



BeFriending Creation

Newsletter of Quaker Earthcare Witness

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Thomas Berry's dream belongs to all of us

by Louis Cox
BeFriending Creation Editor

OUR Friend Thomas Berry, self-described “geologist” and leader of the modern spirituality and ecology movement, died peacefully at age 94 on June 1, 2009 in his home state of North Carolina. On June 8th he was interred at Green Mountain Monastery in northeast Vermont.

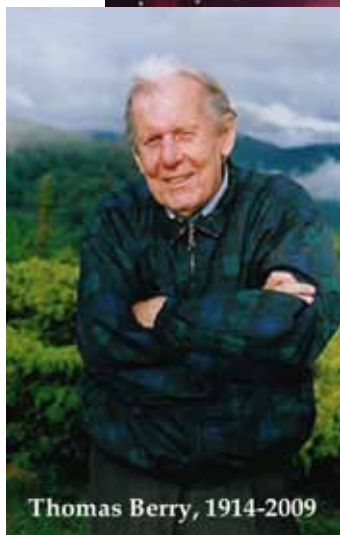
The monastery is run by an order of Catholic nuns who are dedicated to living out Thomas's vision of a mutually enhancing human-Earth relationship, in the context of recent discoveries about our creatively evolving universe.

At least two things made this joyful interfaith celebration of Thomas's life and work significant enough for the cover of *BeFriending Creation*:

—Four of the 80 or so Friends of Thomas who took part in the service in Vermont were Quakers with connections to Quaker Earthcare Witness.

—While coming out of very different traditions, Thomas Berry and Quaker Earthcare seem to have a lot in common—including certain tensions with their respective faith communities. Many who come from a traditional Christian perspective still either don't grasp the significance of Thomas's prophetic message or can't reconcile his views with long-held assumptions. Quaker Earthcare Witness also has encountered criticism from some sectors of the conservative community who speak of God as separate from Creation—and therefore assume that Earthcare is Earth worship.

That's probably why so many QEW supporters have cherished Thomas's writings and have seen him both as a mentor and as one of the “Earthcare family”; as a student of history, culture, philosophy, science,



and religion, Thomas had a marvelous gift for articulating what many of us already know in our hearts: We are all imbedded, materially and spiritually, in the web of life; in order to preserve it, we must celebrate and nurture it as our “Larger

Self.” We are Earth's emerging self-awareness.

Minds and hearts are beginning to soften—but will the needed profound change in human attitudes and worldview, about which Thomas talked so passionately, happen soon enough? And what chance is there for a greening of religion within a rapidly urbanizing population that has little contact with the natural world?

Thomas believed that direct involvement with the wonders and mysteries of Creation—especially during early childhood—can play a key role in developing empathy for other life forms and a sense of belonging to something so transcendent and beautiful that we could not bring ourselves to harm it. He recalled his own awakening to the numinous quality of the natural world while exploring wild places as a young boy.

Children through the ages have had similar awakenings while playing in woods, fields, and streams near their homes. Why then do so few carry those heightened sensitivities and empathies over into their adult lives? According to Thomas, their dreams are often drowned by opposing messages coming out of Western culture, which preaches domination of nature through technology and teaches us to see the world only as inert matter with no inherent value or transcendent purpose.

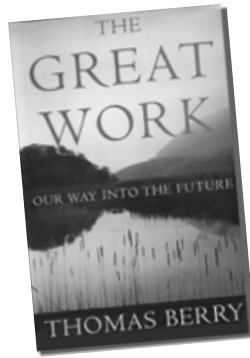
It was from Thomas's 1988 book, *The Dream of the Earth*, that many of us learned how modern indus-

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>> **Thomas Berry**, from page 1

trial culture and inherited religious traditions were important stages in our cultural development, but by the end of the Middle Ages had lost their power to show us how to live justly and sustainably on the planet. Perhaps in response to the Black Death, which decimated whole populations, people in Europe began to see the natural world as something evil to be escaped in an afterlife. Meanwhile pioneers of materialistic science began to dream of a paradise on Earth through mastery of nature. The resulting segregation of religion from science removed many restraints on reckless exploitation of the planet, people and other species.

Holding on to those failed belief systems has brought us to the point of “eco-cide.” Our only hope is to find a way to revitalize them in a new context, a new creation story that has emerged from recent scientific discoveries. An outline of the new creation story is provided in the book, *The Universe Story*, that Thomas co-authored with Brian Swimme in 1992.



That new story also can inform and inspire our generation to begin reforming education, industry, politics, economics, communities, relationships, and religion so that the human presence on the planet can be ecologically sustainable, socially just, and spiritually fulfilling. This bold plan is outlined in one of Thomas’s last books, *The Great Work, Our Way into the Future* (Bell Tower, 1999).

As helpful and inspiring as such books may be, we must not overlook that other well-spring of divine revelation—*the book of nature*. Thomas urged us to immerse ourselves in its beauties and wonders, not as objects to contemplate but as other subjects with which to have ecstatic communion. He warned us how spiritually impoverished our lives are becoming as we allow species after species to become extinct and ignorantly stamp out Earth’s wildness and beauty.

More information about Thomas can be found at <www.thomasberry.org>. Also a short video, *Thomas Berry Speaks*, available through the QEW video lending library, can be helpful to discussion groups. ❖

How can we help steer a new climate course in Copenhagen?

