

Pugwash hosts anti-nuke academia

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National defense employee criticizes government

PUGWASH – A professor employed by National Defense at Canadian Forces College in Toronto said he's saddened the federal government isn't playing a bigger role in promoting nuclear disarmament.

Dr. Walter Dorn, professor and chair of the Department of Security and International Affairs was speaking at Thinkers' Lodge in Pugwash. He's also chair of the Canadian Pugwash movement, and was responding to the question, Did he perceive any possible conflict between the two roles?

"I don't," he said, describing himself as a public servant with guaranteed academic freedom.

Dorn wasn't the only academic or researcher at the national historic site Friday afternoon. About 30 – some Canadian, some American, some from overseas – were attending a three-day conference focused around a hypothetical scenario: Imagine what a nuclear free world would be like in 2040.



Masako Toki participated in a four-person panel, open to the public, on the porch and lawn of Thinkers' Lodge. She's from the Monterey Institute of International Studies in California. Eric Sparling – Amherst Daily News

Adele Buckley was project leader for the conference. The event, entitled 'A secure world without nuclear weapons: a strategic foresight workshop,' sought to use a discipline called strategic foresight as a filter through which the assembled academics could use their diverse areas of expertise to begin fleshing out pictures of where the world might be without the doomsday devices – but stopping short of attempting to forecast the future, according to Buckley.

The past chair of Canadian Pugwash and current member of Pugwash Council said the relaxed setting of Thinkers' Lodge and the village of Pugwash was helpful to the process.

"We must learn to think in a new way," Buckley said, quoting the manifesto of Russell and Einstein that played – and still plays – a large role in the Pugwash movement.

Expectations were very high, she said, but results from the discussions would need to be summarized and compiled in a meaningful report, despite budget constraints.

"We'll tackle that..." she said.

Her ambition was that the resulting document would be significant.

"Hopefully it has some sort of lasting endurance," she said.

Professor Dorn thinks nuclear weapons will be gone some day, despite inactivity by players such as Canada's government. He said, of the three classes of WMDs – chemical, biological and nuclear – the United States only retains one. And he said China, with about 500 nuclear weapons, never ramped up participation in a nuclear arms race in which thousands of warheads were built. His prediction is that a hundred or two hundred years from now, nuclear weapons will be history.

FACTBOX: Who and what

The conference program listed the biographies of participants: enough PhDs to start a Pugwash University. Nuclear engineers and physicists, a senator and former MP, one former party leader – Alexa McDonough – lawyers and diplomats were all present. Among the session titles were 'Strategic foresight as applied to several scenarios for a world without nuclear weapons (WWNW),' under the leadership of David Harries, a nuclear engineer who works in the field of strategic issues; 'WWNW policy action imperatives for nuclear weapons states,'; and 'Is the current global disarmament and non-proliferation agenda likely to be sufficient to reach the preferred future?'