hundred and forty-two Unitarian Universalist ministers signed a petition for Peace in the Middle East on March 10, 2002, while attending the Convocation of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association in Birmingham, Alabama. Details are available at [UUUs for Justice in the Middle East](#).

United Kingdom General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches 2004 Resolution for the support of Human Rights of Palestinians. Details at [Unitarians in Britain](#).

Canadian Unitarian Council in 2002 passed a resolution to end the Occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, which states:

- We believe that one of the primary outcomes of negotiations in the Middle East must be a viable Palestinian state living in peace alongside the state of Israel. For a Palestinian state to be viable and for Israel to be secure, Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza must end. All Israeli settlement activity in the Occupied Territories must cease.
- We believe in the vision of a shared Jerusalem as the heritage, hope and home of two peoples and three religions. Jerusalem should be a shared, open city – a sign of peace and a symbol of reconciliation for the Abrahamic faiths.

Canadians Unitarians for Social Justice 2013 position paper on Israel and Palestine (JUSTnews Discussion Paper No. 26) quoted US President Obama speaking to the Knesset in October 2013 on the Palestinian people's right to self-determination: "Put yourself in their shoes—look at the world through their eyes. It is not fair that a Palestinian child cannot grow up in a state of their own, and lives with the presence of a foreign army that controls the movements of her parents every single day. It is not just when settler violence against Palestinians goes unpunished. It is not right to prevent Palestinians from farming their lands; to restrict a student's ability to move around the West Bank; or Palestinian families from their home. Neither occupation nor expulsion is the answer. Just as Israelis built a state in their homeland, Palestinians have a right to be a free people in their own land."

Therefore be it resolved that:

1. The CUC establish a Study Group - *Human Rights in Palestine and Israel* - to assemble

information and resources to enable congregational study of:

- a. the history of the conflict in Palestine and Israel;
 - b. the present conditions which prevail in the state of Israel including the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank;
 - c. various actions being undertaken or recommended around the world to bring peaceful resolution to the situation, including the ongoing BDS initiative.
2. Member congregations be encouraged to undertake this study during 2014 - 2015 about the conditions in Palestine and Israel.
 3. Study Group members be [names were provided].
 4. The Study Group shall be prepared to propose a motion on the subject for the 2016 AGM.

Canadian Unitarian Council Urgent Resolution on Pervasive Surveillance

Background

- The governments of some democratic countries have been secretly engaging in routine surveillance of the communications, associations and movements of large numbers of citizens, referred to here as "pervasive surveillance;"
- The Communications Security Establishment Canada (CSEC) issued a statement on January 30, 2014, asserting that it is legally authorized to collect and analyze communication metadata under the National Defence Act;
- The Minister of National Defence in the House of Commons on January 31, 2014, declined to acknowledge that tracking the locations of Canadians by CSEC is against the law or is wrong;
- Democracy can only function effectively when citizens can freely associate and exchange ideas without government interference;
- Citizens involved in social justice work may engage in lawful activities that some politicians and government officials may want to discourage;
- Citizens, through their elected representatives, cannot exercise democratic control over their government when it acts or makes policy in secret;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this 2014 Annual Meeting of the Canadian Unitarian Council recommends that each of its member congregations call on the government of Canada to:

- Provide to its citizens a comprehensive and forthright account of all the pervasive surveillance pro-

grams that have been carried out by government agencies over the past five years; and,

- Assign the authority to oversee surveillance activities undertaken by the government to an agency that is responsible directly to Parliament, not to the Cabinet; and,

- Bring forward legislation that would make it unlawful for the government to engage in pervasive surveillance, including the routine mass collection or storage of its citizens' communications, movements, or meta-data; and,

Be it further resolved that this 2014 Annual Meeting of the Canadian Unitarian Council recommends that its member congregations invite their individual members to write their elected representatives to express concern about pervasive surveillance and their support for the changes outlined above.

Government orders federal departments to keep tabs on all demonstrations across country

by David Pugliese

The federal government is expanding its surveillance of public activities to include all known demonstrations across the country, a move that collects information even on the most mundane of protests by Canadians.

The email requesting such information was sent out Tuesday [June 3rd, 2014] by the Government Operations Centre in Ottawa to all federal departments.

"The Government Operations Centre is seeking your assistance in compiling a comprehensive listing of all known demonstrations which will occur either in your geographical area or that may touch on your mandate," noted the email, leaked to the Citizen. "We will compile this information and make this information available to our partners unless of course, this information is not to be shared and not available on open sources. In the case of the latter, this information will only be used by the GOC for our Situational Awareness."



