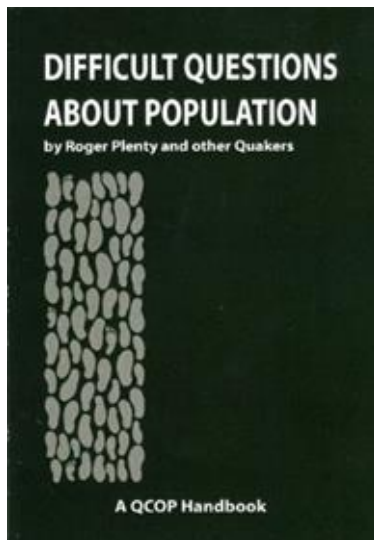


QUAKER CONCERN OVER POPULATION

NEWSLETTER 8 SPRING 2021

“Difficult Questions about Population” by Roger Plenty. ISBN 978-1-5272-7190-6

Our book *Difficult Questions about Population* has now been sent to nearly every meeting in BYM. We are still trying to get copies to a few meetings so please check that your meeting has received its copy and make sure that Friends are aware of it and being encouraged to read it. A review by Margaret Mathews has appeared in *The Friend*.



Copies are not yet available at the Quaker Centre at Friends House but can be bought from QCOP price £3.50 or £5 including postage.

Contact: Jonathan Riddell
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**‘Any Questions’ Session,
Thursday 11 March, 2021**

This Zoom meeting brought in 33 participants from the UK from Orkney to Hastings and also Colorado, USA in the person of Richard Grossman.

To our delight, 15 excellent questions had been submitted. Due to time constraints, these were short-listed to 8 and in the event only five topics were answered fully, which was a shame. These were:

1. *Is QCOP in tune with Quaker values?*
2. *Addressing climate change and population growth;*
3. *How to slow population growth;*
4. *Consequences of declining population;*
5. *Abortion in the USA.*

The meeting was hosted by David Tinsley and chaired by Nick Chetwood, who kept it on time. The format was that two steering group members would answer the question, then the questioner could respond. Most felt that the evening had been interesting and thought-provoking, and should be repeated, looking at those questions which had to be deferred. The majority asked for more chance for

discussion, so our next event might spend 90 minutes looking at just two or three questions with time allowed for everyone to contribute.

Nick asked for more members to join the steering group and help to move QCOP forward. More initiatives are planned, including a talk by Jonathan Porritt at the 2021 Yearly Meeting and a young Quakers art competition next year.

Jeanette Cayley

Are the aims of QCOP in tune with Quaker Values?

We all seek to check that what we are guided to do is in line with our wider morality of life; in our case, is it Quakerly? In fact we are searching for authority, often going to writings for this. At first glance there is nothing in Quaker Faith and Practice about population, but if we look deeper we can find broad references to it. Population has been mentioned from the time of the ancient Greeks, but it

has only increased dramatically over the last 200 years, and reached a global crisis point in the last 100 years or so, so less has been written about it.

One of the earliest references connecting faith to action in the community, was in Leviticus 19.18 which says, "Love Thy Neighbour." It is also found in 6th century Confucian writing and indeed is in every faith group. So it's pretty basic to get involved helping our neighbours. Someone once asked "And who is my neighbour?" and it prompted the parable of the Good Samaritan. Early Quakers were steeped in the bible, and they preached the connection between love and nature. John Woolman said

"...to impoverish the earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age." (25.1 *Conversations on the true harmony of mankind*). We are now facing a huge

impoverishment of the earth, based on our numbers and our greed.

More recent writings are clear. Advices and Queries 42 says "Work to ensure that our increasing power over nature is used responsibly, with reverence for life," and Number 41 says, "Do you keep yourself informed about the effects your style of living is having on the global economy and environment?" One of QCOP's aims is to keep Quakers informed.

Finally, to speak of our testimonies we can listen to Audrey Urry, a member of Quaker Green Concern who wrote in 1994, "All species of the Earth itself have interdependent roles within Creation. Humankind is not the species to whom all others are subservient, but one among many. All parts, all issues are inextricably intertwined. Indeed the web of creation could be described as of a three-ply thread; wherever we touch it

we affect justice and peace and the health of all everywhere. So all our testimonies, all our Quaker work, all our Quaker lives are part of one process, of striving towards a flourishing, just and peaceful creation.”

QCOP was accepted as a Quaker Recognised Body in 2018.

Cherry Foster

Who was Marie Stopes?

This is in response to Maria Grace, who sent in a question about Stopes’s connection to eugenics and ‘her’ charity’ at our Q&A session.

Dr Marie Stopes (1880-1958) was a pioneer who fought hard for the acceptance and provision of contraception at a time when church and state condemned it. She opened the UK’s first ‘Birth Control’ clinic in 1921 in north London. But, her reputation has been tarnished by her association with the eugenics movement.

