



# A Friendly Letter

Issue Number Twenty-six

Fifth Month 1983

Dear Friend,

Issue Number 25, on the problems of Quakers as employers, seems to have touched a nerve: I have received several lengthy, thoughtful letters, from different places around the country, from Friends who have been on both ends of this too-often faulty process. Most, I might add, were in basic agreement with the general concern the issue pointed out; and there were also some indications of activity aimed at beginning to address the problem. One promising straw in the wind is a report from Philadelphia that Friends General Conference is thinking of holding a gathering on this subject, in hopes of shedding some light on the problems of Quaker personnel practices, and beginning to look for ways to improve our performance. These plans are still in the talking stage and thus rather vague, but here's hoping they turn to action.

One other gathering that did take place was on 4/23-24, a meeting of the AFSC Corporation committee charged with exploring ways of building better ties between AFSC and other Quaker constituencies. This meeting was notable because it was attended by Maurice Roberts, Superintendent of Mid-America Yearly Meeting and president of the Evangelical Friends Alliance. It has been a long time since an Evangelical official set foot on AFSC's turf; the last time may have been more than a half-century ago, when Edward Mott of Oregon Yearly Meeting told an AFSC-sponsored All-Friends Conference in Iowa that to have any further fellowship with AFSC and liberal Friends would be to betray his faith.

Whether this new encounter was a fruitful one, however, is not clear. I called Maurice Roberts to ask about his responses to the meeting and to AFSC, and whether he thought there was much chance of a thaw in the hostility between most Evangelical Friends and AFSC. His replies were guarded and not very sanguine. He pointed out that this was his first direct contact with AFSC, and that he went to the meeting as an individual. He felt there was no particular reason why the two groups should avoid each other. He also observed that the hostility and distancing has been a mutual process, not a one-sided one. In line with this he noted that the AFSC people he spoke with did not seem well-informed about Evangelical Friends; and he expressed concern that they seemed more interested in the traditions of Quakerism than in Christianity, whereas he would put the emphasis the other way. He expressed little enthusiasm for future dialogue, except in small, limited and focussed settings.

None of which, after all, is very surprising. The cleavage between Evangelical Friends and AFSC goes back to the organization's foundation; it will take more than one dialogue session, and something more than dialogue alone, to begin to heal it. Still, I commend the AFSC Corporation for extending an invitation to Maurice Roberts, and to Roberts for accepting it. We have to begin somewhere.

Yours in the Light,

*Chuck Fager*

Chuck Fager



## PEACE ACTION PRIORITIES: SOME SUGGESTIONS

It is time to talk about new priorities for Quaker peace action. It is time because, with the vote on the nuclear freeze resolution in the House of Representatives earlier this month, it is my sense that the freeze issue has peaked and is likely to fade from public view in the near future. This judgement is based on the freeze resolution's chances in the Senate (virtually nil), and the press of other arms race-related legislation before Congress, especially funding for the MX missile and B-1 bomber.

Most Friends I know have supported the freeze campaign actively; indeed, its startling emergence last year as a significant public issue was in large part due to skillful organizing by AFSC staff and supporters in New England; one could even call it something of a Quaker conspiracy. But now that the freeze has had its moment in the Washington spotlight, it seems likely that a period of intensive discussion, not to say conflict, will open among activist Friends and others over what proposals and actions to focus on next. Having been through such debates a few times, I want to offer my two cents worth.

### *Dr. King and the Next Election*

I see two major themes as likely to dominate peace work over the next 18 months, themes which seem to encompass much of the abiding agenda of peaceworkers: one is The Next Big March, and the other is The Next Big Election.

