

WIDER QUAKER FELLOWSHIP, AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

LETTER 146

AUGUST 2018

19 Exeter Place, Rotorua 3015, New Zealand.

widerquakerfellowship@quaker.org.nz

Dear Friends,

It's good to see signs of Spring again – gardens waking up, longer daylight, temperatures rising. And all this without human assistance! Parts of my family have been enjoying the snow this year. I'm glad that they can have their fun without being forced to endure hardships that cold weather can bring. Global warming may be welcome in some regions although most people seem to regard it as a major problem.

Another problem that has exercised many of us for some time now is the welfare of people who have chosen or been forced to move away from their home countries. As New Zealanders we, or our ancestors, have all left our country of origin in the hope of finding a better life. Compared with masses of people in other parts of the world we have fared well. We understand some of the difficulties that may arise for emigrants, immigrants, and the indigenous people, but we have not developed a perfect solution. We have adopted a controlled immigration policy which is reinforced by geographic isolation and helps us to avoid the massive problems that afflict other attractive destinations.

What is the Quaker attitude to all this? It's probably grounded in one of our favourite quotations from George Fox (1656):

And this is the word of the Lord God to you all, and a charge to you all in the presence of the living God, be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come; that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them. Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one; whereby in them ye may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you.

Yours in Friendship,

Ruth Gadgil.

Quaker attitudes to human migration

In the New Zealand context it was clear from the earliest days of colonisation that emigration was not a simple matter. From Quaker *Advices and Queries 1840*:

We would entreat those who may establish themselves in newly settled countries to reflect upon the responsibility which attaches to them ... we desire that all those under our name, who may emigrate to such settlements, may be careful neither directly nor indirectly to inflict injury ...

Many Quakers coming to live in New Zealand have tried hard to contribute at least as much as they have received. Early examples documented in *Quaker Faith and Practice in Aotearoa New Zealand* are William Trusted (from 1836); Thomas and Ann Jackson (from 1841); Thomas and Jane Mason (from 1841); Frederick Tuckett (from 1841); John Cotterell (from 1842); and Mary Harlock (from 1880).



Nineteenth century Quaker thought seems to have been concentrated on the attitudes of immigrants rather than the attitudes of long-term residents.

Much later (1986) Eric Camfield wrote:

As were all other assisted immigrants, my family and I were ‘processed’ and plenty of information was available about life in New Zealand. But as far as I can recall, nothing about understanding the Tangata Whenua or the Treaty of Waitangi ... In company with many others who have become New Zealanders by emigration, I now have to meet the challenge of biculturalism and the rights of the Tangata Whenua.

There’s no doubt that fear and resentment can arise from the perception that religious or cultural values may be threatened by an influx of “foreigners”. Our latest edition of *Advices and Queries* (2013) acknowledges this:

We are challenged to enter into fellowship with people of all faiths and philosophies, locally, regionally and globally, so that we may work or worship together and cooperate for peace, justice and care for the planet. (D11)

Both within our family of Friends and in our wider communities, we need sensitivity to each other and to our various cultural roots.

What joys and responsibilities does this bring? Do we aspire to an understanding of ourselves as people of Aotearoa/New Zealand and the South Pacific? (D4)

Recently, New Zealand Quakers collectively expressed their views on the inhuman treatment of immigrants by the USA administration. This was done by Quaker process. Mid-North Island Monthly Meeting experienced a leading that was considered and supported by Friends in the other eight Aotearoa/New Zealand Monthly Meetings. The result was a letter to the Prime Minister of New Zealand, composed by the Yearly Meeting Urgent Submissions Writer. Here is an extract from that letter:

Quakers in Aotearoa/New Zealand are deeply concerned about the immigration policy being pursued by the United States of America, which the current President has described as a “no mercy” policy.

We acknowledge that all nations have the sovereign right to develop their own immigration policies, but this right must be exercised within the context of commitments made under international human rights law. There is a comprehensive framework of such rights that has been developed by member states of the United Nations which includes a set of binding rights and related instruments as well as non-binding standards of best practice. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966). International humanitarian law: Geneva Conventions (1949) also confers human rights obligations on states.

This framework has established a clear principle that no human being can be excluded from the protection of law and that discrimination and abuse on the basis of immigration status are violations of human rights.

Quakers believe in the inherent dignity and equality of all human beings and in the right of all to fair and humane treatment. We are therefore appalled at the scale and severity of the human rights violations sanctioned by the United States administration, including the separation of thousands of young children from their parents. Whilst the implementation of this particular policy has been stopped, the denial of many human rights continues.

We call on the New Zealand Government to make representations to the current American administration emphasising the obligation to respect and protect the rights of all migrants as required by international human rights law. We ask that the details of such representations be made publicly available.

Yours in Peace and Friendship

*Lesley Young
Yearly Meeting Clerk*

The Wider Quaker Fellowship is an association of persons of diverse backgrounds who wish to have ties with the Religious Society of Friends without necessarily being in its membership, or who, through isolation, illness or some other circumstance are unable to attend a Monthly Meeting.

Any person who finds the fundamental Quaker testimonies and the Quaker way of life, with its emphasis on sincerity and simplicity, compatible with his or her philosophy of life is welcome to join the Fellowship. A request to the Clerk will ensure enrolment as a member.