

QUAKER CONCERN OVER POPULATION

NEWSLETTER 3

AUTUMN 2018

QCOP now a recognised Quaker Body

In July 2018, QCOP was accepted as a Quaker Registered Body or QRB. We are immensely pleased as it is something we have been striving for over quite a long period of time. Immediately on becoming registered several doors were opened to us. We felt emboldened to sign QCOP up to a couple of documents:

One is the *"Alliance of World Scientists Second Warning of November 2017"*. This warning is concerned with the current massive threat to our global environment and has been endorsed by over 20,000 scientists, a number still swelling.

You can read the Warning at http://scientists.forestry.oregonstate.edu/sites/sw/file_s/Warning_article_with_supp_11-13-17.pdf. This warning is also supported by many environmental NGOs, such as Friends of the Earth and QCOP. To view the list of organisations, see:

<http://www.scientistswarning.org/organizational-endorsements-2/>. In addition, concerned individuals urged to endorse the warning and we would like to encourage you to consider adding your name. To take this simple but effective action of signing the document, please go to: <http://www.scientistswarning.org/please-sign/>

The other document we've signed up to is the QUNO document of a Quaker Statement on Climate Change. It has been signed by many Quaker Organisations, and was revised in 2017 and has been sent out to Yearly Meetings across the

world. "The Statement recognizes the personal and collective responsibility to respond to anthropogenic climate change and calls for fair, sufficient and effective international action."

<http://www.quno.org/resource/quaker-statement-climate-change>

The most literal "door" that opened is that we have been able to book a room at The Priory Rooms, Bull Street Meeting House, right in the centre of Birmingham for 29th September for an afternoon talk and discussion on **"Population Growth – A Challenge for Quakers which won't go away"**. The speaker is David Tinsley. Thanks to being a QRB, the room is now free of charge to us, so our slender funds can be stretched further! You will be receiving separate notification about this event and we hope QCOP members living within reach of Birmingham will be able to attend. If this is a possibility for you, please make a note of the date now.

News of overseas QCOP members

One of our earliest members, Richard Grossman from Durango, USA, brought his wife Gail to have lunch with his old friend Roger Plenty and Cherry Foster in July. It was a lovely opportunity with friendship, news and ideas exchanged.

Another Friend, David Tinsley, who joined QCOP from New Zealand, is at present home in the UK and met up with Nick Chetwood in June. He has been very proactive on the other side of the world,

and we have taken the chance to invite him to talk on Population to Members and Friends at

Birmingham on 29th September. He returns to The Quaker Centre in Wellington in November.

Personal impressions and report from the QCOP meeting at Jesus Lane Friends Meeting House, Cambridge on 23rd June 2018



June New and the QCOP members from afar Ruth McCarthy, Jonathan Riddell, Nick Chetwood, Cherry Foster worked hard to organise very successfully this first discussion among Cambridge Quakers on world population pressures. I was a little disappointed that more local Friends did not turn up for this successful session.

What has remained particularly in my mind from the discussion after the showing of the Population Matters film "*Small families; Small planet*" is the question of why it is so hard to get people talking about population.

Four factors stand out for me from the discussion.

Firstly, population pressure seems so remote from

our everyday life: Cambridge is a great place to live! Surrounded by miles of open fields, over-population hardly seems an issue. In comparison, pollution and resources are much more immediate: we all have our green, black and blue rubbish bins for recycling, and we encounter some litter in the streets daily. And I only saw a hedgehog some weeks ago for the very first time in years. But but but -- Britain was once covered by forest, and near here by swamps (called 'fens' in East Anglia because of their alkaline water from the local chalk hills). Of course they disappeared a few hundred years ago. People now get upset (quite rightly) at the destruction of native forest in the Amazon basin and in South-East Asia for example, but of course the UK forebears did the same here. The use of timber for ship building is often cited for

deforestation in Britain, but I suppose the need for smelting bronze and iron before the use of coal was probably the major cause: have you ever tried getting a wood burning fire hot enough to bake pottery, let alone smelt steel? But --- that was hundreds of years ago.

The second factor seems to be that talking about population is regarded as racist. Certainly now most of the population growth is in the 'Third World', but during the industrial revolution the UK and to a lesser extent other European countries exported a huge wave of excess population to expropriate the land in New Zealand from the Maoris and similarly in other countries. Having myself grown up in New Zealand I am quite conscious of this, and when I was young (born 1930, arrived in New Zealand in 1939) much of the cutting down of the native bush (rain-forest) had occurred within living memory, not hundreds of years ago. I can remember when I raised the population issue in a Quaker discussion in the 1960s in Britain I was 'put down' by some specious arguments. In particular, the dogma was that rising affluence would result in smaller families, but if average economic growth over a decade or two is at, say, 3% and population growth at 5%, then people are getting progressively poorer, not richer.

