

earthQuaker

*The newsletter of the Living Witness Project
Issue 65 Summer 2009*



European Honey Bee (Image from flickr by autan)

Contents include:

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Editorial

I hope this arrives in time to encourage you to attend the AGM which is to be held after all on Saturday May 23rd—details below.

I wonder how many Meetings responded to the request from the Recording Clerk's office for a minute about the possible statement by BYM in the run-up to the Copenhagen Conference in December. Mine (Dorking) did well, committing itself to work to continue to reduce its carbon footprint, but I know some members were disappointed at the apparent lack of concern in their Meeting. One frustrated correspondent summed up the situation by— *We seem, quite deliberately, to be ignoring the elephant in the room, the crying of our hearts, the desperate need of many of our generation and many more of future generations, simply so that we may remain complacently comfortable in our dithering affluence. And the fact that the Age of Stupid could be applied to Quakers, of all people, I find deeply distressing.*

I expect some of you watched *Who killed the honey bee?* on BBC4. The collapse of honey bees,

particularly in the USA but also throughout Europe, has been widely covered in the media (see page 14). I feel quite concerned and selected the honey bee for our cover picture. The possible consequences somehow remind me of T S Elliot's poem which ends *This is the way the world ends, Not with a bang but a whimper.*

Sorry that's a bit depressing but there is still hope and it's good to hear from Friends in Kenya and Australia (pages 3 and 4) of their earthcare work.

Ed Tyler's article on pages 10 and 11 *Gaia and the growth economy* refers in the final paragraph to the Zero Growth Economy conference in London on Sat Sept 26th. This conference is part of a programme looking specifically at the impact of our economic system on the environment and Ed's article has some interesting ideas on this subject.

Finally a plug for the latest issue of Friends Quarterly which is linked to the Woodbrooke *Good Lives* initiatives and covers environmental issues and Quaker responses to climate change.

Anne Brewer



LWP Summer School 2009—Change of date

Now 17th—21st August

Still at Swarthmoor Hall as stated in last earthQuaker but the cost will now be **£170 to stay in the Hall and £110 if you are camping**. Concessions available. Please contact Laurie at laurie@livingwitness.org.uk or 01865 725244 if you would like to attend.

Come and develop a more in-depth understanding of the sustainability challenge and our Quaker response through developing scenarios of the future: exploring the dynamics and events that may shape the world we live in, the alternative possible outcomes, and the implications for our lives and witness. We will be self-catering (vegan). Mostly shared rooms.

The first **LWP Annual General Meeting** will now be held

Saturday May 23rd at 2 pm

during the Link Group meeting at Bilberry Hill Centre, Rose Hill, Rednal, Birmingham, B45 8RT. All LWP members are welcome. This AGM is the key opportunity to be involved in discerning the direction of our work to support a Quaker witness for sustainable living. The draft agenda is as follows:



Bilberry Hill Centre, Birmingham

Opening worship

1. Receipt of Annual Report and Accounts 2008—This can be downloaded from <http://www.livingwitness.org.uk/LWPAnnualReport2008.pdf>
2. Development of LWP community of Friends/Meetings working for sustainable living
3. Development of our network of volunteer resource people
4. Projects and events
5. Appointment of trustees
6. Review of LWP constitution

Quaker Earthcare in Kenya

From Mary Gilbert, Quaker Earthcare Witness
(North America)

Friends in the North should know about the Rural Service Programme (RSP) operated by Kenyan Quakers. I am here in Kaimosi, where RSP is based, for a two-week work program before I attend a series of meetings at the UN Environmental Program (UNEP) headquarters in Nairobi.



RSP was founded in 1962 to raise money communally for church buildings. Since then its range of services has been expanded, first to include family planning and maternal-and-child care and more recently to address environmental concerns. Projects are simple and use local materials, so results are easily replicated with minimal cost. The RSP vision exemplifies the interdependence of the human community and the natural world. There are 16 field officers who teach and supervise the programs. Here are some of RSP's programs.



A mother fetching water from a ferro-cement tank constructed by RSP. (www.rspkaimosi.org)

Water development – To provide clean water RSP constructs wells (“springs”) protected by planting indigenous trees around the water source. Spring water is piped away from the source to a hole that is dug deep enough to put a pail under the pipe’s drip. People can fetch water without tramping around the spring itself. RSP also promotes roof-top rainwater harvesting.

Tree nursery - RSP has started nurseries for indigenous trees, sited along rivers. When the young trees are ready RSP buys them from the growers, who thus get income from this important

work. About 83,000 trees have been planted so far, and they receive the temporary care they need to insure that they live. RSP is conscious that this will affect local rainfall.

Environmental conservation project in Agro-forestry - This separate program has been funded by Quakers from the Netherlands for planting trees around church compounds. Vegetables will be raised among the trees. RSP is asking churches to train non-church members as well, to spread the benefits widely.



an agriculture farm demo (www.rspkaimosi.org)

Agriculture – RSP runs a horticulture program to help people feed themselves. This has been successful, and RSP has received some additional money from the Kenyan government to carry out the government’s food security program.

Micro-credit – The goal is to make as many people as self-sustaining as possible. Funding enables groups to carry out projects they choose. Any funding to individuals is done through the group, which ensures accountability. There are quite a few widows’ groups – I have already visited 8 – carrying out projects like sewing, knitting, raising poultry, growing crops for family use and for sale, raising goats and sheep, and making soap. I am told that men too form groups and get micro-credit to start small enterprises.

Dairy – This began with a gift of 2 cows from a New England Friend, and 2 from Friends in Iowa who were in Kaimosi and could get the project started. Now there are 20 milkers plus about a half-dozen calves with 2 more expected this week.

