



Around Europe

Quaker Council for European Affairs

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Friends Committee on National Legislation - Legislative Programme

Martina Weitsch, Joint Representative, visited FCNL's offices in December 2006 and reflects here on some of the highlights.

FCNL works on a large range of issues - they cover the whole breadth of peace, human rights, economic justice and the environment and all follow from the FCNL motto:

We seek a world free of war and the threat of war
We seek a society with equity and justice for all
We seek a community where every person's
potential may be fulfilled
We see the earth restored

One of the highlights of my visits was to be part of a meeting in which one of the FCNL staff, Jeanne Herrick-Stare, Senior Fellow, Civil Liberties and Human Rights, was awarded the James K. Mathews Distinguished Service Award by a representative of the Churches' Centre for Theology and Public Policy. The award was given in recognition of the work Jeanne has done for the *National Religious Campaign Against Torture*.

I was able to have a long conversation with Jeanne about her work and was struck by the enthusiasm, energy and drive which she conveyed. This was the overall feeling I got from everyone at FCNL. Despite the very difficult political situation in which they find themselves, they remain focused, enthusiastic and optimistic that change is possible.

One of the more surprising features of their programme and team is that one member of staff is a retired Colonel. Dan Smith, variously decorated in his long career in the military, with experience in the intelligence and public affairs aspects of the military, advises FCNL on military issues, publishes widely, has his own blog (The Quakers' Colonel at <http://quakerscolonel.blogspot.com/>) and ensures that FCNL is able to take account of what is feasible



Photo: FCNL

Jeanne Herrick-Stare (right) receiving her award

in its lobbying efforts on issues related to military matters.

One of the other remarkable things about FCNL is the way in which it has been possible to reflect Quaker values in the building from which they work.

Originally, the buildings were two traditional row houses built for residential purposes. They are in a conservation area so the exterior of the buildings must retain their original character and any internal modifications must be designed to allow a re-conversion to two separate row houses.

FCNL had to undertake a major redevelopment of the building due to structural faults. They decided to develop the new building with a commitment to accessibility, environmentally friendly architecture, and healthy working conditions.

The result is stunning. From the outside, the
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building looks more or less like the original row houses, but on the inside it is a completely different story. There is an atmosphere of quiet and even stillness in a building which is a hive of activity. The lighting is subtle but entirely sufficient for a working environment. Lights come on when you go into a room and go off as you leave. The building has a green roof and windows which are energy efficient. Everywhere is completely accessible and the work stations

are designed to be pleasant, functional, with adequate storage space and lovely, comfortable chairs which are made entirely from recycled materials.

The building is recognized officially as a 'Green Building' and has been visited extensively by architects, architecture students and others who want to see how such design can be made to work. More information is available at <http://www.fcnl.org/building/>

Martina Weitsch

Biofuels: The solution to our problems?

The debate hosted by the *European Voice* on 6 February addressed a hotly contested topic: biofuels. The panel included representatives from the European Commission, the European Parliament, the food-production sector, an environmental NGO and BP. The debate was centred around the Commission's 'energy and climate change package', released on 10 January, which includes a proposal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20 per cent by the year 2020. Within this, the Commission has called for a mandatory 10 per cent of vehicle fuel to be biofuel. This proposal has generated debate on both sides of the spectrum.

For many, the idea of replacing oil with biofuels is not environmentally sound. Once one includes the energy used in cultivating, harvesting, producing and possibly transporting biofuels, their touted carbon-neutral status becomes less certain. In addition, the use of food crops to produce biofuels drives up food prices, making it more difficult for the poorest to afford basic food staples.

The promotion of food crops for fuel through agricultural subsidies led some participants to question the relationship between the EU's environmental and energy policies, and its agricultural policy. In fact for many, the Commission's reliance on a certain volume of biofuels in vehicle fuel as opposed to a set amount of greenhouse gas savings is a sure sign that this *mélange* of policies is already happening.

One thing that everyone at the debate did seem to agree on, including Paul Hodson representing the Commission, was the potential of second-generation biofuels. These are biofuels made from all parts of the plant, and by everyone's admission, this is where the future of biofuels lies. Whereas first-generation biofuels, such as biodiesel and bioethanol, use only the seed for starch and gluten, second-generation biofuels use the entire plant,

which can include things like waste from the forestry industry. This can greatly increase the output of fuel produced while having the same, if not lower, production costs. In addition, second-generation fuels do not need to be made out of food crops, which can halt the competition between food and fuel. In theory, plants for second-generation biofuels could be grown on land unsuitable for food crops.

Technologically speaking, producing second-generation biofuel is far more difficult than first-generation - different enzymes are needed to break down the different parts of the plant. The principal second-generation biofuel that would be produced in Europe would be biomass to liquid (BTL), which does just what its name implies. Currently, this process is costly and requires big facilities, though if through technological advancements the cost of converting biomass into fuel were to drop, it would be far more cost-effective than first-generation fuels.

