



BeFriending Creation

Newsletter of Quaker Earthcare Witness

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Beyond organic: *Saving the soul of our food system*

Ruah Swennerfelt & Louis Cox

THE 2007-2008 Peace for Earth Walk took us through many major food-producing regions along the Pacific Coast. We were impressed by the immense scale on which vegetables, fruits, grains, nuts, and livestock are being grown these days, as well as by the organization behind such intensive use of human and natural resources.

At the same time, we were alarmed to see how unsustainable modern farming has become through reliance on non-renewable resources, synthetic chemicals, and a volatile (and frequently unjust) labor market, while putting at risk the health of people, the land, and fragile ecosystems.

While staying at one host home in Oregon, we read a revealing account of an informal meeting in the 1950s between leaders of the European Biodynamic Farming movement and agricultural scientists at the University of California at Davis. The agronomists told their visitors matter-of-factly that there were no more “farms” in California, only production units of the state’s “rice industry,” “almond industry,” “citrus industry,” etc.

We found this to be an apt description for a system of food production that was in the process of losing its soul—its essential connection to land and community.

So it was a refreshing and en-

A recent visit to Fairview Gardens highlights the strengths of community-supported agriculture

couraging experience for us to tour Fairview Gardens, a small but highly productive community-supported agriculture (CSA) operation in Goleta, Calif., some 90 miles



Ruah Swennerfelt, left, shares gardening tips with Tiffany Cooper, education director for Fairview Gardens, a community-supported farm and urban agriculture center in Goleta, Calif.

north of Los Angeles. It was grounded in principles of sustainability that are generally the opposite of those that guide today’s factory farming. We were eager to visit this 12½-acre diversified farm after seeing its dramatic story told in the video, *Beyond Organic—the Vision of Fairview Gardens*, (which can be borrowed from the QEW Video Lending Library).

We started by browsing in Fairview Gardens’ roadside farm stand. The many fresh fruits and

vegetables on sale were so mouth-watering that we would have loaded up if we had been locals instead of travelers. Then we located the farm’s office, a small yurt nestled among fruit trees. We were greeted by the farm’s education director, Tiffany Cooper, who led us on a 45-minute tour. She began with some of the area’s recent history:

This had been agricultural land for more than a century, but by the 1950s only this little farm remained within a sprawling urban landscape. In the 1980s, the farm’s owners, Roger and Cornelia Chapman, were determined to keep the land in organic, agricultural use, so they hired a manager, Michael Ableman, who kept

the farm economically viable while maintaining good relations with its changing community. Besides helping suburban neighbors be more understanding of crowing roosters and the smell of compost piles, the farm’s community-education efforts created a base of local support that has helped it to withstand continuing pressures of land development.

(For a fuller account of this

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inspiring story, we recommend the book, *On Good Land: The Autobiography of an Urban Farm* by Michael Ableman, Chronicle Books, 1998.)

In 1997, after Ableman had left to pursue other agricultural-related interests, the Chapmans turned the land over to a not-for-profit corporation called the Center for Urban Agriculture at Fairview Gardens. They set down two basic conditions: 1) The land must continue to be used as a working organic farm, and 2) it must provide a substantial amount of community education about sustainable food production.

Now, hundreds of school children visit the farm every year, not only to learn where their food comes from but to have the pleasure of digging their fingers into the rich, fragrant loam and experiencing how delightful natural foods can taste. In addition, the farm hosts school gardening programs that give students vital hands-on experience in composting, cultivating, planting, and harvesting during the Central Coast's long growing season.

The staff also lead cooking and gardening classes, teach workshops, organize farm festivals, give lectures, oversee apprenticeships, and provide outreach and consultation to schools and communities nationwide, Cooper said.

As we fed tufts of grass to a small herd of milk goats, we learned that domestic animals played an important role in the farm's nutrient cycle. Clusters of beehives ensured adequate pollination (except for an imported tropical fruit called cherimoya, which has to be hand-pollinated.) We

watched a flock of chickens scratching around under the citrus trees, disrupting the life-cycles of orchard pests while fertilizing the soil with their droppings.

Soil fertility also was boosted by intensive composting, including red worms that rapidly turned crop wastes into rich humus and liquid fertilizer. A large greenhouse was filled with healthy seedlings that would soon replace crops being harvested. Thriving under this intensive cropping system were fields of asparagus, strawberries, and salad greens, as well as many types



HIGH PRODUCTIVITY and quality show the superiority of small, community-supported farms.

of fruit trees.

This little farm was meeting the fresh-food needs of about 300 local families who had purchased shares of its annual harvest. Cooper said. It may be priced a little higher than food from the big distributors, but it also tastes better. That's because it can be picked riper, and varieties can be chosen for flavor instead of for their ability to be shipped long distances.

