

A Friendly Letter

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Dear Friend,

Well, if thee is still here, then thee wasn't Raptured either. (The Rapture, by the way, is the snatching away of true Christians by God to meet Jesus in the sky; Cf. 1Thessalonians 4:13-18.) According to the book pictured above, the Big Event was supposed to occur between 9/11 and 9/13; the range of dates was in deference to Matthew 24:36, where Jesus states emphatically that "No man knows the day or the hour...." Taking this Scripture literally, the author concluded we could know the year, month and week, and made his guess accordingly. *The Washington Post* reported a couple of days later that the book's publisher had invested the profits in land in Tennessee. It is easy to chuckle at such predictions; but then, I remember only too well a front-page article of mine from Seventh Month, 1972, entitled—what else—"Why McGovern *Can't* Lose."

So if non-Raptureous life is to persist for awhile, then we had better get back to our regular task of looking at the news. And first up this month, there's bad tidings from Richmond, Indiana: Barbara Mays, who was picked here as Quaker of the Year (Issue #82) for her fine work as book editor at Friends United Press, has left there for a higher-paying position in the Richmond area. With her post vacant, there is talk that Friends United Meeting, which is under heavy budget pressure (as usual), may cut back the job slot from full to part-time to save money.

Let us hope FUM will find some way to avoid this, as there is at least a full-time workload that goes with the job, and a fulltime salary will be needed to attract a successor of Barbara's stature. Who that successor will be is another important question; Barbara was of solid pastoral midwestern Quaker stock, yet her outlook encompassed unprogrammed and liberal Friends' concerns as well. FUM will need to find someone of comparable breadth if the superior work Barbara began is to continue, and that won't be easy.

Another process that probably won't be easy is the impending labor negotiations at the American Friends Service Committee's headquarters in Philadelphia. As was also mentioned in AFL #82, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees began an organizing drive there last winter. The drive succeeded on 3/9/88, when a solid sixty percent of eligible employees (about 110 in all) voted for the union. AFSC management only recently announced selection of its negotiating team, headed by Executive Secretary Asia Bennett, and bargaining is expected to get underway in the next few months.

According to a union activist I interviewed, the employees' contract proposals will have more to do with personnel practices than wage increases; evidently the organizing drive was sparked by an accumulated sense that workers' concerns and problems were not taken seriously enough by the AFSC management and its Personnel Committee. The union will be aiming to replace a management-created Staff Concerns Committee which was supposed to represent staff in personnel policymaking, but which has come to be seen as toothless and ineffective.

The coming of a union to AFSC has evidently embarrassed its management, given AFSC's long support for various oppressed groups of workers, and Quakerism's historical record as a nursery for progressive and sensitive employers. The organizing drive, while rather genteel by union standards, was highlighted by a silent vigil outside the AFSC offices last Twelfth Month, which caught the attention of Philadelphia newspapers.

Yours in the Light,

Chuck Fager

Chuck Fager

I admit it, I'm normally about as partisan as you get, and my slant, in case regular readers haven't guessed, is Democratic. Even so, especially over the last ten years, I have found myself thinking nervously that there is one issue that could someday make me a Republican. It is not welfare, not crime, communism or Jesse Jackson.

It is trade. Free trade, to be more precise. Republicans are more likely to be for it than my own crowd. And the older I get, the more important this matter seems.

This sentiment is not based on immediate self interest (my current international business consists of about 25 copies of this Letter sent to foreign subscribers); it is more related to reflections on the Quaker Peace Testimony and the key question it raises. Twenty-some years ago, when I first came among Friends, the key question arising from the Quaker Peace Testimony was, How do you stop war (or more accurately, *The War*). Now I look more to the flip side of that, which is, How do you start or promote peace? What context for international relations will make the prevention of wars most likely?

SEEKING THE BLESSING

This seems to be the more fundamental aspect of the testimony, not just historically, but religiously as well. After all, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9), and the meaning is unmistakable: As Abbie Hoffman used to say of YIPPIE revolutionaries, their first duty is to get away with it; and Jesus' blessing is for those who actually get results, who *make* peace. And how do you do that, especially in the broadest context of international life? Or can you? While I don't regret the antiwar focus of the 1960s, anymore than

one would regret a fixation with water buckets when one's house is on fire; but once a particular blaze is out, one's attention turns to larger questions of fire prevention.

