

Newsletter: No. 67 Aug. 2005



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member of THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL COMMITTEE FWCC, visited Hong Kong.

Website:<http://www.fwccawps.org>

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TABLE OF CONTENT

EDITORIAL:	2
1. LETTER FROM INDIA by Ronald Titus.	3
2. LETTERS FROM LONDON, by Nancy Irving & Martin Garate.	3
3. A RECORD OF AUSTRALIAN FRIENDS GATHERING AT LAKE HUME.	5
4. FRIENDS SUMMER GATHERING AOTEAROA/NZ 4—12 January, 2006 by Elizabeth Duke.	6
5. ON BABIES AND BATHWATER by Rachel Brett	8
6. EXCITING CHANGES AT QUNO by Eleanor Evans.	10
7. A QUAKER PRESENCE IN PALESTINE by Helen Bayes.	11
8. THE SECTION GATHERING AT SEOUL 3RD TO 8TH NOVEMBER, 2005. by Eleanor Evans	13
9. EXPLORING THE COLCA CANYON IN SOUTHERN PERU by Valerie Joy	14

EDITORIAL

Dear Friends,

In this issue, you might be interested to read what has happened to Friends House during and after the London bombs. Another article of broad interest is Rachel Brett's piece on "Babies & Bathwater?." and Helen Bayes article on the International conference on "Kids Behind Bars" which she has just participated. In the same vein, Elizabeth's article whets us to the welcoming/intriguing gathering that is going to be happening in New Zealand/Aotearoa!

Besides these important contributions, the rest of the issue is devoted to material related to the up-coming section gathering in Seoul and also sister organizations who are doing work in our area including letters from Stuart Morton, of QPS Britain Yearly Meeting and Stephanie Ramamurthy, of QSAIG(Quaker South Asia Interest Group). Those two letters will be published later due to other, more pressing matters.

It is certainly an exciting time when we are working towards our long awaited get together in Seoul. Recently personal health and other issues (I had a twisted lower back which I nursed for about a whole month) forced me to evaluate the

status of my own fitness, both physical and mental for continued involvement with the work of AWPS.

At the same time it dawned on me how important this work is to me personally. For unbeknown to me, the work gives me higher purposes and adds meaning to my life. To be alive is a blessing, to be working for AWPS is a privilege!

Your Friend and fellow traveler on the spiritual path,
Kenneth Co.

Dear Friend,

We are deeply grieved by the terrorist activity in London, killing more than 50 people and affecting injuries to many others. All these people were innocent.

On 10th July 2005, we had a special worship meeting, prayed to God to give wisdom and the mind of peace to those people who did this act of violence. We also express our sympathy to the people of London, who were in fear this period.

In His Love & Peace,

Ronald Titus (Foreign Correspondant Bhopal Y.M.)

LETTER FROM LONDON, by Nancy Irving & RESPONSE by Martin Garate.

Dear Nancy,

Thanks for keeping us informed of the tragedy that affected so many English people. I cannot but reflect on how essential and crucial at these times is our peaceful testimony and our acceptance of diversity.

We need to eradicate the practice of political assassinations whether they are done by a bomb inside a train or by bombs coming down from the sky into your home or a shell from a tank fired into a neighborhood.

I do pray that the spirit of love may shine inside the world leaders, in all of us normal citizens so that we might begin to build a society where conflicts are

difference can be overcome through dialogue. I dread the future if the same practice of political assassinations continue, where women children and the normal citizens are the ones who suffer.

My heart and thoughts are with those that have lost loved ones in this brutal attack.

Martin Garale

Greetings and many thanks for your prayers and expressions of concern

The bus bomb was only a block and a half away; windows shook at Friends House and the subsequent noise from helicopters and sirens broke any semblance of regular working conditions. Friends House became a haven on that chilly, rainy morning for travellers at Euston station, staff and guests at the Hilton Hotel there on Woburn Place, and miscellaneous others. Tea and coffee were handed out by various staff members, the cafe was congested; the Quiet Room was available on-going, rooms were set aside for listening to the radio or just for sitting. We were told to stay put most the day.

