

QUAKER INSTITUTE

# NEWSLETTER

FOR THE FUTURE

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## Moral Economy Project Obtains Book Contract

The Moral Economy Project (MEP) of Quaker Institute for the Future will have its first book published in January 2009 by Berrett-Koehler (BK), a San Francisco based publisher of progressive business, economics, and social change books. The book will be titled *Right Relationship: Building a Whole Earth Economy*. The BK editors were attracted to this book, in part, because of its Quaker context. While not explicitly a Quaker book, it developed from a two year process of collaborative discernment by a group of economists, ecologists, public policy professionals and social action practitioners associated with the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Quaker testimonies and values are central to the book's re-visioning of the economics-ecology relationship, and its effort to advance the struggle for effective global governance on behalf of the commonwealth of life.

*Right Relationship* has been co-authored by Peter G. Brown (McGill University, School of the Environment) and Geoffrey Garver (International Environmental Law and Policy Consultant) with the assistance of the MEP writing and editorial team. It will be actively promoted by the publisher and available through regular book trade outlets. MEP will hold a symposium on the book in early 2009 with a view to generating a companion publication of response and critique. A program of outreach and promotion within the Society of Friends will also be conducted during 2009-2010.

Although *Right Relationship* is a relatively short book, it presents substantial concepts, analysis and proposals. It is aimed at the general reader who is concerned to understand why the modern economy is locked into a crash course with Earth's ecosystems and headed for increasing violence over control of resources worldwide. It asks, and provides answers to, the question of what should and can be done to redeem this critical failure of economic and cultural adaptation. *Right Relationship* will be published in paperback and sell for \$16.95.

*Right Relationship* does not reflect an agreed on Institute view or program. It is much too wide-ranging and exploratory to be seen in that way. The Berrett-Koehler editor summed up her view in a complimentary way when she said, "This is a provocative book." QIF Board Members concur, as, no doubt, will many other Institute Associates and readers in general. The QIF Board sees the publication of *Right Relationship* as an exploratory contribution into a dialogue process that needs to rapidly engage both public policy professionals and the broad range of citizens. A new kind of decision making – essentially, a new kind of politics – needs to be invented in order to deal effectively with the increasing threat, and already mounting consequences, of ecological and social disruption. While Institute Board members – and even the authors - have reservations about certain aspects of the proposals presented, we are united in our sense of urgency on advancing this dialogue toward critically needed action on global economic and environmental governance. The QIF Board sees this offering as a beginning and anticipates substantial critiques and additional publications as the dialogue is joined and unfolds.

## **Circles of Discernment Program Underway**

The Circles of Discernment Program (CoD) is gathering a range of responses. Groups now forming around the CoD process have identified the following themes for study, research, and writing: Africa and its special problems of development; the history and causes of war; the place of non-profits in a market economy; the monetary system and international finance; natural capital, property rights, and the commons; the Norway model of progressive political economy; how money is created, disappears, and works, and the values involved in the process; Friends testimonies and fueling our future.

In addition to CoD's that are based in Friends Meetings, it has become evident that Friends at a distance can also effectively engage the CoD process. Another variation emerging is for individual researchers and writers to work collaboratively with the CoD coordinator, Keith Helmuth, and with members of the QIF Publications Committee and the Research Oversight Committee toward the creation and publication of a CoD pamphlet. Flexibility in these arrangements will expand and enhance the CoD process and the publications that can be expected. For full description of the CoD Program see the QIF brochure titled, "A Call to Circles of Discernment."

## **Summer Research Seminar**

After three years of successful sessions the Summer Research Seminar (SRS) is on sabbatical for 2008. It will resume in 2009. This program was initiated, convened, and hosted for its first two years by QIF Board Member, Gray Cox, and Acadia Friends Meeting, Bar Harbor, Maine. In 2007 the SRS moved to Berkeley, California. Convened and hosted here by QIF Board Clerk, Leonard Joy, and Strawberry Creek Friends Meeting, this session continued the pattern of combining individual research interests with a process of collaborative discernment. We have come to characterize the SRS process as "meeting for worship for the conduct of research." Information on the 2009 SRS will be posted on the QIF website.

## **Research Associates**

At this stage of its development, QIF is primarily a networking organization. Participants come together in various ways for various projects and programs. Persons who participate in these projects and programs are placed on our Research Associate roster. We have a vision for QIF that includes a community of place where Associates can gather for work and consultation, and to further engage the Quaker process of collaborative discernment. The realization of this vision depends on funding and, perhaps, a symbiotic relationship with a Quaker college or study center.

## **Emerging Themes**

As the work of the Institute has developed since its founding in 2003, two themes, in particular, among others, have emerged into deep and troubling reflection: (1) How do we relate ethical decision making to circumstances of risk that are essentially incalculable in their potential for damage and catastrophe? Quakers are strongly oriented toward purposeful problem solving in social and technical affairs, and seek the path of right decision making and right action in working out solutions. We are now increasingly confronted with technical and social problems for which there seem to be no good solution in terms of the ethical considerations we are used to employing. (2) How do we prepare ourselves, our families, our communities, our public policy process and our political economies for the disruptive changes that are occurring and on track to accelerate, like climate change.

For fifty years far seeing persons have been saying if we don't act now to correct our course it will soon be too late. In many important respects "too late" has arrived. Catastrophic consequences are in process. Mainstream scientists are now saying we have maybe 10 years – 20 at the most – to prevent the degree of climate change that will trigger incalculable, and almost unimaginable, consequences of breakdown for modern civilization. As unpleasant as these thoughts are, QIF is determined to hold them in focus in order to help Friends, and others, craft a response to our changing reality that carries ethical integrity, social equity, and ecological coherence at the heart of its process, whatever the human prospect turns out to be.

**Web Site:** [www.QuakerInstitute.org](http://www.QuakerInstitute.org)

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Quaker Institute for the Future is incorporated in California as a 501(c)3 scientific and educational organization.

