



BeFriending Creation

Newsletter of Quaker Earthcare Witness

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Quakers helping sow seeds of *11th Hour* video

by Louis Cox

SOMEONE once wrote, "The only person in the world I can change is myself." But that is only half true when it comes to global climate change: After changing yourself, you can start spreading the alarm and stirring others to action.

Here's one simple but powerful step you can take right now: Order a copy of the new documentary, *The 11th Hour*, for only \$5.00 plus postage from <http://wip.warnerbros.com/11thhour/>. Invite everyone you can think of—family friends, neighbors, or Meeting members—to watch. Follow up with discussion or worship-sharing.

Then give the DVD to one of the group—preferably someone seems very enthusiastic—with the understanding that they will soon hold their own group viewing and discussion of *The 11th Hour*, then pass it on to someone else, etc. Within weeks your little mustard seed of concern could grow into an outwardly branching tree of people getting informed and energized on this vital issue. You would be flying under the radar to fight the corporately controlled climate disinformation and denial industry (Warner Bros., Inc. apparently being a hopeful exception).

To multiply your impact, buy additional copies of *The 11th Hour* in order to send even more viewings and discussions rippling through the national psyche.

In fact, that's how I got copy #26, from Rhiana Levy, a woman in Iowa who recently bought more than 100 of the DVDs and has sent them to prospective allies across the U.S., including about 40 Quakers. (Three of them turned out to be members of the QEW Steering Committee!) Levy says she trusts the Quakers because they had provided a lot of support when she was giving a live one-person per-



formance called "Creating a World Beyond War" before thousands of people in England over a ten-year period, starting in the early 1990s.

Over the past several years Levy has had a leading to embark on a similar campaign to deepen and broaden the national conversation about climate change. Illness now prevents her from traveling, but after watching *The 11th Hour* (which she found to be even more powerful than

Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*), she got the inspiration for spreading the word chain-letter fashion. A friend helped her set up an Internet blog hundredthmonkey.wordpress.com that invites recipients to help her track the movements of her 100 copies. If this overture is successful, other people may be inspired to make their own bulk purchases and start DVD "viewing trees" of their own. They would be welcome to go to her blog for instructions on how they can participate in the same tracking system to follow the spread of any DVDs of *The 11th Hour* they buy and distribute.

The name of Levy's blog, by the way, associates her DVD project with the "100th monkey effect" that became buzz word in the 1970s and 80s: An isolated group of wild monkeys reportedly started learning a new skill that at some point made a "quantum leap" to a larger, distant population. Although skeptics love to slam this unconfirmed account as an urban legend, it still makes an important point: Everything in the world *is* in fact interconnected as a dynamic whole, in ways we are only beginning to understand. Even small actions are known to have dramatic effects on larger systems that defy physical cause-and-effect explanations. Just as there is a feared tipping point for greenhouse gas emissions, there is also a corre-

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>> **100th Monkey**, from page 1

sponding hopeful tipping point in the general public's awareness of the crisis and their role in it.

That answers another criticism often directed at "100th Monkey" enthusiasts—that they are encouraging a dangerously passive mindset, believing that "raised consciousness" is all that is needed to change the world. *The 11th Hour*. Levy and *The 11th Hour* are clearly about getting people organized to take action.

It's interesting to note that Leonardo DiCaprio, who produced and narrated *The 11th Hour*, also starred in a 1997 movie about the "unsinkable" ocean liner *RMS Titanic*, which went down with most of her passengers in 1912 after hitting an iceberg. The *Titanic's* tragic end—blamed mostly on human arrogance and recklessness—can be an uncanny metaphor for what seems to be happening ecologically and socially to spaceship Earth. But there is little we can learn from such a grim and hopeless example. Initial hopes for containing the damage and resuming the journey were in vain, since the ship's fate was sealed the moment it struck the iceberg.

The 11th Hour, on the other hand, picks up with the icebergs still on the horizon. It warns us to slow down to buy more time to maneuver. It assures us *there's still time* to change course. It shows that we have the knowledge and resources to do so. *Now, if we can just wake up from this dream that all is well...*

This dramatic 92-minute video will wake us up if anything can, with its stunning cinematography, stirring sound-track, and eloquent appeals from prominent teachers, writers, inventors, climate scientists, biologists, environmental activists, physicians, government representatives, etc. For example, Kenyan Nobel Peace Prize recipient Wangari Maathai describes the tragic links between deforestation and irreversible shifts in a region's water cycle. Green architect William McDonough explains how the principles of nature can teach us to redesign our cities to virtually eliminate waste and carbon emissions.

The basic message of *The 11th Hour*—that the combination of superior technological abilities and our current addiction to fossil fuels has led us to exceed the planet's carrying capacity and throw the climate and other natural systems dangerously out of balance—has been well taught in other documentaries. But this beautiful production excels at driving home a key point: Surviving this "perfect storm" of converging crises is not just about greening our technologies; we must transform a whole culture that has disconnected us from the natural world.

There is still time to make that transformation, to make this eleventh hour our finest hour. ❖

Swing Semester

(Quaker founders; staff with links to Quaker colleges)

STUDIES SHOW that the young "Millennial Generation" is ready for civic action, and **Swing Semester** helps those young people find great faith communities, peace & justice work, and faith-based progressive initiatives. **Swing Semester** envisions a whole generation of life-long engaged citizens.

