

CONA TODAY

CITIZENS OFFERING NEW ALTERNATIVES

Fall 2005

P.O. Box 649 , Newcastle, ME 04553

From the Executive Committee

As CONA begins its 24th year, our organization faces many new challenges and changes. Primary among them is meeting our committee and leadership responsibilities by using a new model of organization, and expanding CONA's mission and educational outreach through networking with other citizen groups in our area.

With the departure of President Jenny Begin in October due to family health issues, the board created a Leadership Committee of three board members to fulfill CONA's executive responsibilities, each with defined areas of oversight. In addition, we welcomed a new board member, Gretchen Hull of Lincoln County Peace and Justice Coalition, as a Delegate-at-Large, and expanded our Program Committee with active new CONA members. We think that the Leadership Committee structure, and a new expanding roster of committees which tap into our organization's capable membership, will make for a stronger, adaptable, and more diverse organization as CONA moves into its second quarter century.

But most importantly, those of us who treasure the work of CONA believe that in these difficult times, the forums, films, discussions, and community programs we offer are more significant than ever. As the great and troubling issues affecting our community and our country shape the content of our work, the ethics of peace and social justice remain the touchstones of our common cause.

CONA ... twenty-four years and still growing.

Belva Ann Prycel

Joanne Clauson

Kay Liss

CONA Mission Statement

CONA's mission is to provide opportunities to address the evolving problems of peace and social justice locally and globally. Our programs include education, discussion, political action, and celebration to encourage the community to become active, involved citizens. We work in collaboration with other regional organizations sharing concerns for pressing issues such as poverty, overpopulation, war, and environmental protection.

CONA Board

CONA Leadership Committee: Belva Ann Prycel, Joanne Clauson, Kay Liss

Executive Secretary: Millie Baggs

Treasurer: Caroline Walker

Past Presidents: Tom Schmidt, Joanne Clauson, Jean Harris, Julia Myers

Forums: Kay Liss, Tom Schmidt

Representatives-at-Large: Donald Means, Michael Stevens, Jenny Begin, Carolyn Hardman, Gretchen Hull

Newsletter: Doris Balant

Outreach and Hospitality: Charlie Hedrick

Publicity: Sharon Crosbie

Webmaster: Guy Marsden

Democracy Now! In case you haven't noticed, this excellent "alternative" news program can be seen Monday through Friday, 7-8 p.m. on local access cable channel 7.

CONA History 1994 through 1997 – Part II by Julia Myers

For many years CONA members gathered at sunrise at Pemaquid Point around August 6th to remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Julia Lane provided music. That, and hot coffee and assorted offerings fostered a great feeling of community and even greater commitment to peace efforts.

CONA hailed President Clinton when he declared an extension of 15 months for a moratorium on nuclear testing. Support for this move came from unusual places, i.e. the Energy Department (in charge of Los Alamos National Laboratory), Hazel O'Leary, Energy Secretary, and Defense Secretary James Schlesinger. CONA sent letters of support to President Clinton and Senator George Mitchel for leadership in extending test dates. Congressman Tom Andrews voiced his conviction that we should not use economic conversion funds to promote international sales of U.S. arms. He received similar CONA letters of support.

Our newsletter continued to carry the Clergy Corner column. Pastors from differing faiths shared their views of our culture. Reverend Robert Ives wrote a particularly poignant column about Ray Phillips, who was the sole resident, besides his sheep, on Manana Island adjacent to Monhegan Island. Ray was ill, but would not leave the island. To satisfy his friends across the harbor on Monhegan he hung a kerosene lantern in the window of his house to signify all was well. Reverend Ives found this symbolic of God's light of love and peace, which shines throughout our lives.

Alternatives to military intervention were considered at three successive meetings. The third consideration was the theory and practice of non-violent conflict resolution. A discussion was led by Edward Myers and David Hart, who served on the board of the National Peace Foundation. Edward had volunteered with Witness for Peace in Nicaragua in 1987 during the Contra war. It's thought that the continuing presence of Witness for Peace was a factor in ending the war. David Hart spent three months in Costa Rica with the Experiment in International Living. Both speakers agreed that conflict resolution was a powerful tool in preventing war.

