INTRODUCTION

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There’s an old Quaker joke: a young woman attends her first business meeting as an adult member, looking to make her mark, and sits next to a weighty older Friend in a gray bonnet who is knitting quietly. An agenda item comes up which requires nominations to a new committee; the young Friend eagerly raises her hand and offers a name.

The older Friend listens without looking up from her knitting, then says quietly, "That is a name which would not have occurred to me." Nothing more is heard of the upstart newcomer’s suggestion.

The truth is, if I was looking for a detailed critique of the American Friends Service Committee, Guenter Lewy is a name which would not have occurred to me. Partly this is a matter of jurisdiction: Such an examination should be done first from within the Society of Friends, as a species of "family business." The AFSC is, after all, "our" organization, is it not?

But partly too, this would be due to the fact that over the decade or so, I have perceived an increasing sense of concern and uneasiness about the AFSC’s evolution among many Friends who had once staunchly supported it. So besides it being our business, there were also Quaker voices which ought to have been heard on the subject. There were enough of them, in fact, to make a book, especially once AFSC responses were included.

In real life, however, the Quaker joke was on us: Guenter Lewy, a non-Friend and retired professor of political science at the University of Massachusetts, also had concerns about the AFSC (and three other major peace groups) which he wanted to put into a book. His book got done; ours did not, at least not until now.

As a result, Quakers who have concerns about the AFSC have to deal not only with it, but with Guenter Lewy as well. We may not want to admit it, but his achievement in his book Peace and Revolution: The Moral Crisis of American Pacifism (Eerdmans, 1988), is sufficient to merit at least three responses
from concerned Friends:

First, we owe him a vote of thanks for providing the incentive to the Friends represented here to finally put together and into print what was on their minds about AFSC. A few have raised their voices before, usually in private; but some critics have hung back out of a combination of sloth and timidity which does us no credit. The truth is that, while liberal American Quakers will denounce their government's iniquities at the drop of a broadbrim hat, we are very timid about facing up to problems in our own ranks.

Lewy has not suffered from these defects, and his book was the scholarly equivalent of a swift kick in the pants, one welldeserved and long past due in my judgment.

Second, we should admit that Lewy has saved us a lot of work by his researches into the AFSC's history, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s. As some of the writers here assert, he may have misidentified an occasional tree of fact in its recent landscape, but there seems to be little doubt that he has pretty accurately seen the forest of organizational evolution into which they fit. You may judge for yourself the weight of objections by AFSC spokespeople John Sullivan and James Matlack to his methods and results, and Lewy's rejoinder; in my opinion, his factual data stand up rather well.

Much of the picture he paints is not very edifying; certain of its features are embarrassing and even shameful. There is, of course, much more to be told about AFSC, even in its recent years. Fortunately, historian J. William Frost of Swarthmore College is at work on a more comprehensive AFSC history. But that project is years away from completion. In the meantime, squirm as we might, Lewy's selective sketch of the last generation is the best we have.

Finally, however, Lewy's book presents us with a major problem. His is an unabashedly interpretive account of the AFSC; he has an axe to grind, and is not shy about grinding it, even if the blade turns out to be less sharp than he had hoped. Yet his outlook and these have very little in common with those of most of the AFSC's Quaker critics. He got there first, with a book too well-researched and revealing to be ignored; but the material he presents must be substantially reframed before it can be of much use to Quakers for the task of examining AFSC's history from our point of view. This ultimately is why his name "would not have occurred" to me.

Since such an examination is the purpose of this book, attempts at this reframing are evident in just about every essay. The contributions here fall into four categories:

First, there are three background pieces, which do not relate directly to Lewy's book (since they were written long before) but rather address basic questions of what the American Friends Service Committee is and ought to be about. These include two pieces by the late Milton Mayer, and R.W. Tucker's reflections on the implications of Quaker faith for organizational structures.

Then there are the contributions by AFSC defenders. These writers challenge Lewy's research, intentions and outlook, and generally uphold the group's status quo against his criticisms. They include John Sullivan, James Matlack, Lady Borton, and Elise Boulding.

Daniel Seeger's essay might also have fit into this second category, since he is a longtime staff member and is certainly devoted to AFSC's mission and welfare. Yet it is likewise true that his has long been an in-house voice that questioned and challenged many of the changes in AFSC which Lewy has chronicled. He can be considered the foremost figure in AFSC's "Loyal Opposition"; hence I have placed him in the third section, that of the AFSC's critics.

Two former AFSC staff members, Ed Lazar and John Powelson, are here also, as are two members of the AFSC Corporation, Thomas Angell and Sam Levering. Arthur Roberts, the most distinguished scholar and writer among Evangelical Friends today, contributes the first extended reflection on AFSC from this quarter in many years. And Jim Forest, the only non-Friend among these critics and a veteran staff member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, along with Kenneth Boulding, one of the premier Quaker intellectuals of our time, fill out this section.

My own views fit this category too.

None of these writers, as you will see, is very happy with Guenter Lewy's underlying outlook and his critique of the AFSC; however much they respect his scholarship. Hence it is
appropriate that Professor Lewy have the opportunity to answer us, and his rejoinder closes the book.

It is fair to say that, while the writers represented here range from strongly favorable to the AFSC and its development to sharply critical of it, there is remarkable agreement among them that much of Guenter Lewy's critique of AFSC misses the mark, at least as far as Quakers and their religious values are concerned. Let me try to say why I think this is the case.

First a bit of background: Guenter Lewy was born into a German Jewish family, which escaped from the Nazis just before World War Two. He told me during a conversation about his book that he had seen a democracy destroyed once in his lifetime, and that experience left him convinced of the fragility of civilized values and democratic structures. Lewy is thus not only a non-Friend; he is a non-pacifist and very strongly anti-communist as well, with a base of experience for this outlook with which it is hard to argue.

Nevertheless, Lewy was once active in the peace group SANE, when it was supporting the Limited Test Ban Treaty negotiated by President Kennedy with the Soviets in 1963. But he was among the more conservative members of the early 1960s peace movement who felt unable to tolerate the changes wrought in it by the Vietnam War and the rise of the 1960s counterculture. One gets the impression the evolution of the movement reminded him all too much of the ordeal he had been lucky to survive in Germany as a youth. In any case, Lewy supported the Vietnam war; indeed, one of his earlier books, America In Vietnam, (Oxford University Press, 1978), defended American policy and conduct there against, among other things, the allegations of systematic war crimes that were made by some peace activists.

