



A Friendly Letter

Issue Number One

Third Month 1981

Dear Friend,

Do you want to see Quakers develop strong, faithful witness in these times of growing threats to peace and human rights? So do I.

Would you like the various groups of Friends to get better acquainted and move closer together? So would I.

And do you think it would help if the burning issues facing Friends today were reported with professional competence, religious sensibility and a balanced outlook?

I do. And that's what *A Friendly Letter* is setting out to provide.

For more than a decade, I've been both a convinced Friend and a working journalist. (You might have seen my byline in *Friends Journal* or *Quaker Life*, or in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.) *A Friendly Letter* puts these two commitments together to create a unique news source for busy Friends like you.

In the coming months, I'll be looking into issues like these:

- New Service opportunities for young Friends: Who is developing them, and where?
- Gay rights and abortion: Is there a way around these roadblocks to Quaker ecumenism?
- The AFSC and Its Quaker Critics: Has there been any progress since 1979?
- How Liberal and Evangelical Quakers Can Get Along: A Guide.
- Building an affirmative Quaker peace witness for the 1980's.
- The exciting growth of Quaker culture: writers, artists, musicians, and more.
- Does *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia* prove that Quakerism produces second-rate leaders? An interview with author E. Digby Baltzell.
- Plus many others.

Each issue will also contain two other unique features: *This Month in Quaker History* and a sampling of our special brand of *Quaker Chuckles*.

Practically every monthly issue of *A Friendly Letter* will provide material for a group discussion at your Meeting or Church, in a compact, easy to read newsletter format, at a reasonable price.

Letter-writing among Friends to bring us closer together, share important news and thresh out key issues is a 300 year-old tradition. Won't you join with me as *A Friendly Letter* carries this tradition forward? Please subscribe today, so you won't miss a single monthly issue.

Yours in the Light,

Chuck Fager

Chuck Fager

SAVING THE LAW OF THE SEA TREATY: AN URGENT PRIORITY FOR FRIENDS

Amid the debate over U.S. involvement in El Salvador and its parallels with Vietnam, the American peace constituency, including Friends, is in danger of overlooking a greater long term threat to peace, namely destruction of the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea.

The Reagan administration, yielding to pressure from U.S. corporations opposed to the Treaty, announced on 3/3/81 that it will block completion of a new Law of the Sea Treaty, which after seven years of work was widely expected at the negotiating session now underway in New York.

This reverses earlier U.S. support of the negotiations, and throws them into serious jeopardy. Agreement on the 320 articles of the Treaty draft involved protracted negotiations and a series of delicately-balanced compromises on key issues, mainly between major industrial powers and poor Third World nations.

The Stakes Are High

The Treaty involves more than simply agreement on rules for sea travel and regulation of the developing seabed mining industry--important as these are. The Treaty also sets a crucial series of precedents in international cooperation, including new dispute settlement mechanisms and the nucleus of a system for distributing some of the wealth of the seabed among the poor nations. Perhaps most important, if successful it would provide a model for how such international peacebuilding efforts can be conducted.

The draft Treaty has been called the most important diplomatic initiative for global peace since the founding of the UN. Yet it is also a cautious, even conservatively-drawn document; until now, even the Pentagon supported it.

The Treaty will not, of course, stop all wars. But it can prevent many wars, particularly hostilities generated by conflicts over ocean resources--conflicts sure to multiply in an increasingly resource-hungry world. This preventive value is worldwide in scope and incalculable in potential.

The Next Few Months Are Crucial

That is why a strong case can be made that for the next few months the U.S. peace constituency should concentrate on saving the Treaty negotiations from collapse. The administration has not flatly rejected the draft Treaty. Rather, it has said it is to be "reviewed." This could mean only that the administration's diplomats, most of whom have no familiarity with the Treaty, are simply pacifying corporate Treaty opponents while they do their homework; after all, the Conference has been supported by two previous Republican administrations and Republican Elliot Richardson was Jimmy Carter's chief negotiator.

But the delay could also mean that the administration is waiting to see whether sinking the Conference would be politically costly. And in either case, the "review" period gives the Treaty's well-financed, skillful corporate opponents a crucial opportunity to subvert the negotiations in what was to be their concluding session.

Fortunately this delay also gives Treaty supporters a chance to pressure the administration to conduct a balanced review, to stick with the negotiations, and to facilitate their completion on reasonable terms.

But this chance for influence could well be the last one. The compromises in the nearly-completed draft Treaty are still very fragile; if the U.S. formally withdrew support for them, *the whole treaty structure could easily unravel*, and seven years of

work could be down the drain, just when potential conflicts over ocean resources are becoming more and more serious. That is what makes saving the Treaty now a priority peace concern.

