

**I'M NOT MAKING THIS UP, HONEST:** A recent Roper poll taken for an evangelical group turned up some unexpected data about the effects of "born again" religious experiences: The survey found that *after* people were born again, they were *more likely* to use drugs, be unfaithful or drive drunk than they were before their "conversions". It was reported in *National & International Religion Report*, 10/8/90.

# A Friendly Letter

ISSUE NUMBER 116

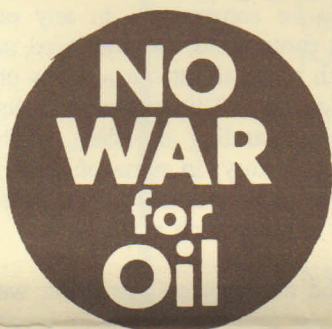
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TWELFTH MONTH, 1990

Dear Friend,

Rarely have I received a more appealing rejection letter than the one from Vincent Frazzetta of Connecticut explaining why he was *not* renewing his subscription: *"The reason is simple. There is so much controversy in my world...I need something restful. My religion is restful. The fact that this group of Quakers thinks this, and that group thinks that, is just more than I can handle. My Meeting (New Haven CT) is restful. When it isn't I will leave. Change it? No. I'm already trying to change the rest of the world. I need a rest."*

I sympathize with Frazzetta a lot. I, too, seek (and often find) rest in meeting. For me, the larger context explored in these pages, including the conflicts, deepens that experience of worship; but there is no doubt that for others it is different, and I respect that. May Friend Frazzetta find rest in his meeting, and change his world.



Speaking of conflicts, though, how close has the impending Gulf War come to you? Here are a couple of ways it has touched me: At the post office where I work, we frequently handle big containers full of packages headed for GIs in Operation Desert Shield. Because of the

routing, most come from West Virginia; and I have been struck by the return addresses: The vast majority are towns I never heard of, places like Newburg, Cowen, Burton, Rowlesburg and Buckhannon--tiny hamlets off the backroads of one of the poorest, most rural states in the nation. That's where the GIs on the line are coming from. But not only from there: One of my supervisors is a black woman, whose young daughter, uncertain about her future and seeking job training, joined the army. Now she is awaiting orders to Saudi Arabia, and her mother is a wreck. She recalls, as her daughter does not, the damage our last big foreign war did to another relative. So she watches, and waits, and worries.

As the article inside spells out, I fear my supervisor does have much to worry about. But maybe it is not too

late to stop the war; anyway, it's worth a try. To that end, here's something for nothing--well almost: The first round of anti-Oil war buttons is appearing, and we're ready to do our part in spreading the sentiment. So while my supply of the one shown above lasts, you can get one at no charge. Just send me a self-addressed stamped envelope, and I'll get it out to you. And then let's hope it isn't outdated by the time it arrives.

On another front, that of the "army" of homeless in our own cities, news reports tell of their numbers increasing as winter and a recession come on apace. But from Philadelphia there's a bit of better news that is relevant, if small: AFL #102 described how two homeless men spent several months encamped on the front porch of the Central Philadelphia Meetinghouse at Friends Center, to the discomfort of many Friends and neighbors, and to the increasing interest of the city's media.

After weeks of negotiations and committee meetings, the two men, Vincent Thompson and Jealous T. Street, were finally evicted from their squatters' quarters by a nonviolent but determined group of Friends.

End of story? For Jealous T. Street, the more outspoken and truculent of the two, perhaps so; he has been seen only rarely since then, still homeless. But for Vincent, there is a hopeful sequel: recently he has been working with some regularity in the printshop of the American Friends Service Committee at Friends Center; and earlier this fall, after some counselling and with help from Friends, he moved off the street and into his own quarters, for the first time in several years. So welcome home, Vincent, and good luck.

Yours in the Light,

*Chuck Fager*

Chuck Fager

PS. There is still time to include *A Friendly Letter* on your holiday list. It makes an economical, unique gift for Quakerly readers, and I'll send out an announcement as soon as I get your order. A gift subscription flyer is enclosed in this issue; I hope you'll return it soon.



## A SELECTIVE SERVICE: CALLING UP THE QUAKER RESERVES

It's time for Quakers to prepare for war. This is not the same as preparing to prevent war. That's been the focus of peace activity since the invasion of Kuwait in Eighth Month. Preventing war is certainly preferable, and I hope these efforts succeed. But as this is written, the odds of a major Persian Gulf war seem very high. So it's worth reviewing some of the implications a war will have for a body with the history and convictions of the Society of Friends.

