



A Friendly Letter

Issue Number Fifty-One

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Sixth Month, 1985

Dear Friend,

This issue sees the first fruits of my offer back in Issue #46 to consider articles written by other Friends: a piece by Margaret Springer of Waterloo, Ontario, telling of Canadian Friends, their special qualities and concerns, especially for better understanding by US Quakers. Friend Springer is an experienced writer, who has been published in several distinguished magazines. Her article spoke to my condition, gently recalling times when I was guilty of "continental chauvinism," lumping Canada and Canadians in with Americans as if they were all the same, which is not true. I hope other American Friends will find it useful. Your comments, as always, are invited, as are other article ideas.

Also harking back to earlier issues (#43 & #48), as we went to press on 6/12, there was still, unfortunately, no word from the White House on its slate of nominees for the first board of the US Institute of Peace, though the statutory deadline was 4/20. The president's silence on this item is becoming deafening; I hope you will let him know if it bothers you as much as it does me. Without a board, the Institute cannot begin to function. While we wait, though, there is a new book, *The Hundred Percent Challenge*, (Seven Locks Press, P.O. Box 72, Cabin John MD 20818, \$9.95 paper) which contains several valuable essays devoted to providing a platform for Institute planning and programs.

Better news comes from the fledgling George Fox College Center for Peace Learning, which we have likewise mentioned previously. It was permanently established last month by the College Board of Trustees. Director Lon Fendall is putting together a course list for next year, to include offerings on conflict resolution, war and conscience, the Biblical Basis of Peacemaking, and Introduction to Peace Research among others. At the rate things are moving, this evangelical Quaker center, with maybe two percent as much money, is going to be doing more than the entire US Peace Institute for the next few years! It also, in one leap, puts George Fox out in front of several other Quaker colleges, who ought to follow suit.

On another newsfront, in Akron, Ohio a conflict is brewing between tiny Akron Meeting, which gathers in the home of Shirley and Robert Parsons, and some neighbors, who don't want a church next door. The bothered neighbors went to the Zoning Board, which in Fourth Month told the Parsons they could not operate a place of worship in their home. This decision raises weighty questions of freedom of religion, and has been hotly debated in the letters columns of the *Akron Beacon Journal*. Recent word from the mayor's office, though, is that the city will not press the matter to a court fight; and following the publicity, attendance at Akron Meeting is up significantly. We'll stay tuned to this situation.

Yours in the Light,

Chuck Fager

Chuck Fager

CANADIAN QUAKERS: SLEEPING WITH A FRIENDLY ELEPHANT

By Margaret Springer

Pierre Trudeau, former Prime Minister of Canada, once remarked in a Washington speech: "Living next to you is in some ways like sleeping with an elephant. No matter how friendly and even-tempered the beast, one is affected by every twitch and grunt." Friends in Canada sometimes feel the same way about U.S. Quakers. We love you, we're enriched by the resources and programs we share, yet sometimes we feel ignored, misunderstood or forgotten.

Before we get to concerns, though, here is a bit of background: When American Friends came to Canada in the early 1800s, their separations came with them. But in 1955, at the insistence of young Friends who were already united, groups from the Conservative, FGC and Five Years Meeting (now FUM) strains joined in a single Canadian Yearly Meeting. This followed 25 years of slow movement towards unity. (A united Canadian Friends service Committee, or CFSC, had been operating since 1931.) Today CYM comprises fewer than 1200 members stretched across 4000 miles: 23 monthly meetings, 17 recognized worship groups, and 80 or so isolated Friends, scattered, except for a cluster in southern Ontario, from coast to coast. Although all our meetings are unprogrammed, they encompass plenty of theological diversity: fundamentalist, Christocentric, liberal, humanist and everything in between.

