

SOME GOOD NEWS, FOR A CHANGE: On 7/22, the Ramallah Friends Schools began reopening. The lower six grades opened first, and the secondary grades are supposed to be opening within a few weeks. If the Israeli government lets the schools stay open, they may be able to survive financially, though with 40% fewer students and a smaller staff.

A Friendly Letter

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Dear Friend,

Whew! Here we are at Issue Number One Hundred; it feels like a milestone to me. But it's no time for self-congratulation or lollygagging about; there's work to do, and stories to follow up. Here are two:

First, the search for a new Executive Secretary for the Friends Committee on National Legislation (described in AFL#98) has entered its last round. Three candidates have been interviewed: one from the East Coast, one from the Midwest, and one from the West Coast. All are male, and they range in outlook from evangelical to liberal unprogrammed. One is a Quaker bureaucrat, another a farmer, and the third a political operative turned academic. More candidates will be interviewed in Ninth Month.

Within a few more weeks, each will have visited the FCNL offices for intensive meetings with the committee and staff. While staff reactions and input are being solicited, however, staff will have no part in the actual decisionmaking. That is reserved to the search committee, whose five members were drawn from the FCNL's policymaking General Committee.

This subordination of staff contrasts starkly with the American Friends Service Committee's last search for a national executive, in 1979-80. The AFSC has been criticized in recent years for being more responsive to its staff, which is more than 80% non-Quaker, than to the all-Quaker Board and Corporation which supposedly make policy. The 1979 search committee's composition strongly supports these misgivings: Five groups were represented on it: The National Board, the Corporation, the National Office staff, the area staff, and at-large staff. One FCNL source told me they saw this example as one to avoid in their own selection process; is it any wonder that FCNL enjoys much better relations with Friends at large?

The second update relates the FCNL to human rights concerns in Kenya, which we reported on in AFLs

#92 and #97. FCNL recently joined the lengthening list of critics of Kenyan government practices in a letter sent to several key members of Congress, accompanied by copies of the latest State Department human rights report on Kenya. FCNL also sent a copy to William Wagoner, the World Ministries Secretary of Friends United Meeting; FUM is planning to hold its 1993 Triennial in Kenya. Wagoner told me he was shocked when he read the State Department report.

He's not the only one. Reporter Raymond Bonner published an Op-ed piece in the *New York Times* of 6/30 on "African Dictators, American Silence" excoriating US media and liberal critics of South Africa for not speaking out more against the corruption and violence of many governments in black Africa, among which Kenya was prominently mentioned. And Amnesty International's latest newsletter had a long feature about the ordeal of a Kenyan professor, Maina Wa Kinyatti, who was jailed for six years and repeatedly tortured on charges of possessing a "subversive" document. Following his release last year, he was harassed by police until he fled the country and was granted asylum in the U.S.

Two major international Quaker gatherings are being planned for Kenya, for 1991 and 1993; and yet their planners continue to act as if the practices of its government can be completely ignored. How often does the alarm bell of human rights have to ring before it becomes a priority on their agendas?

Yours in the Light,

Chuck Fager

Chuck Fager

PS. Don't forget, subscription rates increase to \$17.95 per year for the U.S. and Canada as of 9/1. Early renewals and gifts are welcome before then.

Church politics, says the old adage, will try the faith of the firmest believer. If you doubt this, read any honest church history book; the Bible is particularly revealing, when read with open eyes.

Quaker church politics is no exception to this melancholy truth, though in our own struggles we have two structural advantages and one helpful bit of history: the advantages are our peace testimony, and the absence of bishops.

The help from history is an ironic one: it is that the Society of Friends has remained small, despite the founders' grandiose dreams and the evangelicals' best efforts; but this also means we have few huge institutions or large accumulations of corporate wealth to fight over. This in turn provides a kind of built-in firebreak and damage control for any particular fight, and thereby also helps us keep to our peace testimony and avoid killing each other.

OUR OWN UNHAPPY HISTORY

None of which makes the sorrier episodes of Quaker church politics any less embarrassing: Whether it is the Orthodox-Hicksite split, Friends United Meeting's wrangling over doctrine, or Kenyan Friends chasing each other with clubs—we have our share of them.

The decade of the 1980s—thank goodness it's almost over—has yielded plenty of shabby Quaker church politicking. More than any other factor, this has been aggravated by the impact of the H-word among us. We have often reported (e.g., AFLs #15, #23, #30, #44) the manipulations by some evangelicals in Friends United Meeting to keep the subject of homosexuality from even being mentioned its precincts.

