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The Nobel Peace Prize Watch
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REPLY TO LETTER OF 20 FEBRUARY 2015

The Norwegian Nobel Committee has discussed the letter of 20 February 2015 sent by Nobel Peace Prize Watch (NPPW) to the Storting's Presidium, the Nobel Foundation and the Norwegian Nobel Committee, in which the association's spokespersons put forward what they call "Measures to ensure that the Nobel Peace Prize is administered according to the actual intention".

It is the Nobel Committee's firm belief that it has administered the peace prize, both historically and in recent years, according to the "actual intention", and that the measures recommended to the Nobel Committee are therefore neither necessary nor appropriate. However, the criticism does present an opportunity for the Nobel Committee to shed light on the thinking about the terms of Alfred Nobel's will on which the selection of laureates is based.

Before proceeding, it may be worth recalling that it was Alfred Nobel's express wish that the responsibility for awarding the peace prize be administered by a committee appointed by the Norwegian Storting. The guidelines for the committee's work are enshrined in Nobel's will and testament of 27 November 1895, which states that the peace prize is to be given to "the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses". By virtue of its mandate from the Storting, the Norwegian Nobel Committee is to be regarded as the executor of this

portion of Nobel's will. Others are entitled to their opinion about the committee's choice of laureates, but, under the terms of the will, the task of awarding the peace prize is entrusted to the Norwegian Nobel Committee and no one else. Changes in Swedish foundation legislation 100 years after the will was written do not alter this fact.

As the committee explained in its letter of 28 February 2012 to the Stockholm County Administrative Board, it conducts "every year a careful examination of the candidates against the terms of the will as they must be understood in today's world".[1] The committee feels confident that it is carrying out its mission in a competent and conscientious manner. Looking forward, it will continue to administer the Nobel Peace Prize in accordance with the provisions of the will and with Alfred Nobel's wishes, to the degree these are ascertainable 120 years after the will's creation.

One premise of the committee, as communicated in its letter to the Stockholm County Administrative Board in 2012, is that old texts and documents, be they legal, political, literary or religious in nature, are not self-explanatory to posterity. Readers must always interpret such writings in the light of their own time and reality. Any interpretation of older texts is in this sense *dynamic*. NPPW, for example, bases its criticism of the Nobel Committee on its own dynamic interpretations of how best to understand and address Nobel's intentions today.[2] Similarly, in one of his publications Fredrik Heffermehl presented 10 assertions about the peace prize in language which, as he sees it, makes the will and the intention of the prize "recognisable in the reality of our time".

The disagreement between the Nobel Committee and NPPW is thus not a matter of *whether* the will's provisions, and by extension Nobel's wishes in creating the peace prize, are subject to interpretation, but rather *how* they should be interpreted and understood. As will be shown below, much of the criticism of the Nobel Committee by NPPW and Heffermehl is based on unconvincing and somewhat speculative interpretations of the will and of Nobel's wishes.

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[1] The Norwegian Nobel Committee to the County Administrative Board in Stockholm, "Heffermehl og Nobels Fredspris" [Heffermehl and the Nobel Peace Prize], 28 February 2012.

[2] The letter from NPPW to the Storting, the Nobel Foundation and the Norwegian Nobel Committee, dated 20 February 2015, contains several examples of distinctly dynamic interpretations of the will and of Nobel's wishes, as is evident in the third paragraph of p. 1 and the fourth and (highlighted) third paragraph from the bottom of p. 2.

In adopting a dynamic interpretative perspective, the Nobel Committee is not simply recognising that it has no alternative. The committee is also convinced that the dynamic perspective is that which best corresponds to the testator's will – a point to which we will return.

Let us begin, however, with a more general observation: Attempts to interpret older texts often must proceed explicitly under the caveat that an exact interpretation may remain elusive, because the textual basis and other available source materials are simply too thin or ambiguous to serve as grounds for hard and fast conclusions about the testator's will and intention. Any intellectually honest construal of such texts should make this point clear, and set forth the relevant reservations. In the view of the Nobel Committee, the absolute certainty expressed by NPPW and Heffermehl in their interpretation of the peace prize provisions in Nobel's will is fundamentally unscholarly as well as ethically problematic because it conceals from the reader the fact that there are other well founded ways of interpreting the will.