The farmers and patrons also have a close relationship with the land, which gives them a stake in its productivity and health. While several small tractors were in use, a lot of manual labor was evident. According to Cooper, Fairview Gardens was employing more than 20 people—including seven farm workers

Some of the farm workers and their families lived in small trailers that were parked under large, shady avocado trees. Under a long-range development plan, the trailers would be replaced with standard energy-efficient housing, and the old farmhouse someday

would be remodeled to provide permanent offices for the staff.

ALTHOUGH the educational and outreach programs of the Center required outside fund-raising, the farming operation had always been self-supporting from the sale of produce, Cooper said. (In fact, small organic farms tend to be very productive—and not necessarily more expensive when the true costs of “conventional” farming, including various direct and indirect subsidies, are part of the accounting.)

As non-renewable water and fossil-fuel resources continue to be depleted, the greater reliability and affordability of locally-grown food will become more apparent. If this is the way that more and more people will be fed in the future, we can be thankful that CSAs like Fairview Gardens are there to show how it's done. Go To: <www.fairviewgardens.org>. ❖

Northwest Earth Institute has new food curriculum

A CURRICULUM on food titled, “Menu for the Future” has just been added to the Northwest Earth Institute (NWEI) discussion course materials. The six-session course explores the connection between food and sustainability.

Food discussion course goals

- ❖ To explore food systems and their impacts on culture, society and ecological systems.
- ❖ To gain insight into agricultural and individual practices that promote personal and ecological well-being.
- ❖ To consider your role in creating or supporting sustainable food systems.

Books can be ordered from the NWEI website <www.nwei.org> or by writing to NWEI at 317 SW Alder, Suite 1050, Portland OR 97204, 503/227.2807.

Australia Yearly Mtg. approves Earthcare minute

The produce of the Earth is a gift from our gracious Creator to the inhabitants, and to impoverish the Earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age.

—John Woolman (1720-1772)

WE find delight in the grace of Creation, and are humbled by the richness of its gifts.

Our very existence depends upon sustaining our intimate relationships within nature. Yet much has been harmed or lost forever through our lack of reverence, our ignorance, denial, waste and ill-considered action. We have set ourselves against the Spirit. We have ignored our interconnectedness with all other living things, weakened our own well-being, and we have diminished the opportunity for fair livelihood.

Once our lack of care caused limited damage. Now our thoughtlessness endangers whole ecosystems, and even the entire biosphere, through global warming, pollution, destruction of habitats, and accelerated extinction of species. We also acknowledge that wars, poverty and overconsumption are part of this spiral of destruction. We seek to transform this culture of domination and exploitation, of false witness and idolatry, and instead develop a culture of caring for the planet, preparing for future generations of living things and honouring God's gifts. Each of us must now strive to live a just life which values the air, the waters, the soil, living things, and the processes sustaining all life.

Given the extent of the crisis and the need for transformative change, despair and fear are likely to arise in us all at some stage. We can be set free in the Spirit to live our lives in radically different ways.

We are called to consider the world as an enspirited whole, to accept no boundary to repairing and sustaining the earth for the future, and to appreciate more deeply the creative energy in all living things and life processes. We seek to mend what has been hurt, and to strengthen our courage to discern and bear witness to this spiritual care for the earth.

Friends are not alone on this journey. We must listen to the call of Creation, recognise and respect the profound knowledge and wis-

dom of indigenous peoples and learn from scientific understanding. We will work with those many others already deeply engaged, who make the links between religious belief, lifestyle, social justice, and peace.

We commit to the demanding, costly implications of radically changed ways of living. Let us do so out of joy, celebration, reverence and a deep love of life.

—Adopted at Yearly Meeting
2008, Melbourne, Australia
Judith Pembleton, Secretary

QEW Steering Committee member receives award for writings on population concerns

DICK GROSSMAN, a QEW Steering Committee member, recently received a Global Media Award from the Population Institute for his writings on population issues. Dick is also a member of the QEW Sustainability: Faith & Action interest group.

The award was based on a monthly column called "Population Matters" that Dick, a gynecologist practicing in Durango, Colo., has been writing for the *Durango Herald* for 13 years.

"It was an international event since some of the winners had come from Africa and India to receive their awards in different categories. The *Durango Herald*, itself a past winner of a Global Media Award, is probably the only paper in the country that has a regular column focusing on human population and other issues of sustainability," Dick said.

Below is a sample from his winning article:

"The image of Varanasi that stays with me is not the chanting and bell ringing while seven saffron-robed priests gesture with incense

and flames. It is not the nine clouds of smoke as bodies are cremated on the steps beside the Mother Ganges. It is not the press of dense crowds of people-whom I found to be more comfortable than those in New York City. I am haunted by the lepers.

"This is written on a long-awaited trip to India. My invitation came over 40 years ago with a chance meeting with a man from this country. I told him that I was going to medical school because of concern about overpopulation. He responded, 'Come to India, we need you.'

"Varanasi is the heart of Hindu India. Pilgrims have visited there for centuries because of the cleansing water of the Ganges. Believers go there to die, since it is most auspicious to have your soul released by cremation beside this holy river. Perhaps you have seen images of this in glossy magazines.