But there is another side to this story, involving an even unhappier combination: liberal Quaker church politics and gay politics.

Gay politics, for reasons not clear to this writer, has too often,

almost typically, been sullied by a high level of acrimony and vituperation. For outsiders, this pattern has been amply documented in gay reporter Randy Shilts's award-winning book on the AIDS crisis, *And the Band Played On*. A new book, *After the Ball*, by Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen (Doubleday, 400 pages, \$19.95) identifies and challenges this pattern even more forthrightly.

SHOOTING THE MESSENGERS

Madsen and Kirk are both gay. One is a social scientist and the other a communications consultant. Both are well-versed in gay culture and politics, and dedicated to gay liberation. So they know whereof they speak when they decry the "myopic, overemotional, and destructive" style of too much gay political and moral discourse. More specifically, they point out that gay and lesbian spokespeople have too often moved to "reject all criticism of the community itself, not only by straight outsiders but by gay insiders, using exactly the same tactics of oppression employed by our straight oppressors: lying, smearing, shouting down, refusing the right of reply, name-calling, and counterstereotyping.... Their counterattacks have the same curiously formulaic, sloganeering quality in which their far-right enemies excel: be the criticism large or small, the critic straight or gay, the diagnosis is always the same cheap shot: *you're a homophobe!* [Italics in original—Ed.]—and you must also hate women, blacks, and all other oppressed minorities."

Kirk and Madsen likewise deplore the "explicit, root-and-branch rejection of morality by gays [which] has been real, pervasive, and baleful in its effect on both the quality of life that we create for ourselves within the community and our p.r. with straights." They lay much of the blame for this on self-indulgent gay opinion leaders, whom they call "pied pipers of radicalism," who have led the community "to blind extremes in rejecting the values of morality and family structure, leaving us with no values or

community structure to replace these, and taking us with them into the complete void of individual isolation and communal amorality." They propose for gays a new "self-policing social code," which includes, besides a charge to abandon promiscuity and unsafe sex, the statement "*I Won't Re-Enact Straight Oppression by Name-Calling and Shouting Down Gays Whose Opinions Don't Square With Mine.*"

Such stern judgements are, of course, controversial among gays, and *After the Ball* is, predictably, getting mixed reviews in gay circles. It's not our business to resolve this debate for gays; but the book has been cited here at this length because these comments accord both with the reporting of others such as Randy Shilts, and with my own experience and observation. And this has been regrettably but not surprisingly extended to occasions when gay politics has intersected with liberal Quaker church politics.

TAKING MY STAND WITH THEM

Which brings us, at last, to Herb Lape. Lape is currently clerk of Matinecock Meeting on Long Island, New York, and a teacher at the nearby Friends Academy. His own odyssey in church and gay politics has extended through the 1980s, beginning with the 1981 Friends General Conference Gathering at Berea College in Kentucky.

When the Quaker history of our times is written, the Berea FGC Gathering should merit at least a page, and maybe even a chapter, as a curtain raiser to the struggles of the decade over homosexuality. There isn't room for the whole lurid story now, but here is a thumbnail:

For the most part, the Gathering went off peaceably enough. But three items proved problematic: One was the fact that a workshop made up mainly of gay men decided to experiment with nude massage, in a lounge near a well-travelled hallway, where their efforts were observed by some other Friends passing by. Then there were the numerous notices in

the Gathering's *Daily Bulletin* from the Men's and the Women's Centers—which had become gay and lesbian strongholds—of discussions on various gender-and sex-related topics. And finally, there was the matter of the gay and lesbian "dorms," floors populated largely by Friends of these persuasions, who had taken advantage of FGC's policy of letting registrants express preferences as to housing location.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S NIGHTMARE

In a few days, the antics in the massage workshop, generously augmented by rumor, spread among other participants. Also, some cafeteria staff began reading the *Daily Bulletin*, which was placed in stacks by the dining tables, and some were shocked by some of what they read. Indeed, the story goes that among these outside readers were members of local fundamentalist churches, who took the sheets to a regional radio evangelist of the Jerry Falwell stripe.

By the penultimate day of the Gathering, something of a crisis had developed, based on reports that this preacher had warned college officials that a mob of his followers, pushed beyond reason by the Quaker saturnalian spectacle there, were planning to march on the campus that night, with mayhem or worse likely to ensue.

