

WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?

Quaker Peace Witness in the Post Cold War World

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One morning in meeting for worship here at Pendle Hill the question was asked: "What are we waiting for?"

Tom Jenik, the person who spoke, then described how, when President Carter announced the re-institution of Selective Service registration in 1979, Tom grabbed a piece of oaktag, lettered an anti-draft message on it, and spent his lunch hour on the main street of his New England village parading with his sign. Someone asked him, "What group are you with? What can I do? How can I join?" There started a practice of weekly peace vigils which continued until just a year or two ago. After relating this message, Tom asked the question with which he began: "What are we waiting for?"

Love obliges us to go down to Main Street; it obliges us to stay in the world. Doing so does not keep us apart from God, but rather makes us accessible to God. The notion that we can be related to God and not to the world, its history and politics is foreign to Quaker faith and practice.

But love sometimes obliges us to wait. "What do we wait for?" We wait for God's call. For we are both radical and hesitant. Love involves a hopeful modesty. It entails attentiveness to the present situation. It involves a willingness to wait for God's indication of what, in existing circumstances, must unfailingly be done. It means a willingness to do things on God's schedule, rather than on our own.

God does speak to us, and moreover, God speaks to all of us together. When we respond, we do so collaboratively as well as individually. "How can I join?" is a natural and inevitable question. We must live responsively, responsive to God's call and responsive to other human beings in history. And so good people work together for many years on Main Street. In fact, we know that no single human being is rightfully indifferent to the destiny of any other single human being anywhere in the world. No one is an island.

Seeking to be responsive to God's voice, our ultimate concern is with things which do not vanish with the passage of time. We practice a politics of eternity. Yet a consistent lesson of Scripture is that God speaks to us through the trials and tribulations of history. As T.S. Eliot wrote in his play *Murder in the Cathedral*: "Even now, in sordid particulars, the eternal design may appear." I propose to take a look some of the particulars of our current history, many of which are admittedly sordid, in the hope of servicing Friends and other people of faith as we seek to discern God's call regarding a witness for peace in the years ahead.

Throughout the Cold War, from 1945 until 1985, peace work was a significant part of the life of monthly meetings and of individual Friends. This was true during the Vietnam war, when Friends had much positive reinforcement from many outside our ranks; it was true as well during the earlier years when there was a great public support for the United States government's military policies, and Quakers felt themselves to be voices crying in the wilderness.

In the last decade interest in the Peace Testimony among Friends has been in eclipse. My purpose is to contemplate this situation and to consider whether this state of affairs is appropriate. If it is not, I want to examine the reasons for this eclipse and to discuss ways of overcoming it.

Of course, the world of 1995 is radically different from that of the mid-1940's

through the mid-1980's, so perhaps a radical change in Friends' priorities is a fair response to a changed situation. If the collapse of the Soviet Union and the ending of the Cold War brought the world community to a state of peace, a reduction of attention to the Peace Testimony would seem to make some sense. But peace is not "at hand." Events over the past ten years have presented troubling challenges to Friends who take their Peace Testimony seriously. Indeed, I have frequently sensed considerable anguish among Friends as we felt ourselves helpless and voiceless in the face of some recent outbreaks terrifyingly brutal warfare.

While such things may defy exact measurement, it seems fair to assume that there are more people suffering and dying as a result of mass organized violence today than was the case during the Cold War era. During that time it seemed to be in the best interest of the super-powers not to be fighting on too many fronts at once, so there were some limits to the amount of armed conflict which took place. Now, in the absence of this "old world order," wars seem to be breaking out in many more places than before. Thus, it appears scarcely possible to argue that a decline in our attention to the Peace Testimony is an appropriate reaction to improved conditions.

Yet there is one new aspect of the situation which may, in part, excuse this Quakerly dropping-out. With all their horror, current wars do not seem to involve the increased threat of nuclear omnicide -- the risk of killing off everybody and every thing. It no longer seems likely that civilization will be wiped out in a single, reckless hour or so we dare to hope.

It would also seem somewhat natural, after a long period of preoccupation with international issues and problems, that people should turn inward and concentrate on the issues and problems in their own back yards. But there is a danger here. For almost all our history the attention of American citizens to foreign affairs has usually only been galvanized when has threatened our own well-being. This reactive, "after it is too late" pattern is a distinctive weakness in our practice of democracy, and

Friends may be as vulnerable to it as their fellow citizens.

During the long years of the Cold War, most international conflicts however local their initial causes, were quickly absorbed in the grand contention between the two super-powers. The United States became a participant in these battles through various forms of covert and overt interventions. Since these actions were being done in the name of America, Friends were provided with a direct connection to the conflict through their government. Although we were a tiny minority, Friends did have access, sometimes greater and sometimes less, to the government through their senators and representatives and various governmental agencies.