THE EYES OF THE WORLD will be fixed on Copenhagen, Denmark, in early December 2009 as UN delegates gather to forge a new climate protection treaty. The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change strongly warns that time is running short to prevent a tipping point of irreversible climate destabilization—and there is no assurance that the new treaty will incorporate all that needs to be done.

Success will depend on the U.S. and other developed countries taking the lead. The treaty must have binding terms, based on the latest climate research, to ensure a rapid shift to low-carbon economies while addressing unmet basic human needs.

Discussion has been going on within Quaker Earthcare Witness about how, between now and December, Friends can influence the outcome of these negotiations. A staff member, Ruah Swennerfelt, and a Steering Committee member, Mary Gilbert, are exploring the possibility of going to Copenhagen as observers under QEW’s UN accreditation as a non-governmental organization.

But NGO status does not guarantee access to any of the formal UN sessions or that any kind of “Quaker voice” would be heard there. What Ruah and Mary are envisioning is some kind of collaboration with British and European Friends to focus attention on the spiritual and moral dimensions of the negotiation process.

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS that Friends can be doing to prepare for Copenhagen at home?

❖ Quaker Earthcare Witness is asking supporters to distribute National Council of Churches “Countdown to Copenhagen” postcards in their Meetings, which can be mailed to Congressional representatives in support of strong national and international climate legislation. The initial goal is 50,000 signatures. Free postcard campaign packets can be ordered from the QEW office.

❖ Friends also can become involved in lobbying for climate action through the action alert program of Friends Committee on National Legislation. Ask your representative to support a strengthened American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009. FCNL’s website, <www.fcnl.org>, has background information, including helpful analyses of different approaches to curbing global carbon emissions, such as cap-and-trade and carbon tax, that are being debated.

❖ In addition, Friends are strongly urged to get involved with 350.org’s campaign to stage thousands of climate-awareness events around the world on October 24th, as way of putting pressure on delegates to the Copenhagen conference to support a rapid roll-back of CO₂ levels to 350 ppm, even if that seems difficult and politically risky. Register your community’s event at <www.350.org>. ❖

Awakening from the dream *and changing it*

by **Hollister Knowlton**
QEW Steering Committee Clerk

IN September 2005 my life was changed by a symposium I attended on “Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream.” Offered by the Pachamama Alliance of San Francisco, its purposed was “to bring forth an environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling, and socially just human presence on the planet.” (Pachamama is a word from the indigenous Quechua language of Ecuador that means, roughly, “mother earth, Spirit, the universe”).

I found the all-day program deeply moving, well-researched, and effectively presented—so effective that I signed up to be trained as a facilitator. The message is very like the one I had been bringing to small Quaker groups: making the connections among social and economic justice, right sharing of the world's resources, and ecological sustainability. But with its stunning video components and provocative interviews with people like Brian Swimme, Thomas Berry, Desmond Tutu, Julia Butterfly Hill, and Van Jones, I found the Pachamama approach much more compelling.

There is something else that spoke to me about the symposium—its inclusion of the wisdom of indigenous peoples. Indeed, the symposium was developed in response to a call for help from the Achuar, an indigenous tribe of Ecuador whose Amazonian rain-forest was endangered by oil exploration.

A Californian, Lynne Twist, had been having recurring dreams of a tribal people with yellow and red feathered headbands who were in distress. When an Achuar leader entered a meeting she was attending in Ecuador, she recognized the headband he wore and told him she had seen it in her dreams. “Ah,” he said, “then you are the answer to our prayers.”

Twist set up the Pachamama Alliance to provide legal and material assistance. The Achuars' forest was saved, but she was told that her work was not finished. “Thank you,” said the Achuar, “but if you really want to help us, you will go home and change the dream of our brothers and sisters of the North.”

Not knowing where to begin, it took more than 10 years for the Pachamama Alliance to create the “Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream” symposium” to address the trance of materialism that has led us of the North to do so much damage to ourselves and the planet.

Threaded through the symposium is a prophecy that has been told for millennia throughout Latin America. In this prophecy, the world will be imperiled when the Condor (symbolizing spirit and heart), is overcome by the Eagle (representing intellect, reason, and technology)—what in fact has been happening since European contact some 500 years ago.

Indigenous peoples (including those of North America) see themselves as the people of the Condor, living in harmony with the natural world. They have long watched industrial society—the people of the Eagle—in puzzlement and grave concern. They have seen what we have only recently realized: that the web of life is being ravaged by our way of life—our perpetual-growth economy, our runaway exploitation of Earth's abundance, and the inequities of a system that makes a few wealthy and the rest impoverished.



Hollister Knowlton

In time, said their ancient prophecy, the people of the Eagle would gain so much power that their spiritual side would suffer and the future would be endangered. But according to the indigenous people's ancient calendar, a time would come (around our year 2000), when the Eagle and the Condor would learn to “fly together in the same sky.”

Thus the Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream symposium ends on a theme of hope rather than despair. It uses the modern Universe Story, along with a host of inspiring interviews, quotations, videos, and individual and group exercises to demonstrate the power of one—and the power of community to make change. We leave the symposium empowered and awakened to a new possibility.