It sounds like a bad sitcom, but the upshot is that no mob materialized; still, on the last morning of the Gathering, the cafeteria crew all appeared wearing new T-shirts bearing the initials ISTQ. Asked what they stood for, one coyly told me they meant "I Served The Quakers." But further investigation disclosed that the initials could also mean "I Survived the Quakers."

FGC has not since returned to Berea, and it seems unlikely that it will. But the memory of that week lives on. And for Herb Lape, who was then clerk of Asheville Meeting in North Carolina, the memories were particularly sharp and uncomfortable. Indeed, he felt they demanded action. So he went home and called a special business meeting.

Herb Lape is one of the many persons for whom the upheavals of the 1960s proved traumatic, and who reacted by moving toward what has come to be called a neoconservative position. Along the way though, in the mid-1970s he had come to Friends through contacts with Powell House, the conference center of New York Yearly Meeting, while teaching at a nearby private school.

After moving to Asheville, however, the failure of his first marriage led him to reconsider his religious views, and in particular to begin reading the Bible. At the time he was teaching inmates at a state prison, and he was much affected by the work of prison ministries there. From this period came a strong Christian commitment, a second marriage, and a growing concern over what he saw as the moral and theological laxity among liberal Friends. This concern was brought to a boil by Berea.

A LETTER FROM AN EX-PRISONER

Asheville Meeting authorized the sending of a letter to FGC about the events at Berea. The letter voiced concern at the "appropriateness of sexual behavior among Gathering participants and over the legitimacy of FGC policies and responses to matters concerning expressions of sexuality in general." More specifically, the letter wanted the gay and lesbian "dorms" abolished, and a return to what it called the "pre-1972 practice" of FGC regarding cohabitation at the Gathering by unmarried couples, i.e., a prohibition thereof. The letter also asked that FGC issue "a clear statement of standards and policies regarding housing and sexual behavior" prior to the 1982 Gathering.

When Herb Lape read FGC's response, from George Webb of Baltimore's Stony Run Meeting, who was Clerk of FGC's Long Range Conference Planning Committee, he was not satisfied. Webb pointed out that it was inaccurate to speak of "pre-1972 practice" on FGC housing, since prior to that year, the Gatherings were held at a resort in Cape May, New Jersey, and adult participants found their own housing. Webb

agreed that a statement of "Queries and Advices" on "the complete range of human encounters that occur at a Gathering," could be useful, but noted that writing it "will take a number of years." He added that FGC had not in fact established gay and lesbian "dorms"; such aggregations as developed were the result of unmarried men and women being housed in groups, on separate floors, as were other family combinations.

To Lape, this was mostly "vague doubletalk," designed to put him off and ignore the issues he had tried to raise. But when he went back to Asheville Meeting to develop a followup, the group backed away; they had stated their concern, and that was enough for them.

That wasn't enough for Herb Lape. He decided to make a reexamination of liberal Quaker attitudes regarding sex, and their underlying assumptions, his "personal crusade." Having studied his Quaker procedure, he decided that what Fox called Gospel Order called for him to speak directly with those he was challenging, the way John Woolman had visited Quaker slaveholders, to labor with them as lovingly as he could. This he set out to do, taking aim initially at FGC and the major Quaker gay group, Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (FLGC).

TRACKING THE LIBERAL TRADITION

This is when Herb Lape's trial by Quaker church and gay politics began in earnest. (He is not the only one to raise such questions, but he's been at it longer and in more depth than anyone else I know of today.) Along the way, his critique of liberal Quakerism's "orthodoxy" has broadened to include much more than sexuality; he now is questioning our basic religious outlook, and the manner in which we deliberate about issues, and, not least, the way we deal with dissent.

Much of Lape's perspective has been shaped by neoconservative religious thinkers, such as Stanley Hauerwas of Duke University. Hauerwas and Lape see current American culture, particularly its "progressive" sectors, as shaped by an out-

look that stresses individualism and rights, and neglects the importance of community and tradition, particularly religious traditions.

Based on the ideas of the Enlightenment, this new outlook sees personal behavior and ethics—and theology too, for that matter—as mainly private matters, to be negotiated by consenting adults, and without prior assumptions about right and wrong. For Lape this makes decisions about sexuality similar to choosing what to buy in a supermarket: a "can" of *Heterosexual Monogamy* brand behavior is not necessarily any better than, say, *Bisexual Promiscuity* brand; it is all a matter of taste, inclination and mutual agreement.

