

A Friendly Letter

Issue Number Forty-Eight

ISSN #0739-5418

Third Month, 1985

Dear Friend,

With this issue *A Friendly Letter* is four years old. In considering this milestone, it is a humbling fact that fully half of those who subscribed in response to issue #1 in 1981 are still on the list. That is an unusually high percentage for a publication like this. While I am grateful for every reader, I want to pay special tribute here to those of you who have faithfully sent in your renewals, as well as your letters of praise, inquiry and elderring. I am thankful for all of it, and I hope you will pardon me for mentioning in passing that for most of you it is time to ask you to renew yet again....

Let me also pass on to you the thanks of Lon Fendall, of the George Fox College Center for Peace Learning, who reports that well over \$200 in contributions has come in since his flyer appeared in Issue #46. There was also a good response to the earlier appeal for the World Gathering of Young Friends, and let me repeat that these pages can likewise be open at no charge to other such appeals for needful and needy Quakerly causes; if that is of interest to thee and thy group, Friend, write for details.

There is one more appeal I want to make to you here also, not for money but for political action. (This is, incidentally, a reason *A Friendly Letter* is set up on a regular commercial basis--so I can make political appeals when led to do so, without having to fear for a tax exemption.) Some important issues will soon be coming to decision in Congress and at the White House. Among these, three seem to me to be of urgent priority. They are: Action on funds for building 21 MX missiles; a decision on money to support the "Contra" guerillas fighting the Nicaraguan government; and the first slate of presidential nominees to the U.S. Peace Institute board. Debate on the MX is underway as this is written; contra aid will come up soon; the USPI nominees are due by 4/20. My appeal to you is, if you share these views, to contact your Representative and Senators and urge them to vote AGAINST the first two items, and urge the White House to appoint a sympathetic, peace-minded and independent set of nominees (including some Quakers) to the USPI board. If you have already done this, there is no harm in doing it again. (Congressional Zip Codes are: House, 20515; Senate, 20510. To phone members of Congress, call 202-225-3121 and ask for yours; on the USPI, write Robert McFarlane, National Security Adviser, White House, Washington DC 20500.) Please don't let these decision go by without expressing yourself!

Yours in the Light,

Chuck Fager

Chuck Fager

CONTINUING UPHEAVALS AMONG KENYAN QUAKERS

THE FRIENDS WHO CAN'T BE FRIENDS?

A COMMITTEE of the East Africa Yearly Meeting of Friends.

We have reported frequently on turmoil within East Africa Yearly Meeting of Friends, the world's largest Quaker body (See AFLs #4, #9, #16, #32, #39). The issues which have divided that body center on personal power and control of the YM's institutions. In addition to the division into three YMs, the conflicts have sometimes degenerated into physical confrontations, and have made Friends the object of embarrassing news reports there.

These issues recently flared up again, as shown by the headlines reproduced here, taken from Kenyan newspapers. This time the issue is a power struggle within East Africa YM, the oldest of the three groups there. It came to public notice in First Month, after a delegation from the Executive Committee of East Africa Yearly Meeting went to the YM's headquarters office in Kaimosi. There they were prevented from entering by a band of men armed with *rungus*, a kind of club made from knotted tree limbs. When they came back in late First Month of this year and met a similar reception, armed police intervened and, at the direction of the District Commissioner (equivalent to a U.S. state governor) closed the office down and padlocked it.

Act Two: Who's In Charge Here?

The issue that led to these confrontations was a decision by the Executive Committee to retire five EAYM staff people, chiefly its longtime General Secretary Thomas Lung'aho. According to press reports in English language Nairobi newspapers, Lung'aho refused to hand over the office to his designated successor, and sent letters protesting the executive committee action to local meetings and area public officials. In the letters Lung'aho reportedly insisted that he should be paid all his retirement benefits before giving up his post.

Lung'aho's letter apparently got results. In early Second Month, the chairman of EAYM's missions commission called a leadership meeting to sort out the wrangle. The meeting, held 2/5, brought together pastors and three of the five Executive Committee members. At this session, the retirement decision was overturned and Lung'aho and the others were reinstated in their positions. Press reports in Second Month said the YM office was still officially closed, but that Lung'aho remained in control of its affairs.

Time For A Change?--But How? And when?

This latest outbreak is in a way typical of the major problem facing EAYM, which from all reports centers around making YM staff officials accountable, and providing for orderly and equitable succession in office. As we have described before, particularly in Issue #39, a church institution in a poor country, particularly one receiving outside funds, easily becomes a focus of ambition and struggle. In EAYM, Thomas Lung'aho has held the central position ever since it was set off by Friends United Meeting in 1963, and as this current incident shows, he has no desire to step aside. Leaders of the other two breakaway YMs, Elgon and EAYM South, have said that it was Lung'aho's insistence on maintaining personal control of the YM machinery and programs which made the ruptures unavoidable. There have also been persistent reports of financial irregularities involving EAYM staff, as well as complaints that EAYM staff have denied Friends from the two new YMs access to the Quaker institutions--chiefly the Friends Bible Institute and two hospitals.

Some observers of the Kenyan scene have said that the succession problem is built into the situation by the cultural facts of African life, in which rule by elders is the traditional mode. In any event, it seems evident that Lung'aho is adept at staying in power, whatever the cost to the institutions or image of Friends there. It was through his maneuvering, with the unhappy connivance of FWCC and FUM officials, that the first breakaway group, in Elgon, was kept invisible among Friends for more than ten years. He has also

Quakers Hq. closed by DC

THE Kakamega acting District Commissioner, Mr. Emmanuel Omar, has closed the office of Thomas Lung'aho. Lung'aho is understood to have refused to hand over the office.

presented one roadblock after another to the efforts of the two other groups to form a Kenya Friends Council, a national association designed to take over the major institutions and run them for the benefit of all Kenyan Quakers.

