



Better World Economics



*Quaker Peace & Social Witness
Economic Issues Programme*

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Friends 'stand up' against climate change and poverty

On 16th–18th October Friends around the country demonstrated their concern about global poverty and climate change and stood up to politicians to persuade them to take action to confront these injustices.

Quaker involvement in this year's *Stand Up and Take Action* was even bigger and better than last year. From the 16th–18th October Friends were part of a global movement of people literally standing up to demonstrate solidarity with those living in poverty and affected by climate change. They also lobbied parliamentary candidates to persuade them to commit to tackling these issues. 173 million people across the world, including over 100,000 in the UK, took part in stand up lobbies, demonstrations, petitions, public meetings and special faith services.

Friends stood up after meeting, held vigils and stalls, wrote letters to parliamentary candidates and held meetings with them. You met with an impressive nine parliamentary candidates in six constituencies (out of a total of 200 candidates in 100 constituencies lobbied across the country) as part of the *The Great Persuasion*, and engaged in some interesting and productive dialogue. With the 17th October being the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, and the weekend ending only 50 days before global leaders meet in Copenhagen for the global climate change talks, the discussions focused on poverty and climate change. Peter Hussey of Llandrindod and Pales LM geared his meeting with Liberal Democrat MP Roger Williams around the 10:10 campaign (see box on page 2) and Simon Bond (Maidenhead LM) and fellow lobbyist had a productive one hour meeting with Lib Dem MP Tony Hill, which covered climate change as well as the conflict between our current economic system and environmental sustainability. He asked to meet



Photo: Mervyn Carter, Colchester Meeting

Colchester Friends 'stand up'

with them again closer to the Copenhagen Conference.

In East Edinburgh David Turner (Edinburgh LM) and five others met with Labour candidate Sheila Gilmore at a Christian Aid coffee morning. As well as asking what action she will take to ensure a 40% reduction in carbon emissions by 2020, they also discussed adherence to the UK promise of 0.7% of GNP (gross national product) to development assistance by 2013. Sheila Gilmore promised to press for this, though stated that it is not something that will be prioritised in the election campaign.

This is a particularly crucial time for us to get our views heard by parliamentary candidates as

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Simon Bond of Maidenhead LM and fellow campaigner hand over a copy of the Vote Global manifesto to Tony Hill MP.

a general election must take place by June next year, and the parties are still writing their manifestos. For this reason all those involved in the *Great Persuasion* were asked to hand to candidates a copy of the *Vote Global* International Development Manifesto – a set of

recommendations compiled by BOND (the UK membership organisation for international development NGOs) providing a baseline of policies on international development. Candidates were themselves asked to hand it onto their party's manifesto group. With multiple copies of this document arriving with the manifesto groups the message will be clear – these are issues that the electorate care about and all parties need to demonstrate what action they will take to address them.

For this reason it was particularly encouraging to hear from many Friends who participated that they have built strong relationships with their candidates and that they plan to continue to keep the dialogue going. Please see the suggestions below if you are interested in keeping up the pressure on politicians ahead of the election.

What can I do?

- Contact your parliamentary candidates to ask what action they will take to tackle climate change and poverty. A local action toolkit (based on the Stand Up toolkit) will be available from BOND in the next month at www.bond.org.uk.
- Read up on the political parties' positions on international development. See www.bond.org.uk (look under UK General Election).

10:10 Campaign

Friends House has signed up to the 10:10 campaign, and therefore committed to reduce carbon emissions by 10% by 2010. For more on the campaign and how you can join it see www.1010uk.org

The climate debt crisis

The Jubilee Debt Campaign (JDC), World Development Movement (WDM) and People and Planet have launched a new campaign to tell the UK government to pay back its climate debt at the Copenhagen climate summit.

What is climate debt?

Rich countries have taken, and continue to take, a disproportionate percentage of the world's common resources, including the atmosphere. Whilst around 70% of carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels have been released by rich countries, they only hold 20% of the world's population. Developed countries therefore have the primary responsibility for climate change, whilst it is the poorest and most vulnerable who are hardest hit by its effects.