Furthermore, we engaged our fellow citizens in dialogue about public issues by various educational efforts and protests. We also found opportunities to help alleviate the suffering caused by war, because Americans were involved in so many conflicts. This very involvement provided a certain kind of entre, even for people opposed to the involvement. In short, during the Cold War period there were many things which pacifists could *do*, even if the odds were overwhelming and the efforts often had a "drop-in-the-bucket" feeling about them. The situation provided both an opportunity to act and a clear moral responsibility to do so.

In the post Cold War period things are radically different. The problems in Chechnya, Somalia, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Tibet, and even Bosnia seem very remote from any American sphere of influence. Although a few die-hard ideologues argue that any world tragedy is our responsibility because it is a legacy of colonialism, that argument is wearing more and more thin. And so another reason for the relative silence and inactivity among American Friends today stems from the fact that we seem to have little role to play other than that of helpless and hand-wringing bystanders.

A final difference has to do with a shared perspective about the global situation

among many Friends during the Cold War era. This perspective was set forth in the pamphlet *Speak Truth to Power* published in 1955. The pamphlet was issued by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) after the configuration of the world into the Cold War system took shape and its implications for Friends' values could be discerned. This seminal pamphlet, the work of a small committee established by the AFSC, provided many Friends with a way of analyzing the Cold War world and of understanding their own role in it. It defined an alternative vision for American policy. It related practical policy issues to deeper questions of values, values both religious and democratic. It was alluded to again and again by Friends throughout the period as "our" way of looking at the situation.

Moreover, the pamphlet's argument was powerful enough to attract the attention of mainstream opinion leaders, who sometimes paid it faint praise as useful "food for thought," and sometimes condemned it as subversive of the unity and purposefulness needed by America for the conflict with communism. But what is important is that the pamphlet, besides providing a framework for Friends, tried to argue from premises accepted by the larger society in a way that others found difficult simply to ignore or dismiss. While it provided a focus for self-understanding to Friends, it also made a powerful appeal to people of goodwill everywhere. It was not angry, vituperative or insulting, but lofty in its diction and forthrightly challenging in its arguments.

Now of course, as with everything involving Friends, it must quickly be acknowledged that the text was not without its Quaker critics. In fact, *Speak Truth to Power* made no pretence of speaking for the entire Religious Society of Friends, and was not even an official policy statement of the American Friends Service Committee. The AFSC released *Speak Truth to Power* not as an official statement, but only, in the interest of stimulating public discussion." But nevertheless, a broad array of Friends and friends of Friends felt themselves drawn together around a shared perspective about the Cold War world and its implications for their spiritual

testimonies. Such a drawing together around a shared perspective about the state of affairs is conspicuously lacking today.

Quakerism as understood and practiced by most Friends is a "congregationalist" religion. That is, authority is vested in local groups rather than in a centralized structure. This polity has advantages and disadvantages. One main advantage is that the authority lies with people who are the peers of members, keeping decisions about faith and practice close to life as it is actually lived. A major disadvantage of the congregationalist model is that when it comes to large issues of social policy and foreign affairs, understanding, analysis and vision are presumably invented and reinvented again and again by hundreds of local groups, none of which could ordinarily be expected to have the time, energy, resources, or expertise really to grapple with such problems thoroughly.

It is not clear whether Friends would be served by some sort of assisting agency when addressing today's social and international issues, which are certainly as complex as those of the Cold War period. One of the assumptions of Pendle Hill's Issues Program is that Friends will benefit from some non-authoritative threshing of issues which could draw together Friends' perspectives, and enable a pooling of insight, experiences, knowledge and resources. It is also an assumption of the Issues Program that organizing a small committee to serve as a kind of "think-tank" and issue a statement like *Speak Truth to Power* is no longer apt. Rather, we must function in a way which encourages diversity of participation and more drawing in of the experience of monthly meetings and of Friends from the different branches and strands of Quakerism.

But certainly some collaborative effort larger than an individual monthly-meeting by monthly-meeting approach to complex global issues is desirable, and Pendle Hill, a center for study and contemplation intended as a resource to Friends, is one logical place where such an effort should find support. Pendle Hill is by no

means the only place which could make a useful contribution to the gathering of Quaker perspectives about global issues: the Friends World Committee for Consultation, Friends United Meeting, the Friends Committee for National Legislation, Friends General Conference, Woodbrooke, the Earlham School of Religion, various yearly meetings, and the American Friends Service Committee all spring to mind as valuable resources, to say nothing of various Quaker educational institutions, particularly those which have devoted significant attention to the establishment of centers for peace or Quaker studies.

There is another significant dimension of the *Speak Truth to Power* experience which deserves some reflection. I believe it was largely a reaction to a situation which had already crystallized. While it honestly sought to promote the idea of "undoing" a series of policies and situations it saw as disastrous, the essay also seemed to assume the voice of an already defeated minority. And so the question arises as to whether or not *Speak Truth to Power* was issued too late. And if so, why did this happen?

