

# BeFriending Creation

Newsletter of **Quaker Earthcare Witness**

**Volume 17, Number 5 • September-October 2004**

## *Just suppose...that Quaker concerns had been voiced*

By **Kim Carlyle**

**QEW Steering Committee Clerk**

**A** GUIDING question during the course of the recent redirection and renaming of our organization was, "Why do we need a *Quaker* environmental organization?" With scores of worthy secular groups working for our cause, what special qualities do Friends bring to this effort?

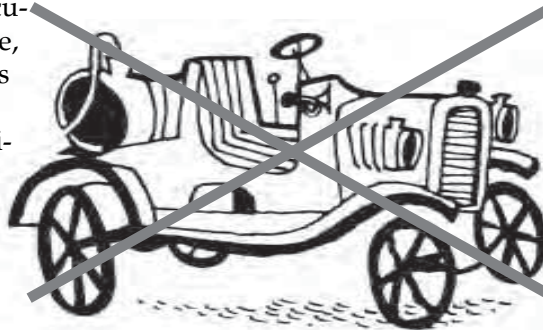
The answer: Our unique religious tradition grounds us and informs us as we reconnect with the complex of natural systems that we call Creation. It provides the spiritual basis for our efforts to prevent further environmental degradation and to restore ecological integrity.

This exercise stretched my mind to ask, "What Friends practices might be useful in the secular world?" And a totally unrelated question that Luddite-leaning Friends (like me) often ponder is, "Does our culture's continual employment of the latest technology improve or degrade the human condition, the human/earth relationship, and the earth itself?"

Putting these questions together led me to muse on how the application of Friends practice in the corporate arena might have tempered the rapid pace of technological development that has altered our culture and our planet.

Suppose that in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, in a hypothetical corpo-

rate boardroom of a horse carriage company, folks were evaluating a proposal to develop a personnel vehicle powered by the new internal-combustion gasoline engine. Suppose also that instead of Roberts Rules, where a simple majority is sufficient for adoption of a mo-



Would Quakers in the corporate area have sent the motorcar back to the drawing board?

tion, they used the deliberate, Spirit-led, Friends business process.

In my imaginary boardroom are folks with vision beyond the bottom line of the company's profit and loss statement. One person expresses a reservation: "This new motor spews noxious fumes. If many people were to begin using this product, our fresh air might suffer."

*Transportation is the largest single source of air pollution in the United States. It causes nearly two-thirds of the carbon monoxide, a third of the nitrogen oxides, and a quarter of the hydrocarbons in our*

*atmosphere... Cars and trucks pollute the air during manufacturing, oil refining and distribution, refueling and, most of all, vehicle use.*

— Union of Concerned Scientists

Another person asks: "Will the large-scale use of this device have negative effects on our neighborhoods and sense of community?"

*The next time you are sitting bumper to bumper in rush-hour traffic, pass by a blighted inner city neighborhood, or stumble upon a new housing development replacing what was once farmland, remember this word: sprawl... It comes as no surprise that one of the major factors exacerbating sprawl is the automobile...*

—Ralph Nader, 1998

*next page ->>*

### **Sharply felt losses**

**THIS SUMMER** Quaker Earthcare Witness has suffered the loss of three of its important elders:

- ☉ Isabel Bliss, Chelsea, Mich., 90, one of QEW's co-founders and beloved former clerk.
- ☉ Reubel Keppel, Gainesville, Fla., 87, a long-time QEW supporter and environmental activist.
- ☉ Howard Kriebel, Medford, N.J., a strong supporter of the Ann Kriebel/ San Luis project.

See pages 2 and 3 for articles about their unique contributions to QEW.

>>from page 1

Another voice says, "I have a concern about the danger of this contraption, that it may maim and injure people..."

*Since the advent of the automobile, more than 3 million people have been killed and 300 million injured in vehicle highway crashes in America—more than 3 times the number of Americans killed, and 200 times the number wounded, in all wars since 1776.*

—National Safety Council

Another says, "I fear that this conveyance and the new roads it requires might have deleterious effects on flora and fauna."

*The Humane Society estimates that around a million wild animals die on U.S. roads every day...Roads form asphalt, gravel, or dirt barriers that chop the natural landscape into fragments. Because some plant and animal species can't or don't cross roads, they're unable to feed or reproduce as effectively in road-fragmented areas and may even die out in locations.*

—Katie Alvord  
in *Divorce Your Car*

One prescient voice asks, "Will our country be able to provide enough fuel for these motorcars? If we must import petroleum, what effects might that have on international relations, geopolitics, and the balance of power?"

*Our national economy depends on oil. Our foreign policy is driven by this dependence on oil. It requires a global military presence to insure the flow...To support our habit, we meddle in other nations' internal affairs to a degree that has earned us widespread enmity.*

—"The Dark Side of Our  
Dependence on Fossil Fuel"  
*Friends Journal*

And finally, "Will motorcar disposal present any problems?"

*...with roughly 10.5 million vehicles reaching the end of their useful lives each year in the United States alone, what to do with all the non-readily reusable or recyclable "stuff" that makes up a car or truck is a huge challenge in and of itself. From cradle to grave, the collective toll from vehicles on our natural world is perhaps more than that of any other consumer product today.*

—U.S. Environmental  
Protection Agency

After a period of quiet reflection, the "clerk" of the board announces, "I sense an uneasiness among board members concerning societal, environmental, health, and safety issues. Board members are not in unity with the proposal to produce this motorcar. We'll

refer these concerns to the clerk of the Research and Development Committee for further seasoning."

