



# A Friendly Letter

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Dear Friend,

Last month, when our issue came back from the printer, we were faced with a disaster every contemporary publisher dreads: a total computer foulup, which left us completely without access to our mailing labels. Hence, it was necessary to reconstruct and update the list by hand, then type each label and sort them all by zip codes. What a chore! Unfortunately, this month our situation is only 50% better: we have the list and the labels, but must still sort them before mailing. Ah, computers! All this confusion undoubtedly makes for more than our normal quota of errors in renewals and such. So if you receive such a notice incorrectly, please let us know because we want to straighten it out. To ease the situation somewhat, we are sending this issue out first class mail, in hopes it will not become the needle lost in the vast haystack of bulk mail at this heaviest time of year. (We also hope you will get it in time to order a gift subscription or two, using the enclosed coupon.) Next month, we profoundly hope, it will be back to computing and bulk mail as usual.

On a more seasonable note, the holidays that are upon us are traditionally a time of giving, not only to friends and families but to charities and good causes. It is with such giving of funds that this issue is concerned, especially as this is practiced among liberal unprogrammed Friends. As the article inside will indicate, it is my judgment that we liberal Friends have much to learn, and much to repent for, in this area. We could do no better in this regard than to study the experience and approaches of Evangelical Friends. While we would probably not want to imitate their methods exactly, it is evident that they are much more successful at channeling the resources of their members into the support of their Quaker institutions, while our lack of success is imposing increasingly serious, and I believe unnecessary, burdens on ours. If, as I suspect, some of the comments on the following pages evoke a response from you, I will, as always be glad to receive them.

One last reminder: next month's issue will present our third nominations for Quaker/s of the Year. I appreciate the nominations that have come in so far, and encourage you to send me additional names of Friends who you feel have made signal contributions, either in the past year or during their careers, to the Quaker venture in the United States.

Yours in the Light,

*Chuck Fager*

Chuck Fager



## THE COST OF A LIBERAL QUAKER TABOO

About 18 months ago I came across some very upsetting statistics, while working as a consultant to a prison ministry group. They asked me to find out how religious groups had fared financially during the recessions and inflation of the 1970s. What I learned was that, overall, religious groups did quite well: although prices went up between 1970 and 1980 by over 80%, total giving to all religious groups increased by about 120%, putting them comfortably ahead of inflation. Moreover, many such groups, especially evangelical ones, did much better.

After collecting this information, and checking the records of several specimen evangelical groups, it seemed an interesting idea to compare this data to the records of a liberal religious group, just to see how they stacked up; and who better for such a comparison than the American Friends Service Committee?

### *A Shocking Set of Numbers*

This is where the numbers became disturbing, because between 1971 and 1980, it turned out, the AFSC's total income increased barely 60%. This meant that in these years it had actually fallen almost 25% *behind* inflation, and 60% behind the average for all religious groups. But even more disturbing was a specific lineup of the AFSC against World Vision, an evangelical group whose work in many ways parallels AFSC's. In 1971, World Vision's total income was \$8,500,000, more than two million *less* than the AFSC's \$10,300,000. But by 1980, when AFSC's income had risen only to \$16,600,000, World Vision's had literally exploded to \$61,700,000, *almost four times as large*.

AFSC fundraisers tell me that AFSC's income since 1981 has kept up with the lower inflation of these years. Even so, its loss of real income has been substantial, and the negative impact on its programs and staff has been marked. If AFSC had kept up with inflation, its 1980 income would have been \$19,000,000; if it had kept pace with the average for all religious groups, the figure would have been over \$20,000,000. That's why I think it is fair to say that the AFSC was then at least \$4,000,000 short of where it should have been. What happened?

Lengthy discussion of these figures and their implications with AFSC staff including its top fundraisers has pretty well eliminated the easy explanations. One such would be to blame it on a lack of talent among the fundraisers; but having seen them in action, it is evident they are accomplished and dedicated professionals. No more useful is my pet concern (see issue #7) over AFSC's eroding Quaker identity; while this continues to be a real problem, the fundraisers are typically likely to be solid, even exemplary Quakers, among the most responsive to Quaker sensibilities of any AFSC staffers.

### *Figuring Out Whodunit, and How, and Why*

No, the most likely villain of this piece is also the hardest one to pin down. Rather than indicating any widening breach between AFSC and its Quaker constituency, AFSC's financial misfortunes appear far more to be a result of their very sensitivity to it. Or rather, they result from a sensitivity to a lengthy but unwritten set of rules and constraints on fundraising by and among liberal Friends. One could sum up this set of rules in the observation that such fundraising, among and by liberal Friends, is much like sex was for Victorians: better neither seen nor mentioned, and where unavoidable, then used only for reproduction. Anything much beyond this, and quiet, confidential letters to members, is simply not done. It isn't exactly sinful, nor is there a formal testimony against it. Words like *gauche*, *uncouth*, *unseemly*, *boorish* and *crass* seem best to express the attitude. In sum, it's a taboo.

Just how seriously liberal Friends adhere to this unwritten code was shown by two identical horror stories recounted by AFSC fundraisers: in each, an enthusiastic but untutored new staff member visits a large meeting to talk about a program, and at the end of the presentation actually commits the unthinkable gaffe of *passing the hat*! Good grief; from the ensuing brouhaha, headquarters could have concluded they had unveiled a bar, craps table and strippers to raise revenue, and invited in military recruiters besides. Needless to say, the staffers



in question were more thoroughly briefed before their next foray into the Society at large.