A new report, *The Climate Debt Crisis*, by JDC and WDM argues that rich countries are therefore heavily in debt to the poor. They owe poor countries money to cover the cost of adapting to climate change (adaptation debt); and they owe them money to reduce their own carbon emissions (emissions debt). It finds that the UK owes \$1 trillion in climate debt, and that that overall the rich world owes in compensation to poor countries far more than the poor owes to the rich.

Technology transfer

Many developing countries, particularly those with heavy international debt, have found themselves locked into a high carbon model of development. Yet, all countries (not just the industrialised nations) need to limit carbon emissions if we are to prevent temperature increases of 2°C or more. But, at the same time, many millions of people still don't have the energy to increase incomes, provide jobs and cut poverty.

As a result northern countries have a responsibility to provide the technology and resources need to help the global south meet its energy needs without fossil fuels. This responsibility was in theory agreed in 1992 in the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), when the rich countries agreed to pay 'full incremental costs' of any measures to reduce emissions in the global south – but the new report argues that little has been done to implement this agreement.

Intellectual property, sustainability and the food system

Caroline Dommen, Global Economic Issues Representative at Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) Geneva introduces one aspect of the economics work.

Food, climate change and migration. These are the three priority focus areas of the Quaker UN Office in Geneva's Global Economic Issues Programme for the coming years.

Under the heading of Food, QUNO's main concern is the impact of intellectual property rules on sustainable food production and equitable access to food. Indeed, increased intellectual property protection on new plant varieties is going hand in hand with reduced biological diversity.

In September, QUNO organised a panel discussion during the World Trade Organization's Public Forum. This aimed to describe the way in which intellectual property rules impact on the adaptability of our food system to new challenges such as climate change, as well as on availability of seeds.

The session built to a large extent on the prize-winning book published by the Quaker International Affairs Programme, the International Development Research Centre and Earthscan, entitled *The Future Control of Food* by Geoff Tansey and Tamsin Rajotte (introduced in Issue 14 of Better World Economics).

The full audio recording of the session is available on the World Trade Organization's website at http://www.wto.org/english/forums_e/public_forum09_e/programme_e.htm (scroll down to Session 30).

Find out more:

- Zoë Goodman, *Seeds of hunger: intellectual property rights on seeds and the human rights response* (<http://www.3dthree.org/en/page.php?IDpage=38&IDcat=5>)
- Geoff Tansey, *Trade, Intellectual Property, Food & Biodiversity*, 1999 <http://www.quno.org/economicissues/intellectual-property/intellectualLinks.htm>

Stop increasing the debt

At the climate change negotiations in Copenhagen in December the industrialised countries have an opportunity to stop increasing their debt by agreeing to massive and binding cuts in carbon emissions. The climate justice campaign is asking you to send a post card (see below) to our Prime Minister asking the UK to commit to a radical cut in emissions, as well as the provision of financial compensation and technology transfer to enable climate-friendly development, at Copenhagen.

What can I do?

- Sign the enclosed post card or contact Suzanne Ismail on suzannei@quaker.org.uk 02076631055 if you would like one, or more, to sign.
- Join *The Wave* – the UK's biggest ever demonstration for action on climate change on 5th December. See www.quaker.org.uk/environment.

Find out more

- Read the report *The Climate Debt Crisis* or the accompanying campaign briefing available at www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk
- Read *Responding to Climate Change*, a briefing pack produced by QPSW for Friends and others wanting to learn about, reflect on, and take action on climate change. Available from www.quaker.org.uk/environment or on request from Suzanne (details above).
- Attend the Climate Justice speaker tour – a series of public meetings around the country about why we need a global climate agreement which is both effective and delivers justice for the global south, and how we can help this happen. See www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk for details.