"But the pictures leave out an important part of Varanasi. The image that sticks with me is of people lining our path to the Ganges. Squatting with quiet, upturned, stolid faces, they held empty begging bowls with mutilated hands." ♦

Unprecedented mobilization on climate & energy is needed now

By Ned Stowe,
Sr. Legislative Secretary, FCNL

THE climate is changing fast. Many around the world today are already experiencing the harmful effects. Scientists warn that our grandchildren will likely suffer far more if we continue business-as-usual greenhouse gas pollution today. The longer we delay restoring the earth's carbon cycle to balance, the higher the price future generations will pay. Mobilization to prevent more extreme, dangerous climate change—on unprecedented national and global scales—is urgently needed now.

The good news is that, *today, we in the U.S. have all the resources, creativity, and know-how needed to help lead the world toward a safe, stable climate.* The trouble is that the President and Congress (and the broader public) remain unconvinced of the urgent need for action, and lobbyists for the powerful greenhouse gas-emitting industries are doing everything they can to keep it that way. Until Congress enacts strong, comprehensive legislation to reduce emissions, the U.S. economy will not make the revolutionary shift that is needed toward energy conservation, energy efficiency, and renewable energy.

In June, the U.S. Senate is expected to begin floor debate on "**America's Climate Security Act**" (S. 2191), as introduced by Sens. Lieberman (Conn.) and Warner (Va.) and as amended by the Environment and Public Works Committee. S. 2191 represents the best attempt in Congress so far to craft bipartisan legislation to reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions

across most of the U.S. economy.

S. 2191 contains many commendable provisions. It would start putting a price on greenhouse gas emissions and set a timetable for emissions reductions. It would establish flexible, market-based mechanisms to encourage private industry to develop and pursue least-cost methods to reduce emissions. It would dedicate resources to international forest protection, domestic agriculture and forestry (to store carbon), worker transition assistance, low-income energy assistance, wildlife adaptation, and international assistance for climate change adaptation in developing countries. And it would strengthen energy efficiency standards for buildings and appliances.

However, the bill falls far short of what is needed in many ways. The U.S. needs to cut emissions deeper and sooner. The pace of emissions reductions in S. 2191 lags well behind the pace that scientists estimate will be necessary to avoid dangerous climate change. The Natural Resources Defense Council estimates that S. 2191 would reduce emissions only 18-25 percent below 2005 levels by 2020, and by 62 to 66 percent below 2005 levels by 2050. Scientists warn that to avoid the most dangerous, extreme climate changes, the U.S. and other developed countries must cut emissions 25 to 40 percent below 1990 levels (which were about 16 percent lower than 2005 levels) by 2020 and 80 to 95 percent below 1990 levels by 2050.

Initially, S. 2191 would give away almost 40 percent of pollution allowances to polluting industries, declining to zero by 2030.

This could provide huge windfall profits to polluters while placing an especially heavy burden on low-income ratepayers.

The assistance to low-income households needs to be increased, and the programs better designed. Low-income households will need more than just help with utility bills; higher energy costs will also affect household transportation, food, and other costs of living. More people will need help than the provisions in this bill would reach.

The bill should allocate more funds to international adaptation assistance. The UN Development Programme estimates that developing countries need an additional \$80 billion per year now—in addition to ongoing development assistance—to respond to the impacts of climate change today.

CONGRESS needs to do better. Please urge your senators to *strengthen* S. 2191, and urge your representatives to draft an even stronger bill.

We also need legislators and a president who will do better next year. In the campaign season ahead, please urge candidates to support:

- ❖ Reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by *at least 25 percent below 1990 levels by 2020* and at least 80 percent by 2050.
- ❖ Placing a moratorium on building new, polluting, coal-burning power plants.
- ❖ Requiring electric utilities to generate at least 20 percent of their electricity from renewable energy sources by 2020.
- ❖ Helping poor and vulnerable people at home and abroad advance toward the climate-friendly economy of the future.

Please contact <ned@fcnl.org> or <www.fcnl.org> for more about how you can get involved. ❖



Insurmountable Risks: The Dangers of Using Nuclear Power to Combat Global Climate Change

By Brice Smith

IEER Press and RDR Books,
2006, ISBN 1-57143-162-4, 430pp

Reviewed by Louis Cox

AFTER lengthy deliberation at its October 2007 Annual Meeting, Quaker Earthcare Witness minuted its strong opposition to nuclear power as part of the solution to harmful climate change, *“based on everything we know about the current state of nuclear technology and our understanding of its impact and risks for people and the earth.”*

Some Friends still do not want to close off this option, because they do not believe conservation and increased use of renewable energy can replace enough fossil-fuel power to significantly reduce global CO₂ emissions.

But Brice Smith offers several reasons why nuclear power cannot be considered a serious alternative:

- ❖ Using nuclear fission to boil water for generating electricity is inherently more expensive than burning fossil fuels, and therefore nuclear plants are unlikely to displace existing fossil-fuel-powered plants or prevent new ones from being built.