This year, **Swing Semester** is the only organization supporting people in moving to swing states to work on progressive initiatives of all kinds—environmental, political, peace and justice, issues of faith, etc.

We are bringing young people to several cities in swing states across the country. We provide them with a real civic education, a host family, and a supportive community with other participants and team leaders. Our program makes it possible for young people to take their first steps into activism and grassroots work at a time when it can set their course for a lifetime. **Swing Semester Civics** will continue to support 18-26 year olds in community-building and civic activities past the election cycle.

We're inviting you to help make this possible by doing any of the following:

- 1) Host a young person to build an inter-generational community,
- 2) Connect us with organizations in your city that may want to work with our participants,
- 3) Sponsor a needs-based scholarship for a young person.

As a **Swing Semester** host, you'll be part of a vibrant community of 30 to 40 other progressive families in your city and will be invited to join them for progressive reading groups and potluck events. **Swing Semester** hosts are energized by the young people actively making a difference this election cycle, and in turn educate participants about their community and its history.

The initial part of the **Swing Semester** 2008 program runs September 2 through November 7. Families and communities may choose to continue to host participants past this date per their own arrangement.

Program cities are: Cincinnati/Columbus/Cleveland, Ohio; Virginia Beach/Richmond, Va.; Albuquerque, N.M.; Denver, Colo.; and Manchester, N.H.

If you are interested in being a host in our program or know someone else who may be, please visit our website, www.swingsemester.org, or contact us directly at 1-866-967-9496 (866-YO-SWING)

—Tim Freeman

Program Facilitator, City Captain
1133 19th St. NW, 9th Floor
Washington DC 20036

What differentiates QEW from other organizations?

Hollister Knowlton
Chestnut Hill (Pa.) Friends Meeting
QEW Steering Committee Clerk

THE QEW Annual Meeting in October will afford us an opportunity to listen to what inspires Friends from varying perspectives (FUM, FGC, and non-affiliated Friends) and to find common ground as we seek to deepen the spiritual basis of our ministry of work for the earth.

In 2009, when we meet in the Northwest, we hope that Evangelical Friends will engage with us as we explore the language that unites and divides those of us who care deeply about God's creation. In both of these meetings, we look forward to more time than usual in worship and worship sharing in order to really listen to one another.

Meanwhile, it has been wonderful to receive e-mails from Friends who are not on QEW's Steering Committee but who support QEW, read *BeFriending Creation*, and basically feel a part of this growing network of Friends.

Two striking e-mail messages arrived this summer: One, from Nan Bowles of North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative), turned around the question I posed in the previous clerk's message (July-August 2008 *BeFriending Creation*). Nan asked simply, "What is God's purpose for QEW? What function does God want us to serve? For whom does God want us to serve in this function?" I loved this reminder that it isn't all up to us to figure out... rather, that we need to pray, to listen, and to discern the will of the Spirit.

The second arrived last week from Adrian Fisher of Illinois Yearly Meeting, who wrote, "QEW's Vision & Witness statement is inspiring to me, and I find I reread it from time to time, almost as one might reread and reconsider queries in a *Faith & Practice*. I agree, however, that ... a statement of purpose should be formulated. To what courses of action should QEW commit in order to help Friends to better live in right relation with God and Creation?"

"One biggish question is, 'What differentiates QEW from other environmental organizations?' Where is talk of our responsibility, our relationship to the Inner Guide? How do we meld our deep Quaker tradition with modern ecological science and new



Hollister Knowlton

beliefs? ...This extends to questions of lifestyle: Like many Friends, I am a vegetarian, line-dry my laundry, commute by bike to work, buy few clothes and wear them until worn out, buy vegetables through a community supported agriculture (CSA) grower, and so on. Yet this type of lifestyle, while environmentally friendly, could be followed by any "green" person, even one who pursues it for purely secular, anthropocentric reasons. I feel that we, as Quakers must live and express... our care for Earth from the inside out—that there is a deep connection between our relationship to our Inner Teacher and our relationship to our surroundings. We talk of the Creation—how is QEW actively working to help create, as early Friends might put it, God's kingdom on Earth?"

AT Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's annual sessions at the end of July, a Mennonite pastor, Fred Kauffman, spoke to us about peace. He shared his beliefs that "...God's passion is to create a people who will live in covenant, [that] we find joy and purpose as we become part of God's people, [and that] we are not called to fight the empire, but to 'bear witness.'" His words struck me as relevant to those of us called to work for right relationship, or "covenant" with all Creation.

Later in those same sessions, Colin Saxton, Superintendent of Northwest Yearly Meeting, ended his talk with three queries:

1. *Do you live in the power of that life and spirit...?* ("We don't need people of comfort," he said, "but people who are transformed.")
2. *Are we at peace with one another?* ("The Bible tells us to make the conflict right between you and your brother before you come to worship..." He asked, "Do we confess our faults and offer forgiveness when needed?")
3. *What is our message and do we share it with others?* (Colin included, among the elements of his message, "restoration of creation.")

And he ended by saying, "I don't ask you to be evangelicals, but ask you to be evangelistic. Tell your stories, and know that you are the message, you are the love letter. You are God's workmanship, God's poem, God's song being sung in a way that people can hear."