Stopes was not medical. Her doctorate was in fossil botany. After her first marriage was annulled, she educated herself about female sexuality and decided to share her insights to other women. Her book “Married Love” caused a sensation and resulted in her receiving many letters from couples begging for advice on how to limit their families. The health of wives was at serious risk from too much childbearing and there were concerns about poverty and the welfare of existing children. The extreme misery touched her and set her on a mission. She was helped by her intelligence, influential friends and also her second husband. Her campaign demanded courage and tenacity. She brought un-doubted benefits to sexually active partners; but she had a dark side. Elitist and racist, she believed that reproduction was best left to the bright and the beautiful as defined by her and that selective breeding would lead to a happier, healthier society.

In this she was of her time - many liberal figures that we revere today had similar ideas, though not as extreme - and the later experience of Nazi atrocities did change attitudes.

'Eugenics' was originally a term coined in 1883 by Francis Galton who was fascinated by heredity and the concept of survival of the fittest. He thought that the most able couples should have incentives to have children and those deemed unfit should be prevented. These ideas seem abhorrent now, but Stopes embraced them and became a life fellow of the Eugenics Society. She even objected to her son marrying a woman who was very short sighted.

The charity formerly known as Marie Stopes International has no direct connection with her and is very far from being eugenicist. It is a non-governmental organisation supplying women worldwide with contraception, safe abortion and maternal health

services. In 1976 they were looking for a base and purchased the lease of the Marie Stopes Clinic and named their charity after the building, recognising its earlier role. Stopes would not have approved of her name being used, as she publicly opposed abortion and would have been shocked by the premises being used to help young unmarried women. She thought contraception was only for married women. What would she have thought of its use as a centre for vasectomy? Realising that Stopes' legacy was now tainted by her views on eugenics, in 2020 the organisation changed its name to MSI Reproductive Choices.

What to make of this brilliant but in many ways unlikeable person? It is the ever-present problem of judging a person's achievements along-side their behaviour. When does self-belief become arrogant and delusory? An exasperated Muriel Spark said, "Dr Stopes knows a great deal about

contraception – but it’s a pity her parents did not.”

Jeanette Cayley

QCOP now has a Communications Policy!

Our communications policy is a statement that guides the work of the steering committee. It sets out our values and how we communicate them. We recognise there is a great risk of reputational damage by being misunderstood in what we say and do. A significant number of Friends seem to look for reasons to oppose us. We want to be successful and clear in our communications.

Well, what are QCOP’s values?

We are pro human, families and children. We are anxious to stand up for human rights and especially to empower women. We seek to support the poorest and most vulnerable. And we want to encourage global justice.

Aren’t these empty words?

No, they are not. The steering committee spend lots of time trying to convince Quakers of the need to consider the effects of an ever increasing world population on the health of planet Earth.

Tell me in two sentences what QCOP stands for.

1. Population growth makes climate change and other environmental problems worse and it makes people poorer.
2. We are convinced that choice, education and empowerment of people should be at the heart of the solutions to the world’s problems.

Nick Chetwood.

Newsletter Editorial Policy

Since the first newsletter was issued the Steering Group have been aware that we should have an editorial policy. This might sound grander than it is. Its aim is to make clear the newsletter’s function and to

help the editor to decide what to include or not.

The newsletter has two main purposes. One is to inform our supporters and other Friends about QCOP's present and future activities. Produced twice a year it is not the only, or indeed main way we inform supporters of future events. This will be by email or letter.

The second equally important role is to include short articles and reviews about population. These can be submitted by any supporter but the editor reserves the right to edit or not to publish them if it is felt that they do not reflect the views of QCOP or are too lengthy.

QCOP encourages Friends to talk about the role of **population in the Sustainability crisis** and welcomes reports from its supporters. If you have pictures, please ensure everyone photographed is willing for the picture to be published.

Support a charity

We are often asked what individual Friends can do. One way is to support organisations working in family planning. So twice a year we will nominate a charity that is helping reduce population growth and hope you will donate to it, if you can. With the pandemic we are very aware that some people are struggling to manage, but if you can donate we know that our nominated charity will be enormously grateful and it will help them carry on their brilliant work. Thank you.

The first charity selected is **MSI Reproductive Choices**, which provides contraception and safe abortion to women and girls in 37 countries. By enabling girls to stay in school, supporting women's careers and enabling communities to be resilient in the face of global challenges, sexual and reproductive healthcare is central to a better, more equal and more sustainable world for

all. The world is failing the 218 million women and girls who cannot get the contraception they need. This number is likely to rise to 300 million in 2030.



Sexual and reproductive health and rights supports education, gender equality, and building sustainable economies. This is central to climate resilience. Healthy, educated and empowered communities can help in climate change planning and managing natural resources, thus ensuring their future sustainability. To support its work go to <https://www.justgiving.com/mariestopesinternational>

A Hexham Debate

The Future of Humanity Depends on the Size of our

Population! This talk by the Quaker, Simon Beard, took place on the 20th March. It is hoped it will be available at: <https://hexhamdebates.wordpress.com/>.

Future events

AGM – 6 May 19.00-20.00 via Zoom

Talk by Jonathon Porritt at YMG – details to be confirmed

Our Newsletter

The opinions in this newsletter are the views of the contributors and do not necessarily represent those of the Editor or QCOP. : Editor: jmrr57@outlook.com.

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