



Economic Mythbusters course

Additional material for Quaker participants: Week 2 (for session Tues 21 May)

Each week QPSW will provide Quaker participants on the Mythbusters course with additional preparatory information to help link the course content to Quaker Concerns and to support independent study, reflection or action. Material will usually consist of extracts from Quaker writings or minutes that QPSW staff consider particularly pertinent to or which may help to provide a useful frame of reference for that week's Mythbusters topic and the general course content provided by nef.

This additional material should be treated as optional (but recommended!) reading. Participants may also have their own ideas about relevant Quaker writings. If so, feel free to use them. We would also encourage you to share your favourite writings with QPSW staff via Mythbusters@quaker.org.uk

Our suggested readings for week 2 are about Quaker Concerns for community, common life and citizen and institutional responsibility. We hope that these will offer useful perspectives on the content of the session.

Reading 1

Compassion, to be effective, requires detailed knowledge and understanding of how society works. Any social system in turn requires men and women in it of imagination and goodwill. What would be fatal would be for those with exceptional human insight and concern to concentrate on ministering to individuals, whilst those accepting responsibility for the design and management of organisations were left to become technocrats. What is important is that institutions and their administration be constantly tested against human values, and that those who are concerned about these values be prepared to grapple with the complex realities of modern society as it is.

Grigor McClelland, 1976

Quaker faith & practice, 23.47

Reading 2

Evils which have struck their roots deep in the fabric of human society are often accepted, even by the best minds, as part of the providential ordering of life. They lurk unsuspected in the system of things until men of keen vision and heroic heart drag them into the light, or until their insolent power visibly threatens human welfare.

William Charles Braithwaite, 1919

Quaker faith & practice, 23.5

Reading 3

Our testimony to equality stems from our underpinning conviction that we are all equally children of God. It sets us against the prevailing inegalitarian temper of the times. The prevailing belief is that the individual should keep more and more of what they are given through employment or investment, to spend as much as you wish. This has led to massively increased inequality in British society. It has also meant that there is less available for decent standards in our common life – for instance, in education, housing, health provision and the maintenance of our public spaces. There is more public squalor than there should be, and more private affluence too...and these are two sides of the same coin.

3a.1. on Equality and Community from *An expression in words of Britain Yearly Meeting's corporate Social Testimony drawn from the experience and understanding at this time*, prepared in draft by the BYM Co-ordinating Group on Rediscovering our Social Testimony (RSOT) at the request of Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee, and approved at Yearly Meeting 1997.

Reading 4

The market economy functions by fuelling our wants; it manufactures new desires, passing them off as needs. Ceaselessly, advertising implores us to consume. Such a system works constantly against sufficiency and simplicity. It is our experiences that true human fulfilment is not to be reached through the worship of money and all that it can buy. Friends seek to resist the temptations to define our value by acquiring possessions. All the same, we are drawn almost inexorably into spending more on some types of luxuries. It is, therefore, our conviction that developing resistance to consumerism is an essential spiritual practice today.

3b.2. on Simplicity from *An expression in words of Britain Yearly Meeting's corporate Social Testimony drawn from the experience and understanding at this time*, prepared in draft by the BYM Co-ordinating Group on Rediscovering our Social Testimony (RSOT) at the request of Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee, and approved at Yearly Meeting 1997.

Reading 5

Remember your responsibility as citizens for the government of your town and country, and do not shirk the effort and time this may demand. Do not be content to accept things as they are, but keep an alert and questioning mind. Seek to discover the causes of social unrest, injustice and fear; try to discern the new growing-points in social and economic life. Work for an order of society which will allow men and women to develop their capacities and will foster their desire to serve.

Advices, 1964

Quaker faith & practice, 23.01

Reading 6

God comes to us in the midst of human need, and the most pressing needs of our time demand community in response. How can I participate in a fairer distribution of resources unless I live in a community which makes it possible to consume less? How can I learn accountability unless I live in a community where my acts and their consequences are visible to all? How can I learn to share power unless I live in a community where hierarchy is unnatural? How can I take the risks which right action demands unless I belong to a community which gives support? How can I learn the sanctity of each life unless I live in a community where we can be persons not roles to one another?

Parker J Palmer, 1977

Quaker faith & practice, 23.48

Quaker Peace & Social Witness
14 May 2013