**S**ADLY, this was only a day-dream. Friends practice is too complicated for the secular world. But 'tis a gift to be simple. Suppose we could just get our corporate and government leaders to make use of one simple guideline from another culture of sage decision makers? And given that the internal combustion engine was developed about 120 years ago, it would be quite appropriate for them to reflect upon the great law of the Iroquois Confederacy:

*"In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations." ♦*

## Two faithful QEW supporters who will be missed

**REUBEN KEPPEL** of Gainesville, Fla., a long-time QEW supporter and promoter of Earthcare as a witness among Quakers, died at his home in July at age 87.

A resident of Florida since 1955, Reuben taught chemical engineering at the University of Florida until his retirement in 1973. He was a board member for Habitat for Humanity and had been an active Habitat volunteer. He also was a member of the Sierra Club, the Nature Conservancy, the National Wildlife Federation, and other environmental organizations.

The printed program for his memorial service expressed his life's passion with these words, attributed to Chief Seattle:

*"The earth does not belong to us, we belong to the earth. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. We did not weave the web of life; we are merely a strand in it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves."*

**HOWARD KREIBEL** of Medford, N.J., was killed in an automobile accident in June. His wife Dottie was injured and survives him. They were both very active in QEW's Ann Kriebel/San Luis Project, named for their daughter, the late Ann Kriebel.

Susannah McCandless, who has been in Costa Rica working with the La Bella Farm community responded, "Howard was one of my Quaker elders. He and Dottie have helped ground my connection to Ann and her work, which still bears fruit in San Luis.

"I will miss Howard's thoughtful, questioning presence in our meetings, and his insistence that we work always to strengthen Finca La Bella's autonomy, not simply to fund its needs. Eugenio Vargas remembers Howard and Dottie's joy during their visits, riding on horseback and stopping to talk to members of the community. We will remember him here in San Luis and in Monteverde, and hold his family in the Light."

## QEW celebrates the fruitful life of co-founder Isabel Bliss, 1914–2004

**I**SABEL Needham Bliss, one of the co-founders of Quaker Earthcare Witness, died peacefully in her sleep on June 24th at age 89, five months short of her 90th birthday. She will be remembered by countless Friends for her love of God's creation and for her skilful leadership in organizing Friends to protect it.

A nurturer by trade (she was trained and worked professionally as a nurse), Isabel had always been intrigued by how close in meaning were the ideas of wholeness, health, and holiness. "My concern for the environment as a spiritual issue seemed to grow naturally from awareness that anything is a part of everything. It's about the wholeness of Creation," she said in a 1994 interview for *BeFriending Creation*. "Sin, defined as what separates us from God and each other, has an environmental component; we are called by God to respect and care for life."

Isabel said she learned a lot about that growing up on a farm in northeast Massachusetts. "It was a very simple life, but we were not overly conscious about it. In those days you conserved and recycled as naturally as you breathed."

"Isabel's life was one of 'let your life speak,' her husband Bill Bliss wrote recently. "She discovered Quakers when she was a volunteer in an American Friends Service Committee Student Peace Project in the summer of 1938. She founded and became a member of Cleveland Friends Meeting in 1939.

"Her profession as a registered nurse led her to Marseilles, France, in 1940–1941, where, under the American Friends Service Committee, she had responsibility for a colony of 70 children, refugees from the Spanish civil war.



**ISABEL BLISS, with her husband Bill, at a fund-raiser for FCUN at the 1992 FGC Gathering in Canton, N.Y.**

"She also spent two years, 1942–1943, as a nurse in a mission in Ecuador, and this was followed in 1944–1945 as a nurse for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Authority (UNRRA), in Egypt, Italy, and Yugoslavia, working with Yugoslav refugees.

"In all the above ventures she quietly and clearly let it be known to others her dedication to the Quaker testimonies.

"When attending the Friends General Conference in Oberlin, Ohio in 1987, she was asked by Bill Howenstine to chair an assembly of environmentally concerned Friends seeking the founding of a national committee to spread the Quaker concern for a testimony for the holiness of Creation, and to let our lives speak to this testimony.

"Quaker environmentalist Marshall Massey had addressed the Conference on the necessity for such a testimony. This was the birth of the Friends Committee on Unity with Nature (FCUN), later

renamed Quaker Earthcare Witness.

"In the fall of 1988, concerned Quakers met at the Bliss home in Chelsea, Michigan, to organize FCUN, appointing officers and setting up committees, and drafting bylaws to let us incorporate as a tax-exempt, non-profit organization. Isabel was clerk of FCUN from October 1990 to October 1992. In 1993, she became general secretary of the organization, with Bill as office manager and head of finance. FCUN was headquartered in the northwest corner of the Bliss living room until 1995, when Ruah Swennerfelt became paid general secretary and the offices were relocated to Vermont.

"The years under Isabel's clerking were formative and productive for FCUN. Early morning outdoor worship was initiated at the FGC Gathering. An FCUN Nature Center—a source for information on environmental concerns, and a location for speakers—was established as a continuing event at the Gatherings. FCUN committees were established to explore population, sustainability, and other concerns from a Quaker perspective. A newsletter and many significant pamphlets, booklets, and resource books were produced. FCUN representatives participated in the 1992 UN Earth Summit and in later conferences on population and sustainability. The Ann Kriebel/San Luis Project, begun in 1993, helped secure land for landless citizens of the San Luis Valley near the Monteverde Cloudforest Reserve in Costa Rica."