FOR me, presenting the Awakening the Dreamer symposium can be a good way to awaken Quaker meetings, yearly meeting annual sessions, schools, universities, and other community and faith groups. Interested? Visit <www.pachamama.org> to learn more about Pachamama Alliance, and then go to <www.awakeningthedreamer.org> to find out if there is a symposium scheduled near you.

There are now more than 1,600 trained symposium facilitators all over the world! If there isn't an Awakening the Dreamer symposium scheduled near you, I can help you find a team of facilitators to create one. I'm even willing to travel (via bus) to bring one to you. It's that important to me and God's creation. E-mail me at <h.knowlton@comcast.net>. ❖

'Clean coal' is a dirty lie

by Bob McGahey

Celo (N.C.) Friends Meeting

It would go a great way to caution and direct people in their use of the world, that they were better studied in the creation of it. For how could [they] find the confidence to abuse it, while they should see the Great Creator stare them in the face, in all and every part thereof?

—William Penn, 1693



WITH climate change from excess burning of carbon hovering like a Sword of Damocles over our heads, the way we produce electricity, and how much we use, has become critical. Since it produces carbon dioxide previously locked away from the active carbon cycle, burning fossil fuels is the most damaging way to get our power. The power we use in North Carolina comes chiefly from coal, and most of that coal comes from dynamiting mountaintops in neighboring states. This is a matter of grave injustice.

Though there are promising new technologies available which will gradually close the gap, we are going to still be burning coal for at least a generation, with nuclear and hydropower being the other chief sources of base-load power (available 24 hours a day). But any additional capacity built needs to be as close to carbon-neutral as possible, and building more coal-fired plants is simply suicidal. A study commissioned by the North Carolina state legislature in 2006 showed that with conservation, efficiency, and a modest growth in renewable energy, we would not need any added capacity in the state for ten years.

Despite this finding, Duke Energy is building a mammoth coal-fired plant at Cliffside, near Shelby, N.C. Construction at Cliffside had been temporarily halted by federal court order, citing in particular the mercury pollution it would produce, but Duke Energy got around this by simply reclassifying this 800-megawatt plant as a “minor” source of pollution, without changing the plant design. The North Carolina Utility Commission and Governor Bev Perdue went along with this bald-faced lie. The truth is, *there is no clean coal*, and we must stop building new plants.

On April 20, I joined 350 folks in a well-organized march in Charlotte, N.C., to protest the Cliffside plant, carrying a Call to Conscience, which was read in front of Governor Perdue’s office and outside Duke Energy headquarters, urging Duke CEO Jim Rogers to cancel the project. Rogers has built a reputation as a “green” power executive, speaking articulately about the need

the “grandchild test,” saying we must steward a world in which our grandchildren have as much chance for a healthy life as we have enjoyed. On Monday I carried a sign reading, “Jim Rogers, you flunked the grandchild test.”

I was among 43 citizens who committed trespass and were arrested at Duke Energy headquarters in the spring of 2009. I felt it an honor to be in the Mecklenburg County jail with grandmothers in their 80s, students from Appalachian State University missing class to be in Charlotte, environmental leaders and clergy, and most of all, victims of mountain-top removal, the most “efficient” —and most devastating—way to mine coal. After being unsuccessful at hearings and having court injunctions circumvented by procedural lies, it’s now in the hands of citizens to proclaim the truth, even if we risk arrest and jail time in the process.

Who is this being built for? Not for us, because if we follow the recommendations of the study mandated by our legislature and the fresh thinking in the executive branch of the federal government, we don’t need Cliffside. Duke Energy is an international corporation, not a public utility answerable to the citizens of this state, and this additional capacity is being built to sell for profit elsewhere. But the truth I went to Duke headquarters to witness was not simply to expose an external enemy. *Our own behavior as consumers is the key to reducing demand.* Power companies are producing a useful product; they’re just pushed to produce too much of it, and—in the absence of legislation capping carbon emissions and fair public utility regulations—in the wrong ways.

THIS is a justice issue, justice for the poorest among us who are already most impacted by global climate change, and justice for the rest of Creation, which we put at risk by our arrogance and foolishness. It is a stewardship issue, not just of Creation put into our care by a loving Creator, but stewardship

to reduce CO₂ in power production. Indeed, while we were reading the citizen’s injunction and Call to Conscience outside his headquarters, Rogers was on the West Coast addressing a conference on renewable energy. On many occasions he has touted

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'Bringing the economy into alignment with ecology'

by Louis Cox

CAN the human economy be reconciled with the laws of ecology? That was the question posed to me and about 70 others who took part in a two-day symposium on ecology and economics in Montreal, Quebec, in May 2009.

We generated many promising proposals, but in the end we realized that this had been only the beginning. We were still in a global race to redefine economics and its role in the commonwealth of life—before Earth decides to “short-sell” its stock in the human enterprise.

The symposium was designed as a follow-up to the recent publication of *Right Relationship: Building a Whole Earth Economy* (Berrett-Koehler, 2009), by Peter G. Brown and Geoffrey Garver of the Quaker Institute for the Future's Moral Economy Project.

Although invitations were extended to a wide range of groups and interests, it turned out that nearly half of the symposium participants were Quakers from Canada and the U.S. or people who worked for various Quaker organizations. The roster also included many college faculty and students, as well as representatives of nongovernmental ecology groups, government agencies, and other faith traditions.