Treaty Shows Strong Quaker Influence

The Treaty's fate should be of particular concern to Friends. Some of the most talented Quakers of our time--headed by Sam and Miriam Levering of North Carolina Yearly Meeting--have devoted years of dogged and brilliant effort to helping the negotiations reach a workable and equitable conclusion. In addition, Quaker principles have had *major impact* on the negotiating process and in some critical instances have shaped the *text of the Treaty itself*. The entire conference has proceeded on the basis of consensus-building, a model drawn by UN staff consultants from direct study of Friends' practice. (The full and ongoing story of Quaker impact on the Treaty negotiations remains to be told--Quaker historians take note!)

Thus, Quakers could take particular satisfaction in a successful Treaty. And through it we can put the stamp of our ways and Peace Testimony on international developments for a long time to come.

These close connections should give Friends special concern to see that the administration's "review" does not mean abandonment or sabotage of the Treaty's completion.

Making saving the Treaty a peace priority has several tactical advantages, among them:

1. It presents a clear set of opponents, large corporations whose concern seems to be mainly for maximum short-term profits;
2. It provides a model of positive, constructive peacemaking efforts, which should speak to the many Friends who are no longer satisfied simply to oppose war, but want even more to support the building of peace;
3. Treaty supporters include both Democrats and Republicans, military leaders and pacifists; it is a carefully-drawn, responsible initiative with wide potential public appeal; and
4. Finally, there are many ways to show support, in keeping with Friends' various proclivities and resources--from writing letters to lobbying to organizing public protests, etc.

Friends moved to take up this concern will want to become informed about the Treaty's background and content to make their support most effective. Two groups can provide information: The Ocean Education Project, at 100 Maryland Avenue NE, Washington, DC, 20002; and the Committee on Ocean Law, at 316 Pennsylvania Avenue SE, Washington, DC, 20003. Opposition to the Treaty is being articulated by the American Mining Congress, at 1920 "N" Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036.

Letters regarding the Treaty could usefully be directed to Ronald Reagan, Alexander Haig, members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee and Foreign Affairs Committee, as well as your own Representative and Senators, along with newspapers and other media. Such communications are not simply ignored; the administration is very sensitive to public reaction, particularly when presented in a well-informed and forceful manner.

The Law of the Sea Treaty could and should become a landmark to the practical application of Friends' Peace Testimony in our time; and in the current crisis of its fortunes, Friends should express strong support for that application and its potential for taking away the occasion of many wars in our time and for a long time to come.

INSIDE: THE TOP PRIORITY
FOR PEACE IN 1981

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THIS MONTH IN QUAKER HISTORY

On March 23, 1903, an American Friend named Elizabeth J. Magie applied for a patent on a new board game she had invented, which she called *The Landlord's Game*.

The game, which was granted Patent #740,626, was the original version of what became Monopoly, after it was in effect stolen in the early 1930's by Charles Darrow, who sold it to Parker Brothers and made millions on the royalties. Parker Brothers thereafter tried to eradicate any trace of Friend Magie's game, and has worked hard for almost fifty years to propagate the myth that the game originated with Darrow. But in truth, the game had circulated among East Coast Friends for three decades, and had evolved most of its present characteristics before he ever heard of it.

The full story of the Great Monopoly Rip-off has yet to be written, but perhaps most ironic of all is that the game Friend Lizzie Magie invented was intended not to glorify the building of real estate empires, but rather to expose the process for the specimen of organized greed which it so often is.

Well, may thee rest in peace, Friend Lizzie. Thy game has given the world much pleasure, even if not in exactly the way thee hoped.

QUAKER CHUCKLES

A Prophetic Utterance

Once in a very warm First Day morning in Birmingham, Pennsylvania, an elder named Nicholas Waln was at Meeting. Although in those days Meetings were typically two or more hours long, Nicholas shook hands to close Meeting in about half an hour. When criticized afterward for such an early closing, he said, mopping his brow and quoting from the prophet Hosea: "I desire mercy and not burnt offerings."

Adapted from *Friendly Anecdotes*.

Music Lovers

An alumnus once wrote to each of the members of the Haverford College Board, asking if they would be willing to accept the gift of a piano. The donor reportedly received replies from all the members, each of whom stated that while he personally had no objection to the gift, he was sure that it would not be acceptable to the others. Sure enough, when the question was raised at a Board meeting, the proffered piano was turned down, unanimously.