Isabel will be remembered for the key role she played in making Quaker Earthcare Witness the vital witness for Earthcare within the Religious Society of Friends that it has become today.❖

See letter on page 10 from Amy and Paul Weber, two other co-founders and close friends of the Blisses.

## 'Hands-on' opportunities generate new interest at Earthcare Center

By Louis Cox

STAFF and volunteers of Quaker Earthcare Witness created a more "hands-on" Earthcare Center at this year's Gathering, which turned out to be quite popular.

The shift was largely the result of feedback from last year that most Friends are now familiar with QEW's message but are needing more help in reducing the impacts of their own lifestyles.

Inspired by the interactive "Peaceable Rainforest" exhibit that Amy and Paul Weber rigged up for the 1992 Gathering, Friends this year put together an imaginative "Simpler Living/Eco-Friendly House." As the centerpiece for the QEW Earthcare Center, the house suggested designs, products, and lifeways that can be more spiritu-

ally rewarding, as well as more ecologically sustainable, than what the prevailing materialistic culture offers.

The Simpler Living/Eco-Friendly House was solar- and wind-powered and equipped with energy-efficient appliances. The living room was geared to conviviality, not television-watching. There were board games, books, and musical instruments to stimulate lively interaction and creative expression. Although the "walls" of the house were painted backdrops made from bedsheets, it was surprising and gratifying to see how many Gathering attendees took time to settle into one of the comfortable chairs and engage in easy conversation and play. One woman found the "parlor" to be a perfect place to relax while she ate

her sack lunch. On display in the "bathroom" and "kitchen" were a variety of Earth-friendly household products (courtesy of the folks from Seventh Generation) and Fair Trade goods, as well as many old-fashioned household items (clothes drying racks and non-motorized carpet sweepers, lawn mowers, and kitchen implements) that are part of a slower pace of life that Americans have largely forgotten.

The back door of the house led to displays of various energy-saving products on the market, as well as the regular tabletop displays of QEW literature and programs.

Around the corner was a table where dozens of Friends took an "Ecological Footprint Quiz," then placed construction-paper cutouts of their actual footprints on a chart with others as they vied for prizes for having the best scores in various categories.

In contrast to previous years, there was a lot more in the Center to engage children. In addition to coloring books with environmental themes, there were Earth-friendly games, and a pedal-powered generator that few children (as well as adults) could resist. Nearby were tables stocked with environment-related books and periodicals for general browsing.

With these and other attractions, the walk-in traffic at the Center in the afternoons was estimated to be triple what it typically had been in previous years.

QEW staff and volunteers were very pleased this year to have been given a very large space (a cafeteria with copious natural lighting) for all of these activities. This made it possible for special-interest groups to meet in the same space, a distinct advantage when it came to encouraging interest group participants to check out the Center's



**ABOVE LEFT:** Photovoltaic systems are demonstrated near the Earthcare Center.

**ABOVE:** QEW's Hollister Knowlton presents prizes and a certificate to Paul Mays, for having one of the best scores in the Earthcare Center's "Ecological Footprint Quiz."

**LEFT:** David Glassberg leads an attentive afternoon interest group on the topic "Sustainability and the American Dream."

next page ->>



**LEFT:** Ralph Johnson gets a better appreciation for the electricity most of us take for granted, as he tries to light a lamp with a pedal generator.



**RIGHT:** The Huber-Feely family of Tenn., find themselves at home in the yurt-like "Simpler Living/Eco-Friendly House" at the Earthcare Center in Amherst, Mass.

displays. The only drawback was the lively music and conversations that occasionally drifted from the Simpler Living/Eco-Friendly House and competed with the speakers.

The QEW Program Committee did an outstanding job of lining up highly qualified and interesting local resource people for well-attended special interest groups. Discussion topics included permaculture principles, Earth-friendly house design, the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, protection of the world's freshwater resources, sustainability and the American Dream, solar energy technology, and world food production issues.

Back by popular demand was Earth Mama (QEW's Joyce Rouse, a professional singer-songwriter from Nashville), who led rousing sing-alongs with Earthcare themes.

Also scheduled were guided field trips to several important ecological sites in the Amherst area.

Outside the Center, Don Campbell, a QEW supporter and solar energy consultant from western Massachusetts, set up various displays of photovoltaic and windpower equipment.

Putting all these programs and exhibits together involved a prodigious amount of planning and preparation. But by finding out what Friends are most interested in and working to meet those needs, QEW is on its way to playing a greater role in the future. ♦

## Tennessee family attending the FGC Gathering express vision of living in harmony with nature

**IN EARLY JULY 2004** Mt. Toby (Mass.) Friends Meeting generously offered camping and the use of their facilities as a simple-living option to make the FGC Gathering in nearby Amherst more affordable to me and other Friends.

As I prepared and ate breakfast, I was privileged to overhear many conversations about farming between Jill Horton-Lyons, a member of Mt. Toby Meeting, and Heidemarie Huber-Feely and her husband Stephen, who live in a yurt with their four children, Emanuel, Angelica, Noah, and Sylvan, on a small farm in a cove in the Cumberland Mountains near Sewanee, Tenn. They own 13 acres, which will soon be enlarged to 26. Mountains surrounding their farm have been purchased by the Nature Conservancy and the states of Tennessee and Alabama. The area is a temperate rainforest, a bio-gem of great biodiversity.

