

# Special Interest Groups (SIGs): Peace; Quaker Ecology Action Network

By Bill Currie

## SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP ON PEACE

We brought together three peace SIGs: Nonviolence Training and Teams; Peacemaking and Trauma Healing; Middle East Peace Work.

We began with the Nonviolent Peace Force video, made a lot of links among peace actions, and concluded with several steps we wish to take.

We named ways war harms innocent victims, doctors and nurses, military personnel, and their families. We see a continuum from humanitarian relief and development, to prevention of war and violence, peacekeeping, and peace-building. In the aftermath of breakdown and attack (in areas served by ambulance teams and Doctors Without Borders) we see stages: immediate survival, ongoing needs for trauma healing, and long-term recovery. We discussed peace through health, and medical models for peacemaking.

We paid particular attention to Sri Lanka, Colombia, Iraq, Canada, and Palestine.

Among other things, we recommend Canadian Friends' participation in the World Peace Forum, Vancouver, 23–28 June 2006.

We also recommend:

- Nonviolent Peace Force <<http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org>>
- Peace Brigades International <<http://www.peacebrigades.org>>
- Christian Peacemaker Teams <<http://www.cpt.org>>

- Friends Peace Teams <<http://www.friendspeaceteams.org>>
- Alternatives to Violence Project <<http://www.avpcanada.ca>> and <<http://avpinternational.org>>
- Médecins Sans Frontières <<http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org>>
- Physicians for Global Survival <<http://www.pgs.org>>
- World Peace Forum <<http://www.peace.ca/worldpeaceforumvancouver.htm>>
- International Middle East Media Centre <<http://www.imemc.org>>
- Palestinian Centre for Rapprochement <<http://www.rapprochement.org>>
- The Wall Must Fall campaign <<http://www.thewallmustfall.ca>>

Physicians for Global Survival states: Abolition of war is a medical imperative.

TO JOIN A CANADIAN QUAKER PEACE AND JUSTICE E-LIST, PLEASE CONTACT LYN ADAMSON <[LADAMSON@IDIRECT.COM](mailto:LADAMSON@IDIRECT.COM)>

## SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS ON QUAKER ECOLOGY ACTION NETWORK

Quaker Ecology Action Network hosted two Special Interest Groups during CYM, on the implications of the Earth Charter and our work for peace on and with the earth.

The first session reviewed the practical work of Friends and

Monthly Meetings, e.g. meeting houses. We heard quite a few good examples of Friends' ecology action and witness.

We reviewed the Earth Charter, with attention to some clauses of concern for Yonge Street MM. We acknowledged that while some of us are more engaged and some just beginning to be involved, others have not begun the process.

We were informed of the Earth Charter review, November 7-9 this year in Amsterdam, to which we can bring concerns (as well as helping gather a Canadian report).

We were reminded of the Sustainability Minute CYM adopted in 2001, and we were encouraged to guest edit the December 2005 ecology issue of *The Canadian Friend*, with the theme Living in the Spirit: Honouring the Earth.

The second session followed consideration of the Earth Charter on the floor of Yearly Meeting, which reaffirmed support for the Earth Charter and challenged QEAN to convey some of the nuances of concern. In particular, Friends oppose all war. QEAN has a role in gathering a Canadian report for the Earth Charter review, as well as expressing Canadian Friends' concerns through international Friends at the review.

We considered our structural relationship with CYM and agreed to take steps toward QEAN being a Standing Committee of CYM. We reaffirmed our decision-making protocol for ongoing work: to make QEAN better known throughout

CYM, and to engage more Friends ecologically, we are preparing some queries for local Meetings.

We recommend exploring the

Earth Charter website at <<http://www.earthcharter.org>>. 🌱

TO JOIN THE QEAN E-LIST,  
PLEASE CONTACT PEGGY LAND

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*Bill Currie is a member of Prairie Monthly Meeting.*

# The Earth Charter Reconsidered

By Bert Horwood

**T**he Earth Charter is a comprehensive list of principles needed for humans to live without destroying the basis of life. It is disseminated by the Earth Charter Initiative. Details on the Initiative, its Annual Report, lists of endorsing organisations and International Commissioners are available from Mirian Vilela, Executive Director, Earth Charter International Secretariat, c/o University for Peace, P.O.Box 319-6100, San José, Costa Rica, or at <[www.earthcharter.org](http://www.earthcharter.org)>.

Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM) endorsed the Charter in 2004. At that time I had read only the Charter. I was impressed by its obvious merits and suppressed my vague sense of discomfort and unease in order to unite with Friends to endorse it. The Charter was clearly a “good thing” for the future of the earth and the peaceable “kingdom.”

That feeling of unease returned when I read the article from Yonge Street Monthly Meeting stating that the Charter fell short of matching our Peace Testimony. I was not persuaded by the Yonge Street minute (CF Vol. 101, #3, p. 21) but I was led to study the Charter and the 2004 Annual Report of the Initiative. I compared the Charter and Report to my 45 year’s of experiences and observations as an environmental and earth educator.

