



A Friendly Letter

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Sixth Month, 1988

Dear Friend,

If you read the "peer review" of our first six years (in Issue #75, 6/1987), you may recall reviewer Richard Cimino expressing surprise that they did not include anything about abortion. That silence was not due to unconcern. To the contrary, I have published several major pieces on abortion in various places going back to 1973, and have paid my dues for doing so by dodging brickbats from both sides. But for a long time it was not clear to me that I had anything further to contribute to the debate, and my own thinking was undergoing a slow evolution and ripening.

Last fall, however, I reached some new conclusions, and felt increasingly under the weight of the cost to our society of the struggle over abortion. So I began another essay about it. After more than a dozen drafts, I am now pleased to make this essay public.

But not here. To find it you will need to turn to the pages of *The New Republic*, in its 5/30 issue, under their title, "Fetal Distraction."

The piece can be read there for free. But I can't forego tantalizing interested readers by pointing out that due to space limitations, the original manuscript was substantially shortened by *The New Republic*, and some of its major points were left out. I'm not complaining about this; it is par for the journalistic course. But the thrust of what was left out is suggested by the essay's original title, which was "*Abortion and Civil War*." And if any readers are interested in pondering the full argument advanced there, a flyer enclosed with this issue explains how you can get a copy. In either version, I think you will find it a provocative view of this tangled and divisive issue. And when the next "peer review" comes around, I will at least have an excuse for not writing here about the topic: would you believe, the pay isn't good enough....

Another piece of reading matter, or rather two, also deserve mention here. Guenter Lewy's book, *Peace And Revolution: The Moral Crisis of American Pacifism*, which has been mentioned here a couple of times before, has now been published. Since this is a title unlikely to find its way to the front shelves of many retail bookstores, I have obtained some copies, which are available by mail; the enclosed flyer gives the details.

Lewy's book offers a detailed history and critique of the record of four major American pacifist groups during and after the 1960s and the Vietnam War. Among these, perhaps the most searching scrutiny is given to the American Friends Service Committee. While I disagree with much of Lewy's political outlook, his researches raise many troubling questions that Friends ought to grapple with. Indeed, I plan to write a detailed critique of Lewy in the near future, of which there will be more to be said soon.

In the meantime, those who are interested in *Peace and Revolution* will doubtless also want to read the other document I mentioned, which is the AFSC's response to Lewy. A lengthy reply has been in preparation for some weeks, and at press time I was told it would be ready in a few days. So when this issue reaches you it should be available from: AFSC, Information Services, 1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia PA 19102, at no charge.

I believe these two documents mark the opening round of a searching discussion of the shape and direction of corporate Quaker service, and the place of the AFSC in such efforts. This examination is both overdue and important.

Yours in the Light,

Chuck Fager

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THE STATE OF THE SOCIETY: ONE FRIEND'S IMPRESSIONS

By this time each spring, many local Quaker groups have completed a Report on the Spiritual State of the Meeting. From these some Yearly Meetings attempt to discern the overall condition of their body.

While sometimes blandly pro forma, usually these reports reflect honest and serious self-examination, and I read them with much interest. And I often wonder what a comparable report on the Spiritual State of the American Quakerism might look like, and what it might disclose. The following is an effort to sketch what might be such a report's salient points.

A SURPRISING FRIENDLY GESTURE

There are four key factors to consider, and the first involves the Pope. If you were asked to attend a meeting between Quakers and Pope John Paul II on Quaker turf, where do you think it would be: Philadelphia? London? Richmond, Indiana? Newberg, Oregon? Well, such a meeting *did* take place not long ago, but if you or I had been invited we would have been headed for None Of The Above. Try, instead, La Paz, Bolivia.

That's right, on 5/10, the pope met with leaders from several non-Catholic churches in Bolivia; and among them were Jews, Methodists, German-speaking Lutherans—and Francisco Mamani, the national president of INELA, the large and vigorous evangelical Quaker church in that desperately poor country.

Let's take a look at this encounter, based on what I've been able to find out about it from this far away: It came after the Pope had loudly denounced fundamentalist evangelical groups which are growing rapidly in Latin America and whose evangelistic message is strongly anti-Catholic. His invitation to an ecumenical summit was issued to over 100 Bolivian church groups. Other evangelical groups refused; but Mamani, who has worked with

Catholics on Bible translation teams, took up his offer.