At 3:30 we were told the building would close at 4, as people were then advised to make their ways home. No underground, trains could not come into the stations at Euston, Kings Cross or St Pancras. The others had been shut, but gradually re-opening. Busses outside of central London began running around 4 to get people out of town. Michael lucked out by catching a rare train out of Euston; Joseph was aiming for a station farther from the center; I walked 5 of the 6 miles home before I found a bus that had space. By then, it was a cool but pleasant day and I only wished for different shoes.

This morning, for most of us, it's as though nothing happened. Most underground lines are running; busses are running; trains are running but late. I noticed a great deal of auto traffic. Woburn Place and the stations around it and Kings Cross remain off-limits - a reminder of what could happen to us anywhere. I found myself praying for forgiveness on the bus after I had tensed up when a young Muslim woman in a leather jacket sat next to me - peacemaking starts in one's own heart!

With faith that we are building a more loving world,
Nancy Irving, General Secretary

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CANBERRA REGIONAL MEETING RESIDENTIAL WEEKEND Lake Hume, 15-17 July 2005

Lake Hume Resort was the venue; cold was the weather; and enthusiastic were the Quakers who gathered there over the mid-July weekend. Canberra RM had offered us the opportunity to meet and discuss issues drawn from two publications from Yearly Meeting 2005, David Johnson's Backhouse Lecture, "Peace is a Struggle" and Adrian Glamorgan's "State of the Society" address.

More than 60 Friends responded to Canberra's invitation; and a further 20 met at the same time for mid-year Standing Committee.

We were welcomed to the country by Yalmambirra, an Elder of the Wiradjuri nation, who told us a little of his story and of the work he is doing.

On Saturday we gathered to listen to three Friends in each of two morning sessions as they expressed their hopes, concerns and experiences related to "living in the spirit" and to supporting each other as we lived our lives and tested our leadings. We then moved into small groups to tease out our own thoughts on the questions which had been asked:

What is your vision for the broadest society in Australia? As Quakers, what are we neglecting to do that seems more important than what we do?, What would your life look like if you were living in the spirit?, and In what ways might Friends support each other, vision for a spirit led life?

The small groups allowed us to speak, to listen, and to know each other more deeply.

In the afternoon, we had some free time and then re-gathered for Worship Sharing

where Friends responded to the Question" What am I going to do, either alone or with support?"

As individuals we need to look at living life in the Spirit. This requires courage and humility to connect with each other with our promptings and journeys. We need to consider reading and reflecting on all of our testimonies to gain the wisdom and insight of our history. It can be said that Quakerism lives with lots of loose ends held together by the testimonies. Some friends reported the positive experience of groups of three or four people meeting regularly to support each other and test each others leadings and promptings. We too must learn to tap into the thoughts and feelings of Young Friends for we have much to learn from each other. We should shine our light. "I do this and I am a Quaker"

As a group we might consider letting people know what it is we have to offer. There are many people in the world that are seeking our message and we need to illuminate our path. By inviting them to share our experience is not proselytising. By examining the quality of our outreach messages and making them more eye catching and attractive serves only to illuminate the path for those seeking it.

The completion of Standing Committee business brought us all together in time for a shared evening meal; and the day was completed with a concert, highlighting the varied talents and passions for music, drama and poetry amongst Friends.

After a session on "Loose ends" and Meeting for Worship we left Lake Hume all the richer for our time together, and with many ideas to take back to our Meetings

(NOTE: The italics are added since the reading at Lake Hume)

Friends' Summer Gathering, Aotearoa New Zealand, 4 - 12 January 2006.

Friends visiting Aotearoa New Zealand are warmly invited to join us at our all-age Summer Gathering in Central Otago, inland from Dunedin in the South

Island. Most mornings we have programmes for adults and younger Friends. During the rest of the day there is leisure time, with plenty of activities and interest groups for those who want them.