I was rather young at the time and I may not have everything about the early Cold War clearly in focus. But it seems to me there was an innate rivalry between the Western and Soviet systems which was probably plastered over only superficially by the common need to defeat Germany and Japan in World War II. With the Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe, Winston Churchill's Iron Curtain speech in Missouri, the unveiling of George Kennan's policy of containment, and the creation of NATO, the configuration of the post-World War world seems to have been established rather quickly. Friends probably simply did not have the opportunity to mobilize themselves to affect events during the brief period of post war fluidity.

Today conditions seem quite different. The international situation seems unsettled in many respects, and policy makers seem to be earnestly searching for ways to understand the situation and to develop credible approaches to it. In similar

times of openness and uncertainty in past centuries, Friends have had disproportionate, occasionally profound influence on the course of events. Prevailing Friends' attitudes in the colonial period did much to shape the character of early American culture and political arrangements, just as Friends' attitudes toward social issues like the equality of women and the abolition of slavery shaped much of Nineteenth and Twentieth Century American attitudes, politics and culture. It is my conviction that there are issues in the present situation which make a claim on Friends' spiritual perspectives. We should therefore be working in the most conscientious way we know how to pray and to reflect on the issues, and out of such seeking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to offer a bold and faithful peace witness. Such a witness might influence the course of events for the better before a new world order becomes crystallized and rigid.

Well, if a group of concerned Friends were to begin to draw other Friends into a dialogic study and threshing process to consider the post-Cold War world and the challenges it offers to our Peace Testimony, where exactly might they begin? How would we do a preliminary assessment of the current state of the human family? How do we begin to discuss what a post-Cold War Peace Witness by Friends might look like?

Mainstream opinion leaders offer a considerable diversity of views about the world which is emerging and its problems. I doubt that Friends would have a much easier time finding an authoritative definition of contemporary trends. For example, some mainstream thinkers believe that we are on the verge of a great clash of civilizations, and that the politically bi-polar world of the mid-forties through the mid-eighties is being replaced by three or four polarities representing a grand march of civilizations which are now coming into abrasive rivalry. Frequently mentioned among such rivals are a reawakened and fundamentalist Islam, Confucian civilization, North Atlantic liberal democratic capitalism, and a Slavic nationalism allied with Orthodox Christianity.

Other thinkers see us heading toward a highly fragmented even chaotic world in which ethnic and political conflict will be carried on in multifarious ways depending mainly on local conditions and ancient clan rivalries. Still others see us as having come to "the end of history," with capitalism having emerged triumphant. According to this last school of thought, the current stresses and strains in the international environment, bloody as they are, should be understood merely as adjustment pains which are occurring as the synthesizing force of global capitalism moves forward on its grand unifying dynamic. And there are yet other credible global interpretive models.

Well, then, to return to the original question: can we describe what a developed Friends Peace Testimony in this confusing and poorly understood post Cold War world would look like?

The purpose of the present gathering is deliberately not to come up with a definitive view, but rather to start a dialogic process among Friends, particularly Friends in local meetings, so that the Holy Spirit can be given a chance to move among us. But, what I do hope is that it will be reasonable and useful for me to sketch out five general and interrelated matters which I think a developed Peace Testimony by Friends ought to address. Some of these matters have inherent in them quandaries which I believe Friends need to face rather than to avoid, and I will try to identify these quandaries as well.

Another person or group might come up with three or seven main areas of work, and see different quandaries and other directions in which to look for solutions. I am offering the following analysis to stimulate thought and evoke additional, and even countervailing, perspectives which might enrich a broad process of dialogue.

A. DIRECT ACTION.

The first of five aspects of a developed Friends Peace Testimony, it seems to me, would be the involvement of Friends in *direct action* of one kind or another where conflict and violence loom, or where they have actually broken out. A range of such responses are already visible and making an impact which is both inspiring and useful. Not all these efforts are Quaker, but most have Friends involved in them. I am thinking of things like Peace Brigades International, like the Peace Teams efforts, the Alternatives to Violence Projects, Women's Aid for Peace, and the efforts of various individual Friends to teach democratic practice, mediation, and nonviolent conflict resolution in places where there seems to be both a need and a hunger for this knowledge.

One hesitates to summarize or characterize this array of creative, experimental, and often heroic activities which I am loosely terming *direct action* projects. But it seems to me that they are important elements in a developed Peace Witness for Friends. They contribute to our knowledge of strategies and techniques which work in conflict situations. They contribute to our understanding of the conditions people face in areas where violence has broken out or which are threatened with violence. They offer an image of conviction about a way of life which takes away the occasion of war and which holds out the hope that there exist creative ways which human beings can find to resolve differences and live together in peace. If thought about carefully, the experience gained by Friends in these projects can provide a link between the macrocosmic trends and events with which a fully developed Peace Testimony must deal, and life as it is actually lived in villages, barrios and urban communities.