I am grateful for and challenged by these messages. I feel humbled and deeply moved. I am also eager to hear from more of you, whether via e-mail or in person at our upcoming annual meeting in Hampton, Ga., near Atlanta. ❖

Is public control of the monetary system crucial to a sustainable and moral economy?

by Steven Walsh
Northside (Ill.) Friends Meeting

WHILE Friends are working directly for the healing of the world's ills, we also need to be addressing their root causes. These include some fundamental flaws in the U.S. monetary system that are making us all unwitting parties to conflict, injustice, and ecological destruction.

The problem with the current monetary system is that it serves primarily the interests of the banking sector rather than the general well-being of the public. It promotes the concentration of wealth in a few hands, leaving millions of people with miserable lives and worse. Such unbridled "money power" is immoral and has repeatedly pressured our leaders to choose war over peace, to neglect the nation's infrastructure, and to treat vital ecosystems as mere commodities to be consumed as rapidly as possible.

To prevent these kinds of abuses, the American Monetary Institute¹ proposes three reforms of the current monetary system, which history proves must all be done together to be successful and sustainable. These are:

- ❖ Incorporate the Federal Reserve System into the U.S. Treasury Department, and establish a separate national Monetary Authority, answerable to Congress, to be responsible for monetary policy.
- ❖ Convert all existing debt-money to non-debt U.S. money, and end the fractional-reserve lending practices of the commercial banking sector.
- ❖ Introduce new money into the economy in response to demand, initially through the rehabilitation of the public infrastructure, the environment and the well-being of the people, including their health and education.

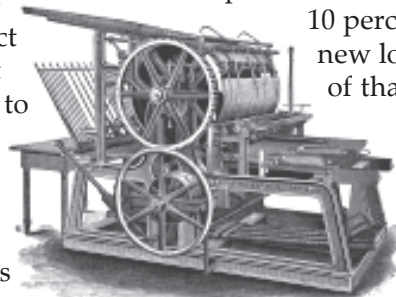
Crucial to support for these reforms is persuading the public that "money" is essentially *an instrument of law* that is properly within the jurisdiction of elected government. The current system stems from a common misconception that money is a commodity.

The root of our monetary system flaws can be traced to Article 1 Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution, which refers to the government's power to "coin money and set value thereof." This key section was just vague enough to allow private banks to establish themselves under state-control. It was not until the

passage of the Federal Reserve Act of 1913 that some worthwhile organizational reforms were made. However, this Act institutionalized private ownership of banks with fractional reserve banking, which encouraged financial speculation, and soon was to lead the way to the Great Depression.

Most of the "money" in the Federal Reserve System today consists of account book credits for loans that member banks have made. Since those debts have to be repaid with interest, additional money needs to be put into circulation in order for borrowers to earn enough to repay principal plus interest.

But where does additional money come from? The banks can legally loan up to 90 percent of depositors' funds to new borrowers, keeping the other 10 percent as a reserve. When proceeds of the new loans are deposited, however, 90 percent of that can be loaned out again, etc. This creates new money. The total of outstanding loans made this way can be up to 10 times the funds the banks hold in reserve.



THE POWER of money isn't in what it is made of, but who gets to create it.

Here's the problem: Expanding the money supply through debt that is secured primarily with more debt creates an economic treadmill that requires continuous growth—despite the fact that many economic activities are using up the earth's resources.

The proposition that our elected government can do a better job of managing the monetary system for the public good (as well as for the earth's ecological integrity) is well supported and documented from the American Colonial period:

In 1690, in order to pay debts it had incurred during King William's War, Massachusetts issued paper notes called "bills of credit." These notes were to be accepted back by the government for any monies or taxes due to the colony of Massachusetts.

Since the English Crown did not allow coins to be imported into the American colonies, these bills of credit served very nicely as money, which greatly promoted economic activity, including infrastructure creation. Since that time, paper money has always been in circulation, and the amount generally grows as the economy grows.

What was learned was that paper money could be used to do different tasks and, significantly, to be used successfully as a means of payment.

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In 1723, Pennsylvania created a government-run office to loan paper money into circulation. From 1723 to 1739 the Trustees appointed by the Quaker-dominated Pennsylvania Assembly made 3,000 loans that averaged £56 per loan. As money was paid back it could be reissued as part of another loan.

During the 1720s the Pennsylvania Assembly was charging 5-percent interest on its loans, which it used initially to pay their dues to the Crown, maintain good relations with Native Americans, build roads, etc. But Pennsylvania residents were having difficulty paying back loans because the system was not putting enough money into circulation to cover principal plus interest. To help relieve this problem the Pennsylvania Assembly was authorized to spend the interest money back into circulation, in addition to lending more money into existence as the economy grew.

What was learned was that money could be spent into circulation by the government or loaned into circulation by the government at interest, which could be a useful source of government revenue and a means of regulating the supply of money.

The critical connection between ecology and money will be explored further in a new pamphlet, *Friends and Money*, to be published by QEW later this year.

A misconception that underlies many arguments for keeping the monetary and banking system in private hands, is that the government supposedly would print too much money, and that would be inflationary. But another experience of colonial Pennsylvania refutes that: Inflation threatened between 1755 and 1760, when the Pennsylvania Assembly allowed the amount of paper money in circulation to grow about 500 percent in order to meet its obligations in the French & Indian Wars. In 1763 the Assembly moved to reduce the amount of money in circulation, and by 1769, 5 percent had been taken out of circulation.

