

## Quakers and Social Oppression

The minutes of the "Genesee Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends," held at Bloomfield, Ontario, in June, now issued, indicate the scope of the deliberations thereat. Some of these may be of interest to your readers as manifesting the attitude of one religious body towards the Social and Economic oppression standing in the way of Justice and Brotherhood.

It is well to remember the Orthodox Christian Church in the past as largely concerned in cultivating through materialistic, kindergarten and dramatic means, certain dogmatic feats of faith and a spiritual qualification for an abundant entrance to the life beyond. It has in its way made appeal for the spiritual side of life as of first importance—"seek first the Kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you." Religion from various motives, lofty and otherwise, has been regarded as too sacred to mix with the common affairs of every-day life. This omission has led to other fraternal and special economic and materialistic methods of reform, which appear to rather invert the method laid down by the injunction quoted if not to ignore the inward and spiritual control altogether.

Neither the church nor Social Economic associations have entered very sympathetically into each other's fears, fancies and facts.

The solution, from the Quaker standpoint, and from the viewpoint of many others, is not to be found in either attitude, but in the unity of both. The church is already taking off its gloves and making overtures.

Quakerism stands for a Christianity, a soul life, a spiritual consciousness related to all the occupations and activities of this life as they come day by day. However valuable as an inspiration, love, truth, justice, and brotherhood are not to be secured simply by lifting one's longing eyes to the Elysian fields beyond. The parochial achievement of these for this life, under the high motive power of Divine immanence, gives to the democratic society of Friends a natural approach to the unity essential to the evolutionary solution of our economic and fraternal problems.

It need not surprise you readers to learn that there is a Friends Socialist Society, in touch with the London yearly meeting, that the stewardship of wealth, the investigations of economic conditions and co-operative methods have received and are receiving attention as matters of every-day religious concern.

To "Friends" (or Quakers), religion is not a scheme or plan to escape in the next world the consequences of wrong-doing in this. Religion is not a matter of theology, a scheme or plan of salvation chiefly for the world to come. It is the life, character and salvation in and for the present day. It arises from a conscience obedient to the touch of a Divine Spirit, that moves life and character into action, love into justice and brotherhood. Systems of taxation, the distribution of wealth, the adequacy of wages, the division of profits, will aid, but such alone is not enough. The absence of a compelling religious conscience in the actual working, managing affairs of life, that has permitted and left open the door of opportunity, to the present reign of injustice, economic grab and poverty must not remain absent. Religion and economics, the Divine and the human must unite.

Since nature, and men especially, are the temples of the living God through which he expresses Himself, and conscience becomes the inner temple, the Friend cannot bring himself to the destruction of that temple in any war,

social, industrial, or international.

From the revised advices we take the following:

In order that Friends may be led into an individual examination whether their life is consistent with their profession and may faithfully administer counsel, admonition and encouragement, the following queries are to be read and deliberately considered:

Second Query.—Do Friends maintain love and fellowship towards all as becomes our Christian Profession?

Third Query.—Do our Members maintain a faithful testimony in favor of a free ministry resting upon Divine qualification?

Fourth Query.—Are Friends striving through reason and love to promote justice, liberty and peace and to live consistently in the maintenance of a faithful testimony against war and incentives to it and preparations for its "abiding in the life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars?"

Fifth Query.—Is due regard paid to the proper education of all?

Seventh Query.—Are Friends truthful? Do they confine themselves to legal affirmations and encourage it in others?

Eighth Query.—Are Friends careful to be just in their dealings and punctual in complying with their engagements, to live within the bounds of their circumstances and to avoid involving themselves in business beyond their ability to manage?

Ninth Query.—Are Friends endeavoring to remove the causes which produce poverty? Are the circumstances of our members, who may require assistance, investigated and is relief afforded them? Do they co-operate with others in the relief of poverty? In cases of public calamity do they endeavor to allay the suffering entailed thereby? Do our members maintain a faithful testimony against all forms of oppression?

While not unmindful of the call for relief and charity, the result largely of unfair conditions, the removal of the root and source of the trouble is considered of the highest order of service.

The epistle or letter of the yearly meeting of other Friends conferences contains the following:

Our relations to an economic system, which is not consistent with the law of love, calls for the serious consideration of Friends. There are great groups in our population, whose labor is long and whose wages are insufficient for a normal existence. They toil, but they enter not in. And many are the handicaps which hamper their spiritual growth. Furthermore, a competitive economic system has an unfortunate influence upon those in power, developing in them a spirit of hardness and grasping, which leads to oppression. An opportunity faces us to attempt the larger application of love and justice.

One department of Friends service work is called "Industrial Relations and Social Structure." It will be noted that Friends relate war, poverty and economic oppression pretty much to the one source.

Note the following extract: Since organization a year ago, the aims of the department have been:—

- 1.—To search out maladjustments in our social order which are already, or will be in future, sources of discord, hardship, poverty, suffering, strife and war.
- 2.—To determine the causes of these maladjustments with an idea toward their prevention.
- 3.—To determine the true relation between our social and industrial institutions and the welfare of the human race.
- 4.—To discover, so far as may be,

what re-adjustment should be made in our social and industrial order to best serve progressive human needs, and to get under way a determined and religious effort for their realization.