Looking South, For Fellowship and Support On Concerns

Lamentably, for cultural and linguistic reasons, there are almost no French-Canadian Quakers, and regional tensions among us tend to reflect the east-west differences of the wider Canadian society. Western Friends are less hung up on tradition, organization and discipline, and tend to be impatient and suspicious of Toronto-based bureaucracy. The constant challenge to CYM is to nourish spiritual roots and overcome problems of geography when we are too small in numbers to support more than one yearly meeting structure.

Naturally then we look south for extra Friendly contacts. There's an annual Labor Day gathering of Maine and New Brunswick Friends. Potsdam New York is a Preparative Meeting under Ottawa MM. Winnipeg and North Dakota Friends meet twice a year, and Friends in Vancouver and Victoria have informal links with Seattle and Bellingham. Some Canadian Friends also visit US yearly meetings, conference centers, ESR, and take part in gatherings and committee meetings of FGC, FUM, FWCC, Young Friends of North America (YFNA) or Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (FLGC). (We've had less contact with EFA and evangelical Friends.)

One benefit of all this is mutual support on common social issues. CYM peace work currently focuses on peace education, and on resisting Canada's increasing militarization and participation in Cruise missile testing and "star Wars" research. We support prison abolition, and continue to work on justice issues and on self-determination for Canada's native peoples, though activity on the latter is currently weak. Also, as the last stop on the underground/overground railroad, we struggle with the challenges of an influx of Central American refugees. During the Vietnam war, we ferried relief supplies meant for Vietnam which were illegal to send from the US, and this cooperation continues. Today the US government bans development aid to Vietnam, Kampuchea, Laos and Cuba, so CFSC has development projects in Kampuchea, while AFSC does relief work there. In 1984 CFSC was pleased to make a joint presentation with AFSC on its efforts to the FGC gathering in New York.

The "Invisible" American Quakers--A Call for Recognition

Despite these many links, Canadian Friends also feel many frustrations in our dealings with US Quakers. "American Friends are extremely sympathetic and understanding when we have the chance to tell them of our special condition in our different country to the north of theirs," Carl Stieren, CFSC Coordinator, told me. "If we don't have that chance, they make assumptions that everything is the same, mistakenly assuming that we do 'sanctuary' rather than legally accepting central American refugees, or assuming that all they have to do is 'drop' their Central American refugees at the border, or--worse yet--illegally bringing them to Friends House in Toronto without proper declaration of claiming refugee status at the border and without informing CFSC or the Quaker refugee Committee beforehand."

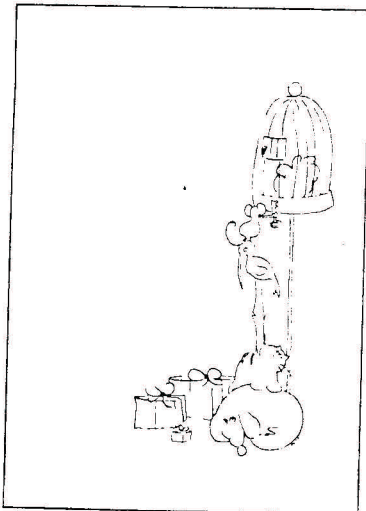
Amnesty International Cards

Amnesty International, the Nobel Peace Prize-winning human rights group, now offers a series of unique greeting cards, proceeds from which go to the support of its international work on behalf of prisoners of conscience. We are pleased to be able to offer these designs to our readers.

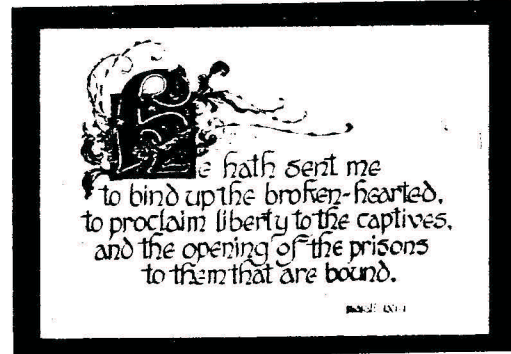


"We're here from Amnesty International."

