

Concerning Economic Policy and Friends Testimonies

Pendle Hill, Wallingford, PA, USA

Third First Day, Sixth Month, 2003

To Friends Everywhere,

We greet you as 29 individuals, belonging to 19 monthly and 11 yearly meetings. Many among us are or have been actively involved with organizations such as the American Friends Service Committee, Canadian Friends Service Committee, Friends Association for Higher Education, Friends Committee on Unity with Nature, Quaker Eco-Witness, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Friends General Conference, and Friends World Committee for Consultation.

We have gathered at Pendle Hill to explore a concern we all share about economic policies as they relate to issues of peace, justice, equality, and restoring the earth's ecological integrity. We believe the human-earth relationship in all its aspects is inseparable from our relationship with the Divine. We are convinced that the current economic system should be of urgent concern to the Religious Society of Friends. It is intensifying economic and social inequities throughout the world, causing structural and physical violence, driving many species to extinction, and leading our own species toward ecological self-destruction.

Through our worshipful deliberations, we have come to unity in urging all Friends, especially those in the United States and Canada, to make individual and corporate commitments to learning more about certain fundamental aspects of current economic policies and institutions as they relate to Friends' historic testimonies. Specifically, we encourage Friends to ask themselves the following:

In light of Friends' Testimonies, what is God calling us to do about the continuing and increasing marginalization of so much of the world's population, the extinction of species, and other environmental degradation?

How do we integrate our human community within the natural world so as to provide for the physical and spiritual needs of future generations?

What changes in the institutions of economy and governance are needed to promote effective stewardship of the natural environment and caring for people and communities?

What is it in nature and human knowledge that we have the right to own?

How best can we promote the values expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Earth Charter?

How can we promote understanding and awareness of the consequences of increasing global interconnectedness and the urgency of addressing the dangers and opportunities that these present?

As we earn, spend, and invest money, as individuals and as meeting communities, how can we live in the "virtue of that life and power" that leads us to treat all humans and the Earth as a manifestation of the Divine?

Are we aware of the true cost of our consumption? Do we take into account our concerns for social justice as we earn, spend, and invest money?

What information, tools, and skills do we need to equip ourselves to work effectively for public policies that restore Earth's resilience, increase social equity, and strengthen community?

How can we engage with others in ways that help us discern God's will for us, at this critical stage in Earth's history, as we labor with these concerns?

Quaker Eco-Witness, a project of Friends Committee on Unity with Nature, and the Environmental Working Group of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting have collaborated in bringing us to Pendle Hill. They will also collaborate with us in preparing a collection of short articles, questions to help clarify Friends' understanding, and queries to encourage Friends' individual and corporate discernment about the concerns we raise. We have agreed to pursue a number of tasks designed to create and draw together existing material on economics and ecology as resources for our meetings and wider communities. We hope you will make use of these materials when they become available in the late fall or early winter.

In the Light, Elaine C. Emmi, Recording Clerk