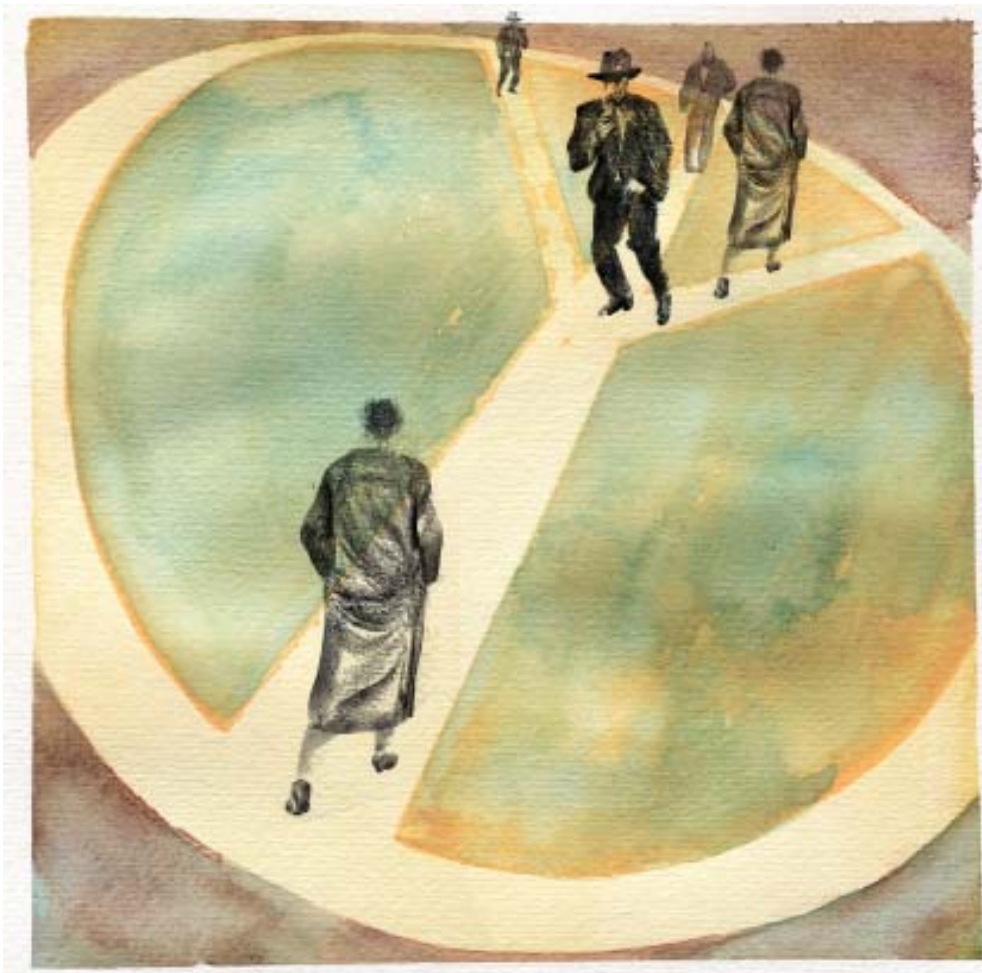


Peace and the Global Commons



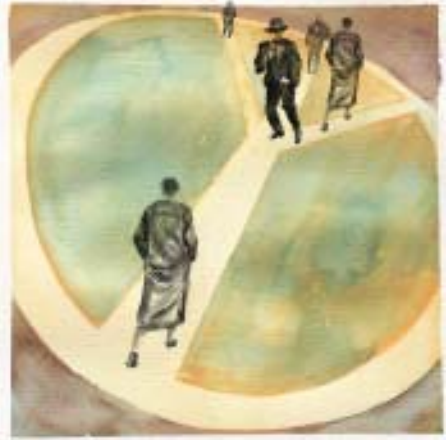
POLICY PAPER

NUPGE NATIONAL CONVENTION | FREDERICTON 2007



All we are saying is
Give peace a chance





Peace and the Global Commons

PEOPLE UNITED in the pursuit of a common cause can achieve great things. It is a lesson each generation learns as it first confronts and finally triumphs over its own great challenges. There could be no better lesson for us now in our time.

Today we need again to unite in common cause, to come together as a country and as a global community to address what are some of the greatest challenges ever faced by any generation.