Al Eipper presented figures on world population. The annual population rate increase, excluding immigration, was 2.0% in underdeveloped nations, 0.5% in developed countries and 0.8% in the U.S. The U.S.' environmental impact was at a rate of five to one as compared to underdeveloped nations. Adlai Stevenson said, "Man is a funny animal. He doesn't see the handwriting on the wall until his back is up against it."

CONA joined with hundreds of organizations as a partner in the new Earth Action Network, whose object was to bring like-minded groups, acting together on issues of common concern.

We increased our bank account by \$242. with another Ruth Pope bake sale. "Give Peas a Chance", a fine, hearty soup made its debut at the Common Ground Fair. For helping at the Peace Action Maine booth CONA realized \$104.

Our Christmas programs have been outstanding. Clifton Olds, Bowdoin Professor of History and Art Criticism returned to CONA to give a slide lecture on the theme of the Adoration of the Magi.

A note from Thor Erikson reported that after attending Yale he went to Nebraska to be with National Alliance and Trust Company hoping to return to Maine as a "young attorney", CONA's support of Thor was a fine investment.

Questions being considered in late 1994 were submitted to our congressional candidates as follows:

"Should we maintain the ability to fight two regional wars simultaneously, as is the current policy for dealing with perceived threats?"

"Senator Daniel Moynihan has pointed out that the C.I.A. was part of the Cold War. Do you support his plan for eliminating the C.I.A.?"

"With the review of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and negotiations for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty coming up, do you think the U.S. should take world leadership in reducing nuclear weapons stockpiles, ending the testing, and promoting these treaties?"

Ruth Ives arranged another program with Professor Clifton Olds. He delighted us with his slides of "Mother and Child in world art". Included were works of Botticelli, Raphael and Mary Cassatt.

continued on page 3

History - continued from page 2

A barn sale put \$1,000. into our treasury. Ruth Pope did it again!

Nancy Glassman of Lincolnville showed an 18 minute video about the School of the Americas, aka School of the Assassins, long noted for their use of force and violence. Congressman Toricelli revealed that Guatemalan agents, paid by the C.I.A. had ordered the murder of U.S. citizen Michael Devine, Guatemalan innkeeper, and Efraim Bamaca, Guatemalan husband of American, Jennifer Harbury. In the cases of Jesuit priests, 19 officers cited were graduates of the School of the Americas. Two of Archbishop Romero's assassins, and three of the five officers cited in the murder of American nuns were also S.O.A. graduates. CONA members Suzanne and Charles Hedrick attended a meeting of a group dedicated to closing the school in 2000 and again in subsequent years. This group of 20,000 members pressed members of Congress to close the training school.

The summer of '95 marked the 50th anniversary of the birth of the United Nations. CONA member Bruce Stedman, retired Assistant Secretary General of the U.N. served there for 31 years. In 1989 CONA was instrumental in helping to start the Maine chapter of the United Nations Association. This period also was time of remembrance of Hiroshima and Nagasaki 50 years ago. At our annual meeting an exhibit entitled "Hiroshima, Nagasaki and 50 Years of Nuclear Terror" was on view. Ten large panels started with the background to the atomic bombings, development of the bomb, the decision to use it and culminated in the movement for disarmament. It was loaned to us by Maine Physicians for Social Responsibility.

The return once more of Bowdoin Professor Clifton Olds put sparkle into our Christmas Program. His theme that year was "The Sea" and we were indeed grateful to Ruth Ives and Professor Olds.

Peace Action Maine launched the project "Abolition 2000", a treaty to be conducted by the year 2000, to formulate a procedure for abolishing nuclear weapons worldwide.

CONA sold many postcards depicting Peace

Cranes and stating "Hiroshima, Nagasaki: 50 Years of Resistance to the Bomb".

We held a Conflict Resolution program with the help of Connie Hammer, C.R. leader in School Union 74, and some CONA members. From that meeting came CONA's support of Connie's program in South Bristol School for a modest \$50. Once students had mastered the elements of these skills, another program, Peer Mediation, was introduced. I believe Lincoln Academy signed on to the Peer Mediation program with some success.

