Minneapolis Friends Meeting

Peace and Social Concerns Committee statement regarding the voluntary carbon tax and the goals of peace, racial justice, and economic justice:

Quakers have taken the lead in saying that the US and other nations need a mandatory carbon tax, something to encourage people to buy less fossil carbon for plastic, heating, electricity, and travel. The money collected could build up funds to help developing nations and the poor here contend with the effects of climate change. However, the US government has not passed a carbon tax. As an alternative witness, Quaker organizations and meetings (along with some other groups and individuals) are setting aside a Voluntary Carbon Tax--sometimes as an arbitrary amount and sometimes as a set percentage of their carbon use--to be spent to support both (1) reduction in the carbon use by the communities themselves (by installing better insulation, for example, or by lobbying for reduced carbon use in the US) and (2) relief for those already being harmed by climate change (such as in provision of desalination equipment or solar panels to developing nations or health clinics in affected local neighborhoods).

Climate change is being caused by the affluent life-styles of people like us, and thus far has affected primarily people of color and people without economic resources, who have the hardest stress when they must adapt to a changed climate. They cannot move the way many of us travel simply to avoid a hot summer or a cold winter. The rich get insurance against floods, hurricanes, storm damage; the poor make-do as they are able. When the climate itself changes, they often are not able.

Droughts caused by climate change led to the wars in Somalia, Syria, and other places. Most wars are wars over scarce resources and most of that scarcity these days has its source in environmental distress.

Sometimes we prefer to help after a crisis. For example, after a war starts we do admirable work of mediation, to resettle refugees, to foster reconciliation, to care for the wounded. However, prevention is preferable. People do not need us to help them once their lives are destroyed as much as they need us to stop causing the problem and to provide resources so that those affected can find their own ways to adapt.

"It would go a great way to caution and direct people in the use of the world, that they were better studied and known in the Creation of it. For how could Man 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, Some Fruits of Solitude, 1692

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