



A Friendly Letter

Issue Number Twenty-Seven

Sixth Month, 1983

Dear Friend,

I have in hand a letter from Leonard Kenworthy, which says kind things about this publication, but also points out that in Issue #25, when I mentioned his own recent publication of a book of modern Quaker quotations, I neglected to give its title. It was an embarrassing oversight, but one easily rectified: the book is *Quaker Quotations on Faith and Practice*, and it is available from Quaker Publications, Box 726, Kennett Square PA 19348. I must add, though, apropos of the subject of this issue, that Evangelical Friends are in my view woefully underrepresented in this collection. This too can be rectified, in future editions.

Friend Kenworthy adds that, since finishing that volume, he has also done a sizeable essay on Quaker Meetings for Discussion, an idea that sounds worth learning about, as well as a pamphlet on Membership; he is now well into a two-volume biographical gallery of Quaker pioneers of the twentieth century. "So—"he concludes, "little grass is growing under my feet these days. I think this is a wise use of retirement." Indeed.

One other item of business to be mentioned here is the outcome of our Second Peace Poster and Bumpersticker Contest. You may recall that this year there were two age divisions, nine and under and ten and above, for posters. However, few entries, and only one winner, were received in the older division; apparently this did not develop a wide appeal in this group. From the younger entrants, though, we picked three winners; the two bumpersticker prizes were also awarded. Congratulations to the winners:

For Posters:

Molly Wanning, age 8
Narramissic Monthly Meeting
Orland, Maine

Kentner Cottingham, age 7
West Branch Monthly Meeting
West Branch, Iowa

Patricia Reixach, age 8
Rochester Friends Meeting
Rochester, New York

Julian Dolby, age 11
Minneapolis Friends Meeting
Minneapolis, Minnesota

For Bumpersticker Slogans:

Alison Bing, 8th grade
Richmond, Indiana

Kenneth Munz, age 10
Haddonfield Friends School
Haddonfield, New Jersey

Special Honorable Mention:
Rachel Matney, age 11
Minneapolis Friends Meeting

Yours in the Light,

Chuck Fager
Chuck Fager

CHANGE COMES TO A QUAKER STRONGHOLD

Among American Quaker bodies, the Evangelical Friends Church Eastern Region (EFC-ER) is unique, in several ways: its churches are not only pastoral and strongly evangelistic, but include several whose programmed worship includes baptism and communion; decisions in their business meetings are not uncommonly made by formal voting; conscientious objectors are rare, and EFC-ER provides credentials for the Quaker chaplains in the military (there are three, two Air Force and one Army); and while a handful of women are recorded as ministers, all EFC-ER pastors listed in its current directory are male, as are all members of EFC-ER's highest body, the Executive Board.

To a liberal unprogrammed Friend, EFC-ER presents a sharp, even startling set of contrasts in theology, practice and structure. Perhaps nowhere is this contrast sharper than in the position and role of its General Superintendent. Their *Faith and Practice* says of this post that "While the implications of the office are far removed from the concept of dictatorship, yet the General Superintendent is in a position of authority, and it is expected that pastor and people shall, in their relation to him, comply cheerfully with the precept of Scripture to 'obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves.'" (Hebrews, 13:17) Moreover, the handbook also asserts that "the EFC-ER expects pastor and people to hold the General Superintendent in honor and to esteem him highly for his work's sake."

Authority Based on A Heritage of Evangelical Orthodoxy

Nor are these admonitions simply vague bromides. The *Faith and Practice* spells out in detail a broad range of duties and prerogatives for the Superintendent: he has direct charge of all new, Extension Meetings; he develops and maintains the list of candidates available for pastorates, and must be consulted by any church calling a new pastor; he can intervene in a local church's affairs on his own initiative if he feels it is necessary; and he is even in charge of programming all the non-business parts of the Yearly Meeting sessions.