Earth Action sent out an urgent alert about Global Warming, now often referred to as Climate Change. They warned of "potentially irreversible" effects, including "loss of habitat, increase in human diseases, and loss of life." We wrote many letters to Congress urging members to support the reduction in emission of greenhouse gases and to press all developed countries to cut their emissions by 20% by 2005. We asked the government what steps were being taken to increase investment in renewable energy, energy conservation, and public transport.

Voters in Maine addressed a ballot question on forest practices supporting 1) a ban on clear-cutting, 2) the Compact for Maine Forests, or 3) neither of the above. CONA arranges a debate between Charles Fitzgerald, a forester who spoke for the ban on clear-cutting, and Rob Bryan, field ecologist for Maine Audubon Society, who spoke for Citizens for a Healthy Forest. The debate took place at Lincoln Academy with the principal's cooperation. He hoped to encourage students to attend and to become attentive to these issues.

In 1997, following many meetings and discussions concerning CONA's specific role and mission, we voted to keep the acronym CONA but to change our name to "Citizens Offering New Alternatives". The change more accurately reflected our broadening interests and mission. CONA's intent was to offer the community new alternatives to problems of peace and justice, and to explore and consider new approaches with open minds – coming together to arrive at options for appropriate action.

Thus began a new direction for CONA.

Speak Out members speak out about justice, equality

by Kay Liss

Note: The following article on CONA's public forum in October appeared in the Lincoln County News (Nov. 2)

"If people only had an opportunity to speak with us, those against us would change their minds." Such is the philosophy of Speak Out, a group opposing discrimination based on sexual orientation, which brought its message recently to Damariscotta in a forum sponsored by Citizens Offering New Alternatives (CONA).

The three members spoke about their personal experiences involving discrimination in the work place and elsewhere. Each feels that if people got to know them, to hear their stories, and see they are like everyone else except for their sexual orientation, people would see that discriminating against them is wrong, just as it is for other groups.



Members of Speak Out, from left, Lucie Bauer, Dan Williams and Natasha Johnson, were hosted by CONA at its October forum.

"We are a variety of humankind, not a deviation," said Natasha Johnson, a transgendered male.

They also feel it is not about sexuality, as many opposing Maine's anti-discrimination law say, but about "a widening issue of justice," as Lucie Bauer stated.

"I don't understand this term 'gay rights.' The anti-discrimination law would give us the same rights everyone else has already. The other derogatory phrase used by many is that we have and promote a certain 'lifestyle.' Well, I go to work and

lead a life just like everyone else. There is no 'lifestyle' involved."

She added, movingly, that the issue is also about love, that one be allowed to love whom one chooses. "We've been having this dialogue for 30 years now in Maine," she said. "Maine was one of the first states to look at this issue, and now we are lagging behind: Vermont and New Hampshire, which have enacted laws, are ahead of us."

Maine finally did pass a law in March, but members of a Christian conservative group gathered enough signatures to force a referendum to repeal the law, Question 1 on the ballot next Tuesday.

Bauer told a story about a gay man who was demoted, not because his job performance had changed, "but because there was no law to protect him. By not opposing this ballot initiative, we are condoning this sort of discrimination – and I think this is wrong. Question 1 will determine whether I have civil rights in my lifetime."

She spoke of how nervous she was before applying for a joint loan with her female partner, not because she worried about qualifying financially but because she might be denied based on her sexual orientation, which any bank in Maine presently can do. Fortunately, the loan was approved, she added.

Daniel Williams spoke emotionally about his constant worry in the workplace as a sign language professional, afraid of not being hired because of being labeled a homosexual. He said a particularly hurtful assumption some make is that being a homosexual automatically makes one a pedophile.

"Another misconception people have about us," said Johnson, "Is that there is some kind of choice to be what we are. It is something you are born with. I tried to escape it most of my life."

continued on page 5

She described how she was a normal, “macho” guy, even a football player in high school. She had a happy childhood and grew up in a loving family, but always felt somehow “imprisoned in a male body.”

Johnson said she began to drink heavily, depressed for a reason she couldn’t yet fathom. Finally, in later adulthood and after a career as a military policeman, she understood what it was and decided to “come out,” to accept that she did not feel right being a male. It was another big decision to go the next step, to actually change her physiology to become a female, which she did last March in Canada.

