

Quaker Institute for the Future

NEWSLETTER

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Number 3

QIF Pamphlet Series Launched

Quaker Institute for the Future is launching a pamphlet series that aims to bring a Quaker voice to the global dialogue on the human prospect. The first volume is now available. *Fueling our Future: A Dialogue about Technology, Ethics, Public Policy, and Remedial Action*, edited by Judy Lumb, is the product of a Circle of Discernment (CoD) that was coordinated by Ed Dreby and Keith Helmuth.

This CoD process involved the participation of thirteen people over a year and half exploration of the technical and ethical aspects of the three most contested energy technologies - nuclear, coal and biofuels. Participants were in close agreement on some aspects of their discernment and divided on others – most notably, nuclear power. *Fueling our Future* is about advancing dialogue, not about closing the argument. Participants did agree on a set of framing principles for ethical decision making on energy technologies. These framing principles have been repeatedly noted by readers as an especially helpful feature of *Fueling our Future*.

Fueling our Future has been well received by Friends and by many others beyond the community of Friends who are also concerned about the ethical context of our energy future. *Fueling our Future* (67 pages, \$8.95) can be purchased from **QuakerBooks** of Friends General Conference. To order by phone call 800-966-4556. For online orders go to www.quakerbooks.org *Fueling our Future* can also be ordered through most bookstores and through other online book vendors.

It is dawning on more and more people that the human species is in an absolutely unprecedented situation with regard to our planetary circumstances. Not only has nothing like the current convergence of ecosystem decline, population spike, and climate disruption previously occurred in human history, but never before have we had such profound knowledge about earth's geochemical, thermal, and life systems functioning. Our advance understanding about the kinds of changes the planetary system is heading into, and our understanding of the triggers of change recent human economic behavior is tripping, puts all thinking persons on the edge of transformation on the one hand, and nightmare on the other.

Friends have long been skilled in the publication of pamphlets on the spiritual life and on peace and social justice work. **QIF Pamphlets** are dedicated to picking up this educational mission and applying the perspective of Friends testimonies to the now increasingly lethal conflict between economic behavior and the resilience of Earth's ecosystems on which all life depends. **QIF Pamphlets** are dedicated to advancing "the evolutionary potential of Quakerism" (Kenneth Boulding) at the most fundamental level of right relationship – the human-earth relationship. Pamphlets on natural capital and the commons, monetary system reform, food ethics, and on the connection between individual and societal transformation are in the works.

Right Relationship Goes into Second Printing!

It was a great day for **QIF** and its **Moral Economy Project** when the publisher of our book, *Right Relationship: Building a Whole Earth Economy*, announced it was going to a second printing. When **Berrett-Koehler's** marketing man gave us the good news, he said they now regard *Right Relationship* as a successful book. In terms of the commercial book trade, this is a real achievement. **BK** is a small publisher specializing in progressive business books, and *Right Relationship* was a bit of a stretch for them. But our editor at **BK**, Johanna Vondeling, believed in its potential and provided the guidance the authors needed to put the book together in a way that makes it readily accessible without compromising the depth and breadth of its message. When finished copies rolled off the press, she told us we had now done half the work required to create a successful book. Thus, the second phase of book project was launched – outreach.

From mid winter to early fall 2009 the contributing authors have been on intensive schedules of outreach assisted by professional publicists in both radio and print media. **Peter Brown** and **Geoffrey Garver** have participated in numerous radio interviews, have published several op ed articles and made numerous other presentations. **Keith Helmuth** made presentations at seven Yearly Meetings and three ecumenical conferences in both the US and Canada. Geoff and Keith made four presentations at the **Friends General Conference Gathering**. **Steve Szeghi** and Keith conducted a workshop at the **Friends Association for Higher Education Annual Conference**. Steve has spoken at two economics conferences. **Robert Howell** has made presentations in New Zealand, Australia, India, and the UK. Peter Brown made presentations in London, Geneva, Rome, and Nairobi. Garver spoke at a conference in Amsterdam in December. Bookshop events, book study programs, and participation in professional conferences have helped build a growing interest in the ideas and proposals of **Right Relationship**. The book has been reviewed in both print media and on a variety of websites. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting has selected **Right Relationship** as the first book in its new “One Book, One Yearly Meeting” reading program

BK has notified us that **Right Relationship** will be featured in the magazine “Lufthansa Executive” which the German airline sends to the homes of 260,000 of its select customers, It is also scheduled to be featured in the “Shanghai Daily.” For this level of attention to continue building almost a year after publication is an indication that **Right Relationship** is touching a solid and on going level of interest. **Right Relationship** has been widely stocked in the large chain bookstores as well as in many independent bookshops. It is readily available online and can also be ordered from **QuakerBooks** at the phone number and website noted above.