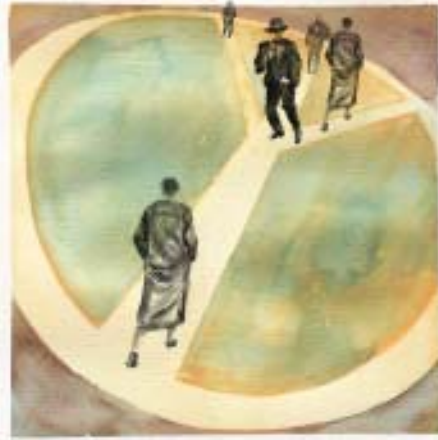
Our world has become more interconnected through communications, business and travel. Sadly, our problems have also become interconnected.

Conflicts, diseases or pollutants in one region of the world do not remain confined to a geographic locale. The impacts are now more widespread—often more devastating.

One of the great challenges of our times is the impact of climate change on the people of the world. This is a problem that will have a global impact and that requires a global effort to address.

But there is something standing in the way of globally uniting to reduce the impact of climate change—war!

Not only is war itself a significant contributor to the production of greenhouse gases but it is pre-



venting the creation of a global response to the problem. Unity of purpose requires that those issues that create conflict be resolved.

Conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel-Palestine, Sudan and Somalia, to name a few, bring terrible loss of life, disease, fear and insecurity. As a people—as a global community—we cannot move ahead without resolving these conflicts.

Once we, as a global society, achieve peace the trillion dollars spent globally on the military and the arms trade can be redirected to education, social programs, environmental protection and restoration—in short to building a better world for all of us. This is referred to as the “peace dividend”.

Canada has had a proud history of being social innovators and global peacemakers. Generations of young Canadians have sewn small flags on their clothing while traveling the world because it often brought instant recognition—and appreciation.

Unfortunately, our once shiny global reputation is becoming tarnished. Our dedication to building peace is distorted by our willingness, as a nation, to walk lock step with the failed policies of the current administration of the United States.

The National Union is committed to Canada regaining its moral footing in the world. We must work to once again be known as a nation of peace-makers and environmental defenders.

Iraq

“WE ARE TRAPPED in times of great uncertainty. The drumbeat for war rises. We are told we have no real choice; we either endorse certain death for many Iraqis or face an uncertain future for ourselves.

We believe we have a choice, and we have made ours. We are opposed to the threatened war with Iraq. We believe there is neither a practical necessity, nor a moral defence for such a war.”
—2003 Open Letter from the National Union

In the fall of 2002 and winter of 2003 the world community was locked in a global debate—on one side the government of the United States, on the other the overwhelming majority of the world’s people.

The case made for war then was flawed and sketchy. We were told that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction and that the Iraqi government was supporting terrorists.

All of these assertions have since been proven to be false. In-

deed, it appears that it was even known at the time that the arguments for war were fraudulent.

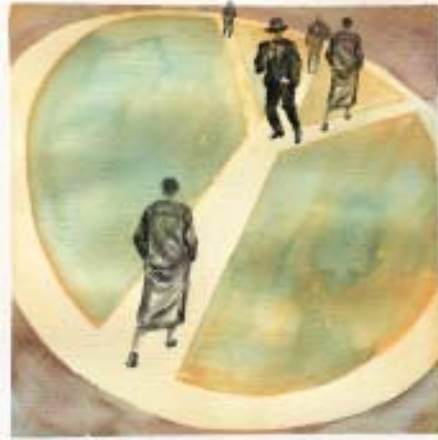
While no friend to the regime of Saddam Hussein, we thought that the proposed cure would be far worse than the disease. History has only validated this opinion.

“War makes enemies—not friends. The people of Iraq, the millions of people in the Arab world, the hundreds of millions in the worldwide Muslim community will not love us for killing their friends and relations. They will only hate us more. They will only live to visit the same misery on us that we visited on them. If we sow the wind we must surely reap the whirlwind.”

The truth of this passage from our 2003 Open Letter has been proven by the course of time. The longer that foreign troops remain in Iraq the greater the bloodshed and the farther away a lasting and just resolution remains.

The National Union reiterates its strong opposition to the invasion and occupation of Iraq. We join with others in the world community in calling for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Iraq.

We also feel that the world community must dedicate itself to rebuilding the war-torn country of Iraq. Peace and security can only



come when a free and independent Iraq has the ability to house, feed, educate and care for its people.

Afghanistan

AS SO MANY young Canadian men and women risk life and limb in Afghanistan it can be difficult to discuss the nature of the mission in a fair and responsible manner. It is only right that all of us honour the women and men serving and that concern for their safety and wellbeing must be the starting point for our discussion.

It is equally true that it is our duty as citizens to question and debate our government when it makes the conscious decision to send our young people in uniform in harm's way.

To do otherwise would be to make light of their sacrifice. To do otherwise would be to undermine the democracy that these soldiers are serving to defend. To do otherwise is to diminish the suffering that many Afghans are experiencing.