In all these, emphasis has been placed upon the spiritualistic. The book "Whence Come Wars," being the first report of the London Yearly Meeting Committee on "War and the Social Order," explaining the relation between the present competitive industrial system and war and submitting the preventative of a social order based on Christian Co-operation, have been found to be great helps.

Friends attitude towards the war:— The following Minute was adopted by Genesee Yearly Meeting:—

For over two hundred and fifty years the Religious Society of Friends or people called Quakers has borne a faithful testimony against war. It is one of the important principles of this religious denomination.

Genesee Yearly Meeting of Friends having its membership in the Dominion of Canada, in the State of Michigan, in a part of the State of New York, and now in session at Bloomfield, Ontario, in Sixth Month, nineteen hundred and seventeen, hereby reaffirms that it is uncompromisingly opposed to all wars, believing them to be inefficient methods of advancing human interest, and that it has firm faith in the sufficiency of reason and love as a means of adjusting international relations.

It earnestly encourages its members to apply themselves to the removal of all conditions that are conducive to war.

Friends unite in expressing their love for their Country and their desire to give her loyal support in helping to their utmost in both productive and constructive work in which they can conscientiously serve.

While great freedom of conscience is regarded as a religious and democratic right, the responsibility of obedience to the voice of the Divine influence has brought Friends everywhere into general unity respecting war, education, etc., of which the following from the Baltimore Epistle is given as evidence:

"Since opposition to war and strife is one of the important principles on which Christianity is founded, and since the elimination of the spirit that leads to warfare is essential to the religious life; and since warfare cannot be conducted in a Christian manner; but violates every principle of true religion, encouraging hatred instead of love, violence instead of gentleness; cruelty instead of brotherly kindness, horror instead of happiness, lust instead of purity, ambition instead of meekness, and covetousness instead of justice, and places reliance in the inventions of men instead of trust in the power and righteousness of God; and since entrance into warfare requires the setting aside of Christianity for the time being; in favor of paganism; therefore, the Religious Society of Friends, holding its 244th session at Park Avenue Meeting House, Baltimore, in Yearly Meeting assembled, expresses its firm conviction that all Christians should oppose war and all preparations therefor, including the manufacture and sale of munitions of war, substituting in the

place of warfare, moral force and trust in God.

And it might be added "With a faith regardless of consequences."

W. Greenwood Brown.

### CALIBAN IN THE COAL MINES.

God, we don't like to complain;  
We know that the mines are no lark,  
But there's the pools from the rain,  
But—there's the cold and the dark.  
God, you don't know what it is,  
You in your well-lighted sky  
Watching a meteor whizz—  
Warm, with the sun always by.  
God, if you had but the moon  
Stuck in your cap for a lamp,  
Even you'd tire of it soon  
Down in the dark and the damp,  
Nothing but blackness above,  
And nothing that moves but the cars,  
God, in return for our love,  
Fling us a handful of stars!  
Louis Untermeyer.

### Notice to Locals.

We shall be pleased to hear from you with reference to the approaching elections. As your Executive are contemplating throwing all our resources into the campaign.

Socialism will make marriage a matter of the head and heart, instead of bread and butter, as it is too often nowadays.

A subscription to The Canadian Forward costs only 50 cents, but the value of a convert to Socialism cannot be estimated. Make converts by getting subs.

## ...PARTY ANNOUNCEMENTS...

### ALBERTA PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Meets on the First Wednesday in each month, at 8 p.m., at Mrs. A. Martin's, 10528 98th Street, Edmonton, Alta.

Riverdale Local No. 87 (Toronto) meets at 82 Wroxeter Ave. (off Pape) every second and fourth Friday of the month, at 8 p.m. Everybody welcome. Address enquiries and communications to the Secretary, Charles M. Thompson, care 82 Wroxeter Ave., Toronto. (1)

The Dominion executive committee meets on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month at 363 Spadina Avenue, Toronto, secretary, I. Bainbridge.

The Ontario provincial executive committee meets on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month at 363 Spadina Avenue, Toronto, secretary, I. Bainbridge.

Local No. 71, Toronto—Meets at 165 Van Horne street, every Sunday, at 2.30 p.m.. A hearty invitation is extended to all friends and sympathizers. J. Cunningham, 219 Wallace avenue, Secretary.

Saskatchewan Provincial Executive Committee—Meets on the 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month. All comrades desiring to join party or organize Locals are requested to write, F. G. Wetzel, Box 151, Vanguard, Sask.

Locals and Executive Bodies may have their Advs. in the Directory for the sum of \$3.00 per year.

### Organizer's Maintenance Fund

The Workers of Canada await the message of emancipation. Send along your dimes and nickels. Drops of water make the ocean; let us have a tidal wave for Socialism.

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