Thirdly, we are not well tuned in to life in African and other economically Third World countries. Here in the UK most of us have some pension fund, as well as the state pension when we retire. But in other kinds of societies one's children are one's provision for old age, the more the likelier it is that one or two will have 'made it' well enough to provide for us in old age. The economic incentive is to have more children, not less! And it is difficult to argue against people's economic best interests.

Fourthly, people are not tuned into the nature of exponential growth. I remember my children having a riddle:- if some pond weed doubles in size every day, and if it covers the whole pond in 30 days, how long does it take to cover only half the pond? The answer is 29 days! One does not notice exponential growth until it hits one explosively, usually when it is too late! I think I remember that world population was 2 billion when I talked about it in the 1960s, and it has now doubled twice to 8 billion. Now picture another doubling, together

with global warming putting much of Bangladesh and other river deltas under water!!

Volker Heine

Newsletters – date of publication

It is hoped to produce two newsletter each year in the spring and autumn. Contributions to the Editor, Jonathan Riddell; jmrr57@outlook.com.

QCOP at Gloucester Quaker Meeting House, Southgate St - 3 February 2018

18 Quakers attended this event organised by QCOP and held in the Friends Meeting House in the centre of Gloucester. Friends were drawn from the Area Meeting and from as far as Charlbury, Hereford and South Wales, as well as three QCOP organisers from the north of England.

The aim was firstly to introduce participants to the issues caused by global overpopulation in the Quakerly context of the Canterbury Commitment on living sustainably, (Yearly Meeting 2011, Minute 36). The second aim was to show how the solutions to the issues are close to Quakerly thinking, involving the education and equality of women and the provision of family planning facilities. The third was to familiarise Friends with the subject so that they find it easier to consider and discuss it with others.



Starting with a short Population Matters film clearly explaining the current global situation, the group moved on to explore their own personal responses in pairs and small group discussion. Feedback on "How overpopulation impoverishes the earth" revealed a wide understanding in the group of the international environmental issues 7.5 billion people are creating, as well as the local problems created in nations. They included,

“Contribution to war, terrorism, migration and human misery”, “Disrupts economies” and “Problems with Cultural assumptions.”

The 3 hour event began with shared lunch in a room with resources on the subject, and ended with tea, cakes and some very positive feedback. Further events have been planned. The next at Jesus Lane Meeting House, Cambridge took place in June and another at the Priory Rooms, Bull Street Meeting, Birmingham will be on Saturday 29th September from 2.15pm to 5pm.

To contact us, or for further information, go to our wide-ranging QCOP website, www.qcop.org.uk

Upcoming Events

QCOP Regional Gathering, Saturday 29 September, 2-5pm at The Priory Rooms, Quaker Meeting House, 40 Bull Street, Birmingham B4 6AF

“Population Growth - a challenge for Quakers which won't go away”

2.15-5pm Presentation and discussion on the impact of population on global environmental issues and how we as Quakers should respond.

Enquiries: Jonathan Riddell at jmrr57@outlook.com or via the website www.qcop.org.uk
Please let us know if you hope to attend.

BYM Sustainability Gathering 2018: Bridging the gap – hope and action 19th-21st October.

Bookings via BYM website by 7 September.

Why become a member?

The value of having plenty of members is that as well as being a large pool of experience to share, it shows that many Quakers feel that Population issues are a relevant area of concern which should not be dismissed by Friends. The value to our members is in being kept in touch with worldwide

news through email briefings and newsletters.

QCOP has taken Data Protection seriously, and adapted a Friends' House template for members' consent. It has been a useful experience, although we have lost a few members who, like us all, really hoped to ignore the vast numbers of emails from clubs asking people to re-join. Useful, in that we have clarified what people want and where there are clusters as a base for arranging an event.

It showed that we haven't reached out to Friends in London, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, so we are acting to rectify this. If you know any concerned Quakers in these areas, please tell them that membership is free and mention the website to them, which is not only informative, but also has the membership form and can be used to contact us. www.qcop.org.uk. We hope that our Members feel they can contact us with queries, successes and suggestions.

Cherry Foster, Membership Secretary

QCOP – How we operate

QCOP grew out of the Canterbury Commitment and was established after the successful lecture that we held at Yearly Meeting in Bath in 2014. We have around 50 supporters, mainly from Friends in Britain but also a few from around the world.

Annual voluntary donations.

QCOP is growing and needs money for publicity materials, website etc. We have no membership fee so ask for an annual voluntary donation of £5-£20 per supporter. If you can, please send a cheque made out to **QCOP to: Roger Plenty. Ashleigh, Rodborough Hill, Stroud, Gloucs., GL5 3RT**

Committee and contact details

Jonathan Riddell – Convenor (Alton Meeting)
Cherry Foster – Membership (Nailsworth Meeting)
Roger Plenty – Treasurer (Nailsworth Meeting)
Nick Chetwood (Brigflatts Meeting - Cumbria)
June New (Jesus Lane Meeting - Cambridge)
Norman Marsh – Listserv Manager (Birkenhead Meeting)

Email: pqconcern+plan@groupsSpaces.com

<http://qcop.org.uk/>