"We're here from Amnesty International." Ed Fisher's cartoon (©1976) reprinted by permission of the artist and the Tribune Company Syndicate. No greeting.



Animals' Amnesty in action. Artist, Beverly Meiss. No greeting.



Full-color reproduction, plum red predominating, on "parchment" background. Artist, William Weckesser. No greeting.

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A NEW BOOK BY CHUCK FAGER

Selma 1965: The March That Changed The South, first published in 1974 by Charles Scribner's Sons, has now been republished by Beacon Press of Boston. Telling the dramatic story of the historic voting rights campaign led in Selma, Alabama by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the book has been widely praised by reviewers. Here are a few of their comments:

Charles Fager's Selma 1965 does more than any book I have read to bring that epoch back to life. The story of Selma is a rich, complex one and I Fager's carefully researched, precisely written book tells it with great clarity and power."

---Washington Post Book World

"One of the most notable studies of a social crisis to appear in recent years."

---The Christian Century

Through graphic scenes and dramatic narration, Selma 1965 provides a fascinating, unforgettable portrait of the most significant campaign of the Civil Rights Movement."

---Stephen B. Oates, author, Let the Trumpet Sound

Advance copies of the new, updated edition of Selma 1965 are now available, in a large-size quality paperback, 256 pages with introduction and 27 photographs. On orders from this flyer Chuck Fager will autograph copies according to your instructions. Use the coupon to order.

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Thus, if we have one special message for US Friends, it's on the issue of lack of recognition of Canadian identity. We are **NOT** another US state or another US yearly meeting! Our government and laws are different! It's important to note here that CYM belongs to both FGC and FUM. We join in committees and gatherings as full members, NOT visitors. We understand when the main focus of the various presentations is on the US situation, and we're repeatedly told how to influence "our" Senators on various important "national issues." But we feel left out, and we treasure that rare awareness, when it comes, that some of us are in a different situation. We have to keep saying this, in part because over 90% of Canadians live within 100 miles of the US, which has ten times our population and generates 12 times our GNP. We're saturated with American books, magazines, cars, TV shows, and Friendly mailings; no wonder we feel overwhelmed as Canadians and as Friends by that elephant to the south. But to repeat: FGC and FUM are not just US gatherings! For that matter, YFNA will be meeting internationally in Canada next year!

Are Canadian Friends really all that prickly? Perhaps it would help to share a few experiences that many of us have had: At an FGC gathering, someone notices our name tag and exclaims, "Oh, you came all the way from CANADA!" when we have often travelled less distance than they did to get there. Or take the last FUM Triennial in California, the opening newsletter of which joyfully welcomed Friends from Kenya, Jamaica, Cuba, Australia and Britain--with no mention of the Canadians present. "In this context," one Friend told me, "America means North American." Fair enough. But then, when we take out a subscription to a Quaker periodical such as *A Friendly Letter*, the price may be quoted as \$12 a year; \$20 foreign; are we now "foreign"? If so, does it cost THAT much more to send things to us? [Editor's note: Good point; \$16 is a fairer rate for Canada.] Let this be a plea to anyone sending out mailings which include Canadian addresses: Please be aware of us, and be clear!

The Cost of Discipleship--Across the Border

We face other challenges too, which you in the US cannot help us with, but which we hope you'll understand: highly unfavorable exchange rates (\$1.00 US costs \$1.38 Canadian), which put attendance at US gatherings almost out of reach and affects us directly and indirectly in many other ways), postal rate differentials (39 cents to the US, vs 34 cents within Canada), and high customs duties (I was recently charged \$9 on four US cassette tapes).

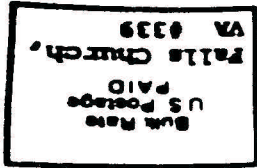
It's true that Canadian Friends don't always take as full a part as we might in program planning and committee work for wider Friends groups. Some of us, especially in the smaller meetings, have ignored the wider circle of Friends. But the major obstacle is cost. When 25% of CYM's total 1984 budget (\$23,000 out of \$94,000) was spent just on bringing Friends together for national committee meetings, not much is left for travel beyond our borders.