Even defenders of the occupation of Afghanistan concede that it is not going well. Armed opposition in the countryside is growing, not decreasing, with time. With every death—every

report of civilian abuse—the opposition grows.

The people of Afghanistan want peace and the freedom democracy brings. They voted in unprecedented numbers during the election. Unfortunately, the process was stacked in favour of the war lords.

Some leading members of the current Afghani government are the same individuals who are implicated in war crimes that killed or displaced hundreds of thousands of Afghans in the early 1990s and led to the rise of the Taliban.

The plight of women in Afghanistan is not improving but, as the recent increase in self-immolation shows, becoming even more dire.

Brave individuals who oppose the war lords and government war criminals face violent retaliation.

Our military's support for such a government is not promoting the pursuit of peace and democracy in Afghanistan.

It is time for Canadians to seriously examine the premise underlying our government's support for the US-led occupation of Afghanistan—peace and democracy cannot be brought to another country through war and occupation.

History has shown us that such an approach will not be successful.

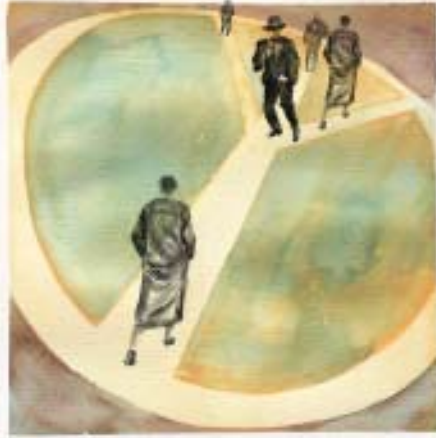
The National Union joins the call for Canada to immediately withdraw its troops from Afghanistan and to commit to supporting humanitarian aid, progressive organizations in civil society, and women's organizations.

Middle East

AFGHANISTAN and Iraq are but two flashpoints in a troubled region. In the minds of most Canadians the Middle East has become closely identified with violence and war. Sadly, violence and war have been facts of life for many in the region.

And yet, it is a mistake to think that this is simply the way things are, or that the future only holds more of the same. People throughout the region desire freedom, democracy and peace.

It is also a mistake to think that the conflicts in the Middle East are solely based on religious or ethnic divisions that have their origins in antiquity. Most of the current conflicts are the outcome of a history of being colonies of the West. Others arise from the posturing



and maneuvers of the United States and Soviet Union during the cold war.

Henry Kissinger, former Secretary of State of the United States, once said that, “oil is much too important a commodity to be left in the hands of the Arabs.” This is a succinct statement of the West’s policy approach to the Middle East for over a hundred years.

Throughout the twentieth century, foreign governments intervened in the region’s social and political institutions. Even the current boundaries are primarily those that were arbitrarily drawn by Western governments.

Many of the states of the region are governed by autocratic governments / regimes that violate human rights and political rights for its citizens, almost all of which have been financially and militarily supported by Western governments.

Strong political and social reform movements in the Middle East are ruthlessly stalked and brutally crushed with the assistance of Western governments—in the interest of maintaining Western access to oil.

This approach to building peace in the Middle East is flawed and failing. It has not increased our security. Western dependency on

oil has distorted foreign policy objectives. The people of the Middle East have been the innocent victims of this foreign policy objective.

It is time for a new approach. Canada can play a role in forging a new foreign policy vision. We can work with our allies to foster dialogue between the different parties of the Middle East.

And Canada needs to push for those steps that will ultimately lead to peace in the region. A first step must be to call for the disarmament of all nuclear weapons in the region.

Palestine-Israel

PERHAPS the single greatest source of conflict in the Middle East is Israel's occupation of Palestine. The failure of the international community to support a true and lasting solution to this conflict has served to make the region less stable, its people less safe, and the global community less secure.

It is undeniably true that violence and crimes have been committed by parties in both Palestine and Israel. All too often the victims of these actions have been innocent civilians trapped in a

conflict neither of their making nor in their interests.

Israel has turned the military power of an advanced technological state against an impoverished and occupied people. The daily harassment of the Palestinians at checkpoints, the erection of the "wall" on Palestinian land, and the repressive actions of the Israeli army have taken a devastating toll on the Palestinian people.

The people of Israel are also paying a huge cost for these actions. It is almost ironic that the Israeli government has made its own people less safe by suppressing the Palestinians.

The Palestinian people have a legitimate and inalienable right to self-determination. Only by their realizing the dream of a free and independent Palestine can we begin to build peace between the two countries.

Ultimately it is the only way to assure Israel's security. It would also be an important step forward towards building some political and social stability in the region.

