

YOUNG FRIENDS GENERAL MEETING (YFGM)

Oxford Friends Meeting House, 18-20th February 2000

Minutes

Present:

Co-clerks:	Nick Perks	Co-convenors of Overseers:	Michael Grimes
	Anne Pommier		Paddy Uglow
Treasurer:	Andy May	Officer of Outreach:	Nick Sturge
Convenor of Officers:	Sarah Donaldson	Administrator:	Edd Sellman
Acting Convenor of Nominations Committee:			Rachel Bryers

Monthly Meeting Representatives

Brighouse:	Robyn Kearns & Bethan Hillas	Colchester:	Maddie Hurford Maud Grainger
Cheshire:	Leon Spence & Ruth Todhunter	Cornwall:	Romney Fox
Hardshaw East:	Aidan McCartney	Hardshaw West:	Harry Kingham
Lancaster:	Helen Close	Leicester:	John Myer & Hugh Williams
Northumberland:	Emma Welton		
Norwich & Lynn:	Richy Rushmer	Pontefract:	Anne Pommier
Ratcliffe and Barking :	Rory MacQuenn	Reading:	Sarah Donaldson
Settle:	Anna Watson	South Wales:	Ruth Wood
West Devon:	Paddy Uglow	Warwickshire:	Joseph Coffin
Westminster:	Ali Ghanem	Wirral & Chester:	Flip Bridges
West Scotland :	Victoria McQuiston		

Jason Barton, Phillip Batten, Anna Benedikz, Charlee Bewsher, Adam Boulter, Rachel Boyd, Alex Brierly, Gavin Burnell, Rowan Burrough, Anna Carter, David Carter, David Cockcroft, Kate Coole, Jane Cowling, Simon Davies, Sam Dawes, Anna Dicker, Jakob Donkersloot, Alice Drewery, Mike Eccles, Blubell Eikonoklastes, Chris Elliott, Helen Evans, Owen Evans, Richard Evens, Hugo Finley, Daphne Fisher, Carolyn Forrest, Dawn Fowler, Alia Ganaposki, David Gee, Daniel Germer, Stephen Gibbs, Andrew Goodman, Matthew Graville, Simon Gray, Nicky Grimes, Svetlana Gurilova, Geoff Hannan, Rachel Hargreaves, Judi Hemsley, Ceri Hillas, Keith Holmes, Klaus Huber, Daniel Hughes, Tim Hughes, Jude Kirton-Darling, Anna Jones, Nick Langley, Paul Levy, Clare Lockwood, Alice Lynch, Aidan McCartney, Chris McCartney, Emily Miles, Will Miles, Alice Morning-Star, Rachel Muers, Matthew Naumann, Jane Osborne, Ben Parker, Marion Penn, Rachel Ramaker, Carol Robinson, Heather Rowlands, Anna Sharman, Jenny Shellens, Simon Shaepard, Mark Siddal, Paul Slayden, Lana Snook, Ella Speirs, Hester Speirs, Andrew Stokes, Mike Stokes, Juliette Stoller, Andrew Taylor, Boris Teplykh, Bronwen Thomas, Jesse Turner, Robin Vanner, Rob Wallis, Emma Welton, Tom Wickens, Nessa Williams, Laura Wirtz, Stephen Wolfenden, Hilary Wood; TOTAL: 115

00/01 Opening Minute

We welcome each other to General Meeting at Oxford. We would particularly like to welcome our visitors from overseas:- Matthew Graville, Svetlana Gurilova, Boris Teplykh and Jesse Turner, and those working at Quaker Council for European Affairs:- Jude Kirton-Darling, Chris McCartney and Heather Rowlands. We also welcome those attending the enquirers' gathering that is running in parallel with this main programme.

00/02 Crèche Co-ordinator

Officers have brought to our attention that our current arrangements for looking after children at YFGM are rather ad-hoc.