Friends Bringing Hope – This program is run by a Friend from Iowa, who provides her own funding but operates through RSP. FBH covers the needs of several widows’ groups and builds sim-

ple mud houses for widows identified as in direst need by RSP staff. Twenty-one have been completed so far, and we will be building 4 more this coming week.

Student support – RSP supports 56 orphans in residential secondary schools.

Youth Program – In response to the post-election clashes in 2008, fueled by lack of employment among other causes, US AID has also funded a new youth program (up to age 35). Many of these young people were led to participate in the violence last year. Now they form groups and are assisted in doing things to help the community. One youth group I met helped build a widow's house and have started a nursery.

Needless to say, the reality of life and Kenya and the work of RSP are not at all what I expected. I wish I had time and space to tell you about the new "jiko" (stove) made of mud, designed to use minimal wood and direct the smoke outside, with space underneath for the chickens when they come in at night. Or about the jackets one widow's group makes for sale in the US. Or about my networking efforts to find a good way to introduce solar cookers and what I've found out that

makes me hopeful.

By the time you read this RSP's website will be up and running. You can find out much more about the program, as well as what to do with your used laptop, by going to: www.rspkaimosi.org

I have been here only 6 days and have another week before I return to rub shoulders with NGOs and diplomats in Nairobi. I will have much to say when I get home.

Amani kwa wote. Peace to everybody.

This is something I copied from the wall of the office of RSP's director:

Community Approach

1. Go to the community
2. Live among the community.
3. Learn from the community.
4. Plan with the community.
5. Work with the community.
6. Start with what the community know.
7. Build on what the community have.

... and Quaker earthcare in Eastern Suburbs Friends Meeting in Australia

A small group of Friends at the Eastern Suburbs Local Meeting for Worship in Adelaide, South Australia has been meeting regularly to discuss the practical ways in which we can reduce our use of the earth's resources. We have covered topics about energy, food, transport, waste and water resulting in many actions taken and adaptations being made by group members. We have been able to use the information available on the website of a local Community Group called Sustainable Communities NPSP – www.scnpsp.wordpress.com. A number of Quakers has joined this Community Group which has the aim of supporting residents in reducing their use of the earth's resources and developing cooperative neighbourhood groups for sharing produce and supporting each other in the decisions we are making and carrying through.



Sustainable Communities NPSP logo

The EarthCare Statement was written at Australian Yearly Meeting 2008 guiding us in our care of the earth in relation to the Testimonies. And at Australian Yearly Meeting 2009 the children made a statement asking the adults to "Please Stop Polluting the Earth" with specific requests for action. Our Earth Care Group now meets with the children to work on their requests and go further. We have a method of Goal Setting which adults and children have under-

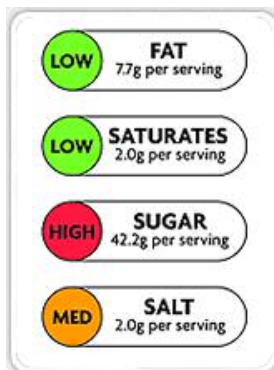
taken. Five year old Lachlan set his goal at the last meeting of making a compost bin with his date for achieving it the 28th May which is his 6th birthday."

Beth Mylius
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Members share their views

....on food

People are always quick to object when the government tries to 'interfere' in our eating habits. Recent attempts to address obesity through changing food consumption patterns have included increased regulation of school meals (Today program 25 March 2009), and 'traffic light' labelling on packaged food.



Most people would agree that obesity is a problem but they object to the so-called 'nanny state' approach, asserting that they wish to (and will!) make their *own* choices about what to eat. This is based on an underlying assumption about 'free will'.

Why is it that people do not seem to object to advertising by the huge food conglomerates and fast food outlets? Advertising shapes our desires, and has a strong influence on what we 'want' to eat.

Locally produced and organic foods have a lower carbon footprint and often have a higher nutritional content than processed and over-packaged products, but they do not have large advertising budgets.

I do not believe we can tackle obesity without confronting this issue head on. Either the government needs to use the same 'weapons' of advertising for healthy and environmentally friendly foods, or the conglomerates need to be reigned in before they destroy us!

Priscilla Magrath
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... on the work of the Population Media Center

During most of the twentieth century, world population doubled every forty years. It is currently growing at nearly a quarter of a million a day. There are various organisations addressing this, the chief amongst them being the United Nations Population Fund, also known as UNFPA. There are also various charities like IPPF and Marie Stopes International.

Possibly the most original approach is that of the Population Media Center under the direction of Bill Ryerson, based on the work of Miguel Sabido in Mexico. This is to use entertainment, in the form of soap operas, either on television or radio, to introduce ideas concerning reproductive health. It has been practiced in over three dozen coun-

tries including Brazil, India, Mexico, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania. Pains are taken to involve members of the target population to write scripts, do local research and to direct and act in these dramas: the results are therefore very much in tune with the culture concerned. The length of run is typically about two to three years, which is sufficient to allow the audience to make an emotional bond with the characters, who thus become role models. Remarkably, these projects have attracted no serious opposition in any country.

Results are impressive. One radio drama in Tanzania attracted 58% of the population in the target age group, and subsequent surveys showed that there was

a significant increase in the number of people who be-

lieved they were vulner-

able to HIV; who believed that their own acts rather than their deity or fate determined the size of their families; who believed that children in small families had better prospects, and also an increase in the number of people who approve of family planning. This compared with no difference in another part of the country where it was not broadcast. There were also important behavioural differences. Of the listeners surveyed, 82% said the programme had caused them to change their own behaviour to avoid HIV. Independent data from the Government of Tanzania AIDS programme showed a 153% increase in condom distribution in the broadcast area in the first year of the project, compared with only a slight increase elsewhere. The percentage of married women using family planning rose by 32% where the programme was heard. Ministry of Health figures showed 41% of new adopters of family planning had been influenced by the broadcast.