- ❖ Wind power has already overtaken nuclear when it comes to providing clean, affordable, and reliable electricity.

- ❖ Risks of nuclear accidents and terrorist attacks on nuclear facilities have been greatly *understated*.

- ❖ Civilian nuclear power cannot be separated from the problem of nuclear weapons proliferation.

- ❖ There is no feasible solution in sight to safe, long-term “disposal” of nuclear wastes (which are far more radioactive and dangerous than enriched uranium).



Smith, a scientist for the Institute for Environmental and Energy Research, puts these issues into an ecological perspective when he traces the evolution of “peaceful” nuclear power: Because of the extremely high cost of enriching uranium and inducing chain-reactions, nuclear fission initially was considered to have only military applications. Using it to generate electricity for the civilian market was not considered cost-effective.

So why the rush to build nuclear power plants in the early 1950s, when oil and coal were still cheap and plentiful and no one imagined that CO₂ from burning fossil fuels would someday pose a grave ecological problem? The answer, says Smith, was *Cold War politics*: After the Soviet Union acquired a nuclear capability it announced it was exploring ways to use it for peaceful purposes, which raised its standing in the international community. The U.S. government followed suit with its own “Atoms for Peace” program. It gave generous subsidies and other incentives for the construction of civilian nuclear power plants, de-

spite the fact that fission technology and engineering were still in their infancy. Utility executives continued to balk because of incalculable risks until the Price-Anderson Act put a significant cap on their legal liabilities (i.e., transferred most of the risk to taxpayers and the general public).

Nuclear politics continue today as the federal government, in a desperate attempt to get the embarrassing lack of a permanent nuclear waste repository off its back, has been suppressing mounting evidence that Yucca Mountain, the only site currently under consideration, is turning out to be very unsuitable for that purpose.

ACCORDING to Smith, this “*Ready, Fire, Aim*” approach to promoting nuclear power has given us a legacy of more than 100 aging plants—many of them problem-prone—that would be shut down immediately if all government subsidies were stopped.

“Whether one considers plutonium or carbon dioxide emissions, there has been a consistent failure to ask and pursue vigorously the answers to a few simple questions before large-scale deployment of new technologies: Is there a potential for irreversible catastrophic damage if the system does not work? What is the fate of the most dangerous materials? How many generations could be affected?”

“...If we do not answer such questions, then it is possible that wide-ranging, potentially irreversible effects will damage the common good now and for uncountable generations into the future, even as individuals derive transient benefits from the technologies....” ❖

Making gifts for Mother Earth

**Betsy Caulfield, co-clerk
Bloomington (Ind.) Friends QEW**

THE Earthcare Witness Committee at Bloomington (Ind.) Friends Meeting created a fun and informational activity for our annual Christmas party. Since Mother Earth gives so much to us, we thought it would be a good idea to give something back to her. Though it could be done any time of the year, the Christmas season seemed an especially apt time to honor the Quaker testimony of simplicity.

Our gifts were divided into two categories: items you could give to someone that benefited nature, and things you could do yourself—most of which were totally free, some of which would actually save you money, eg. switching to compact fluorescent light bulbs.

Our local newspaper very conveniently ran a nice article one Sunday listing various local and national Earth-friendly groups for which you could give someone a membership or a donation in their name. Such ideas included everything from the Arbor Day Foundation to adopting various endangered animals to our local Sycamore Land Trust, to a yearly pass to Indiana's state parks.

To this list we added the AFSC pamphlet *Gifts with Heart & Hope*; Heifer International; and environmental/spiritual magazines such as *Yes!*, *Orion*, and, of course, *Be-Friending Creation*. Next came environmental organizations, both local and national, with contact information. Obviously, the list of relevant groups and charities is endless, and limited only by the scope of a Meeting's special interests. We tended to lean towards local as we are blessed in the



Bloomington area with many such organizations needing our attention.

We made a colorful tri-fold display poster of all these suggestions, which we put on our display table, along with a beautiful paper-maché globe of planet Earth, painted in shades of blue, green, and brown, with white clouds to look as Earth appears from space, made by QEW co-clerk Ria Collee. Last, we cut a slot in the top of the globe.

Next, we looked through the many lists of "ways to save our planet," with my favorite being the one from the Spring 2006 issue of *Yes!*, which they called "*50 Ways to thrive and survive the next 10 years.*" Other good places to look are: newdream.org/holiday and justgive.org. Out of these many suggestions, plus a few of our own, we came up with a list of 15.

Then came the fun part. Pooling our old Christmas cards—we knew we'd find a way to reuse them someday!—we cut the fronts off each card, folded them in half, then wrote on each card one of our 15 gifts above and below the fold, making five copies of each gift. The idea was that Friends, if so led, could select one or more of the ideas, cut the card in half, put one half in the globe and take the other one home to remind them of their gift. We also had a stack of empty cards, folded in half, where Friends could write their own gift ideas.

