

A Friendly Letter

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Dear Friend,

This month we take up again an issue concerning the relations between Friends in America and those in Kenya. Reporting on Quakerism in East Africa has been a topic in this newsletter more frequently than just about any other. This frequency reflects both my judgment on the importance of the issues involved there (major schisms, the preparations for a large international Quaker conference in 1982, and now relations with Friends United Meeting), and a continuing concern over the poor reporting of these important matters in other Friends publications. In this latter respect, the failure of *Quaker Life* to do better, more complete and accurate reporting has been particularly unfortunate; let us hope it is about to improve.

As for my own failures, those in the technical end of this effort seem persistent. But those who recall my groans of distress over the difficulties associated with putting a subscription list on computers may be pleased to know that I have now discovered a whole new aspect of this technology: it is the all-purpose mechanical scapegoat. Nowadays, I hardly ever make mistakes regarding subscriptions; no, the computer makes those frequent errors. Many readers have understood this well, and I have received several letters about mistaken renewal or expiration notices which, rather than reproving me, have asked me to reprove the computer, since it is obviously to blame. Ah, the marvels of progress! So if you find something wrong with your subscription--it is expiring too soon, or a change of address has not been entered, etc.--please don't hesitate to let me know about it; I will speak sternly to the computer as soon as I figure out what it has done wrong.

And speaking of speaking, there has come to my attention another recent comment that belongs in the ongoing discussion about Friends and the centrality of Christian commitment, the subject of our issue #37. It comes from my old home base, Cambridge Meeting in Massachusetts, and a notice of a "Day of Sharing" to be held there this month. It was written by Barbara Cummings, a most discerning Friend, and I think it belongs in any list of quotations relevant to this question. "We come," she writes, "from a diversity of roots and backgrounds. We come with a diversity of spiritual gifts and diversity of religious experience and a diversity of life experience. Yet in our Meeting for Worship there is a mystical bonding. In the presence of God we are at one. We are gathered like an extended family, like pilgrims who seemed to be called to a pilgrimage together--who need one another. We need the light of the candle of faith that each soul has been given."

What more is there to say, but Amen.

Yours in the Light,

Chuck Fager

Chuck Fager

THE QUAKER MISSION IN KENYA

The late Everett Cattell was both a longtime evangelical Quaker missionary and a scholar of missions. In his book, *Christian Mission: A Matter of Life*, published by Friends United Press in 1981, his last year, Cattell summed up his long and distinguished career, what he had learned and what he felt was important for others to know about his chosen field.

Much of what Cattell had to say he put plainly, sometimes bluntly. Of particular interest here are some comments he made about common mission problems. Two of the most widespread pitfalls he found were: First, the tendency of indigenous church leaders to become more interested in the control and aggrandizement of *institutions*, such as schools and hospitals, than in the *people* these institutions were built to serve. A related and even more common failing, Cattell said, was "the encroachment of dishonesty through the mishandling of funds by those entrusted with their management. Such abuses, he observed sadly, "are found almost universally," and were "understandable, although not to be condoned."

And When the Shoe Fits....

These frank comments ought to be of interest to Friends who have any involvement or concern with the Quaker groups in Kenya, the fruit of the largest, most successful Friends missionary effort. They should be of particular interest to FUM Friends, whose representatives will address a number of Kenya-related items at FUM's Triennial sessions next month, in which both of these issues will be engaged.

Take for instance the matter of institutions. Too often, Cattell noted, donated American funds, which go much further in poor societies, have been used to build what are in their settings large institutions, "and thereafter property determined policy instead of being its servant." In Kenya, during the 80+ years of FUM involvement, mission funds have gone into the development of numerous educational and medical facilities, prominent among them the Friends Bible Institute and hospitals at Kaimosi and Lugulu. East Africa Yearly Meeting (EAYM) took control of these facilities in 1963, but they have continued to be heavily supported by FUM funds; total FUM grants to Kenya this year exceed \$80,000.

As has been reported here before (See issues #4, 16 and 32), EAYM has in the past 15 years experienced major divisions, first the secession of the Elgon Religious Society of Friends and more recently the creation of a Southern YM. Relations between the two new groups and EAYM have been acrimonious and even litigious, and at this writing are by no means resolved. While the roots of the conflict are complex, a central sticking point in their resolution has been, unsurprisingly, *control* of these institutions: the EAYM leadership has resisted any meaningful sharing of control with the newer groups.

"Where Your Treasure Is, There...."

This problem has been complicated by persistent allegations of misuse of funds, both local and FUM contributions, by EAYM personnel. These charges, which are reportedly widely believed in Kenya, have sapped morale among EAYM's membership, marred the reputation of Quakerism in Kenya generally, and have led to sharp responses by responsible FUM officials.

These charges have been known to me for some time, but I have hesitated to mention them in print, not least because they are impossible to check out from this side of the ocean. Even now, it is not a matter of pointing fingers at individuals. Nevertheless, as these reports have accumulated and the question of FUM's relationship with these groups has come to the fore, it has seemed increasingly important that they be taken into account. For while American Friends obviously cannot dictate solutions to the internal problems of independent Quaker bodies, we *are* responsible for proper stewardship of our funds, wherever spent. Certainly Everett Cattell's attitude on such matters was unequivocal, as we shall see in a moment. And the plain fact is that there have been over the years serious shadows cast on the quality of this stewardship in relation to East Africa Yearly Meeting.