I know some Friends fear that allowing all our energy to be absorbed in small scale efforts to teach nonviolence in prisons or urban schools is to get lost in personalism and localism, abdicating to others vast spheres of human life where war, the threat of war, and mass organized violence looms. After all, teaching conflict mediation and nonviolence within any context where civil society is intact, where the

rule of law more or less prevails, is simply quite a different thing than addressing problems of war, conflict and violence in an international arena which remains largely chaotic and anarchic, and where the major constraint on contending factions seems to be only the fear of retaliation by the other factions which vie with them.

I believe this concern must be taken seriously. A witness for peace in the post Cold War world which is confined to local ventures would indeed be very incomplete. At the same time, it seems to me that, starting at least with John Woolman and perhaps earlier, Friends' attempts to understand the root causes of social evil and the interconnectedness of socially destructive phenomena have always maintained a careful connection between theory and concrete experience. These *direct action* projects, in addition to the good they accomplish in themselves, can be an important way that Friends remain connected with real problems in the real world and avoid becoming overly "academic" in their concerns and outlook. Yet an effort must be made by participants in these projects and by Friends in general to keep engaged in a broad process of dialogue, so activists do not become isolated in their heroic service. Obviously, everyone's time is limited and a balance has to be struck here which does not undermine the efforts themselves with exhaustive discussions.

B. ARMS TRADE AND DISARMAMENT.

A second focal point of a developed Friends Peace Witness would relate to the continuing need for *disarmament* and for *stemming the arms trade*. Trafficking and profiteering in arms, an activity of both private business and of governments, clearly bodes only ill for the human family. There now seems to be some commitment by governments to prevent a black market trade in nuclear weapons materials. But the circulation of conventional weapons seems to proceed unabated, save with respect to a few limited places where embargoes have had some impact. Clearly there is no human problem, conflict or difficulty which is not worsened if each side is armed with tons upon tons of advanced and sophisticated weaponry nor would it seem likely in

general that justice will be served and the situation improved if one side is so armed and the other is not. So, achieving controls on the trading and profiteering in weaponry would be an important objective for Friends peace activism.

Friends should find fairly ready unity in terms of this thrust for peace activism. Here our work for disarmament during the Cold War can find a complementary trajectory into the future. But the arms trade is also an arena in which there is an embarrassing contradiction between our aspirations for the international order and the reality of American domestic life, which seems to be engulfed in a tidal wave of weaponry, and where the political will to do anything about it seems constantly to be frustrated.

This is not the place to analyze the problem nor propose solutions to the weapons trade, a business which grossly misallocates the resources of a hungry and poverty-stricken world, which renders the sensible resolution of conflicts enormously more difficult, and which makes the violent outbreaks ever more destructive. But I believe it should be affirmed that achieving domestic and international controls on the trading and profiteering in weaponry would be an essential objective for Friends peace activism.

C. ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESCUE.

A third focus for a developed Quaker Peace Witness for the new millennium would be a concern for the *global economy*.

One need not be a Marxist or a neo-Marxist to understand that an unjust distribution of humanly generated wealth and of the earth's natural resources, while not the only cause of war, is certainly one of the chief causes of bloodshed. Even conflicts which at first glance seem unrelated to economic issues -- conflicts over ethnicity, over religion, over nationalism, or over governmental power -- can often

be seen to have at their root economic issues as well.

In spite of this obvious fact, Friends, even when vigorously championing their Peace Testimony, have in modern times been remarkably silent about economic arrangements. It is true that important and creative work has been done by Kenneth Boulding, Jack Powelson and others, and London Yearly meeting issued important statements about economics early in this century. We can also harken back to John Woolman to find a Friend who was willing to face economic issues squarely. Now John Woolman functioned in an economy much simpler than ours, and he himself was not an expert in economics and can perhaps be faulted with regard to some of his conclusions. Nevertheless, he was willing to argue forcefully about the spiritual and practical implications of economic systems and arrangements. More recently, the American Friends Service Committee, to its credit, has sought to address some of economic issues. The AFSC's Nationwide Women's Program has published a very useful study called *The Global Factory*. The AFSC has also published an organizing kit called *Justice for All*, which contains a series of "myth busters" about economic issues and about the Republican Party's Contract with America.

Unfortunately, there seems to be a polarization between Quakers who are professional economists and Quaker social-change activists attempting to understand and to deal with the economic issues they face as they work in communities. And it must be observed that the efforts of AFSC, Boulding, Powelson, and London Yearly Meeting simply have not found resonance among the generality of Friends, who remain remarkably silent on economic issues. Disordered economies certainly induce as much destruction, suffering, injustice, conflict and even bloodshed as do wars and arms races, yet there is no Quaker witness on economic issues even remotely comparable to the witness which took place regarding the Cold War, the Vietnam War, and the nuclear arms race. Even in their activities for racial justice Friends are apt to slight the economic questions which are so significant a part of the issues involved.