Heidemarie showed photographs, helping me understand some of their innovative ideas about farming. A hedgerow serves as a green barn, protecting cows, calves, and goats, who can hunker down there when the weather is inclement. Pecan trees provide nuts as well as shaded pasture for sheep. A patch of pawpaw trees produce a delicious fruit not found in grocery stores.

As a young person, Heidemarie had had a deeply formative and inspiring experience at Temenos, a Quaker spiritual retreat center in western Massachusetts. Stephen grew up in the southern Appalachians and spent many years in environmental education. Together they express their shared vision of living simply in harmony with nature on many levels. As parents, they are committed to homeschooling their children on the farm, while providing secure family relationships. At the next level they are working on creating an eco-village, a community of people striving for a lifestyle which sustains and supports the natural ecosystem and a more just society.

This intentional community would be centered around Quaker worship, which would be open to another level, the local community, as a place for Meeting. Finally, the eco-village would extend its vision beyond the local area by hosting spiritual and educational retreats aimed at healing our connection to nature. Heidemarie and Stephen welcome communication from others who share these interests. They can be reached at 265 Sacred Earth Ln., Winchester, TN 37398; 931/967-1423; [huberfeely@yahoo.com](mailto:huberfeely@yahoo.com).

—Penny Jakim  
Saunderstown, R.I.

## *Food & Faith: Justice, Joy and Daily Bread*

Edited by Michael Schut

Published by Living the Good News, Denver, Colo., 2002

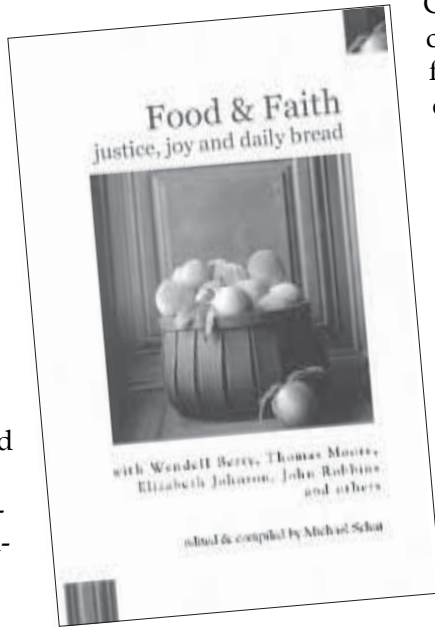
Reviewed by Molly Anderson  
Friends Meeting at Cambridge

**F**OOD & Faith is a delight to read, and a useful resource for anyone who wants to explore the myriad dimensions of food in contemporary culture, political economy, and religious faith and practice. In some ways, Michael Schut's book is a compilation of "best food and farm writing ever." He has selected some of the most thoughtful and thought-provoking essays and book excerpts that are available in this field.

People who are already conversant with the themes he addresses will find many familiar voices: Wendell Berry, Donella Meadows, Thomas Moore, Eric Schlosser, Gary Snyder, Marion Nestle, David Suzuki. There are many other entries from less well-known, but equally provocative and articulate, writers. I particularly appreciated the combination of those writing from an explicitly spiritual framework and those who would probably consider themselves to be secular. This book is more than a good collection of readings, however. It was designed to support study sessions by individuals and groups.

The book begins with an essay by Michael Schut, "Food as Sacramental," in which he explains his own connection with farming communities in southeastern Minne-

sota and how he came to understand the spiritual, political and cultural aspects of agriculture and eating. This is followed by readings on celebration; health, Western diet and politics; spirituality;



Christianity and care of the land; family farms; industrialization of agriculture; genetically modified organisms (GMOs); worker rights and animal rights; hunger; and stories of hope. The selections are almost all by writers living and working in the U.S. or other industrialized countries.

However, you will also find an interview with Ethiopia's environmental minister about GMOs and an essay by Indian scientist and activist Vandana Shiva.

After the readings is a study guide for an eight-week course, with suggestions for shortening to six or four weeks. Using the book in this way does not require an experienced facilitator; the purpose of the study guide is more to set up a structure for learning and reflecting together.

Each session has an explicit purpose, list of selections from the book to read beforehand, facilitator overview, opening meditation or prayer, group reading, discussion questions, and sometimes a suggested video and closing prayer or grace. Most of the sessions also contain an "action step." The sessions are well designed for an

adult audience, but they could be adapted for group of older youth.

The book closes with a description of Earth Ministry, the organization in which Michael Schut works as a staff member; a comprehensive list of groups working on this book's issues, their websites and other contact information; and a bibliography, including videos and video resource centers.

It is the best collection I have seen of writings on food, agriculture, and their spiritual dimensions. The editing is very thorough and helpful, but unobtrusive. Earth Ministry describes itself as an "ecumenical, Christian, environmental, eco-justice oriented, nonprofit organization" that strives to "connect faith and care for creation." They do a great job, judging by this book. Note that Michael Schut edited another volume, *Simpler Living, Compassionate Life: A Christian Perspective*, published in 1999.

## Your donated stamps support video project

**QUAKER EARTHCARE Witness** is again grateful for a generous cash gift from the Quaker Missions Stamp Project, which raises funds from the sale of donated postage stamps to collectors. Proceeds are used to support the "good works" of various Quaker organizations.

Their most recent gift of \$500 will help pay for professional production of a 15- to 20-minute video about the work of Quaker Earthcare Witness, to be carried by QEW representatives when visiting Yearly Meetings and other Quaker gatherings. Previous gifts have supported the Ann Kriebel/San Luis Project and helped QEW buy a digital camera.

