Canadian Yearly Meeting

Canadian Yearly Meeting (approved August 2001)

Canadian Yearly Meeting website: http://quaker.ca/

Friends believe we are all manifestations of the Creator, the Divine Spirit, God. As our knowledge has grown, we have come to realize that indeed all life forms are exquisitely interrelated and independent. We envision a Religious Society of Friends in the 21st century that includes in its testimonies a clear call of responsibility to live in harmony with all life on Earth.

We see that our traditional peace testimony of nurturing peace with each other must be clearly expanded to include nurturing peace with all the created world. We are inspired to do this with a renewed respect for Creation which goes beyond self-interest. We envision a relationship with Earth that allows us to see ourselves as an integral part of God's creation and not as the sole inheritors of it, to use as we will. We seek nonviolent ways of meeting the needs of other species with whom we share the Earth. While Friends respect science as a useful tool for understanding aspects of reality, we recognize that there are divine mysteries that remain beyond our ability to understand.

While evidence of ecological disaster is all around us, we can and must make changes now which will heal our spiritual and physical connections with the Earth. In the tradition of First Nations Peoples we work to ensure a better future for at the very least, the next seven generations. We see that significant changes in the way we live our day-to-day lives are necessary for life on Earth to survive and flourish.

ECOLOGY CONCERNS--2008

"So great is the hurry in the spirit of this world that in aiming to do business quick and to gain wealth makes creation at this day to loudly groan." - John Woolman

At a full session of CYM on Tuesday, August 11, 2008 Friends representing a number of ecology-related groups described our work thus far, challenging us under the theme "Moving Forward". We heard from the Moral Economy Project, Quaker Ecology Action Network (QEAN), Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW), Quaker Institute for the Future (QIF), Canadian Council of Churches (Biotech Reference Group), Quaker International Affairs Programme (QIAP), Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC). We heard a re-reading of the CYM Sustainability Minute (2001).

Following these presentations, many deep spiritual and practical concerns were voiced by Friends present. Faced with multiple complex and massive climate change impacts, while "business as usual" and resource exploitation continue, we are very aware of the limited timeframe for necessary prevention and mitigation. We are especially attentive to the plight of those most vulnerable, whose suffering, sickness and death rates are already increasing due to global warming and environmental dislocation.

GLEANINGS FROM THE PLENARY AND THE QEAN SIG

- We need corporate accountability - watch out for ‘corporatization’ and privatization.
- Quaker International Affairs Programme future work will focus on right relationship to the Commons.
- Biofuel - should we consider burning of food as a sin?
- Greed and getting ahead, growth and more growth, not counting the cost; we need to conserve and do with less.
- We go through a narrow place, shedding what is extraneous; love does not know fear as motivator. It is important what we can do together, in small community ways as well as large picture.
• We can move from fear and depression, through balance, to gratitude. I found joy only by stepping through my fears.
• We are here now to live each day fully with love and learning to be thankful.
• We can make changes as needed, and help others to do the same; be models.
• Brighten the corner where you are, be a little candle if you cannot be a star.
• Balance joys and fears; the touch of joy and optimism is necessary to fact it bravely.
• Our society is like the Titanic; it is too late to turn the ship around; we probably have already struck the iceberg, and we need to build as many lifeboats as possible to carry us to a sustainable society. We wonder what our Quaker lifeboat looks like, and we need to be particularly concerned about those on the lower decks.

QUERIES AND ADVICES

1. What is laid upon us by our traditional testimonies: simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality? Can we see that these are confirmed and deepened by earthcare and reverence for life?
2. Are we open to radical simplicity in order to respect and nurture all life?
3. Do we know our farmers: do we know where our food was produced, the conditions under which it was grown and transported, and your relation to the people who produced it? Can we broaden the question not just to the people but to the animals, soil and water on which all life depends? Can we broaden this question to include clothing, transportation, and other necessities of life?
4. Can we question the doctrine of unlimited growth, in order to reduce our consumption and pollution?
5. Recognizing that excessive use of fossil fuels is the cause of two threats--global warring and global warming, are we doing all that we can to reduce our use of energy and to promote development of renewable resources, rather than developing more fossil and nuclear sources to maintain consumption?
6. Can we speak Truth to people as well as to "power"? We need to get to ordinary people as well as to government?
7. How can we limit human population growth? (a) by ways such as education of girls, women's rights, social security, guarantees of safe food and water, tree-planting and well-digging, rather than population control by dictatorship, war, famine and disease and (b) by reducing the environmental impact of the rich.
8. The Moral Economy Project raises questions about right relationships: what is the economy for? How does the economy work? How big is too big? What is "fair"? And how can we get there?

ACTION TOWARD A MINUTE

As Friends with deep concern, we are moving toward solutions and ways of living in sustainable ways. We are moving toward a moral economy and ways that do not increase the carbon footprint. We are engaged in working with Canadian Friends and the wider society to deepen our earthcare concern. We ask all Friends and Meetings to continue and intensify the search and witness.