The dramas provide entertainment and information to help people make informed decisions without telling them what to do: this approach emphasises non-coercive and informed decision making, tailored to local needs and circumstances. They promote human health and dignity by providing education and examples of various alternatives and their consequences.

N.B. We said in the last issue that Bill Ryerson is a Quaker: this was a mistake, although he has had a lot of contact with Quakers. He was raised in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, has attended meetings and has been to work camps run by AFSC.

Roger Plenty
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From www.populationmedia.org

... on Money—what is its value?

Money has no intrinsic worth. It is a human convention, a convenient means of negotiating social interactions among human beings – *some* human beings. Remote tribes, monastic communities, babes-in-arms seem able to survive without it; and to non-human life-forms it has no meaning whatsoever.

Meanwhile the very stuff on which all life on Earth relies – the sun's energy and the historic bounty it has delivered over billions of years – intrinsic to survival – is taken for granted. Humanity has indulged in the arrogant assumption, fostered by the leading Genesisic religions that such energy is god-given and inexhaustible.

Let us suppose it isn't. Imagine it to be finite – that 'Peak Oil' will be followed by 'No Oil'; that non-human extinctions will increase apace, as burgeoning humanity continues its rapacious development.

Let us ask the 'Council of Non-Human Life-forms' for its idea of what humans should adopt as the global currency. Surely they would point towards a fair sharing of the sun's energy and the historic

bounty invested in the Earth's crust and atmosphere, i.e. its *real* bank.

Just how we translate that into a workable currency is currently beyond anyone's imagination. Until that conundrum is solved, faced with the spectre of global warming it would be prudent for humanity to rely on carbon emissions trading with an equal (annually declining) share allotted to each human being of whatever remains after our non-human fellows, forming Earth's life-support system, have met their biological needs.

Ecology scientists tell us that humanity is spending three times a years-worth of sun's energy (our annual revenue) by borrowing heavily from the Ancient Bank of Fossil Fuels. As with the credit crunch, future generations of all life-forms will be saddled with our debt to the point of bankruptcy. In future we should all complete 'Global Revenue' assessments specifying just how much energy we consumed in the year. If we are over the top then we must somehow demonstrate how we have completely mitigated our overspend by our energy-saving actions elsewhere.

Dennis Mitchell

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Looking back by Jerry Cullum

I read about you the other day
On the newsstand
When the power was up
For a bit

There were nineteen of us there
Standing in mud and god knows what
Everyone else stayed in the Homes
Being too tired to see if there was any
News

There was no news
At least nothing new
So the newsstand was displaying
Information pages

And there you were
Standing in front of your own house
With your own car
Next to your son's car
All packed up with bags
With a big fool grin on your face
About to drive to the airport
I think it was called
And fly to an island
In the sun

The newsstand explained where the
Island once was
With an old map
But none of the shapes made any sense

The idea of seeking the sun
Seems like madness to us now
As we find it hard to avoid
For half of each year
When it's not hurricane season

But I guess back then
You couldn't see it coming
Or you just didn't care
But you would if you saw
My family in the Homes

We're guarded at night
Which is good
As there's more incomers
Each day, looking for food
And shelter and weapons
With dogs and rats and AIDS

We're not allowed children
Now
There's not enough space
Or water
Or food

You look happy
And then the power went off
And I walked back to the Homes
Before dark

5 February 2008

EarthAbbey

Graham Davey has sent the following edited version of an article he wrote for his Area Meeting newsletter. Since writing it, he has heard Chris Sunderland speak and has bought his book and thinks that LWP supporters and earthQuaker readers ought to know about the project and maybe could use some of the materials being produced.



Chris Sunderland is a Bristol vicar who has served in one of the toughest tower block estates in the country and worked previously as a research biochemist. He has research level degrees in both science and theology. With others he has set up EarthAbbey as an example of a new concept in Christian community. A prospectus for the project introduces its purpose with these words:

“The big story that will focus the concerns of all human beings across the planet in this century will be our relationship with the earth and its living systems.

Human beings are now making a substantial impact on the very fabric of the earth. With the human population set to rise to around nine or ten billion by 2050 we face serious difficulties arising from the depletion of natural resources, the destruction of fauna and flora across the earth, and the pollution of the atmosphere with greenhouse gases. Scientists and others are predicting extreme social and ecological consequences.

At the heart of all these concerns is a spiritual issue that has to do with how we see ourselves and our relationship to the earth, the extent of our imagination and our willingness to change.

The Christian gospel conveys a dream of peace, which is not only about peace with God and peace among people, but is a peace which embraces the whole creation. Many Christians are recognising their responsibility to engage with these issues and contribute the insights that come from faith, but the churches are not always ready

or able to help them in this task.

EarthAbbey will set out to provide a new type of Christian community stretching across denominations and embracing all who share our values with an open and creative spirituality. Its aim will be to gather a community of people who will journey towards a life more in tune with the earth.”

The prospectus goes on to say that the principles of EarthAbbey are to promote:

1. A rich relational life between human beings
2. A compassion toward the earth and its creatures
3. A sense of connectedness of all life
4. Wisdom and justice in relationships
5. Human fulfilment and the nurture of the inner life
6. A way of living that leaves the earth better than we found it.

A number of projects are being planned to fulfil these aims:

- A website is being constructed to provide the facilities of a virtual abbey. It can be found in embryonic form at www.earthabbey.com
- An annual earth camp is planned, offering training in environmentally-friendly living and opportunities for study, artistic expression and celebration.
- ‘A Journey to a New Kind of Life’ is a course designed to draw people together and encourage life change.
- ‘Kitchen Garden’ provides facilities for sharing practical advice on foraging, growing food and preparing meals.
- ‘Earth Connect’ is a set of materials for a meditative trail designed to help people prayerfully to consider what we are doing to the earth and its creation.
- Creative Arts will be the heading for events linking arts, the environment and spirituality.
- Publications are being planned and some are available now.
- There are also plans to set up a community of EarthAbbey members in 23 eco-homes (flats and houses) on a church site in Bristol.