A number of participants who didn't want to add to the meeting's carbon footprint were linked to the Montreal gathering electronically. Despite intermittent technical glitches, the fact that teleconferencing



POLICY, Governance, and Social Action were workshop themes on the second day of a Quaker-led symposium on ecology and economics in Montreal in May.

was part of the format showed how much the organizers believed in *a decentralized, bottom-up approach as the only hope for effective global action*.

Much of the current thinking in the growing field of ecological economics is available in print or online. I urge Friends to read Brown and Garver's book (even better, use it in your own symposium), then move on to other works in their bibliography. Another resource is the Moral Economy website: www.moraleconomy.org.

What was most important to me about the symposium was the fact that a sizeable group of Quakers and kindred spirits came together to discern which issues and actions they could unite on. They became better informed and were energized to serve as emissaries of a new message of warning and hope, one that is all but ignored by the mainstream media.

MOST of the symposium's discussions on ecology and economics revolved around growing concern about runaway global warming and the relatively few people who seem informed and involved. Laurie Michaelis of Britain's Quaker Green Action said in a teleconference that most Friends he surveyed in the UK seem to know the score but many offer all the typical excuses for not radically changing their lives.

Destabilization of the climate is growing daily, and the world's governments (both elected officials and civil servants) seem wedded to economic models and concepts that are pushing in the *opposite* direction of where we need to be going. As author and activist Bill McKibben told us in a live link-up, *"The number of years we have left to turn the situation around can be counted on two hands."* It is critical that we focus on influencing the coming UN climate summit in Copenhagen, starting with special events on October 24th to focus public attention on this watershed moment (see www.350.org). He reminded us that *"physics and chemistry don't negotiate."*

We saw many signs of hope. Current climate research has been reaching world leaders, and there has been some integration of the fragmented disciplines of earth science, economics, philosophy, ethics, and religion. We also witnessed the emergence of new models, new worldviews, new heroes, new leaders, and new determination in the eyes of young people. ❖

>> "Clean coal," from page 4

of our own species. For if we don't radically dampen the accelerating CO₂ curve, we are virtually assuring our own extinction, along with countless other species. As far as we know, we are the only beings in the universe where the creature can look within and find the Creator staring back. This is a sacred trust indeed.

So let's continue to pressure Duke Energy to stop Cliffside and other new coal plants. Urge your congress-folk to support strong legislation to cap carbon emissions. And become aware of your own habits around power use. We could immediately reduce demand by a third simply by conservation and installing more efficient appliances and compact fluorescents.

I'm not the only one on trial here. ❖

The Green Collar Economy

How One Solution Can Fix Our Two Biggest Problems

Reviewed by Barb Day

Upper Fox Valley (Ill.) Friends Meeting

IN this new book, Van Jones, an award-winning activist, political advisor and Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress, describes in detail how to solve “our two biggest problems,” our failing economy and our devastated environment.

Jones gets to the crux of the two problems early in the book when he points out that although we cannot drill and burn our way out of our present economic and energy problems, we can *invent and invest* our way out, by choosing to commit to a serious shift in our energy strategy. Even though support from the public sector was inadequate, in 2006 there were 8.5 million new “green” jobs that created \$100 billion in industry profits.

Jones believes that the main pieces of technology in the green economy are a *caulk gun* and a *clipboard*. The caulk gun easily and cheaply stops energy waste. The clipboard is used by auditors who point out energy-saving opportunities to homeowners and renters. He thinks hundreds of thousands of green-collar jobs could be weatherizing and energy-retrofitting every building in the U.S. In this green-collar economy it is not about the advanced, degree-holding scientist, it is about the guy with the hard hat and the lunch bucket going off to fix America; the America that already exists and the America that needs retrofitting for solar panels and wind turbines. Jones’s view of a green collar job is: “...a family-supporting, career-track job that directly contributes to preserving or enhancing environmental quality.”

In “The Green New Deal,” Jones’s book speaks to me as a Quaker. He is talking about more *eco-populism*, less *eco-elitism*. He points out that the green movement must attract and include the majority of all people, not just the majority of the affluent. He describes *eco-populism* as *the method that would promote green solutions that improve ordinary people’s standard of living while decreasing their cost of living*. He says he has tried to bridge the divide between the constituencies; the affluent who are passionate about the environment, and those groups of people of color who do not want to coalesce with the affluent,



Van Jones

because they fear betrayal, resent chronic arrogance and don’t want to deal with the tensions brought on by cultural differences and power imbalances. He says he found that leaders from impoverished areas tend to focus on social justice, political solutions, and social change. They care about the people. The leaders from affluent places are focused on ecology, business solutions; and inner change. They care about the planet.

He created three binaries: 1) *Ecology vs. Social Justice*, 2) *Business Solutions vs. Political Solutions*, and 3) *Spiritual (inner) Change vs. Social (outer) Change*. Eventually he saw the value and importance of both approaches, replacing the “vs.” symbols with “plus” signs. He calls it “The *Amistad* Meets the *Titanic*,” and “Crisis vs. Opportunity.”