Although the terms of Nobel's will and testament must be interpreted in the light of our own time, this does not mean the committee is free to interpret the will however it sees fit. There is no disagreement between the committee and NPPW on this point. The crux of the matter is to clarify, as far as the sources permit, what Nobel wished to achieve with the five prizes whose creation he made possible after his death. To form the most accurate picture of Nobel's intentions and wishes, the will must be interpreted through its content – specifically the wording of its provisions, both in isolation and collectively – supplemented with other relevant information about the testator and his time. Only through such a process will one be able to form a sound and balanced view of how the wording in Nobel's will was meant by the testator to be understood – or at least what Nobel *most likely* had in mind when he drafted the final version of the will and testament. It is the committee's view that even a dynamic interpretation of the will must take this process as its basis.

A great deal of literature has been published on Alfred Nobel, the Nobel Peace Prize and the international peace movement's history. When these works are combined with other legal, philosophical and historical literature, a solid basis emerges for interpreting the

provisions of Nobel's will as they relate to the peace prize. The committee has immersed itself in this literature in the course of its discussions. For the sake of brevity, the committee has decided to focus this reply on three key issues about which, given the literature, it fundamentally disagrees with NPPW and Heffermehl. It sees their somewhat rigid views on these issues as lacking in foundation. The committee also finds that much of the criticism by NPPW and Heffermehl of the committee's administration of the Nobel Peace Prize is based on those same weakly supported views.

Should the peace-prize guidelines provided by Nobel be understood as an integrated peace programme?

According Heffermehl there is no doubt that the three criteria given by Nobel in his will should be seen in connection to one another and be understood as parts of a larger programme – or, as he puts it, as organically intertwined components of a comprehensive *peace theory*. As Heffermehl sees it, these three criteria together constitute "a holistic programme for a new and demilitarised world order".[3] He believes he knows that Nobel's intention was to reward efforts to establish a "peaceful, demilitarised world community through negotiations between countries".[4] NPPW, in its letter to the committee, expresses similar beliefs.[5]

It is hard to see how Heffermehl and NPPW can justify such a rigid interpretation. Heffermehl uses two main arguments. One is semantic: instead of "or", Nobel used the Swedish words for "and" and "together with" to separate the three criteria. (In most English translations, only the word "and" is used). If Heffermehl is to be believed, this shows that Nobel wanted the criteria to be perceived as a whole. The second argument is historical: The three criteria combined purportedly reflect the peace movement's programme in the year 1895.[6]

[3] F. S. Heffermehl, *Nobels Fredspris: Visjonen som försvann* [The Nobel Peace Prize: The vision that disappeared] (Stockholm 2010: Leopard förlag), p. 48.
[4] Heffermehl, *Nobels Fredspris*, p. 64.
[5] According to NPPW, it was Nobel's idea "that the prize should go to the work for a demilitarised global peace order, 'fraternity between nations' through 'abolition or reduction of standing armies'".
[6] Heffermehl, *Nobels Fredspris*, p. 48.

As to the first argument, it is of course possible that Nobel chose his conjunctions with great care, and thereby meant to signal that the three criteria should be understood as an organic whole. But the fact that Nobel did not to use the word "or" between the three main criteria could also have been a stylistic consideration, in order to avoid unnecessary confusion, since "or" is already used repeatedly in the same sentence ("the most or the best", "abolition or reduction of standing armies"). Furthermore, the words "and" and "together with" in the Swedish text need not signal a collective programme; they can just as easily be seen as a natural way to link the three elements, without the testator necessarily having meant that the three forms of peace work related to each other in a specific way.

Nor is Heffermehl's second argument – that the three criteria taken together reflect the peace movement's programme and thereby constitute a comprehensive peace theory – convincing. One must first ask whether the peace movement really *had* a clearly defined programme in the mid 1890s, and if so, whether this programme is fully described by the three criteria specified in the will. To both questions the answer is probably no. The peace movement of the era was highly diverse, with internal disagreements cutting in different directions. A coherent, unified programme did not exist. The resolutions adopted at the annual peace congresses in the 1890s were probably the closest things to such a programme that arose. But these resolutions were too expansive in content, and pointed in too many different directions, to be summarised with the help of the three criteria in Nobel's will.