Take, for starters, the problems of antiwar protest. One old hassle is already back: The secular peace movement has resumed its habit of internal squabbles. There are, in fact, two distinct, not to say competitive umbrella alliances working against a Gulf War. There's the Coalition to Stop U.S. Intervention In The Middle East (36 E. 12th St., 6th Fl., NY 10003; 212-254-2295); and then there's the National Campaign for Peace In The Middle East (P.O. Box 3009, Church St. Stn., NYC 10008; 212-727-3069.)

### THE SAME OLD SAD SONG

Why are there two? The dividing line appears to be this: The Coalition condemns only the U.S. military buildup; it has steadfastly declined to criticize Saddam Hussein's takeover of Kuwait. Perhaps this is because its endorsers list is crowded with left-wing political groups, including the Communist, Socialist Workers, and Workers World Parties (Yes, Virginia, they still exist, though what they believe in these days--besides anti-Americanism--is beyond me). The Campaign, on the other hand, whose endorsers include such traditional pacifist groups as the War Resisters League and the American Friends Service Committee, has condemned **both** Hussein and the U.S. buildup.

If you, too, recall the anti-Vietnam war movement's endless internecine quarrels, you may also greet this news with a groan and a murmur of "*Do I need this aggravation?*" To which the reluctant answer has to be: *I'm afraid so.* That's because with war comes a new, unsought series of

occasions requiring careful and informed discernment. This despite the fact that Friends have more than enough to be well-informed and discerning about as it is.

As meetings around the country receive insistent calls for support and action from these groups (as we went to press, they were quarreling over two dates in First Month for a national march), most will want to respond favorably. Yet uninformed, reflexive approval could put us in company with groups and perspectives that have little in common with our Testimonies, not only of Peace but of truthfulness as well. How involved should Friends become with secular antiwar protests that include groups, perspectives and demands that may depart fundamentally from those underlying a Quaker witness? Should we concentrate instead on developing distinctive Quaker peace actions? How do we do that? Can we stay "pure" and still have any political relevance?

### IF HE'S RIGHT, WHO'S RIGHT?

These concerns are made even more complicated today because amazingly, some of the most eloquent and principled denunciations of the U.S. buildup have come from, of all places, the far-right, commentators such as columnist Pat Buchanan. How do we recognize and encourage these voices without becoming compromised by their other positions, with many of which we may differ strongly?

None of these are new questions, and there are no simple textbook answers. But if the war lasts for more than a few weeks, as it easily could, we will need to wrestle with them anew.

A war will bring many more challenges as well. Here are some of them, grouped according to context:

### INTERNATIONAL CONCERNS

- Aid to victims of the war. These already number in the hundreds of thousands, and will swell to millions once combat breaks out. Many groups are collecting aid; more will be needed.

- Appeals to the combatants to limit hostilities, and to end them as soon as possible. It will be difficult to get such appeals through to Saddam Hussein from "behind enemy lines"; but perhaps not so very much harder than to get them past the White House fence. Yet such a dual focus is very important, in my view, especially for Friends. To treat one side as the locus of all the war's evil is not only biased and unQuakerly; it seems to me obviously inaccurate as well.

- Preparation to repair the war damage. Combat will end eventually. Damage will be great, and more than physical. Who will help rebuild, re-knit the international connections? This will demand imagination and enterprise as well as funds and labor: I recall Louisa Alger, a distinguished Friend from Cambridge (Mass.) Meeting, who organized the knitting of 50,000 children's sweaters to send to Vietnam after that war. Can we begin thinking and planning beyond this next one?

### RE-OPENING PANDORA'S BOX

- To be constructive in any of these first three areas, we will need to learn much more about the realities of the Middle East. This especially calls for an understanding of Islam, Arab culture and history, in none of which Americans, including most Friends, have previously shown much real interest.

- And not least on this front, we will need to monitor and help resist pressures for international militarization that a Gulf War is sure to promote. Already the Japanese parliament narrowly defeated a bill to lift their constitution's ban on sending Japanese troops abroad, so forces could go to the Gulf. Similar calls have been heard for German troops to be sent. Especially if the war goes badly, these proposals will be revived. The Japanese bill reportedly unnerved other East Asian governments; it ought to be equally unnerving to anyone else who can remember World War Two.