In our own time, in a silent and relentless way, the seeds of future strife and conflict are being sown day after day with the establishment of a new global economic order which few understand and which no one seems to guide or govern. It is not necessarily to demonize multinational corporations or international businessmen to nevertheless understand that when mobile economic actors in control of financial empires which exceed the gross national product of entire nations function outside the purview of geographically bound political communities, something unhealthy is likely to occur. In the face of multinational corporations, geographically bound political communities seem unable to protect the public interest in the territories they are expected to govern. Global corporations, whatever flag they fly, have outgrown national laws and national cultures, and the world has not yet begun to address the resulting problems.

Much international business and trade is very useful. It finds ways to provide needed goods and services efficiently and is producing as well an integration of national interests which in some ways reinforces peace. Business people functioning in the new global economy are gaining important skills, knowledge and background which can be a great force for good. They are, in many respects, the new world citizens.

Yet, wherever concentrated wealth collides with extreme poverty, we see a snow-balling erosion of human rights and major threats to peace and freedom. Unfortunately, there are some transnational corporations which seem to roam the world at will seeking the most docile, politically suppressed and underpayable workers, and the societies with the least demanding ecological regulations, sometimes even financing repression along the way. The unsavory involvement of the Shell Oil Company in the recent political troubles in Nigeria is a glaring case in point, but is unfortunately only unique in its degree of conspicuousness.

The capitalist system has been transformed from a society of small, family-

scaled proprietorships to a series of huge conglomerates in the control of a few. These few are themselves governed only by a market which seems to lack all moral purpose and which is unable to take account of the ecological costs of doing business. The idea that the unfettered market magically transforms the greed of individuals into the common good, and that through it wealth somehow trickles down from the super-rich to benefit everyone else, is surely one of the most enduring exercises in wishful thinking humankind has ever known. Equally naive is the expectation that the free market fosters a kind of meritocracy in which diligent and creative wage earners who are determined to succeed find the opportunity to become capitalists. In addition, the expectation that prosperity depends upon ever increasing growth seems to propel humankind's economic life into a fatal war against the earth itself, the very basis of our survival.

I don not deny the many accomplishments of market economies in generating wealth and raising standards of living. Nor, needless to say, would one want to romanticize the sort of government-controlled economic system which the Soviets sought to maintain. It is often said that democracy could not survive without the disbursal of power which a free economy encourages. But it probably also can be said that a market economy only produces fairness and justice if it operates within a strongly democratic political environment. There is little evidence in the modern world that capitalism practiced in contexts characterized by political repression tends to help a society evolve towards liberalism and democracy.

In this current situation, moreover, the academic discipline of economics is itself a source of trouble. It seems to keep posing as a kind of science, yet it lacks all the characteristics of a science. Science discovers laws which are independently verifiable by different investigators and which can be used to predict causes and effects. Science establishes principles around which people knowledgeable in the field can unite. Economics, in contrast, can predict almost nothing, can verify very little, and has not succeeded in producing unity about much of anything among its leading

practitioners.

It would seem that from a Friends perspective economics must be understood not as a form of natural science, but as an exercise in social ethics.

Friends probably ought not to seek to design or envision a new economic order. But clearly an adequate Friends Peace Testimony for the future would involve some sifting out of economic issues and some identification of Quakerly ethical and spiritual objectives for economic life. This would require deep pondering and sincere searching by a broad body of Friends, including the professional economists among us, as well as people from our inner cities and our farms, social-change activists, those who work with the poor, and Quaker representatives of the increasingly beleaguered middle-class. It is to be hoped that Pendle Hill can provide an enabling office in facilitating such a threshing of economic questions, as it did before in the 1930's.

D. ETHNIC CONFLICT.

A fourth focus of a Quaker Peace Witness for our time would be the matter of *ethnic strife and conflict*. On one level this may seem a straightforward matter, yet in some ways I see it as enormously complicated.

Ethnic conflict is an ages-old phenomenon. Whatever view we take regarding the probable evolution of human history in our time, it would seem likely that with the collapse of empires and of the enforced peace they administered within their spheres of influence, and with the increasingly desperate economic plight of many newly emerging countries, we are apt to see ethnic strife and bloodshed increasing rather than decreasing over the next several decades.

In many of these situations the traditional Quaker role of seeking to be a

reconciling and healing presence and a provider of whatever aid might relieve the suffering of victimized populations remains available to us. Obviously, we would prefer to serve in a healing and reconciling role before violence breaks out, rather than provide aid after a great deal of damage is done. So the first level of difficulty with this important issue of ethnic strife is: how do Friends become engaged in constructive and creative ways *before* the worst violence occurs? Certainly this is one place where there would seem to be an important role for the experimental ventures in direct action mentioned as the first aspect of a five-point Quaker Peace Witness.