For instance, for some years FUM contributions to various Kenyan Quaker institutions were channeled through the EAYM offices. But FUM staff in Richmond, Indiana received numerous complaints from the institutions about long delays between the time funds arrived at the EAYM

offices and their transmittal on to the institutions. Furthermore, the institutions noted that EAYM officials did not use current exchange rates when the US funds were finally converted into Kenyan pounds for transmittal.

At least two abuses are made possible during such delays: First, since the dollar's value has been steadily rising against Kenyan currency, conversions based on a past, lower exchange rate will leave a difference between the calculated amount and the actual value of the funds--a difference the institutions said they did not get, and which was otherwise unaccounted for. Secondly, while such funds are being held, they can be deposited to earn interest; this interest can be quietly siphoned off when the funds are finally passed along. Such "kiting" is a common form of financial chicanery.

Accounting For--And Dealing With--Accounting Problems

FUM's retiring Wider Ministries Secretary Eldon Helm, to his credit, moved to put a stop to these delays by arranging, over vehement EAYM protests, to have FUM funds sent directly to the institutions.

An additional problem area centers around a lack of clear and open financial record-keeping by EAYM. Such inadequate accounting is, as Everett Cattell pointed out, an open invitation to abuse by those with access to funds, or at the very least sows seeds of mistrust among members and mission supporters. Again to his credit, when Eldon Helm confronted such mispractices in some FUM-supported Kenyan institutions at the beginning of his tenure in 1981, he insisted on strict recordkeeping as a condition of further FUM assistance. These institutions now must submit budgets for the coming year, in addition to audits of the previous year's accounts, and an evaluation of how well they managed to achieve the goals set out for that period. Results of this change in practice have in some cases been dramatic: in 1981, under the old arrangements, the Kaimosi hospital was near insolvency; last year, with better recordkeeping and direct grants, it actually showed a surplus.

Prodded by their government, Kenyan Friends have been struggling to resolve their differences to the extent of creating an FUM-like association of the three YMs. In this effort, the future of Quaker institutions now under EAYM's exclusive control remains the biggest sticking point. (Indeed, there have been persistent reports of efforts to deny non-EAYM Friends access to these institutions, charges EAYM officials dispute. The very fact of this controversy underlines the importance of settling the matter of sharing control, and maintaining accountability in dealings with FUM.)

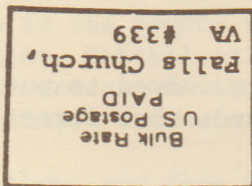
Changes Are Coming, Here and There

With the FUM Triennial likely to admit the two new Kenya YMs into membership, FUM's commitment to openness of these institutions will be formalized. A similar commitment to full accountability by all groups seeking FUM grants should likewise be forthcoming. Furthermore, FUM grants ought to be made with a clear expectation that the recipients will move rapidly and consciously toward complete self-support. This was a goal Everett Cattell advocated strongly for mission efforts, so that resources could be moved on to other, newer developments. A substantial portion of FUM's current Kenya grants are going to such a pioneering effort in the drought-stricken Turkana region. Among the existing institutions, however, only the hospital at Lugulu has set a target date, 1989, for an end to outside support. After more than eighty years of FUM involvement, this does not seem too much to ask of the others as well.

At the close of his book, Everett Cattell included a questionnaire for use in evaluating aid requests from mission groups. His advice regarding action "where there is faulty budgeting, long range planning and auditing" was clear-cut: "No support."

He added that interested Friends should "insist on adequate information so that you can pray as intelligently as you are giving." This seems like eminently sound advice. But regrettably, FUM Friends in America have rarely been given candid or complete information about Kenyan Quakerism's development, difficulties and prospects, particularly in its official publication, *Quaker Life*. This too must change if FUM contributions to Kenyan Quaker institutions are to be part of the solution rather than a major part of the problem.

INSIDE: KENYAN FRIENDS AND AMERICAN MONEY--
TIME FOR AN ACCOUNTING



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THIS MONTH IN QUAKER HISTORY

In 1826, the famous abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison was the proprietor of an obscure newspaper published north of Boston and called *The Free Press*. In his edition for this month, he printed the first poem to reach print by an unknown versifier named John Greenleaf Whittier. The poem was entitled "The Exile's Departure," and told the story of early Quaker missionaries to Massachusetts Bay Colony who were driven out of its territory on small boats, which carried them to Nantucket island, where they laid the foundations for what became a famous and important Quaker community.

On 6/28 in 1889, Maria Mitchell, a daughter of Nantucket, died in Lynn, Massachusetts. Mitchell as a young girl learned the basics of astronomy from her father, who had a telescope on the roof of his island home. She continued her studies on her own, and in 1847 discovered a comet; when confirmed, this discovery won her a medal offered by the king of Denmark, and made her famous. She went on to become the first woman elected to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and to teach astronomy at Vassar College. She ultimately left Friends, however, when the dry and domineering spirit of reaction to the Orthodox-Hicksite Separation of 1827 reached her community.

QUAKER CHUCKLES

Ecumenical Plain Speaking

Said a Baptist to a Quaker one day, "I don't like your form of church government. With all those committees and whatnot it has too much machinery about it."

"Maybe so, friend," came the reply, "but then thee see, it doesn't take near so much water to run it."

And Some Plain Singing

Reader Gladys Swift of Bethesda Md. recently turned up a real find: the music and words to a 1929 jazz song entitled "All the Quakers Are Shoulder Shakers (Down in Quaker Town)." I don't know if it was a hit in that eve of Depression year, but at least one verse sounds rather contemporary:

"Oh I just got back today, from a town not far away,
I've been looking at the Quakers in their clothes of gray;
And it struck me mighty strange, 'cause there's been an awful change;
If you think those folks are slow, there's a lot that you don't know."