Their meeting was brief, essentially a courtesy call; but it was historic even so. And the link to North American Friends is direct, because these Bolivian Quakers are the spiritual offspring of the very evangelical Friends of Northwest Yearly Meeting in Oregon. And it wasn't so long ago that Friends like these were unwilling to meet even with other kinds of Quakers, never mind the Pope of Rome. In 1929, for instance, Edward Mott, the Superintendent of Oregon YM(now Northwest), attended an All-Friends Conference in Iowa intending, as he candidly put it, *"to thwart the very purpose for which the conference was held, the promotion of fellowship among the groups."* The effects of his demolition work were felt for more than a generation afterward.

A CONTROVERSY TO COME?

Today, however, Evangelical Friends are typically represented at mixed Quaker conferences of many sorts; this is no news at all. Even so, a visit by evangelicals with the Pope is still something of a phenomenon. Knowledgeable sources speculated that Mamani's visit could prove controversial among his own flock, and I suspect there may be murmurings about it among some American evangelical Friends as well. My sources were careful to point out, in this connection, that Mamani made the visit as an individual, not officially on behalf of INELA.

It will be interesting to see whether Mamani suffers for his boldness in meeting the Pope. The antagonism of many fundamentalist groups toward Rome runs very deep; it was a staple of Jimmy Swaggart's preaching, and during the last papal visit to America I saw slick broadsides denouncing John Paul as nothing less than the Anti-Christ. Yet the La Paz gesture fits with

the trend being noted here, what could be called the Evangelical Quaker Detente: an openness to contact with other groups, even while clinging to the basics of their own position.

This Detente is a major element shaping the state of the Society in America today. It has been a great boon to Friends United Meeting, enabling it to survive last year's rejection of the Richmond Declaration of Faith(see AFLs #72 & #75). This last winter, the FUM Meeting Ministries Commission even opened up the formerly taboo topic of homosexuality, asking meetings and churches to write in and share their feelings and convictions. Responses ranged predictably from loud acceptance to vehement condemnation. But the mere fact that the subject was actually raised without an institutional crisis, shows how far FUM has come since 1984, when proposals to talk about this same subject nearly sank the plans for its California Triennial(see AFLs #23, #30 & #44).

A NEW FOCUS ON THE FAMILY

FUM's difficult transition is paralleled by another important development at the other end of the spectrum, what could be called the Domestication of Gay Quakers.

A decade ago, when debate over the legitimacy of homosexuality first heated up among unprogrammed Friends, there was a subtext to it that many straight Friends found unsettling: we were being pressed to affirm, not only the potential legitimacy of homophile orientations and relationships, but implicitly as well the reigning patterns of homosexual eroticism. Among gay males particularly, the dominant ethos was then one of unfettered sexual consumerism. In the late 1970s this reached a level of intensity among many for which even the term promiscuity seems inadequate. Many straight Friends who could accept homosexual

GUENTER LEWY

PEACE & REVOLUTION

THE
MORAL CRISIS
OF
AMERICAN
PACIFISM

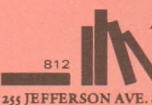
"Charging that American pacifism since the Vietnam War has lost its conscience by abandoning the principles of nonviolence, Lewy, professor emeritus of political science at the University of Massachusetts, critiques four leading pacifist organizations. . . . [He] further warns that the alliance of pacifists with the New Left and antiwar groups gives them political and religious clout — 'peace at any price' — that could endanger American interests."

—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

"Guenter Lewy's careful study of the ways in which four pacifist organizations have abandoned their commitment to nonviolence helps explain much about the wider policy debate over Vietnam, nuclear weapons, and Central America. It is essential reading for anyone who truly cares about the pursuit of peace and freedom."

—GEORGE WEIGEL

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NOW AVAILABLE--

PEACE AND REVOLUTION:

THE MORAL CRISIS OF AMERICAN PACIFISM

Guenter Lewy's disturbing book, Peace and Revolution, deserves the careful attention of Friends concerned about the record and prospects of corporate efforts in Quaker service. There is much to disagree with in it, but also much to ponder and learn from.