JUDGE NOT, LEST YE BE JUDGMENTAL

A crucial implication of this view is the impropriety of judging another's choices: *De gustibus Quakerus non disputandum*, to borrow a phrase. Thus tolerance becomes the major, perhaps the only group virtue. Lape believes this outlook, while not new in theory, really came to the fore in America, and among liberal Friends, in the 1960s, when it was seen as a liberating antidote to repressive and restrictive traditions, sexual and theological.

In such a context it is easy to understand how a group like FGC would begin to countenance unmarried cohabitation at Gatherings, and permit the emergence of visible, articulate gay and lesbian minorities. But to Herb Lape, as to Stanley Hauerwas and other neoconservatives, this view is defective and pernicious, not only in its concrete results, but in its basic assumptions as well. They argue that in practice it leads to human relations based on the worst aspects of capitalist consumerism. This produces individual exploitation and isolation, especially in sexual matters, contributing to the breakup of families and other social ills.

Further, in theory, this privatized liberalism ignores the facts of Quaker history, especially its roots in the Christian and biblical tradition, and its creation by men

and women who strongly affirmed this tradition even as they broke new ground within it. In addition, Lape insists that this outlook disconnects Friends from our own Quaker process, by dismissing the essentially communal character of Quaker religion, and ignoring the process of community discernment in the formation and change of testimonies.

How does this apply to, say FGC and the gay and lesbian "dorms"? This way: According to Lape, the Society, like other Christian bodies, has traditionally held homosexual practice to be sinful. He agrees that given our belief in continuing revelation, this might change, as Friends' initial acceptance of slavery changed to a testimony against it. But such a change can legitimately come about, he argues, only by group seeking and discernment leading to unity around the new light. And such a process may take a long time, as it took Woolman and others seventy years to sway Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

RIDING THE CIRCUIT FOR A CHANGE

Those Friends who feel they have new Light regarding the acceptability of homosexuality, Lape says, should follow Woolman's example, travelling and laboring patiently among Friends until they too see this new Light. In the meantime, he insists, our existing testimony should stand. Inasmuch as no such unity exists among Friends, even liberal Friends, on the acceptability of unmarried sex and homosexual practice, FGC as a creature of these yearly meetings should not "outrun its Guide" and independently implement a contrary policy.

Now this thesis, whatever one thinks of it, is not irrational, and Lape has taken his own advice and attempted to travel among the affected Quaker groups and make his case, both in person and in print. His presentations of it have been for the most part civil and coherent. But it could certainly be challenged, on numerous grounds (and will be below). Thus one might think it would be at least productive of some lively discussion and, who knows, might even convince some

hearers. After all, don't we liberal Quakers glory in our tolerance of diversity and our commitment to open and fearless truthseeking?

Sure we do. In theory.

In practice, it is another matter. Not long ago Herb wrote that he has found among us "an ideological approach to sexual issues that makes it almost impossible for Friends representing liberal Quaker institutions to even understand what I am saying," adding that "In the last seven years that I have carried this concern about our testimony on sexual expression, I have learned that 'liberal' Friends are no more open-minded and tolerant than conservative Friends."

Is he exaggerating? In AFL#37 a strain of anti-Christian prejudice among liberal Friends was identified, which would suggest he is not. But let's look at his record. Lape has sought since 1981 to share his concern directly with the relevant FGC committees; he is still waiting.

SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER?

Lape also sought to visit the Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns, and was finally issued an informal invitation to its Midwinter Gathering in Philadelphia in 2/1984. But when he arrived, the Steering Committee somewhat shamefacedly told him that because of vehement opposition by a few of its members, he could not be allowed to address the group. This was, incidentally, the same session at which FLGC loudly protested the dropping of Elizabeth Watson as a speaker for the upcoming Friends Ministers Conference due to her reported sympathy with homosexuals (reported in AFL#44).

The embarrassing irony of this juxtaposition was not lost on cooler-headed FLGC members, and Lape was put on the agenda of its 1984 summer meeting, at the FGC Gathering at St. Lawrence University in New York. In due course, on 7/3, came and delivered his message.

I was present at this confron-

tation, taking notes, and it was in my experience a remarkable and unusual event. It is very easy to deal with our opponents or enemies indirectly and by rhetorical flourishes. But how many of us who are concerned about, say, racism, have actually confronted a bigoted neighbor and attempted to labor lovingly with him about this? Or how many who rail against the Religious New Right have visited a fundamentalist church to show the pastor and flock the error of their ways?