Vulture funds: Campaign Update

JDC has reported an excellent response to the End the Vulture Culture campaign (covered in Better World Economics 14). In July the government launched a public consultation on a new law it is considering to restrict vulture funds. Treasury Minister Ian Pearson is in charge of taking the decision about whether to turn the proposed new law into a priority for the next parliamentary session, by putting it into the Queen's Speech on 18 November. You can write to him through JDC's website (www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk), where you can also download a petition.

‘The Great Turning’ – the environment and the future economy

Majk Stokes of Central Edinburgh Local Meeting and representative of Young Friends General Meeting responds to the Zero Growth Economy conferences.

Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) and Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre have worked together this autumn to bring Quakers into discussion on the subject of the environment, the economy and the links between the two. Under the heading “A Zero-Growth Economy – What Would It Mean For Us All?”, a one-day conference in September at Friends House in London was followed up with a weekend seminar at Woodbrooke in Birmingham at the end of October.

The conference in London had as its focus the “big picture”. Four speakers – Miriam Kennet, director of the Green Economics Institute; Richard Douthwaite, author, economist and founder of the Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability; Duncan Green, head of research for Oxfam; and author and activist Alistair McIntosh – presented their views on the economic and environmental situation at the global level, the threats that we face and the need for change.

Practically all scientists now agree that climate change is taking place and is caused in no small part by human activity. It is also widely agreed that we will reach “peak oil” in the near future – the supply of fossil fuels will start to decline, and those that remain will require increasing amounts of energy to extract them, making them more and more expensive. We were told that something similar is true for uranium: therefore nuclear power is ultimately not a long-term solution. It was made clear to us that in the future the Western World will have to adopt a much simpler lifestyle and consume less energy and goods.

By contrast, the weekend at Woodbrooke approached the situation from the other end of the telescope, exploring what we can do and are doing as individuals and small communities, in and around our local Quaker Meetings.

The seminar was attended by more than 90 representatives of Area Meetings and other Quaker bodies, who took part in discussions and workshops on subjects such as LETS (Local Exchange Trading Schemes) and local

currency schemes; employee-owned co-operatives; local community-run shops and businesses; Transition Town work; community-supported agriculture; and the witness of our Quaker Meetings. We had the opportunity to talk via Skype to Geoff Garver, a Canadian Friend, on the issue of “Right Relationships-Building a Whole Earth Economy”, and to watch “The Power of Community”, a DVD telling the story of Cuba’s resilience and its shift to largely sustainable living, 90% organic agriculture and simple lifestyles after its enforced “peak oil scenario” when the Soviet Union collapsed and Cuba no longer received support and supplies from the Eastern Bloc. This was particularly powerful as it was clear that although the Cuban population consumes far less than their counterparts in Britain and America, their quality of life is not significantly lower and their sense of community seems impossible to miss.

We were shown a video of the activist and campaigner Joanna Macy, who described the environmental, economic and social challenges we face as “the Great Turning”, and compared our situation in terms of scale to the agricultural and industrial revolutions. Whereas those took place over a period of centuries, the environmental crisis imposes upon us a far shorter time limit and we must make this shift much more quickly. However, this also makes it a tremendous opportunity for humanity to learn and it is important that we focus on the positive choices and changes that we and others can make, rather than sinking into despair.

Informal impromptu groups were formed over the weekend to discuss other aspects of the question and to come together on areas of shared concern. A “talking wall” helped to raise issues that had not been addressed in the programme.

The response from those present far exceeded the organisers’ expectations, and it was felt that this could be the start of a much wider movement as Friends continue to discuss and explore the issues in more depth and consider what role our Quaker witness can actively play. The Quaker testimony to simplicity is as

relevant now as ever, and we need to “let our lives speak”: in addition to actively engaging in the situation, perhaps we can play a part in living an example of simplicity and of consuming less, and help to demonstrate that prosperity and quality of life do not have to be directly linked to the acquisition and consumption of “more stuff”.

Faiths celebrate their commitments to action on climate change

Alison Prout, who leads QPSW’s work on the environment, explains.