To judge how much money should remain in circulation, the Pennsylvania Assembly looked at the exchange rates with the English pound and the export prices of wheat and flour—then the most important exports of Pennsylvania. They also looked at how other colonies used Pennsylvania money, how it was being hoarded or saved, how it was being spent in Pennsylvania, and what were the general levels of prices for goods.

Yale economist Richard Lester² observed in the 1930s, "...It would seem that the price level in Pennsylvania was more stable from 1723 to 1775, when

Pennsylvania was on a paper money standard, than it has since been in this country during any 50-year period" (Lester, p. 6).

The American Revolution was largely the result of a monetary dispute with the Crown of Great Britain. The United States of America was only able to gain its independence from the British Empire by applying the lessons learned previously by the American Colonies, when the Continental Congress issued its own money, known as the Continental Currency (Zarlenga, ch. 14).

Besides the colonies and the Continental Congress issuing their money, the United States did the same during the Civil War. Congress chose to use its constitutional authority, and by the War's end had issued \$450 million without any principal or interest being paid to the banks and with only a relatively



Civil War era Greenback

short period of inflation, due mostly to the state of destruction the country was in (Zarlenga, ch. 17).

What was learned was that government can create U.S. dollars that are successful as money instead of having to borrow credit as debt from private banks, and that it can limit the amount issued to what was authorized.

HISTORICALLY it has been during wartime that we as a nation have felt closest together, with the greatest sense of community. The same kind of let's-pull-together attitude needs to take place now so that we can face looming ecological crises and break down the barriers that separate us as human beings from each other. Monetary reform, by putting the power to issue new money back into the hands of the people, through our government hands would provide an opportunity for the economic priorities of the country to move in the direction of halting the deterioration of our infrastructure and the environment, and to securing and sustaining a world of beauty, justice, peace and harmony. ❖

1 Zarlenga, Stephen. 2002. *The Lost Science of Money: The Mythology of Money—The Story of Power*. Valatie, N.Y.: American Monetary Institute <www.monetary.org>, especially the article, "The Need for Monetary Reform" and the proposed American Monetary Act.

2 Lester, Richard A. 1939. *Monetary Experiments: Early American and Recent Scandinavian*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press (Reprinted 1970 in New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers).

It's time to be allies in indigenous peoples' struggles

by Mary Gilbert

QEW representative to the United Nations

AROUND the world Indigenous Peoples are standing up to be seen and speaking up to be heard. The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at the UN is providing a platform for collaboration. The UN General Assembly's adoption last September of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is beginning to matter. (See the beautiful 3-minute video on the Declaration, *Change Is On Its Way!* from the website of the High Commissioner for Human Rights at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Pages/WelcomePage.aspx>)

On December 10, 2007 the UN Declaration became the law of the land in Bolivia. Bolivian President Evo Morales (the world's first indigenous president) said, "From the passage of this declaration, I feel that the indigenous movement has gone from one of resistance to one of power ... a power that, at its core, is a way of living in a community ... it is the power of resolving problems equally for all, not only in Bolivia but in the entire world."



Four nations voted against the Declaration: Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States. Good news is coming even from them.

Australia—Australia's High Court ruled on July 30, 2008 that Aborigines control more than 80 percent of the Northern Territory coast, ending a 30-year battle for indigenous rights to the sea. This ruling could result in similar bids in other Australian states. An Aboriginal spokesperson said, "I think morally other Aboriginal people would now be able to argue that if these sorts of rights are being provided to Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory they should be extended elsewhere"

New Zealand—An article forwarded by the Arctic News reports that a Maori tribe, Ngai Tuhoe, entered into talks with the New Zealand government on July 24 about gaining autonomy over their land. In a significant acknowledgment of wrongdoing, New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister Michael Cullen said, "As the result of Crown action your people have at times suffered poverty, famine, and significant isolation," as well as "the loss of much of (your) lands and considerable loss of life."

Canada—In November 2007, lawyer Jack Woodward helped win a landmark British Columbia Supreme Court decision that said the provincial govern-

ment had overstepped its authority in granting land-use rights to companies without the approval of the Tislahqot'in nations.

This May, on behalf of the Beaver Lake Cree, Woodward filed against the governments of Alberta and Canada, seeking to invalidate government authorization of thousands of petroleum projects on the band's territory. Woodward says a win will lay the groundwork for "a new legal regime" about extraction on land reserved for or claimed by Canada's First Nations, setting a precedent other bands can use. A win could also shut down Canada's only tactical bombing range at Cold Lake.

The United States—Owe Aku, a grassroots Lakota organization, and the Black Hills Sioux Nation just won an OST (Office of Special Trustees, under the U.S. Department of the Interior) Court case against a uranium mining corporation, using the principle of "free, prior, and informed consent" set forth in the Declaration. "Companies who come to our land need to come with full disclosure of their intentions to do business with our people," said Debra White Plume of Owe Aku. Since this decision, the Declaration may be useful as *de facto* precedent in Oglala Lakota tribal court.