In 1901 the Norwegian-Swedish peace activist Anna B. Wicksell published a book about the 1890s' peace movement. The book systematically examines the movement's wide range – peace associations, peace congresses, interparliamentary conferences and councils – as well as the extensive work that took place under the auspices of national assemblies and at governmental level. Interestingly enough, she attempts to summarise the peace movement's "theoretical foundation" on the basis of the resolutions of the peace congresses.[7] It is instructive that the three main points highlighted by Wicksell, a witness of the period, only partially coincide with the "comprehensive peace theory"

[7] Anna B. Wicksell, *Fredsrörelsen på 1890-talet* [The peace movement in the 1890s] (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1901), pp. 16–17.

that Heffermehl and NPPW, more than a century later, ascribe to that era's peace movement. The first point is to all appearances identical, having to do with "fraternity between nations" (though, as we will discuss later, interpreted quite differently by Wicksell than by Heffermehl and NPPW). The second is that "nations, like individuals, have a right to self-defence". The right to self-defence is of course something other than the demilitarised world order Heffermehl and NPPW talk about. Wicksell emphasises that this key point in the peace movement's programme had been adopted under strong protest from the Quakers and other absolute pacifists. Wicksell herself belonged to the part of the peace movement that believed "armed peace", meaning peace based on military deterrence, had both a positive and a negative side: It prevented war between the great powers, but gave no protection to small states.[8] The third point in Wicksell's list deviates clearly from the third criterion in Nobel's will. Instead of holding and promoting peace congresses, it called for an international arbitration tribunal based on "the full recognition of the independence and integrity of all participating nations".[9] There is moreover little evidence that Wicksell intended the three main points she describes to be regarded as parts of a holistic programme.

It is unclear whether NPPW and Heffermehl are familiar with this important source of insight into the peace movement's work and programme. At any rate Wicksell's book does not appear in the reference lists for Heffermehl's published works on the Nobel Peace Prize. Unfortunately, this is symptomatic. The portrayal of the peace movement at that time by NPPW and Heffermehl draws consistently on their own interpretation of Nobel's will, and not on what the sources and specialised literature actually warrant.[10] In the committee's opinion, the holistic peace programme that Heffermehl and NPPW ascribe to the peace movement and Alfred Nobel is therefore a purely notional construct.

This is most evident in their interpretation of Nobel's attitude to disarmament and military power.

[8] Wicksell, p. 12.
[9] Wicksell, *Fredsrörelsen på 1890-talet*, pp. 16–17.
[10] The reference lists for Heffermehl's books *Nobels vilje* [Nobel's will] (2008) and *Nobels Fredspris: Visjonen som försvant* [The Nobel Peace Prize: The vision that disappeared] include a hundred or so books and articles in total, but apart from some publications on Nobel and von Suttner there are almost no authoritative accounts that help shed light on the peace movement's history in the late 1800s. Such books can be counted on one hand, and several pivotal contributions to the research literature are conspicuous by their absence.

Heffermehl purports to know, as noted, that Nobel wanted the prize to go to the person or persons who had done the most to establish a "demilitarised world community through negotiations between countries". Similarly, the letter from NPPW states that the prize was intended to honour "the work for a demilitarised global peace order, 'fraternity between nations' through 'abolition or reduction of standing armies'". Especially problematic are the words "through" and "demilitarised". First of all, nowhere in Nobel's will does it say that disarmament was to be an instrument for achieving "fraternity between nations", as the two quotes from Heffermehl and NPPW imply. Nor, as will be made clear in this letter, was the phrase "fraternity between nations" even used in this way by the contemporary peace movement. The claim that Nobel was a supporter of a "demilitarised world order" and wanted the peace prize to go primarily to people who worked for this goal is highly dubious. Nobel was certainly no pacifist; nor did the absolute pacifists in the peace movement at the time count themselves as a majority. What most of the peace campaigners in Nobel's time opposed was armament beyond the force level required for defence against an aggressor. Nobel and many others were also opponents of wars of aggression and militarism.[11] But that is not the same as calling for a "demilitarised world".

For Nobel it was far from obvious that a demilitarised world would be a peaceful world. It is well known that he often expressed more belief that military deterrence could lead to lasting peace than that disarmament, peace congresses and arbitration could do so. He further believed that developments in military technology would one day bring forth weapons of such destructive power that any potential aggressor would be forced to exert self-control. The same logic underpinned his belief in the idea of collective security: that if all states joined forces to guarantee peace, and promised one another to retaliate against any attacker, the deterrent effect would make it irrational to pursue a war of aggression.

[11] Asle Sveen, "Fredsbevegelsen i 1890-årene og Alfred Nobel" [The Peace Movement in the 1890s and Alfred Nobel], a memorandum prepared for the Norwegian Nobel Institute, 27 May 2015. See also Øyvind Tønnesson, "Folkeforbundet – en tragedie?" [The League of Nations – a tragedy?] and Waage, Tamnes & Vik (eds.) *Krig og fred i det lange 20. århundre* [War and Peace in the long 20th century] (Oslo: Cappelen Damm Academic, 2013), p. 213. On the diversity of the peace movement in the late 1800s and its different approaches to the military and armament, see also David Cortright, *Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 38–43; Martin Ceadel, *Semi-detached Idealists: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 125–150. The final two works, both key historical accounts, were not used by Heffermehl in his purported research into Nobel's will.