Summer Gathering is to be held in the heart of the Maniototo, a distinctive part of Central Otago, rich in history and geographically quite different from other parts of New Zealand. The Maniototo enjoys a dry and warm to hot climate in January.

The site is well appointed for old and young alike. There are innersprungs, mattresses in double, twin and single rooms, wonderful lounges and verandahs with sweeping views across the Maniototo, facilities for wheel chairs, huge grounds, an extra large swimming pool and a raft of other facilities. It is on the backdoor of the Otago Central Rail Trail, for which bicycles can be hired, close to several historic goldmining towns and Ranfurly, the artdeco town of the south.

Our theme is "Bridging the gap - Letting the Light shine on our diversity". An exciting programme is being developed by Christchurch MM, including a Picnic Day when we all go to some local park or reserve for a picnic. In addition, there will be time for SG Interest Groups to visit many of the local attractions, such as Art Deco in Ranfurly, The Beautiful Yarn Co near Alexandra, historic villages such as Kyeburn Diggings, Wedderburn, St Bathans, Ophir, Lord of the Rings locations such as Poolburn Dam, Otago Rail Trail cycling and walking, goldfield locations walking and cycling, Roxburgh lake walks, Naseby Museums, Clutha River cruises and many others.

Dunedin MM will be organising transport from Dunedin city and airport and providing fabulous food. So come and enjoy this special part of the country, relax and re-energise yourself for the coming year.

Registration forms and further details, including cost, will be available on the Yearly Meeting website - <http://quaker.org.nz> - some time in July.

Or ask for them to be sent to you by e-mail to DN.clerk@quaker.org.nz or by post to Summer Gathering, P.O. Box 6083, Dunedin North, New Zealand.

We are sorry that we cannot offer any financial support to visiting Friends attending Summer Gathering.

by Elizabeth Duke

On Babies and Bathwater

There is talk of abolishing the much-criticised UN Commission on Human Rights and replacing it with a Human Rights Council, but does the Commission deserve such a bad press?

In the 17th Century, William Penn wrote (Essay Towards the Present and Future Peace of Europe, 1693) of the value of having a meeting at which government representatives would meet face to face. In so doing, he foreshadowed the various multilateral institutions and bodies which have been established over the years with the idea that if those with power were actually to meet and talk, wars could be averted. Unfortunately, this has not always proved to be the case, but Quakers still value the idea of engagement in face to face discussion, rather than seeking to impose change through force. This is as true in the human rights field as in others.

Our support for multilateral processes is not a naïve one. Such processes rarely produce clean, quick solutions. They are often boring, politicised, and frustratingly slow. However, it is based in the idea that real change comes from exposure to and discussion of different ideas, and to a certain amount of peer group pressure.

Where else than in the Commission on Human Rights has the USA in fact had to defend its policies and practices to other Governments, including the EU, in relation to detentions in Guantanamo Bay? This happened at the Commission because Cuba tabled a resolution on the subject. Of course it was not a disinterested move by Cuba – any more than the American resolution on human rights in Cuba is. Unsurprisingly, the resolution was defeated - only once (in relation to Chechnya) has a resolution been adopted on any of the permanent members of the Security Council - with the whole EU voting against, but Canada abstained and Mexico voted for it. Less significant than the vote, was that the threat of the resolution led the USA to arrange a series of meetings with

Governments and NGOs to explain its policy, and other Governments to publicly state their concerns and urge the USA to abide by international law and cooperate with the UN human rights mechanisms.

For QUNO, the Commission has been an important forum. This is the body which mandated the drafting of the Optional Protocol on child soldiers, and adopted it before forwarding it to the UN General Assembly for final adoption.

This is also the body which first recognised the existence of a right of conscientious objection to military service, and continues to discuss the issue annually. This year, QUNO helped to organise two meetings at which Conscientious Objectors from Angola, Eritrea, Israel, Russia and South Korea spoke, amongst others. It means much for such people to have the opportunity to expose the situation in their own country publicly, to meet like-minded individuals and organisations. We also helped some of them to prepare their statements for the formal sessions in the Commission and to understand how they can use the UN human rights system to address the situations in their own countries.