Right Relationship Featured at Montreal Symposium

QIF and the **Moral Economy Project** hosted a two day Symposium in Montreal in May 2009 that gathered over 60 participants to focus on the ideas and proposals of **Right Relationship**. The Symposium looked closely at “**frontiers of governance, frontiers of policy and frontiers of social action,**” and produced a sequence of recommendations aimed at rapid social policy and institutional change. The entire Symposium was recorded and will soon have major sections posted to the website www.moraeconomy.org

Summer Research Seminar at Berkeley

QIF's fourth **Summer Research Seminar (SRS)** was held in July at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley CA. Twelve participants spent the week long period sharing presentations from their work in a setting of collaborative discernment, and in working on their individual research projects. In 2010 the **SRS** will again be held in Berkeley the third full week in July. The **SRS** welcomes both scholarly and action oriented research contributions. For further information on joining this unique Quaker event, contact Shelley Tanenbaum, Clerk of **QIF** at sheltan@pacbell.net or write to 526 Cornel Ave., Albany, CA 94706

Circles of Discernment

QIF's **Circles of Discernment Program** continues to develop online. E-mail exchanges and conference calls are giving Friends at a distance, who share the same research interest, the ability to work effectively in a collaborative manner. Contact Keith Helmuth at ekhelmuth@mindspring.com or P.O. Box 887, Houlton ME 04730 for information on the Circles of Discernment Program and how it feeds into **QIF Pamphlet** publication.

Moral Economy Project II

Now that the book, **Right Relationship**, has been published, **QIF**'s Board of Trustees is gearing up for **Moral Economy Project II**. In the last two years it has become increasingly evident to a wide range of people that something is fundamentally wrong with the economic system on which much of the world now depends. The door of systemic reform is ready to be pushed open. We have known for some time that this capital driven approach to economic adaptation is degrading ecosystem integrity and exacerbating social inequity, making it increasing unsustainable in a crowded and fragile world. The new element that has now emerged in startling

relief is the dysfunctional structure of the financial system. This system has long been regarded as a perfectly sound, self-regulating mechanism for fostering economic growth and wealth accumulation. No more!

In the aftermath of its near collapse, and now ersatz recovery, two things have become evident: (1) The current financial system cannot, even in its own terms, guarantee economic growth, or even stability; (2) Economic growth has become “uneconomic” in the wealthy and overdeveloped regions of the world. Where economic growth is now overshooting Earth’s bioproductive and bioassimilative capacities, the negative effects are outweighing the positive benefits. Even if temporarily masked by the mantra of “recovery,” this framework of human adaptation is heading into a tunnel of confrontation with the on coming reality of Earth systems - systems that operate without deference to the human prospect. A new piece of folk wisdom has recently surfaced in the media that describes our situation: “Mother Earth does not negotiate!”

Clearly, collective human adaptation must back out of this tunnel fast and be put on another track. To change the metaphor, we must build a policy ladder that, step by step, allows human adaptation to climb down from its unsustainable use of materials and energy, and get its feet back on the ground of Earth’s ecological reality. An intelligent response to the way Earth systems actually work now requires creative curtailment of material and energy throughput in the overdeveloped regions of the world. This is a very different way of looking at the human situation than we have long been conditioned to see as normal. We are not, however, without examples or knowledge of how to approach this collective human task of ecologically sound re-adaptation. There are still communities and cultures from which we can learn that draw the circle of adaptation within the bounty and boundary of Earth’s functional limits.

In broad terms, the next stage of **QIF’s Moral Economy Project** will be to investigate and assemble a range of public policies that address this historic task. We see Quaker testimonies as our context of guidance, and the collaborative discernment of Quaker process as our core methodology. We see a wave of moral resurgence in public life, and the rise of an ethical commitment to the common good. This moral stance and ethical practice must be rapidly brought into place at all levels of jurisdiction from local to global. We see Friends making a significant contribution to this movement.

The **Moral Economy Project II** will likely include a variety of consultations, the results of which will be published in several forms. Its aim will be to offer coherent policy alternatives into the frontlines of public dialogue and, thus, help chart a way out of the ecological, economic and social catastrophe that is building. We do not imagine the Project will be able offer anything highly original in scope or substance – there is so much excellent work already being done: Rather, we believe that in keeping faith with the Quaker heritage, the Institute’s work can build a significant moral component into policy analysis, and contribute a seasoned dialogue process to the struggle in which we are collectively engaged with many other groups world wide. For further information on **MEP II** contact **Phil Emmi**, Clerk of the Research Committee at philemmi@mac.com or write to 1968 E. Herbert Ave., Salt Lake City, UT 84108

Financial Support

Quaker Institute for the Future depends on the financial contributions of persons who are drawn to support its programs. It employs no staff at the present time and relies on the volunteer efforts of the Board of Trustees and Institute Associates to develop and guide its programs and projects. The **Institute** and **MEP** received a **generous private grant** for the creation of the book, ***Right Relationship***, and for the outreach that followed publication. We now need regular contributions from persons who believe in the importance of **QIF’s** programs and projects. Please consider becoming a sponsoring supporter of the **QIF Pamphlet** project, or of the second stage of the **Moral Economy Project**. We hope to assemble a dedicated core of support associates, who are eager to involve themselves in the **Institute’s** work and become part of its growing network.