Want to support the stamp project? Contact Brad Hathaway at Quaker Missions, P.O. Box 795, Mattapoisett, MA 02739

## Workshop leaders for QEW Annual Meeting have impressive credentials

**W**ORKSHOP leaders with impressive backgrounds have been lined up for the QEW Annual Meeting & Gathering, October 7–11 in Burlington, N.J.

Five workshops have been scheduled for three time slots on Saturday, Oct. 9, following Steering Committee business Thursday evening through Friday evening:

◆ *Experiences of a Friend making federal energy policy*, with **Rick Morgan**. A member of Bethesda (Md.) Friends Meeting, Rick began a four-year term on the District of Columbia Public Service Commission in July 2003. He is a member of the Energy Resources and Environment Committee of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) and serves as chair of its Environment Subcommittee. He served as staff co-chair of the committee's predecessor, the NARUC Energy Conservation Committee, from 1989 through 1991. Before joining the PSC as a commissioner, Rick spent 12 years with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, where he served as a senior energy analyst.

◆ *Green building for Friends schools, meetinghouses, and institutions*, led by **Jennifer Rezeli** and **Scott Kelly**, partners in Re:Vision Architecture, a sustainable design, architecture, and consulting firm. Jenn, who attends Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting, leads community planning and client services. Before coming to Philadelphia and co-founding Re:Vision Architecture, Jenn spent ten years managing, consulting and volunteering for non-profits that share her passion for the environment and education. Her more notable projects include the creation of a regional environmental education non-

profit in South Carolina and the development of a national training program for the U.S. Department of Energy's Rebuild America program. Scott, a practicing architect in Philadelphia for over a dozen years, brings a depth of experience that stems from his experience in approaching sustainable building design from almost all aspects—as building owner, operator, designer, builder, and green building advocate. Known nationally in the vanguard of sustainable design, Scott was the 23rd U.S. Green Building Council L.E.E.D.-certified professional in the nation.

◆ *Energy, Economics, and Social Justice*, led by **Liz Robinson** and **Ed Dreby**. Liz is executive director of the Energy Coordinating Agency in Philadelphia. Ed is a member of Mt Holly (N.J.) Monthly Meeting. He is project leader of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Earthcare Working Group and clerk of Quaker Eco-Witness for National Legislation (QNL), a project of QEW. Ed served for five years as a member of the National Council of Churches' Eco-Justice Working Group and was for three years coordinator of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches' Interfaith Climate Campaign. Ed is a co-author of a new curriculum, "Quaker Eco-101: Friends Testimonies and Economics in an Ecological Context," a tool for QNL's project on Friends Testimonies and Economics.

◆ *State of the States*, led by **Pat Pingel** and **Mike Aucott**. A member of Reading (Pa.) Monthly Meeting, Pat has worked for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for 11 years—with non-point source pollution (water) programs for 10 years and as an Ecological Program Specialist with the De-

partment of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) since April. She is helping to develop department management plans for alternative energy promotion and use, and for invasive species control on state lands. Mike works with the N.J. Dept. of Environmental Protection, Division of Science Research & Technology, where he heads up the Trends Team, which is preparing a State of the Environment 2004 report. He has played a key role in the development of inventories of New Jersey's greenhouse gas and mercury emissions.

◆ *Energy and Spirituality*, led by **Keith Helmuth**, sojourning Friend at Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting. After serving on the faculty of Friends World College during its early years, Keith was active with a variety of community development projects in New Brunswick, including credit unions, producer and marketing cooperatives, environmental protection and enhancement programs, and vocational training for persons with barriers to employment. Keith has written on ecology and culture, with an emphasis on sustainable food systems and technology. In recent years his work has focused on the relationship between religion, world views, and economic behavior.

### Other special events

**Saturday evening**—Panel discussion on Friends Testimonies and Energy.

**Sunday afternoon**—Interpretive tour of the Woolman Memorial (home of John Woolman) in Mt. Holly, N.J., and a program at the Burlington Historical Society.

**Monday morning**—Field trip to the New Jersey Pinelands, a unique, protected habitat of pine and cedar forest that overlie the extensive Cohansie Aquifer.

See page 12 for information on the Annual Meeting keynote speaker.

# Lester Brown warns Friends at FGC Gathering of pending world food crisis

Noted environmental policy expert outlines urgently needed changes

**L**ESTER R. Brown, founder of the Earth Policy Institute, delivered a basically secular address on the pending crisis of world resource depletion to the Friday evening plenary session at the FGC Gathering in Amherst, Mass.

But the relevance of Brown's scientific analysis to the concerns of our faith community was clear: The Quaker testimony of truth-telling stands in opposition to the campaign of falsehoods and disinformation that is leading our civilization toward ecological disaster.

The problem with the current "business-as-usual" approach, Brown said, is that the current market system doesn't tell the truth about the real costs of things. His recent book, *Plan B—Rescuing a Planet under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble*, not only sets the record straight about what is happening to vital resources but offers tools for governments and citizens to work for change. Free copies of *Plan B* were handed out to Friends as they entered the plenary session.

