



**SIGNS OF THE TIMES:** A senior Gulf official--"You think I want to send my teenage son to die for Kuwait?" He chuckles and adds, "We have our white slaves from America to do that." A Saudi teacher--"The American soldiers are a new kind of foreign worker here. We have Pakistanis driving taxis and now we have Americans defending us."

--Quotes from the *Wall Street Journal*, 1/7/91

# A Friendly Letter

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FIRST MONTH, 1991

Dear Friend,

I wish it was different, but if there is any good news to report this month, I don't have it. Like many of you, I have been preoccupied (obsessed is a more accurate word) with the countdown to war that, when this reaches you, may have crashed bloodily through zero-hour.

About the only up-side to this grim drama is an item the truth of which I can verify: It is substantially slowing down the usual First Month flow of junk mail into your mailbox. Direct Marketeers believe, rightly, I think, that Americans will be glued to the tube until the Gulf confrontation reaches its culmination, ignoring even the cleverest, brightest envelopes.

So enjoy it while you can, but there's a kicker here too: it means the Postal Service has more need for the big postal rate increase coming up in a few weeks. At the moment, I think *A Friendly Letter* can absorb this hefty (25%) rise in mailing costs without raising the subscription price yet; but the trend is unmistakable.

A similar good news-bad news cast colors the latest splash of national publicity for Quakers. The last time Friends made it onto the pages of the *Washington Post* and other national papers, it was for taking on the Quaker Oats Company over their pugilistic Popeye the "Quaker Man". That was good press in my opinion, a battle worth fighting and a battle we won.

Well, we made the *Post* again on 1/5/91, with a wire service story sent 'round the country. But this time, its service to the Reputation of Truth was more dubious: **Lesbian Pastor Fired**, was the headline, and the first sentence stated that "*Members of a Quaker congregation in Iowa have decided to fire their lesbian pastor under pressure from state denominational officials who say that the practice of homosexuality is a sin.*" The piece went to identify the church in question as West Branch Friends, and the pastor getting the boot as "the Rev." M. Elisabet Hannon. (It turns out she's actually a Presbyterian, hence the title.)

Actually, I had already heard of this incident and was planning to report it here, but was scooped, not only by the *Post* but also by the *Newsletter* of the Friends For

Lesbian and Gay Concerns, not to mention the Des Moines *Register*, Iowa's dominant paper.

In one sense there's really no news here: Iowa YM adopted a strongly anti-homosexual minute back in 1977, in the wake of the Anita Bryant hysteria; and giving the bum's rush to pastors that get out of line, even against the wishes of local meetings, is a recurrent phenomenon among the pastoral and evangelical yearly meetings.

On the other hand, in most cases, such pastors have torn their churches apart, like the one we reported on in Western YM back in AFLs #20 and #50. Here, all reports indicate that pastor Hannon had been very good at West Branch, bringing it back from the brink of extinction with fine biblical preaching and effective interpersonal work. An Iowa YM official was quoted as admitting to her, "*This would be easier if you weren't doing a good job.*"

Further, Hannon was only hired through Sixth Month of this year anyway, and one wonders why she couldn't have been let be til then and departed quietly. West Branch proposed just such a course. But sadly, here again concerned Friends ran up against a mentality of fear and intolerance: Once "out," Hannon had to go, and quick. YM officials were determined to enforce an anti-gay posture evidently at whatever cost. And the cost was high: locally, in the demoralization of a healing church, and nationally, in the scandalous public depiction of Friends as a body where such bullying of local meetings goes on apparently unchecked.