And turning to war prevention, despite its obvious complexity, this issue has kept popping up for me. It is an obscure issue; if one surveyed the top ten peace concerns among American Friends today, I doubt trade would make the list. (For that matter, although it involves major public policies, it has not to my knowledge been mentioned in the presidential campaign. To be sure, the absence of such an abstract issue from a campaign thus far aimed largely below the belt is not surprising.)

A LINK BROKEN

Yet there was a time when free trade, peace and Quakerism seemed inextricably linked. Indeed, this connection was central to the career of one of the greatest Friends of the last 150 years, the British Quaker parliamentarian John Bright. Bright was firmly convinced, as he wrote in 1876, that "when the hindrance to trade created by hostile tariffs is removed, I think the time will have come when the intelligence and Christian feeling and the true interests of nations will overcome the motives and passions which lead to war."

His political comrade-in-arms John Cobden put it more vividly, arguing that when free trade became universal, "The best effect of all will be that the whole civilized world will become *Quakers* in the practice of peace and mutual forbearance." (His italics.)

This is rhetorical hyperbole, of course, but the underlying point is clear: If nations can trade freely, mutual prosperity and interdependence will be promoted, and this will provide a crucial,

perhaps decisive restraint on the forces of conflict which lead to war. It does not guarantee peace, but it nurtures a context favorable to the peaceful resolution of conflict. Conversely, when trade is inhibited in a selfish and discriminatory manner, this adds to and exacerbates all the other forces of social conflict.

Some historians have pooh-poohed the idea of trade as a way to peace, and pointed to the fact that there was lots of trade among various European nations before World War One as evidence that it does not work. But on the other hand, many historians point to the Smoot-Hawley tariffs of the early 1930s as a root cause of World War Two. Congress imposed these tariffs to shelter U.S. companies and their workers from foreign competition during the Great Depression by keeping out imports.

MAKING THINGS WORSE FOR EVERYONE

But the plan backfired: other countries retaliated, and the overall effect was to deepen and prolong the Depression, by inhibiting the growth of trade among them which was needed to overcome it. And the outcome of social strife fed by the resulting economic distress in countries like Germany and Japan was calamitous for all, to say the least.

Furthermore, the effects of such protection on the sheltered industries is not good, especially over the long haul. I saw this up close as a congressional staffer assigned to study the longstanding U.S. policy of protecting domestic shipyards, ostensibly to preserve them as a base for national security purposes. This policy had led to the creation of an ever more costly array of subsidies, which in turn had fed widespread corruption in the industry, its unions and among associated politicians; and

even at that, it had failed to achieve its goal, because U.S. shipyards kept going belly-up. This close study showed me how important trade policy is, and firmed my anti-protectionist views.

It also suggested that, while trade policies are certainly no panacea, their impact on peacemaking is nonetheless very significant. Thus, they ought to be on the priority list of those, like Friends, whose tradition mandates a preoccupation with peacemaking.

Alas, it is not so—at least not in the United States. Step over our northern border, however, and the atmosphere is drastically different: Canadians also face a national election soon, and free trade will be, not an issue but THE issue. That's because the Canadian and U.S. governments last December signed off on the most important bilateral free trade agreement in the history of either nation.

CANADIAN FRIENDS: ON THE CASE

The U.S.-Canada FTA (as it is called) has been front-page news in Canada all year; the debate is still raging, and the fate of the present government will turn on what Canadian voters ultimately decide about it. (A U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement was negotiated once before, in 1911; but when it was put to the electorate, the government lost and the agreement was killed.)

Moreover, Canadian Quakers are not sitting silently on the sidelines of this debate. The Canadian Friends Service Committee has come out strongly and publicly—*against* the free trade agreement, notwithstanding John Bright's example. (The American Friends Service Committee, on the other hand, has taken no position on it.)

The Canadian Friends Service Committee made several points against the FTA in testimony at an Ontario hearing last Eleventh Month. As explained to me by Coordinator Elaine Bishop, CFSC argued that "The

'free trade' agreement will lock us even more into the huge U.S. war economy, increasing ever more rapidly the militarization of the Canadian economy."

CFSC also asserted that the FTA would force a lowering of environmental standards, threaten Canada's extensive publicly-funded social and health programs, involve it in unjust U.S. trading relationships with poor countries, and perhaps most important, erode Canadian sovereignty, sap its control over its own national destiny by tying Canada ever more tightly to the economy and culture of its vastly larger neighbor.

ON THE OTHER HAND—JOBS

On the surface at least, that's only one item of four about war and peace. But look closer: Sovereignty, environmental quality, social and cultural identity—these are also fertile seedbeds of serious international conflict. If the FTA was really that bad, and Canada were a more equal military power, there would be good reason for worry.