Many tribal nations in the U.S. participated in "The Longest Walk 2." Starting on February 11 from Alcatraz Island, hundreds of people walked a northern route and a southern route across the country, meeting in Washington, D.C., on July 11. Their official slogans, "All Life Is Sacred" and "Clean Up Mother Earth," represent what QEW is all about. You can read their inspirational *2008 Manifesto for Change* at www.longestwalk.org/images/stories/lw2manifesto2008.pdf. At the same website you can find 16 Resolutions, specifically naming ongoing struggles in which they and their allies are engaged.

You know what? The time for charity toward the Indigenous Peoples of our countries is coming to an end. It's now time to be allies in their struggles. They believe in and are working for things we believe in and are working for. I'm thinking of the right to live by your own decisions rather than under the rule of distant powers—Gandhi's "*swa raj*." I'm thinking of deep commitment to defending the natural world against exploitation. I'm thinking of acknowledging and living mindfully in the sacred all around us.

Are there indigenous legal suits and demonstrations going on in your region? Check into what they're about. It's not "us" and "them" anymore. It's just "us." *Otro mundo es posible.* ❖

Earthcare flourishes among Western Friends

by Joe Morris

(from a report he delivered in 2008 at Pacific YM as Clerk of PYM's Unity with Nature Committee)

THIS past year has again brought bad news for our planet: glaciers melting ever faster, the cyclone in China, the paralysis of international agreements over reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and, here in California, the over 2,000 wildfires that have burned since the beginning of summer. But for the involvement of Quakers in Pacific Yearly Meeting for Earthcare, the story is quite different.

Those attending the 2006 Pacific Yearly Meeting Annual Gathering will recall the widespread anxiety and confusion expressed about our lack of response to environmental issues. The then-Clerk of the Unity with Nature (UWN) Committee recommended that the committee be laid down. (No unity was found on this matter.)

Over the following year, 2006–07, UWN came vigorously back to life. It held seven committee meetings and set up over 30 liaisons in virtually all of the Monthly Meetings, who would relay communication. The committee then took on its major task for the year: encouraging discussion and possible minutes from Monthly Meetings in response to climate change. After the initial Minute approved by Santa Monica Meeting in October 2006, 16 additional Monthly Meetings (about half of all PYM Meetings) went on to approve their own versions of a Minute. This impressively broad support exceeded that for any other issue over several decades.

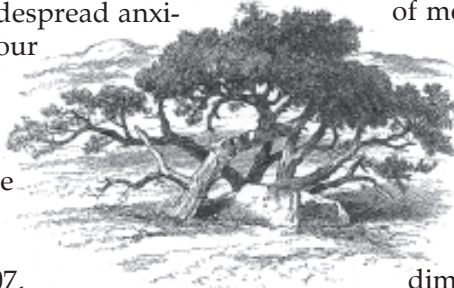
Inspired by this, UWN brought forth a "Responding to the Global Climate Crisis" Minute at the 2007 Gathering, which was strongly approved with no revisions. From that plenary, UWN was charged with two tasks: the gathering of reports from Monthly Meetings on their actions regarding global warming and a request to commence the formulation of a new testimony on "Harmony with Nature," in cooperation with the PYM Discipline Committee.

Before receiving these reports, no one in PYM could know the extent of environmental involvement among Monthly Meetings, and some assumed it was minimal. Here are the findings:

First, over 75 percent—29 Meetings and 3 worship groups—sent reports, an impressively high proportion. Second, about 85 percent of Meetings and worship groups stated that they had considered and taken significant steps to respond to the environmen-

tal crisis. The activities reported are not merely conventional ones like using florescent bulbs or cloth bags, but show an impressive and creative variety of approaches. Only four indicated that involvement was minimal. Naturally, some Meetings were much more involved than others.

The second charge for the UWN Committee this past year was to begin work on drafting a new testimony on "Harmony with Nature." The committee conferred about this for several months and contacted the Clerk of Discipline Committee to begin work together. An environmental working group composed of members of Strawberry Creek Meeting (but with no official ties) has worked since February on a draft, which is now available in an initial form. It broadens our definition of community to include all of life and challenges us to consider our place in a society that routinely consumes the diminishing resources of an ailing planet. (An interest group on this was offered at the '08 PYM.)



Conclusions and reflections

FROM relative quiescence two years ago, Friends Meetings of PYM seem to be experiencing a collective shift in a spiritual connection to the planet. Witness the climate-change minutes, the activism among meetings, the walks of Rolene Walker and of Ruah Swennerfelt* and Louis Cox, and the work toward a new Earthcare testimony. Maybe this energy has become contagious. In July, North Pacific Yearly Meeting also approved a climate change Minute, drawing on our Minute and using some of the same wording.

As Earthcare becomes part of our spiritual lives, several new personal challenges seem to be emerging among us. A critical one is the place of environmental justice. Almost all of the Meeting activities are focused on care and respect for other species. Yet our *current* testimonies urge us to minister to the poor and disadvantaged of the world. Pointedly, these are the *very ones most harmed* by the exploitation of the environment, whether they are inner-city children in Los Angeles developing cancer from the fumes of diesel trucks, impoverished families who must live near toxic waste sites, or the millions in Africa facing

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*Ruah was the invited speaker at this year's Pacific Yearly Meeting, sharing experiences from the 2007–08 Peace for Earth Walk, which nurtured eco-spirituality concerns among Western Friends meetings and churches.

NYYM regional gathering explores Earthcare in depth

by Maeve Cullinane
Rochester (N.Y.) Monthly Mtg.