The Iowa action was supposedly based on biblical mandates. But I wonder whether Iowa Bibles have been purged of such verses as Matthew 7:16f and 9:13: "*By their fruits you shall know them...every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit*", and "*Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice....'*"

Yours in the Light,

*Chuck Fager*

Chuck Fager

## I READ THE NEWS TODAY, OH LORD....

I read a lot of newspapers and magazines. Besides four daily papers, here's a small pile of weeklies, plus many other magazines and journals. The periodicals range from left to right and from local to international, with a heavy emphasis on religion, both mainstream and off the wall. It's all interesting, from *The Economist's* free market polemics to the apocalyptic warnings in the *Crying In the Wilderness Newsletter*; even the irregular blurb from out west explaining in detail why Pope John Paul II is an impostor and the Vatican's throne has really been vacant for the past twenty years.

With so much information, one might think I could manage to stay tolerably well-informed. Yet despite all this reading, I still missed the first major new trauma waiting for me with the new year. Maybe it's the heavy competition in the disaster department these days, which is our theme this month; in any case, for me 1991 started just before Christmas, when a holiday visitor handed me a clipping from the *Boston Globe* and asked, "Do you know about this?"

### INTRODUCING: BIG BROTHER

I glanced at it. The headline read, "Clerk sues over his right to write". It was about one of my colleagues in the U.S. Postal Service who writes articles and books on labor union topics on the side. It said he was suing Uncle Sam over a new federal ethics law that was to take effect on New Years Day. The law, according to the article, makes it illegal for any federal employee to speak, write or make public appearances for pay. Period. The penalty was a fine, the amount of the payment, or \$10,000, whichever is *greater*.

I read the thing over a couple of times, confused and disbelieving. "There must be some mistake," I told my visitor. "Or this is some kind of a joke."

Wrong. Say hello to the Ethics Reform Act, which on the face of it makes what I am doing now, writing this text you are reading, Friend, illegal. It also meant I couldn't visit the Friends

Meeting and the Quaker college that have asked me to speak, and offered small honoraria for the effort.

Happy new year? That's your opinion. Nineteen Ninety One has been all downhill from there for me.

There followed several days of panic, looking for confirmation of this news; I didn't have to look far. The entire front page of *Federal Times's* last issue in Twelfth Month was devoted to articles about it, all of which made it even clearer that I did indeed have a problem. An ACLU lawyer said the law was originally aimed at members of Congress and top-level civil servants, to inhibit their payola from special interests via such honoraria. A laudable purpose; but the drafting was sloppy, and the net proved to be vastly broader: it covers everybody connected with the feds, no matter how lowly, except military enlisted personnel.

What to do? Was this an occasion for civil disobedience, for defiantly throwing myself on the federal oppressors' swords? The thought was appealing, but also daunting: my reckless radical days were long ago; and I don't have \$10,000 plus legal fees to play Quixote with.

### BUT THEN, IT COULD BE VERSE

There were options, of a sort: I could distribute this *Letter* for free. Or publish it in rhyme (writing poetry for pay is exempted from the ban, as is fiction, which some critics have suggested much of these pages are in any case). But my pocket is not deep, my lines don't always scan, and there is much here that is all-too factual.

In the end, I got a copy of the law and associated regulations, then convened an ad hoc clearness committee from my meeting, which included a lawyer and a canny real estate professional. After some meditation on key texts, including Matthew 10:16 ("therefore be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves,") we found a workable loophole: If I were to incorporate and pay myself a salary, then remit any honoraria to the corporation, that would be legal; the

law only covers honoraria paid to *me*.

If this sounds like legal nitpicking, in a way it is. But in our discussion, one consideration, besides the matter of personal risk, loomed larger and larger for me: In a month when major war hangs over us, presenting probably the gravest challenge for the Quaker Peace Testimony in a generation, is it the time to take on a protracted, distracting struggle about this parochial matter?

My answer was no. In fact, this item has already taken up too much space here. So I am proceeding to incorporate, and meantime am publishing under a provision making it legal to fulfill existing contracts, in this case unexpired subscriptions. But when I say 1991 has already been a bad year, with more than eleven months left to go, you begin to get the idea.