Herb Lape faced the gay and lesbian Friends, though, alone. He spoke of his concern for group discernment as the basis for Friends' ordering of their life together, and the importance of the testimonies in this process. If gays feel they have a new testimony on sex, he said, they should formulate it and travel with it among Friends as did Woolman. In the meantime, he asked them to voluntarily disband the gay and lesbian "dorms" until they had persuaded the relevant committees of FGC to agree to it, in a process that he could have access to.

Needless to say, the group did not accept his proposals; but they were mostly polite.

FLIES IN THE OINTMENT

This brief encounter was the high water mark for Lape's crusade in the next several years. In 1983 he had moved back to New York to teach at Friends Academy. There he joined Matinecock Meeting, and soon added New York Yearly Meeting to his list of groups to labor with, focusing on the emerging issue of gay marriage. New York YM has been struggling for several years to revise its 1974 book of *Faith and Practice*, with limited success, and the proposed draft on marriage became a particular sticking point.

Here Lape, for perhaps the first time, was not alone. He catalyzed an informal coalition of several monthly meetings in New York that reflect a variety of conservative views: among them were Farmington, a pastoral meeting which sent a letter to all New York meetings in 1985

insisting on the centrality of Christian commitment to Quaker faith; and Manasquan, a Wilburite outpost in New Jersey, whose members had denounced an earlier *Faith and Practice* redraft for purportedly de-Christianizing the Faith section. When a draft on marriage was distributed in 1986, Lape objected to it as too relativist and inclusive, and Matinecock Meeting backed him up. Manasquan and Farmington agreed as well, and the *Faith and Practice* revision committee was sent back to the drawing board.

In their next version, the key section read as follows: "*We should try to widen the circle of love to include Friends with varied manners of living. Loving and nonexploitative relationships of mutual affection can express the light. The meeting family should welcome the diverse ages, interests and living patterns of members, for it is God who has brought us all together, in our diversity. Jesus showed that God's love, if we are open to it, embraces all of us and forms the community.*"

To Lape and Matinecock Meeting, this was still Ranterism, and they wanted no part of it. This time, in addition to another minute rejecting the draft, Herb Lape wrote an article explaining his view and began lobbying for a panel discussion of the issue at the 1988 yearly meeting sessions.

STRIKING SPARKS AT SPARK

And here he really ran into the buzz saw of Quaker church politics, heavily flavored with the tone of gay politicking decried by Madsen and Kirk. He submitted his article to *Spark*, New York YM's newsletter. The Publications Committee had been attempting to liven up *Spark*, but when Lape's article arrived the committee balked. As committee clerk Karen Way delicately put it in her annual report, Lape's piece "was so unlike any other article printed by *Spark* that we spent several meetings seeking clearness on whether or not to publish it...."

It was objected that *Spark* did

not publish articles by individuals; Lape's piece was promptly endorsed by Matinecock Meeting and resubmitted as a meeting document; then it was objected that Monthly Meetings did not have standing to publish in *Spark* either—only committees, such as the Human Relations and Sexuality Committee, which had churned out numerous articles along the tolerance-inclusiveness lines.

You get the idea. Lape persisted in the face of these lame excuses, and maintained comparative equanimity in the face of the undercurrents of name-calling and character assassination that accompanied the process *sotto voce*. In any case, the YM planners ultimately agreed to the idea of a three-person panel on sexuality at the 1988 sessions; this was well-received, and perhaps because of sheer embarrassment, the Publications Committee finally agreed, at the end of 1988, to publish a revised version of Lape's article.

IT'S BETTER IN THE WEST

(A similar flap developed early in 1988 around a letter sent to Pacific YM's *Friends Bulletin* from a Friend in Seattle's University Meeting, angrily objecting to the way some gay Friends there had pursued the gay marriage issue. But in that case, Editor Shirley Ruth and her committee promptly rejected the calls to suppress the letter; it was published in the 3/88 issue.)

Just how much of a pariah his stance has made Lape is suggested by the report that at the 1988 sessions his name was proposed for three different YM committees, but was shot down in each case, a most unusual treatment for a monthly meeting clerk. (The time may come, of course, when he will look back wistfully on the days when he couldn't get on a Quaker committee; but that's another story.)