There are so many areas that need our help, we had a hard time limiting ourselves to just 15. The

most popular selection, where all 5 cards were taken, was, "I will pay attention to environmental issues and contact my representatives and senators when action is needed."

There was a four-way tie for the second most popular, with four taken: "I will plant a tree in the coming year," "I will use cloth bags when shopping," "I will contact our newly-elected representative in Congress (we had just chosen a Democrat to replace the Republican in our district) demanding action on global warming," and "I will remember to change my furnace filter monthly."

The least popular response, with none taken, was "I will try to use alternative transportation (walk, bike, carpool, or take public transit) at least once a week." The next least popular, with only one taken, were: "I will begin composting," and "I will make my yard more wildlife-friendly." As we are already a fairly environmentally-aware Meeting, we felt that many of the options we listed were already being done by Friends. Also, we didn't note how many of the blank cards we started with, so—short of opening up the globe—which was too pretty to ruin—there was no way to see how many had written their own.

I THINK everyone who participated enjoyed it; I know we had fun creating our table. If we do it again, next time we will add a section with gift ideas especially suited to children—which we neglected to include this time. I was reminded of this when I overheard one family writing their own cards, with one little boy saying he was going to make sure the bird feeder was always full.

As is often the case, the children lead the adults. ❖

Jim Merkel: *Sustainability means sharing and caring*

JIM MERKEL, author of the book *Radical Simplicity*, believes that *peace, justice, and Earthcare are global issues that begin at home*. Merkel is also a good example of the kind of *inward transformation* that is needed for meaningful change at the individual and societal levels.

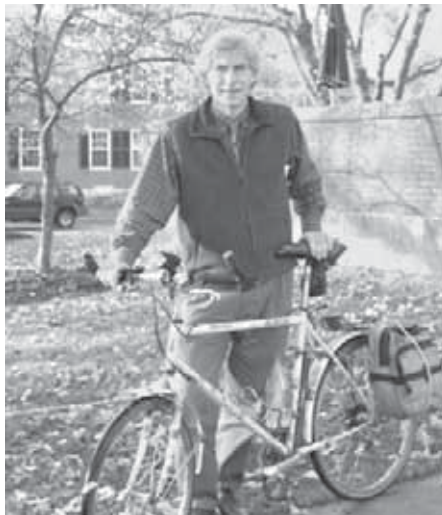
Merkel told Friends at the 2007 QEW Annual Meeting that his own personal transformation began with disillusionment over the materialistic version of the American Dream he had been pursuing. Around the age of 30, after becoming very successful as a “cryptographics designer” he realized that the products of his work were used by international arms dealers. He had been raised to be responsible for his actions, and he could not continue denying that his career and the lifestyle it supported made him a party to oppression.

Merkel said his growing anguish became a crisis after the giant Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska in the late 1980s, which helped him to see that he and other consumers of oil were complicit in such ecological disasters. He soon quit his job and began looking for ways to radically simplify his life.

“The best way to fight the corporations is to starve them; our dollars are votes,” he concluded, as he cut his living expenses enough to live below the taxable income—not only to reduce his need for fossil fuels and other limited resources but to avoid paying for war. He learned how to grow alot of his food and began using a bicycle to get most places. Things like this got easier as they became habits, he said.

The challenge was demonstrating to other affluent North Americans that a lower level of material consumption could lead to greater personal happiness—an important

condition for sustaining most activities. In 1993 Merkel and William Alexander (a QEW supporter) visited the state of Kerala in southern India, where people reportedly enjoyed a high quality of life, compared to the rest of India, while living on a relatively low incomes. He wanted to learn how much of this might be applicable to the industrialized world.



Jim Merkel at Dartmouth College

Merkel went on to collaborate in the “ecological footprint” studies of Mathis Wacknagel and William Rees. In 1996 he started the Global Living Project, a series of experiments in simple living that pioneered ways to measure the ecological impacts of diet, transportation, and other lifestyle factors.

In 2005 he became Dartmouth College’s first sustainability coordinator. The program’s goal, he said, was to put caring leaders out into the world. It also tried to show the tangible benefits to the college of incorporating sustainability into its facilities and operations. (After Merkel had stepped down from his work at Dartmouth in 2007 to return to the Global Living Project, Dartmouth earned the high grade of A-minus from the Sustainable Endowments Institute.)

Ultimately, our civilization has to downshift enough to have a “zero ecological footprint,” Merkel pointed out. This is easier to visualize from the examples of leaders like the Interface Corporation, a carpet manufacturer that has reduced its waste going to the landfill by 70 percent, and its greenhouse gas emissions by 60 percent.

The problem with most sustainability programs that Merkel surveyed is that they ignore the fact that humanity is already consuming the bulk of the earth’s biological output. To be truly sustainable, we would need to leave 80 percent of the earth alone, to give adequate room for other species to thrive. But that would require the worlds’ current population of six and a half billion to be able to live on about *one acre* per person.