### RE-VIEWING A BAD MOVIE

Which returns us, above all, to the Gulf war toward which America and Iraq are racing as this is written; and the sliding economy, with major banks and airlines going belly-up in a seemingly endless succession; even what could be viewed as a rare positive event—cancellation of the hugely wasteful Navy A-12 Stealth fighter plane—came at the cost of several thousand jobs in Missouri and Texas.

But there's more; this month, so much more. Consider the disarray in the secular peace movement, dividing forces and spreading confusion just at the moment when coalescence is the demand of the hour. The basis of this split, which has yielded plans for competing national antiwar marches in Washington on 1/19 and 1/26, was laid out in last month's issue.

For readers who missed that issue, this split is a rerun of the leftist sectarian maneuverings that bedeviled the peace movement in the Vietnam days: a small but assertive Marxist cadre calling itself the Workers World Party, which refuses to criticize Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, has control of the Coalition to Stop U.S. Intervention in the Middle East, which

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**COME TO AN  
EMERGENCY QUAKER CONSULTATION:  
THE PEACE TESTIMONY & THE GULF WAR**

**January 26-27, 1991**

**Friends Meeting of Washington**

**2111 Florida Avenue NW**

**Washington, DC 20008**

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**SCHEDULE**

**SATURDAY--1/26/1991**

**5:00-7:00PM Registration at FMW (Dinner at area restaurants)**

**7:00 PM--Panel--Overviews of events, trends & resources**

**--FCNL    --WRL**

**--AFSC    --CCCO**

**(10-15-min. presentations, followed by break and questions/discussion)**

**9:15 PM recess for night.**

**SUNDAY--1/27/1991**

**9:00 AM Gather at FMW--(Coffee/danish/fruit)**

**9:15-10:45--Large Group sharing/discussion: What are Friends at large  
doing/thinking/saying about the Gulf crisis???**

**11:00AM Worship**

**12:15 PM Lunch, downstairs at FMW**

**1:30-3:30 PM--Special interest small group sessions on, e.g.:**

**--Tax resistance**

**--Public witness(legal)**

**--Other collaborative efforts??**

**--Civil disobedience actions**

**--Staying Centered in a time of crisis**

**--Networking/communicating**

**3:30--Break**

**4:00--Reports from small groups, and wrapup**

**5:00 PM--Adjourn**

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**Cosponsors:**

**Baltimore Yearly Meeting Peace Committee**

**Friends Meeting of Washington Peace Committee**

**Langley Hill MM**

**COST: \$10.00 per person, includes lunch on Sunday.**

**For info, help with hospitality, and to register, call: 202-483-3310, between 4PM and 9PM after 1/13/91.**

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# SEND A BARREL OF OIL TO THE BIGWIGS--FOR PEACE!

Tape one of these labels around an empty plastic film container, and mail it to your Member of Congress, Senator, the White House to dramatize your message. 45 Cents postage will do it. Make copies to share with others. This design came originally from the Fellowship of Reconciliation, who let us adapt it for use here.

Copy, Share & Mail

Copy, Share & Mail

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Copy, Share & Mail

From:

**NO BLOOD  
FOR OIL**

42 gal

affix  
45¢  
postage

George Bush  
The White House  
Washington DC 20500

From:

**NO BLOOD  
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42 gal

affix  
45¢  
postage

U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

From:

**NO BLOOD  
FOR OIL**

42 gal

affix  
45¢  
postage

U.S. Senate  
Washington DC 20510

is sponsoring the 1/19 gathering. Most peace groups, which have condemned the Kuwait invasion as well as the U.S. buildup, are part of the rival National Campaign for Peace in the Middle East, which is behind the 1/26 rally.

By early next month, one hopes this confusion will begin to sort itself out. For my part, I urge Friends to carry on secular protest activities under the umbrella of the National Campaign and its 1/26 action; and I hope they draw the larger crowd.