Further information about EarthAbbey can be obtained from the website or by reading Chris Sunderland’s book, ‘The Dream that Inspired the Bible’, ISBN 978-0-9561913-0-4, cost £8.95

Graham Davey
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News from Local Quaker Meetings

Friends at **Wellingborough meeting** share a concern that we should be living in a more sustainable manner and are looking forward to a workshop on May 17 to be led by Laurie and Jill Fisher. We are also working to make our garden/burial ground a good habitat for wildlife as well as attractive to look at. We are about to put in water butts to collect the water off the roof and have already established a compost heap. We hope to share how we get on and include some photos in a later issue of earthQuaker.

Liz Rees

Here at **Wandsworth**, we are planning to host a community Green Festival at the Meeting House on 26th September, working with local groups already concerned with environmental issues, but hoping to reach out to those who are confused, anxious, uncertain, and inactive on green issues. The aim is to have fun, build community, and also show people practical things they can do to cut down their resource use, demonstrate skills, technology etc. We hope to have it themed e.g. transport, food, energy in the home, making mending and recycling clothes.... Planning is at an early stage but there is enthusiasm from lots of small local groups who are pleased at the publicity and chance to make wider contacts. e.g. Lets, Transition town schemes, green party, cycling group, Food up Front, FoE, etc. More details in due course.

Linda Murgatroyd

Smiling on our way to the bank: the Westmill Wind Farm Cooperative

Little did I think I'd live to see the day when investing in a wind farm could be a safer home for my money than a bank or building society! However after a decade of hoping, planning and fundraising (including a second appeal for a top-up million or so from members) Britain's largest community-owned wind farm, Westmill Wind Farm Cooperative in South Oxfordshire, was able to declare its first dividend. This was 10 months after the finally-installed turbines had been turning and followed searching questions from the members at the AGM to make sure that a 2.3% dividend was indeed affordable and prudent.. There had been more wind to produce electricity to sell than budgeted for and it was clear that this company is managed carefully and prudently as well as ethically. So in the words of the Westmill Calypso which all joined in after the formal business:

*I'm glad to say, we're on our way
Westmill Windfarm is here to stay,
Hearts are leapin', turbines turnin' around,
Cos we're making clean power on this green ground.*

(Tune: Jamaica Farewell, words by Liz Rothchild)



Picture from www.westmill.coop

The five Siemens turbines produce enough electricity each for 5000 people per annum. They are almost silent when turning—at last year's AGM you could hardly hear them for lark song and this year when the AGM was earlier a tractor was ploughing the green ground brown.

Westmill is one of the seven community co-op windfarms supported by Energy4All, a Cumbria company which exists to 'deliver community-owned green power' and which provides information and management support. For further info see their website www.energy4all.co.uk. Westmill's website is www.westmill.coop.

Incidentally 2 Scottish windfarms are forecasting a 9-10% dividend this year!!

Patricia Wright

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Reflections from Space

This item was contributed by **Pamela Chadbourne** and **Peter Wilson**.



Seeing the earth for the first time I could not help but love and cherish her. (Taylor Wang , China)

I realized that mankind needs height primarily to better know our long-suffering earth, to see what cannot be seen close up, not just to love her beauty but also to ensure that we do not bring even the slightest harm to the natural world. (Phan Tuan, Vietnam)

I was already aware of how small and vulnerable our planet is, but only when I saw it from space, in all its ineffable beauty and fragility did I realize that humankind's most urgent task is to cherish and preserve it for future generations. (Sigmund Jahn, Germany)

Having seen the sun, the stars and our planet, you become more full of life, softer. You begin to look at all living things with trepidation, and to be more kind and patient with the people around you. (Boris Volynov, U.S.S.R.)

I love looking on the earth. It isn't important whose she is, just that she is. (Oleg At'kov, U.S.S.R.)

From space I saw earth – indescribably beautiful and with the scars of national boundaries gone. (Muhammed Ahmed Faria.Syria)

On the return trip home, gazing through 240,000 miles of space towards the stars and the planet from which I had come, I suddenly experienced the Universe as intelligent, loving and harmonious. My view of the planet was a glimpse of Divinity. (Edgar Mitchell, U.S.A.)

Two words leaped to mind as I looked down on all this: commonality and interdependence. We are one world. (John David Bartoe, U.S.A.)

The first day we all pointed to our own countries. The third or fourth day we were pointing to our continents. By the fifth day, we were aware of only one earth. (Prince Sultan Bin Salman al-Saud, Saudi Arabia)

I really believe that if the political leaders of the world could see their planet from a distance their outlook would be fundamentally changed. I think the view from 100.000 miles could be invaluable in getting people together to work out joint solutions, by causing them to realize that the planet we share unites us in a way far more basic and far more important than the differences in skin, colour, religion or economic system. If I could use only one word to describe the earth as seen from the moon, I would ignore both its size and colour and search for a more elemental quality, that of fragility. The earth appears fragile above all else; I don't know why, but it does. (Michael Collins, U.S.A.)

The Gaia paradigm shift, and the concept of the Growth Economy.

I hold that Gaia – the earth system comprising all the living and non-living forms within the biosphere encircling our planet – is in effect a living entity, and actively keeps our planet fit for life. We as humans are part of Gaia, just as all other living creatures are.