Merkel said the only way to change this equation would be to gradually shrink the human population to about *one billion*. This could be done over a 100-year period if the average family had only one child. Even if we managed to stabilize the current population with an average of two children per family, future generations would continue to face brutal poverty and warfare. “*I am willing to support only those solutions that have no losers,*” he said.

MERKEL concluded by saying true sustainability can be achieved only if it is grounded in sharing and caring.

“*Do you remember what it was like when you first fell in love?*” he asked. “*Weren’t you willing to make significant changes in your life to please that person? In the same way, when we fall in love with the earth, making necessary changes to care for won’t feel like a sacrifice.*” ❖

—Louis Cox

Marshall Massey calls us to spirit-led action...again

Hollister Knowlton
QEW Steering Committee Clerk

TWENTY-ONE years ago, Marshall Massey's plenary talk at the FGC Gathering at Oberlin College electrified a small group of Friends, who, with great energy, founded Friends Committee on Unity with Nature. Marshall asked that evening, "Where are Quakers on the issues of climate change, loss of biodiversity, and overpopulation?"

More recently, Marshall has wondered just what Friends have accomplished since then, and how they are called to act, now, in the 21st century.

On a raw, overcast weekend in mid-March, 18 of us gathered at New York Yearly Meeting's Powell House to hear what Marshall has to say to us today. (See Friend Angela Manno's reflections on her experience on the following page.) Entitled "Earth in the Headlines, How are Friends Called to Respond?", the weekend was not quite what some of us had expected. Instead of concentrating on the "how" and "what" of responding to the global ecological crisis, it was a deeper, more contemplative look at what it was that set early Friends afire and enabled them to make such an impact. What was it that brought forth in this small group of earnest men and women a witness so powerful that they brought about profound changes in the social systems of their time—the end of slavery, the reform of prisons, the establishment of women's rights and of fair and fixed prices, public schools, and more?



Hollister Knowlton

If we understand the source of that spiritual power, said Marshall, and if we could find it for ourselves today, might we who care so deeply about transforming the human-Earth relationship be able to make more of a difference than we are making?

His answer, which will soon be available as a 27-page paper on his website <journal.earthwitness.org> (—just that, no "www"), lies in the what early Friends meant by being "convinced" by the "Light." (Friends today often use the word "convinced" to refer to the same thing.)

It was a personal transformation, resulting from having the "Light" (of Christ, or God) reveal one's "sins" and shortcomings and greatly enlarge one's sense of responsibility for the world. The men and women who had such an experience were changed inwardly forever. And their behaviors and lives were profoundly changed, as well.

Most of us there at Powell House were eager to get to the specifics about ways in which Friends might respond in some effective way to climate change, and massive species extinction—and to human overconsumption and overpopulation that exacerbate both. It wasn't until Sunday that Marshall shared the thoughts that had come to him. I won't list his suggestions here, because they deserve more space and context. Also, I'd rather you had the opportunity to read his actual words.

We ended the weekend with a rich and powerful worship sharing, realizing that we had only begun the discernment process.

Each of us now must help lift up that conversation in every Quaker circle in which we move.

At the time of this writing, Marshall has not yet posted either the 27-page paper on conviction and the Light (Called "the Yoga of Christ") or his "Why Not Go for Big Dreams?—Five Projects Our Society Could Take Up." The latter is a provocative and inspiring piece—a *must* read for all of us and another wake-up call. It is based on an excerpt from the talk Marshall gave at Baltimore Yearly Meeting in 2006, after he had responded to a leading to walk from his home in Omaha, Nebraska, to the BYM sessions in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Instead, watch his site for these papers, and check the next *BeFriending Creation*.

IN the meantime, ask yourself: "What might Friends do, corporately, that could capture the attention and the hearts of our fellow Earthlings?" I'm thinking of the Amish and their witness of plain dress and horse-drawn buggies. There are many Amish among us here in Philadelphia, and my sense is that, while they are much respected, these particular witnesses are seen more as oddities than as a having a message that inspires change. On the other hand, their forgiveness of the person responsible for the deaths of their children in a school shooting last year caught the attention of the nation.

Is there an action that we Earthcare witnesses could take that would wake up the world? Or is the answer in lifting up and supporting our individual leadings and witness for the earth? As a member of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting often says, "The Spirit that lifted up Lucretia Mott and John Woolman is not done with us yet!" ❖

Reflections on a watershed moment in Earthcare ministry

THE first workshop in the Earthcare Series at Powell House near Old Chatham, N.Y., was a watershed event in the history of Earthcare Witness within the Religious Society of Friends. [See the January-February 2008 *BeFriending Creation*.]

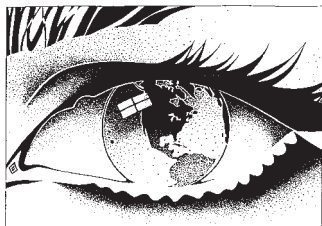
Marshall Massey's March workshop, "Earth in the Headlines: How Are We Called to Respond?" began with the simple assertion, "We have a responsibility to serve the force that's propelling us into the future."