Like many others of similar views, Lewy is convinced that the peace groups he examines, and perhaps the AFSC above all, were pivotal in undermining America's national will to win in Vietnam. He believes furthermore that AFSC's work against the war helped produce, not peace but enormous evils in Southeast Asia, including the exodus of the boat people and the Khmer Rouge genocide in Cambodia.

Further, Lewy asserts that AFSC's activist role in the anti-Vietnam movement was shaped by internal changes which he chronicles in detail and which, he argues, represented the victory of radical leftist tendencies within the organization. He traces with particular emphasis the abandonment of a longstanding informal prohibition on joining coalitions which included any explicitly Marxist groups such as those associated with the Communist Party.

In Lewy's view the abandonment of this prohibition was perhaps its key bargain with the devil. He sees it as leading inexorably to the effective abandonment of AFSC's Quaker pacifist heritage, and its alignment with violent and totalitarian forces, not only in Vietnam but more recently in Central America.

As many of the writers here explain, they share at least some of Lewy's concerns about AFSC's recent attitudes toward many revolutionary groups, finding it too often tilted in a simplistically leftist direction. But on two of his biggest issues, the justice of the U.S. war in Vietnam and the meaning of pacifism, Lewy finds little sympathy here. Because these shape so much of his critique, they deserve a brief response here before we go further with our efforts at reframing. Let me summarize mine, along with some thoughts on AFSC and coalitions:

During a Washington seminar on his book, Lewy declared that "in the last analysis," the AFSC's antiwar work in this period had failed the practical test of results because of what happened after the war in Vietnam and Cambodia.

From across the table, I replied that this was by no means the last analysis, it was only his analysis. While much of the aftermath of the Vietnam war has been horrible indeed, it is not at all clear that the peace movement and the AFSC can be fingered with the responsibility for that.

In fact, another equally plausible "last" analysis could be that, bad as the war's aftermath has been, the peace movement helped avoid an even worse toll of destruction and killing that was likely had the war continued for many more years with increased U.S. involvement. After all, suppose the war had been escalated at the end of the 1960s, as many of the military commanders wished? Lewy evidently thinks we could ultimately have defeated North Vietnam and established a regime satisfactory to us in Saigon.
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But is he right? And even if he were, "ultimately" could be a long time. Who is to say that we might not still be bogged down there? The somber black marble of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial might now be half a mile long and still unfinished, to contain an American casualty list that was still growing; and how many millions more Asians would have been killed since 1975? History suggests continued bloody stalemate was at least as plausible as any hopes of victory; the record of the Vietnamese for fighting outsiders, be they French, Japanese or Chinese, goes back not decades but centuries. And what risks of escalation into a nuclear confrontation with Vietnam's Soviet and Chinese allies would we have run in the meantime? These were not minor even before 1975.

Additionally, it can be argued that Cambodia's slide into the U.S., followed by a CIA-sponsored coup which replaced corrupt and doomed military junta. It is entirely reasonable to suggest that this, as well as the illegal U.S. invasion of 1970, had more to do with the rise of the Khmer Rouge than any machinations of domestic doves. It is one of many ironies of only stopped by the invasion of Cambodia by another Communist army, that of the victorious Vietnamese.

The debate over the Vietnam war will certainly not be settled here; my point is simply that while Lewy is entitled to his convincing. In my judgment those who opposed the war, confess that they were wrong and that the war should have been supported and continued.

If anything, the postwar record suggests just as plausibly kicking rocks down a mountainside: it started an avalanche of evil which continued to roll destructively across the slopes of Southeast Asia long after we had left the scene. No, the only regret this former anti-Vietnam protester has is that I did not do more (nonviolently) to stop it sooner, and I believe most AFSC partisans feel the same way.

Similarly with pacifism. Lewy believes the AFSC's turn to the left in the 1960s led to the abandonment of a traditional and authentic concept of pacifism which he believes had guided it until then. But his understanding of pacifism, as most writers here reiterate, is a very restrictive one, which identifies it with what pacifists call "nonresistance," a simple refusal to take part in war, which leaves those who do wish to make war unchallenged in their actions.

To be sure, such nonresistance is an ancient and honorable form of pacifist witness; but it is not and has not been the only one. After all, as far back as the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:9), Jesus pronounced a blessing on peacemakers, and the Greek text is clear that the blessing is reserved for those who get results, not simply those who stand aside from the fray and pray. As Milton Mayer says, the religious idea underlying the AFSC involves both faith and works.

In any case, as John Sullivan also argues, nonresistance has never been the exclusive expression of pacifism among Friends. In 1675, for instance, the Quaker Lieutenant Governor of Rhode Island, Nicholas Easton, canoed deep into the woods and risked his life in an effort to prevent the bloody regional Indian uprising known as King Philip's War, unsuccessfully, alas. In the 1750s, Philadelphia Friends worked vigorously, and against the desires of their rulers, to head off similar conflicts in Pennsylvania. In 1854 a British Quaker delegation visited the Czar of Russia in an attempt to stop the Crimean War. Like Easton, they too failed, and came home to face a wave of fierce public attacks on their patriotism.

The list of examples could be much longer, and not all have been failures. Some of these peacemaking sorties were wise, others perhaps foolish. But none of the Friends involved was considered "un-Quakerly" for attempting them. In like manner, the nonresistance aspect of pacifism has never been the exclusive understanding within the American Friends Service Committee, and no one in these pages charges that the AFSC is "un-Quakerly" because it takes an activist approach to peacemaking.

To be sure, once people or groups set out not simply to avoid war but to help make peace, their choices and judgments
can and should be subjected to rational analysis and practical criticism; to this extent Lewy is correct. AFSC's attempts to apply their active version of pacifism may not always have been wise--indeed, I and many other writers here think some clearly have trouble admitting this. And let us remember that any attempt at evaluation will reflect not only the facts but also the critic's values.

Finally, to the matter of coalitions including Marxist groups. It seems to me Lewy's analysis here is shaped by the traumas of the liberal left in the 1930s and 1940s, in which many groups fell victim to a pattern of seemingly principled cooperation with communist groups, which opened the way to the liberal groups being infiltrated and captured by the Marxist cadres, followed by the groups' subversion, manipulation and destruction.

