

Report on Activities of the Kamloops-Shuswap Peace Council
February, 1980 - October, 1981

Introduction

The following report is not meant to be an exhaustive report on the activities of our peace council since its formation in the early part of 1980, but rather a brief look at our history (which will be easy, considering the brevity of our history), an examination of our structure and an overview of our council's activities and approach to the community at large.

In general terms, we in the KSPC, are quite pleased with our work over the past 20 months, though by no means satisfied. We recognize that some of our approaches to organizational and structural questions are somewhat unique in the organized peace movement in Canada and are reporting them, not as an example of how everybody should 'do it' but rather as an example of what has worked in this one particular area. Likewise, some of our activities are also activities which other peace councils have not taken up on, but again they are reported as examples of what we felt were important, and perhaps even more importantly, potentially popular issues for the Peace Council in this area to get involved in.

History

The KSPC was originally organized in the early part of 1980, drawing largely upon the overtly politically progressive elements within Kamloops, along with some members of the Society of Friends in the city. The impetus for the council's formation was the obvious need for some kind of peace action within the city (Kamloops is a city of approximately 60,000 located about 250 north east of Vancouver on the Trans Canada Hwy; and is generally regarded as the major industrial and distribution center for the south central interior of the province) and reports of stepped up peace activity in all parts of the country.

Understandably, the Kamloops Peace Council (as it was then called) was very small, about 10 people in all, most of whom had no experience in the organized peace movement as we know it at all. Nonetheless, the first action of the council was to plan for some public activity, as well as send a representative to the Canadian Peace Congress biennial conference in Toronto. The KPC organized 2 public showings of the film "War Without Winners", one in the local library, the other at Cariboo College.

The new group found a couple of distinct disadvantages in trying to establish a consistent pattern of activity and profile within the community;

one being the lack of direct experience of the membership in peace action, the other being the problems enforced upon groups through isolation from the major population centers, and hence, the major areas of peace activity.

While nothing can overcome the first problem other than direct activity, there is a distinct feeling, even today, within the KSPC that extra special efforts must be made to incorporate more fully the work of outlying councils in the overall plans and activities of the Canadian Peace Congress as a whole. We say this fully aware of the very limited resources, both human and financial available to the peace movement in Canada, and the incredible problems our country's geography creates for relatively small organizations, but also with the very deep conviction that this problem must be tackled head on to maximize the work of all peace activists in the country and to help new organizations get on their feet.

Unfortunately, but not all too unpredictably, after the first surge of enthusiasm and activity, a certain lack of activity struck the KPC over the late spring and summer of 1980. In the main, the lack of activity has to be attributed to lack of experience, and lack of direct input from other peace councils into the work of the new council in Kamloops.

However, with the advent of September, 1980, and even more pressure internationally for firm actions to meet the new military aggressiveness of imperialism, activities within our council picked up.

The increase in activity did not take spontaneously, but rather through the implementation and carrying out of a concrete plan for improving our group's work.

Our first priority was increasing our membership, and a membership drive resulted in an immediate increase of members from about 10 to more than 30. Secondly, we felt a definite need to establish somewhat of a secure financial basis, and chose the option of selling memberships, in various categories (regular yearly membership \$10.00; students and OAP, \$5.00; sustaining and organizational memberships \$25.00). This too proved to be very successful as not only did we increase our numbers, but we also generated a fairly significant amount of money for the work of our council.

Thirdly, we felt a need to expand our terms of reference and to involve other outlying, smaller centers peripheral to Kamloops in peace action and restructured ourselves as the Kamloops-Shuswap Peace Council in order to more ably reflect the entire geographic region.

And, of course, we realized that no matter what structural, or organizational changes were made, activity must begin on a regular basis.

Structure of the KSPC

As mentioned previously, the KSPC has opted for a membership

structure for a number of reasons. The most obvious one is the source of revenue which memberships can provide. Secondly, we have found that many peace minded people who support our activities simply do not have the time (due to other pressing commitments in other areas of activity) to play an active role in the council's work, but find the purchasing of a sustaining membership to be a very simple method of supporting the council's activity.

