

FWCC EMES Peace and Service Consultation

Kortenberg, Belgium, 10-12 October 2008

Present:

Alice Andrews	American Friends Service Committee
Philip Austin	Northern Friends Peace Board
Kathy Bergen	Friends International Centre Ramallah
Pier Cesare Bori	Bologna Worship Group
Karima Brooke	Quaker Peace and Social Witness
Adam Drury	Quaker United Nations Office, Geneva
Peter Dyson	Friends House Moscow
Tofte Frykman	Quaker Service Sweden
Geraldine Grubb	Irish Quaker Faith in Action
Edward Haasl	Belgium and Luxembourg MM
Penny Heymans	Quaker Service Norway
Bernt-Erik Heid	Quaker Service Norway
Marisa Johnson	FWCC-EMES
Jeanne Henriette	
Louis	France Yearly Meeting
Fabien Nji Lang	Bologna Worship Group
Jasmine Piercy	Quaker Voluntary Action
Liz Scurfield	Quaker Council for European Affairs
Marlies Tjallingi	Peace Committee and AVP, Netherlands
Sytse Tjallingi	Quaker Hulpfonds, Netherlands
Martina Weitsch	Quaker Council for European Affairs

QPSC2008/1 Introductions

We have gathered at Oude Abdij Kortenberg, Belgium, in grand surroundings and autumn sunlight. We have been encouraged to reflect on the saying: "The means are the ends in the making". Friends have introduced themselves and we have been delighted to be amongst Friends from such diverse parts the Europe and Middle East Section, and beyond.

QPSC2008/2 News and concerns from our work

Friends have talked about some aspects of their work. We have heard of excitement, of dilemmas, of successes and of frustrations. The efforts on their own can feel small, but together are a powerful expression of Friends' commitment to working for a transformed world. There are opportunities for us at this crucial time, to promote new paradigms. We look forward to exploring these themes further, through discussion and conversation, during the rest of the weekend.

QPSC2008/3 Some current challenges in peace work

Kathy Bergen has described the devastating consequences of the dividing wall that is still being built in Palestine, creating more than 525 checkpoints and severely affecting communities, families, business and numerous other aspects what we would expect to be normal life for Palestinians. Mistrust is an inevitable result of this and other policies and practices. Kathy has also described the issue of 'right to entry', which has been blocked for many members of Palestinian families living outside the territory but wishing to re-enter. This also affects international people wanting to re-

enter. This has even been described as 'silent deportation'. There is a determination amongst many people to challenge these obstructions; this can be costly in many ways. The work at the Friends International Centre is affected by these and other policies, but it continues, seeking to build better understanding and to promote nonviolent responses to the conflict.

Peter Dyson has referred to changes in Russia, where the government is becoming tougher on non-profit organisations. There are strict and demanding requirements for registered organisations which can leave them feeling vulnerable. In the light of this, FHM have done what they can to assess and reduce risk and have had to consider the possible consequences of being closed down. There are also restrictions for visitors, with new visa regulations. This means that many foreigners are now leaving the country. Dissent is being constrained through ever-tighter media controls.

We uphold these Friends who are working in very challenging situations, seeking to live faithful lives and to find opportunities for positive change.

QPSC2008/4 EU funding for Peace and Service work

Richard Condon, of Belgium and Luxembourg Monthly Meeting and Clerk of QCEA, has told us of the research he has undertaken into the possibilities of EU funding being sought for Quaker peace and service work. There is some convergence between the areas of the activity for which the EU has budget lines and Quaker concerns. Whilst some Friends have been uneasy about seeking funding from official bodies, others – most notably, Norwegian and Swedish Friends – have had positive experiences of doing so. EU funding does impose very demanding reporting and application requirements, which can be very burdensome. There is experience of dealing with such reporting requirements which we can draw on. There is also normally a requirement that significant levels of match funding are obtained in applying for EU funds. Richard has identified some possible ways in which European Quaker peace and service work might be supported by such funding, and these will be explored further in the second half of this session. We thank Richard for the work he has done and for his contribution to our meeting today.

QPSC2008/5 Service discussion

We grappled with the question of whether we need to move from a loose network getting together once a year for consultation to a more coherent structure along a 'Europe and Middle East Friends Service Committee.' which would develop the capacity and authority to provide co-ordination and management necessary to handle any funding coming from the EU and other funds, and take care of projects such as the Am'ari Play Centre, currently under review. It is important that the motivation for such a significant move is not attracting such funding per se, so that the focus remains on our Quaker commitment to integrity and truth. We do not envisage creating another structure to be serviced, but a stronger network with the capacity to discern where to direct resources and to allow clusters to form around particular projects and concerns.

QPSC2008/6 Peace discussion

We have considered the urgent need for a new way of thinking that should underpin security and policy practice. Security is about interdependence and justice. We want to see this message used to empower local and regional action and to persuade our political decision makers. The European Parliamentary elections in June 2009 present a specific opportunity. Peace tax campaigning is another. We may have a role to play in helping make some of the connections between economics, energy and climate change issues and the military /control paradigm that currently pervades so much of the political thinking in the countries in which we live.

QPSC2008/7 Environmental Concerns

Friends have described the different ways in which Friends in their YMs have acted on environmental concerns. These have included:

- Consideration at Netherlands YM, with children and young people challenging the adult Friends to account for their actions.
- The lecture presented at Norway Yearly Meeting, emphasising the importance of being in unity with nature.
- Consideration at France YM on the theme of *Towards a Deep Ecology*.
- The appointment of a new policy officer at QCEA, who will be seeking to build and maintain contacts with Friends throughout Europe.
- The forthcoming QCEA conference on the theme of 'Not privation, but appropriate living'
- Quaker Voluntary Action's working retreats on the theme of the Testimony to Simplicity.
- Work by QPSW on Human Security and the Environment.
- Tentative steps towards composting and environmental work in the garden at the Meeting House in Ramallah.
- NFPB Peace Learning Days on sustainable security and Woodbrooke Courses on Visioning a World Without Oil.