It is fair to say that the EFC-ER General Superintendent holds the most powerful staff position in any American Quaker Yearly Meeting. Indeed, from the vantage point of unprogrammed Friends, among whom staff are usually few, mainly administrative and virtually without any authority over constituent Meetings or Friends, such a post would be all but unimaginable. For that matter, the entire thrust of EFC-ER's program, which is heavily based on missionary and evangelistic work, shows the marks of its very different religious history and identity. This is a group which, in the Hicksite-Orthodox split of the late 1820s, opted decisively for doctrinal orthodoxy and the authority of elders to enforce it. A generation later, it stood for the Evangelical-revivalist trend against the mystical Inward Light emphasis of Ohio Conservative Friends; and since then it has been shaped largely by the evangelistic model developed by men like Dwight Moody. Its Malone College, in Canton, Ohio, was begun as a Bible Institute in the Moody mold. Even its problems are unique: *Faith and Practice* includes two cautionary "testimonies," on spiritual healing and speaking in tongues, the former urging members not to depend solely on miracles to cure illnesses, and the latter directing that speaking in tongues, while a phenomenon which has a definite Biblical basis, should be practiced only in private devotion, not in public worship.

A Surprising Apostle of Quaker Dialogue

It is small wonder, against this background, that I have heard numerous unprogrammed Friends murmur doubts as to whether EFC-ER could still be considered meaningfully Quaker. (Of course, I have heard as many Evangelicals ask the same thing about unprogrammed Quakers, pointing to our doctrinal fuzziness and ethical latitudinarianism.) It is also small wonder that for many years, EFC-ER paid little heed to unprogrammed Friends, except to occasionally denounce their "modernism," an indifference which liberal Friends largely returned.

What is surprising is that from this context came one of the leading figures in the movement of the 1960s and 1970s away from this mutual isolation, Everett Cattell. Cattell, an Evangelical Quaker missionary in India for many years, was later president of Malone College. He played a key role in the 1970 St. Louis Conference which brought together the various groups under one roof for the first time since the 1920s. Cattell stood firmly for continuing contact, even in the face of the many deep differences which surfaced there. He admitted

frankly at one point in the conference, that "I struggle in my heart to define what a Quaker is today. I do not know the answer." Furthermore, Cattell's ecumenical work was not limited

Friends: he was also the initiator of an annual fellowship conference of top staff people from numerous denominations. This conference has continued even after his death, and has included Catholics and Jews, groups which Dwight Moody would have denounced as apostates.

Everett Cattell's example is important not only on its own, but also in light of the fact that the retirement of EFC-ER's longtime General Superintendent, Russell Myers, has brought to the fore one of Cattell's closest friends and proteges, Robert Hess. Hess served as a junior missionary in India under Cattell, and later followed him to Malone College, from whose faculty he succeeded to the EFC-ER Superintendency on 6/1. Hess even described Cattell to me as his "guru."

There is bound to be much continuity between Myers' administration and Hess's, especially in the areas of "church planting" and overseas missionary work. But there might also be a resurgence of interest in wider contacts between EFC-ER and other Friends groups, and an increased willingness to come to grips with some of the issues that are high priorities for the other groups. In a recent interview, for instance, I asked Hess about peace concerns, the scarcity of women in leadership posts, Quaker ecumenism, and the matter of specific Quaker training for EFC-ER pastors, most of whom have not studied at Friends institutions.

A Changing of the Guard--A Change In Direction?

Hess indicated he was "very open" on all these matters: He plans to begin study groups on nuclear war issues; he admitted the paucity of female leadership, and noted that the example of women Quaker ministers had largely drawn him to the church as a youth; he similarly expressed concern for more Quaker presence at the two seminaries, Asbury and Ashland, in which the largest number of EFC-ER pastors are trained. He also expressed interest in Quaker ecumenical contacts, though he said he had some trouble, as did Everett Cattell, with ends who do not consider themselves Christian.