What came through most clearly during the debate was the need to place a value on standing forests, land, and healthy environmental conditions. Land is a finite and valuable resource and increasing demand for biofuels will only put more pressure on land that is already over-burdened. Aggressive farming techniques and the destruction of wetlands and standing forests have already led to a massive loss of animal and plant life. Increased crop production would inevitably mean further reducing forests and "set-aside" land, incurring additional damage to already struggling biodiversity. To avoid the demolition of these precious resources we must assign them a value. The cost of climate change and its myriad consequences must be factored into energy cost calculations. As Ruth Davis of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds pointed out, if we are not careful, our so-called environmental policies may end up harming what we set out to protect. There is a valid fear of the risks involved with moving our dependency from oil to biofuels - they



are certainly not going to solve all of our climate and energy problems. To ensure that biofuels have the least ill effect and the most benefit possible, the EU needs to pursue transparent policies and aggressive research into all types of renewable energies and future technologies. We cannot afford to treat biofuels as a panacea. If we, as Quakers and Europeans,

hope to contribute positively to the health and well-being of earth's single ecosystem and those dependent on it, then we cannot let our decision-makers be focused perpetually on satisfying our growing demand. Rather our duty, as citizens of the earth, is to reflect carefully on the impact and future consequences of our own energy use and to behave accordingly.

Sophie Miller

Human Security: From words to action

On 7 February, a conference organised by the European Commission Stagiaires was held on the topic of human security. The aim of the conference was to discuss the meaning of human security and whether an EU human security doctrine would be of value when dealing with such issues.

Unfortunately, the main stumbling block throughout the conference was the question of 'What does Human Security mean?' which, of course, is a rather central point to address before even looking at what an EU doctrine on the subject could involve! In its most basic terms, it is generally agreed that human security is an idea of security which places people at its heart i.e. the comprehensive security of people, not just the security of states. Indeed, as Robert Cooper, the Director General of External and Politico-Military Affairs at the Council of the EU, commented, so-called 'new wars' are increasingly against people rather than states and so, as a logical conclusion, it is people, as well as states, who require protection and security.

However, it is evident that the types of activity that could be considered as constituting human security are rather wide ranging. At a recent Overseas Development Institute (ODI) conference, Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner commented that the idea of human security encompasses both freedom from fear and freedom from want. Some, reflecting on the Commissioner's words last October, considered this to be too broad a definition- human security should not be an all encompassing term for development issues, lest it become nothing more than an umbrella term. Others disagreed and argued that human security should be mainstreamed into all policy areas including environment, human rights, trade etc.

Another crucial issue raised was the question of whether an anthropocentric approach to security would be compatible with the EU's

current approach to security. Robert Cooper argued that defence needs to remain central to EU thinking about security, while others suggested that human security should be synonymous with a demilitarised security. Angelika Beer MEP (Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance) argued forcefully that the EU is in need of an integrated security policy which addresses the root causes of conflict. On paper, she said, the EU does a lot to contribute to conflict prevention but that, more and more, Europe is looking to the military. She was clear to point out that this is the *wrong way* and that the EU needs to change its approach. She emphasised that the problem is not due to a lack of institutions but due to the way in which the EU and Europe thinks about security. However, Seán O'Regan, representing the Council of the EU, disagreed with this viewpoint and emphasised that with the 'security approach' we need to accept that soldiers will die and that soldiers will kill. Unsurprisingly, the example of terrorism was often cited as a good example of how a lack of human security in one country can impact on the security of people in other countries. Regionally, this can also be true of so-called 'problems with passports' e.g. refugees crossing borders into neighbouring countries.

It was unanimously agreed that human security is an increasingly important issue but whether or not an EU human security doctrine would be beneficial was less clear. Some argued that showing a commitment to 'R2P' (the responsibility to protect), should surely be enough. Yet it seemed to me that the most worrying disagreement amongst the panellists was over the use of force and the use of the military to bring about peace and human security. In the opening words of the conference, Robert Cooper was clear in his opinion that "peace is not a natural state of mankind" and that "if you wish to defend people you need to be prepared to deploy force." It is concerning, is it not, that the EU seems to be first looking to force to bring about peace?

Sarah Barnett



Italy to raise death penalty question at UN

At a recent meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg the Italian delegation - representing six different political parties, both in government and opposition - announced an initiative to raise the issue of the death penalty at the next UN General Assembly in September. Italy, supported by the Council of Europe, wants a global moratorium on all states carrying out the death penalty, and wherever feasible, the elimination of the death penalty from the statute book.

The initiative was triggered by the execution of Saddam Hussein, pictures of which caused widespread disgust and revulsion across Europe. Andrea Rigoni, leader of the Italian delegation, said that politicians needed to encourage "our better selves" to take the issue seriously. Public opinion often called for execution in the wake of serious crimes, but the principle of the sanctity of life was a principle to respect on all occasions.

Inside Europe no member states now carry out the death penalty in practice, and all but one - Russia - have eliminated it from their statute book. Will Russia, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, fall into line with its European partners before September in order to set a good example to the rest of the world?

Martyn Bond (Founder Member of QCEA)

On 1 February 2007, MEPs passed a resolution committing the European Parliament to support UN efforts for an international moratorium on the death penalty. (Ed.)

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