We agree to make the crèche co-ordinator a two-year appointed position. We expect that the first holder of the post would need to develop a job-description for the position and that their work would include working with the Children and Young Persons Committee (CYPC) representatives to develop guidelines of good practice and considering how the meeting as a whole includes those children attending YFGM. We will ask them to report back to this meeting in a year's time when we will review this position, including whether it would be appropriate to merge it with one of the CYPC representative positions. We will invite the post-holder to attend the Winter weekend and ask Overseers to take particular responsibility for supporting the individual and their work.

00/03 Membership:- Sharing our Experiences

We have begun our consideration of the issue of membership, as part of the wider consideration within Britain Yearly Meeting, by trying to speak of our own experience.

The issue of membership throws into focus some fundamental questions:- building a meaningful worshipping community requires finding ways to include, but less comfortably may also mean taking decisions to exclude. Explicit consideration of membership, whether through the process of application, or reflection such as we have engaged in, can and should force us to address our responsibilities towards the Society.

00/04 Membership: Identifying the Issues

There are practical difficulties with membership for some Friends, particularly those not based in a single place for long enough to feel part of a local meeting. Negative experiences of the bureaucracy involved in the membership process and sometimes of rigid attitudes from meetings have highlighted the issues of rejection and exclusion. It is important that we become members by conviction in order to show a formal commitment to a society we believe in, and not simply for convenience.

As a religious community, our membership is an expression of our faith. For some, this will be a process of trust, for others a careful even painful weighing up. We ask Yearly Meeting to deeply consider the meaning and purpose of membership, whether the current system supports this purpose, and how greater flexibility could be built into whatever processes we have for membership, if any.

We thank all present for their open and heartfelt contributions to this ongoing process and encourage young Friends to attend Yearly Meeting.

00/05 1998 Accounts

The consolidated accounts for 1998 have been presented. We acknowledge that these accounts have been delayed considerably and we thank those who have brought them to completion. We approve the accounts as presented.

00/06 Budget 2000

A budget for the current financial year has been suggested, along broadly similar lines as that for 1999. We note that money has been designated in a number of areas that were not fully taken up last year, and that there is considerable flexibility built into this budget. We approve it as presented.

00/07 Peace Tax

We have heard our administrator's letter requesting that we withhold the proportion of his taxes that would go toward military expenditure. The trustees of YFGM have minuted that they are prepared to support Edd Sellman in his decision. We realise that the issues around withholding tax are complicated but important and we ask officers to look into bringing this matter before the meeting more fully. However, we do support Edd in his decision and the trustees in their minute of the 16/01/2000. This minute and Edd's letter will be appended to the minutes.

00/08 Management Group

Management group has brought forward a suggestion that we increase the administrator's post from 16 to 20 hours per week. This would enable the administrator to work more closely with Outreach committee, to support local groups and other young Friends' activities, that happen between YFGM gatherings.

We are happy to support this suggestion and ask management group to consider what this change in role will mean in terms of support and supervision. We encourage Friends to take suggestions and ideas to management group in the coming months.

00/09 Nominations

We appoint the following people to the following posts and release from service the people mentioned below and thank them for all their work.

<u>Position</u>	<u>Person appointed</u>	<u>Period</u>	<u>Released from service</u>
Overseer	Ceri Hillas	2 years	Paddy Uglow
Outreach	Ruth Todhunter	3 years	Stephen Cappleman
Quintessential	Ali Ghanem	3 years	Stephen Inch
Fundraisers	N/A		Duncan Curtis
			Nick Sturge
QPS Representatives	N/A		Jane Cowling
			David Newton
Management Group	Rachel Ramaker	3 years	Rachel Muers
Nominations Committee	Hugh Williams	2 years (from May 2000)	Robyn Kearns
			Rachel Bryers
Crèche Co-ordinator	Harry Kingham	2 years	N/A
Pardshaw Committee	Simon Gray	3 years	Nicky Grimes

The new co-convenor of Overseers is Carolyn Forrest

00/10 Young Quaker Account Signatories

We authorise Simon Gray and Hugh Williams as signatories to the Young Quaker account to replace Robyn Kearns. The signatories will then be Alice Drewery, Simon Gray and Hugh Williams.

00/11 Events Account Signatories

We authorise Adam Boulter and Will Miles as signatories to the Events account. The signatories will then be Adam Boulter, Daphne Fisher and Will Miles.