Regarding Crisis vs. Opportunity, he points out that a lot of environmental rhetoric remains rooted in crisis language. People who have a lot of opportunity are motivated to react to tales of crisis, whereas people who live in a state of personal crisis are not. When those living in that personal crisis learn about the economic solutions inherent in the green economy, then they are motivated.

In “The Future Is Now,” Jones points to an interesting fact: As a result of the ten pounds that the average U.S. citizen gained in the 1990s, the airline industry burned *350 million additional gallons of fuel* per year. Further, he points out, our current system deeply dishonors the work of traditional farmers.

MY favorite part—because I seek to start a business promoting products made from recycled materials—is under the subtitle, “Waste.” Jones talks about the stigma in low-income communities of color about working with waste. There was a time when the “sanitation worker” was virtually a separate caste, with black and brown men being treated and paid badly. If we changed the title to “recycling technician” and improved the pay [and increased the amount of recycled material], recycling and material reuse could be another sector of growth for green-collar jobs.

In “The Government Question,” Jones points out those government policies can play a big role in creating an inclusive, green economy in three ways: regulate conduct, invest money, and convene leaders. There are sections applying this to the executive and legislative branches of the federal government, as well as for local governments and international negotiations.

This book is extremely useful as a road map for the future, and President Obama must agree because Van Jones is currently serving as Special Advisor for Green Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation on the White House Council on Environmental Quality. ❖

How can Friends defend the Global Commons?

by Jack Bradin and David Millar
QEW UN Support Working Group

AS Friends, we are called to recognize the intrinsic value of the natural world, the web of life, as God's creation, beyond its use by humankind. Failure to respect ecosystems results in activities that damage Creation and its ability to support life. We are called to worshipful action—to promote policies, laws, and institutions that protect the Global Commons of air, water, earth, and energy.

Energy is captured for us free of charge by the miracle of photosynthesis; but science warns that as a species we have exceeded this “net primary productivity.” This overshoot will be inevitably followed by collapse. Our throw-away lifestyle has given us the Great Pacific Garbage Swirl, decline in songbird populations, honeybee hive collapses, melting icecaps, and global warming. Tipping points are happening far faster than the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicted.

Without a functioning ecosystem, and right sharing of resources, there can be no peace. Resource wars and migration of environmental refugees have already begun. The takeover of the necessities of life by economic force (backed by military force) is also a threat to the Global Commons.

A peaceful resolution to our planet-wide issue of poverty is still possible. Renewables give promise of world-wide energy independence. The age-old wisdom of the great religions can lead us to an understanding of Earth's Commons; like the best science, founded on respect for life.

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Then Job answered the Lord and said, I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. —Job 36–42

These changes will require unprecedented international cooperation, as well as greater self-reliance and responsibility in regions and communities. Little of enduring consequences will be accomplished if we do not address the prevalence of violence and the extreme wealth and poverty within the human family, or if we try to manage environmental problems without regard for both local and global ecological limits. We must change our economic paradigm of unlimited growth.

Jared Diamond points out in *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* that other civilizations

have faced this challenge. He also shows that the answer is not in technical fixes, but *value shifts*. Did not early Quakers of North America find kindred spirits amongst the native friends they encountered? Might we pay attention to the advices and queries of both sides? They might guide us during the present storm. Is it now what the global South is asking of the global North in the present UN debate over human and indigenous rights? Should the Global Commons

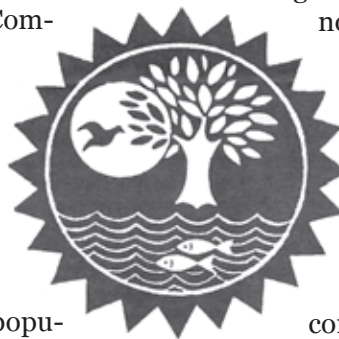
not be considered a moral claim to the necessities of life, for all life on Earth?

Total human population nears 6.8 billion souls, only 200 million people control all the wealth on Earth. So it is those 200 million who have brought global warming to a crisis stage, not the other 6.6 billion. The job of preserving the Global Commons from a greedy (unconscious, uncaring, indifferent, whatever word you prefer) minority is not as daunting as we are led to believe.

Many in the world (Friends and others of good will) understand and are dealing with this challenge. How can we as a Society of Friends exemplify and promote a right relationship to the earth, its commons, and its inhabitants? First steps might be to:

- ◆ Adopt a new UN treaty to preserve the Global Commons, including a moratorium on extraction until sustainable extraction and use can be proven.
- ◆ Initiate a carbon cap with no trading—thus avoiding a “carbon casino” that would make the recent sub-prime meltdown look like child's play.
- ◆ Cut atmospheric pollutants 45 percent below 1996 levels, through energy conservation and efficiency (“nega-watts”).
- ◆ Rapidly develop and implement sustainable technologies.
- ◆ Adopt a world-wide treaty on industrial environmental protection to stop “dirty” chemicals and industries from being intentionally exported to the global South.
- ◆ Convert electric utilities as rapidly as possible to renewable fuels, 20 percent by 2020 and 80 to 95 percent by 2050, the same order of magnitude as the required reductions in greenhouse gases. We citizens of the “developed” world will need to reduce our footprint by an equivalent percentage.