This is not a question of red-baiting, as the WWP people charge whenever anyone points out their bias and its sources. After all, the Communist Party and the Socialist Workers Party are supporting the National Campaign, so there's probably more reds there, if that still scares anybody. The point here is not attachment to some antique ideology, but concrete political positions today: I can't support groups which take a one-sided, and to my mind wrong position in this conflict.

#### ALAS, POOR SALMAN

I won't bore you with further details of this unhappy division. If you want more, look up a piece by Alex Cockburn, "Saddam, Kuwait and Bonkerism," in *The Nation* 12/31/1990, p. 831. Cockburn pungently shows how foolish the Workers World Party's maneuvers appear, even to a dedicated old commie like himself.

There has been plenty of other bad news to contend with this month, some of it all but overlooked in the rush of events in the Middle East. One of the most disheartening reports was that of Salman Rushdie's knuckling under to Iranian Shiite terrorism.

It doesn't bother me if Rushdie has been converted to Islam (though I confess that under the circumstances his declaration of faith sounded more than a little forced and unconvincing). It is as unfair to measure Islam by the extremism of Iranian Shi'ism as to gauge Christianity by assassins in Northern Ireland. Rather, what was distressing was his cave-in to the demands to suppress the book, by not permitting a paperback edition of *The*

*Satanic Verses*, and ending further reprints of the cloth edition. This was a clear sellout of free expression to the forces of religious terrorism, a defeat in one of the most important cases of our time. As *The Economist* angrily put it, (1/5/91) "*Before he cracked, Mr. Rushdie had stumbled on a truth: that if free speech and free writing are to be defended in an age of increasing religious fervor, they must be defended with a zealot's passion.*" Amen.

But *The Economist*, in *Looking towards the next Rushdie*, had more to say both relevant and eloquent: "*Like religious practice, the practice of free speech is often neither grand nor edifying. It can turn the stomach. [But] if free speech is to mean anything as a principle upon which democracy is based, it must be invoked regardless. Wholeheartedly, this time, not piecemeal; and without giving up.*"

#### THE GOOD BOOK, AND THE BAD

Remember those lines when certain feminists come to demand that you join their boycott of the publisher and retailers of the forthcoming slasher novel, *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis. This by-now notorious portrait of a killer who likes to cut up women certainly sounds repulsive and ugly (though, for the record, I have not read it and have little desire to); but the campaign to "protect" women by forcibly preventing the book from entering the marketplace of free expression sounds even worse to me.

How much worse? Well, if they're out to drive portrayals of violence against women from the public prints, these activists have some other targets that must not be overlooked; there's the much more widely-distributed, and truly repulsive tale of a woman sold into sexual slavery, and later abandoned to gang-rape, murder and dismemberment, with pieces of her body shipped around the country in public for propaganda effect. After that, gruesome battles are fought to avenge her owner's "honor" (though since these are merely men killing men, they may pass muster).

I refer, of course, to the last three chapters of the biblical book of Judges, of which millions of copies are openly purveyed, *to children*, every year! And

we forbear to dwell on the similarly horrible fate of the heroine in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*.

And once this crusade to clean up our reading and viewing matter gets rolling, how can its backers complain when the Pentagon reissues its restrictions on reporters covering the Gulf to prevent them from showing GIs in "real agony", or almost anything else that isn't pre-screened and censored? After all, some of these GIs may be women; and there are many children watching TV at all hours; must we not protect them against such displays of gratuitous violence? "No More Vietnams," the president has sworn; *especially* in the major media.

Am I getting a little shrill? Forgive me; I'm having a bad year. And so on we bump down the slippery slope. Did you read (*Washington Post* 1/9/1991) where the FBI has begun interviewing Arab-American leaders, "just in case," to make sure they are not, um, subjected to any harassment in case of war, and just, heh, heh, to make sure they aren't tied up with any, um, potential terrorists....