It was clear that this is not just about survival. It is a sacred duty. What is that force, I asked myself? For me, it is the Life of all the life we see around us. The Intelligence

that guides the stars and galaxies on their journey through the universe, that same Intelligence that brought forth the most exquisite forms of beauty and highest forms of art and spirituality.

Throughout the weekend, we were challenged to reclaim the Quaker traditions of conviction and corporate witness and laid the foundation for Friends being a truly powerful witness for

the earth. We came away with the certainty that now is the time for Friends to turn their passion and concern for our beautiful Earth into united action. Marshall inspired us with a powerful and visionary set of proposals for far-reaching action that will not only



make a significant impact on the condition of our planet but be a means to build up the Religious Society of Friends, to make us once again noticeable to the wider world.

It was also clear that there is a tremendous hunger to learn how to become skillful witnesses and to begin to organize on a large scale.

To that end, a conversation has begun about how those with an urgent concern and passion for the fate of the earth can receive the training in witnessing and organizing that is being so urgently called for. It is in this urgency that I sense most strongly "the force that is propelling us into the future."

Lastly, it was clear that a growing core of "Earthcare ministers" is forming and that now is the time to link up with like-minded souls to move forward in this crucial common work.

—Angela Manno
New York Yearly Meeting's
Environmental Working Group

Peace for Earth Walk, *from p. 12*

they often will open up when they sense that someone is willing and able to listen.

Developing a new relationship with time. When all you have to do in a day is walk, time slows down and becomes more expansive. Because we were walking, we encountered many more people, saw many more details in the landscape around us, and experienced more interesting places than if we had traveled in any other way. I think of the time we walked by a group of Mexican day-laborers who were sitting on some steps. When one of them asked, in English, where we were going, we stopped to talk. The man was so taken with our story that he asked more questions while translating into Spanish for the others. Their

sparkling eyes told us that they appreciated the time we were taking to talk with them. We hope we can bring this sense of expanded time to our daily lives (something we have found happens more readily in Latin America). We hope to be more grounded and attuned to what people and the natural world have to offer.

Experiencing true humility. We've been quite the celebrities as we've walked into Friends Meetings and homes. Some people have made a fuss over us, and we have begun to joke that we're probably the most photographed Friends of 2008. But we don't think of ourselves as having done something grand and special. Because of all the people who've gone out of their way to



support us, this has become literally a walk of thousands. We see our efforts as a small piece of a larger whole—a quilt piece in all the beautiful work that so many Friends are involved in. We could call it spiritual humility. It's not that we don't recognize our pilgrimage as something unique, but we also see it as something coming from the Spirit instead of our own egos.

Maybe ultimately we have learned about Love being the first motion. As we entered into the intimacy of people's homes, listening to their stories, and learning of their hopes and concerns, they opened our hearts in new ways—ways we hope will translate into our everyday lives. ❖

Help fight climate change—support Project 350

[At the 2007 QEW Annual Meeting environmental writer and activist **Bill McKibben** urged Friends to get organized for climate action.]

350 IS THE RED LINE for human beings, the most important number on the planet. The most recent science tells us that unless we can reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to *350 parts per million*, we will cause huge and irreversible damage to the earth.

We're planning an international campaign to unite the world around the number 350, and we need your help. We need to make sure that the solutions the world proposes to climate change are to scale with the level of crisis that this number represents. Everyone on Earth, from the smallest village to the cushiest corner office, needs to know what 350 means. The movement to spread that number needs to be beautiful, creative, and unstoppable.

What we need most right now are your ideas for how to take the number 350 and drive it home: in art, in music, in political demonstrations, in any other way you can imagine. We will connect actions all around the world and make them add up to more than the sum of their parts. But we don't have all the ideas and all the inspiration. E-mail yours to <ideas@350.org>.

We could also use your help to spread 350. Can you *contact anyone you think might be interested and willing to help*—in every country—and send them our way? E-mail us at <contacts@350.org>.

—Bill McKibben
<www.350.org>

P.S.—We've raised some money to get this campaign up and running, but executing a successful international campaign will require more than we've

got. If you're in a position to help, please support Project 350 by making a tax-deductible donation to the Sustainable Markets Foundation: <www.networkforgood.org/donate/process/expressDonation.aspx?ORGID2=13-4188834>.

Earthcare included in Quakerism 201 course

SALEM FRIENDS Meeting in Oregon recently focused on Earthcare in their 2nd-hour Quakerism 201.

Materials made available prior to the discussion included two articles from the October 2004 issue of *Friends Journal* on the theme of "Friends and the Environment." The first article was "The Flowering of Quaker Earthcare Witness," which suggested an activity to tie the talk together: As each member present spoke, scissors were used to cut strands in a ball of yarn representing the Web of Life. At the end of the meeting, the question was posed, "How many threads of God's Creation can we cut before the Web of Life unravels?"