Experts tell us this is the economic equivalent of fighting a world war. There is no *moral* equivalent—because inaction would be like losing a war. And success would mean creating a moral economy. ◆



Two visions at UN Commission on Sustainable Development

by Mary Gilbert

QEW representative to the United Nations

THERE were two profoundly different visions for our common future operating at the UN Commission on Sustainable Development's 17th annual meeting (CSD 17) in May.

Vision 1 is a *top-down* approach. It pictures global trade linkages with high interdependence for the goods needed to sustain countries and communities. It is based on maximizing profits for investors and implies a trickle-down concept of wealth and well-being for the rest of us.

Vision 2 is a *bottom-up* approach. It pictures healthy, thriving, eco-system-based local economies. Communities are self-sustaining for basic needs. Trade exists, but involves surplus *after* people's basic needs are met. Wealth and well-being grow upward.

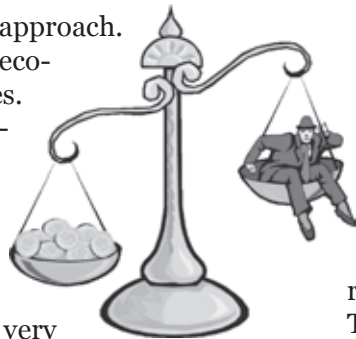
The top-down vision was very clear in May 12th presentations on biofuels by Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the UN Environmental Programme (UNEP), and Alexander Mueller, Assistant Director General of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). Twenty UN organizations "pulling together across institutional boundaries" were that day releasing a report called *Sustainable Bio-energy: A Decision Support Tool* to help countries plan the development of sustainable biofuel industries.

Steiner spoke of giving countries "a kick-start" to help them get "a role in the marketplace." Mueller said that growing bio-energy crops on a large scale for the global market requires "planning strategically and managing investment risks." He added that bio-energy production can play a big role in relieving poverty, since "rural growth is driven by agriculture more than by other sectors."

The kind of "growth" they meant is measurable by Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It assumes that bigger is better, that mono-cropping for export is the way for developing countries to go, and that "trickle-down" wealth addresses poverty.

This is just business as usual, with caveats about "sustainable limits" that will keep corporations fat and happy over the long term.

I walked out on Steiner's speech because I had been hearing enough Vision 1 talk over that week and a half.



Agriculture

At CSD 17 sessions diplomats talked about agriculture as if it were a single entity. All agreed that the world needs more food, but the differences among ways to produce that food were enormous. Those with Vision 1 talked about industrial-scale mono-cropping for export, involving heavy petrochemical inputs with their negative effects on soil health, large use of water for irrigation, and long supply chains. One thinks of food in terms of tonnage, processing, and distribution systems. Cash flow is into pockets already large and deep. This is *business as usual*, draining wealth away.

Those with Vision 2, in contrast, had a biological understanding of health. There are two basic units that they want to see strong and healthy: 1) the land itself (including soil structure, natural fertility, and moisture) and 2) the local smallholder economy. Small farmers have an investment in soil health and water management systems. They use short supply chains, with local markets and rural-urban links. Cash flow remains mostly local. This bottom-up vision accords with Gandhi's *swa raj*, which is about having a say over the conditions in which you live, without choices precluded by interests beyond your control.

What were they really saying?

All through the CSD 17 talks, the United States was insisting that the phrase "sustainable agriculture" be used wherever possible. Some of us were initially cheered by this language. But why was the alliance of smaller nations, the Group of 77 (G77) demanding that all those phrases be replaced by "agriculture for sustainable development"?

It turns out that in February 2009 Monsanto and the other agribusiness giants convened in Colorado and hammered out a definition of "sustainable agriculture" that suits them, and are engaged in a major green-washing campaign. For instance, no-till agriculture is now being touted as a means of keeping carbon in the soil. Monsanto has developed a genetically modified variety of corn that needs no tilling; a colleague of mine has seen it growing on steep Asian hillsides. It involves heavy use of an herbicide (available from Monsanto) that kills everything in the soil before planting takes place.

Monsanto has also hosted a meeting on *biochar* (an experimental method of carbon capture and storage), so they must think there's a way they can cash in on that too. More business as usual, forcibly promoted by the U.S. and its financial allies.

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QEW 'traveling ministers' groomed at spring meeting

AT ITS SPRING MEETING in Chicago, in addition to its on-going administrative work, QEW Steering Committee members and supporters learned what it means to be a QEW representative of a Yearly Meeting and how to represent QEW in the wider world of Friends. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting representative Hollister Knowlton and QEW General Secretary Ruah Swennerfelt led the two-part workshop.

It was explained that Yearly Meeting representatives, who are directly appointed to the Steering Committee, have the very important job of reporting what ecological activities are being undertaken in the constituent Monthly Meetings and at the Yearly Meeting level. And then the representative is expected to report to the Yearly Meeting about current activities of QEW through a display, making a plenary announcement in sessions, and possibly offering a workshop or interest group. Written reports both to their Yearly Meeting and to QEW are also expected. In addition, as Steering Committee members, they have the responsibility of helping to set policy and direction of QEW. They are expected to serve on one standing committee as well.