THERE is a growing and fervent need within our communities for a deeper connection to the earth. We in the Farmington-Scipio Region of New York Yearly Meeting (NYYM) find ourselves in step with national and international movements, of Friends and non-Friends alike, looking at issues of global warming, carbon footprints, media and consumer cultures, food distribution, health and safety, etc. We come to our Earthcare work from many angles, and the more we engage with one another around these issues, the more numerous the connections we find to long-standing Quaker testimonies and practices.

The Farmington-Scipio Region's Spring Gathering in May 2008 at Long Point Camp on Seneca Lake was devoted to "Earth-Friendly Faith and Practice." The region's 2007 Fall Gathering had featured a program "Going Green at Home and in the Region," which had record-breaking attendance, with great energy and excitement generated from the four-person panel. Coincidentally, at the state level, a Minute known as the NYYM Eco-Spirituality & Action Minute [Sept.-Oct. 2007 *BeFriending Creation*] was being generated. It seemed only natural, when planning began for the region's Spring Gathering, that we examine together our Earthcare concerns and the NYYM Minute more deeply.

The weekend was designed to give Friends the opportunity to joyfully learn and reflect in community and in worship. The three Monthly Meetings responsible for planning the weekend each incorporated Earth-friendly practices and insights into their work. Farmington Church was responsible for the meals, providing reusable mugs instead of paper and plastic cups, encouraging Friends to eat what they take and take only what they can eat, compost buckets for food scraps, and the purchase of local produce when possible. When planning for the Youth Activities, Alfred Meeting connected with the Native American community in our geographic area and offered an intergenerational session, led by a teenage dancer of Haudenosaunee heritage. She and her family shared their experiences of social dances, such as the Smoke Dance, as well as their cultural history of treating the earth reverently.

The planning committee from Rochester Meeting decided to affirm the "experts" within each of us, so instead of having a single outside speaker for the

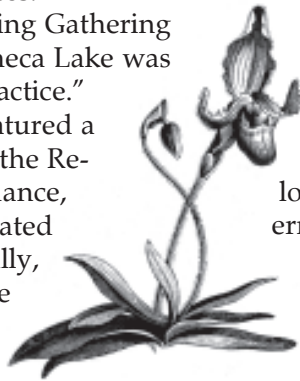
Saturday morning plenary session, the topic was explored through the Quaker practice of worship sharing. The NYYM Eco-Spirituality & Action Minute, approved at Yearly Meeting July 2007, was read with adapted queries for this regional gathering to consider. Small groups spent the remainder of the hour sharing, and then the whole group heard reports back from each small group, resulting in a wonderful patchwork of responses, concerns, and themes. I will highlight two of the many themes:

One common theme was the realization that we need to remain open to growth and possibility as we each negotiate ways in which we can make our lives more "Earth friendly." Collectively we need to move away from the notion of right or wrong choices and use the process of discernment to find clearness and connection to this broad issue. Passions run high on many separate topics—transportation, eating locally, consumer culture, energy choices, governmental policies. We need to embrace the passion in one another, and remember to be tender when passions or choices lead us in different directions.

Another common theme was the creative tension that many of us feel between those who are on this journey with us to care for the earth and those who are on a different journey, tied more to material satisfaction and consumer culture. Some of us found ourselves and/or our families on both of these journeys. Some of us considered this in a global, governmental sense. Many comments led to philosophical and spiritual examinations of this tension. What does it mean? What can we as Quakers offer?

IN the afternoon, individuals offered sessions on a wide variety of more practical topics. The sessions were titled: "Eating Locally for City Friends;" "Land Trusts;" "Preserving the 1816 Farmington Quaker Meetinghouse: A Green Project;" "Staying Grounded in Spirit: The Spiritual and Practical Aspects of Home Organic Gardening;" "Community as Green Technology;" and "Yes, In my Backyard: A Q&A Session about Lifestyle Choices." One small group gathered to write an epistle based on the morning's discussion. At the end of the weekend, the business meeting approved the epistle, and we gladly share it with these readers.

Farmington-Scipio Gathering Epistle, next page >>



'Peace with Earth' spirit resonates at 2007 FWCC triennial

Behind the founding of QEW more than 20 years ago was the sense that Earthcare was integral to the historic Quaker testimonies. Evidence that this spirit is resonating strongly within the Religious Society of Friends was found in a brief report on the 2007 FWCC triennial in Ireland for New England Yearly Meeting Sessions in 2008:

by Maggie Edmundson

Pastor of Winthrop Center (Maine) Friends Church

THE MISSION of Friends World Committee for Consultation is to build love and trust among the various branches of Friends so that we can work together on our shared Quaker concerns.

Attending a gathering of Friends from all over the world is eye-opening, challenging, joyful, humbling and hard work. It present us with our diversity, not as labels—FGC, FUM, Evangelical, Liberal, Conservative, but as Ramon, Julie, Charlie, Shamala, Irina.

In advance of a triennial, Yearly Meetings send details of their concerns from which working groups are formed when we meet. What I can tell you is that



one of the most effective ways of building relationships across the branches of Friends is to bring together Friends in whose hearts God has lit the fire of the same concerns. Get together the peace builders, gather those with a passion for the Earth community, or racial justice. This is where the Spirit draws us powerfully together and where we come from geographically or theologically is almost irrelevant.