And, perhaps most importantly to our way of thinking, was the desire to involve fully established organizations, such as the organized labor movement, in our council's work, if even on a nominal basis.

The availability of organizational memberships seemed to us to be the best possible manner to do that in that a local union, church group, or whatever, would be making a conscious, collective decision to become affiliated to the peace council, and would receive official recognition in the council. The results, to date, have been very impressive we feel in that our organizational memberships now include the Kamloops and District Labor Council, Local 1-417 of the International Woodworkers of America (the area's largest trade union local), Local 900 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, and Local 1540 of the Carpenters Union. The negative side of this however is that other than the Labor Council, CUPE and to a lesser degree, the Carpenters, we have not been able to fully involve the unions in our activities, other than during special efforts such as disarmament week and nuclear awareness day. Improving this to ensure that as many local unions as possible first affiliate to the council, and then designate a regular delegate to attend meetings and report back (as do the Labor Council and CUPE representatives) is now one of our organizational priorities.

Secondly, on structure, while Kamloops is the geographical, economical, political and demographic center of the region, there are a number of smaller centers, each with their own political and social life, each of which could support some form of peace action. However, as we experienced, each of these centers where peace activists wish to establish activity will need a lot of direct assistance in the early stages of their development. In order to help out in this regard, we adopted the position that we would form sub groups of our council, the first one being established in Salmon Arm in the early part of 1981. While the structure has not yet been firmly entrenched, the general idea was that both the Kamloops and Salmon Arm groups would be members of the same overall organization, but each would meet separately, plan their own activities and so on, all within a general framework established by the Canadian Peace Congress, B.C. Peace Council and KSPC as a whole.

The eventual goal was, and remains, that of establishing separate

councils in each town or village. To date, this system has worked fairly well in that the Salmon Arm group is undertaking activities, on their own initiative, but helps out somewhat in the financing of the KSPC and utilizes our bulletin and other materials we have on hand.

We feel that the Salmon Arm Peace Council is about to become a reality in its own right at any time (and in fact, in many ways is so today)

However, after establishing a fairly formal structural apparatus, we have always operated on the basis that anyone wishing to attend our meetings, help out in our activities and offer opinions on our work, member or not, is more than welcome to do so.

Finally, we felt that it was absolutely imperative that the KSPC establish a regular mailing list and prepare a regular bulletin on our activities and the activities of the peace movement generally to keep the interest of those who indicated at least some inclination to become involved in the peace movement from waning. Hence, the Kamloops-Shuswap Peace News.

Activities of the KSPC

The most effective way of detailing our activities is to go through them in chronological order.

In September of 1980, our first action after the relative inactivity, was the preparation of a leaflet directed to the students at the local community college. Some 2,000 leaflets, contrasting educational cutbacks to increases in the military budget were distributed, with a positive response from the students and the students association at the college.

Our first real foray into the community at large took place during disarmament week when we once again showed the film "War Without Winners" this time to a larger audience, and one which included some members of some of the local church organizations. As well, during this week we approached and were successful in securing support for our activities from the Labor Council and the CUPE local, both of which inserted advertisements in the local papers declaring themselves in favor of disarmament and urging the public to attend the Peace Council's film showing.

In November, 1980, the KSPC marked Remembrance Day by inserting another advertisement in the local papers urging people to reflect upon the theme of disarmament during this day.

In early December, we launched a new campaign, and identified ourselves with the Peace Tax Fund of Victoria by preparing Personal Declarations for a Peace Tax Credit. We approached the Labor Council and received a very warm reception, and a tremendous amount of publicity and interest in the council's activities were generated. In all honesty, the only objective of this

effort was to project the Peace Council into the public's eye and to offer an innovative method of doing so. The resultant publicity was far more than we anticipated, and firmly established us in the center of the political and social life of the city.

Throughout this period of time (September - January) we also circulated special materials to specific groups such as letters to all the doctors in Kamloops pointing out the formation of Physicians for Social Responsibility in Canada, the leaflet for the students and the circulation of the "More Jobs" pamphlet to trade unions, which was jointly produced by SANE, the ILWU, the IAM and UE in the United States.