QEW "traveling ministers" are asked by Outreach Committee to visit a Yearly Meeting, Monthly Meeting, or other Quaker gathering. Sometimes a QEW member offers to visit a Yearly Meeting other than their own, rather than wait for an invitation. Visiting includes setting up a display; speaking briefly in the plenary session to direct people to the visitor and to the QEW display; offering a workshop or interest group; and generally meeting people and explaining

the work of QEW. Traveling ministers generally attend Yearly Meetings that have not yet affiliated with QEW by appointing a representative. During the spring meeting training, two people role-played the difficult task of introducing QEW to a reluctant participant.

Would you be interested in being a QEW traveling minister? Does your Yearly Meeting appoint a representative (the Yearly Meeting is invited to appoint up to two)? If not, would you like to encourage your Yearly Meeting to do so? Contact Ruah at the QEW office to learn more about these vitally important roles. ❖



General Secretary Ruah Swennerfelt, left, and Philadelphia Yearly Mtg. rep Hollister Knowlton review some do's and don't's of representing QEW at Yearly Meetings.

'Wisdom Stories' will be theme of Annual Gathering, October 8-12

THE THEME for this year's QEW Annual Gathering in Bellingham, Wash., will be "Wisdom Stories for a Resilient Future: Bible Stories, Native Stories, Quaker Stories." We have invited Quaker storytellers, a pastor from Northwest Yearly Meeting, and someone to share Native stories. The Firs Conference Center in Bellingham is on a city bus line, on beautiful grounds, and only about 1½ miles from an old-growth forest!

We'll also have a chance to share our own stories and see how they fit into the whole story of planet earth. QEW will have its annual meeting Thursday through Friday and the gathering will begin Friday evening and end Monday afternoon. Information will be available on the website by the end of July. Register early for this great event! ❖

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Closing session pact

At the closing session of CSD 17, each of the nine civil society groups at the UN was allowed one minute to speak on the record. All these groups, except Business & Industry, made a pact to end our speeches with the phrase, "*Business as usual is not an option.*" Everyone present had to hear it once a minute for eight minutes. Engrave that phrase on your hearts for ongoing discernment.

For a discussion of the impacts of biofuel production on nature and on livelihoods, and on biochar, see <<http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/>>. ❖

Quaker Missions Stamp Project helps QEW replace office printer

A \$300 grant from the Quaker Missions Stamp Project of Mattapoisett (Mass.) Friends Meeting recently enabled the QEW office to replace one of its ailing office printers.

The project raises funds for worthy projects by selling collectible postage stamps that are donated by supporters around the world. Stamps may be sent in care of Brad Hathaway, QMSP, 87 Aucoot Rd., Mattapoisett MA 02739.

God loves all Creation, not just the humans

ROLENE WALKER of San Francisco Friends Meeting is more than a third of the way along her two-year Walk With Earth from San Diego, Calif., to Santiago, Chile. By early June she had just entered Colombia. The purpose of her journey is to honor exceptionally beautiful places in God's creation and to support those who are working to save them. She posted this progress report on her website, <www.walkwithearth.org>.

WE got into Costa Rica without too much trouble at the border. This last week there haven't been any classes because of Easter break, but we have been to some beautiful places. We camped at Palo Verde National Park, where we saw pavones, large birds of the turkey family that are black with crests. We also saw coatis, howler monkeys, deer, egrits, caracaras, and several other birds. It is a dry tropical forest, which is very different than others we have seen.

We are now in Monteverde, where there is a community of Quakers that came in the 1950s, after the men were jailed for refusing to sign up for the military draft. They have dairy farms, a school, a cheese factory, a library, etc. One of the early Quakers, Wilford "Wolf" Guindon, helped to start the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve. We saw a fox, coatis, howler monkeys, capuchin monkeys, quetzal birds, purple throated hummingbirds, wrens, and robins. The variety of species is incredible. Twenty percent of the world's species are in the cloud forests. It is really a little paradise. We are staying with Jean and Joe Stuckey, who raised their children here on the dairy farm. They look out over the Gulf of Nicoya to the west and enjoy spectacular sunsets. We are about a mile or two from the Continental Divide, and the clouds come mostly from the Caribbean and disappear just above the farm. A mile up the mountain is a cloud forest, but on the farm it is more of a dry rain forest. Even on the farm there are microclimates of more dense and less dense canopy and understory.

This morning we got up at four to walk to the Meeting house to watch the sunrise. Well, it was a beautiful foggy morning, and we did actually see a little sunlight on the top of some of the clouds. I spoke to about 30 people about the spiritual underpinnings

of the Walk With Earth, how we need to rethink our metaphors about the earth and its care, the characteristics of the Ecozoic Age, and what we need to do to get there.

We need to get rid of the idea of stewardship in protestant thinking, because it is too damaging for three reasons. It implies increase (which the natural world can't do). It implies management or control, which we can't do with natural ecosystems even if we knew how. Finally, it implies that we decide how to use and abuse natural resources considering only our own needs and don't consider the consequences of our actions on the whole web of life.

Instead of stewards, we need to see ourselves as gardeners of our world's forests. We can't create life, but we can make it more or less difficult for others to live. Humans are the greatest influence over the forests of the world, and it is irresponsible to pretend there is nothing we can do about the harm. Thomas Berry coined the phrase, "Ecozoic Age," which is an age in which we live in harmony with the web of life we are a part of. The Cenozoic Age (geological age of mammals) is coming to an end, and we can move either towards a Technozoic Age, in which a few people have access to sophisticated resources and most of us have nothing, or towards an Ecozoic Age.