But the FTA's Canadian advocates also have potent arguments: In sum, they echo John Bright, and contend that the FTA will enable both countries to substantially expand their trade. This will mean more wealth and more jobs for both. They note that the FTA permits Canada to continue policies of favored treatment for its "cultural industries" such as publishing, films and television, to maintain its national identity. And underlying all this is the belief that more wealth and jobs will increase "domestic tranquillity".

With all due respect to the CFSC, my own opinion tilts the other way, in support of the FTA. This view is similar to that of another Canadian Friend, Jane Zavitz of Pickering College, who said in a thoughtful letter that in her view "The free trade idea in the long run and on the world economic scene is important and

valid." But she agreed that "for the short term there will be many businesses disrupted which ran under 'protection'....The free trade concept is needed and the longer we wait the greater the shifts may be."

From this perspective, such problems as the militarization of Canada's economy via U.S. war firms is already an important trend, and seems to me a separate issue. And while increased employment and income may lead to more pollution, it can also be argued that a more prosperous society will be more able and willing to clean up pollution.

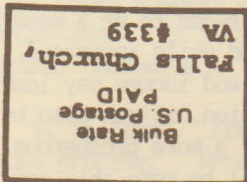
Paradoxically, it is the non-economic issue of preserving a Canadian national identity which seems to me to carry the most weight against the FTA. U.S. culture already casts a long shadow over Canada, and this would likely increase along with mutual trade. This effect is not taken into account by free trade theory; economists generally prefer to let cultures fend for themselves.

COUNTING ALL THE COSTS

But if the FTA dies, it will probably be because most Canadians decide that the potential economic benefits are not worth the likely cultural costs. This would be a decision which Quakers, recalling the example of John Woolman, ought to empathize with, even if, like me, they would regret it.

The U.S.-Canada FTA is but the largest and most immediate example of trade policy as a shaper of international events; other cases, such as changes in the European Economic Community, are looming on the horizon. All of these may have significant impact, for better or worse, on the prospects for long-term peace. Can U.S. Friends remain as ignorant of them as we are and hope to qualify for the blessing promised as the fruit of our Testimony faithfully borne? I don't think so.

INSIDE: IS THIS A FORGOTTEN
QUAKER PEACE WITNESS?



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

Poor Charles II. With all the cares of state, when was a king supposed to get any rest, any recreation? In Tenth Month, 1662, after less than two years on the throne of England, Charles already had a full plate: foreign maneuvering and threats of war, financial problems, and recurring plots aimed at taking his crown away and sending him either back to the penurious exile in which he had grown up, or worse, to the block where his father, Charles I, had ended his life in 1649. To be sure, there were his mistresses, a growing list of them; but a prince also needed fresh air, and a chance to walk in the open. This more wholesome recreation he sought in a park near his court.

But even here there was to be no relief. From behind a tree sprang a woman, old but still spry, jabbering at him as he walked. She shoved letters in his hand, saying something about bringing the Light of Christ to New England and—the accompanying courtiers were left gasping—refused even to kneel before his royal highness. Charles ignored the woman and her letters. But

she kept appearing. She even turned up at Whitehall dressed in sackcloth and covered with ashes, and was dragged away preaching; disgusting.

Eventually, wearied by her persistence, the king listened. She was Elizabeth Hooton, one of those fanatic Quakers, and she wanted royal permission to go to New England. She had been there twice before, and been jailed and flogged repeatedly for her trouble, and banished. She needed a letter from the king to return.

Well, now, she and her Quakers were indeed obnoxious, but the request did have a certain appeal; after all, Boston was far away, and she would be gone a long time. Why not let her harass Boston's haughty Puritan magistrates for awhile?

And so Elizabeth Hooton, one of the first converts made by George Fox, received the royal permission to return to Boston yet again, which she did in early 1663. There, for her witness, she was again jailed, and flogged, and banished.

QUAKER CHUCKLES

If the Red Shoe Fits...

Friend Anthony Manousos, who worked with Soviet editors on the forthcoming Quaker-inspired book of stories about life in the US and USSR, reports that after one lengthy, laborious editorial session, a Russian editor turned to him and said, "You know, I think you Quakers would make good Communists, the way you love to go to meetings."

Still Another Shoe...

Another Friend, asked for a summary description of the many varieties of American Quakers, answered simply, "Well, in several yearly meetings, the Liberal Friends are in control, in some the Conservative Friends are in control, in others the Evangelical Friends are in control... and then there are some that are just out of control."