The big march is set for 8/27 in Washington, on the 20th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s historic civil rights rally. Friends are already deeply involved in the march planning: Asia Bennett, AFSC's national executive secretary, is one of 22 "convenors" who signed the original call for the gathering. The march plans are not widely known at this point; but I predict that by midsummer the peace movement's creaky organizational machinery will be turning in its behalf, and interest will build rapidly. Organizational efforts, by the long list of peace, church and labor organizations endorsing the march, will likely be enhanced by a stream of bad news from Congress, Central America and the stalled arms limitations talks; and the rally will not have much competition from other events then either. My guess is that the march will turn out to be a huge gathering, at least as big as the original (250,000), and possibly in the same league with the giant rally in New York last spring. (Its address is Box 26020, Le Droit Park Sta., Washington DC 20001.)

The other major magnet of attention is a traditional, quadrennial one, the 1984 presidential election. By the first of the year, it will be Topic Number One, and will stay that way--barring World War Three--until Election Day. At least two of the Democratic presidential aspirants (Cranston and Hart) are attempting to recruit peace-minded voters into their campaigns; and Ronald Reagan, or his GOP successor, is clearly getting ready to run a peace-through-strength campaign. Thus with some luck, there is a chance that there might be a serious debate and choice for the electorate regarding defense policies. Or at least, many of us will be irresistibly drawn to work to keep peace a live issue in the election.

### *Some ideas For the Rest of Us*

These predictions are offered with some confidence (I've seen this cycle through several times) but without an excess of enthusiasm. Although I live in the Washington area and often work around politics, I find the business, especially campaigns, rather boring--it isn't that I would prefer another form of government, but it is my conclusion that it takes the fulltime efforts of the capitol's several hundred reporters to sustain the public misimpression that this process, rather than being mostly tedious, is actually glamorous and exciting. For that matter, after the first couple dozen, big marches are likewise mostly rather dull, especially if the weather is hot, as it is likely to be in Eighth Month (unless it rains). But these too are a frequently necessary part of the process of keeping peace concerns before the policymakers.

But what about those among us who are either too individualistic to want to march (as many Friends are), or who have to work and can't go anyway? Are there any useful options for them beyond the freeze, and these two upcoming events?



I believe there are, lots of them. They can be pursued on various levels, too, in keeping with individual proclivities and resources. For one thing, there are lots of other good peace-oriented bills before Congress which could use support. Here are a few:

*\*The Peace Academy Bill*, HR 1249 and S 564, sponsored by Senator Matsunaga and representative Glickman. This bill actually has an outside chance of passing, though if it did it would still have to face White House opposition.

*\*H.Con.Res. 20*, a call for negotiations with other nations on a plan for staged, worldwide disarmament. Sponsored by Rep. George Brown (who was raised a Quaker), this advisory bill could serve to raise genuine, thoughtful alternatives to the administration's plans for a massive weapons buildup.

*\*Stopping Draft Registration*, which HR 1050, sponsored by Reps. Sabo and Green, would do by cutting off money to Selective Service; a related bill, HR 1286 (and S 122) would repeal the current ban on federal college aid to draft resisters.

*\*The UN Convention Against Genocide*, which has been signed by 82 nations, has lain dormant in the Senate for years. Sen. Proxmire has been making speeches almost daily for over a decade calling on the Senate to take up and ratify this convention; he's right.

For information on any of these proposals, write your Representative or Senator, or FCNL, at 245 Second St. NE, Washington DC 20002.

### *A Shopping List For The White House*

There are also actions the president could be urged to take, or repeal, on his own which would in my judgement reduce the risk of war. Among them:

*\*Stop Planning For a Prolonged Nuclear War*. A classified Pentagon study, outlining such plans, was leaked to the press early this year. It proposed to base our defense policy on an effort to "prevail" (i.e., to win) a nuclear confrontation.

*\*Start Negotiating Seriously With the Soviets on Arms Reduction*. The so-called "START" talks have been stalled almost since their beginning; and if the White House does not figure out how to get them moving, a new and dangerous round in the arms race will be upon us.

*\*Sign the Law of the Sea Treaty*. Longtime readers will recall our reporting on the extensive Quaker involvement in this treaty, as well as our view that it is one of the best war-preventing measures developed in our time. It has been supported by four U.S. administrations until this one, and has been signed by almost every other nation. We should, too.