Contributions are tax deductible in the US according 501(c)3 Federal law. A receipt will be provided. Please send contributions to **Elaine Emmi, Treasurer, Quaker Institute for the Future, 1968 E. Herbert Ave., Salt Lake City, UT 84108**. For further information on becoming a supporting associate contact **Keith Helmuth** at ekhelmuth@mindspring.com or write to P.O. Box 887, Houlton ME 04730. Thanks for your consideration.

QIF Board of Trustees

Shelley Tanenbaum (Clerk), Strawberry Creek MM, Pacific YM; Elaine Emmi (Treasurer), Salt Lake City MM, Intermountain YM; Keith Helmuth (Secretary) New Brunswick MM, Canadian YM; Daniel Seeger (Recording Clerk), Moorestown MM, PYM.Gray Cox, Acadia MM, NEYM; Phil Emmi, Salt Lake City MM, Intermountain YM; Geoffrey Garver, Buffalo MM, NYYM; Laura Holliday, Live Oak MM, South Central YM; Leonard Joy, Strawberry Creek MM, Pacific YM; Anne Mitchell, Toronto MM, Canadian YM.

Extracts from *Right Relationship*

“In a profound sense, economics and ecology are domains of relationship. Economics is about access to the means of life. Ecology is about the mutual interdependence of life communities. Using right relationship as a unifying mechanism, this book brings these two perspectives together, pivoting the lens of human solidarity and the lens of ecological science into a single focus. Right relationship becomes the central motif both in the social design of human well-being, and in ecologically sound economic adaptation. The Quaker tradition teaches that in right relationship, people may touch the fullness of human meaning, and, some would say, the presence of the Divine. Quaker practice is about elevating all areas of human policy and practice into this zone of right relationship.” (p. xvi)

“The analogy of introducing a new computer system in parallel with old one is helpful here. The shift works if professionals develop the new system as much as possible in advance. In the case of new forms of global [environmental] governance, new or reformed institutions should be conceptually designed and promoted to the maximum, even if the opportunity to implement them is not yet in sight. Unforeseen events – knocks to society’s collective head – may suddenly crumble shaky institutions. New openings for new governance models will appear, sometimes suddenly. A bank of well-developed, participatory models and democratic implementation plans ready to go may make the difference between a lurch into social chaos, followed by political authoritarianism, or a transition to cooperative governance for the common good.” (p. 164-5)

Extracts from *Fueling our Future*

“Climate change and energy futures are splitting the environmental movement. Some environmentalists now defend nuclear power from an ethical point of view. Others are appalled. Opinions differ over whether solar, wind, and other non-carbon energy technologies can keep the lights on. Some hold out hope for “clean coal,” and deep earth storage of captured carbon. Others say this is economically unfeasible and dangerous. A rush to bio-fuels is touted as “green energy.” Others see it as sacrificing food for fuel. Our energy future is stacked with technical options and policy dilemmas, but above all with ethical choices. Quakers expert in both the technical and ethical issues, provide key information, critical analysis, and thoughtful dialogue on choices for our energy future. *Fueling our Future* will assist concerned citizens in their evaluation of public policy and personal choices.” (Back cover)

“Is it reasonable to assume that a nation that mobilized technology and social cooperation with the speed it did for the second World War, cannot now, in the face of climate change, mobilize its technology and people for the rapid redevelopment and transformation of its electricity system, and its energy systems in general? At worst, a shortfall of the capacity to power all current end uses may occur, and a sloughing off of non-essential consumption would be required to meet basic service. Such an adjustment could be seen as the force of necessity moving our society in an ecologically responsible direction. This would not be unlike the food rationing of the Second World War that produced flourishing “victory gardens” over the whole country.”

“Meeting the climate change emergency requires a degree of economic wisdom, social organization, information synthesis, and technological integration that greatly exceeds anything we have ever experienced. Whatever we are going to do responsibly requires a degree of human cooperation that we have never seen happen on this scale.” (p.57-8)

Prepared by Keith Helmuth,, QIF Secretary

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