

Homes Not Bombs

Because Canada should build homes, not blow them up.

**Convert the War Department to the Housing Department
A Nonviolent Civil Disobedience Action and Street Festival
Friday, November 12, Morning Rush Hour, Downtown Ottawa**

Canada's Choice: To Build Homes...

"The Committee [United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights] is gravely concerned that such a wealthy country as Canada has allowed the problem of homelessness and inadequate housing to grow to such proportions that the mayors of Canada's ten largest cities have now declared homelessness a national disaster...The Committee recommends that the federal, provincial and territorial governments address homelessness and inadequate housing as a national emergency by reinstating or increasing, as the case may be, social housing programmes for those in need...[and] to implement a national strategy for the reduction of homelessness and poverty." – **United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, evaluating Canada's lack of progress, 1998.**

...or to Blow Them Up

"The Canadian Forces can hurl more raw firepower at a potential enemy today than they could during the Persian Gulf War...Since the gulf war, all three services have increased their 'combat capability' (the wherewithal to inflict heavy damage on the enemy), said Major-General Kenneth Pennie, director-general of strategic planning for the Canadian Forces. The equipment includes new frigates for the navy, armoured vehicles for the army and high-tech 'smart' bombs for the air force. Given the improved accuracy, Gen. Pennie said, 'we find that some conventional weapons can be more useful than nuclear weapons.'" – **Globe and Mail, March 10, 1999**

Canada's Shame:

Homelessness in Canada has been declared a national disaster by city councils, big-city mayors, and thousands of individuals and organizations.

Canada is the only Western nation without a national housing policy. If Canada spent in one year on affordable housing and related support programs what it spends each year on war, homelessness could be virtually eliminated.

Instead of funding child care, adequate levels of income support, affordable housing, women's programs, education and health care, Ottawa consistently spends its largest block of "discretionary" funding on the War Department (about \$10 billion annually, over a quarter of a trillion dollars since 1980).

Ottawa is actively seeking a role in the revived U.S.-led Star Wars Nuclear War Fighting Program, and is considering a \$635 million commitment to the project. The Chretien government has rejected a debate about the issue, "saying they will publicly deal with the missile issue when the system is ready to be deployed." – *Ottawa Citizen*

Canada continues to support an arms industry which annually exports hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of weapons to human rights violators around the world.

Funding the bombing of Yugoslavia by Canadian fighter jets took precedence over new funding for housing. People are made homeless in Canada because money which could have been spent on affordable housing at home is used to drop bombs on civilians abroad, making them homeless too.

Canada's ongoing commitment to war training also destroys cultures here, as the Innu people of Nitassinan continue to struggle against NATO war testing over their homeland.

Imagine a Canada that, for one year, spends not a dime on war, and uses that money for desperately needed social programs for the homeless, the underhoused, battered women, the environment, the unemployed. Imagine the possibilities, then join us in Ottawa November 12 to make it happen.

(turn over for contact information on Homes not Bombs)

“The time has come for an all-out world war against poverty. The well-off and the secure have too often become indifferent and oblivious to the poverty and deprivation in our midst. The poor in our countries have been shut out of our minds, and driven from the mainstream of our societies, because we have allowed them to become invisible. Ultimately a great nation is a compassionate nation.” — Martin Luther King, Jr.

Canada’s War Against the Poor: At Home and Abroad

Imagine what Canada would look like if we were a truly compassionate nation.

In 1996, Statistics Canada estimated it would take only \$18.6 billion to bring every Canadian out of poverty, less than what the War Department spends in a two-year period. Yet given the choice of where to spend, Ottawa has made its priorities clear:

When War Minister Art Eggleton first discussed the cost of bombing Yugoslavia, he declared, “It’s obviously something that the government of Canada will cover.”

A week later, the *Toronto Star* reported “(Federal minister responsible for homelessness) Bradshaw’s spokesperson said yesterday there are no plans to put more money into affordable housing.”