The council idea is clearly a constructive one; it could provide the basis for an equitable relationship among the three groups. But it has taken the intervention of the state authorities to get negotiations for the Kenya Friends Council past Lung'aho's obstructionism. Now there are reports that agreement has been hammered out and the Council's formal approval by the government (a necessity in Kenya) is imminent. It would be pleasant to be able to believe these reports, but there has been a long string of overly optimistic forecasts about the impending resolution of these issues which have failed to come to pass (For an example of this, see Issue #9, which published one such false report.) Nothing less than an official public announcement of the Council's formation should be accepted as real evidence of the negotiations' success.

Last year American Quakers sent more than \$80,000 to Kenya for the support of Quaker projects there. This aid was mainly channeled through Friends United Meeting, whose missionaries laid the groundwork for EAYM beginning in 1901. However, since the retirement of Eldon Helm last summer, FUM has been without a fulltime Wider Ministries Secretary to oversee the programs and the grants.

Quakers tackle leadership row

The FUM Role: Almost starting From Scratch

At its recent boards and commissions meetings, a successor to Helm was announced: he is William Wagoner, now pastor of Marion First Friends Church in Marion, Indiana. Wagoner and his wife worked as missionaries in Jamaica under FUM's predecessor, Five Years Meeting, from 1958 to 1970; he later served on the Wider Ministries Commission and was acting secretary for several months some years ago when the incumbent was on sabbatical. He will begin work in Seventh Month.

In an interview, Wagoner agreed that he was coming to the position with little up-to-date information about the current issues and programs, or the situation and problems in Kenyan Quakerism. But he said he hoped to be able to build bridges between various sectors of the international FUM membership, as well as among its wide-ranging groups in this country.

He will need to learn fast, especially about Kenya. Dealing with the conflicts there has proven to be a snare for at least one of his predecessors, and was a constant challenge for Eldon Helm. Confronted with evidence of financial shenanigans in various EAYM operations, Helm laid down some strong conditions for continued FUM assistance, centering on financial accountability, development of budgets, and pressure on them to develop plans for freeing themselves from dependence on outside assistance. EAYM leaders protested against these conditions; and will such wise policies be continued under new FUM leadership?

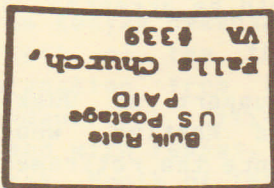
More Accurate Information--or the Same Old Stuff?

There are other questions that will soon press in on him: what about reporting to FUM's constituency on developments in Kenya? The reporting by his predecessors on these matters in *Quaker Life* was so consistently sanitized as to be virtually empty of useful information. Particularly in relation to the long-suffering Friends of Elgon YM, who spent a decade essentially isolated from the world Quaker community despite their leadership's frequent and eloquent appeals, the silence of FUM's official organ was deafening and culpable, piling insult onto injury. Can Wagoner break through this tradition and insist on giving the rank and file who provide the money FUM sends overseas an honest picture of the situation into which their contributions will be going?

William Wagoner is taking on a difficult job, and he has our best wishes and prayers. So, for that matter, do the Friends of EAYM, as they continue to struggle to find a way of making their leaders accountable. And so, too do those Kenyans who have worked so hard to create a Kenya Friends Council as a body which could become the basis for--not a united Kenyan Society of Friends--but at least, someday, a reasonably Friendly one.

*Inside: More Conflicts Among
Kenyan Quakers*

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THIS MONTH IN QUAKER HISTORY

On Third Month 2, 1955, the National Board of the AFSC approved for publication a 75-page booklet entitled *Speak Truth To Power*, in which a committee of 13 authors made an eloquent case for a religious pacifist response to the Cold War which was then near its height. Quaker historian Larry Ingle of Chattanooga Meeting in Tennessee, in an article on this booklet soon to be published in *The Christian Century*, compares this pamphlet with the many others he has researched and calls it "The most lucid pacifist tract ever published in the United states."

Certainly the roster of its authors was as stellar an assembly as the AFSC ever mustered, including such names as Clarence Pickett, A.J. Muste, Milton Mayer, Stephen Cary and Bayard Rustin, though Rustin's crucial role went uncredited because of recent public disclosure of his homosexuality. The analysis is clear-eyed and the writing retains great force; possibly most striking of all is the fact that their argument is essentially religious in nature, a characteristic rarely found in recent AFSC literature. These qualities are shown for instance in the closing response to those who say a world at peace "is not possible now because the communist cannot be trusted. The politics of eternity," they declare, "does not require that we trust him. They require us to love him and to trust God."

The cold war mindset that *Speak Truth To Power* challenged so well 30 years ago is being promoted all around us more loudly now than in many years, and Larry Ingle believes Friends and others should seek out and rediscover this essay as a classic Quaker resource for our time. This is an excellent idea. It is a shame that AFSC has not updated or at least reprinted it; we may need it now more than ever.

QUAKER CHUCKLE

Sometime during World War Two a government inspector toured a Civilian Public Service Camp, to check its water supply. Knowing that the Quaker inmates of the camp were an individualistic lot, the inspector asked many questions: "What do you do about possible contamination?" was one.

"Well, Friend," answered one man, "first we boil it."

"Fine," said the inspector. "Then what?"

"Well, Friend," said another, "then we filter it."

"Good," said the inspector. "Is that all?"

"No, Friend," piped up a third, "after that, just to be on the safe side, we drink beer."