QPSW hosted a public event, ‘Many Heavens: One Earth’, after the conference at Windsor, to celebrate the faiths’ action on sustainability. The evening including a presentation by Olav Kjørven, UN Assistant Secretary General (second left) as well as song and dance.

Photo: James Mutton

Quakers were represented at the Windsor Celebration of faith groups’ commitments to action for climate change between the 2nd and 4th November, jointly organised by the Alliance of Religions and Conservation and the United Nations Development Programme.

Among the faiths represented were Sikhs and Hindus; Christians of many flavours from evangelical to orthodox; Jews from Britain, America and Israel; Shinto priests from Japan and Daoist monks from China; Muslims from Egypt to Indonesia; Buddhists and Baha’is. Together the nine religions represented some 4 billion people worldwide. Also participating were a range of secular environmental organisations.

The objective was to recognise and celebrate commitments made by faith organisations, to harness the power and influence of faith groups for change, for the peace of the planet, and to send a strong message to political negotiators prior to the Copenhagen summit in December. On behalf of Quakers, Alison Prout and Helen Rowlands received a certificate in

recognition of Friends’ long term commitment to work ‘to protect the living planet’. Other faith groups being similarly recognised have produced 7-year (or 8, or 9 – depending what number is auspicious!) plans for change, in response to the UNDP’s call for faith commitments. The scope of those commitments is awe-inspiring. Each faith is enjoined to consider what can be done, from within its own teachings and traditions, under 7 headings: faith-consistent use of assets; education of young people; wisdom; encouragement of green lifestyles; media and advocacy; partnerships and eco-twinning; and celebration.

Readers of Better World Economics might be particularly interested to know that the faith consistent use of assets was a hot topic of conversation amongst those gathered in Windsor. There was even a dedicated discussion table one evening over supper. For example, the US Catholic Coalition on Climate Change is working with its 18,000 parishes, 8,500 schools, 244 colleges and universities and dozens of hospitals to link with the US government’s Energy Star programme to buy green energy, and is initiating conversations with treasurers of Catholic institutions to discuss how Catholic investment portfolios can encourage green energy technology and support environmentally careful companies. Some 25 percent of the US population is Catholic.

The Church of Sweden diocese of Vasterås has helped create a fund, in which it has also invested, which grows sustainable timber in a deforested and impoverished area of Mozambique. As well as commercial forestry the ‘Global Solidarity Fund’ involves reforestation an equivalent area for wildlife, and building a timber mill in which a local labour force is employed. The Church of England diocese of London is also an investor.

See www.windsor2009.org for more details.

Quakers in Copenhagen

Linda Patterson from Bath Meeting will be at the climate change negotiations in Copenhagen from 9–18 December and is planning to carry a banner made up of messages of witness from Quakers, if Friends wish to respond. The banner will say QUAKERS in big letters made up of these many small messages. Email your witness to the earth and/or negotiations to lin@larkhall.force9.co.uk.

Settlement goods: Engaging the supermarkets

Suzanne Ismail explains.

Photo: Suzanne Ismail, QPSW



Mint from the West Bank for sale in Waitrose

British and Irish supermarkets risk undermining efforts for peace in Israel and Palestine by continuing to sell goods produced in Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories says QPSW partner the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR).

ECCR, which seeks to promote corporate responsibility and to assist faith communities invest in line with their beliefs, has initiated dialogue with 10 companies, controlling 16 supermarket 'chains', in order to highlight church concerns about settlement goods. Their work has shown that while many supermarkets are aware of these concerns, only two (Marks & Spencer and the Co-operative) have fully adopted a policy not to source produce originating in settlements. One other company, Irish based Musgrave Group which supplies the Budgens, Londis, Mace, Supervalu and Centra chains is in the process of reviewing its policies and procedures with a view to ensuring that settlement goods are not sourced in future.