The struggle with *Spark* was by no means his last. Lape had almost as much trouble getting *Friends Journal* to publish an article setting forth his Christian critique of the idea of gay marriage, despite *FJ*'s publication of numerous ar-

ticles favorable to the concept. And most recently, his name was proposed as a principal speaker for the Quaker Theological Discussion Group's sessions of earlier this summer, which were to be devoted to issues of sexuality; but again, there were objections of an *ad hominem* character raised in the QTDG committee, and he was not invited as a speaker.

Actually, by this summer, Lape's sheer doggedness seemed to be winning him a few rounds: His *Friends Journal* piece appeared in Sixth Month, and he was ultimately asked to attend QTDG and respond to a paper by Hugh Pyper, a gay Friend and biblical scholar from England. Earlier in the year, *Spark* had finally printed his article on the *Faith and Practice* marriage draft.

In all these institutions—FGC, FLGC, New York YM, Friends Journal, and even QTDG, gay and lesbian Friends and their straight supporters are represented, and in each, Herb Lape's measured dissent from liberal Quaker notions about sex has been met, to varying degrees, with the kind of tactics identified by Madsen and Kirk that have so disfigured and disrupted the course of the gay rights struggle. And again, he is not the only dissenter treated thus.

SLOW AND STEADY WINS THE RACE?

Lest this be thought an exaggeration, the New York FLGC newsletter, shortly after Lape's *Spark* article appeared, printed a "letter" signed by "Herbert L." It was a nasty, sneering piece, of which the following excerpts give the flavor:

I [Herbert L.] am wholly preoccupied with other people's sexual habits. I collect underwear and bathing suit catalogs for my high school students to study in my classes on American moral standards. I perseverate[sic] totally about sex, just as did the early men who erected tall rocks, poles and market crosses that reminded them of the miracle of the engorgement of their penises, except that I am preoccupied with those men's thoughts about this as well. And I want to control others' thoughts: mine are

out of control....I think I am listening to God's leading in between teaching in this fabulously rich Long Island suburb. Where else should I live? Be a neighbor and friend of poor people? Jews? Blacks? Single mothers who need a man? Gay men and lesbians who I think are ghettoizing themselves away from the racist and bigotted [sic] remarks and deeds of me and others and into each other's solace?

DIVERSIONS FROM THE SUBSTANCE

Enough of that. The "letter" was actually written by John L.P. Maynard of Manhattan's Fifteenth Street Meeting. Maynard is a member of New York's *Faith and Practice* review committee, and an FLGC stalwart. Sadly, his "letter" displays all too well some of the worst characteristics of irresponsible gay reaction to criticism identified by Madsen and Kirk, and it is not unrepresentative of the sort of attacks Herb Lape and others like him have often been met with among so-called "liberal" Friends. After the publication of the "letter," Lape sought a clearness meeting with Maynard and other concerned Friends; a meeting was held in Sixth Month, but it is not yet clear if some reconciliation will be effected.

One of the worst effects of such invective is to shift our attention away from the issues at stake and onto concerns for fairness, the practice of real tolerance, and the like. Important as these are, they are beside the original point of the debate, which would include such questions as:

Are Herb Lape and his neoconservative mentors right about liberal Friends and sex? Have we sold our Christian monogamous birthright for a mess of liberal consumerist pottage? Are we as completely out of touch with genuine Quaker spirituality and process on this issue as he says we are?

In fact, I believe there can be substantial rebuttals made to Lape's analysis and recommendations, if interested Friends, especially advocates for gay and lesbian rights (among whose ranks this writer in-

cludes himself) would quit the stonewalling and low politicking and engage him and his views carefully and thoughtfully. Here are a few points, presented perforce briefly:

1. The neoconservative account of the "subversion" of traditional values by the 1960s upheavals, including the so-called "sexual revolution," is of limited and debatable explanatory value. Among the facts it fails to grasp is that for many of us in that time, it is more accurate to say that the traditions collapsed rather than that some nasty subversive Liberalism sneaked in and spirited them away when we weren't looking. Thus our exploration of other values was not just a self-indulgent lark—for many of us in a culture torn apart by war, racism, and official mendacity, it became a necessity. Even if our explorations led us ultimately back to an approximation of traditional practice (and for most of us, I contend, this is the case), both we and these values are different for being based on our own experience and reflection rather than acceptance of tradition; and there is no going back.

