

## Peace prize – Norwegian politicians more visionary than Nobel?

A Response to the Book Note by Scott London in JPR 48(2)

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The Nobel Peace Prize is, I think, the greatest gift ever to humankind, or rather it could have been so. It should be obvious to everyone that creating a real “international community” based on international law and getting rid of the military is a key to survival in the global emergency situation we have in the nuclear age. Not least at PRIO one would have expected an interest in the peace plan the visionary Nobel had in mind using the concept “confraternization of nations”, but I see little of this in the book note by Scott London – as well as in other PRIO reactions to my research into the purpose of Nobel’s prize.

Alfred Nobel not only formulated a goal, he had a specific idea about how to get there. Writing his will in 1895 he described the recipients of his prize as “the champions of peace.” The Norwegian Nobel committees have interpreted a self-invented word, “peace prize,” instead of reading the will, a gross and elementary mistake. My research into Nobel and his life and language has left no doubt that he intended his prize to support those who seek global disarmament through global law and order – a new kind of international relations where the power of the law will replace the law of power.

With every reason Nobel was afraid of being too ambitious when he made disarmament a core aspect of his recipe, the specific approach that he wished his prize to support. The Norwegian awarders have ignored what Nobel intended by the term “champions of peace” and more closely explained by expressions on peace congresses and a global community of disarmed nations, ideas that ran high in the politics of the 1890s. The interpretation that Nobel’s intention was to break the vicious tradition of militarism, is indisputable – and undisputed. The response from Parliament and Nobel committee has been silence or nonsense.

Scott London joins the many who are eager to ignore my documentation of Nobel’s intentions and how miserably Norwegian politicians have betrayed his will and misused the prize for their own political ideas and other irrelevant interests.

When, in 2007, I rediscovered, hidden behind years of mismanagement, the true purpose of the prize, it filled me with enthusiastic hope. The new global order that Nobel once had in mind responds to a dream shared by people everywhere on the planet, but with the present lack of direction and profile the “Nobel” prize will do nothing to combat militarism and build a world security system that is not as flawed and illusory as the one we have today. Respecting what Nobel had in mind the would make a most important and useful prize

I realize that my discovery was controversial and embarrassing to powerful elites in Norway. Nobody wished to admit – or take the consequences of – the fact that Nobel had been ignored for generations. First my appeal to the committee to check its mandate had no effect, and then the facts and conclusions in a book, in Norwegian, in 2008, were ignored. A main purpose of my latest book, “The Nobel Peace Prize. What Nobel Really Wanted,” (Praeger 2010) was to reveal the political methods used to silence my impudent protest. In the exceptional cases when my first book (2008) had been mentioned, the remarks were incorrect, untrue or misconstrued my points. My Nobel book (2010) developed into a case study of political ethos

in Norway, where, I concluded, the standard of debate is so low that democracy cannot function. Norway is unlikely to be much worse than other countries, but my criticism was met with a deafening silence that proved my point.

Scott London's "booknote" in PRIO's flagship publication JPR – an abbreviated version of a "review" he published on his website 4 months earlier – are not a review. It contains far more inaccuracies and errors than permit correction. In one example London writes: "arguing that the guardians of the prize have violated Nobel's intentions - [and the law] - is both inaccurate and far-fetched." But, how "inaccurate and far-fetched" are they? The results of my interpretation are substantiated by detailed studies of the relevant factors in law, language, general history, the history of the will and of Nobel himself, the importance of the prodding by Suttner, etc. My view of Nobel's intention (the pivotal issue in interpretation of a will) enjoys massive support in a dozen scholarly works that I present in Chapter 13. Even the committee itself in one year (1990) expressed the purpose of the prize correctly. Furthermore, the longest serving Nobel committee secretary, Ragnar Moe, in a book in 1932 concluded that Nobel chose the three elements (brotherhood, disarmament, peace congresses) to more closely describe the work of the peace movement that he wished to support by his prize.

The conclusion that the Norwegian awarders have consciously ignored Nobel and have done so since the end of WWII, is both undisputed and indisputable. The transcripts from the private diaries of Gunnar Jahn (Chair 1942-1966) speak clearly of disregard for the mandate, as do numerous public statements by later committee chairs about the committee's own (not Nobel's) "concept of peace". My protests have led to one small change; instead of total disinterest in Nobel committee chairs Mjøs and Jagland have started to profess, or feign, an interest in Nobel – as pure lip service, with no reality.

London claims that "to bolster his case Heffermehl has had to overlook key historical evidence . . ." Repeating a common argument London argues that Nobel had a trustful working style that confers upon the Nobel committee a license to do as they like. Here London must have overlooked the discussion of this argument in my book. The description of Nobel's style as a businessman not fussing with detail is probably right, but London draws the wrong conclusion. Instead, I propose that the elementary tenet of delegation obliges the committee to diligently follow the purpose Nobel described in his testament. Nobel was able to allow his aides leeway in the *how to* do things, by clear instructions regarding *what he wanted done*. I thus conclude, on page 85, that "as a capable, professional leader [Nobel] counted on his helpers to do their best to comply, not to redefine the task to their own liking."

I have always held the Journal of Peace Research in high regard as a diligent institution of high academic standard, where openness to new research and a will to rigorously test and – if necessary - disprove earlier assumptions reign. London fails to give my work a truthful presentation and then a fair consideration. My book is highly critical both of a long tradition and many of the people who have served the committee's transformation of Nobel's prize. The committee members, the secretaries, the historians, people in a variety of roles – including both me and Scott London – have found it rewarding to be supportive of the Nobel committee. I shifted my loyalty, however, to serving Nobel – and his unique gift to the world – when I discovered what the will contained, what Nobel really intended, and how essential his peace prize was, high above the – in comparison – bleak and directionless prize formulated by Norwegian parliamentarians.

It makes me extremely sad to see so many – even after the purpose has been explained in my books – continue to squander a visionary prize. In the book I mention that the decline of the Nobel prize seems to be part of a pattern where access to influence and political power requires dropping any serious challenge to the military. All attempts to free the world from the yoke of militarism seem to succumb rather soon to overwhelming political force (pp. 183-186): institutions like The Carnegie Endowment for Peace; antimilitarist political parties, in Norway Labor in the 1930s and Socialist Left Party in the 1960s, in Germany Die Grünen; politicians like Nelson Mandela and Jiri Dienstbier; and peace research, PRIO. The way PRIO has received my recent work appears to fully confirm this point in my book.

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