At the same time, Hess spoke candidly of the problems that might be encountered in addressing these concerns in EFC-ER. Perhaps the most important is that in many of the churches, particularly the newer ones, the general awareness of Quaker history and traditions, not to mention familiarity with other Quaker groups, is low; moreover, there is still considerable exclusivistic suspicion in some quarters even of such institutions as the Earlham School of Religion as being too "syncretistic," that is, tolerant of various kinds of Quakerism. Similarly, there are those who would equate any talk of "peace" with communist sympathies. And it is also evident that many EFC-ER Friends are influenced by Evangelical figures who teach that subordination of women is the true New Testament doctrine.

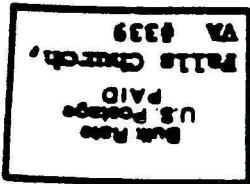
A Surprisingly Rough Row to Hoe

These are not matters to be settled by fiat. Hess said he saw his position as "not quite a bishopric, more like that of a coach than one in authority." EFC-ER will soon appoint several new Area Superintendents, to nurture a closer relationship between local churches and headquarters. They may also bring some decentralization to the structure.

Peace, the advancement of women, Quaker identity and ecumenism--this is a weighty agenda to hold up before EFC-ER Friends, with their staunchly conservative outlook, and long-standing preoccupation with evangelization at home and abroad as top priority. Still, just as Everett Cattell played a surprising and crucial role in breaking through the mutual isolation of former days, EFC-ER may still have more surprises in store for the rest of Quakerdom. One project, the Friends Disaster Service organized by EFC-ER Friend Dean Johnson, is an inspiring example of how this faith can be concretely applied. It deserves to be better known.

Will Robert Hess take hold of the heritage of Everett Cattell, and projects like Friends Disaster Service, and make them and EFC-ER again a surprising source of leadership among American Friends in the years ahead? In his new position, as the most powerful Yearly Meeting executive in the Quaker realm, he has the tools at hand. I for one will be watching, hopefully and prayerfully, as the answers to this question unfold.

INSIDE: WILL THERE BE A NEW ERA
IN EASTERN REGION?



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

It was 25 years ago this month that the United States Supreme Court agreed to hear a case involving a Virginia Quaker named David Scull. The previous year, Scull had been summoned to testify before a Virginia State investigative committee, much like the House Un-American Activities Committee, about his involvement in several organizations which were promoting the idea of racial equality and school desegregation. Many of these organizations' other supporters in Virginia had been silenced or even run out of the state by threats and violence, as part of the state's campaign of "massive resistance" to school integration. Friend Scull, then and now an inveterate joiner of committees, had become by attrition one of the few remaining public supporters of desegregation—the law of the land—in the state.

Scull had refused to testify before the state committee, and cited his Quaker faith—not the Fifth Amendment—as his warrant for doing so. The committee got a local judge to find Scull in contempt and sentence him to ten days in jail and a \$50 fine if he would not answer the committee's questions. When Scull appealed to the Virginia Supreme Court, his petition was rejected without even a hearing; but the U.S. Supreme Court proved more receptive.

Scull's case was argued the next autumn, and in Fifth Month, 1959 the court unanimously overturned the contempt citation. Scull continued to support racial equality, and Virginia schools were at length—mostly—desegregated. The chairman of the committee continued to serve in the legislature for 20-odd years, until a coalition of feminists and liberals, incensed over his opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment, retired him in the late 1970s. Friend Scull, on the other hand, retired his printing business, voluntarily, about the same time, but he has continued to be an inveterate joiner of committees, controversial and otherwise.

QUAKER CHUCKLE

Let Us Now Praise Peaceful Bumpers

Two of the winning bumper sticker slogans submitted in our recent contest seem to me to have a special winsomeness. One, by Alison Ding, reads simply: "Quakers do things Peace by Peace." The other, by Rachel Matney, argues that "Flame broiling doesn't beat frying, but Friendly Peace beats war." I'm not sure that would fit on a bumpersticker except in rather small print, but the point is well taken.