In early 1981, we set out to collect 4,000 signatures for the Peace Is Everybody's Business petition, and began what have become regular weekly petitioning. We bolstered this by placing the full content of the petition in the local press as an advertisement (which resulted in about 40 signatures being clipped and mailed to the Peace Council), though we have also managed to have the full text of the ad printed as part of a letter to the editor from the Peace Council.

Our major activity in the early part of 1981 was the preparation, planning and holding of Nuclear Awareness Day, which saw the Peace Council act as the catalyst and driving force in bringing together thirteen groups in the city to mark April 25. The overriding theme of this day was the need to curtail the nuclear arms race and the day was, in our opinion, very successful. It was during this week that Nelso Riis, local MP for Kamloops-Shuswap very openly and publicly aligned himself with the peace movement by agreeing to be the feature speaker for the event. (Incidentally, at our request, he also sent written greetings to the B.C. Peace Council conference earlier this year, the only MP to do so.)

Also during Nuclear Awareness Week, we prepared a 45 minute videotape presentation for the Community Cablevision on the dangers of the arms race which interviewed and involved a large number of prominent individuals in the city.

In the early spring, following the decision by the School Board to declare itself in favor of the Global Referendum on Disarmament, we decided that as the issue had been introduced, and editorialized upon favorably by the local press that we would take advantage of the new opening up of the situation. Initially we responded to the editorial with a letter to the editor pointing out that while this was a good initiative, it did not direct sufficient pressure to our own government and offered the PIEB petition as an example of how that could be done, and secondly approached the City

Council to also endorse the referendum. This did not happen.

At this time, we should mention that we consistently approach the locally elected officials and force them to declare themselves one way or another on this question. So far, the city council has proclaimed Disarmament Week for both 1980 and 1981, and Nuclear Awareness Day for 1981. As well, as our petitioning results in 1,000 names, we send copies of a notarized statement attesting to that fact to both the MP and the MLA, along with a brief note that they might be interested in the opinion of their constituents on the question of peace or war.

It was also at this time that the idea for a peace education kit was conceived and that we approached the school board with this request. The result was the preparation of a resources kit for use in the schools which was presented to the board for their approval. We intend to keep updating the kit, and as the B.C.T.F. is now in the process of preparing their own material on this question, we hope that the two can complement one another.

For Hiroshima Day, we felt it important that it be marked in Kamloops and decided to take part in the Comox Valley events on this day. We therefore organized a cavalcade from Kamloops to the demonstration in Comox and organized a commemorative meeting in Kamloops and Kelowna (one of the stopping point for the cavalcade.) as well as extensive press coverage in Kamloops, Kelowna, Salmon Arm, and Vernon, including at least one radio interview en route.

Our council has also participated in the most recent of the many conferences on the theme of peace, that of the Coalition for World Disarmament, and is currently planning for Disarmament Week with a plan of activities which includes advertisements in the local press listing prominent local signatories of the PIEB petition, a statement from a number of unions arguing for the curtailment of the military budget as it generates unemployment, a four part film and discussion series on Cablevision involving school trustees, teachers, religious activists, etc. on a number of themes, and a week long booth and display in a local major shopping mall.

The main consistent thread which has run through all of our activities has been the need to 'localize' everything as much as possible, to point out that the effects of the arms race are felt here, in Kamloops, every day of the week and that we can blow up here as well as they can in New York or Washington; and secondly we take full advantage of the need all local media have to present local news and events.

We have found that by fully integrating ourselves into the community, by involving already established groups in our activities, and in the planning of these activities we have guaranteed for ourselves a certain amount of respect,

even if sometimes offered begrudgingly, and will be very hard to be dislodged from our position.

In the preparation of this report we have realized that we have missed a number of activities of the KSPC including telegrams to the White House and Prime Minister on various actions (most of which are reprinted in the press), our participation in some solidarity work (Nicaragua), the support offered to the ANC, the establishment and building up of a fairly comprehensive KSPC library and resource center, including slide tape shows, video tape shows, recorded music and books, pamphlets, posters and so on, but feel that we have hit the highlights of the last 20 months.

We hope that this is of some help in explaining our activities over the past 2 years, and hope that it may be helpful to some other groups which are finding themselves in the same situation we were in when we started out.