Heffermehl claims that Nobel eventually put those ideas aside, and that the wording chosen for the peace prize in his will shows that Bertha von Suttner and the programme of the peace movement had won him over. This fits poorly with the conclusions of leading Swedish experts on Alfred Nobel. Nobel's biographer, Erik Bergengren, argues on the contrary that Nobel *never* changed his mind on this matter: "When Alfred Nobel expressed himself, he always did so directly, and for the rest of his life he held the opinion that the most effective way to prevent war would be a powerful joint action against the nation violating the peace."[12]

Nobel's view of weapons and the arms industry was in sum ambivalent. He had "an almost passionate interest in the development of weaponry", writes the former director of the Nobel Museum in Stockholm, Svante Lindqvist. In 1894, the year after Nobel decided to create a peace prize, he purchased the arms manufacturer Bofors, and excitedly said he hoped it would help make Sweden into one of the world's leading arms exporters. "It would be nice to see old Sweden competing in armaments with Germany and Great Britain," he stated.[13] That a man of such beliefs wanted the peace prize to go primarily towards promoting a demilitarised world seems, to put it mildly, unlikely. The committee therefore cannot go along with the contention by NPPW and Heffermehl that Alfred Nobel's testament "described a world order where disarmed states would resolve their conflicts through negotiations" and that the peace prize was to be reserved for the person or persons who had done the most or the best work to realise precisely this vision. The committee's interpretation is rather that the provisions in the will identify three related, yet different, types of peace work, each praiseworthy in its own way.[14] The exact future Nobel envisaged and may have hoped to nurture with his five awards cannot be deduced from the will's concise wording – and certainly not with the self-assurance that NPPW and Heffermehl display.

[12] Erik Bergengren, *Alfred Nobel* (Stockholm 1960: Almquist & Wicksell), p. 199.
[13] Svante Lindqvist, *Alfred Nobel, Inventor, Entrepreneur and industrialist (1833–1896)* (Stockholm 2001: The Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences), p. 13.
[14] In his book *Nobels Fredspris: Visjonen som försvann* [The Nobel Peace Prize: The vision that disappeared] (Stockholm 2011), Heffermehl all but claims that not only did Nobel want the three provisions to be regarded as a comprehensive peace programme, but that a worthy prize winner must have made significant efforts in *all* three fields cited by Nobel in the will. The committee regards this as poorly substantiated speculation on Heffermehl's part, but sees no reason to comment on it any further given the committee's view that Heffermehl and NPPW err in choosing to interpret the three criteria as parts of an comprehensive programme.

Did Alfred Nobel want the peace prize to be reserved for members of the organised peace movement?

Heffermehl claims in his books that Nobel primarily wanted the peace prize to go to members of the organised peace movement, and that those who should have got the prize in the past 50–60 years have been deprived of it by the Norwegian Nobel Committee. NPPW uses similar rhetoric on its website and in its letter to the Nobel Committee.

There are three main factors that weigh against such an interpretation. One of them we have already mentioned: Nobel's reticent attitude towards the organised peace movement. We can safely assume that he would have looked positively on awarding the prize to movement members who deserved it, but that is not to say he wanted to give the organised peace movement some exclusive right to the prize. Again, it must be stressed that the peace movement was highly diverse, and that there were a number of people who engaged in peace work *without* belonging to any organised movement. The attendance at peace congresses illustrates this point well. At the Bern Conference in 1892, which Nobel observed anonymously, there were representatives from 13 countries – politicians, peace activists and independent individuals.

Nobel probably had this varied assortment in mind when he wrote in his will that he wished to create a fifth prize for "fredsförfäktare" (generally translated to English as "champions of peace"). Had he wanted to reserve the prize for members of the organised peace movement, to which he himself patently did not wish to belong, we have to believe he would have been far more explicit on this point. And he would hardly have entrusted the Norwegian Storting with appointing the award committee; more likely he would have given the job to the International Peace Bureau (created in 1891) or to Bertha von Suttner's Austrian Peace Society. While the Storting was indeed favourably inclined towards arbitration and certain other items on the agenda of the peace movement, the parliamentary majority nonetheless allocated money to enhance

Norway's military armaments in the 1890s and generally stood for realism, rather than pacifism, on the issue of the use of military force.[15]

However, the weightiest argument against Heffermehl and NPPW's interpretation is this: Not even those within the peace movement in the decade following Nobel's death expected worthy laureates to be selected solely from their own circle. The objection raised to Henry Dunant's award in 1901 was not that he came from outside the peace movement, but that the humanitarian work of his organisation, the Red Cross, was not strictly speaking peace work. When Bertha von Suttner received the peace prize in 1905, she chose "The evolution of the peace movement" as the title for her Nobel lecture some months later. An interesting aspect of this lecture is the warm tribute she gave to a man who had *never* been a member of the organised peace movement, namely U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt.[16] There is little doubt she considered him a "champion of peace" of the highest order, and an obvious candidate for the award she had just received. And the Norwegian Nobel Committee evidently took her point: Later that year, President Roosevelt was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 1906.