But the Commission is much more than resolutions and formal discussion. This is effectively the annual gathering of the world human rights community – governmental, NGO, independent experts and others. As much – or more – work gets done in the coffee bars and small group discussions where contacts are made or renewed, ideas exchanged and networks built. One of the potential dangers of replacing the Commission with a higher level body is that this would need a new system to be created for NGO participation, and it is not clear that Governments would be willing to provide the same kind of access that has been established over the years of the Commission's existence.

This year one of QUNO's objectives was to raise awareness about women in prison and children of imprisoned mothers. We had a new publication hot off the press on the specific issue of Babies and Young Children Residing in Prisons with their mothers. With this the QUNO team, including the Programme Assistant and

two volunteer interns, could talk to the heads of many governmental human rights departments and experts from capitals; with the UN human rights experts there to present their reports to the Commission (for example on Cambodia) and with the NGOs from around the world. One person commented: 'I didn't know anything about this issue, but now I'm hearing about it everywhere!' For this year, that's good enough: next year perhaps there will be a specific section in a resolution, or even a new resolution.

Ah – but that presupposes there will be a next year. The less positive aspects of the Commission – 'politicisation and selectivity' in the jargon – have led to proposals that it should be abolished. At this stage it is unclear what will happen. For QUNO, Commission or Council, what is important is that the 'Commission as forum' – the annual gathering of the human rights movement and opportunity for informal interaction is not lost – in the wish for a more 'efficient and effective' body.

Exciting Changes at QUNO

Over the past year or so there has been much discussion at the QUNO New York Office. It has been decided that in future overall responsibility for the Office will be taken by a committee of 10 Friends, similar in composition to that which oversees the QUNO Office in Geneva. Instead of a much larger committee from the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) the new committee will have 5 members from AFSC and 5 from FWCC, to make it more representative of Friends around the world. One of these FWCC representatives will be from the World Office in London, and one from each of the 4 Sections of FWCC - including our Section. We already have a representative on the Geneva Committee, and the International Nominations Committee is seeking a representative from our Section for the New York Committee. It is expected that an appointment will be made very soon.

This means that our Section will have representatives on both QUNO Committees. This is a great step forward. Our Section contains more than half the world's population, the majority of the world's languages, and Friends are more

widely dispersed than any other Section. It is important that we are represented on these Friends organisations.

Nancy Irving, the General Secretary of FWCC will be at the Seoul Gathering, and she will have up to date information on these exciting developments.

Both QUNO offices publish booklets and articles about the research they are doing. These can be found on their website <www.quno.org>. This website also includes an application form for you to be notified of any new material of this kind which is posted on it. Keep up to date with the work of QUNO !

by Eleanor Evans

A Quaker presence in Palestine

The old meeting house on the busy main street of Ramallah, in the Occupied Territories of Palestine was derelict until 2001, but it has recently been restored and is a pool of peace and quietness on Sunday morning - a normal working day for Palestinians.

On two Sundays during July, there were many visitors, from Scandinavia and the USA, as well as me from Australia. The simple stone hall was filled with a deep sense of unity in God's presence as we sang from the Quaker song book, and were offered a beautiful Negro Spiritual. I was staying in Bethlehem for an international conference on the rights of children in detention ? young offenders, young people in police cells, street children arrested for begging or sleeping on private property, sexually exploited children, children who have thrown stones at soldiers, children seeking asylum. These children suffer in many ways, not least from their invisibility and the stigma attached to detention or imprisonment.

We called for children's NGOs and for UN bodies to pay more attention to protecting children from violence, neglect and discrimination when they are "Kids behind Bars".