I don't see why people have such a problem with this view of the world. Perhaps it's both a scientific theory and a profoundly spiritual vision. Scientists dislike the spiritual overtones and people of faith are not used to building faith around scientific theory. Perhaps it's more productive to see it as neither; rather as a major paradigm shift following on from our awareness that we orbit around the sun, not the sun around us.

We as humans are having profound effects on the non-living as well as living parts of Gaia, notably the atmosphere and the oceans, which support not only all living things but – crucially – play a major role in regulating our climate. The living and non-living aspects of Gaia are in a constant state of connection due to many complex feedback loops which either accelerate or put the brakes on change. Sufficient evidence has emerged to show that we are responsible for accelerating changes that – if unchecked – will have deep and long-term damaging effects on Gaia's overall health.

The promptings of my heart and my personal spiritual journey as a Quaker tell me that humanity has reached a "make or break" point. To make it we have to think and act in an entirely new way. Firstly, we need to hold in awareness this amazing notion: that Gaia exists; secondly, that what matters most is the health and wellbeing of Gaia – and not the health and wellbeing of us as "the human race." The two are interlinked of course but until now it has been possible for humans to improve their collective health at the expense of the health of Gaia.

However, the situation cannot continue. This is a truly profound shift in thinking. Until now our sense of altruism, from which has flowed all our great ideas such as peace, justice, fairness, universal brother/sisterhood, equality, liberty and freedom (most recently expressed with rhetorical power by Barack Obama), has meant – at its highest expression – caring for the human race as a whole rather than merely for family, tribe or nation.

Now we have to think beyond even such human-centred notions to embrace not only animals and plants (which are obviously alive) but the Gaian earth-system as a whole, which includes the non-living parts of the biosphere.

How can we possibly do this? Surely it is asking far too much of us? This is where the burgeoning Transition movement is relevant, for it offers positive community-based, localised solutions based on a truly Gaian philosophy. Philosophers themselves have begun to explore a framework for this new way of thinking: Fox, for example, in his "Towards a Theory of General Ethics", uses the concept of "flexible cohesion" to map out how both individuals and whole societies can chart a Green course which is neither authoritarian nor anarchistic. The "Green New Deal" is a Gaian thinker's response to the Credit Crunch.



Gaia from www.intentblog.com/.../04/hqr_spiritualit.html

Gaian thinking is holistic and therefore beyond current notions of Science (split as it is into so many separate disciplines) and Spirituality (for so long synonymous with anthropomorphic religions). The way into it involves mindfully laying aside our natural tendency to anthropomorphise the natural world: to see it, however loosely, in human terms.

Gaia is so much greater and more powerful than we are, though we, currently, through our use of fossil fuels and technological know-how, are in a position of great power: for the moment. But our power (ironically one of the principle sources of our estrangement from Gaia) will not last as the Global Climate shifts ineluctably to a new, hotter state that will not be nearly so equable or congenial to human life.

Urgent issues press upon us, for example: how to tackle the vastly inflated ecological footprints of the people of the West, how to adequately feed a growing world population. The issues are so big, so difficult to tackle, that it is easy to either panic or despair or switch off. However, the knowledge that we are part of Gaia and that we are therefore part of the solution, can sustain us through the difficult times ahead.

We have got to come up with a cogent alternative to current notions of "Growth". So far the response to the Credit Crunch has been to attempt to kick start the World Economy, to bring it back to its former state of "Growth". It is hard to argue against this because for so long Growth has seen to be Good, leading to ever-better standards of living. Of course, many countries' economies actually

shrank whilst the others enjoyed the “boom years”. The people of such countries also suffered from the ancient curses of famine, pestilence and war and this is perhaps why “zero” or even negative growth holds such deep-seated fears for us. We fear that the same curses may fall on our heads.

The Transition movement offers an alternative path towards revitalised, resilient, localised economies based on principles of mutuality and trust. They are flexibly cohesive, culturally diverse and continue to trade and exchange but still able to “stand on their own two feet”. When taken together, their GDP (gross domestic product) would be far smaller than when the nation-state (of which they are still a part) was still part of the pre-credit crunch world. Therefore, they would be judged to have suffered from negative growth. Its people would be consuming far less – but would this make them unhappy? Not necessarily, because the gains – a sense of mutuality, of working together, cultural revival, fresh, locally produced food – could easily outweigh the lack of access to the latest gadgets.

Seen like this, Transition Initiatives are seen as radical; however, they seek to build upon any existing community spirit and in that sense are very much inclusive. They seek to “be the change” rather than campaign for it.

Resilient, local economies are part of a “systems” approach to the Global Economy: and systems thinking is essentially Gaian thinking. Fox has applied this approach to Ethics: if one applies it to the Economy one sees it as a series of “nested” systems, one fitting inside the other. Thus the current dichotomy between “local” as opposed to “global” is overcome. Resilient local economies fit within larger, bio-regional economies which themselves fit into the Global Economy. The problem at present is that local economies have not been allowed to exist, leading to the current imbalance and the continuation of the Growth Mantra.

In a “nested” system of differently scaled economies, linked by appropriate trade and exchange and in a state of dynamic balance (a state of genuine sustainability) with the Earth System’s resources, the concept of Growth is replaced by one of Balance. At present the issue of continuing world population growth is a fraught one, with any talk of needing to reduce it leading to fears that it might lead to Eugenics, or, at the very least, authoritarian practices imposed upon the individual’s right to have children.

However, as people’s thinking changes and they start to “think Gaia”, as people start to feel recon-

nected to the Earth and its bounteous but limited renewable resources, as people begin to build local economies that restore a sense of trust and confidence, I believe that local populations will naturally decline and stabilise at sustainable levels.