On the domestic side, there is likewise a full plate:

- Countering the whipping up of war fever. The editorial columns of



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Send to: *A Friendly Letter*, P.O. Box 1361, Falls Church VA 22041



**THIS HOLIDAY SEASON  
DON'T FORGET--**

**These groups need your support,  
Especially with a Gulf War on the horizon.**

**All but one are tax-deductible.**

**1. The Friends Committee on National Legislation  
(Lobbying to prevent or shorten a Gulf war)  
202 C. Street NE  
Washington, DC 20002  
(This group is NOT tax-deductible)**

**2. The War Resisters League  
339 Lafayette St.  
New York, NY 10012  
(Works with military COs)**

**3. CCCO (The Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors)  
2208 South St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19146  
(Counselling COs and non-registrants)**

**4. NISBCO The National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors)  
(Monitoring Selective Service, lobbying, counselling COs)  
1601 Connecticut Ave. NW  
Washington DC 20009**

**5. American Friends Service Committee, Gulf Assistance Fund  
(War relief, refugee aid)  
15th & Cherry Sts.  
Philadelphia, PA 19102**



many newspapers and elite opinion journals resound with drumbeat demands for a western  *jihad*  against Saddam Hussein, portrayed as worse than Hitler. This will undoubtedly escalate once fighting begins and rationalizations are needed for the stream of body bags. Can we stand and speak against this propaganda?

- Exposing and avoiding the lies put out by the combatant governments, of which there have already been plenty. Exposing lies is partly a form of protest; but more important, we need to do it so our witness can be based on truth as much as possible, and not simply a reaction to propaganda barrages from one side or another.

#### TO BE ALL THAT THEY CAN BE??

- Defending the rights of conscience, especially for conscientious objectors, should be of particular concern to us. It will be easy to let this slide, since no draft is yet putting our own youth at risk. But groups like the War Resisters League, the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors, and The National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors, all tell the same story: their phones are ringing off the hook, mainly with calls from GIs and reservists wanting CO information or help with hardship claims; inquiries about Selective Service nonregistration are also increasing. These groups all need money, and volunteer counsellors. Remember Vietnam draft counselling, which went on in scores of meetinghouses around the country in the Vietnam years? Time for another round.

- Fighting repression of dissent. Civilian protesters are as yet undisturbed. But the U.S. military announced late last month that GIs wishing to file as COs must wait **after** they are sent to Saudi Arabia to do so--5000 miles away from outside information, sympathetic ears and legal counsel. When combat and casualties start, official denunciations of opposition to the war is almost certain to begin. Given the Reagan-Bush proclivity for covert operations, this could well be aided by resurrecting the COINTELPRO program of covert harassment of activists by government agents. Even during the '80s, there

was a long series of suspicious, unsolved break-ins at the offices of groups challenging the administration's Central American policies. Also, as demonstrations heat up, there are sure to be Quakers facing prison terms, fines and other "sufferings," needing help.

- Preparing to fight a return to the draft. The White House says it has no plans to revive conscription. But other influential figures have pointed out that the scope of the U.S. military role is straining the available force levels. The heavily nonwhite and mainly underprivileged makeup of the forces in the Gulf is becoming a growing embarrassment to the Pentagon; and--no surprise--recruiting has suddenly fallen sharply below quotas for what are called "potential combat troops".

#### TAFT SAID THE DRAFT WAS DAFT

The draft is an issue where the right-wing antiwar voices could be particularly helpful, if we can learn how to hear them. (There's a key lesson in this for unprogrammed Friends, overwhelmingly liberal Democrat in our political views, to recall, or learn: It was Cold War *liberals* whose votes enacted the peacetime draft after World War Two, against old-style Republican conservatives like Robert Taft who fiercely opposed it. [Today, Jesse Jackson supports a return to the draft.] Some older evangelical Friends, who were conservative before that meant Jerry Falwell and Jesse Helms, may be able to help us here.)

- Facing the growth of Anti-Arab racism, another likely byproduct of war fever. Islam is now a major American religious community, and that still makes many people uneasy. Quakers stood with blacks in their struggle; will we be prepared to stand with American Arabs and Muslims?

Finally, within the circle of the Society of Friends:

This crisis makes painfully obvious the link between our Testimonies of Peace and Simplicity. Was John Woolman's insight about seeking the roots of war in our possessions ever more vividly confirmed than in the face

of a war over the oil that fuels America's wanton consumerism? This was always implicitly true; now it's an imperative: Plain living is also peace activism.