My journey from Bethlehem to Ramallah was difficult and time consuming, because of militarized restrictions on movement between Palestinian areas. For a 30k trip I had to take three taxis and walk through two long military checkpoints. But my journey to Hebron the following week was even more trying.

Hebron has been a focal place for religious Zionist settlers wanting to expand Israeli control and presence. This lovely, old city is surrounded by right wing settlements, army checkpoints and watch towers. Most of the old market is closed and a large sector of the city has been barred to Palestinians and Arabs. Violence by settlers includes house demolition, harassment of children and farmers, and shooting breaks out frequently. Much of the town's economy has collapsed and many residents have simply left.

Eventually I met up with John Lynes, an English Quaker, who is part of the Christian Peacemaker Team in Hebron and was shown around. There are 5 CPTers in Hebron, working in 3-month shifts. They go wherever there is a violent outbreak to offer a peacemaking presence, for example to shepherds who are being harassed off their traditional grazing areas, children who are being attacked on the way to school, householders whose house is threatened with illegal demolition. It is risky work.

The CP Ters are themselves harassed and have been physically attacked. It seems impossible to open any dialogue with the Israeli settlers. Recently, John Lynes painted a big banner very carefully in neat Hebrew script, saying "The Lord shall bless his people with peace" and the group devised a way to hang it in the main street on the Israeli side. It was torn down after a few days. As John said, "It is surprising that even this quotation from the Old Testament was offensive to some people."

If you would like more information about CPT, you can get it on their website: www.cpt.org More information about the Kids Behind Bars Conference and campaign is on www.dci-pal.org or www.defenceforchildren.nl

Helen Bayes
baymor@cyberone.com.au

The Section Gathering at Seoul 3-8th November

Registrations are rolling in from Friends who intend to be at the Gathering in Seoul. There is still room for more ! So far we have 8 definite bookings from Japan, with the possibility of some additional Young Friends coming on after the World Gathering of Young Friends, at least 5 and we hope more Indian Friends, 4 from Hong Kong, about 9 from Aotearoa/New Zealand, 10 from Australia and one from the FWCC World Office, as well as an unknown number of Korean Friends, all of whom are busy working to make the Gathering a success.. That sounds an amazing mix of Friends.

Korean Friends are undertaking a lot of the interpretation work, and are also planning an excursion for us on the 6th November. They hope to take us to the Demilitarised Zone between North and South Korea.

If you haven't yet indicated that you want to join the Gathering, would you please do so as soon as you can, so we can finalise some of the arrangements ? If you have trouble forwarding your fees in Australian dollars, please feel free to bring them to Seoul in US dollars, unless of course you live in South Korea. Then Won will be most acceptable.

The Registration fee, for registrations before 30.6.05, is the equivalent of US\$350. From 1.7.05 to 30th October, US\$400, and after 30.10.05, US\$450.

Accommodation and food for the 6 days of the Gathering will cost US\$200 for dormitory accommodation with floor beds and Korean plumbing. Accommodation and food for Friends who would prefer western beds, two to a room, and western plumbing will pay US\$250.

Accommodation and food for Friends who would prefer western beds and western plumbing with a room to themselves will have to pay an extra surcharge of only \$15 above the twin rate.

The two rates - the one for Registration and the one for accommodation and food need to be added together to reach the total cost of attendance at the Gathering.

These rates have been changed since those appearing in the March Newsletter. I will arrange reimbursement for some Friends who have paid more than these when we are together in Seoul, and apologise to those Friends who may have

been inconvenienced.

ADVANCE NOTICE RE. THE 22ND FWCC TRIENNIAL IN DUBLIN.13

It will be held at Kings Hospital(a Conference venue, not a real hospital) Dublin, Ireland, 10 - 19 August 2007.

Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) was set up in 1937 to act in a consultative capacity to promote better understanding among Friends the world over, particularly by the encouragement of joint conferences and inter-visitation, the collection and circulation of information about Quaker literature and other activities directed towards that end.'