Participants were asked to consider the queries, "What choices do we have? What are my concerns? How can 'little me' have impact on the crisis? What am I doing to maintain the Web of Life?"

After a talk on the current incarnation of Quaker Earthcare Witness (formerly FCUN), the group acted out a historical study on "mythic Ireland," showing how the Protestant and Catholic churches had tried to destroy the nature-based religion of Ireland, and how the Bible has been misrepresented over the centuries in an attempt to separate humans from nature.

The topic of science and religion was introduced with a quote

from Rufus Jones: "Faith is not endangered by the advance of science. It is endangered by the stagnation of religious conceptions."

A review of current environmental research targeted specific examples within the categories of Soil, Water, and Air to initiate a discussion of stewardship. It was noted, for example, that the study of the biodiversity of soils makes it possible to avoid pesticides and the overuse of manmade fertilizers, both of which cause a host of environmental problems.

Trash was mentioned as a subtext. Plastics have been softened to make them biodegradable, but the question has been raised whether they are releasing estrogen-mimics into the food web. (The clerk of the Meeting, who is a physician, confirmed the severity of this problem.) The point was that sometimes environmental solutions are short-sighted.

For Water, a study was cited which correlated rH-negative values in drinking water and longevity, supporting the hypothesis that most drinking water today increases our load of free radicals and decreases longevity.

In a transition between Water and Air, it was noted that federal funding had been severely cut for a long-term baseline study of climate data under the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Without such data, climate change can be argued infinitely.

For Air, it was stated that it is fruitless to continue arguing over the reality of global warming/climate change. The model is very complex, but the truth is simple. Rising ocean temperatures are amplifying hurricanes as well as cyclonic activity around the Antarctic, which traps ozone-destroying chlorofluorocarbons so that they don't periodically dissipate.

—from a report by Peter Kelly
Salem (Ore.) Friends Meeting



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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

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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.**

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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.

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Home on the Earth

Oh, give me a home where the cougars still roam,
Where the whale and the dolphins still play;
Where seldom is heard the discouraging word,
"Rainforests are going away."



*Home, home on the earth,
Where grizzlies and rhinos still play,
And sometimes is heard the encouraging word,
"Some wetlands we rescued today."*

How often at night, when the heavens are bright
With the light from our cities and cars,
Have I stood there amazed and asked as I gazed,
"Will Earth become lifeless like Mars?"

*Home, home on the earth,
Where the loon and the owl still call,
And sometimes is heard the encouraging word,
"The skies are not smoggy at all."*



Oh, give me an Earth of wildlife no dearth,
Where eagle and falcon still fly,
Where humans don't crowd, all's not builded and plowed!
Preserve wilderness, lowland, and high!

*Home, home on the earth,
With natural places to roam,
Where sometimes is heard the encouraging word,
"Let's save and restore our sweet home."*

—Adapted from "Home on the Range" by Jack Phillips
for QEW's 20th anniversary celebration in October 2007

BeFriending Creation

May–June 2008

Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper, bleached without chlorine

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Be sure to visit the Earthcare Center at this year’s FGC Gathering! INTERESTING SPEAKERS, challenging activities, and like-minded Earthcare Friends will be at the Earthcare Center again at this year’s FGC Gathering at Johnstown, Pa. Every afternoon between 1:30 and 5:30 the Center will be staffed with knowledgeable and friendly people to help you calculate your ecological or carbon footprint and learn more about how you can make a difference. There will be opportunities to watch videos and read books on Earthcare. There also will be age-appropriate activities and materials for children. Pick up a schedule of the Earthcare Center’s activities at the Gathering check-in tables.

Epiphanies from the 2007-2008 Peace for Earth Walk

by Ruah Swennerfelt

IN April, as we neared the end of this chapter in our life adventure, Louis and I began to list some of the lessons—or epiphanies—we had learned during our Peace for Earth Walk from Vancouver, B.C., to San Diego, Calif., and to reflect on how we could hold on to them and use them in our work when we returned home.

Learning how to receive. One of my first lessons has been how to receive from the very deepest place in me. As people spontaneously offered us assistance with prayers, money, hospitality, and love, my heart kept growing so that I felt like it would burst! I am one of those people who are very willing to give, but reluctant to receive, so this has been a huge lesson. I remember the looks of delight on people’s faces when Louis and I would just say “thank you,” and that way allowed them to

become part of our journey. It takes giving *and* receiving to complete the act of love.



STOPPING near Big Sur to chat with Earthsavvy French students whom we never would have met if we hadn’t been walking.

As he let go of ego enough to let the Spirit do the speaking, he found that many people were eager to hear about our journey and purpose. He also learned that people have their own stories to share and that

Daring to open up to strangers.

Louis says he is generally a shy person and often holds back in new encounters, waiting so long for a “right” moment to speak that it never comes. Some people who saw our banner came right up and started asking questions, but many others walked by without responding. This didn’t necessarily mean they weren’t interested, Louis eventually decided. Maybe they were shy themselves and just needed a few friendly words from us to break the ice.

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