A common response from companies that do stock settlement goods was that it is not their place to 'take sides' in conflicts. Some mentioned that by following UK government guidelines and labelling settlement products as being the produce of 'West Bank' customers can make up their own minds about whether or not to buy them. Whilst this latter point does show an awareness of the issues, ECCR is disappointed that the majority of supermarkets are still prepared to sell goods produced in what are essentially illegal entities. It is also

concerned that some supermarkets may not have sufficiently robust systems in place to enable them to identify settlement goods within their supply chain.

What can I do?

- Supermarket customers and individuals or groups with investments in supermarket companies can write to them to raise concerns about the sale of settlement goods. Contact details, model letters and more detailed information about supermarkets' policies can be found at: <http://www.eccr.org.uk/module-htmlpages-display-pid-65.html>

Find out more:

- www.quaker.org.uk/settlementproduce.

Migrant workers: update

On the 27th October ECCR's patron, Lord Harries (ex-Bishop of Oxford) introduced a debate to the House of Lords around the question: 'To ask HMG what is their assessment of the protection of vulnerable migrant workers' rights'. The debate followed from ECCR's publication of the report *Vulnerable Migrant Workers: The Responsibility of Business*, and was facilitated by a briefing produced by Sunniva, one of ECCR's researchers.

The debate lasted an hour and covered a wide range of issues including potential extension of the Gangmasters Licensing Authority (the body that regulates those who supply or use labour in agriculture, forestry, horticulture, shellfish gathering and food processing and packaging). Seven peers contributed and a response was then given by Lord Brett, the Minister. His response was very measured but the peers' discussion covered some interesting issues for reform.

See a transcript of the debate at <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/ld200809/ldhansrd/text/91027-0007.htm#09102776000640>

Farewell

This is the last edition of Better World Economics that I will be editing as I am leaving QPSW at the end of November. I have had a wonderful time working with you and am sorry to go.
Best wishes, Sunniva

Responding to poverty with tea and a chat

Alison Tsang tells the story of “Made of Money” – a practical education project in East London.

With phrases like “the credit crunch” now on the front page of every newspaper, it’s acceptable that money is a bit tight for everyone at the moment. The recent financial crisis has highlighted just how many of us have been living on borrowed money, on borrowed time.

But for many families, living on the breadline is not a recent phenomenon; it’s a long-term way of life. 22% of all households in the UK are living on low-income, and for households with children, the statistics are worse – up to 30%, with an estimated 3.9 million children living below the poverty line.

Living on credit, always having debts, worrying every time bills arrive, having to borrow to buy basics such as school uniform: these are many of the issues that families living in poverty face. So where do we look for long-term, practical solutions to helping people out of such poverty? What should our response be?

“Made of Money” is one such response – a financial education course for families, developed by Quaker Social Action, a Quaker-founded charity working alongside people in poverty in East London. The response began in 2002, when QSA ran some one-off workshops offering debt advice. While people came for advice, it became apparent that they really wanted a space to chat about the impact of money issues: how it was affecting their relationships; how it made them feel like bad parents; resisting pressure from teens who always wanted the latest brands. Many would stay for hours after the workshops just talking.

And so the idea for Made of Money was born: a course to “*help families talk, listen and learn about money and its impact on their lives*”. It has now been running in East London for 4 years, working with over 350 families. Each course is great fun: plenty of group discussion, practical exercises, games, lots of tea drinking and even ‘taste testing’ branded vs. supermarket branded goods (a good excuse to eat biscuits...). It’s also often first time parents talk about money with their children.

Made of Money seems to work because of its approach. It seeks not just to apply a sticking

plaster to money problems, but to address the root causes. These may be practical – such as not claiming all benefits, or not understanding the interest rates being charged by lenders. But more often than not these causes are more deep seated: due to learnt family patterns, emotions, values, and attitudes.

One mother who came on a Made of Money course, Sarah, had such issues. She was in debt and struggling to keep her head above water bringing up two children. As part of the course, she completed a spending diary, and found that a huge proportion of her money was going on food. In discussions she opened up that as a child, she often went hungry. She was determined never to let this happen to her children. Consequentially she over-bought food and it was adding to her money issues. One of the workers suggested she use a meal planner, and only shop for what she needed. She did this, and put the money she saved in a jar, so she could always see that there was money there should she need it. She was empowered to take more control of her money, which also increased her confidence as a parent.