We have heard of dilemmas, in particular considering the cost of taking actions to reduce our individual carbon footprints, whilst continuing to play an active role as global citizens. We can find joy in acting on these concerns.

QPSC2008/8 Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development

Adam Drury of QUNO has introduced this issue. The declaration is both a political statement and an ongoing process, looking at the ways in which development and conflict prevention are linked. Many people are killed as a result of violence, but not all of these are in wars. The Declaration takes a holistic approach, recognising the two-way interconnection between the themes of the declaration and building on earlier work on small arms. The three pillars of the process are advocacy, measurability and practical programmes. QUNO plays a key role in providing a link with non-governmental organisations, ensuring adequate representation and to support civil society organisations in promoting awareness and action.

Adam suggests that this should be of particular interest to Friends in that:

- it focuses on the effects of armed violence,
- it looks at prevention of armed violence through appropriate development
- the twin approach recognises that people are not inherently bad and have the possibility of change
- it seeks to change the underlying conditions rather than wars on a piecemeal basis.

QUNO is keen to know of organisations involved in relevant work, particularly in those regions where the regional meetings are taking place. We also have a role in entering into dialogue with our governments, whether or not they have signed the declaration.

QPSC2008/9 Georgia

Marlies has talked by phone with Mikheil Elizbarashvili, Clerk of Tbilisi Recognised Worship Group, and has reported on her conversation. There is a growing problem with refugees, for whom Friends from the Tbilisi worship group are seeking to provide material help. They will be

providing support in particular for children and for older people. There are many practical and emotional difficulties and the conflict will continue to have severe ramifications for regional security for many years ahead. We have been reminded of the wider geopolitical context of this conflict, with large-power strategic interests being at its heart.

We have greatly valued the opportunity for us to hear from our Friends in Georgia at this difficult time for them. We will continue to hold them in our thoughts and to be alert to ways of providing further support to Friends in their efforts help people affected by the conflict.

QPSC2008/10 Responsibility to Protect

Martina Weitsch has introduced this issue, giving us the background to its development, culminating in the UN's adoption of the Responsibility to Protect as a doctrine. This says that states have the responsibility to protect their own citizens and that the international community has a responsibility to intervene if states fail in this.

It is implied in the doctrine that intra-state conflict might also be included, if it affects international security, and that military action has to be sanctioned by the UN Security Council . The responsibilities are to prevent, react and rebuild, with action to intervene militarily being based on a number of criteria. These are largely the same as the just war justification used by many Christians. Unarmed intervention is not included in the doctrine.

The responsibility to protect poses particular challenges for Friends in that it assumes that intervention is dependent on having a military capable of intervening, with all the infrastructure that this implies. Should we endorse this, or take a stance in opposition to it?

We need to advocate alternatives to military intervention, holding onto what we have learned of the consequences of military intervention; the needs are the ends in the making. We must continue to express this and to support work to prevent and to rebuild, before and after armed conflict.

QPSC2008/11 News and concerns from our work 2

We have heard from more Friends about their concerns and work. We have been challenged to think about the distinctive nature of our work, how it is managed, how it can develop and how we can open up opportunities for more people to become involved.

Are we tempted to work just with those with whom we are most comfortable? How do we use learning and experiences from the past to find new and relevant ways of acting in the future? We must...

- nurture the Quaker roots of our work and witness,
- look for opportunities for making connections across boundaries
- and balance the need to address current concerns with a much longer term perspective.

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As a final part of our time hearing from Friends about their activities, we have heard about work to support people in addressing the causes and consequences of violence on a personal level. The issues around funding and paying for these type of activities is a constant dilemma, as the trainers seek to take the opportunities for involvement to new audiences. The cost of peace work should be recognised and we should not assume that people can undertake it without being adequately paid. Funding can liberate people to undertake work that they would not otherwise be able to do, however strong the personal motivation that has led them to decide to do the work.

QPSC2008/13 Ongoing communications

It has been suggested that we should set up a Yahoo or Google group for the consultation, enabling more frequent communications and sharing of information, resources and ideas for action. We are generally in support of this and Friends will share practical experiences of using these media with Marisa.

We would like to be able to share the minutes of this meeting with other Friends in our Meetings and ask that we can each see the minutes before this is done, in order to ensure there is nothing in them that would better be kept confidential.

QPSC2008/14 Collaboration between service committees between these consultations

Our earlier discussions indicated we feel that there may be some significant value in working together in other ways, to share expertise, to support one another and also in order to help obtain funding from, for example, the EU. It is unclear how this might best happen. Continual sharing of information and ideas between consultation meetings will be the foundation for whatever might come next.

A particular issue is that of the Am'ari play centre, which is a project under the care of the section in a rather loose way. We cannot take on responsibility for this work as a consultation, but individual service agencies may take a lead on continuing to manage this and seek support from other agencies. Friends will follow this up after this consultation in response to the outcome of the review.

QPSC2008/15 Evaluation and next year's consultation

We have spent a short time evaluating the practical arrangements and content of this consultation. We agree that we would like to meet at Kortenberg again next year, preferably in the first half of November. Marlies Tjallingii and Philip Austin have been asked to serve again as Clerk and Assistant Clerk respectively.