Because the book will be hard to find in regular bookstores, we have obtained a limited supply to offer to interested readers.

The book should be of particular value to meeting libraries, where it would be available to larger numbers of readers.

To order, return the coupon below.

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Please send me _____ copies of Peace and Revolution, at \$19.95 per copy, plus \$2.00 shipping. My payment is enclosed. Send to:

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Falls Church VA 22041

A Major Essay By Chuck Fager:

ABORTION AND CIVIL WAR

Where is the conflict over abortion in our society heading?

Can America come to terms with this issue peacefully? Or will it produce, as some anti-abortion advocates are already predicting, something approaching a new civil war?

What are the frightening parallels between the current anti-abortion movement and the bloody outcome of the struggle over slavery?

What alternatives are there for those who are opposed both to abortion and to the current anti-abortion movement?

These are some of the questions Chuck Fager considers in this essay, the expanded original text which was the basis for an article in The New Republic issue of 5/30/1988.

Chuck Fager has followed the abortion conflict since before the Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade decision in 1973. In this essay he sums up fifteen years of conflict and presents an original and unsettling forecast of where it is headed, and what could be done about it.

This essay will be of interest to anyone who has been concerned about the abortion issue. To get a copy of the full text, return the coupon below.

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Please send me _____ copies of Abortion & Civil War by Chuck Fager, at \$5.00 per copy postpaid. Payment is enclosed.
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Falls Church VA 22041

orientations and relationships balked at affirming this as its main pattern of expression. After all, even apart from moral qualms, such lifestyles had proven unsustainable and unhealthy among straights; why should gays be any less vulnerable?

The AIDS epidemic put an end to all that. The shock waves of change it has sent through the gay male community are of a depth that few outside it can comprehend. AIDS has decisively dethroned the old orgiastic ethos, forced it to the margins of the community's life. In its place has come a new, and to my mind healthy emphasis on long-term committed relationships.

NEW CONTEXT, NEW ISSUE

Hence the focus in discussions relating to homosexuality among Friends has shifted to the question of same sex marriage. Having discussed this in issue #84, we won't go over that ground again. But one additional point seems worth making concerning this debate:

My sense is that many straight Friends do not yet understand just how profoundly the terms of dialogue about homosexuality have changed: No longer is there the implicit expectation of approval for promiscuity. To the contrary, the vocal gay Friends are now asking, indeed almost pleading, for legitimation of norms and patterns which very closely resemble those of heterosexual morality, and which for many represent no less than a revolution in their thinking and behavior.

The effects of this shift go well beyond matters strictly sexual; they affect the entire meaning of the gay presence in our meetings. Whereas only a few years ago, gay Quakers were generally regarded as an insurgent and even radical force within unprogrammed Friends groups, I now see them rapidly evolving into a stabilizing, indeed perhaps even a conservative force there. This potential was illustrated at the two gay Friends weddings I have

attended; they were conducted strictly by the book, with vows even more traditional than my own. If this prospect seems paradoxical, it is not the first among Friends, and such paradoxes help keep a religious group alive and interesting.

Another element of the State of the Society into which this one feeds is a stirring, as yet inarticulate but increasingly discernible move among liberal unprogrammed Quaker groups to begin to define their religious identity.

For some liberal Friends, the very notion of moving toward definition is troublesome: it smacks of doctrines, creeds, and divisions; and freedom from all that is part of what brought many of us to Friends in the first place.

THE ACCIDENTAL EVANGELISTS

To all of which the answer now seems to be, "Yes, but—". It wasn't noncreedalism alone which appealed to us; if that was sufficient, many of us would have stayed Unitarians, and the response to our poll about that reported last month showed clearly that liberal Friends see the Society as very different. Yet by and large we were content to leave this difference unarticulated. For many of us, indeed, this attitude amounts to an unwritten dogma of nondogmatism.

But the factor now calling this attitude into question is growth: this undefined Quaker character is increasingly attractive; many unprogrammed yearly meetings are growing rapidly, and have been for some years. This growth defies the steady decline among mainline denominations and is the envy of evangelical Quakers, who are working much harder at evangelism but with generally meager results.