We also need to start expanding our idea of who is God's beloved. Just as ancient Israelites were told by

Isaiah that God was the God of the Egyptians, not just the Israelites, we need to start thinking that God loves trees, amoebas and parasites, not just humans. For Christians, we need to see the biosphere of the earth as the body of Christ, not just the human parts. The whole web of life is sacred. ❖

Donations to Walk With Earth can be made by check or online credit card through <www.walkwithearth.org>.



Twenty percent of the world's species are in cloud forests.

Earthcare Calendar

July 29–August 3, 2009—Philadelphia Yearly Meeting annual sessions will have a strong environmental theme.

August 7, 2009. Deadline for article submissions for the September-October *BeFriending Creation*.

October 8–12, 2009. Quaker Earthcare Witness Annual Meeting. The Firs Conference Center, Bellingham, Wash.

It costs QEW a lot to process returned mailings. Please call or write to let us know your new mailing address.

Letters

I WANT TO CONGRATULATE Peter Brown and Geoffrey Garver for their well-thought-out and wonderfully written book, *Right Relationship: Building a Whole Earth Economy* [see March-April 2009 *BFC*]. Reading the book has given me hope where I felt only despair for our future. I think the book should be published online so that everyone in the world can read it, and complementary copies should be mailed to every world leader, heads of major corporations etc. But who would fund this action? I will write to people I think may be able to help, and I will mail a copy of the book to my Prime Minister and to Canada's ministers of the environment and the economy.

—Jaroslav Zenchuk
Ottawa, Ontario,
Canada

IT'S ALWAYS AN HONOR and a pleasure for us to have QEW at the Cenacle. And we do appreciate the influence and practical assistance you have given us in "greening" the building. I know we have quite a ways to go, but at least we have been able to take some steps in the right direction since you started meeting here.

Thank you for the gift of seed money to purchase low-flow shower heads. It was not something on our radar screens, so I am glad that you brought it to our consciousness. It certainly will help to reduce our water consumption. Once again, we are grateful for your help.

I have read a couple of good books recently that you may be interested in: *Living Beyond the "End of the World": A Spirituality of Hope*, by Margaret Swedish, and

The Conservationist Manifesto, by Scott Russell Sanders (just published). Both are very challenging looks at our current situation and how we can live more responsibly.

Please extend our heartfelt thanks to all of our Quaker Earthcare Witness friends.

—Bob Raccuglia
Cenacle Director
Chicago, Illinois

I JUST WANTED to say how delighted I was with the May-June *BeFriending Creation*, putting the population issue right on the front. So often it's listed, at maximum, as secondary to global warming rather than the inevitable cause behind all of these problems. And so I was so glad to see that out there

I was also glad to see that the next QEW Annual Meeting will be at Bellingham, Washington. I might be able to come to it because of that. That's certainly close enough.

So I'm delighted with the work that you're doing and hope to see you there.

—Steve Willey
Sand Point, Idaho

JUST A NOTE to thank you for your interesting website. I look forward to reading Jack Phillips's essay, "The Spiritual Dimension—Why We Care for the Earth." I also receive and am always inspired by *BeFriending Creation*.

We are in an historic period requiring enormous creativity. I know we can count on the Quakers to provide leadership and relevant thought. Keep on keepin' on!

—Rev. Finley Schaef, president,
NACCE (Network Alliance of Congregations Caring for Earth)



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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QEW REALLY NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT! Like many other non-profits around the country, QEW has been feeling the impact of these leaner economic times, as many of its supporters have been forced to trim back on what they budget for various donations. While we experience such pressures too, we need to say that QEW's mission to integrate Earthcare into the beliefs and practices of Friends needs to remain a priority. Many issues of the day hinge on people's assumptions, attitudes, and spiritual values, and QEW is unique in its attention to those underlying conditions. Please do your best to increase or maintain your support for this vital work!

QEW pamphlet reissued

No peace or justice without a planet!



MORE THAN EVER it is crucial that Friends of all stripes and leadings make their healing influence felt as the earth is bruised by a host of conflicts and stresses.

Many Friends are increasingly concerned about harmful climate change and other ecological crises, but say they are too busy with peace and social justice work to take on "one more issue."

This QEW pamphlet explains simply and powerfully why our peace work and Earthcare are "two sides of the same coin and *must be addressed together*." Copies may be ordered from the QEW office. ❖

Steering Committee member works to boost her Yearly Meeting's involvement in Earthcare

SUSAN SWANSTROM, an at-large QEW Steering Committee member, is resident Friend at Santa Rosa, (Calif.) Friends Meeting.



She is currently clerk of QEW's Outreach Committee and serves on the QEW Sustainability: Faith & Action working group.

She moved to California recently after living for 25 years in Missoula, Montana,

where she had been active in unity with nature work through her Friends meeting. She served as clerk of that Meeting three times and was involved in writing a new "Harmony with Creation" section for North Pacific Yearly Meeting's *Faith & Practice*. She is now facilitating NPYM's process of formally affiliating with QEW.

Trained as a psychotherapist and mediator, Susan most recently completed a training to be a personal life coach. For her this means "helping people find fun in going green." ❖