This was a real enough pattern, and such things did occur during the 1960s, as the destruction of Students For a Democratic Society testifies. Yet it seems to me that Lewy's analysis has missed the essence of what happened with these 1960s coalitions, both more broadly and with specific reference to AFSC.

On the broadest level, I see the antiwar coalitions as comparing less to the Popular Front leftism of the 1930s than to the alliance of the United States and the Soviet Union against Hitler during World War Two. Ed Lazar expresses a somewhat similar perspective in his essay, and he was involved in many of these efforts as an AFSC staff member. That is, they were emergency confederations of highly dissimilar and often mutually suspicious parties, most of whom had little in common except their opposition to the Vietnam War. And like the U.S.-Soviet alliance, none of them outlasted the war, though some insignificant vestiges remain.

What these coalitions did not do, particularly in AFSC, was produce a 1930s-style pattern of infiltration, subversion and destruction. Lewy specifically acknowledges that there is no evidence that the developments he dislikes in AFSC can be shown to be the result of direct involvement by the minions of Moscow, Hanoi, or Managua. Yet clearly the experience left its impact, and much of it was negative. So what happened?

My own sense is that rather than the infiltration-subversion model, what we have seen in AFSC over the past generation is the rise of a new establishment, made up largely of former 1960s radicals of various stripes, who have, rather than operating as a conspiracy, more or less backed into becoming a distinct, careerist constituency which I call the "organizers' subculture."

I doubt that many of these men and women started out thinking in career terms; their mood--mine, too--in the late 1960s was too apocalyptic for that, nor did it fit with the outlook summed up in the slogan "Don't Trust Anyone Over Thirty." Once irrevocably past that dreaded landmark, however, with families and possessions and debts arriving sooner than the revolution, career considerations became unavoidable; yet many of these men and women were still alienated from "establishment" institutions and conventional career tracks. So what were they to do?

Here I am in line with Kenneth Boulding's reflections on how Marxism built a "niche" or base in the peace movement while it was losing ground just about everywhere else, now including many socialist countries: Over time, and with artful application of their organizing skills, a kind of informal network of professional activists with similar histories formed, concerned to protect and advance its members much like those of any other such network.

The gradual, indirect character of this transition is dramatized in Jim Forest's essay. He tells of an AFSC staffer shouting at him that his criticism of the North Vietnamese for human rights violations would cost him his "career" in the peace movement. Forest says that was the first time he realized peace movement work could be a "career" rather than a vocation. That was more than ten years ago, and Jim is still at it.

In the case of the AFSC, this evolution has produced a sharp erosion of its Quaker roots, as I explore further below. Yet Lewy's 1930s infiltration-subversion analysis, with its alarm about the antiwar coalitions, does not offer much in the way of understanding of it. My sense is that even if AFSC had firmly eschewed joining the coalitions it would not have avoided the problems it now has; there was no safe haven for it from the sixties. Furthermore, I agree completely with Arthur Roberts and Elise Boulding in their insistence that it is appropriate for
AFSC and others concerned for peace to maintain contacts with persons and groups from communist countries in this effort, and that whatever its risks, this can be—and has been—done without automatically becoming communist dupes.

What all this comes down to is the assertion that, rather than repeating a previous generation’s mistakes, these sixties activists made some new mistakes of their own. And this conclusion means that Lewy’s analysis of what went wrong is not all that useful, especially to AFSC’s Quaker critics. Which brings us back to the need to reframe Lewy’s data for our own Quaker purposes.

Thus at this point we will set aside the arguments with Lewy over whether Vietnam was a noble lost cause, and whether pacifism should be confined to nonresistance; there is little division among the Quakers represented here on these points, and the key concern of most writers here is threefold:

First, whether the American Friends Service Committee can still be considered an authentically Quaker agency;

Second, whether its work over the past generation is on the whole a quality and direction that Quakers can be proud of; and

Third, what can or should be done to remedy any shortcomings revealed by these two inquiries.

On the second point, I will leave most specifics to those raised elsewhere in these pages; they are numerous. Suffice it to say that a great deal of the AFSC material I have seen in the past fifteen years dealing with current peace and justice issues I would not be prepared to show to persons whose intellect, spiritual depth and scholarship I respected, even though I often agreed with the positions being advocated. That is because too frequently it was simply of inferior quality; shoddily researched, needlessly tendentious and freighted with dubious political baggage; it was just bush league.

This is an embarrassing, even humiliating admission to have to make; I consider Quakerism to be, if you will, a first-class religion, and I want the public manifestations of my religious denomination to reflect that level of quality. Corruptio optimi pessima.

(Major exceptions to this observation are the AFSC’s two books on the Arab-Israeli conflict, Search For Peace In The Middle East, [AFSC,1970] and A Compassionate Peace, [Hill & Wang, 1982]. These two books were carefully-researched, clearheaded, evenhanded, yet brave and firm in their advocacy of reasonable though controversial proposals for a just and peaceful resolution of that tangled conflict. They stand out as appropriately first-class expressions amid a crowd of mediocrity. In their company I would also put In Place of War [Grossman, 1967], which brilliantly made the case for considering a nonviolent approach to national defense.)

On the first point, that of Quaker identity, opinions differ sharply, though more and more Friends have come to have increasing doubts. Lewy’s book mentions this concern only in passing, which given his agenda is to be expected. But his research, as distinct from his interpretations, has brought to light much that is useful for this enquiry, and some data that is rather disturbing.

Indeed, Lewy’s examination of AFSC archives, while far from exhaustive, makes plain what increasing numbers of Quakers have felt in recent years, namely that whatever else it might now be, the AFSC today does not have many real ties to the Society of Friends. Moreover, they believe it has largely forsaken the objective laid out by the Statement of Purpose in its by-laws (Article 1, Section 3), which states that AFSC is to work "on behalf of the participating yearly Meetings and other bodies of the Religious Society of Friends in America; and in addition...to promote the general objects and purposes of the participating yearly Meetings and other bodies of [Friends]...."

I have been asked why this whole issue is seen to be of any consequence; why is a "Quaker identity" for service such a big deal in a world full of starving and oppressed people. What difference does it make what label goes on the work that is done?

