

Sent

St. John's
January 11, 1981

Richard Prigent
Joint Clerk,
Special Joint Committee on the Constitution of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa

Dear Richard Prigent:

We, the St. John's Worship Group of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), believe that if there is a human rights provision in the Constitution of Canada, it should include a provision for guarantee of the right to conscientious objection to military service.

Quaker opposition to war and military service has been firmly established for more than 300 years. In the past this opposition often resulted in imprisonment and other forms of unjust treatment. Due to the suffering in prison by Quakers and others, and because of the positive contributions of those in alternative service in the public interest many nations now have provisions for alternatives to conscription or for complete exemption of those whose conscientious scruples have been validated. It is the guarantee of this kind of treatment that we seek in the new constitution of Canada.

It is important that basic rights of conscience not be left for last minute consideration. Experience has shown that the rights of minorities are easily ignored in the passions of emergencies, while later more calm consideration arrives at a more compassionate view. Provisions for protection of the rights of conscience belong in those parts of our constitution that are not easily brushed aside by transient opinions and ill-considered actions.

Sincerely yours,

Jack C. Ross

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