Heffermehl, who otherwise holds the first Nobel Committee in very high regard, not surprisingly believes that it was guilty of gross misjudgement in that case: Roosevelt should never have got the Nobel Peace Prize, he concludes.[17] Roosevelt is the second example on Heffermehl's list of the prizes awarded in contravention of Alfred Nobel's will. Thus Heffermehl takes issue with the very queen of that era's peace movement, Bertha von Suttner.

What would Nobel have thought if he knew the prize criteria in his will were being interpreted dynamically – that is, in keeping with historical developments and the times in which the award committees operate?

As shown above, several of the claims made by NPPW and Heffermehl are in reality

[15] Statistics from contemporary sources provide a striking picture of the Norwegian armament programme in the 1890s. In 1890 Norway ranked No. 16 in military spending per capita on a list of 18 European countries, while on a similar list for 1898 Norway was ranked No. 4. Norway had not only passed its union partner, Sweden, but trailed only the great powers: the UK, France and Germany. Wicksell, *Fredsrörelsen på 1890-talet*, p. 6.
[16] http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1905/suttner-lecture.html
[17] Heffermehl, *Nobels Fredspris*, p. 81.

based on a dynamic interpretation of Nobel's will and wishes. Yet they themselves seem convinced that their dynamic interpretation is more faithful to Nobel's original intentions than anyone else's, not least that of the Norwegian Nobel Committee. It is almost as if they consider their interpretation of the terms of the will to be an exact translation of Nobel's wishes into the language and reality of our time. In its letter to the Nobel Committee, for example, NPPW writes that there is "no room for doubt which 'champions of peace' Nobel intended to support. Expressed in modern language: *Nobel wished to support the movement and the persons who work for a demilitarised world, for law to replace power in international politics, and for all nations to commit to cooperating to eliminate all weapons instead of competing for military superiority.*

This is indeed a very bold interpretation of the brief guidelines provided in Nobel's will! By what right does NPPW ascribe to Nobel a desire to abolish "all weapons", when his will refers explicitly to the abolition *or reduction* of standing armies?

In the Nobel Committee's view, this is scarcely an adequate description of the relevant provision in Nobel's will, not even in "modern language". Not even the peace movement of the time issued a unanimous call for total disarmament. In September 1896, three months before Nobel died in Paris, the International Peace Bureau organised the 7th Universal Peace Congress in Budapest. Among its actions, the congress passed a framework for international law, one of whose main principles was: All nations have the right to legitimate self-defence.[18]

The committee's key objection to NPPW and Heffermehl's interpretation of the terms of Nobel's will and testament is obviously not that it is dynamic – on the contrary, the committee thinks a dynamic interpretative perspective is not only necessary to make the will relevant to our time but is also the approach that best fulfils the wishes of the testator. The problem with NPPW and Heffermehl's construal of what Nobel wanted for the peace prize is that it is conjectural and poorly substantiated, both historically and legally. NPPW has simply no basis for saying, of its own subjective interpretation of the

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[18] The resolution can be read in its entirety at the website *100 års fredsarbete: Internationella Fredsbyråns och andra internationella fredsföreningars historia* [100 years of peacemaking: A history of the International Peace Bureau and other international peace movement organisations and networks], by Rainer Santi, version 4 May 1992 (in Swedish), p. 7. English translation available at: http://santibox.ch/Peace/Peacemaking.html

will's terms: "This is the content of the prize and the legally binding scope of all awards made."

The committee, as stated, is convinced that a dynamic interpretative perspective is not only necessary, but also the one that best suits Nobel's wishes and intentions with respect to his will. Nobel's dynamic personality, the size and time horizon of his donation and the general nature of the five awards – as a long-term project to benefit civilisation – all point towards such a conclusion. If Nobel wanted his prizes to maintain their relevance and importance over time – and it is hard to imagine he did not – then he must have envisaged that the prize award assemblies would have to interpret the will's terms dynamically, meaning in the light of their own time. *That is why* he entrusted Sweden's leading scientists to award the scientific prizes; they would always be abreast of developments in their respective fields, and would understand which parties had pushed forward the frontiers of research. *That is why* Sweden's leading authors and poets were charged with awarding the literature prize. And *that is why* the Storting, a political body and thus a highly dynamic one, was assigned responsibility for deciding who should award the peace prize.

