



Finnish MDs say land mines needed for border defence

Finnish physicians have taken a far different approach on the issue of banning land mines than their Canadian counterparts. Dr. Markku Äärimaa, secretary general of the Finnish Medical Association, raised a few eyebrows this fall when he spoke against a resolution to support a worldwide ban on land mines during the 50th World Medical Association General Assembly in Ottawa.

The CMA has already offered its strong support for the move, which has been led by the Canadian government. However, Äärimaa said the irony of a physician body defending the use of a weapon that has been blamed for killing or injuring some 26 000 people a year worldwide is less striking when Finnish geography is considered.

Finland and its 5.1 million citizens have lived with the threat of attack by a much larger hostile neighbour for decades. The Finns are cautiously optimistic that relations with Russia will

continue to be positive, but they maintain their land mines — currently in storage — are vital for defending their border.

“We don’t see a convention against land mines as a purely ethical thing,” Äärimaa told WMA delegates. “We see it is a challenge to our ability to defend our borders. History has taught us that many things can happen and that we must be prepared.”

The campaign for the land-mine ban, championed by Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy, peaked in December 1997 when representatives from more than 120 countries met in Ottawa to sign an agreement to ban the production, use, stockpiling and transfer of antipersonnel land mines. The US, China, Turkey and Russia were among the handful of countries that did not ratify the agreement; Finland was the only member of the European Union to balk at signing.

“Although there are countries



Dr. Markku Äärimaa: Finland may need land mines

where medical professionals feel their nation may be threatened by the removal of mines, you must understand that we all do not feel similarly,” summed up WMA secretary general Dr. Anders Milton of Sweden. Delegates voted overwhelmingly to support the agreement to ban land mines. — *Steven Wharry*

An amazing MD finally gains recognition

When Dr. Cathy Younger-Lewis, the CMA book editor, heard about Dr. Leonora Howard King, the first Canadian physician to practise in China, she could not believe that her extraordinary story had gone untold. “I was astounded that a life story this rich in adventure and dedication could have been overlooked by Canadian historians,” said Younger-Lewis, a family physician.

The credit for telling the untold story belongs to Ottawa author Margaret Negodaeff-Tomsik, who got on the trail after reading a short biography in a turn-of-the-century *Who’s Who*-type book. “Somebody must do something for this woman,” she concluded.

Leonora Howard King was born in the Eastern Ontario town of Farmersville (now Athens) in 1851. Since Canadian medical schools did not admit female students at that time, she attended the University of Michigan. Soon after graduation she travelled to China as a missionary, and stayed to treat both royalty and the poor for 47 years.



King operated her “hospitals” from temples, back doors and dilapidated inns until she successfully treated the wife of China’s greatest viceroy, who asked her to stay on as her personal physician. By 1884 her medical skills allowed her to create a practice devoted entirely to Chinese women and children. She also taught Western medicine to Chinese women. King offered her services through flood, famine, many “antiforeigner” movements, 2 major wars and even the Boxer Uprising of 1900. During that fighting Tientsin — where she was living — was heavily bombarded.

King was the first Western woman to be made a mandarin — an honour similar to a knighthood — in recognition of her efforts to care for Chinese soldiers during a war with Japan. “It’s truly a remarkable story,” said Younger-Lewis.

Honour Due: The Story of Dr. Leonora Howard King is available from the CMA’s Member Service Centre, 888 855-2555, at a cost of \$19.95 for members and \$24.95 for nonmembers. It is also available in bookstores.