Brown said his best guess is that the first wake-up call will come soon in the form of soaring food prices. This is because of the

**KUDOS to Judy Hyde of Storrs (Conn.) Friends Meeting for her persistence in getting Lester Brown to be a speaker at this year's Gathering. She is a long-time QEW supporter, active in New England YM's Earthcare Ministries Committee, and clerk of FGC's Evening Program Committee.**



**LESTER BROWN, second from left, met with Earthcare activists prior to his plenary talk at the 2004 FGC Gathering in Amherst. Others, from left, are Ruah Swennerfelt, QEW general secretary; Louis Cox, QEW publications coordinator; Stan Becker of the QEW Population Concerns Committee; Judy Hyde, clerk of the FGC Evening Program Committee; and Margaret Mansfield and Ed Dreby, both of Quaker Eco-Witness for National Legislation (QNL).**

combined effects of loss of soil fertility, expanding deserts, unsustainable use of groundwater for irrigation, and rising temperatures from global climate change. World grain harvests have been falling for the last four years, and reserve stocks have been drawn down to their lowest levels in 30 years. The last time this happened the prices of wheat and rice on the world market doubled, Brown said.

China, India, and the United States currently produce one-half of the world grain harvest, but this production has become highly dependent on irrigation in areas where water tables are dropping at alarming rates. "Food production is very water-intensive, and we are quite literally borrowing water from the future," he said.

Food production is also reduced when temperatures rise above optimal levels. For each additional 1 degree Celsius rise in

average growing season temperature there is a 10-percent decline in grain yields. For example, during the intense heat wave in Europe in 2000 (which caused 35,000 deaths) the grain harvest was reduced drastically. The four warmest years on record have occurred in the last six years. The 0.7 degree C. rise since 1970 appears to be part of an accelerating trend, correlating closely with rising levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Precision measurements show that CO<sub>2</sub> has been going up each year, leading scientists to project a 1.4 to 5.8 degree C. rise during this century.

All of these factors are making it harder for farmers to keep up food production. Significantly, grain production in China has dropped in the last five years by an amount that exceeds the entire production of Canada. The scales probably will tip when China—a food production success story so far—is forced onto the world market to buy massive amounts of grain. With 1.3 billion consumers and an \$80 billion trade surplus with the U.S., China will have enough economic clout to bid for the entire U.S. grain production and drive up prices. That is why we have a political stake in a stable China, Brown said.

All around the world, rising food prices can destabilize many governments in countries that import a lot of food. No economic indicator is more sensitive than food prices. *Business and usual obviously is not working. We need Plan B*, he said.

next page->>



The Brown Plan for rescuing the planet rests of three pillars:

- ❖ Increasing water productivity.
- ❖ Drastically reducing carbon emissions through conservation and accelerating the changeover to alternate energy systems.
- ❖ Quickly curbing the growth of human population.

Drip irrigation, which is already used extensively in Israel and other countries, is one of the most promising ways of raising water productivity. It is also important to utilize existing technology to reuse water. "Nature purifies. We have imitate that process."

We must quickly cut carbon emissions by half in ten years if we want to stabilize the climate, he said. This will involve:

1. Phasing out incandescent light bulbs, which consume five times the electricity of compact fluorescents for a given level of illumination. This is a no-brainer, since each CFL purchased represents a 30-percent return on investment.
2. Large-scale conversion to hybrid cars, which could cut gasoline use in half, assuming no change in number of cars and number of miles driven.
3. Expansion of wind power. Advances in turbine design have greatly improved the efficiency and reliability of these systems to the point that wind power is more than competitive with fossil-fuel plans in many areas. Current output is five times that of the summer of 1975. In the U.S., 22 states have commercial wind farms, and the wind potential in North Dakota, Kansas, and Texas alone could satisfy the nation's electric needs.

To stabilize population, it is vital to fill the family planning services gap, Brown said. We also need to create social conditions

that will facilitate a shift to smaller families, including worldwide universal education, supported by school lunch programs. He cited Iran as a recent success story. For 20 years their population had been growing at 4 percent a year, but then the government abruptly changed direction. Population growth has been reduced dramatically through programs of health, nutrition, and female education, as well as courses in family planning practices.

Worldwide this approach would cost about \$62 billion a year, a fraction of what is being spent on armaments, Brown said. "We have the resources to eradicate poverty worldwide if we want to do so. *The time has come to do it.*"

Taking the necessary steps—which Brown compared to the dramatic U.S. conversion to a wartime economy shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor—is largely a matter of leadership, Brown said. The first step is to get the market to tell the ecological truth. Too often the market allows businesses to

externalize environmental, social, and health costs. An example is the true cost to society of cigarette smoking, just in terms of lost productivity and illnesses. If priced accordingly, cigarettes would sell for \$7.18 per pack.

The same goes for unrealistically low gasoline prices in the U.S. If we account for the effects of rising sea levels caused by global climate change, including the likely displacement of 40 million people, the cost of burning fossil fuels in terms of climate change may be unacceptably high, Brown said. "We must not leave this problem for our children to deal with."

If we diverted \$100 billion from our current bloated military budget to this goal, our foreign policy interests would be better served. Today governments and the media are so preoccupied with terrorism that they're losing sight of environmental trends that are undermining our very future. Because of this distraction, the goals of terrorists have been reached in ways they had never imagined, Brown said. ❖

## Calgary Friends endorse the Earth Charter

*Calgary (Alberta) Monthly Meeting recently endorsed the Earth Charter with this minute.* —Kitty Dunn

**CALGARY** Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) believes that all the world's peoples and their institutions need to work together to survive. A sustainable, equitable and peaceful future is the only realistic future.

We believe the Earth Charter is a declaration of the fundamental principles needed to build this just; sustainable and peaceful world society and can inspire people to a new sense of interdependence, shared responsibility and greater hope for the future.