The primary response to such questions can only be that for many Quakers, Quakerism is valuable in itself. Besides such outward contributions to history as its role in the struggle for freedom of religion, and its character as the seedbed of the
antislavery and feminist movements, it has also been a bearer of mysticism within Protestantism and has carried the standard of universalism in theology and pacifism in practice when almost all other major Christian bodies had forgotten or denied they were ever parts of the gospel.

This is a very significant record for a small religious society scarcely three hundred years old, and Quakerism in my view is by no means played out. The history of such a movement is very much worth preserving and its potential worth advancing. But who else can Quakers expect to do that but Quakers themselves? More concretely, the idea of AFSC as an instrument of the organized bodies of Friends once had considerable functional reality, the memory of which is both precious and poignant. A great many Friends once bore witness in many places through various kinds of service under AFSC auspices.

Indeed there was once an almost organic, reciprocal kind of relationship between AFSC and numerous Friends groups; but this relationship is now at best a vestigial one, and you don’t have to look hard to find Friends who benefited from it directly and are grieved and quietly angry about the loss. John Powelson’s essay describes the crucial importance AFSC had for him in his younger years; several other writers tell similar stories, and these could be replicated hundreds, nay thousands of times by Friends of two generations.

But how many Friends under thirty today could tell similar stories? Not many, unfortunately. Much of this is due to the virtual disappearance of certain programs, especially the now legendary Quaker youth programs centered around work camps. With their elimination was also lost an important service, that of giving many young Friends a “hands on” exposure to Quaker faith in action, for which AFSC was once principal provider.

The end of these programs was another outcome of the upheavals of the 1960s which Lewy does not focus on. They were ridiculed as elitist in composition, patronizing to the purported beneficiaries and as superficial “band-aids” in their social impact. When these attitudes spread among the youth participants, they soon made the work camps all but impossible to continue. I know this to be true, for I was one such young person.

Thus this was a development that the AFSC cannot be entirely blamed for; the work camps were a casualty of turbulent times. Yet as the years passed, and the attitudes among such rebellious young Quakers as myself began to mature, many of us realized our mistake. We came to see that despite our shortcomings as a mostly white, middle-class American group, we Quakers nonetheless had our gifts to offer and our own work to do, in our own way. And opportunities to see this tradition at work, to join in it and to pass it on, were worth having.

Furthermore, many of us likewise came to see that these experiences were central to maintaining AFSC’s Quaker constituency; but more than that, they nurtured a widespread sense of Quaker “ownership” of AFSC.

A very astute Friend, political scientist David Leonard of Strawberry Creek Meeting in Berkeley, California, has pointed out that such a widespread sense of Quaker “ownership” of the AFSC is crucial if the group is effectively to play the role it now conceives of itself as playing, that of being the “cutting edge” body for the Society, bringing new issues and concerns to our awareness and facilitating an active response to them.

Without it, AFSC becomes just one more of the scores of cause groups knocking at our meetinghouse doors with slideshows and displays, and filling up our mailboxes with fund appeals. This sense of “ownership” cannot be regained by simply shuffling structures at the top, though such change may well be indicated to make its renewal possible. Rather, it depends on making AFSC once again an integral and living part of American Quaker culture, if that can still be done.

Unfortunately, disdain for the work camp approach has become institutionalized in AFSC. Its response to the many calls from concerned Friends, among them not a few chastened ex-1960s radicals, for the reconstruction of a meaningful program of this sort has been token and grudging. That hurts both the AFSC and the Society of Friends.

Another important aspect of this problem is that in its early years, the AFSC played an important ecumenical role among American Friends, helping draw together the Hicksite and Orthodox wings after a century of painful separation. This function too has long since gone by the boards; it is the sad truth
that the AFSC is now, and has been for some years, one of the sources of deepest division and contention among us. And a factor that feeds this friction is AFSC's too-often indifferent or even high-handed response to much Quaker input and concerns.

Whether its purpose statement ever fully described how the AFSC actually worked, it is incontestable that the AFSC today does not now operate in any meaningful sense 'on behalf' of any other Quaker body. One measure of this reality is financing: The vast majority of its $20,000,000 annual budget comes from non-Quaker sources. Another measure is its makeup: In 1985, only fifteen percent of the staff was Quaker; in 1988 the proportion of Friends was even lower.

No doubt most of the non-Quaker AFSC staffers are dedicated and smart, but it is not reasonable to expect them also to be guardians and devotees of a religious tradition which they do not share. Yet in any such institution, as the direct involvement of the parent constituency declines, at some point its founding tradition becomes simply a relic, a vestigial organ with no real meaning.

If it is difficult to pinpoint exactly when this threshold is reached, there is little doubt that it exists. This was starkly illustrated by the recent case of the YMCA in Beverly Hills, California, which protested an advisory group's recommendation that, as a religious organization, it not be given space in a proposed city-owned building. As reported in the Washington Post of September 3, 1988, the YMCA officials insisted that it was not a religious body, despite the fact that the C in its name means Christian, and the Y's statement of purpose describes it as a 'fellowship united by a common loyalty to Jesus Christ for the purpose of developing Christian personality and building a Christian society.'

Beverly Hills mayor Robert Tannenbaum, who is also president of the Y's board, told a reporter that he regards the purpose statement as 'institutional rhetoric that acknowledges the historical roots of the association and in no way mandates a religious commitment on the part of the Beverly Hills Family Y.' He also pointed out that two-thirds of its board members were Jewish.

No doubt Mayor Tannenbaum is right, and one suspects the Beverly Hills Y will eventually gain its niche in the new city building. But in light of this incident, and the fact that the proportion of non-Quaker AFSC staff is considerably more than two-thirds, it would be fair to ask, on this basis alone, just how much longer the F in AFSC's name will carry any more meaning than the C in the YMCA.

This uncertainty is increased by the fact that the spectrum of Quakerism represented among the Friends still in AFSC is a very narrow one. Among the various streams of Quaker religious thinking, it is the major outpost of what was once called 'progressive Quakerism,' which essentially melded liberal Quaker forms with an individualist-rationalist Unitarian theology.

This stream bears some brief examination, as I believe it is important in accounting for AFSC's evolution. The figure who best exemplified it was Henry Cadbury, who was both a professor at the Unitarian-related Harvard Divinity School and for forty years a central figure in the AFSC.