*\*Then, of course, there is Central America*. Events are unfolding so rapidly--and so ominously--there that I hesitate to make any specific suggestion except that Friends stay on top of the situation, and keep telling the White House to STOP getting us ever deeper into that morass.

PS: The White House Zip Code is 20500.

### *Telling It To the Russians, Too*

One often hears rightwing critics of peace activists complain that we only object to U.S. policies, not Soviet ones. There is some truth to these complaints in some cases; but not here. While it seems clear to me that outsiders have little access and less leverage over Soviet policies, that is no excuse for not doing what we can. Here is what I would tell the Soviet government to do, for starters:

*\*Stop its own nuclear buildup*. The superpower arms race is a two-handed game. The USSR can and should rethink and change its approach to security.

*\*Stop Suppressing Independent Russian Peace Groups*. Especially the tiny but important Group to Establish Trust, whose members have been brutally persecuted for making very modest, but independent proposals for slowing the arms race on the Soviet side. (For more information, write Amnesty International, 304 W. 58th St., New York NY 10019.)

*\*Observe the Helsinki Accords*, particularly the sections on human rights. This could mean a halt to persecution of peaceful dissidents like Andrei Sakharov. (For information write the U.S. Helsinki Watch Committee, 36 W. 44th St., New York NY 10036.)

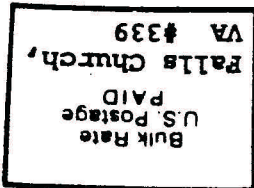
*Where to write to the Soviets*: Soviet Embassy, 1125 16th St. NW, Washington DC 20036; and the Soviet Mission to the UN, 136 E. 67th St., New York NY 10021.

Whatever our preference or resources, there is plenty of peace work for all of us.



INSIDE: QUAKER PEACE PRIORITIES  
AFTER THE FREEZE

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### THIS MONTH IN QUAKER HISTORY

What a full month for Friends this has been! It was in Fifth Month, 1652, that George Fox first came to preach at Swarthmoor Hall; and it has been all down(or up)hill from there. Ten years later, on 5/2/1662, Charles II signed the Quaker Act, which made it illegal for Friends to gather in groups of more than five. And it was also in Fifth Month, a generation later, 5/24/1689 to be exact, that the resulting persecution was finally ended, for other Dissenters as well as Friends, by the Toleration Act.

This month in 1838, Quakers were at it again, in Philadelphia, where a "promiscuous audience" listened to Angelina Grimke, Lucretia Mott and others speak against slavery in the newly built Philadelphia Hall. By "promiscuous" the critics meant only that these women orators' audience included *both men and women at the same time*. This may not sound like much to our jaded modern sensibilities; but it was such an outrage then that two nights later a mob burned the new hall to the ground.

For that matter, early in Fifth Month 1955, postal officials in Boston seized and impounded some mail bound from England to the AFSC, claiming that it included some communist literature. Indeed it did, as part of AFSC's efforts to understand both sides in the Cold War, in order to work for peace more knowledgeably. This perspective was not a popular one in those McCarthy years, however, and the AFSC had to go to court to get its mail delivered.

### QUAKER CHUCKLES

Joshua Brown, a student at the Earlham School of Religion, has proposed that Quakers ought to draft some military recruiting slogans into service with our outreach efforts--a sort of beating of rhetorical swords into evangelistic plowshares. He especially thinks the Marines, with their elite consciousness, have some tag lines that could be serviceable. Imagine a billboard which proclaimed: "Quakers--The Few. The Proud." (perhaps "The Humble" would be closer to our self-image, if not to the truth.) Or what about a sign that said, instead of "The Marines Are Looking For a Few Good Men," this: "The Quakers Are Looking For a Few Good Friends." Or, not to exclude the army, "Be All That You Can Be--In the Society of Friends!" (With the second line to read: "It's Not Just a Church, it's an *Adventure!*") Even the tiny Coast Guard had one we could recycle: "The Quakers. Small denomination--big job."

Other ideas? Why should the military, to paraphrase John Wesley, have all the good catchphrases?

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