“I used to feel cursed, and now I feel blessed,” Johnson said.

If Question 1 on the ballot is rejected and the March 2005 law enacted, discrimination based on sexual orientation would end in employment, housing, credit, accommodations and education in Maine. It will not legalize same sex marriage, as some have claimed. The law was passed by a wide margin of legislators in all parties.

In the November 8 election, Referendum Question #1 was defeated, enabling the law to go into effect.

Disembarking

March 28, 1991 –
Return from the Gulf War

She is the first to break the barrier.
Racing, legs stretched
Into grand triangular frames;
she reaches out sweeping
the air with flailing arms.
Willow limbs, fingering the edge of wind,
coax the body to leave the ground.
Pushing strength into strength
her blackness glistens in the blue sky.
She leaps, and the crowd retreats
in her flight. Her legs wrap
about her sailor man. They kiss
and kiss and kiss again. The public
cheers. They hear nothing
but their hearts beating a retreat
for love too long imagined.

George V. Van Deventer

Carthage and Airplanes

Carthage likes to ride airplanes.

Up in the sky he can forget
About the schedules of earth.

It is almost like thinking,
Gazing out the window at the clouds.

He likes to ponder.

“We’re pretty high up,” he says
To his aides.

“I wonder if we could go much higher.”
Everyone looks thoughtful.

Back on earth ten-year-olds heft Uzis,
People drop dead on sidewalks,
Friendship sours like old milk.
How much better it is in the sky!

Too bad you have to be going somewhere.

Too bad the endless limo will appear
and some suit or turban or daishiki

Will greet you and start
Telling you about what’s going
To happen soon or happened yesterday.

“Why don’t you fly around more?”
Carthage would like to say to them.
If you live in the sky, nothing happens.
You don’t even see the rain.

It is almost like thinking.

Baron Wormser

CONA at the Movies

“Sir! No sir!”

A documentary on the GI movement within the active military during the Vietnam War through the stories of those who were a part of it. Rarely mentioned in historic accounts, this movement started small but grew sufficiently to play a major part in bringing that war to its end. Of the over 100 movies on that war, for instance, none have mentioned it. Meanwhile unfounded myths still circulate about the alleged mistreatment of returning GIs by antiwar activists. Today U.S. troops are again engaged in a protracted, questionable war. Draw your own conclusions. This is a premier presentation in advance of the film’s large scale release, arranged in cooperation with Veterans For Peace and courtesy of the producer. Sunday, December 18, 7 pm at the Skidompha Library, Porter Auditorium. (Access from Elm Street parking lot entrance only).

Peaceful Beginnings

January 1, 2006, Skidompha Library, Noon until 3:00 p.m.



We call it Peaceful Beginnings because it is! It's a peaceful way to start the coming year, and CONA is all about peace.

Everyone, of all ages, is invited to attend the Peaceful Beginnings celebration of community New Years Day at the Skidompha Library in Damariscotta from noon to 3 pm. The first Peaceful Beginnings was organized during the first Gulf War more than a decade ago as a way to bring people together to reflect, create, foster kindness, get to know our neighbors and focus on the joyful.

Years later, our country is still engaged in aggressive military action around the globe and during Peaceful Beginnings, on this first day of the New Year, we can come together to affirm the peaceful aspects of our society through poetry, music, art, food and conversation.

This year, area musicians – Julia Lane, Fred Gosbee and Katie Newell – will once again provide tunes and songs along with other local talents. The folks at Watershed have agreed to set up the clay table again and there will be fun crafting opportunities for children and adults. Melissa Glendenning and Ed Cote Small will perform puppet shows in the children's library. Poetry readings will be held throughout the afternoon in the Porter Auditorium.

Everyone is encouraged to bring finger food to share during the informal potluck throughout the afternoon. Check with local newspapers for a complete listing of the events and musicians at the end of December. If you would like to help out in any way email Caroline Walker at revcarln@midcoast.com or call Jenny Begin at 563-3781. We hope to see you all on New Years Day – Invite your friends.

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