Idle No More demonstrators marching on Parliament Hill.

The Government Operations Centre or GOC is supposed to provide strategic-level coordination on behalf of the federal government "in response to an emerging or occurring event affecting the national interest."

It assesses the requirement for developing plans to prevent or deal with emergencies such as pandemics, earthquakes, forest fires and floods. It also monitors overseas situations such as the 2011 crisis at the Fukushima nuclear plant in Japan.

But the Government Operations Centre has also been involved, as an intelligence clearing house, in compiling information on Aboriginal protesters. Tuesday's email, however, significantly expands its surveillance activities to include all demonstrations by any person or group.

Wesley Wark, an intelligence specialist at the University of Ottawa, said such an order is illegal. "The very nature of the blanket request and its unlimited scope I think puts it way over the line in terms of lawful activity," said Wark. "I think it's a clear breach of our Charter rights."

Wark said the only lawful way a Canadian government agency, with the appropriate mandate, would have to monitor a demonstration would be if that agency could establish that the protest would constitute some kind of threat to civil order.

"But it has to be specific and it has to be justifiable in law to mount such surveillance," he added.

Wark also questioned why the Government Operations Centre would issue such an order. It is mandated to assess incoming information about emergencies and threats to the security of Canada but it doesn't have a legal mandate to issue directions, he added.

Jean Paul Duval, a spokesman for Public Safety Canada, noted in an email that "such requests for information fall within the mandate of the Government Operations Centre which facilitates information-sharing for potential and ongoing events with other federal departments, provinces and territories, and its partners through regular analysis and reporting."

Liberal MP Wayne Easter, the party's public safety critic, said the order appears to be a continuation of the Conservative government's efforts to keep track of Canadians who might disagree with government policy.

"Demonstrations, as long as they are peaceful, are part of a healthy democracy," Easter said. "This is the kind of tactics you would see in a dictatorship."

The GOC was created in 2004 by Public Safety Canada. It is connected with the operations centres of 20 federal departments and agencies, as well as with those of the provinces and territories, and other countries, including the United States.

NDP MP Paul Dewar said the email is part of what he sees as a disturbing pattern on the part of government to increase its collection of information on the public. "This government is turning into Big Brother," said Dewar. "This is clearly out of bounds from what GOC is supposed to do."

Last year the Government Operations Centre was involved in coordinating a response to Aboriginal demonstrations against fracking. The GOC distributed a map of the area where the RCMP had conducted raids on protesters who had seized an oil company's vehicles. It also produced a spreadsheet detailing 32 planned events in support of anti-fracking.

Those included a healing dance in Kenora, Ont., a prayer ceremony in Edmonton and an Idle No More "taco fundraiser, raffle and jam session" planned at the Native Friendship Centre in Barrie, Ont., according to documents obtained through the Access to Information Act by APTN National News.

David Pugliese is a journalist with the Ottawa Citizen. He specializes in reporting on military issues. Published on: June 4, 2014. Last Updated: June 5, 2014 12:23 PM EDT



A Hungarian Roma Family's Struggle to Stay in Canada

by Peter Hajnal

Hungary an Unsafe Country for Romas

This is the story of the Pusumas, a Hungarian Roma family and their struggle to remain in Canada as refugees. Jozsef Pusuma and his wife Timea Daroczi were high-profile human rights activists in Hungary. Jozsef is half Roma and half Jewish (his father was Jewish). Both he and Timea worked for Ms. Viktoria Mohacsi, an indefatigable leader in the struggle for Roma rights, founder of the Movement for Desegregation Foundation and a member of the European Parliament at the time. Because of their ethnicity and their human rights work, the family endured repeated harassment and threats in Hungary, where anti-Roma and anti-Semitic attitudes and well-documented incidents have risen alarmingly—a fact acknowledged by the European Union, Amnesty International and other respected bodies. Despite all the evidence, the Canadian government insists on classifying Hungary as a safe country.



Viktoria Mohacsi

In July 2009, upon returning home from work, Jozsef, with his family, was brutally attacked by four members of the

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Letter: CUSJ president pleads for compassion and justice for Pusuma family

15 May, 2014

To: The Hon. Chris Alexander
Minister of Citizenship and Immigration
House of Commons, Ottawa, K1A 0A2

Dear Hon. MP Chris Alexander:

I am writing to ask you to have compassion for Jozsef Pusuma, his wife Timea Daroczi, and their young daughter Lulu, who live in fear for their lives if they are extradited back to Hungary...