But there is another sort of difficulty associated with the matter of ethnic strife. Does it not appear that racial strife and ethnic cleansing are somehow the shadow sides of the Wilsonian concept of the self-determination of peoples? For many peoples, self-determination apparently means insisting on living in culturally or racially homogenous, and even sometimes theocratic, mini-states. The American experiment, limited and flawed as it admittedly is, in which a large and great nation is comprised of "many people who become one people," gathered around a liberal theory of politics which limits government and protects pluralism, seems not to be enchanting or engaging to great numbers of people.

Recently, on National Public Radio, I heard a talk show host interviewing a reporter covering the wars in the former Yugoslavia. The interviewer was expressing, on behalf of the American people, the bewilderment everyone seems to feel regarding the conflict there. It is even hard for Americans to keep the various factions of this multi-polar conflict distinguished from each other, no less to try to decide impartially how a reasonable degree of justice and a secure peace might be conceived.

"What," asked the host, "is at issue here? Is there anything the American people could identify as a matter of principle?"

The reporter thought for a minute and responded that there was at least one

important issue at stake, and that is the conflict between those who see the political community as a collection of citizens who are equally treated by each other and by their government regardless of their racial or ethnic background, as opposed to those willing to advance the idea that a nation state is a place where identification and worth are attached to one's ethnic group and where the prevailing group runs the country, and everyone else is tolerated only as a guest.

The reporter was speaking in circumlocutions, but I take it that he was contrasting the wish, which I gather is shared by some among the Serbs, Croats and Muslims in the former Yugoslavia, that each live in their own homogenous mini-state, with the desires of other Serbs, Croats and Muslims that a way be found for them to establish together a multi-ethnic and unified republic.

Superficially, it might be easy for Friends to view all these ethnic rivalries the way the reporter saw the troubles in the former Yugoslavia. Certainly it is reasonable and right for us to find repellent a type of state where a particular religious group or ethnic group is somehow more equal than everyone else, or a state whose territory has been "cleansed" of people unwanted because of their "otherness." Of this much we can be quite clear.

Yet what is more difficult, it seems to me, is the presumption that in the liberal, civil society which we are still seeking to establish in the United States we have found a solution which will be apt for everybody. I suspect that most people in the world who are seeking to establish homogeneous communities do not think of themselves as racists or as xenophobes so much as they think of themselves as defenders of communities and cultural values which are under assaults so severe that their very survival is threatened.

Throughout history, people have found what it means to be human by absorbing a cultural heritage from their families and surrounding community. The

sort of self-actualized, rootless, autonomous individual who is presumed to be the fundamental unit of an egalitarian, neutral, democratic, liberal, republican state is a unique creation of modern times.

Liberalism as a theory of politics which limits government and protects pluralism has much to be said for it; liberalism as a theory of life clearly has limitations which we have not yet found a way to surmount. How does the solitary individual identify the fundamental premises upon which to base his life? Is it simply a matter of shopping around for them and donning the suit of values he finds most tasteful? And what happens in a state when such individuals, picking their fundamental values according to their own tastes, wind up adopting incommensurable first premises on an issue like abortion, for example?

We have come to understand that even a liberal democracy like Canada's is a very fragile thing when one cultural group, the French-speaking Quebecois, feels overwhelmed by another. More and more we are beginning to understand that the liberal democracy we call the United States is perhaps less an example of many people becoming one, and more an expectation that many diverse people will assimilate themselves into the dominant Anglo-Saxon, English speaking, vaguely Christian culture which is traditional here. The prospect that we might soon have a Spanish-speaking minority in the United States analogous to the French speaking minority in Canada has produced a spate of anti-immigration laws and English-only policies.

Finally, and here is where the problem of ethnicity encounters the problem of economics, the solitary individual envisaged by liberal democratic theory seems to have little defense against greed-driven commercial values operating in a vast public arena, while alternative communitarian, cultural, and spiritual values are somehow relegated to private, sectarian, and marginalized spaces to which our individual devotes his or her spare time, if any. So in addition to providing the values by which

one lives, a state which is dominated by a given culture or religion also provides a communitarian alternative to a commercial culture which seems to wear away the moral foundations of society by relentlessly replacing devotion to longer term responsibilities and commitments with short-term greed and materialism.

Someone recently told me that the Esperanto movement had died because English has become the Esperanto of the modern world. Perhaps the new global culture which is coming to birth based upon the English language and the commercial dynamics emanating from London, New York, Singapore, Hong Kong and Tokyo will simply overwhelm ethnic diversity, as clinging to traditional cultures comes to appear to increasing numbers of people to be archaic and anachronistic. But the thing that should be sobering to Friends is that this new global culture has so far evolved in a way completely detached from humankind's traditional sources of meaning and value; it seems totally devoid of spirituality.