Cadbury came to Quakerism by family inheritance. His personal religion was frankly ethical and non-mystical, and evidently fluctuated between agnosticism and atheism. He was candid in offering this outlook, and what could be called the "Ethical Action" approach he drew from it, as a basis for Quaker life and work. A typical remark in 1947, recorded in the biography Let This Life Speak, by Margaret Bacon, reaffirmed that this view is frankly non-mystical, and holds out no promise of a realized experience of God in this life. Cadbury's outlook is in marked contrast to that of Rufus Jones, the most famous Quaker figure of the first half of this century. Jones saw Quakerism as a kind of active mysticism, and he was no agnostic. While the history books paint AFSC as the "lengthened shadow" of Rufus Jones, and he was indeed central to its creation during World War One, he was its chairman for little more than its first decade. Thereafter, Henry Cadbury was an extremely influential presence in AFSC policymaking until the end of the 1960s. Today's AFSC bears far more the stamp of Cadbury's "Ethical Action" Quakerism than it does of Rufus Jones and his prophetic mysticism.

The problem with Cadbury's approach is that it is a
theological square peg which ill fits the round hole of Quaker institutions and processes. These all presume the centrality of living inner religious experience as the basis of action. Our worship is based on this conviction of presence and leading; our testimonies are its outward witness; our business procedures make it their goal; our structures are built around its discernment and nurture.

Indeed, Quakerism is designed to operate on inward religious experience as surely as a car is designed to run on gasoline. If, say, you had a car but did not believe in gasoline, you could still perhaps learn much from it about automotive history, components, cultural significance and so forth, and all this could perhaps be put to some constructive use. But when you wanted to actually go someplace, you would have to use something else.

Similarly, without this conviction of presence the peculiarities of Quaker process and testimonies make no real functional sense, and sustaining them would become increasingly difficult and seem increasingly unnecessary. This is especially the case in a setting where there is intense ideological competition from philosophies and political programs which claim to be more vigorous and purposeful.

Here, I believe, we find the theological basis of the AFSC's accelerating secularization. Whatever the strengths and weaknesses of this process, that it has put AFSC on the very outer layer of the Society's periphery seems all but inarguable.

This marginalization has been increased by the fact that in recent years the Cadbury "progressive Quakerism" ethos has been in broad retreat within FGC circles, swept back by a quiet but unmistakable resurgence of mystical/religious seeking and finding as the basis for witness. This resurgence owes far more to Rufus Jones and even programmed Friends such as Elton Trueblood, related to this has been a marked increase in ecumenical contacts among the various Quaker branches in the 1970s and 1980s; yet the AFSC, controlled from its enclave in Philadelphia, has remained all but isolated from this widening and exciting process of cross-fertilization.

How deep is AFSC's isolation among Friends? Dan Seeger describes several of the Quaker activities he pursues in addition to his AFSC staff work; but he is something of an exception. My own experience is not reassuring. A few years ago, for instance, I spoke with a Quaker member of the national AFSC staff, who had not long since worked in its Ohio office. I asked if he had ever had contact with the Evangelical Friends Church-Eastern Region, which has its headquarters in Canton, Ohio and churches throughout the state.

I was not surprised when the reply was negative; Eastern Region Friends, after all, have had little sympathy for AFSC for decades; but I was surprised when he went on to indicate that he had never heard of the group. On another occasion I heard a Quaker member of the national Board speak of Friends at large with contempt, as a drag on the AFSC's accomplishment of its mission. In the years before and since, I have heard many similar stories from other troubled Friends.

This narrowness of Quaker vision is also clearly shown in, and regularly reinforced by, AFSC's formal governance processes. In theory these are directly linked to the larger Society; in practice they are effectively impervious to any outside Quaker influence. Sam Levering's essay, among others, cites several examples of this.

The AFSC's formal link to the Society of Friends is through its Corporation, to which various American Yearly Meetings send representatives, and from which the AFSC Board of Directors is selected. Theoretically the Corporation selects the Board members; in fact, the members, who meet once a year for a few hours, simply rubberstamp an officially-selected slate. This is not surprising, since a body which meets so infrequently and briefly can hardly be expected to achieve much in the way of real oversight or policymaking. Nor, I gather, is it supposed to.

But as if to guarantee the Corporation's pliability, more than half its members are appointed not by Yearly Meetings but "at large," by AFSC's own nominating committee; and almost all the Board candidates in recent times have been drawn from this inside "at large" pool. Thus it is even an understatement to say that the range of Quaker viewpoints represented in AFSC's councils is rather a limited one; it runs the gamut from A to B.

But that is not all. As Lewy's research shows, the overwhelmingly non-Quaker staff, as a result of the upheavals of
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the late 1960s and early 1970s, has become a very influential, perhaps dominant force in much of AFSC's policymaking and governance. In many sections the staff has gained a virtual veto over the selection of their supervisors; as a practical matter they determine the direction and content of most decisionmaking in both program committees and the Board, and little happens in either of which they disapprove.

Given that this essentially non-Quaker staff, only tamely supervised by a Quaker Board which in any case represents a very narrow slice of Quaker thinking, does not take its agenda from the Society of Friends, where do its initiatives come from? Lewy speaks generally of a leftist peace movement constituency tainted by the involvement of Communist-oriented groups. I think it would be more accurate to look again at the "organizers' subculture."

Its members circulate among a number of peace and other issue organizations, which include all four that Lewy writes about, and numerous others. Like any such subculture, it has its own values, jargon, fashions and quarrels. While it indeed displays a generally leftwing political bent, this is a homegrown leftist, not one franchised from Moscow, Hanoi, Havana or even Managua, as even Lewy affirms. As he also shows, in the case of the Forest and Baez appeals to North Vietnam in 1976 (recounted here by Jim Forest), and other incidents, the AFSC response to intra-movement issues often reflects the leftward end of this constituency.

Personally I agree with many (though not all) of the current positions of this "organizers' subculture." My concern here is simply that its relationship to the Society of Friends, even the Society's more liberal wing, is strictly incidental; and its colonization of the AFSC staff and decisionmaking has steadily reinforced the group's secularization, its move out of the Quaker orbit.

This secularization is a familiar feature of the history of religiously-founded institutions. It has been perhaps best-known in the case of colleges, going as far back in the United States to when Yale was started as a more orthodox alternative to Harvard's galloping Unitarianism.