This is where a “Green New Deal” comes in: to kick start not a return to “Growth” but to a sustainable Earth-based Economy (which is actually a set of nested economies working in balance together). Such a Deal demands a radical change to the WTO and the World Bank, and an immediate programme of technology-transfer from Developed to Developing Nations, especially in the most promising of the renewables fields: Solar. Many of the world’s poorest countries have ample sunshine and could easily be self-sufficient in sun-generated energy with existing technology. This is the sort of project that a Green New Deal needs to invest in.

The other big investment should be in awareness-raising and education, in facilitating the paradigm shift in thinking and in acting. Western leaders are fond of talking about our western economies as aspiring to be “knowledge” economies. Well, the new, 21st Century knowledge is here: it’s Earth-Systems, Gaian knowledge, it’s about nested systems working at different levels of scale but interlinking and held in a state of balance with each other, it’s about putting into place local, resilient economies that restore a sense of trust and confidence and connection with the rest of the Earth and its people.

Such an educational investment starts with each of us and it’s free. Just have the confidence to share this new way of thinking with someone else: now! And get involved with some kind of Transition-style initiative in your local community. If there isn’t one, then start it! That’s just what we have done: it’s called Big Green Tarbert and is funded by the Scottish Government.

I look forward to the conference that is to be held at Friends’ House in London in September and hope that it leads to action amongst Friends across the UK and internationally.

Ed Tyler, Argyll Local Meeting

Ed is a director of Tarbert and Skipness Community Trust which aims to reduce the community’s locally generated carbon footprint by up to 20 per cent.

The project has just begun a two-year programme of events, workshops, courses and home/business energy audits. The above article is his own personal thoughts and not necessarily those of the Trust or the project.

Letters

Dear Friends

It's good to hear so many people talking about their part in the Copenhagen Climate Summit - and the need to persuade those attending to take action on the scale that the science demands to prevent runaway climate chaos

Along with lots of others, I only really I woke up to it after seeing Age of Stupid.

Precedents such as Britain in WW2 and Cuba when it suddenly lost its massive Soviet support are useful reminders of what can be achieved when the will is there.

I've heard arguments among knowledgeable people ranging from 'It's a stitch-up, we shouldn't legitimise it with our involvement' to 'It's the last chance we have to preserve life on earth'. More usefully I'm hearing of groups trying to create platforms for voices from the South, and initiatives, such as Transition Communities that exemplify the hopes and adventurousness of overcoming the nightmare. When Norwich unleashed as a Transition Town last October it was the 50th, there are now over 2000.

The Zero Carbon Caravan is another of the many such initiatives, ways in which civil society will push the boundaries of politics and science to bring about the necessary change. Its task is to take the demand for 'a Zero Carbon World, as fast as we can' all the way to the Summit by travelling there completely 'zero carbon'.



This is a relay journey from Climate Camp in Wales (13th - 16th August) to Copenhagen (arriving around 9th December), cycling, sailing and avoiding as far as possible, using any fossil fuels along the route, showing how we can live joyfully without fossil fuels. Zero Carbon events along the way will show and discuss how and why to go zero carbon, and might include candle-lit public meetings, bicycle powered gigs, and hospitality that promotes local initiatives and community building.

Travelling as a relay allows people to join for as long or as short a time as they wish, even if it's just for a few hours cycling on to the next town on the caravan's journey. There is also a plenty of potential for organising events, hospitality, publicity in all the areas en route, or starting more routes, so if you'd like to help make this a journey to remember please contact Chris Keene on

chris.keene@zerocarboncaravan.net

People are planning caravans starting in Scotland (contact Eva Schonveld eva@transitionsotland.org), Ireland (contact Isabelle Sutton isabellesutton@eircom.net), Wales (contact Irene Willis green.pisces@hotmail.co.uk), and Spain (contact Duncan Crowley fuspey@yahoo.co.uk). And others may come from other continents, using the absolute minimum carbon possible. Contact Erica Grigg eg@carbonoutreach.com in America or Guy Shrubsole in New Zealand guy.shrubsole@gmail.com

Website help is also needed, particularly on the climate science showing how urgent is the need for zero carbon emissions, and the way we can get there, by lifestyle change, energy efficiency and renewables.

Benefit screenings of The Age of Stupid

The Age of Stupid www.ageofstupid.net is a brilliant and very moving film about the extinction of humanity by climate change. It has been showing around the country, and from May 22nd any group will be able to organise a screening, just paying a small fee (about £50) for doing so. So get in touch by emailing chris.keene@zerocarboncaravan.net if you would like to organise a screening to raise money for the Zero Carbon Caravan.

Expenses will be kept minimal but publicity, webhosting, harbour fees, eating sleeping don't come free, so donations welcome. The simplest way is to send a cheque payable to THE ZERO CARBON CARAVAN to Chris Keene, 33 Dell Crescent, Norwich, NR5 8QB, but you could also arrange benefit events, get sponsored.

Useful websites
www.zerocarboncaravan.net/
www.ageofstupid.net/
www.transitiontowns.org/TransitionNetwork/
<http://lowcarboncommunity.org/>
www.zerocarbonbritain.com

Useful websites

www.zerocarboncaravan.net/
www.ageofstupid.net/
www.transitiontowns.org/TransitionNetwork/
<http://lowcarboncommunity.org/>
www.zerocarbonbritain.com
Public Interest Research Centre www.pirc.info
www.greennewdealgroup.org (the real one started by ex-Greenpeace campaigner Colin Hines, not the greenwash supported by Gordon Brown).
www.culturechange.org/sail_transport_network.html

Lesley Grahame
Norwich

Dear Anne,
I think this website deserves a mention in eQ.
<http://www.breathingearth.net/>

Roger Plenty
roger@rodborough.net

Dear Friends,
Friends' House responded enthusiastically to Quaker Concern for Animals' suggestion that they might be eligible for a Good Egg Award from Compassion in World Farming and will receive/received the award on May 14 09 at Westminster.