At any rate, to summarize this fourth point, in the years immediately ahead a Friends Peace Testimony will probably be challenged by the continued tragedy of ethnic strife and conflict. There is not very much that can be generalized about this, at least not at this point. Probably every conflict situation will have its own unique solution, as ancient and formidable antagonisms give way, hopefully, to new modes of living together in peace. Friends' experience in mediation, in non-violence and in conflict resolution can hopefully be creatively engaged in this process of change and reconciliation, serving to help lessen violence and reduce conflict. We should probably be prepared to find that some of our own assumptions about the good society will be profoundly challenged in this process, and that some of the solutions which emerge will not be ones which we now can foresee or expect.

E. INTERNATIONAL LAW AND PEACEKEEPING.

The fifth focus of a developed Friends Peace Witness for the late 1990's would

be *international law*.

Given the ongoing "shrinking" of the globe, it would seem inevitable that interactions among peoples, and between people and the planet itself cannot be left in an anarchic state, but will have to come to be governed by some enforceable principle-based rules and regulations. I know the concept of world government inspires unease in many quarters, and this unease is well founded. So this is a matter which must to be approached with very great care. It would not be surprising, for example, if a growing body of international law tended to favor the interests of the already powerful over those of the weak. Nor would it be desirable if governmental mechanisms established internationally came to be subverted by a few people for evil purposes in a way that left large portions of the human race defenseless.

Yet it has been a universal human experience that anarchy is the worst tyranny, and I believe that careful thought will disclose that, just as the people of the thirteen American colonies found that the dangers of establishing a federal state were preferable to the dangers of disorder, so will the international community find that a movement toward an international order with carefully designed safeguards against abuse is preferable to the continuing state of anarchy which presently exists.

While Friends have often found themselves in vigorous opposition to particular laws or particular governmental policies, Friends have never been against the establishment of a civic order and civil society altogether. Friends have always championed active citizenship. William Penn's Holy Experiment had a clearly established government, a body of law, a constabulary for enforcement, and even capital punishment for certain crimes.

This matter of the growth of a body of enforceable international law and of something resembling a world government opens up large philosophical questions

regarding the nature of a social compact and the origins of a civil society with which I am scarcely conversant. It would seem probable that any legal framework that is established will inevitably be flawed, and will tend to favor the rich over the poor and the powerful over the weak. By its very nature an initial legal system relies upon a consortium of self-appointed law-makers who, in coalition, mobilize enough power to put those they designate as anti-social under check. Certainly the early American political system in greatly favored the interests of white male property owners over women, racial minorities and propertyless men, and the founders seemed hardly aware of the disparities. Nevertheless, the founding principles which they were able to enunciate contained the seeds of a universalism which we see creeping haltingly toward realization.

I have not studied carefully the Law of the Sea convention which was established under United Nations auspices after long negotiations. I would not be surprised if upon review I found that it was insufficiently rigorous in protecting the seabed from the mining interests of American corporations; nevertheless, I would also expect to conclude that the world is better off with this imperfect body of law governing our common inheritance, the sea and its wealth, than if anarchy persisted. Clearly the establishment of the protocols governing the seas was a step forward for humankind.

I recall that Friends Sam and Miriam Levering worked diligently over many years championing the cause of the Law of the Sea, and that while other Friends tended to be generally sympathetic, aside from Sam and Miriam and a very few others, we were largely inactive. Since the United States inevitably will be one of the key actors in the formulation of any emerging body of international law, would it not be better if Friends took a more vigorous interest in the matter, if only to help check any unhealthy bias favoring American sectarian interests? Should we not, for example, be advocating that the United States, at last, sign the Law of the Sea Treaty?

In another area of international law, United Nations War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague has indicted about forty Bosnian Serb leaders for war crimes alleged to have been perpetrated in the former Yugoslavia. It has also indicted some Bosnian Croats and, most recently, three Serbian military officers. I understand that there are many philosophical, legal and practical difficulties which this raises. On the practical level alone is the often-noted fact that the cooperation of the alleged war criminals is needed in the establishment of peace in Bosnia. I also understand serious questions can be raised regarding the basis in law and authority for the Tribunal's indictments. Nevertheless, I think as Friends we can acknowledge that however faltering and imperfect it might be, an effort by the international community to bring to task in some orderly and reasonably fair way those who commit the most egregious atrocities against their fellow human beings is a step forward.

In this connection, does the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provide an adequate framework within which a cooperative, enlarging body of international law might be established? Will the next few years represent a kind of golden moment when, with the demise of the Cold War and before a new structure of international antagonisms has been crystallized, great progress might be made in the field of international law and the development of international institutions? Does this aspect of humankind's developing world community not merit the support and attention of Friends?

I believe Friends also need to collect themselves to address the difficult issues which surround the growing practice of United Nations "peacekeeping." Should the world community, as embodied in the United Nations organization, have the capacity to do something proactive to prevent lawlessness and violence? Should this include the capacity to do something more than sending very lightly-armed blue-helmeted peacekeepers to monitor ceasefire lines after warring parties have agreed to a cessation of hostilities?