00/12 Pardshaw

We have been reminded that Pardshaw is an amazing resource available to young Friends. We have been asked to consider immediate improvements, what groups could use it, what would encourage people to go for a first time and what its long term future might be. We invite suggestions to Young Quaker magazine and the Pardshaw committee.

00/13 Appeal Group Report

Supporting Adult Survivors of Sexual Abuse (SASSA) have reminded us of the issues involved in this appeal and given us an update on their work, currently raising awareness across Yearly Meeting and financially supporting Bradford Rape Crisis and Adult Survivors of Incest and Sexual Abuse (ASISA). They are also working on a benefit gig with 'Seize the Day' in Bradford and we are asked to support this event. We are also asked to speak to our meetings in person when they are collecting for SASSA as this can make a huge difference to the amounts of money raised. We are glad to uphold SASSA in their ongoing work.

00/14 Volunteers

We thank the following people for volunteering to help at YFGM in Lancaster (28th April-1st May 2000).

Caterers: Richy Rushmer
Paddy Uglow

Janitors: Will Miles
Laura Wirtz

Pan transport: Carolyn Forrest

Off-floor sleeping accommodation co-ordinator: Helen Close

00/15 Closing Minute

It has been good to be together again in Oxford, and we are delighted to see so many new faces, including the enquirers present. We also welcome Jonti Ruell, the youngest of us here to our gathering. It has been an eventful YFGM with some difficult business which challenges us and our processes. Paddy Uglow will be greatly missed as Co-convenor of Overseers and we would like to thank him for all he has put into this role. We thank each other for the support we have given and received this weekend and wish each other well until April.

Signed in and on behalf of Young Friends general Meeting

Nick Perks

Anne Pommier

Co-clerks

Appendix 1 to minute 00/07

Minute 2 from Officers' Meeting (16/01/2000)

Trustees present discussed Edd's request for YFGM to withhold the proportion of his tax that would go towards military expenditure. We are willing to support him in the first stage of this action. Implications will be discussed at each officers' meeting.

Appendix 2 to minute 00/07

Edd Sellman's letter to Management group and YFGM (dated 19/01/2000)

Dear Management Group and YFGM,

I am writing to you, as my employer, to ask you to consider withholding a proportion of my tax that would be equivalent to that due for military expenditure (currently around 11%). I ask this on the basis that I am a member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and a conscientious objector.

As a Quaker, I believe that all human beings "are called to live in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars". Advices and Queries (No. 31) questions us 'Do you faithfully maintain our testimony that war and the preparation for war are inconsistent with the spirit of Christ? Search out whatever in your own way of life may contain the seeds of war...' I believe that taxation for military expenditure is preparation for war and inconsistent with my conscience.

Conscientious objection to war is widely accepted as a universal human right. The United Nations Human Rights Commission upholds the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion under article 18 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights. Similarly, the European Convention on Human rights also recognises freedom of conscience as a fundamental right.

In the UK, the legal right to conscientious objection was recognised in both World Wars and during the post-war period of National Service. More recent wars have not relied on conscripts to sustain their

campaigns. With the advance of technology, the nature of warfare has changed radically, executed with sophisticated weapons operated by professionals and with ferocious efficiency. Such campaigns rely on high economic investment supported by taxation rather than the support of conscripted personnel.

I believe that conscientious objection to taxation for military expenditure is a logical extension of the call to conscientiously object to fighting in war itself and this is the basis of my request. I have written to Conscience: the Peace Tax Campaign, to ascertain the procedure and likely results of withholding tax. This information will be shared forthwith.

I understand that the likely sum that is actually withheld will be small, and that tax is pooled and then divided, which makes the stand symbolic rather than an effective diversion of funds from the military defence budget. I however, feel the gesture is a matter of conscience and utterly worthwhile and lends momentum to the broader campaign of establishing a register of conscientious objectors who would be able to re-direct their tax from military defence towards peaceful alternatives.

I hope that you will be able to offer your support on this matter.

Yours in peace,
Edd Sellman.