Most Quaker colleges have trod a similar path; A glossy 1989 admissions brochure for Bryn Mawr College indicated how

far one school has gone: It was originally opened in 1885 to give women a "guarded education" in the Orthodox Quaker mode; but nowhere in the brochure, not even in its summary of Bryn Mawr's history, were the terms Quaker or Friends mentioned.

Among colleges the shift has typically been away from denominational peculiarities and control toward the culture of professionalized academia. In the case of the AFSC, I believe we can see an analogous process at work, with the shift being toward the norms and concerns of the professionalized, careerist and largely secularized, "organizers' subculture."

This secularizing trend in religious service groups is, of course, not confined to Quakers or the AFSC. An award-winning Methodist journalist, Roy Howard Beck, in his book On Thin Ice (Bristol Books, 1988) shows in some detail how the United Methodist Church's Board of Global Ministries closely parallels many features of the AFSC as detailed by Lewy.

Beck covered many top religious stories of the 1980s; and he brought to them, unlike Lewy, a basically liberal outlook. Thus it was with dismay that he reported his repeated discoveries of evidence of the Board's uncritically leftist bias, the staff's minimal commitment to the denomination and Christianity, its careful evasion of any real accountability to the Methodist Church constituency, and the chronically poor and biased quality of the information on which many of its campaigns were based. It is a depressing and all-too familiar story.

Beck does not put his findings in any larger context; Lewy, Quakers and the AFSC are never mentioned. Yet comparing the two accounts, it seems clear to me that the real point of reference for the Methodist Board is the same as for the AFSC, the "organizers' subculture."

The AFSC's oft-repeated rationale for the decline in numbers of Quakers on its staff is that in the early 1970s the group undertook an affirmative action program aimed at making it representative of the diversity of our society; and since American Friends remain almost entirely white and middle class, their numbers must inevitably decrease in AFSC as this goal is approached.

In response, it must first be affirmed that surely the AFSC
in those years was past due for an internal shakeup. Those who knew it in the mid-1960s recall a staff structure centered around a middle-class, middle-aged white male hierarchy, attended by dutiful and devoted female secretaries; this was by no means a fitting embodiment of the ancient Quaker testimony of gender equality, never mind the contemporary resurgence of feminism and black power.

In addition, there was the perennial reality of generational struggle: many of these incumbent executives had been youthful conscientious objectors during World War Two, who in their day had grumbled and chafed against the AFSC Establishment of those years. Having replaced it twenty years later, their turn was now coming, with challenges appearing from both upstart women as well as sixty male radicals.

There is nothing unusual about all this, and similar situations turn up like red threads in the stories of all the four groups Lewy chronicles. And at first glance it makes the fact that AFSC underwent internal upheavals aimed at changing these realities seem not only justified, but overdue.

Unfortunately, this effort in practice proved disastrous in many ways, working to the detriment of AFSC on numerous fronts. I believe it has contributed materially to the decline in quality of many AFSC publications, and the vulgar leftist that pervades much of its positions. I have heard AFSC staff and committee people speak of an atmosphere of intimidation, double-baiting.

But perhaps the most serious of its ill effects was the de-Quakerizing the AFSC. The argument that this was the necessary outcome of seeking gender and ethnic diversity in AFSC is not convincing. In fact, I believe it to be largely a self-serving myth, and the purported "diversity" it has allegedly brought to AFSC in place of Friends is almost entirely bogus. It is "diversity" strictly within the highly restrictive limits of the "organizers' subculture", and the application reveals an unmistakable and sweeping anti-Quaker bias.

This bias may be largely unconscious, but it is very real, and it becomes obvious when we consider that in fact, among the demographic categories of "diversity" specified in the AFSC's vaunted affirmative action goals (women, gays, handicapped and "Third World") only one would actually seem to require much recruitment beyond the ranks of the Society of Friends. That is, there are already plenty of female, gay and handicapped Quakers available, if that is what AFSC says it needs.

And even in the latter, "Third World" category, there is in fact no need to look beyond the Society, only beyond the borders of the United States. That is because most Quakers in the world are now nonwhite and "Third World": There are tens of thousands of black African Quakers, and numerous shades of Friends in Central and South America. Among them are undoubtedly numbers of bright and dedicated Quaker men and women who would jump at opportunities to witness to their faith through service in the world in a Quaker agency.

The problem with such real "Third World" Friends, of course, is that they are mostly not politically or theologically "correct" according to the prejudices of the organizers' subculture. To recruit among them would require AFSC to broaden its religious and especially political outlook beyond these limits; and this, I think it can be safely said, those in control of AFSC are determined not to do. If the AFSC must choose between Quakerism and the shibboleths of the "organizers' subculture", there is no contest.

This priority shows itself again in the AFSC response to Quaker concern and criticism. Over the last fifteen years it has maneuvered to head off, deflect, discredit or ignore concerns individual Quakers, some of great weight and unquestioned integrity, have repeatedly tried to raise on these points, and it has for the most part succeeded brilliantly. Lewy recounts a striking and poignant moment of such protest, in March of 1977, when Kenneth Boulding of Boulder Meeting staged a one-man silent vigil outside AFSC headquarters in Philadelphia to highlight what he delicately called the "lack of veracity" in its response to postwar developments in Vietnam. As he reports sadly in his essay here, confirming Lewy, this protest got nowhere.

Lewy mentions several other discreet expressions of dissent by respected Friends which likewise went nowhere. Several more are described by writers in this volume, and it would be easy to fill several chapters with additional examples. On one occasion in
1979, this undercurrent burst briefly into public view, on the heels of another blast of outside criticism, a cover article in The New Republic, "With Friends Like These," Stephen Chapman, June 9, 1979. Three large sessions of searching discussion at Friends General Conference produced a letter of concern to AFSC signed by over one hundred Friends; but it too received only pro forma response.

Sometimes AFSC has gone beyond stonewalling. Ed Lazar and Jim Forest recount their own experiences of this in their essays; here, briefly, is mine: it happened in the spring of 1972, not long after AFSC's Philadelphia Peace Division staff staged a strike in March against the appointment of a Peace Secretary unsatisfactory to them, in one of the key battles to establish staff hegemony over such appointments. I wrote an article about this incident and a parallel case in the New England Regional Office in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The article was actually quite complimentary to AFSC; but when the Philadelphia office got wind of it, national staffers, who had not even read it, nonetheless intervened directly to get it killed by two publications to which I had submitted it.