Brief comments on the committee's interpretation of the terms of the will

Of the three criteria Nobel specifies in his will, the "abolition or reduction of standing armies" is the easiest to understand from our perspective today. In Nobel's time, much of the debate about armaments and militarism centred on the justification for and size of standing armies. While it is true that the naval arms race between the major powers was already underway, it had received less attention, and no air forces existed yet. When Nobel refers to "standing armies", he is probably alluding to the combined available military force of the nation states. It would therefore be natural to interpret this phrase as meaning that the peace prize may be awarded to persons (and organisations) that have engaged in some especially laudable effort to abolish or reduce military forces, regardless of the type of force or weapon involved. It is worth noting in this respect, as already mentioned, that Nobel specifically writes "abolition or reduction": He cannot be said to have supported a call for complete abolition of military forces. According to the

wording of Nobel's will and testament, limited reductions may also be valuable and worthy of the prize.

The provision related to "holding and promotion of peace congresses" is not intuitively comprehensible for us today. We must go back in time to understand what Nobel meant with this testamentary formulation. The 1890s was a breakthrough period for the staging of international peace congresses. The 1st Universal Peace Congress took place in Paris in 1889; also that year the Inter-Parliamentary Union was created at the initiative of France's Frederic Passy and Britain's William Randal Cremer, both of whom later became Nobel peace laureates. Subsequent "universal" peace congresses were held in London (1890), Rome (1891), Bern (1892), Chicago (1893), Antwerp (1894), Budapest (1896), Hamburg (1897) and Paris (1900). The First Hague Conference was held in 1899.

What sort of phenomenon was this?

It is important to make clear that there were many kinds of peace congresses and that their agendas varied. Among the people participating, the organised peace movement was heavily represented, but it was a diverse movement, and there were other prominent participants as well. Put simply, the peace congresses were international arenas for debating and launching initiatives in areas important to the peace cause in its broadest sense. Much of the attention went to practical measures such as disarmament, arbitration and other peaceful ways of resolving international disputes, but broader issues were also discussed, such as the ability to counteract war and armed conflict through binding treaties and collective security regimes, etc.[19]

It is in other words not possible to discern any specific political programme from the will's reference to peace congresses. The congresses were too diverse and dissimilar for that. There were Quakers and other absolute pacifists in attendance, but they were generally in the minority. The debates and resolutions were more often dominated by what we might call "pacifist realists". According to the Norwegian historian Asle Sveen,

[19] For a more complete summary of the programmes and objectives of the peace congresses, see Wicksell, *Fredsrörelsen på 1890-talet*, p. 16.

these participants made up a group of optimistic internationalists who believed historical developments were inclining towards closer integration across national borders, so that "eventually we could have a world with no armed forces, through free trade, international congresses, international law, disarmament, arbitration and an international court". As a step along the way, they could accept military necessity - the right to use weapons against an aggressor. "Most of the key peace activists supported this," Sveen concludes. More traditional realists also attended the peace congresses, where they provoked the more pacifist-minded delegates by disparaging their programme as unrealistic and utopian. These realists, at the same time, were often highly critical of armament policies, which in their view claimed too much of the economy without achieving greater security. New weapons technologies also meant that war would be inordinately destructive. Some of the realists warned as well that increased militarism would push the working class towards socialism, because there would be no money for social reforms. They therefore favoured gradual, balanced disarmament down to a sensible level, on the basis of binding agreements between the great powers.[20]

We know from Alfred Nobel's correspondence with Bertha von Suttner and other sources that his attitude towards contemporary peace congresses was reserved. He declined consistently to attend as a delegate himself, and appears only to have been present at a single congress, the Bern congress in 1892. He wrote to von Suttner that she should not rule out the possibility that his factories - read: dynamite factories - would put an end to war faster than her peace congresses.[21] He also wrote: "Good intentions alone do not secure peace. The same can be said for large banquets and lofty speeches."[22] Interestingly enough, Bertha von Suttner herself expressed scepticism about what the peace movement and peace congresses could achieve on their own. She wrote to the Nobel: "God, I know well that neither the unions nor their congresses have the power to abolish war; it's about consolidating and demonstrating our opinion publically, so that we can influence public opinion in various countries."[23]

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[20] Asle Sveen, "Fredsbevegelsen i 1890-årene og Alfred Nobel" [The peace movement in the 1890s and Alfred Nobel], memorandum, 27 May 2015.
[21] Bertha von Suttner, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 437.
[22] Letter from A. Nobel to B. Von Suttner, 31 October 1891, quoted in Anne Synnøve Simensen, *Kvinnen bak fredsprisen: Historien om Bertha von Suttner og Alfred Nobel* [The woman behind the peace prize: The story of Bertha von Suttner and Alfred Nobel] (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2012), p. 156.
[23] Simensen, p. 168.