The Asia-West Pacific Section (AWPS) of FWCC seeks to serve the affiliated widely dispersed Yearly Meetings as well as a number of small worshipping groups within our region. It also tries to maintain links with other Friends - isolated individuals and non-affiliated groups within the region.'

The Quaker United Nations Offices in Geneva and New York promote Friends' concerns at the United Nations such as human rights and refugees, disarmament and peace, global economic issues (Geneva) emerging and under-reported conflicts and the prevention of violent conflict (New York). There will soon be a Friend from our Section on each of the two QUNO committees.

All three of these organisations working on your behalf are dependent on donations to continue their work. If you wish to support any or all of them, please send your donations, clearly earmarked, to the YM Treasurer, Penelope Dunkley, (Rae Litting) who will forward them appropriately.

Eleanor Evan

Exploring The Colca Canyon in Southern Peru

With the splendid Spanish-influenced city of Arequipa as our base, the intrepid party of 2 SBW members traveled by bone rattling buses, letting in a generous layer dust at the seams. Our traveling companions in the main were delightful traditional Peruvians, carrying amazingly big bundles in embroidered shawls- sometimes a baby's head showed through, or it was filled with goods for sale in the markets.

Serious tourism is about to happen with brand new hotels and hostels and no doubt a boost in prices, but we felt happy not being hassled and treated with genuine friendliness.

Geologically the area is really unstable- signs of where to stand in the event of earthquakes are frequent as are huge cracks in walls- and even roads traversing cliff faces have long fissures which one day could wipe out that road. Peru is economically poor and drilling tunnels is obviously expensive. The plus is the sharp beauty of the skyline- snow capped volcanoes, steep valleys populated by tiny remote villages and the thermal pools- great for aching limbs and special relaxing sitting in warm sunshine enjoying a chicha (local alcoholic drink made from corn).

Walks so far have been on roads with occasional "hort cuts", which gets one into the complicated system of terraces. Prehispanic trails intersect, and already have guided tours on them. We met Edgardo, a young man with disability, who visits the canyons for inspiration, which he then translates into small collages with his impressions of the giant condor. Women in traditional long skirts, embroidered blouses and velvet waistcoats are in fields, ploughing, hoeing and gathering enormous sacks of potatoes, using very traditional farming methods. Owners of small herds of cows and donkeys keep careful watch as the danger of theft is high. A young traditional woman told us they liked the influx of tourists- I wonder if she can tell the impact we will have!

Evidence of Inca life abounds from the massive terraces, massive circular burial towers. The colcas (which gave the name to the Colca valley) are carved caves into the cliff wall and were used for food storage. The older generation still speak Quechua, but Spanish is now the official language taught at school. Tupac Amaru in the late 18C led an unsuccessful uprising against the Spanish. His statue stands proudly on the Plaza of the little village of Corporaque.

Traditional foods are available such as soup made from a small plant which grows

on the altiplano. I liked the tuna, or fruit of the cactus. There are lots of potato and rice with chicken dishes- but Pizza is becoming ubiquitous.

Wildlife is at its most spectacular in the condors, who rise and fall on the thermal currents of the canyons at sunrise hunting for food until sunset. The condor has a wing-span of about 2 metres and it is both awe inspiring and dangerous to seek close encounters. Fortunately, we were awe struck only. Little grey rabbit-like viscachas live in holes in the cliffs and the native stingless bees take their harvest into holes in the earth. On the Altiplano, occasionally protected wild vicñuas were seen from the bus, as were llamas, sheep and alpacas.

Internet cafes abound, which lessens the sense of isolation. Their excellent services can extend to assistance with CD burning from digital camera memory cards. Electricity is available from recently installed hydro power station to many remote areas. This makes life so much easier for the locals and of course the tourists.

Tourism by its nature changes so much. In the country side the only hazard are winding, narrow roads. In the larger towns you have to be careful of thieves. Music and entertainment is Westernized, food becomes blander and prices go up for everyone. The culture of the canyons has so much to teach us, but hurry there before it's too late.

Valerie Joy

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