GOING BACK TO THE BIBLE

2. Lape's views of the Bible, and Christian tradition are highly tendentious and in many ways superficial. These sources are much more ambiguous and in places even downright evil than he seems prepared to admit. But these traditions are unlikely to become credible to the many Friends who have faced oppression based on them except in a process of study that faces and comes to grips with the dark sides of both; and this Lape has not yet offered. Furthermore, as he should know, the conflict between Law and Gospel, or "tradition" versus an ethic of loving tolerance, goes clear back to the New Testament; it was Paul who twice declared that "*All things are lawful for me.*" (1 Corinthians 6:12.) Quaker history displays the same tension.

3. Lape shows little understanding of the evolution of liberal Quakerism, especially the dominant "Beanite" variety identified by

Geoffrey Kaiser. Its emphasis on individual seeking and autonomy is by no means only a sign of corruption by consumerism society. Though such influence surely is there, this individual freedom was hard-won in an honorable spiritual struggle with an oppressive and unQuakerly fundamentalism, and it is here to stay. Its character should be respected and leavened rather than disparaged.

4. Amid his constant outcries against relativism and the abandonment of testimonies, Lape has failed to notice that there is emerging among liberal Friends, straight and gay, a definite and limiting new consensus regarding sexual ethics. It was even haltingly expressed in the New York *Faith and Practice* draft he disliked so much; it is a standard which makes love and commitment the standard for relationships, and condemns exploitation and abuse of any sort. He may not like this standard, but it is *not* what he says, a sellout sanctification of relativism and consumerism. It points to limits and offers practical criteria which can be applied in actual situations in a disciplinary way. (See AFL#76 for a case study.) One wishes he would recognize this emerging testimony and help refine it, rather than continuing to deny its existence.

GIVING BIRTH TO A LOVING COMMUNITY

5. Further, despite the regrettable tendency on the part of some to yield to the oppressive varieties of gay politics, Quaker gays and lesbians within FGC have worked conscientiously since Berea to make the annual Gatherings a safe and spiritually enriching place for Friends of all ages and orientations. And they have succeeded, as the capacity-straining registration figures of the past four years—including hundreds of families—clearly show. In my opinion these Gatherings have become an environment of acceptance, respect and—yes—tolerance between gay and straight that may be without precedent or rival anywhere else in our culture. I would even go farther: In these Gatherings Liberal Friends are creating through their practice a *religious* witness that is a new and precious and beautiful

thing. Gays and lesbians deserve most of the credit for this, and Lape is missing out on something important by continuing to regard the Gatherings as some stage for the enactment of all the most lurid stories from Berea in a mindless sexual supermarket. They are *no such thing*.

6. Lape seems unwilling to credit the drastic shift in outlook that has taken place particularly among male gays in the wake of the AIDS epidemic. The emphasis on gay marriage, as opposed to the old celebration of promiscuity, marks a spiritual advance as well as better public health policy. It also presents liberal Friends opportunities for constructive ministry that, fortunately, many meetings are seizing while Lape persists in arguing as if nothing has changed.

TOLERANCE: STILL A KEY

7. In such a situation, while tolerance is not the only group virtue, it is still an essential one. To be sure, as Lape's experience shows, it is easy to backslide into a groupthink parody of tolerance that is no more than a new prejudice in disguise. This revelation of our own dark side may be Herb Lape's most important contribution to liberal Quakerism. Yet he too often speaks of tolerance in almost a sneering tone, as if it was of no value compared to his version of orthodoxy. There are ominous implications in this which he should understand and reconsider. He would do better, given his experience, to be preaching on the central importance of authentic tolerance at every opportunity; *that* is a message we need to hear, and hear again.

Despite the length and seriousness of this laundry list of objections to aspects of his message, I must repeat that I have much admiration for Herb Lape and his lonely crusade among liberal Friends. He has shown us a living model of the patience and persistence such an effort requires; he has generally kept his temper and has shown considerably more respect for Gospel Order than many of his critics.

Liberal Quakerism will be

better off when it actually listens and engages his critique, threshing it to separate the wheat from the chaff. As Madsen and Kirk emphasize, notwithstanding their oppression, gay and lesbian Friends are *not* exempted from this process of self-examination, nor from the duty to learn how to deal with criticism in an open and friendly manner. Fortunately this seems increasingly to be the case. But liberal Friends as a group are clearly out of practice in this crucial area of spiritual exercise.