This response deeply shocked me; in all my journalistic career, the AFSC is one of only two subjects who had any success in suppressing my work; the other was Lyndon LaRouche. The piece finally appeared in WIN magazine ("New Morning at AFSC," WIN, May 15, 1972).

Nor is such studied evasion only a matter of past history. I recently read the minutes of a retreat held in 1988 by Intermountain Yearly Meeting to consider the AFSC relationship with Friends, in which two top staff members from Philadelphia took part. In the first session, participants were asked to speak a tone of humility and common seeking for the retreat. The local Friends did so; but the remarks of the AFSC participants, as recorded in the minutes, were entirely self-justifying and defensive; there was not even a hint that anything might be less than just dandy in its positions, programs, or its relation with Friends.

Only Guenter Lewy and another blast of outside criticism, however heavily weighted by his own biases, has effectively punctured this protective shield again, if only momentarily. Yet AFSC's skill and success in ignoring such feedback does not suggest a high probability of its having any more significant impact.

But it could be that Lewy's disclosures might make a difference. Combined with wide discussion among Friends of the long-brewing concerns over the AFSC's Quaker identity, connections, and the quality and reliability of much of its work, they might crystallize a body of organized Quaker opinion around these issues that cannot so easily be ignored. If this happens, it seems to me that Friends will face a choice among three main responses, which might for convenience be called the Three Rs: Release, Reclamation or Renunciation.

The first response would be a letting go based on an acceptance of the changes in AFSC over the past generation. Perhaps, it can be argued, it is time to give up our nostalgic images of what the AFSC used to be and do, and what we think it now ought to be, and deal with it as it is. After all, no group escapes change, and AFSC's defenders insist with some justice that its evolution has been based on its own experience, which is as valid as that of the critics.

If this rationale were accepted, perhaps the critics' basic question today should be, how can what AFSC is and does now be brought into a right relationship with the Society of Friends? Laying aside old images would also begin to free up energy now devoted to berating the Service Committee for not doing for Friends what many of us would like it to do, enabling this energy to be redirected into new efforts to do those things for ourselves.

In policy terms, this release could probably be accomplished simply by abolishing the AFSC Corporation. Putting a merciful end to its charade of accountability to the Society would ease some Friends' minds; it would at least make unmistakably clear that the AFSC is an entirely independent, self-directed entity, with only as much Quaker connection as it chooses; and those Friends who wished to work with it would do so as individuals. This is, of course, the place at which many Quaker schools and colleges have arrived, though as we have seen some have passed beyond even it into arrivate amnesia about their origins.

But no sooner is this last paragraph on paper than a voice
of protest wells up from within me. No, it cries, this is too easy! The past is not irrelevant to the present, and the AFSC's departure from its own original purposes should not be allowed to pass without resistance.

The AFSC's original model, however imperfectly realized, produced a record of service that won a Nobel Peace Prize and earned Friends worldwide respect; it is folly to discard it. And it is not wrong to expect the largest Quaker service body, the bearer of the Quaker name in much of the world, to be substantially made up of Quakers, and to be in broad, ongoing engagement with the Society in all its authentic diversity, bewildering and unwieldy as that sometimes is. Simply to let go of it would mean handing over a seventy year-old, world-famous Quaker legacy to a largely secular, liberal-left coterie too much of which is unconnected with what it has stood for over the decades.

Thus the second option, the second R, would mean an attempt to reclaim the AFSC as a body meaningfully connected to the Society of Friends.

In practical terms, what would such a reclamation effort consist of? I can see at least three elements (And the essays by Thomas Angell and Sam Levering contain other proposals along this line):

First, new leadership must take the helm in the national office and the Board. The present establishment there tends to retreat reflexively into a bunker mentality whenever Quaker concerns are raised, and will simply have to be replaced by leaders who would welcome AFSC's reintegration into the Society.

Second, the term Quaker should be added to its Affirmative Action goals, not as an additional category competing with the others, but as a modifier to all of them: Let the AFSC emphasize the recruitment of Quaker women, Quaker gays and lesbians, disabled Quakers, and "Third World" Quakers. There are, to repeat, plenty of all of these out there. If some might need to be trained before they could handle present AFSC program priorities, such preparation of a Quaker cadre would be a integral part of the AFSC's mission. I am wary of specific quotas, but let that not be an excuse for equivocation: Let AFSC set a goal of not less than fifty percent Quaker staff within ten years.

Third, the Corporation would be restructured, along lines suggested by Sam Levering in his essay, to make it a genuine governing body, which would include eliminating its stacking with at-large insiders and its domination by staff. It would be charged with setting overall program priorities, based on careful and extensive canvassing of the life and concerns of American Friends. This would in turn produce a reconstituted Board, no longer exclusively insider-run and representing a broader range of Friends, to oversee the implementation of these priorities on an ongoing basis. One operating policy change would be to end staff vetoes of appointment of their supervisors.

Current AFSC insiders will admit, usually sotto voce and off the record, that part of their resistance to such ideas is based on the fear that politically conservative Quakers, in such a responsive structure, would be able to paralyze policymaking and program; "We'd never be able to agree on anything," I have heard it said. But if such a process involving the wider spectrum of American Friends sounds fanciful, it is not. There is an operating model for it with forty years of success behind it.

That model is the Friends Committee on National Legislation, the Quaker lobby on Capitol Hill. The FCNL's program and administrative staff is almost all-Quaker, and it is generally acknowledged to be of very high quality; and it trains several young interns, usually Quakers, every year.

FCNL works on an agenda of legislative priorities which is set every two years by a nationwide General Committee of Friends representing most American yearly meetings, both programmed and unprogrammed. This group, which meets not for a few hours but over several days, has been able, despite the broad diversity encompassed within it, to achieve unity on many positions in areas of peace and justice, both domestic and international. Indeed, seasoned observers report that some of the sessions in which this committee has labored long over difficult issues have been truly inspirational, worshipful experiences of Quaker process at work.