This award, which several large companies, local councils and public bodies have won, recognises that Friends' House, in all their catering facilities, are committed to using only cage-free eggs; that is, barn and free-range for all whole eggs and products with egg ingredients. Find out more about the awards at www.thegoodeggawards.com

Friends' House café also has accreditation from The Vegetarian Society and, thanks to the interest and hard work of Paul Grey, Head of Hospitality, and Adam Pannell of Hospitality, Services and Facilities, seeks to source ethically and locally as much as possible.

Perhaps your Meetings are cage-free too? If you would like to pledge to become a Good Egg Meeting, please let QCA know via our web site www.quaker-animals.org.uk or to mhussenbux@btinternet.com

Marian Hussenbux
mhussenbux@btinternet.com

Dear Anne,
Thanks for the latest eQ. Laurie Michaelis concentrates on climate change in his article on the possible expansion of Heathrow Airport, however, there is, I think, another factor which seems to be largely ignored. Will there be sufficient fuel available to keep the new runway viable? There is vague talk about new planes being more fuel-efficient and more definite talk about peak oil. How much thought has anyone given to the long-term growth of oil-fuelled transport? When will fuel shortages lead to a reduction in such transport? To what extent have our planners and government considered possible fuel poverty in the future?

In the long-term scarceness of oil could help reduce climate change, in the short-term we must start thinking about how we can reduce our oil consumption.

Roy Vickery
vickery330@btinternet.com

Extracts from letter and newsletter re the PEOPLE Project in the Philippines which Quaker Green Ac-

tion supported in the past. Copies of the newsletter from PEOPLE and the letter from Ricardo Peteros are available on request from the editor of earth-Quaker. Ed Stanton is a LWP member:

The enclosed will probably be my last newsletter about the environmental work carried out by the PEOPLE Organisation in Leyte, the Philippines. Sadly I find it necessary to retire from my position as the International Liaison Officer (for health reasons). If there is someone interested in the position I suggest they contact me and I will refer them on to PEOPLE.

I am also enclosing a copy of a letter from Ricardo Peteros on behalf of PEOPLE in which he expresses the gratitude and appreciation of what has been made possible for the partnership by our support here in the UK.

I have read the articles by Roger Plenty in the earthQuaker about the problems of overpopulation on our planet and I fully agree with the sentiments he has expressed. You may be interested to know that some of my friends in Leyte have been taking responsible action to hold seminars in family planning.

I expect to make just one more collection on behalf of PEOPLE and if you would like to give to this very deserving cause please send cheques to me (payable to E Stanton) and I will transmit the total collected to the PEOPLE account in Leyte.

Ed Stanton
Smithy Cottage, Witherslack, Grange-over-sands,
Cumbria LA11 6RW
☎ 015395 52216

Dear Friends,
I'm trying to live without Coca-Cola, Nestle, KFC, Tesco, Esso, RBS/NatWest, E.ON and Topshop. Why? Look at <http://www.corporation-free.org> to find out.

Corporation-free.org is a new website with facts, videos, links, a community and a blog. Please have a look and join me by signing the pledge. Thanks!

Barney Smith
barneysmith47@googlemail.com

Dear Anne,
Having worked in the co-operative movement since 1956, I was pleased to see the articles in the Fiend (2 Jan '09) extolling the virtues and benefits of this mode of operating for all concerned, and the stark contrast it provides to the inevitable outcome now being experienced, of the uncontrolled materialism of the past 25 years of

the 'Free Market'. Last summer, in the light of the twin unfolding crises of the economy and climate change, I was prompted to pen the following:

Co-operation or Competition?

If only humans would co-operate,
Most of the world's ills would evaporate.
Instead, it seems, we just have to compete;
Our aims to end injustice we defeat.

Our interconnectedness we ignore,
Leading to poverty, hunger and war,
Affecting the most, all those who have least -
Our willingness to share must be increased.

As Mahatma Gandhi famously said -
And he who for sixty years has been dead -
"There's enough on earth to meet man's need,

But clearly not enough to meet man's greed.

To help in providing much needed relief,
Our conduct should flow from our belief
That one worldwide family we really are,
And co-operate with people both near and far.

We know climate change will affect us all,
So for co-operation this does call;
Together as one, we can deal with this threat
And perhaps avert disaster even yet.

Accepting that each has that spark Divine,
That 'something of God' in your heart and mine,
Alternatives we can't contemplate,
Urgent is the need to co-operate!

Alan Spinks (Bournemouth Local Meeting)
aljamspin@yahoo.co.uk

Is the European Honey Bee the canary in the coalmine?

The statistics are quite worrying—according to Apimondia, an international beekeeping body, about 30 percent of Europe's 13.6 million hives died in 2008. Losses varied over the continent reaching 80 percent in southwest Germany. (Planet Ark April 28th).

Here is a quote from an article in The Guardian, of Saturday 31 May 2008:

... honeybees are vital for the pollination of around 90 crops worldwide. ... most fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds are dependent on honeybees. Crops that are used as cattle and pig feed also rely on honeybee pollination, as does the cotton plant. So if all the honeybees disappeared, we would have to switch our diet to cereals and grain, and give our wardrobes a drastic makeover.

According to Albert Einstein, our very existence is inextricably linked to bees - he is reputed to have said: "If the bee disappears off the surface of the globe, then man would only have four years of life left."

Bees are a barometer of what man is doing to the environment, say beekeepers; the canary in the coalmine. ... the silent, empty hives are a harbinger of a looming ecological crisis

The BBC 4 programme broadcast in April *Who killed the honey bee?* described the spread of the problem in the UK.

The consensus seems to be that two main factors are responsible for weakening bee colonies: insecticides and the parasitic mite Varroa . Once

weakened, the hives are then decimated by viruses and other diseases.