And so it has been for the past 20 years. While Ottawa has eliminated funding for new affordable housing, it has spent, since 1980, over a quarter of a trillion dollars on war. We may have killer CF-18s which can drop “smart” bombs with the best of them, but Canada remains the only Western nation without a national housing policy.

“With major procurement programs emphasizing equipment of high intensity combat, Canada’s [military] establishment remains bound to Cold War categories...the [War] Department continues to prepare first and foremost for war,” concludes a 1998 Project Ploughshares report.

As hundreds of homeless people die on the streets of Canada each year, Ottawa continues to spend upwards of 500% more on its military than it does on housing. As with the U.S., Canada’s percentage of monies spent on social housing is dangerously low. Only 5.5% of Canada’s housing is non-market social housing (compared with 15% in France and Germany, 22% in the U.K. and 40% in the Netherlands.)

Yet monies never seem to be scarce when it comes to bombing other countries or enforcing punitive sanctions that have killed over 1 million Iraqis. By depriving the poor of Canada of the income supports necessary to have adequate food, clothing and shelter, Ottawa is in effect enforcing economic sanctions against them too.

While over 5 million Canadians struggle to survive below the poverty line, millions line up at food banks, Canadian children by the hundreds of thousands wait in vain for affordable child care spaces, and unemployment recipients

“One day we must come to see that peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek but a means by which we arrive at that goal. We must pursue peaceful ends through peaceful means. How much longer must we play at deadly war games before we heed the plaintive pleas of the unnumbered dead and maimed of past wars? It is not enough to say, *We must not wage war*. It is necessary to love peace and sacrifice for it. We must concentrate not merely on the eradication of war but on the affirmation of peace.” – Martin Luther King, Jr.

face even tighter restrictions, Ottawa forges ahead, spending billions on Leopard CI battle tanks, upgrades of CF-18s (to use Advanced Air-to-Air Weapons, air-to-surface “smart bombs” and missiles), the Armoured Combat Vehicle Project, and much more.

Our membership in NATO requires that we bomb other countries, yet our membership in the UN, which requires us to house, clothe and feed everyone adequately, is an obligation ignored. Perhaps if we spent billions on learning peace, and not on training for war, our “contribution” to Yugoslavia would not have been so bloody.

It is everyone’s human right to have access to decent food, shelter, and employment, but these rights have fallen under the weight of “fiscal responsibility.” Failure to implement programs which ensure these basic rights is a moral and, according to the United Nations, a legal failure. This injustice is further entrenched when monies for such programs are available, but are spent instead on war.

Homes Not Bombs is a nonviolent campaign which seeks to end this injustice. To join us, refer to the contacts box below.

GETTING INVOLVED

When governments refuse to meet the basic human needs of their people, it is up to all people of good conscience to engage in campaigns of nonviolent resistance that create a moral climate in which government policies of neglect and abandonment are no longer possible. Homes Not Bombs is a campaign based on a complete shift in Canada’s national priorities, challenging the myths of militarism and the myths about where poverty comes from. Our first action is to convert the War Department to the Housing Department.

There’s lots of work to do leading up to November 12: signing people up for buses, conducting nonviolence training sessions, outreach and education, making props and banners, fundraising, and much more. To get involved, contact us at the nearest city near you, or start your own chapter wherever you are! Donations are greatly appreciated for this all-volunteer effort to meet our travel, phone and photocopying expenses. Donations can be addressed to **Homes Not Bombs, P.O. Box 73620, 509 St. Clair Ave. West, Toronto, ON M6C 1C0. (416) 651-5800, tasc@web.net; Guelph (519) 766-4079; Hamilton: (905) 627-2696; Windsor: (519) 258-1555; Ottawa: (613) 237-6278, briane@tao.ca; Peterborough: (705) 742-4175 (fhowlett@peterboro.net); (705) 748-1767 (opirg@trentu.ca).**