We believe our endorsement

will encourage the study and implementation of the Earth Charter by other faith communities, cultural groups and other individuals around the world. Therefore, we approve the endorsement of the Earth Charter and will so notify the Earth Charter secretariat in Costa Rica. We also recommend that Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends consider endorsing the Earth Charter.

We recognize that our endorsement signifies a commitment by us as individuals and as a faith community to work towards basing all our decisions on ethical principles.

—Jan Clarson, clerk

## New from Quaker Earthcare Witness!

### Earthcare for Friends

A Study Guide for Individuals and Faith Communities



"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof..."  
Psalms 24:1

Edited by Louis Cox, Ingrid Fabianson, Sandra Moon Farley, Ruth Swennerfelt  
Quaker Earthcare Witness

### Earthcare for Friends offers stimulating adult learning materials:

- ✓ *Articles and practical steps that individuals and faith communities can take.*
- ✓ *Questions and queries for reflection and discussion.*
- ✓ *Sources of inspiration—songs, scriptures, prayers, sample sermons, and responsive readings.*
- ✓ *Resources—books, websites, organizations, videos, and free leaflets.*
- ✓ *Activities to illustrate basic ecological issues and help us to focus our energies.*

ISBN: 0-881083-10-1, 270 pp.  
\$18.00 plus \$4.50 S & H

Order directly from  
**Quaker Earthcare Witness**  
173-B N. Prospect St.  
Burlington VT 05401-1607  
[www.QuakerEarthcare.org](http://www.QuakerEarthcare.org)

Also available from the FGC Bookstore, Quaker Hill Bookstore, and other Quaker bookstores.

**A WONDERFUL WOMAN**, Isabel Bliss, who with her husband Bill Bliss helped to keep FCUN alive over the early years, has just died. I think that new members of QEW and readers of BFC might like to know more about her.

Isabel and Bill Bliss (we can only think of them together) were the most important people in our lives for over ten years. Paul met Bill when Bill was leading a workshop on "Preparing for Retirement" at an FGC gathering at Slippery Rock College, Pa., sometime in the early 1980's. Bill helped Paul to think more positively about retirement, then introduced us to Isabel at lunch one day. We got on the subject of Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), and we found we were kindred spirits, all believing in putting faith into action.

A couple of years later, when the FGC Gathering was held at Oberlin College in Ohio, the main speaker warned Friends about the deteriorating environment. A group got together afterwards to talk about what could be done about it. Many were from Bill and Alice Howenstine's workshop on the environment, and others were simply nature lovers. Jack Phillips took over the task of keeping all those present informed [through a newsletter that later became *BeFriending Creation*]. The group had no name, no money, no precedent, but a year later they got together again at Boone, N.C., and a North American Quaker environmental organization was born.

We persuaded the Blisses to join us in a classroom at Boone. They were still passionately wrapped up in FCNL concerns, but could not resist another worthy, but so far neglected, cause. As a chemical engineer, Bill knew something of the scientific basis of global warming and air and water pollution. As a nurse, Isabel recog-

nized the dangers to health and the spiritual significance of maintaining a healthy earth. They saw the obvious connection with FCNL. At first the FCNL executive committee resisted making environmental concerns more than a vague goal, but due partly to the Blisses' unflagging persistence, the environment is now one of FCNL's legislative priorities.

The Blisses were soon part of the FCUN Steering Committee, and Isabel, with her skill at conducting meetings, became our FCUN clerk. As clerk she always reminded us that we must be a "spirit-led" organization. Her words on one of our early pamphlets are still being used:

*"To the testimony of conscientious objection to war, let us add conscientious protection of our planet."*

*"Concern for planet Earth — sacred, fragile, and threatened — led to the founding of the Friends Committee on Unity with Nature (FCUN) in 1987. We felt the need to develop a testimony for an Earth restored as clear as that held by Friends for peace and justice."*

It wasn't long before volunteering in retirement with the Blisses and Howenstines and others became for us as exciting and busy as our lifelong paid careers. We worked hard—preaching environmental concerns and trying to increase the membership of FCUN so that Quakers and others would realize the spiritual imperative of preserving the natural environment. Eventually FCUN was able to employ a paid executive secretary to handle the growing membership interest and financial contributions.

Isabel's spirit-centered passion continued to be our guide, and continues to hover over us now and lead us on.

—Amy and Paul Weber  
State College, Pa.

## Quaker Earthcare Witness Order Form

Name

Address

City/State/ZIP

Country

E-mail

Phone

Home Mtg

Yearly Mtg

Interests

### Please check the appropriate boxes

- 1-year support for Quaker Earthcare Witness  
(includes subscription to **BeFriending Creation**)  
 \$500/US  \$100/US  \$50/US (avg)  \$35/US  Other \$ \_\_\_/US

Make checks payable to **Quaker Earthcare Witness**. Send with this form to  
**Quaker Earthcare Witness, 173-B N. Prospect St., Burlington, VT 05401-1607.**

TOTAL \$

Canadians may contribute through Canadian Yearly Meeting for a tax receipt, starting at \$45/Can. Please send check to Canadian Yearly Meeting, 91-A Fourth Ave., Ottawa, ON K1S 2L1. CYM needs to know that the money is for QEW support. Forward this form to QEW to let us know that you have chosen to contribute through CYM.

## BeFriending Creation

**BeFriending Creation**, Vol. 17, No. 5, September-October 2004. Newsletter of **Quaker Earthcare Witness** (formerly Friends Committee on Unity with Nature). ISSN 1050-0332. Published bi-monthly.