Yet with this growth comes some challenges and even strains: The first is institutional. Liberal YMs, except for Philadelphia, make do with minimal staffs, or none at

all, and for some of us this too is almost an unwritten dogma of nonpastoralism. But we are rapidly becoming too numerous to handle without more staff support. The volume of literature sold by Friends General Conference, for instance, has doubled in the last several years; FGC is bursting out of its office space; it needs more staff and more money. But it serves a constituency suspicious of the former and very stingy with the latter. What are they going to do?

And with all these new Friends come challenges as well to our accepted but unwritten customs. The visibility of gay Friends is one case. The trouble some YMs, such as my own Baltimore, are having in revising our Books of *Faith & Practice* is another.

SEEKERS INTO FINDERS?

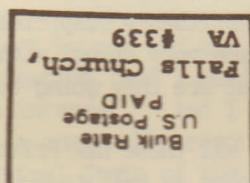
The questions here seem endless and often intractable: What does it mean to be a member? Ought we to have Advices? What do testimonies signify anymore? How Christian should the Society be? What, at the bottom line, do we really believe, if anything?

I think Liberal Friends generally doubt that there are permanent answers to these questions. But that does not absolve us from needing to find provisional answers that can meet the needs of our time. And somewhere along the line we will also have to start shelling out more money for the support of our overworked institutional structures and staff, skeletal though they will undoubtedly continue to be. As evidence of growth and vitality, these are problems I am glad we have; but in this sector of the Society, they seem to be looming larger all the time.

Overall, though, the State of the Society, as glimpsed from here, seems promising and encouraging. From La Paz to Philadelphia, this looks like a good time to be a Friend.

Address Correction Requested

INSIDE: WHAT'S THE STATE OF THE SOCIETY?
HERE'S ONE REPORT



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

THIS MONTH IN QUAKER HISTORY

When Queen Mary Beatrice of England went into labor on 6/10/1688, 29 people, half of them men, crowded into the bedroom. Royal politics mandated this leering audience; they were there to witness that the birth to come was genuine. The throne of England hung on the result. Finally the poor Queen delivered a son, named James Edward.

A son! This changed everything, it seemed. The king's other children were daughters; the eldest was Mary, wife of the Dutch William of Orange. She had been next in line for the crown, until now. But more important than gender was creed: James II was a Catholic, seeking to reimpose his religion on an increasingly Protestant England; William and Mary were Protestants, and Protestant leaders were counting on them, when they succeeded James, to rid the regime of Romanism. But a new prince would be raised Catholic and keep Mary off the throne. Some rebellious lords were already secretly urging William to invade England and get rid of James.

Many people came to pay respects to the king that day. Among them was William Penn, who had long been a court favorite. Penn had used this influence to help imprisoned Friends and to promote toleration. But more on Penn's mind that day than the new prince was his father's political ineptitude: James II had jailed seven Anglican bishops who had refused to read one of his Romanist declarations in their churches. This had brought the opposition to a boil; the birth of a Catholic heir was certain to tip the pot over. Penn begged the king to mark the birth by releasing the bishops, to ease the pressure.

James paid no attention. But in the end it made no difference. Within the year, James had been driven into exile, William and Mary were on the throne, and a Toleration Act was law. Penn, too, was in a kind of internal exile, hiding out at a country house. This exile proved productive, for from it came his little gem of a book, Some Fruits of Solitude.

QUAKER CHUCKLES

Our British correspondent Ben Vincent has yet another report, this time of an incident from his youth. At his meeting in those days it was customary, when a Friend was exercised in vocal prayer, for all the rest of the congregation to rise. And one morning a family coachman came in and, sat unnoticed in the back, and soon fell asleep. While dozing he began to slide off the bench, finally slipping right off and onto his knees with a bump, whereupon he was heard to exclaim, "Oh, Christ!" At this, the entire meeting stood up. Fortunately, the coachman was a

well-versed Anglican, and he proceeded to recite one of the Collects from the Book of Common Prayer; his message impressed most Friends greatly, as they had never heard it before.

More recently, Friend Vincent affirms, a French couple asked to join a Quaker meeting not long after moving to England. The wife, however, put a query to the committee interviewing her: "Does becoming a Quaker mean I won't be able to wear earrings?" The clerk was ready with her answer: "Mon ami, wear your earrings as long as you can."