Do we have a unique contribution to make? Bruce Dienes of Wolfville, Nova Scotia Preparative Meeting says "US Friends seem generally obsessed with a sense of guilt in what their country is doing and a sense of powerlessness to stop it. I think that as Canadians we have a perspective from outside that can be helpful." Suggestions as to HOW we can be helpful fall into four categories:

Canadian Quakerdom's Special Resources

First, Canada's history has been relatively peaceful, and we don't live under the burden of having to be Number 1 in the world. We can remind our US Friends that bigger is not necessarily better, that struggles for power are divisive, and that it's worthwhile to listen to smaller and quieter voices. Second, there's a sense of ecumenism among us, that isn't so evident below the border. Muriel Bishop of Thousand Islands, Ontario MM says it this way: "American Friends have an investment in all their different kinds of worship that we don't. We seem to have been able to accept and integrate both the formal and informal views of Quakerism, and live with both without being so tied up in what's right and what isn't right." Third, we can share our experience of dealing with a relatively sparse population, new meetings and isolated Friends, which may be relevant in newer areas of US Quakerism. And finally, we like to think we have a sense of humour about life and its difficulties, which we can offer with love and support when US Friends feel overwhelmed. So as we in Canada try harder to make a significant contribution to the relationship, you in the US can try harder to be aware of us and of our particular needs. There are joys and frustrations in living with a Friendly elephant, but we know you won't roll over on us just yet!

INSIDE: CANADIAN FRIENDS--
THEIR MESSAGE TO US QUAKERS



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

The story goes that a British Quaker farmer named Daniel Wheeler, one day in the early nineteenth century, found one of his children playing with a jigsaw puzzle map of Russia, and holding a piece with the name of the capital, St. Petersburg, in his little hand. Wheeler said later he knew then he would go to that place. Sure enough, in 1817, a letter was sent around England asking if there were Friends willing to go to Russia and help the Czar Alexander. When Daniel Wheeler heard of it, he declared it was an "absolute command" for him to go, and take his family too. And on 6/26/1818 the little band set sail for Russia, accompanied by a large variety of livestock, seeds and farm implements provided by other Friends.

Once in Russia, Wheeler's main task and achievement was the draining of several large swamps around Petersburg (he declined, as a plain Friend, to speak the "St."), swamps which had defied all previous efforts at reclamation. During his work, Czar Alexander often visited him, and seemed very fond of both the Wheelers and their strange religion. By 1832, Wheeler felt his work in Russia was finished, and he now felt called to work as a missionary in the South Seas, half a world away. Before he got there, however, his wife and a daughter died and were buried in Russia, where their graves are still marked with a special plaque. Wheeler himself died on 6/13/1840, during yet another religious visit, to America.

TWO CANADIAN QUAKER CHUCKLES

#1. One very cold First Day Kitchener, Ontario Friends arrived at the old house they rented for meeting, and found there was no heat. Someone turned up some wood and quickly started a fire in the fireplace, while Friends settled into worship. But it was soon obvious they had made a mistake: the fireplace was strictly ornamental, and smoke billowed into the room. One Friend quietly rose and opened a window; others tiptoed into the kitchen and silently ferried pots of water to douse the flames. This was done without speaking a word, and then all settled back into worship. At the rise of meeting, they assessed the damage: smoke smudges and some peeling paint. "Never mind," said an older Friend, "it was marvelous. It's the first time I've ever seen his meeting so close to being on fire!"

#2. When CYM's 1984 draft epistle was first read, there was objection to the mention of one item which had been discussed in committee but not yet reported to the YM sessions. The Presiding Clerk thought for a moment, then smiled. "Friends," she said, "could we hold this over as an inspiration not yet experienced?"