The Roma people are the largest ethnic minority in Eastern Europe. It is my understanding that they are subject to discrimination and human rights violations in Hungary, and Jozsef Pusuma has been courageous enough to speak out in defense of his people. Amnesty International has recognized that Roma human rights defenders in Hungary are at increased risk.

Canada has a terrific record of welcoming refugees who face persecution in their own land. I don't understand why statements by your government indicate you don't believe the Roma are real refugees. In spite of the political difficulties, it is important that we look at each individual case on its merits, and not make assumptions about any particular class of people.

...
Please grant the Pusuma family a temporary resident permit so their case can be considered properly. Let justice and compassion prevail.

Sincerely yours,

President [at time of writing]]
Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice



neo-Nazi Hungarian Guard. Jozsef saved his then-infant daughter, Laura Viktoria Pusuma (nicknamed Lulu), by shielding her with his body. This incident was the culminating event that led the family to flee Hungary and seek refuge in Canada by applying for refugee status.

Botched Refugee Hearing

Having arrived in Toronto, they first lived in a refugee shelter, in a vulnerable situation because they did not speak English. Thus, on recommendations by some fellow refugees, they turned to a lawyer named Viktor Hohots because they were told he had a staff member named Jozsef Sarkozi who spoke Hungarian. The family submitted to Mr. Hohots's firm full documentation with evidence supporting their refugee claim.

At the family's refugee hearing, attended by Mr. Sarkozi instead of Mr. Hohots, it became clear that a video that demonstrated Jozsef's and Timea's human rights work had not been given to the Immigration and Refugee Board as evidence, and a letter testifying to Jozsef's human rights work had not been translated into English. Thus, neither piece of crucial evidence was available for consideration by the IRB. On March 2, 2011, the couple received a negative decision from the IRB.

Mr. Sarkozi then offered to make an Appeal to the Federal Court and to make a Pre-Removal Risk Assessment (PRRA). But this application for judicial review again omitted the crucial evidence.

In October 2011 the family was interviewed by Anna Porter, a journalist originally from Hungary. She published the story of the family, then on the verge of being deported, in the *Toronto Star*. The couple then saw Andrew Brouwer, a refugee lawyer, who advised them that the failure to submit the evidence of their human rights work was serious. Mr. Pusuma filed a complaint with the Law Society of Upper Canada in late November 2011. It was clear at this time that Mr. Sarkozi was not a lawyer, so a complaint was also filed with the Canadian Society of Immigration Consultants.

Church Sanctuary

Afraid of the danger they would face in Hungary if deported, the family sought sanctuary in a Toronto

church where they have remained for 2 ½ years. They are not free to leave the building because the threat of deportation continues to hang over their heads. Their daughter Lulu, now six years old, has spent half of her lifetime in sanctuary. She cannot attend school and have a normal childhood. Despite inspired and continuous help from their many supporters, the Pusumas feel that they are in prison.

In the meantime, the Law Society investigated the complaint against the lawyer Viktor Hohots. During this time the couple also filed a new Humanitarian and Compassionate application that would allow them to remain in Canada pending the outcome of the Law Society investigation. A new PRRA which included the evidence of their human rights work was also submitted. Nevertheless, in late January 2014, a Citizenship and Immigration Canada officer rejected both applications.



Roma human-rights activists Timea Daroczi and Jozsef Pusuma in sanctuary with daughter, Laura Viktoria Pusuma ("Lulu"). Photo: Toronto Star, June 9th, 2014.

Support Building

On February 13, 2014, the Law Society referred the complaint to the Society's Procedures Authorization Committee which determined that "the investigation of the matter disclosed evidence of professional misconduct by Mr. Hohots" and that the committee had authorized disciplinary proceedings. The ruling of the Law Society is now public and at least two large media outlets are completing a major investigation into the conduct of lawyers and the regulatory effectiveness of the Law Society. This scandal may have a positive outcome for at least one family—although many more have been damaged through the actions of a few lawyers and over the two year period that it took to investigate their misdeeds.

In addition to the Law Society process, which is fair but time-consuming, letters have been written by the family's supporters to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Chris Alexander, requesting him to grant a humanitarian and compassionate temporary residence permit to the Pusumas, allowing them to remain in Canada till the legal process is completed, and the family has an opportunity for a fair hearing, supported by all the available evidence.