That process of engagement may finally be getting underway. With his talk at New York YM last year, the *Spark* and *Friends Journal* articles this year, his participation in the Quaker Theological Discussion group this summer, and—dare I say it—the examination of his views in these pages, Herb Lape's years as a Quaker pariah may be coming to an end. One test will be whether he succeed in getting appointed to a New York Yearly Meeting committee.

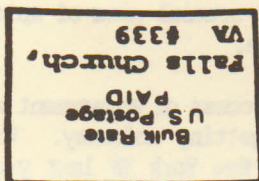
GETTING HERB LAPE COMMITTED

Another test will come next year when New York's *Faith and Practice* review committee—which is taking this year off to "promote healing"—returns to the task of writing about marriage and sex. Can John Maynard and others get off their gay political sarcasm and deal reasonably with the concerns of Lape and other traditionalists? Can Lape and his allies admit that there is more to the draft proposals than supermarket sexual relativism?

Tawdry as it has sometimes been, I believe this saga shows that the Light of Christ can shine in the darkest places, and even through Quaker church politics. I take both Herb Lape's doggedness in pursuing his crusade, and the special atmosphere achieved at recent FGC Gatherings as evidence of that. Still, as the threshing of sexual issues continues among liberal Friends, we could do well to keep before us an observation of G.K. Chesterton: "The Bible advises us to love our neighbors, and also to love our enemies, probably because these are generally the same people."



INSIDE: SEX, POLITICS, AND LIBERAL QUAKERISM--
THE LONG MARCH OF HERBERT LAPE



Address Correction Requested

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THIS MONTH IN QUAKER HISTORY

The title of the lengthy article in the weekly *Pennsylvania Packet* sounded innocuous: "Extract of a Letter from General Sullivan to Congress, 8/25/1777," but Trouble was its message. Trouble for Philadelphia Quakers, that is. The letter stated that "among the baggage taken on Staten Island" (during a raid by revolutionary forces) "...I find a number of important papers....The one from the Yearly Meeting at Spanktown, held the 19th instant, I think worthy the attention of Congress."

Worthy of interest indeed. The purported letter from the Friends of "Spanktown Yearly Meeting" was mainly a list of questions about the current military situation: "Where is Washington? What number of men or cannon?" and the like, along with answers from somewhere in New Jersey describing the location and size of various revolutionary units.

This was hardly religious exhortation among religious pacifists; no, it was military intelligence, what British spies would want to know, and pass on to their masters. This disclosure caused an uproar in

the City of Brotherly Love. Since some of its wealthiest citizens were Quakers who declined to support the revolutionary cause, Friends were suspected of being secret Tory sympathizers. Indeed, some were, but there was no real evidence that they were spies. Until the Spanktown letter.

In the commotion that followed, twenty Friends were arrested by the American forces. Among them was Israel Pemberton, perhaps the richest Friend of his day, other prominent merchants, and rank and file Quakers like Thomas Affleck, a cabinetmaker. Presumably they were arrested on suspicion of spying; one says *presumably* because they were never formally charged. Instead they were held prisoner and sent into internal exile in Winchester, Virginia for over a year. Two of them died there, and are buried by the Hopewell Meetinghouse. The rest, after frequent and eloquent appeals, were finally released and permitted to return home.

There was, incidentally, no such thing as Spanktown Yearly Meeting; or even Spanktown.

A QUAKER WOMAN PASTOR CHUCKLE

A Quaker Woman Pastor (QWP) died and, naturally, went to heaven. At the Pearly Gates, St. Peter described for her the many perks of Heaven, one of the most interesting of which, he said, was that "Whenever you ask someone a question here, they always tell you the truth." "Really?" asked the QWP. "Yep," Pete affirmed; "if there's anybody you've been wanting to ask about something, now's your chance." "You know," said the QWP thoughtfully, there's something I've always wanted to ask the Virgin Mary." "No problem," said St. Peter, "She's right inside."

Sure enough, She was. The QWP approached boldly

and spoke right up: "Mary, I've always wondered about this Immaculate Conception business; what's the real straight skinny on that?"

Mary smiled demurely. "Didn't you read about it in Luke's Gospel?" she replied. "That's pretty much it."

"Pretty much?" the QWP persisted. "What else was there? What did Luke leave out?"

Thus trapped by Quaker forthrightness, the Queen of Heaven hemmed and hawed for a moment, and then admitted shyly, "Well...what Luke left out was that we were really hoping for a girl."