



A Friendly Letter

Issue Number Nine

Twelfth Month 1981

Dear Friend,

This is the season of good news; for Christians, the time of the Best News of all. In keeping with this theme, this issue of *A Friendly Letter* contains only good news, three brief reports on Quaker witness and worship which seem to me to offer cause for celebration, hope and thanksgiving.

Besides being timely, the good news motif is also appropriate because it sums up the way I feel about Quakerism, which is optimistic. Friends have our problems of course; and these pages are often devoted to examining them. But such reports, like the more upbeat ones, reflect the conviction that Quakers as a group are energetic, resourceful and faithful enough to face and resolve our current problems, and get ready for the new problems the future will surely bring. We are also applying this energy and resourcefulness to the bearing of our special witness in the world, lifting our own small but bright light in the surrounding darkness.

A year ago I wrote of American Quakerism that it seemed to me we could be approaching a time of greatness for our Society. I saw communication spreading across the lines of old divisions; our community life being enriched and deepened; and our potential for witness increasing. At some point, these forces could reach a kind of critical mass, a breakthrough into a new era for American Quakerism. This conviction helped make me bold enough to launch this publication, in hopes at least of staking out a ringside seat at this exciting drama, and perhaps as well of contributing an occasional line to the script. Twelve months later, these forces still seem to be at work, and my hopes remain high.

This month's issue should be taken, then, as something of a progress report, because that, despite our problems, is what I believe we are making.

Yours in the Light,

Chuck Fager

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PS. Last month several errors from previous issues were corrected. Since then I have discovered another, in Issue #7's article on the AFSC. In the article it was stated that Yearly Meeting delegates to the AFSC Corporation were outnumbered "almost three to one" by At-Large delegates. The Yearly Meeting delegates are indeed outnumbered, but by nowhere near that much. Actual figures, as of 10/1/81, were 77 Yearly Meeting delegates and 87 At-Large delegates. I don't know how I managed to miscalculate the ratio, but regrettably, I did.

Incidentally, the AFSC has issued a lengthy critique of my Issue #7. I will be happy to send a copy of this response, along with some further comments of my own, to any interested reader; just drop me a line. The AFSC statement asserts that Issue #7 "falls far short" of Quaker standards of veracity; but with the exception of the error just noted, I feel my reporting stands up rather well under this scrutiny.

GOOD NEWS: THREE FRIENDLY PROGRESS REPORTS

Something unusual is happening among Friends in Portland, Oregon. Or more accurately, several unusual things are happening there. For one thing, Reedwood Friends Church, a leading Evangelical congregation in Northwest Yearly Meeting, has added an unprogrammed worship meeting to its regular program of First Day services. For another, among the worshippers who show up (anywhere from 15 to 50 people) are usually several members of Multnomah Monthly Meeting, Portland's unprogrammed Quaker group affiliated with the liberal North Pacific Yearly Meeting.

For that matter, Reedwood pastor Don Green reports that there are a number of Multnomah Friends who often take in both their unprogrammed worship and one of Reedwood's programmed services in the same morning. Don Green has been invited to speak at Multnomah twice. And if that's not unusual enough, how about this: Next month, the regular winter session of Willamette Quarter of North Pacific Yearly Meeting has been invited to gather at--you guessed, Reedwood Friends Church.

Riding a New Wave in Quaker History?

What is going on here? On Don Green's part, it is a series of cautious initiatives which he says are based on a conviction he has held for many years that "exclusivity among different kinds of Friends is evil. And notwithstanding differences, there is lots of ground for fellowship. So we've been pursuing this actively here at Reedwood. I think many Friends here are very much aware of riding a new wave in Quaker history. Many of us are tired of hearing the stories of old battles. We want to create and tell some new stories."

At the same time, Don Green emphasizes that these contacts between different groups of Friends in Portland are proceeding slowly and deliberately. And there has been, he admits, some sharp criticism of these initiatives within Northwest Yearly Meeting. Still, he is confident they will continue; Reedwood's unprogrammed worship meetings have been going on for eighteen months already.

Don Green told me he believes similar contacts among liberal and Evangelical Friends are occurring elsewhere; but details are sketchy. Will readers who know of any such ongoing fellowships please write to *A Friendly Letter* with details? That is how I heard about Portland, and it would be very helpful to get a better idea of the extent and variety of these connections. For that matter, if there are different kinds of Friends in your area who are *not* yet in fellowship, why not start the new year by getting them together to get better acquainted? If we are all Friends, we should at least be friendly.

Better Times Coming For Kenyan Quakers?

Halfway round the world from Portland, another Quaker surprise may be brewing. Readers who have seen my Issue #4 will recall its description of the serious problems facing the Kenyan Friends of East Africa Yearly Meeting, the largest in the world. Plagued by one schism and facing another, their internal morale has been so poor that two rival delegations came from Kenya to the Friends United Meeting Triennial last summer in Indiana. This strife has also produced an "orphan" group, the Elgon Society of Friends, which though several years old is as yet unrecognized by any other Quaker body. The intensity of these difficulties has been such as to cast doubt on the prospects for success of the world gathering of Friends being planned for Eighth Month, 1982 by the Friends World Committee for Consultation.