To be sure, there are issues on which agreement has eluded FCNL, particularly abortion, homosexuality and some other "boundaries of life" questions; the notion of economic sanctions against countries like South Africa has also been difficult.
However, the group has been able to live with its differences in an atmosphere of relative harmony, and there has been plenty of work to be done in the meantime.

For that matter, insider fears that AFSC's present support of abortion and gay rights would be imperiled by making the structure responsive to Friends at large are in my view greatly exaggerated. For one thing, these emphases would have the weight of established precedent behind them, which is an important factor in Quaker decisionmaking. But more important, despite what AFSC partisans may think, most of their critics from the unprogrammed wing are not in the least interested in some homophobic, right-to-life witchhunt; their concerns are rooted in much more basic issues of overall Quaker identity and connections. Most of us fully expect AFSC to continue to occupy the liberal or left pole of the authentic Quaker spectrum in America.

In any event, the most conservative Friends gave up on the AFSC so long ago (the evangelical yearly meetings cut ties in the 1920s) that they have largely forgotten about it, putting their energies and resources into other, more theologically congenial groups. (They have, incidentally, little to do with FCNL either, despite its demonstrated responsiveness.) The constituency for a renewed AFSC Quaker identity will initially evolve around the yearly meetings in Friends General Conference and Friends United Meeting; but even that much of a connection, if it is genuine, would be far broader than at present.

FCNL stalwarts generally give a wide berth to any comparisons of their processes with those of AFSC; the Service Committee, they say, is so much larger, and its agenda so much broader; and they refer to its self-image as the "cutting edge" group whose role is to move the Quaker constituency into new issues and positions, a task which is bound to cause controversy.

But they are too modest. FCNL's experience is directly relevant to AFSC, and serves as the principal alternative model of how AFSC's governance and its connection to the larger Society of Friends could be reclaimed and re-rooted in the life of the Society. And as mentioned earlier, the sense of Quaker "ownership" built on such a process would be the real support for the "cutting edge" role. The differences of size and mission are less significant than they may appear, and in any case they certainly do not justify the attenuation if AFSC's ties to Friends.

What are the prospects for such a reclamation? Short of something approaching a revolution from inside, probably not very good. AFSC's structural insulation against outside Quaker influence would work against it, as would its skill in shrugging off expressions of concern; further, the attenuated and unrepresentative Quaker presence within it is typically defensive when confronted with proposals for change. Among the staff, identification with the organizers' subculture seems virtually complete.

Perhaps if enough weighty Friends, joined by a number of yearly meetings, made a common appeal to the Board for action on a clear short list of reforms, the Board might be shamed into a real response. But I wouldn't violate the testimony against gambling and bet the farm on it.

This unpromising prospect brings us inexorably to the next option, the third R, Renunciation. If AFSC's remaining Quaker connections continue to erode, and its leadership continues to ignore the heartfelt pleas of Friends and former supporters like the critics represented here, the time may come when they and those Quaker groups which are prepared to join them will feel a need to clearly and publicly disassociate themselves from AFSC. There is after all, what in oldtime Quaker parlance is called upholding the Reputation of Truth.

This Renunciation might take the form of a formal request that AFSC's name be changed, as Sam Levering has suggested, dropping the "Friends" and leaving it simply as the American Service Committee. When the AFSC establishment declined, as it undoubtedly would, further public actions to make this breach known to the world would follow.

Arthur Roberts's essay describes how the evangelical rejection of AFSC came about. But such a step for most current Quaker critics would be a grave one, which few of us are now ready to take. Yet it cannot be dismissed. After all, if present trends continue much longer, there will be almost no Quakers in the AFSC, save perhaps the Executive Secretary and perhaps a few fundraisers.

Further, the Corporation has had before it for several years
a proposed By-laws change which would open membership on the Board to non-Friends. This is one idea which a few in the Corporation have resisted and delayed, although the pressure from inside to accept it has been heavy and unrelenting. Once that door is opened, the AFSC might well end up in the same boat as the Beverly Hills YMCA. Could this outcome really pass without a response by Friends?

Given AFSC's impermeability, such actions of disassociation, however traumatic for those who take them, would probably not immediately. But their longer term impact might be more significant. I say that because while AFSC raises most of its budget from non-Friends, it does so by harvesting the fruit of the long-cultivated, intangible but very real (and bankable) reputation of the Society of Friends as a worthwhile and humanitarian body of people. (In line with this "market reality", many AFSC fundraisers have traditionally been recruited from among exemplary Friends; the Quakerly image thus maintained among the donors they visit is very effective.)

Should this connection be challenged openly by former supporters, this base of its legitimacy would be called into question, with potentially grave long-term consequences. AFSC's budget growth has fallen significantly behind inflation over the past fifteen years, and this has forced significant program and staff cuts. It has also lost ground to other religious groups. How serious AFSC's longer-term financial decline has been can be seen by a comparison with World Vision, an evangelical service group whose work in many ways parallels AFSC's: In 1971, AFSC's total budget was larger than World Vision's by more than two million dollars; but by 1980, World Vision's budget was almost four times as large, while AFSC had lost almost 35% of its real income to inflation.

This background suggests that a loss of Quaker legitimacy would not be a small matter for AFSC.

These "three Rs", then: Release, Reclamation or Renunciation, represent possible ways in which the AFSC-Quaker relationship could be revised. The choice among them will be significantly influenced by how Friends come to understand the data about its evolution which Guenter Lewy has detailed thus far better than anyone, though for very different purposes. None much resembles the kind of apolitical quietism implicit in his critique; but that is to be expected once his material has been reframed in Quaker terms.

Because of so many Friends' fear of conflict within the Society, however, there could be an additional, fourth R to be mentioned here in passing—that of simply giving up and uneasily Reconciling ourselves to the status quo within AFSC. This would leave the Corporation to its empty annual exercise and let AFSC become ever more fully secularized and assimilated into the "organizers' subculture" while still making use of the Quaker reputation for its financial sustenance.

Indeed, this could well be the most likely outcome of any outlined here. We Quakers have a very poor record of actually facing up to the rigors and risks of open internal struggle; and changing the course which the AFSC is on would, I am certain, be a struggle.

If it comes to that fourth, passive outcome, this book will have failed; and I believe Friends will have failed too. But like the name of Guenter Lewy, giving up on the American Friends Service Committee is an option that has not occurred to me, or to most of those Friends represented here, at least not yet.