#### ONE DAY AT A TIME....

But of course, if things get really out of hand, we can always add Arab-Americans to our prison population. We're good at accumulating inmates, if not at treating them decently: In fact we're now Number One in the World, in this field if in little else: the USA now has more people behind bars, both in toto and per capita, than any nation in the world (*The Iron Medal*, by Tom Wicker, *New York Times*, 1/9/1991.) That's right; our gulag is bigger than Gorbachev's gulag; and China's; and South Africa's. And Iraq's.

So what's a Quaker to do these days? Well, the best idea I've got at this point is to urge you to come to the Emergency Consultation On The Peace Testimony & The Gulf War in Washington later this month. I know it's short notice; we simply *must* get Bush and Hussein to schedule their wars more conveniently. See the flyer inserted in this issue for details. And in the meantime, mind the Light; we can't get through this on our own. Not you, and not me. Especially not me.

FIRST CLASS MAIL

INSIDE: KVEITCH, KVEITCH, KVEITCH:  
WAR, RECESSION, RATE HIKES,  
BUREAUCRATIC OPPRESSION,  
CLERICAL FOOLISHNESS & MORE--  
WELCOME TO 1991!

Address Correction Requested

From: Chuck Fager, A Friendly Letter  
P.O. Box 1361  
Baileys Crossroads, VA 22041

## THIS MONTH IN QUAKER HISTORY

As Betty Boardman rose to speak after worship in Madison, Wisconsin Meeting, she almost sat right down again when she saw that John Hunter was also there. But she decided to go ahead, and Hunter, a reporter for the local daily paper, pricked up his ears. It was 1/22/1967, in the depths of the Vietnam War, and Boardman was announcing her intention to sail on a small boat to bring medical supplies to North Vietnam.

Hunter hadn't come to meeting looking for news, but the plan for a small oceangoing ketch, the Phoenix, to sail from Japan to Vietnam was news for sure.

The voyage of the Phoenix was planned by an ad hoc committee of Friends calling themselves A Quaker Action Group. There were already Quaker-supported relief projects underway in South Vietnam, offering medical supplies and assistance to wounded civilians there. But U.S. law forbade any such efforts aimed at the "enemy." The voyage of the Phoenix was to be a visible affirmation of the humanity of civilians on the other side, and as an act of defiance of the American legal restrictions on an impartial Quaker peace witness. Betty Boardman had agreed to join the crew in large part to prove to herself and her children that her talk of the

importance of personal witness on behalf of one's convictions was more than words. But once she agreed, many anxieties crowded in on her: would their little craft be caught in the heavy U.S. bombing raids against North Vietnam? Would she and the other crew members be prosecuted as traitors and subversives once they returned? And, to be sure, what would the neighbors think?

Reactions were not long in coming. For instance, when she went in for inoculations, she told the resident in charge something of her plans; he stomped away, snarling epithets about her lack of patriotism. Later, when she told her family doctor, who had treated all her family members for more than twenty years, he walked angrily out of the room and she never saw him again.

No wonder Boardman was nervous about making her announcement at meeting in the presence of a reporter. The story would be public soon enough; but with its appearance more strong reactions were sure to come.

So they did, but Betty Boardman joined the Phoenix crew as planned and successfully completed her mission a few turbulent months later. She tells the story in her book, *The Phoenix Trip*, published by Celo Press in 1985.

## QUAKER CHUCKLE

Returning from First Day School one morning, a Quaker lad was asked by his mother, "What did thee learn in class today, son?"

"The teacher told us about Moses crossing the Red Sea with the Children of Israel when the Egyptian army was after them."

"How did Moses do that?"

"Well, he built a bridge and had the Israelites cross it. Then he put dynamite in all the pillars, and when the Egyptian soldiers got on the bridge, he blew it up."

Horried, his mother demanded, "Is that what the teacher told thee?"

"Not really," the boy admitted, "but if I told thee the teacher's crazy story, thee'd never believe it."