Recently, however, some new reports from Kenya tell of important new developments in this situation. In short, it is said that East Africa YM's sessions in Eighth Month this year were a major turning point for the group. At the insistence of rank-and-file Friends, who previously had not been much heeded, it appears there will soon be both leadership and policy changes in the Yearly Meeting which could ease the tensions considerably. Orderly change in leadership has been one of the major problems, and now this seems inevitable. The crucial policy shift would be away from leadership resistance to the

desire of large regional groups of Friends to form their own independent Yearly Meetings, each of which would still be larger than most such bodies in the West, to an acceptance of this development. One regional group has since last summer already obtained the necessary government approval for a separate YM structure, and met separately last summer. There is also widespread discussion of creating an umbrella association of these various YMs, not unlike Friends United Meeting or Friends General Conference here; and development of such a structure would be accompanied by overtures to the Elgon group, hopefully soon opening the way for its acceptance by the world family of Friends. Indeed, there have been meetings of Elgon Friends with groups of rank-and-file East Africa YM Friends for some time. There is no reason why Elgon should not be part of the FWCC's activities next summer, and if these go well, it should be formally recognized by FWCC and other Quaker groups. The objections of the East Africa YM leadership have been the principal obstacle to this recognition.

More Africa News On the Way

Two FUM staff members, Kara Cole and Eldon Helm, have just returned from a five-week visit to Kenya. Kara Cole wrote a detailed, remarkably candid account of the problems in EAYM in the Tenth Month issue of *Quaker Life* before the trip. She is reportedly planning to make an additional report of her trip in the First Month, 1982 issue of that journal as well. Kara Cole and Eldon Helm's reports should be of interest to any Friends concerned with the international growth of Quakerism. They will be much more detailed and up-to-the-minute than this brief notice can be.

It is evident that there is still much work to be done before East African Friends will have repaired the internal breaches that now trouble them. There are many pitfalls which must be avoided, and resistance yet to be overcome. Still, the atmosphere there now is reliably described as far better than it was last summer, better than we could have hoped. Let us pray the progress there continues.

Refloating the Law of the Sea Treaty

Last but not least, the Law of the Sea Treaty is almost, as they say in Washington, back on track. Readers of Issue #1 may recall that this treaty, both in its negotiating process and in some of its substantive articles, shows considerable Quaker influence, and in my judgment offers a superior example of constructive application of Friends Peace Testimony. That is why many Friends were particularly upset when the new Administration abruptly blocked completion of the treaty last spring, and undertook a full review of whether the U.S. should even continue to take part in the negotiations. Apprehension was increased by memories of the fact that the Republican Party platform of 1980 had expressed opposition to the draft treaty as contrary to the U.S. best interests.

These fears were reinforced late in the summer, at a further negotiating session in Geneva, Switzerland. There the new U.S. negotiators continued to obstruct the progress of the negotiations. The other 150 delegations showed their impatience with this delay by making firm plans to complete the treaty at a final session next spring, with or without US participation. At that point, the prospects for a treaty with a US signature seemed bleak.

However, supporters of the negotiations, including many Friends, had been quietly building interest and backing for the treaty around the country for several years. Over the summer this support began to show itself, in letters and petitions to Congress and the White House; it was not a flood of mail, as such things are measured in the capitol, but reportedly much more than treaty opponents in the Administration were expecting, given the technical nature of the negotiations. With this show of support, plus the efforts of supporters in Congress, private groups and foreign delegations, sentiment within the Administration has now shifted significantly, so that most of the departments concerned are now recommending that the US should return to the negotiations. As this was written, this recommendation was poised to go to the White House, where the final decision will be made by the President.

Letters to the President, encouraging him to approve active and supportive US participation in the final round of negotiations, are still being called for. But the situation now looks much more promising than it did a few months ago.

INSIDE: GOOD NEWS, AND
ONLY GOOD NEWS!

From: Chuck Fager, A Friendly Letter
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THIS MONTH IN QUAKER HISTORY

John Greenleaf Whittier was born this month, 12/17/1807 to be exact. And one of his more well-known Quaker poems concerns an event that took place this month in 1661. Called "The King's Missive," it describes how, at the climax of the Puritan persecution of Friends in Boston, a Quaker visitor, Samuel Shattuck, arrived on a boat from England and, like other Friends, was promptly jailed and whipped. But Shattuck was no ordinary Quaker invader, as Governor Endicott learned to his chagrin. Whittier tells best of their confrontation:

"Bring hither the Quaker." Calm, sedate,
With the look of a man at ease with fate,
Into that presence, grim and dread
Came Samuel Shattuck, with hat on head.
"Off with the knave's hat!" An angry hand
Smote down the offence; but the wearer said,
With a quiet smile, "By the king's command
I bear his message and stand in his stead."
In the governor's hand a missive he laid
With the royal arms on its seal displayed,
And the proud man spake as he gazed thereat,
Uncovering, "Give Mr. Shattuck his hat."

He turned to the Quaker, bowing low,
"The King commandeth your Friends'
release;
Doubt not he shall be obeyed, altho
To his subject's sorrow and sin's
increase.
What he here enjoineeth, John Endi-
cott,
His loyal servant, questioneth not.
You are free! God grant the spirit
you own
May take you from us to parts un-
known."

QUAKER CHUCKLE

The Very Model of a Quaker Major General

In 1854, the distinguished Quaker minister Eli Jones was elected to the Legislature of the state of Maine. During the session, he was offered an appointment as Major General of the Second Division of the Maine militia. In response, he gave a speech which concluded somewhat as follows, "If I should accept, I should give such orders as I think best. The first would be, 'Lay down your arms!' The second would be, 'About face! Now go, beat your swords into plowshares and your spears into pruning hooks, and learn war no more!'"

Do you know a good Quaker chuckle, or an interesting fact of Quaker history?
Your contributions to these features are welcome and encouraged.