

Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Minutes concerning sustainability

August 11, 2001

52. **Quaker Ecology Action Network:** We approve the proposed minute on Sustainability, which now can serve as a Minute of Record, to be used by any Friend or meeting as an expression of our beliefs on sustainability.

Minute on Sustainability

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 inter-related and inter dependent; thus all life is sacred. 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 of 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 non-violent ways of meeting the needs of our species without compromising the viability of other species with whom we share this Earth. While Friends respect science as a useful tool for understanding aspects of reality, we recognize there are divine mysteries that remain beyond our ability to understand.

Human exploration has revealed the Earth to be a beautiful blue-green sphere in the vastness of space - our home in the Universe. We will further strive to understand and respect Earth processes - among these, the growth and respiration of living things, the flow of the Earth's waters, and the natural flow and mixing of gases in the atmosphere-- and do our utmost not to upset its balance, and to strive to restore balance where it has been upset.

Given the implications of Friends testimonies on peace, on simplicity, on equality, and on respect for integrity of Creation, we pledge ourselves to the Precautionary Principle, by which new technology is embraced with great caution. Holistic accounting of impacts, including scientific, moral, and ethical accounts may or may not confirm technology's benefits. These things may only be known in the fullness of time.

We further pledge to share these concerns with the wider human society outside the Society of Friends, and to support and love one another as we carry these concerns forward.

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.

To follow up from this 2001 session, Canadian Yearly Meeting prayerfully encourages all Meetings and individual Friends to take action to measure and reduce our ecological footprints. QEAN offers suggestions and resources:

- Conduct ecological audits
- Establish monthly meeting ecology working groups or networks to address issues and facilitate change within meetings, and as bodies which can network with other faith-based groups and beyond the faith community.
- Make use of resources provided by Friends Committee in Unity with Nature, QEAN and other groups.

QEAN will welcome news from monthly meetings and individual Friends about their activities and results so we can share with one another through reports, poster displays and other means at Yearly Meeting 2002. News can be sent to QEAN through its Email forum or to one of the Co-Clerks, Vince Zelazny or Bill Curry (s.t.c.)

August 20, 1999

59. **Concern for ecological sustainability:** In consideration of a concern for ecological sustainability, a minute from Simcoe-Muskoka Monthly Meeting was read, followed by a minute from Hamilton Monthly Meeting. The Simcoe- Muskoka minute urges the establishment of a Working Group to develop a Canadian Quaker testimony on sustainability.

Eric Hall described the intent of the Seventh Generation Bill, a private member's bill being put forward by Joe Jordan, MP. He appealed to Friends to support the bill. Material regarding the bill has been circulated among Friends, and Monthly Meetings are asked to respond as they feel is appropriate.

Peggy Land presented the following minute from the Special Interest Groups on "Sustainability" and "Worship and Witness with the Light in All Creation".

We gratefully acknowledge our heritage of the social testimonies of peace and integrity, community and harmony, simplicity and justice and equality, all of which govern our relations as Friends with one another and the wider community.

We feel a strong leading to extend these testimonies to include our spiritual interconnectedness with all creation, and our desire to live within our ecological capacity, seeing that of God in all as the governing principle in all of these relations.

Our faith perspective leads us to request Yearly Meeting's approval to form a working group on ecological concerns to:

- a) encourage and support Friends working on ecological issues;
- b) explore and deepen our faith and practice as Friends as we face these challenges;
- c) communicate the ecological faith perspective amongst Friends;
- d) explore how we work with other Quaker groups with these concerns (for example, Friends Committee on Unity with Nature and Canadian Friends Service Committee and the Quaker International Affairs working group, and the ecumenical and interfaith coalitions).

We wish to share the vision of Keith Helmuth (1990) as quoted in *Quaker Faith and Practice* of Britain Yearly Meeting, 25.14.

"We are building towards the climax of crisis. The spiritual crisis is folding into the ecological crisis and the ecological crisis is folding into the economic crisis. As Christians, it seems to me, we are now required to critically assess the capital driven market economy and identify it as a false religion, a fabulously productive but ultimately destructive system bringing closure on God's goodness in creation and bringing a creeping atheism to the soul. To look this system straight in the eye and call it to account is a critical test of Biblical faith.

Challenging market economics with a Biblical sense of the goodness of God in creation is to join a spiritual struggle. Faith in God, solidarity with the suffering poor and all other forms of life demands that we take a stand and say, 'This destruction must stop.' We must be perfectly clear about the implications of undertaking this responsibility. It is more than just setting up household recycling bins, growing organic vegetables or riding a bike to work. It is more than a talking job. It is a renovation which will change everything: the way we do business, the way we eat, the way we travel, the houses we build, the products and services we can expect and the prices we pay for them, the way we feel about trees and the way we worship God."