From this we may conclude that Nobel had an ambivalent attitude towards the peace congresses, but that he seems to have thought they served a positive function as an arena for discussions and resolutions which step by step could lead to a better organised and more peaceful world. His support for the peace congresses was instrumentally motivated: They did more good than harm and were the best tool available at the time to build a peaceful world order based on law.

If we employ the same instrumental approach to the situation today, it is natural to conclude that the peace prize may be used to reward efforts *in the same fields that the peace congresses focused on*, but now more within the framework of today's NGOs and international organisations, including the UN system.

The third criterion – "fraternity between nations" – presents particular challenges. If interpreted broadly enough, it can be used to legitimise the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to virtually any good cause. But on what level did the phrase resonate in Nobel's time? Did it have certain connotations that may now elude us?

Nobel himself gave no clues as to how the term should be understood. One potential starting point is the way the term was used by the peace movement in Nobel's lifetime. In September 1896, three months before Nobel died in Paris, the International Peace Bureau arranged the 7th Universal Peace Congress in Budapest. The congress passed a code of international law based on the following principles:

International relations are governed by the same legal and moral principles as those that regulate relations between individuals. This basic principle was then elaborated as follows:

1. *No nation has the right to be judge in its own case.*
2. *No nation may declare war on another.*
3. *Every dispute among nations should be settled by legal procedures.*
4. *The autonomy of every nation is inviolable.*
5. *There is no right of conquest.*
6. *Nations have the right to legitimate self-defence.*
7. *Nations have an inalienable right to self-determination.*

8. *There is solidarity between all nations.*[24]

As we have mentioned, the peace activist Anna B. Wicksell summarised the peace movement's "theoretical foundation" a few years later on the basis of the peace congresses of the 1890s. A central unifying point, according to Wicksell, was "That the universally recognised principle of fraternity between people as individuals should also lead to fraternity between nations".[25] It is worth noting that Wicksell, who participated actively in the peace movement, exhibits a very different understanding of "fraternity between nations" to that held by Heffermehl and NPPW. As those two would have it, Nobel and the peace movement of his time thought that fraternity between nations could best be achieved through disarmament. Wicksell makes it clear, however, that the dominant view in the peace movement of the 1890s was that fraternity between nations required applying the legal system and the feelings of solidarity that prevailed in the interpersonal realm to relations between states.

It is reasonable to believe that Nobel, who paid attention to the debates of the peace movement and peace congresses, used the term much as it was used in the last major peace congresses before his death. If that is the case, then by "fraternity between nations" he seems to have had in mind many kinds of effort aimed at preventing aggression, resolving conflicts through international law, strengthening national sovereignty and self-determination, and strengthening solidarity among all countries and peoples. The Nobel Committee's awards to individuals and organisations that have worked to achieve the aforementioned goals, including the respect for basic human rights that is a prerequisite for true fraternity, are rooted in the phrase "fraternity between nations" found in the will.

It may also be useful to consider this phrase in the context of philosophy and the history of ideas. The notion of fraternity between nations was intrinsic to a more general idea in the political-philosophical discourse of the time, the idea of *a common humanity*. One envisaged that there actually existed (or could exist) a fellowship – called a "fraternity"

[24] The overview is taken from: *100 års fredsarbete: Internationella Fredsbyråns och andra internationella fredsföreningars historia* [100 years of peacemaking: A history of the International Peace Bureau and other international peace movement organisations and networks], by Rainer Santi, version 4 May 1992 (in Swedish). English translation available at: http://santibox.ch/Peace/Peacemaking.html

[25] Wicksell, *Fredsrörelsen på 1890-talet*, p. 16.

in Nobel's will – among peoples that could be promoted through human action. Such fraternity is destroyed by war – hence the need to reduce or eliminate weapons (or at least to make their use less likely). And it is promoted (or at least *can* be promoted) when people meet, discuss, accept each other's equality, and create rules for interpersonal and international behaviour – hence the need for peace congresses, international law, courts of arbitration, etc.[26]

Key to the modern version of this philosophy, which so heavily influenced Nobel's contemporaries, was its emphasis on all individuals as participants in a common human system of justice, with individual, innate freedoms. But this was also a philosophy with a significant emphasis on *peace*, on the theory that the original or ideal state of humankind is peaceful. Others were more inclined to see peace as something attainable through institutionalisation and progress, rather than characteristic of the original and natural human state. But for them, too, peace was a crucial concept and the essential goal. Through institutionalised and contractual rights, they saw a potential for regaining or achieving that particular, true peace which enables people to develop their personal lives and their humanity.