Powerful new pesticides are now used on crops like sunflower, maize and rapeseed and evidence for their impact on bees comes from the fact that French honey output has suffered in intensive sunflower farming areas but has remained steady in mountains and chestnut forests. Earlier this year, the European Union voted to phase out the most toxic pesticides after years of wrangling so that is at least a start but many bee-keepers feel that the honey industry's concerns are drowned out by the interests of the giant corporations that produce the pesticides.

So what can we do? We can encourage organic agriculture by buying organic produce as much as possible.

We can help by encouraging the wild bees (bumble bees and red mason bees for example) who also pollinate our fruit and nut crops. You can buy special homes for them to put in your garden as shortage of nesting sites is a growing problem for them in our neat and tidy gardens—well that perhaps doesn't apply to mine but I've put up red mason bee nests anyway and they have been well used!



Red Mason bee from www.glaucus.org.uk



Red Mason bee nest from ecx.images-amazon.com/images

What mileage allowance should we pay Friends using cars on Quaker business?

The trustees of my Area Meeting (Bristol) have recently debated the level of the mileage allowance to be paid when a Friend chooses or is forced to use their car to travel to an event on behalf of the Meeting. Here I found myself in a minority of one arguing that the rate should be 20p per mile. Others were happy that the Meeting should pay 40p. Everyone accepted that it was preferable for Friends to use public transport if possible.

I put the case for the lower figure in a letter that was published in 'The Friend' on 9th January saying that fuel for a modern small or medium car cost less than 10p per mile and that to pay more represented a subsidy for car use which was a denial of our testimony to simplicity and our claim



to care for the future of the planet.

Two letters in reply were rather ambiguous, John Smith of Bury St Edmunds saying that his Local Meeting paid 25p and that he thought 25 to 30p was a reasonable level of remuneration. John Bell of Meeting of Friends in Wales said that their rate was 40p but the only argument he could offer for this was that if the rate was lower, Friends wouldn't bother to claim.

I was disappointed that no supporters of the Living Witness Project wrote to support my case for the level to be 20p per mile. I'd be interested to know whether the issue has been debated in other Area Meetings and what mileage rate is paid. I'd be pleased to collect the results and publish them in a future issue of earthQuaker.

Graham Davey

graham.davey@blueyonder.co.uk
0117 909 3491

Deadline for the next issue of earthQuaker - 15th August 2009.

Please post or email contributions to the editor, Anne Brewer, at
6 Phoenix Cottages, Chapel Lane, Bookham, Surrey KT23 4QG
or (01372 456 421/ 0845 456 0334 or email: anne.brewer@phonecoop.coop

All contributions welcome—articles, reports, poems, ideas, letters!

Include your postal address and telephone number or email address. We will publish contributors' contact details unless specifically asked not to, so that members with a shared interest can get in touch directly.

We reserve the right to edit but will always try to check substantial edits with the author.

Membership

I wish to join the Living Witness Project as an individual member.

Name:

Address:

Email/phone:

Delete as appropriate—I prefer earthQuaker:

by post (b&w)

by email as a pdf (colour)

I am happy to access it from www.livingwitness.org.uk (colour)

I enclose £

Gift Aid declaration (please tick box if appropriate):

I would like you to reclaim tax on my donations (you must pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax equal to the tax we reclaim on your donations).

Date:

Suggested donation £5.00
(£3.00 for age 18-25);
Free to under 18's.

Please make cheque payable to "Living Witness Project"

and send to:
Living Witness Project
Friends Meeting House
43 St Giles,
Oxford OX1 3LW

Quaker green events in 2009

22-25 May Link Group Gathering on Community. Bilberry Hill Centre, Rednal, Birmingham with **LWP AGM on Sat 23rd at 2 pm.**

26-28 June *Good Lives* course at Woodbrooke led by Lizz Roe and Pam Lunn. Details www.woodbrooke.org.uk/courses.

26-28 June Glenthorne, Grasmere. Living in the End Times? Sustainability and the Quaker Testimonies. Led by Laurie Michaelis. Details www.glenthorne.org/events.

25 Jul-1 Aug YM Gathering, York University. Options include *Being the Change as Communities* (LWP) and *Sustainable Energy Security* (QCEA). Also LWP special interest group and stall. Some LWP members are sharing self-catered accommodation—details from Laurie.

17-21 Aug (NEW dates) LWP Summer School at Swarthmoor (see page 15)

26 Sept Conference in Friends House *A Zero Growth Economy? What would it mean for us all?* Organised by QPSW/Woodbrooke. Cost £20.

2-4 Oct LWP Resource People's Gathering, Earlswood, Solihull

6-8 Nov LWP Link Group at Bilberry Hill Centre, Rednal, Birmingham.

Living Witness Project (LWP) is a Quaker charity supporting Friends' witness to sustainable living and taking it to the wider community in Britain and elsewhere.

LWP has worked since 2002 with a growing network of Quaker meetings, connected through regular link group gatherings, newsletters and shared resources.

At the beginning of 2008 LWP merged with Quaker Green Action, which since 1986 has been the main forum for Friends sharing a Concern for sustainability.

We welcome both individual Friends and meetings as members of our network and participants in our gatherings. Please get in touch with the LWP co-ordinator if you would like a workshop or speaker session in your meeting.

The co-ordinator is Laurie Michaelis. The office address is Living Witness Project, Friends Meeting House, 43 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LW. Laurie can also be contacted on ☎ 01865 725 244 or email: laurie@livingwitness.org.uk

Website is www.livingwitness.org.uk, where publications including earthQuaker (colour version!) can be downloaded.

If undelivered please return to:

Living Witness Project
Friends Meeting House
43 St Giles,
Oxford OX1 3LW