The Pusuma family has the support of Member of Parliament Peggy Nash (Parkdale-High Park) as well as of well-known refugee advocate Mary Jo Leddy and other leaders of the sanctuary movement.

An inspiring multifaith coalition has also rallied around the family. Now Unitarian faith leaders, namely Rev. Frances Deverell, past president of Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice, have joined this growing support network. A mass campaign to “Free Lulu” (www.freelulu.ca) has been launched. A related petition has garnered 43,000 signatures. On May 23, 2014, a multifaith rally was held in front of Minister Alexander’s constituency office in Ajax, Ontario.



Twelve-year old Ryan Falconer speaks at a rally urging Immigration Minister Chris Alexander to free Viktoria Pusuma (Lulu), from sanctuary at a Toronto church. Photo by Peter Restivo, star.com.

The outpouring of support for the Pusuma family reflects the best face of Canada and Canadians. In contrast, the government has so far remained unmoved, failing to show fairness and compassion despite the clear merits of this family’s case.

Peter Hajnal is Research Associate of the Munk School of Global Affairs and of Truinity College, University of Toronto, and is a friend of the Pusuma family. He wrote this article expressly for JUSTnews.

Donations and Retaining Charitable Status

In the last issue of JUSTnews you were promised an article describing *how donations could be made by congregations without endangering their charitable status*. The subject is sufficiently complex that the excellent and detailed article received from Marlene Koehler is too long for a regular issue of JUSTnews. It will therefore be published in a Discussion Paper, and will appear in early fall of 2014. My apologies for the delay in publication of information on this important topic.

Editor, JUSTnews

Editor’s note: In the preceding issue of JUSTnews, Michael Wheatley described how the alternative voting system could evolve toward a proportional voting system. This evolution appears advantageous in B.C. where a referendum to approve Single Transferrable Vote (STV) was defeated by claims it was too complicated for voters to understand. Andy Blair responds in the article below.

Proportional Representation: Canadians Deserve No Less

by Andy Blair

Last month, Fair Vote Canada’s Victoria Chapter executive Michael Wheatley argued in JUSTnews for an incremental approach to achieving a measure of proportional representation (PR) in Canada. While I share Wheatley’s desire to see a fairer system in Canada via PR, I do not share his view that replacing our flawed First-Past-the-Post system with another flawed winner-take-all system will get us there.

Winner Take All is the Problem

CUSJ has taken a principled stand on democratic reform in Canada, long supporting Fair Vote Canada’s efforts to bring about a more proportional voting system. Indeed, our dysfunctional democracy is probably the most urgent challenge Canada faces today: it is fundamental to progress on so many issues, from climate change and environmental policy, to income inequality, pipelines, resource extraction, to a host of social justice issues. As the last federal election demonstrated, when a 39% minority is handed 100% of the power and can then write the laws governing all of us, we don’t often see governance that is truly in the interest of all Canadians. The voting system is a root cause of much of what ails Canada today.

The key problem is our current system allows the election of only a single representative in each electoral district. With just one winner in “winner-take-all” systems, many—often the majority—of voters do not have their votes count towards electing their preferred representative. In fact, their votes don’t count towards electing anybody. This produces results that aren’t proportional to the popular vote: smaller voices are under-represented or shut out completely, and the top party gets far more seats (and power) than they deserve.

The Alternative Vote is No Alternative

Sadly, this wouldn’t change under Alternative Vote (AV). Even though voters may rank ballots under AV, there is still only one winner in each district and the winning party is still over-represented. Besides distorted results and disenfranchised voters, AV won’t elect more women or minorities. It will move us towards a US-style two-party system over time, and it institutionalizes strategic voting

Continued on p. 11

instead of ending it. Holding your nose to vote for a choice you dislike to block one you absolutely despise is the problem, not the solution!

All this, and AV isn't even a "stepping stone" to PR: no country, state, or city has ever moved from AV to PR. Only Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and Australia (partially) use AV today, while the majority of the world's democracies have adopted PR. Canadian politicians feeling pressure for democratic reform are now touting AV as the answer, because they know little will actually change—studies show that 98% of the time AV would produce the same electoral winner.

AV is fine for electing single-seat positions like a mayor or president, but not for electing legislative bodies. Interested readers can learn more at: www.no2av.ca

A 'Made in Canada' PR System is the Answer

There are lots of voting methods out there—an alphabet soup of both winner-take-all and proportional systems. Different PR systems have various pros and cons: some would make political parties more powerful, some less; others would empower candidates and give independents an equal shot at election. Many offer electors more choice while maintaining the vital link (and accountability) between constituent and local representative. Most result in more women and minorities winning seats.