Was it right for the international community simply to stand by while rape and genocide were employed as tactics of war in the former Yugoslavia, waiting until the warring parties themselves had driven each other to the conference table? Or would it be wise to establish some sort of international police force which, with sufficient provisions to safeguard against abuse, could be used for pro-active intervention in places like Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Somalia, and Haiti? And could such a police force be designed and established in such a way as to remove both the taint of big power partisanship and of militarism itself?

Friends feel ambiguous about the policing function even as applied in our own local communities. We are uneasy about the lethal weaponry with which police are armed. We are uneasy about police strategies and tactics. At the same time there have been many occasions, although I will not cite them here, when Friends have relied upon police for protection. I have not heard of any instance when Friends have been opposed to the existence of police forces in principle. Nor did I hear objections from American Friends when the National Guard and even the army were mobilized to enforce school desegregation and other aspects of racial justice within our own country.

It is useful to keep in mind three factors which distinguish a police force from a military enterprise.

First, a properly established and properly functioning police force is authorized by the entire community within its sphere of operation, and it operates on behalf of the community as a whole. An army is intended to operate in theaters where community has broken down; it does not operate on behalf of those against whom it moves.

Second, the goal of police functioning is *arrest*. It is intended to stop, or arrest, crimes or alleged crimes, again as defined by the entire community which has

established the police. The police do not decide the matter, but merely bring those alleged to have committed crimes before an orderly tribunal of justice.

Third, when properly administered, the use of force by police is focused, limited in degree, and applied in a way to bring people to a court of justice. An army destroys indiscriminately, and presumes itself to settle the argument by prevailing only through superior force and violence. To the extent that police begin to resemble armies in their way of operating, we recognize that something has gone very seriously awry with the character of the community.

It is my conviction that if progress is to be made in three of the areas I have mentioned -- the operation of the global economy; the prevention of ethnic violence; and the ending of arms trade and arms profiteering -- such progress will require development of a body of international law governing these matters and a capacity for the international community to enforce these laws on behalf of the common good. It seems to me that this will involve some sort of international police force to bring arms traffickers to justice, to enforce a ban on exploitative economic activity, however this may come to be defined, and pro-actively to intervene when, in the power vacuum created by the collapse of empires, ethnic strife breaks out.

Friends need to come to grips with the question of how an international police force ought to be organized, and the question of whether it should rely upon contributions of forces from the armies of United Nations member states, or whether it should be wholly reorganized as a new branch of an international civil service, with its own rules of engagement and its own methods of training which would be distinct in kind and nature from the training presently given to national armies. Friends should activate themselves to think through these issues and to advocate for enlightened approaches to them, rather than simply abandoning the matter to others with more heavily biased agendas.

In summary, I have suggested that a Quaker Peace Witness for the late 1990's would be comprised of at least five dimensions:

- 1) The continued practice of *direct action* such as is presently under way through the Peace Teams effort, Peace Brigades International, the Alternatives to Violence Project, Women's Aid for Peace, and various teaching/training efforts in conflict resolution, mediation, non-violence and democratic practice.
- 2) Continued work toward the goal of domestic and international *disarmament* and the ending of **arms trading** and **arms profiteering**.
- 3) Work on understanding the problems of the global economy and of economic development, work to define and establish principles of fair distribution and of *economic justice* in the international sphere, and work to develop economic principles and policies which *preserve the environment*.
- 4) Practical attempts to alleviate *ethnic conflict*, together with an exploration of the difficulties which stand in the way of the establishment of free and fair multi-ethnic and multi-cultural civil societies.
- 5) Work to extend and to develop the body of *international law*, international institutions of justice, and the capacity to enforce, with safeguards, an international legal code.

In the world of the future it is increasingly unlikely that any nation will be able to ensure its own security at the expense of others. The common good requires our taking steps toward nuclear and conventional disarmament, economic and social

development and justice, active conflict resolution, and a rescue of the environment.

Being faithful to God's call and to our human companions is a task fraught with complexity and strain. We live in a time of profound confusion. Disagreement and doubt are everywhere. Our peace testimony has to do, ultimately, with how decency and humanity can be identified and defended in an uncommonly demoralized age. Yet an authentic and prophetic peace witness means not sadness, resignation, anxiety nor desperation, but joy and hope.

To act prophetically is to rely, in our own weakness, upon the strength of God. It is to know that evil people are not beyond the God's mercy, nor are those who are good beyond the need of it. Such awareness can keep in check the self-righteousness which continually threatens to subvert the good judgement of political activists. We know that there is no hope unless there are people who are discriminating and independent, yet communicative and responsive and willing to join with others in the decent management of common affairs.

This is a great work to which we Friends and all people of good will are called. Are we ready for the task?

If not, what are we waiting for?

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