

Editing *The Canadian Friend* by Anne-Marie Zilliacus

I may be quite prejudiced, but I think of *The Canadian Friend* as the most important communication tool that we have in Canadian Yearly Meeting. It is the place where we can become publishers of the truth. It is where we can share concerns with other Friends, share our spiritual journeys, and begin to explore different aspects of our faith together as Canadian Friends. It is a place where we can deepen our knowledge of the various issues that we are concerned with as a Meeting, where we can educate new Friends and remind old Friends of our history and path together. These are just some of the ways we can and do use our national magazine.

When you are editor you can ask a lot of Canadian Friends. You just set a theme on an issue you are interested in and then ask all the weightiest Friends in the Yearly Meeting to tell you all about it. The funny thing is, they feel honoured to be asked to write an article, when really they are giving a gift of their memories and experiences. A few years ago I devoted a whole issue to the theme of Quakers and Native Concerns. It turned into a history of Canadian Friends Service Committee's involvement in these issues, and in fact documented the beginning of the Quaker Aboriginal Affairs Committee. I learned a lot from that issue, and I'm sure others did too. So the Native Concerns issue was interesting from a historical point of view, but it will also be a good source to look at when we begin compiling extracts for the new Faith and Practice.

The concern to have a Canadian Faith and Practice was also helped along through *The Canadian Friend*. Members of Quaker Book Service Committee (which cornered the market on remaindered copies of Christian Faith and Practice and stored them in the Mullen's basement) realized that in ten years we could run out of Christian Faith and Practice and that the Yearly Meeting would have to start work on a volume of its own. Knowing that, I devoted an issue of *The Canadian Friend* to the Faith and Practice of Canadian Friends. That issue had articles by Betty Polster and Dana Mullen (who later became members of the Faith and Practice Review Committee) as well as from Jan Hoffman (Sunderland P. Gardner lecturer at Yearly Meeting in 1998) and Elizabeth Cave, editor of *Quaker Monthly* in Britain Yearly Meeting. (Elizabeth was on the committee that produced that famous red book, *Quaker Faith and Practice*.) After that issue, my Meeting (Ottawa) and Western Half-Yearly Meeting sent minutes to CYM asking that CYM begin work on a Faith and Practice of our own. I think that issue was a good example of the way *The Canadian Friend* can be used to further a concern. I encourage Friends to do that.

Most people are aware by now that *The Canadian Friend* will be looking for a new editor to begin work in 2002, and that the issue of December 2001 will be the last I edit. I have to say, it's been a quite wonderful experience for me and I'm sure that it will be a wonderful, but different, experience for the next editor.

What I thought might be useful, as a sort of sales pitch for people who might be considering applying for this position, would be for you to know what it has been like for me to be editor. Well, like any job, there are warts. But on the whole it has been wonderful - in fact, a life-changing experience.

Before I was editor of *The Canadian Friend*, I was a Monthly Meeting Friend. My first year as editor was my first year at Canadian Yearly Meeting. I didn't know anyone who wasn't from my own Meeting. That has certainly changed in the six years I've been editor. Now I know most faces at Yearly Meeting, and have met many Friends from across Canada and the United States. However, at first I used to go through the meeting telephone directory and pick any name I recognized and some I didn't, to ring and ask for an article. It seemed that just telling them I was editor of *The Canadian Friend* was enough to allow me to ask for nearly anything! Friends are very generous with their time and creativity. That way I met Betty Polster, Ursula Franklin, Betty Peterson.

So what are the warts? Well, time I spend, on average, four full days a month taking care of *The Canadian Friend*. (I could put in a lot more time, but I have another full-time job as well as a family and responsibilities in my Monthly Meeting.) Time is spent in sifting through articles received, obviously, but also corresponding with authors, soliciting ads, looking for graphics, writing letters to ask for articles, telephoning long lists of people to brainstorm about themes, ask for articles. Then, before I send the magazine off to Argenta Friends Press, I spend two to three full weekends doing the copy editing and layout. I also do some visitation on behalf of the magazine, attend two HMAC meetings a year, and am occupied the full week of CYM with *The Canadian Friend*. I ask a lot of Friends for articles and illustrations that week, and find that people are happier to see me at the beginning of the week than at the end - when they get a rather hunted look at my approach.

One of the things that has been a challenge has been having the magazine printed so far away. It shouldn't be a problem in this day and age of communication, but Argenta Friends Press is in a very small town that receives mail only twice a week. I have to use the post office because couriers will not deliver to a general post office address. So that adds a week to the time it takes to get there. It also means that I don't receive proofs back for approval because that would add another two weeks (one each way). The press is under the care of Argenta Monthly Meeting, although it isn't staffed by Friends. The printing press they use is about 25 years old - but it's fairly new to them. I understand that it is much better than the old days when the press was in the basement of Argenta Friends School, and the ink flowed better in the summer than the winter, but even today they have difficulty with graphics. Photographs have to be extremely clear, and black and white is preferable. Illustrations are best if they are line drawings because shading can be problematic. However, they do the best they can under those circumstances and they have a very friendly and cooperative staff.

As editor I am an ex officio member of the Home Mission and Advancement Committee. The committee has become much smaller in the last six years and so I participate in all aspects of the committee work, not just that concerned with *The Canadian Friend*. There have been times when I have gone to Representative Meeting when the HMAC Clerk has been unable to, and I have also attended several Finance Committee Meetings. Although these are not part of the work of the editor, it has certainly given me a very wide view of Canadian Yearly Meeting.

Being at Yearly Meeting is part of my job, gathering articles and bringing CYM to those who cannot be there. I also represent *The Canadian Friend* at other gatherings and report on them. Last year I attended Friends World Committee for Consultation Triennial in New Hampshire. I've represented the magazine at Atlantic Friends Gathering a couple of times, Pelham Half-Yearly Meeting, Friends General Conference and the Quaker Women's Theology Conference. I hope to go to Western Half-Yearly before my term as editor ends. I think it's important to visit Friends, to hear what they have to say and to get to know as many as possible personally - it helps when you want to ask them to write later! Not just that though. It helps to bring us together, to communicate with each other, to share our spiritual journeys, to know each other in that which is eternal.

I know that the next editor will learn and grow as much as I have and I look forward to seeing what more they can do with *The Canadian Friend*.

Anne-Marie Zilliacus is a member of Ottawa Monthly Meeting.

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