But if this list of "shoulds", "oughts", "needs", and "musts," (terms I prefer to avoid) sounds like a sure-fire recipe for overcommitment, conflict, guilt and burnout, you heard it right. That's part of the domestic cost of war, and not even the worst part. The worst will come as the war returns home: in families blasted by death and injuries; the spreading ripples of suppressed guilt and rage among brutalized veterans, which will increase as they see through the deceitfulness of official rationalizations for their sacrifice.

American culture is still paying a heavy social cost for our latest wars, in Vietnam and Central America. You've heard the litany often enough from the religious right: crime, drugs, moral and family breakdown and abuse, citizen cynicism and apathy. Such jeremiads ring false and hypocritical in my ears as they leap to blame liberal secular humanists, while refusing to see--all around them--the corrosive effects of filthy, dishonest wars, and the massive preparations for future wars.

#### THE HARVEST IS RIPENING, ALAS

Yet God is not mocked; America reaps what it has sown. Now we are planting a deadly new bumper crop; and Friends will not be spared our portion of its bitter harvest.

Our ability to bear this, as well as the burden of our Peace witness, does not call for anything special or exotic, only more of the basics of Quaker religious life: More worship, more prayer, more attention to our meeting communities. Does this sound like apolitical self-absorption in a time of crisis? It is not. If our long experience of bearing a Peace Witness teaches anything, this is the lesson: If we are not rooted in the Spirit and upheld by our community, we are lost.

*"If you want peace, say the generals, "prepare for war." If Friends want a meaningful Peace Testimony in 1991, we need to prepare for war too. And the time to start preparing is now.*



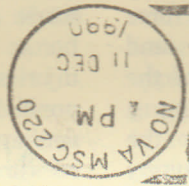
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INSIDE: TIME TO PREPARE FOR WAR

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## THIS MONTH IN QUAKER HISTORY

As he flew north from Alabama on 12/28/1957, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was still able to enjoy the excitement of his new notoriety: The Montgomery Bus Boycott which made him famous had only recently been won, and speaking invitations, while numerous, were still more of an honor than a burden. Landing in Baltimore, he was scheduled to preach to a Negro men's fraternity. He planned to blast this conclave of the black bourgeoisie for preferring the pleasures of middle class living over the rigors of the struggle for racial justice.

At the airport, King and his wife were met by Bayard Rustin, the black Friend, former communist and World War Two draft resister who had already proven himself to have one of the keenest strategic minds in the movement. (See AFL#94 for an example.) Now, as he drove with King into Baltimore from the airport, Rustin told him that he had been working on some ideas for ways to extend the struggle beyond Montgomery.

After King's speech--which was, by the way, very well received--Rustin rode with him to Washington, and laid out his ideas on the way. Most important was a plan to call a Southern Leadership Conference on Transportation, to make plans for protests against

segregation on buses and in other public facilities throughout the region. King liked the idea.

But that wasn't all. With Rustin that night were three white activists: Harris and Clare Wofford, from Alabama, and a New Yorker named Stanley Levison. The Woffords had spent several years in India studying Gandhian nonviolence, and they wanted King, as did Rustin, to visit there and learn Gandhian philosophy and techniques firsthand. Levison was a recovering leftist real estate operator who had helped Rustin raise money to support victims of segregationist violence in the South.

By the time the group arrived in the Capitol city, the next steps in King's campaign were set: He would seek some foundation support for a trip to India, and what became the Southern Negro Leaders Conference on Transportation and Nonviolent Integration was set for Atlanta in two weeks.

Rustin's idea became the germ of King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference; his trip to India, in early 1958, was shepherded by another Friend, Jim Bristol; and Rustin's colleague Stanley Levison became King's closest white friend and adviser until King's death in 1968.

## QUAKER CHUCKLE

Friend Philip Neal of Asheville Meeting in North Carolina has long enjoyed cordial relations with the local Unitarian church, working with them on peace actions and even addressing the congregation on Quaker faith and practice. One year he was moved to attend their Christmas Eve service.

Upon entering, each participant received a candle. At the end of the service the leaders lit the candles of those sitting on the aisles, who in turn lit the next candle down the row until the whole room was aglow. But

when Phil's neighbor tried to pass the flame to him, nothing happened! After several tries, with no luck, the Unitarian reached across him and lit the next candle.

As he walked out into the entryway's brighter lamps, Phil discovered his candle had no wick. Her complained with mock indignation: "In this entire hall, one candle with no wick, and you give it to a visitor!"

"But Phil," came the reply, "we thought you had the Inner Light."

--Based on a true story