I found, in the Working Group on the Environment, a wonderful mixture of shared practical and spiritual concerns calling Friends worldwide to examine their own lifestyles, to recognize the inherent worth of all creatures; that of God, not only in human beings but in all Creation; to recognize that reverence for human life cannot be separated from maintaining the integrity and health of our planet and that competition for land, water, and other precious resources is leading to wars and ecological disasters; to realize that we cannot have peace *on* Earth without peace *with* Earth. ♦

[Maggie also gave the Bible Reflection at the 2007 Quaker Earthcare Witness Annual Meeting (Nov.-Dec. 2007 BFC).]

Epistle from the 2008 Farmington-Scipio Spring Gathering

"And the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and keep it."
—Genesis 2:15

FEELING THE LOVING SPIRIT AMONGST US, we gathered together with angst and concern about the state of the earth, feeling powerless in the face of vast changes, yet with the hope we can learn together, teach others and our efforts will make a difference.

The 2007 Minute from the NYM Earth Care group was read, distributed, and considered, and while the queries seem to be fairly pointed, they failed to elicit distinct answers. They did produce discussion, but Friends seemed to not really address the queries, perhaps because the queries feel so broad and overarching.

In small groups, Friends addressed with grace and appreciation where we are in the spirit of this age in our world, celebrating our young children's responses to Earth Care, while noticing that in our culture much of young people's activity is disconnected from the natural world. We feel

disturbed that the media in our culture are such powerful forces, overwhelming and exploitive, leaving us dismembered, bloated, and diminished.

Here are two of several things we learned at the program that most of us did not know:

1. The Great Pacific Garbage Patch in the Pacific Ocean, located between California and Hawai'i, is twice the size of Texas, and within ten years will be the size of the United States.
2. The permafrost is melting and is releasing gases that are changing the world at an accelerating rate.

This Spring Gathering we continued walking along the path to further deepen and raise our collective awareness, with the hope of significantly improving our stewardship skills. The feeling of excitement generated when our community gathers together to learn and show by personal example, teaches each of us. Sharing personal experience, both spiritual and practical, deepens us so that, corporately and individually, we may be better stewards of our soul and spirit, our selves, our families, our communities, and our earth. ♦

The right to dry: hanging it all out

by Sandra Kocher
Spencer, Massachusetts

HANGING laundry outdoors may sound too obvious and easy an environmental action. Yet it saves energy: Electric clothes dryers account for 5.8 percent of a household's annual energy use. Gas dryers are more energy-efficient but are found in less than one in five households. Too few Americans follow the time-honored step of air-drying their laundry.

When I broach outdoor clothes drying with others, I hear about yards being too shady, condo or neighborhood associations prohibiting such, or those in apartments with no access to outdoor lines. Yet, in our city, three-decker homes in historic working-class neighborhoods all once had clothes-hanging arrangements on their porches that would swing out into the sun.

I also hear that it's too much work for busy people to hang clothes outside, especially when it's so easy to toss them into a dryer. However, if more people realized that an electric dryer can emit up to a *ton* of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere each year they might change their clothes drying habits. One such person who did was a young man named Alexander Lee, who now for over ten years has championed people's right to dry. As director of the New Hampshire-based Project Laundry List, he has continued his mission. Perhaps some of you, as well as those in New Hampshire and elsewhere, participated in this year's National Hanging Out Day on April 19. Remember it next year!

As already indicated, covenants of homeowners associations account for much of the prohibition against outdoor drying.

Almost 60 million Americans live in association-governed communities. Most of these oppose municipal or state regulations that would allow clothes lines in their neighborhoods. Fear of lowered property values underlies much of the opposition.

Hold-outs

**On our street
We are hold-outs,
Three houses in a row
Overlooking the lake,
Each with its clothesline
From deck to tree or pole.**

**Sheets, spreads, pants,
shirts,**

**And other wear
Hang frequently**

**In the sun
In the wind**

**We are good
At reeling in our line,
Pinning clothes upon it,
Slowly reeling it out again.**

**Later in the day
When the clothes are dry
We unpin and fold them,
Sun-infused and fresh.**

**Each reel has its
characteristic sound.
Mine is rather squeaky
And I know when my next-
door neighbor
Is reeling his line in or out.**

**Some may consider all this
extra work,
Would prefer their electric
dryer.**

**Yet today hanging clothes
outside has become "cool,"
A telling sign of the
environmentalist.**

Thank you, sun.

—Sandra Kocher

But slowly that is changing. Already three states—Hawai'i, Utah, and Florida—have laws explicitly prohibiting mandates against outdoor drying. Several other states have attempted to pass legislation to allow outdoor drying and will continue to do so.

Last summer I noticed an increase in articles in the popular press about hanging out laundry, including advice on how to hang one's clothes on a line! Even Martha Stewart Living included a piece. Maybe if we all took a deep breath, learned to enjoy the outdoor process of hanging laundry on a line, or, if needed, using special hoists and efficient umbrella-type laundry supports, we could reclaim the time-honored activity. And property values would not drop because of it.

For those who live in apartments, have shady yards, or otherwise lack access to outdoor lines, there is the recent resurgence of available clothes drying racks in varied sizes and designs, often handcrafted of native woods.