Sarah’s story is typical of many families, not just in East London but across the UK. And that’s where an exciting new chapter in the Made of Money story has begun. Recently Made of Money has received funding to spread our approach outside of London. So it’s my job to do this- to seek and support partners, across the UK to run ‘Made of Money’ in their community. So far we’ve had interest from charities, housing associations and voluntary groups, including some Friends meetings. If you might be interested, or know a group that might be able to run a simple ‘Made of Money’ course in your area – please get in touch – we would love to hear from you!

Contact: Alison Tsang, Partnership worker, Made of Money on 020 8983 5047 or alisonsang@qsa.org.uk.

Articles in the Friends in Action section reflect the work of individual Friends or Groups. Views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of Britain Yearly Meeting or QPSW. If you would like to contribute to this section please contact the editor.

A convenient truth

Martin Wilkinson, Muswell Hill LM, discusses equality.

Economic inequality, of the sort we find in Britain, is very bad for us all. For our personal health and for the health of our society. This truth, established by years of research and increasingly known to Friends through the Salter lecture at this summer's YM Gathering (www.ymg.org.uk/tag/speakers), is presented in the book *The Spirit Level – why more equal societies almost always do better* by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett. The other side of the coin is, of course, that in more equal countries people are healthier and happier. If income in Britain was as equal as in Japan or Sweden, we could expect to halve the number of murders and the incidence of obesity, cut the level of mental illness, numbers in prison and of teenage births to less than 1/3, and almost double the number of people who feel they can trust most others, as well as making important differences to crime, drug-taking, school achievement and many other social indicators.

So, why is this convenient? Because it comes just as we fully realise that we can't go on as we are, that free market economics have led us into financial disaster, and that the unthinking quest for economic growth is incompatible with keeping the planet in a fit state for people and the living environment.

The *Spirit Level* research has many helpful things to say: First – just as clearly as it shows that greater equality of income in a country has huge social and health benefits, it shows that economic growth – in any country as rich as Britain – does no good at all. For the sake of the planet we have to realise that we cannot look to growth to solve our problems; now we discover that growth was not worth pursuing anyway. But there is hope – because going for a fairer distribution of income would make us all healthier and happier, and go a long way to solve the problems that figure in news headlines every week.

Second, the research shows that bigger economic differences between people create greater anxiety about status, and that is a major driver of excessive consumption. People use shopping and possession of new and prestigious things to shore up their self

esteem. Retail therapy indeed. In more equal societies there is less pressure to consume, and to work long hours to earn the money to buy all this stuff. Third, more equal societies are more convivial. People are more ready to act for the common good, whether by recycling more, or giving more development aid, or keeping to environmental agreements.

Fourth – this one is for Quakers and everyone else who has always known that greater equality is the best way for humans to live together – the *Spirit Level* research gives us firm scientific evidence, of a kind that could not have been produced until quite recently, to back up Quaker testimony on equality. It shows that people and communities thrive when there is respect and esteem for one another, but that wide social and economic differences lead to feelings of separation and disrespect that are harmful to ourselves and our society.

As Friends, we have a positive and exciting job to do. To understand this research, and how it connects with our testimony and our understanding of the changes we need to make to lessen global warming and care for the planet. And then to tell other people about it, and see how we and our politicians can change things for the better.

The Equality Trust (www.equalitytrust.org.uk) has been set up to help people find out about the research. On the website you can find more information, a link to buy the book, and get ideas for action. In some places people are setting up local groups to share ideas and action. If you would like a speaker, contact Kathryn Busby at the Equality Trust kathryn.busby@equalitytrust.org.uk, or, for smaller or Quaker groups, Martin Wilkinson at martin@mpwilkinson.co.uk, 020 7263 4061.

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