Canada must play a positive role in fostering a dialogue between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government. We cannot continue to be tied to the foreign policy position of the



United States in their unilateral support for Israel.

Our country's commitment to building a just and lasting peace between Palestine and Israel must be accompanied by support for a viable civil society in Palestine.

Canada can build on existing international agreements—such as the Oslo Accord and the Roadmap of the International Quartet—as well as those proposals that have been made by Palestinian organizations, the prisoners' groups and various Arab states.

We believe that the establishment of an autonomous Palestinian state is possible and necessary. A just and lasting peace must be founded on establishing the pre-1967 borders (UN resolution 242), an end to hostilities and a negotiated settlement (UN resolution 338), and the dismantling of the security wall on Palestinian land (UN General Assembly Resolution ES-10/15).

sudan

An immense human catastrophe is taking place in the African country of Sudan—especially in the Darfur region.

More than 200,000 people have died in the last four years. Two

and a half million people have been displaced from their homes. An untold number are the victims of violence. Now the conflict is starting to spread into eastern Chad.

The current crisis is a legacy of colonial rule. Since gaining independence in 1956 the inequalities between regions and ethnic groups that were fostered under British and Egyptian rule have created a volatile political situation.

Many Sudanese of African descent, desperately poor rural people, responded to what they felt was neglect by the national government. The formation of armed opposition groups by these people brought swift retaliation from the government.

The government of Sudan gave free rein to Arab militias, known as the Janjawid (guns on horseback), to repress the opposition. The Janjawid, supported by the Sudanese government, have engaged in a campaign of violence and destruction.

A peace agreement was signed between the Sudanese government and one of the militia groups in Darfur in May 2006.

African Union (AU) troops are in Darfur as peacekeepers but have been unable to protect civilians from attacks and the violence continues unabated.

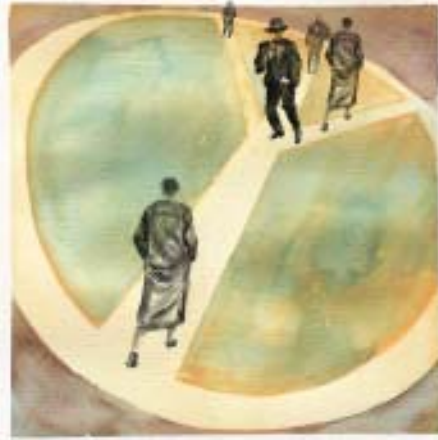
On November 17, 2006, the international community came together to reach an agreement with the Sudanese government to allow a hybrid UN-AU peace-keeping force to be deployed to Darfur in three phases.

Phases I and II involve increasing support to the existing AU force in the Sudan. Phase III calls for at least 10,000 additional UN and AU troops.

Poor people are suffering and yet the world community appears unable, or unwilling, to act. We spend billions upon billions of dollars and commit incalculable human resources to the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan and yet this African nation is being forgotten.

The government of Canada must do more to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid in an impartial and dignified manner to the people of the Sudan.

Canada must lobby the UN Security Council to deploy a strong UN mission in Darfur with the mandate to protect civilians and build peace.



Canada's Foreign Policy

CANADA is not, nor is likely to ever be, a major military power. Our greatest contribution on the global stage has come through our diplomatic interventions. This contribution to global affairs is no small matter and has ultimately saved an untold number of lives.

While the practice of diplomacy may be out of vogue among some quarters of government, it remains the surest way to address current global conflicts. To repeat a famous quote by Winston Churchill, "it is better to jaw jaw than to war war."

To be able to play a strong diplomatic role on the world stage has required us to adopt honest, fair and principled positions on global political issues.

Unfortunately, one federal government after another has undermined our ability to be an honest broker in international affairs. Most notably the Conservative government's obvious adoption of US foreign policy has eroded the perception that Canada will act in a fair and impartial manner.

It is impossible to be a mediator in a dispute between nations if you are seen as being simply a shill for one party.

The National Union also understands and appreciates that the world has changed since the 1950s. Yesterday's foreign policy goals may still apply in some circumstances—or be inappropriate in the current context.

For these reasons the National Union believes that Canada must engage in a sweeping review of its foreign policy. We must develop an independent voice on issues of global importance.

A principled foreign policy will mean that on some issues Canada will agree with the US. In other circumstances, it will mean taking a different position.

We are not advocating a behind closed doors review or an internal academic exercise. We are advocating full and open public consultations. Ultimately Canada's foreign policy must reflect the values and aspirations for a global community that is held by Canadians.

The National Union calls on the federal government to immediately embark upon such a review. We eagerly offer our assistance in charting a new, independent and exciting path for Canada.