Set up a rack near a sunny window if possible—or just in a warm place—indoors. Even those who use outdoor clothes lines may resort to indoor racks on wintry or rainy days. Check in catalogs or on-line for such racks. I recently acquired a small rack of Eastern white pine and birch to replace an ageing sharp-edged aluminum one.

IN the aftermath of the massive earthquake in China this past spring, one NPR reporter described looking upon the devastation and seeing amidst it all a woman hanging out her clothes—a touch of normalcy carried on in this age-old act.

A good reference on the Right to Dry movement is Karen Finogle, "On the line promoting the right to dry," AMC Outdoors, April 2008, p. 14.

'Earthcare Heroes' take flight at '08 Gathering

YOUNG FRIENDS who signed up for the QEW-led "Earthcare Heroes" workshop at Junior Gathering worked on a nature trail project, met real adult Earthcare heroes, and learned how to make their homes, schools, and communities more sustainable.



LEADERS Ruah Swennerfelt and David Abazs take a break with muddy youngsters who are cleaning up a nature trail. At right, caped crusader "Louie LeBulb" (Louis Cox) finds the group is already very savvy about compact fluorescent bulbs and shifts discussion to other conservation strategies.

>> Western Friends, from page 7

famine or starvation due to the prolonged drought. And if we don't address the poverty of people in Brazil, they will continue to cut down rainforest and further impact us all. As oil consumption grows, it not only increases global warming but also the odds of war over scarce resources.

A second challenge is work with other groups—both interfaith and nonreligious—for Earthcare. Only four meetings mentioned such activities, yet it is linked to our testimony of community. We need other people, the 99.9 percent who are not Quakers, to widen our vision and the impact of our actions. In this we are significantly behind many churches, both liberal and evangelical, who have interfaith alliances for the environment.

A final challenge is dealing with our negative feelings—anxiety, discouragement, guilt, and powerlessness—about the planetary crisis we now face. An objection raised at the recent North Pa-

cific Yearly Meeting was why we should bother about global warming. Can we make any difference? Don't the corporations or the government or China really call the shots? Quakers voice these doubts here as well.

Discouragement easily becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Ultimately, the ethical rightness of an action is separate from its hoped-for effects.

The writer Nelson Henderson expressed it: "*The meaning of life is to plant trees under whose shade you do not expect to sit.*" What we do today to heal the planet may not be noticed in our lifetime or even in our children's. It will take generations, many scientists say, for our planet to noticeably heal. And some damage is irreversible. Earthcare may then be the most unselfish social movement in our history.

That is why care for the Earth must be a *spiritual* matter! And that is why, in this ailing world, we in particular are needed and called. ♦

BeFriending Creation

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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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Earthcare Center celebrates spirit-led activism at 2008 Gathering

THE TREE-SHADED campus at Johnstown, Pa., was a wonderful setting for Quaker Earthcare Witness to carry its “green ministry” to the 2008 FGC Gathering.

Located near one of the major campus walking routes, our display-filled Earthcare Center attracted a large number of visitors. A new population concerns exhibit encouraged Quakers to be living witnesses for sustainability by limiting their own family size. The message was underscored with a basket of free “Quaker Condoms” provided by the QEW Sustainability: Faith & Action interest group.

Another new exhibit explained the link between CO² and climate change, and dozens of visitors took the opportunity to calculate their “carbon footprints.” This complemented an afternoon interest

group on carbon reduction issues led by QEW Steering Committee Clerk Hollister Knowlton.

Everyone who took the carbon footprint quiz was eligible for eco-product prizes. It was particularly gratifying that most of those who came back on the last day of the Gathering to claim their prizes chose to remain as a group to discuss ways they could make a difference at the individual, community, national, and global levels. This is just the kind of “energetic forum” that Friends envisioned when they founded QEW more than 20 years ago.

Geoff Garver, a Canadian member of the Quaker Institute for the Future (QIF), previewed, *Right Relationship—Building a Whole Earth Economy*, a book that QIF will release later this year as part of its Moral Economy Project. Jim Rose again led two campus tree walks, which had become so popular that tickets had

to be issued to limit group size. Tom Dick gave a fascinating slide show on a local wetlands restoration project, celebrated nationally for the large number of fish, bird, and plant species that have taken up residence since the project was started in 1992.

There was a large turnout for a showing of a DVD titled *Health and the Hive*, which shows ways

that concerns about honeybee hive-collapse disorder and human health are addressed through sustainable agricultural practices and holistic medicine. There was also good attendance at a reenactment that Ruah and I did of the John Woolman skit we performed during our recent “Peace for Earth Walk” down the Pacific West Coast.

Carl Magruder, Kristina Keefe-Perry, and others

shared their experiences as part of the EarthQuaker Bike Trip from Philadelphia to this year’s Gathering.

Ruah and QEW Steering Committee member David Abazs led an exciting week-long segment for the Junior Gathering called “Becoming Quaker Earthcare Heroes” (*photos and story on page 11*).

The Gathering again sponsored a food co-op, in which about 50 people took turns preparing evening meals from natural and locally-grown foods and enjoyed fellowship and eco-networking while eating family-style outdoors.

Gathering planners expressed appreciation for QEW’s role in pioneering ways to make the Gathering a “greener” experience for Friends and are exploring with us ways that an Earthcare consciousness might be diffused throughout the week’s events.

—Louis Cox



“Carbon Footprint” prizes at the Earthcare Center