Those experiences convinced me some years ago that educating the young in both Environmental Science and Earth Education courses only made smarter polluters. I was forced to conclude that my teaching had largely failed to lead anyone to make choices in favour of earth care. It didn’t matter what people knew. They (and I) continued to act in social conformity and eager consumerism. Education and awareness did not touch the wellsprings of action. They did not start the process which one Friend has called “necessary

cultural transformation.” Education and awareness do not point to environmental issues as being matters of right and wrong.

A general conclusion was opened to me: People act on feelings, not on knowledge. In spiritual terms, they act as they are led. To make a difference in how humans treat the earth it is necessary to touch the well-spring of action, the heart. Exactly like my professional practice, the Earth Charter fails to touch that emotive wellspring. Neither makes us care. Caring comes from some other place. Neither makes us see our treatment of earth as matters of right and wrong.

That leaves me feeling that the Charter is largely inconsequential. It won’t have much effect because it lacks affect. Endorsement is neither here nor there, except that it focuses our attention and energy on that which can’t help us make a difference. It misdirects our efforts. And it’s too easy for organisations to become self-congratulatory as endorsers, not that I see any evidence of that within CYM.

**A** second factor in my mind is the work of the Quaker International Affairs Program in Ottawa, which has taken on a special concern to stop patenting life forms and other corporate interference with biodiversity and the integrity of seeds. CYM supports this concern, yet at our yearly gathering we buy food produced in ways we oppose. In the same way, we stand for social justice, yet corporately we buy products which support agencies destroying the land and lives of third-world farmers. The Earth Charter discussion reveals a serious disconnect between our actions and our words.

There is something vastly more significant than the Earth Charter. It is putting values and principles which protect the biosphere into action. It’s acting to transform our culture of conformity and frantic consumer-

ism. It's doing what's right, regardless of convenience, habit, or cost.

Past Friends were often urged to exhort one another in righteousness and keeping the testimonies. In that spirit, troubled by my own shortcomings, I offer suggestions for ways in which CYM could continue our first halting steps to actually make a difference in earth care. These thoughts apply as well to individuals, and I know that some Friends already do a great deal in these respects.

Here is a list of challenging and radical demands that we could make upon ourselves and upon those with whom we make transportation arrangements when we travel to YM in session—if we were moved to walk our talk. Some Friends already make use of shared driving and surface public transport rather than air travel. The food co-op shows the way in the use of organic and fair-trade food. The indoor food supply abuses the earth. At snacks, a few Friends bring their own mugs, but most of us drink from throwaway containers. Committee Clerks have reduced wasted paper

somewhat, yet there is persistent waste. And so on.

To list small things is trivial and possibly hurtful to those who have been really trying. Everyone of us, especially in YM in session, should participate fully in deeply transforming our culture. Each of us must help each other to bring those values we endorse into reality. It surely cannot be all right with the Creator that the creatures are destroying the creation.

Some of these measure will, at first, increase costs. We must find ways to more dramatically pool financial resources so that those who already live simply and close to the poverty line will not be excluded.

If we fail in these things while endorsing the Charter and our International Affairs Program, it is the Testimony to Integrity which is offended. When our beloved Yearly Meeting fails to enact its stated values, we dishonour our word and miss the mark demanded by Truth. ☹

*Bert Horwood is a member of Thousand Islands Monthly Meeting*



## *Canadian Yearly Meeting National Listeners for Young Friends and Adults*



Canadian Yearly Meeting National Listeners are available to listen to any Canadian Friend disclose harm done on matters of sexual harassment or abuse, or any other topic a Friend may need to discuss.

If you need a listener, the first step is to approach a trusted Friend within your Monthly Meeting (MM), or to go to your MM Ministry and Counsel. If this path is not comfortable, you may contact a National Listener. Listeners seek to be present from a place of spirit-centred openness – to hold the caller and the situation in the Light, and to listen with tenderness. Knowing the healing that comes from simply being heard, we offer you a safe and confidential space in which to speak. One call might be all you need. If not, we have the task of discerning with you what a next step could be: whether a committee of care, of clearness, or of oversight might be appropriate; or how to find other possible resources. The *National Listeners* for adult Friends are:

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|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • <b>Ed Belzer:</b>         | Telephone: (902) 384-2730 | Email: belzer@ns.sympatico.ca |
| • <b>Dorothy Janes:</b>     | Telephone: (905) 685-1022 | Email: dorothyj@idirect.com   |
| • <b>Rose Marie Cipryk:</b> | Telephone: (905) 684-9924 | Email: rmcipryk@cogeco.ca     |
| • <b>Jay Cowsill:</b>       | Telephone: (905) 685-1022 | Email: jmc590@mail.usask.ca   |

Additionally, the following *National Listeners for Young Friends* are now also available:

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|-----------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| • <b>Julie Paradis:</b>     | Telephone: (403) 284-5946 | Email: turtlekate@telus.net  |
| • <b>Peter Stevenson:</b>   | Telephone: (765) 983-2054 | Email: stevepe@earlham.edu   |
| • <b>Nat Egan-Pimblett:</b> | Telephone: (604) 826-8859 | Email: data_dyne@hotmail.com |

*Whenever possible, please contact us first to arrange a mutually convenient time to speak later.*