The benefit of this liberal Quaker taboo regarding fundraising is immediately evident to newcomers from mainstream churches, whom I have often heard exclaim: "You mean you don't take up an offering? Where would I leave a donation?" (Usually there is a small box for contributions, sitting on some obscure corner table, unnoticed by all.) Now, there is no denying that this reticence makes for a wonderfully low-pressure environment, to which many of us, especially the numerous refugees from more demanding denominations, become very attached. The cost of this cozy atmosphere only becomes evident when some such set of figures as those cited above comes to light. AFSC's fundraising for most of its life has scrupulously respected these mores, and has centered around a quiet, one-on-one approach to an unpublicized pool of large donors; such more worldly efforts as mail appeals are a much more recent, and modest, part of its work; and advertising for general organizational support is virtually unknown.

### *Paying For an Unreal Atmosphere*

This approach clearly worked well for many years. But in the last decade, the environment in which the AFSC exists changed dramatically, with the result that this genteel, incognito approach is simply no longer adequate. Other unprogrammed Quaker groups with a similar approach have also had a hard time during this period; Friends General Conference, for instance, nearly went bust, and is still not out of the woods.

But let's also consider this from another angle. Norval Hadley, former president of the Evangelical Friends Alliance, now is an executive for World Vision. I asked him what accounted for the organization's dramatic growth in the last decade. He said he could explain it in one word: "Television." World Vision runs programs late at night, when time is relatively cheap, dramatizing its work and asking for contributions; they work. Evidently they from time to time have exaggerated the extremity of some problems, and have even been known to attempt to pirate other groups' efforts. But by and large, they have grown because they have not been shy about seeking out potential donors and asking them, repeatedly, to donate. Excesses aside, I find it hard to fault such an approach, unless one wants to employ such words as crass and unseemly, but these terms sound increasingly hollow and unconvincing to me.

AFSC fundraisers, however, told me they find television too expensive and too vulnerable to too many of the unwritten rules. The same thing goes with their mailing program: most major groups mail appeals, at least to selected mailing lists, monthly; AFSC mails five times a year, and that is only recently up from four. On further probing, the only solid reason I heard for not mailing more aggressively went back to the liberal Quaker taboo on being visible and assertive in such efforts. Constraints; always constraints.

### *In the World But Not Of the World?*

To be sure, some constraints are definitely in order. I certainly don't want the AFSC or the others to imitate Jerry Falwell, who sends me letters every two weeks shrieking about how the communist-homosexual-abortionist-pornographic-freezeniks are about to destroy Christian civilization unless I send the largest possible gift I can *right now!* (even though his letters brought in \$70 million last year). But our groups could be a whole lot more enterprising and effective in this area without coming near that kind of tripe. Personally, I would be greatly comforted to turn on the tube some night and see, instead of the Old Time Gospel Hour, the AFSC Show, making a pitch for peace over the airwaves for a change. In fact, that sounds like a darn good idea, even if it didn't do anything more than break even.

There's an important qualification to be noted here: I am not implying that liberal Friends, with their taboo, are niggardly in supporting good causes; not at all. Rather, I am persuaded we are simply naive about the way of the world in this regard, and hence we scatter our resources too widely, and effectively prohibit our groups from adapting the techniques necessary to survive to Friendly purposes and processes. Changing this attitude among liberal Friends will not be easy; many may object that it should not be changed at all. But if we do not become more sophisticated and skillful about fundraising, as well as more open to its demands, it is hard to see how groups like the AFSC will be able to avoid paying the cost of this attitude in continued erosion of their ability to maintain the efforts which, for all the faults, have carried the Quaker witness across the world most potently in our time. Can our taboo really be that important to us?



INSIDE: HOW A LIBERAL QUAKER TABOO  
COST THE AFSC 4 MILLION DOLLARS

From: Chuck Fager, A Friendly Letter  
P.O. Box 1361  
Baileys Crossroads, VA 22041

### THIS MONTH IN QUAKER HISTORY

In 1889, a group of Friends in San Jose, California were disciplined by their parent body, Iowa Yearly Meeting, over what appeared to the Iowa elders to be rampant unsoundness, particularly on the part of their leading Friend, Joel Bean. Bean was an Iowa native, formerly clerk of that YM, who had lived through and regretted the separation between Conservative and Evangelical Friends within it. He had, in fact, migrated to the West in hopes of avoiding being drawn into the controversy; but to no avail. His case became a major scandal in world Quakerism, but Iowa YM stood firm. As a result, in this month of that year, he and his supporters formed the College Park Association of Friends in San Jose. The Association carefully declined to describe itself as an embryonic YM, preferring to offer a home to various Friends in the area without becoming entangled in questions of affiliation among the various contending Quaker factions of the day. But finally, half a century later, in 1946, it did become the parent body to a new YM--in fact, more than one: Pacific, North Pacific and Intermountain, thus far, all trace their origins back to it. Still unaffiliated with larger associations, these YMs have become an important new factor on the American Quaker scene.

### QUAKER CHUCKLES

*A Riddle:* At a Quaker restaurant, what would they call the house specialty?

*Answer:* The *piece de non-resistance*, of course.

---Thanks to the Reagans of Palo Alto, California.

Next, from the newsletter of Adelphi Monthly Meeting in Maryland comes the following report, based, they say, on excerpts from a book in their possession entitled *Friends For 3000 Years*: It seems that one Flavius Amicus, an ancient Roman worker, once had a brush with death when the horse pulling his cart collapsed and died in the freezing Etruscan winter on a lonely stretch of road. In desperation, Flavius prayed for deliverance, and he later reported that somehow, "My cart was strangely warmed," and he managed to survive. Thereafter, he prayed daily to a new god, whom he addressed as "Btus," roughly translated as "heat or warmth." How this heat god became translated in to, or identified with The Light Within, the Adelphians promise will be revealed in future excerpts from this quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore. We will be watching that space.