We publish **BeFriending Creation** to promote the work of Quaker Earthcare Witness, stimulate discussion and action, share insights, practical ideas, and news of our actions, and encourage among Friends a sense of community and spiritual connection with all Creation. Opinions expressed are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect those of Quaker Earthcare Witness, or of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). The editor is responsible for unsigned items. Submission deadlines are February 7, April 7, June 7, August 7, October 7, and December 7.

Contents of **BeFriending Creation** copyright ©2004 Quaker Earthcare Witness, except as noted. Permission to reprint **newsletter** material must be requested in advance from the editor.

**Membership** in Quaker Earthcare is open to all who demonstrate commitment to support the work of Quaker Earthcare Witness and who support its work at the Monthly or Yearly Meeting levels, or through other Friends organizations. Quaker Earthcare Witness is a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation; contributions are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

### VISION AND WITNESS

WE ARE CALLED to live in right relationship with all Creation, recognizing that the entire world is interconnected and is a manifestation of God. WE WORK to integrate into the beliefs and practices of the Religious Society of Friends the Truth that God's Creation is to be respected, protected, and held in reverence in its own right, and the Truth that human aspirations for peace and justice depend upon restoring the earth's ecological integrity. WE PROMOTE these truths by being patterns and examples, by communicating our message, and by providing spiritual and material support to those engaged in the compelling task of transforming our relationship to the earth.

**Steering Committee Clerk:** Kim Carlyle, P.O. Box 439, Barnardsville, NC 28709. 828/626-2572; e-mail: [kcarlyle@main.nc.us](mailto:kcarlyle@main.nc.us).

**Gen. Secretary:** Ruah Swennerfelt, 173-B N. Prospect St., Burlington, VT 05401. 802/658-0308; e-mail: [Ruah@QuakerEarthcare.org](mailto:Ruah@QuakerEarthcare.org).

**BFC Editor:** Louis Cox, 173-B N. Prospect St., Burlington, VT 05401. 802/658-0308; e-mail: [Louis@QuakerEarthcare.org](mailto:Louis@QuakerEarthcare.org).

**Website:** [www.QuakerEarthcare.org](http://www.QuakerEarthcare.org)

## N.H. 'Save Our Groundwater' appeal denied

THERE WAS NO JOY in rural New Hampshire when "Save Our Groundwater," a Quaker-led citizens' water protection group, struck out against a hardball-playing international bottled water corporation.

According to Denise Hart, a member of Cambridge (Mass.) Friends Meeting living in the Granite State, in early August a lower court denied the group's appeal of a state permit allowing USA Springs, Inc. to extract nearly a half million gallons of groundwater a day for a drinking water bottling operation.

Last year the group defeated a similar permit application by USA Springs, citing evidence that such massive pumping would draw toxic wastes into the local aquifer and arguing that access to water is a basic human right, not a commodity to be cornered by powerful business interests.

The reason for the state's reversal seems to be "simple politics," following a change in leadership in

state government, Denise told Friends in a workshop at New England Yearly Meeting shortly after the court decision.

The grassroots organization wouldn't hesitate to take the case to the state supreme court,

**The winner?** Denise said, except that it could cost tens of thousands of dollars they don't have, even if their attorneys worked *pro bono*. The corporation, on the other hand, seems willing to spend unlimited funds because of the enormous profits they stand to make selling the bottled water in European markets.

An interview with Denise Hart concerning her involvement in this campaign—part of a growing global battle over water privatization—appears in QEW's new *Earthcare for Friends, a Study Guide for Individuals and Faith Communities*. (See ad p. 10.)

To learn more about the water privatization issue, contact Save Our Groundwater at P.O. Box 182, Barrington, NH 03825, or visit their website, [www.saveourgroundwater.org](http://www.saveourgroundwater.org).



## QEW Annual Meeting will be charged with creative energy

THE ELECTRIFYING theme for this year's Quaker Earthcare Witness annual meeting is

*"Watts Up? Let's get down.*

*Become an energy transformer...ohmmm!!!"*

The aim of the gathering is to provide the alternative energy that Friends need to work for a sustainable future.

We will meet From October 7 to 11 in the Burlington Meeting House, Burlington, New Jersey. The conference center is accessible by public transportation and is near Philadelphia, which has regular Greyhound and Amtrak service.

### **FCNL energy lobbyist is keynote speaker**

Ned Stowe, energy lobbyist for Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), will give the keynote address on Friday, October 8. Having served as legislative secretary for FCNL since 1995, Ned leads FCNL's efforts in two of FCNL's legislative priority areas: to reduce U.S. oil dependence as a source of violent conflict, injustice, and environmental degradation; and to shift federal budget priorities away from military spending toward funding basic human needs at home and abroad.

Ned also coordinates FCNL's legislative program on Capitol Hill. He oversees FCNL's East Asia Policy Education Project and FCNL's Civil Liberties and Human Rights program. He is also serving as interim coordinator of the new FCNL Information Services



Group, with responsibility for overseeing FCNL's print and electronic publications and communications.

Ned is a member of the Sandy Spring (Md.) Monthly Meeting, Baltimore Yearly Meeting.

FCNL is a Quaker lobby in the public interest, established in 1943 in Washington, D.C. FCNL, closely related to the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), is the oldest registered national religious lobby in the United States.

See the Annual Meeting flyer inserted in this newsletter. You may also contact the QEW office for registration forms, or download them from the QEW website, <<http://www.QuakerEarthcare.org>>.

See page 9 for information about the workshops and other special events planned for the QEW Annual Meeting and Gathering.