

Budding Work at the Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva

As an expression of Quaker values and concerns, the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) has been working since 1948 toward justice, equality and peace in international law and practice. QUNO



Photo courtesy of Caroline Dommen

represents Quaker concerns at the UN and international institutions, bringing Quaker approaches to neglected or difficult issues and giving voice to those ignored politically, within their countries or internationally. QUNO has offices in New York and in Geneva.

QUNO work covers a range of issues, from children of prisoners to arms control, from refugees to climate change, from trade policy to conscientious objection. Within its Global Economics Issues program, QUNO has begun a new strand of work, focusing on food and sustainability. One of our main concerns centers on ownership of seeds. We are exploring both the intellectual property (IP) issues (patents), as well as concentration in the seed and agriculture industry.

As companies seek more and more IP protections for seeds and plants, an increasing number of voices are speaking up saying that this is wrong. “Life cannot be owned,” say some. “Seeds should belong to the farmers that developed them,” say others. And there are those who fear that seeds might be priced out of reach

of certain farmers, or that in time, the only seeds available will be those that are economically profitable. Meanwhile, there is a real awareness of the need for improved seed and to produce more food for a growing population, in changing climatic conditions. And many believe that the private incentives that IP can provide are the only way to stimulate research into new and improved seeds and plant varieties.

QUNO’s objective is to promote informed and balanced discussion on this difficult and divisive subject. We are keen to root our work in the experience and concerns of Friends worldwide and are eager to hear from concerned Quakers about their experiences accessing seeds and other agricultural inputs.

Contact: Caroline Dommen, Representative, Global Economic Issues, Quaker UN Office, Geneva, cdommen@quuno.ch. To read more:

www.quuno.org/economicissues
www.idrc.ca/openebooks/397-3/
www.quaker.org.uk/better-world-economics-latest-and-past-issues

Epistle from the Transforming Subcommittee of FGC

First Month 2011

To Friends Everywhere:

After months of wondering and praying, the new Transforming Subcommittee of the Committee for Nurturing Ministries has had two opportunities to meet — once face-to-face at Central Committee in New Windsor, Maryland, 10th Month 2010, and again just this past month by teleconference. We want to let Friends know that we are under the weight of our work and excited for what lies ahead.

When Friends General Conference (FGC) undertook reorganization of our committees last year, there was much concern from Friends that the important work of many of our committees might disappear in the transition. Friends of Color and young and young adult Friends who had been so hopeful with the establishment of the Committee for Ministry on Racism and the Youth Ministries Committee feared that perhaps FGC was creating a way to slide out of the commitments we had made to eradicating racism in the Religious Society of Friends and to creating the radical transformation needed to make meaningful space for younger Friends in the structures of our Society.

We are clear that the same Spirit which led to the formation of these committees is alive and well among us today.

Read the rest of the epistle to learn more about the work of the Transforming Subcommittee at: <http://fgcquaker.org/cmnr/2011-epistle>

New Magazine for Young Adult Friends

The Quake is a publication for Young Adult Friends around the world. Each month Friends write in response to a theme or query. Friends may also submit to the “Dear Maggie” column questions about Quaker process or Quakerism in everyday life. Other sections in the magazine include workshop ideas, interviews, the Bible Bit, queries, what actions Friends organizations are taking, book reviews and comics. There is an ongoing call for writing and art submissions, due the 15th of each month. This publication is a witness to the living faith of Friends everywhere and seeks to nurture that light. For more information or to subscribe, visit: www.thequakemagazine.com.