In the period prior to the writing of Nobel's will, such modern thinking on natural law and human rights spread throughout several political movements, which collectively acquired considerable influence in European and American society – most of all, perhaps, through the abolitionist movement and the struggle for women's rights and universal suffrage. But key peace activists inside and outside the peace movement's ranks also show traces of it. They built much of their reasoning on the ideas of the important 17th- and 18th-century philosophers John Locke and Immanuel Kant.[27] The phrase "fraternity between nations" in Nobel's will must also be construed in this light.

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[26] One of the works that contributes most to this thinking is Immanuel Kant's 1795 *Zum ewige Frieden* [*Perpetual Peace*], available in Norwegian under the title *Den evige fred*, translated by Øystein Skar (Oslo 2002).

[27] Hanne Hagtvedt Vik, "Internasjonale menneskerettigheter", chapter 11 in Waage, Tamnes, Vik (eds.) *Krig og fred i det lange 20. århundre* [War and peace in the long 20th century] (Oslo: Cappelen Damm Academic, 2013), pp. 260-264. For a general review of the era's thinking about equality, freedom, brotherhood and peace, see e.g. Gunnar Skirbekk and Nils Gile, *Filosofihistorie* [History of philosophy] Vol. 2 (Bergen 1987); see especially the chapters on John Locke and the Enlightenment in Volume 1 and the chapter on Immanuel Kant in Volume 2. For an account of Kant's view on peace and supranational friendship, and the views of several other thinkers of his time, see John Gittings, *The Glorious Art of Peace*, chapter 5.1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). A philosophical explanation of the idea of human community, as it resurfaces in parts of the philosophical and ideological discourse of Nobel's time, can be found in Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, chapter 7 (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1957); see e.g. section 7.8.6 on the term "cosmopolis".

NPPW's proposed "measures"

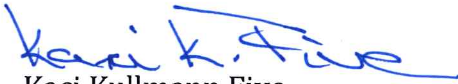
The committee would like to conclude by commenting briefly on the measures advocated by NPPW in its letter. NPPW proposes, first of all, that the Norwegian Nobel Institute engage in an active search for potential candidates for the Nobel Peace Prize so that the committee can supplement the list of incoming nominations with its own proposals, and thus obtain the best possible range of candidates from which to choose. NPPW is in effect knocking down an open door. The system has worked in exactly that way since the very first award in 1901.

Second, NPPW advocates complete democratisation of the right to nominate candidates. The committee's observation is that such a reform would be both practically unmanageable and inappropriate. The current rules already allow for a very large number of people and institutions to submit nominations. The fact that members of national parliaments and governments are automatically granted nomination rights opens the way for nominations generated through democratic channels. One could certainly discuss whether provision should be made to give nomination rights to more groups than the regulations currently allow, but a completely unrestricted process, as NPPW advocates, is not a viable way to go.

Third, NPPW proposes to abolish the secrecy surrounding the nomination system and the committee's selection of laureates. According to NPPW and Heffermehl, the Norwegian Nobel Committee clings to the secrecy provisions of the Nobel Foundation's statutes in order to protect itself from public scrutiny and criticism. In response, the Nobel Committee would point out that it has twice called for reducing the secrecy period from 50 to 30 years without winning support in the Nobel Foundation. This criticism is in other words misdirected. All the same, because of the Nobel Committee's integrity and independence, a certain degree of secrecy is absolutely essential. In their eagerness to criticise and discredit the committee, NPPW and Heffermehl fail to consider that it might also have unselfish motives for shielding itself from view: strict secrecy may in some cases be required to ensure the safety of the nominees or those who have nominated them. Sadly, this issue has become more pressing in recent years as a result

of technological developments and the desire of certain state authorities to monitor the committee's work.

With regards,
The Norwegian Nobel Committee



Kaci Kullmann Five
Chair

Olav Njølstad
Secretary

Note: Quotations from the letter dated 20 September 2015 by NPPW and Heffermehl are based on an independent translation from the Swedish.