But as far as accurately reflecting voters' wishes and producing stable, consensus-style government, PR is the gold standard. The weight of expert evidence in favour of PR is one reason why virtually all citizens' assemblies and government commissions have recommended it in Canada, federally as well as in Ontario, B.C., P.E.I., and Quebec. We can tailor a system that works for Canada. But if we are going to fix our broken electoral system, there is no reason to offer Canadians anything less than PR.

The year 2015 will be a watershed for federal elections. It's one where Canadians of all stripes are coming together to mount a multi-partisan national campaign to ensure democracy and voting system reform are top election issues. We hope that, instead of deflecting momentum for PR with another winner-take-all system like AV, we can finally achieve the fair democracy Canadians deserve.

I invite readers—and the CUSJ itself—to join Fair Vote Canada's Campaign 2015 finally to make every vote count: www.fairvote.ca/campaign2015

Andy Blair is a board member of MOVE (the Movement for Voter Equality), former Vice-President of Fair Vote Canada and President of Fair Vote Nova Scotia. He is also a CUSJ board member.



It's not Easy Being Green—Toronto First Surpasses Kyoto Protocol

by Fred Lautenschlaeger

My grandmother had an ecological footprint of 1. She produced no garbage, had durable simple clothing which she wore for decades, could not afford meat, nursed a vegetable garden in which she put the ashes from her wood stove, on which she cooked and which provided warm water. She went to an unheated church. Only two generations later, because of education and circumstances, my footprint is 6—like the average Canadian's. This means it would require six planets Earth to sustain life, if all mankind had the same ecological requirements as I do. Small wonder that countries, including Canada, signed a legally binding Protocol (Kyoto) to reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) from direct and indirect oil and gas combustion by 5% over the period from 1998 to 2012, against the 1990 level.

But resistance to the necessary lifestyle changes and significant upgrades to transportation and industry made the Kyoto commitment in Canada seem unrealistic. Even if it had succeeded, most felt such a hard-won and economically expensive achievement would have little global impact. The government's "One Ton Challenge" did not sufficiently motivate its citizens. Many environmentalists protested against a new federal government's withdrawal from its commitment. But were the protesters fully aware what fulfilling the Kyoto requirement would have meant to the economic welfare of the country?

Nevertheless, First Unitarian Toronto's Congregation decided to persevere. Based on safe assumptions about unavailable records in the early 1990's, Toronto First fulfilled the Kyoto requirement and surpassed it with an approximate 11% GHG reduction. A major factor was a renovation of the building, which included conversion from oil to gas.

Later, in 2009, electricity consumption for electric heaters in hallways and stairs was reduced by about 30%, with immediate annual savings of about \$2,500. On the human level, the drive required a champion and organizational discipline, and touched on the sensitive issues of comfort versus principle. Much learning was necessary about potential technologies and equipment.

The biggest issue was the question whether such efforts really mattered, if such a hard-to-achieve success would be only an infinitesimally small contribution to a worldwide problem. One only needed to consider massive GHG production by the airline industry and military jets, the huge amounts of flashing (burning) of natural gas during oil exploration, the increasing number of motor vehicles, subsidies for the trucking industries in Canada, and the huge amount of coal burning in states with limited alternative energy sources.

Change will always be difficult and inconvenient, but the risk to our future needs to be more widely understood, and the youth need to be actively involved on all levels.

Fred Lautenschlaeger is a member of First Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Toronto.

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The views published herein do not necessarily reflect views and opinions of the Canadian Unitarian Council, Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice or all Canadian Unitarian Universalists.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The CUSJ purposes are:

- to develop and maintain a vibrant network of Unitarian social action in Canada and elsewhere and to proactively represent Unitarian principles and values in matters of social justice and in particular
- to provide opportunities, including through publication of newsletters, for Unitarians and friends to apply their religious, humanistic and spiritual values to social action aimed at the relief of (1) poverty and economic injustice, (2) discrimination based on religious, racial or other grounds, (3) abuses of human rights whether of individuals or peoples, (4) abuses of democratic process, and
- to promote peace and security, environmental protection, education, and literacy in keeping with the spirit of Unitarian values.

These purposes are an integral part of the Constitution of CUSJ, adopted at the CUSJ Annual Meeting in Mississauga, ON, May 19, 1999, and amended at the 2003 AGM.

I agree with the above Statement of Purpose, and wish to
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