



BeFriending Creation

Newsletter of Quaker Earthcare Witness
Affirming our essential unity with nature

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Reflections on COP21

By Sara Wolcott

IT WAS NOT SO LONG AGO that the cobblestones of Paris were red with blood. November 2015: terrorism. 1940: WWII. 1914: WWI. 1871: Prussians (post Napoleon). 1789: Revolution. One could keep going: 1479: Joan of Arc.

With such a history in mind, and with politicians screaming “crusades” not so far away, it is no small thing to witness thousands upon thousands of people gathered to sit at tables with laptops and coffee and microphones and to talk to one another, countries who have warred with one another and taken one another’s trees and lakes and minerals. One hundred and ninety-six countries, not counting the many indigenous nations unrecognized but still present. That’s impressive.

It was easy to get lost, confused, and to develop headaches.

I have been at a COP before, in Copenhagen, when the faces around me were barely controlled masks trying to hold back tears of frustration. Sometimes being on the “inside” is harder than being on the “outside”: you are so close to the people making decisions that you can see them. Maybe they even meet your eyes in passing. But you cannot touch them. Not just their hands—to guide them differently, perhaps—but their hearts. Don’t do what your boss says. Do what is right for humanity.

Copenhagen was very depressing.

Paris was better. There was more optimism. France didn’t want to lose face. Of course, you can take the 20-minute train ride from the Center to Gare du Nord, step into the shops and the Champs Elysees lit with Christmas lights and know that the French economy has little actual interest in slowing down. All those bright lights are like a much more elegant version of Times Square. “That’s because they depend upon nuclear power,” an ex-Parisian told me. Ultimately the



Public marches were canceled due to security concerns prior to COP21, so protestors placed their shoes in protest. Pope Francis’ shoes are said to be among those pictured here. Photo credit: Eric Gaillard, Reuters.

agreement reached at COP21 was insufficient because it had no teeth. Nevertheless, it was better than what has been done before.

There are, at this point, three things I can say to the wider Quaker community from Paris.

First: The movement of people who yearn to bring this world to a better place is beautiful. It is strong. It is filled with young people from all over the world. It is also filled with grandmothers and grandfathers, with indigenous peoples and rappers, with peace activists and environmentalists. It is interfaith and no faith. It was evidenced in side panels and side events around the city, in art exhibits and interfaith prayer services and random conversations with strangers. It was in the warm embraces across cultures that have deep histories of fighting one another. When in the midst of those spaces, I believed that it did not matter what

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BeFriending Creation

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VISION AND WITNESS

WE ARE CALLED to live in right relationship with all Creation, recognizing that the entire world is interconnected and is a manifestation of God. WE WORK to integrate into the beliefs and practices of the Religious Society of Friends the Truth that God's Creation is to be respected, protected, and held in reverence in its own right, and the Truth that human aspirations for peace and justice depend upon restoring the earth's ecological integrity. WE PROMOTE these truths by being patterns and examples, by communicating our message, and by providing spiritual and material support to those engaged in the compelling task of transforming our relationship to the earth.

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Earthcare Calendar

February 20, 2016. Deadline for article submissions for March-April 2016 *BeFriending Creation*.

Letters to Share

"WHAT CANST THOU SAY" ABOUT SPIRIT-LED EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF EARTH, about your own stirrings toward care for the planet, in relation to the vision and thoughtful action of Quaker Earthcare Witness as a whole? We'd like to hear from you. Send your letters to Katherine at katherine@quakerearthcare.org, and share your thoughts and leadings with Friends and caring others throughout North America. ❧

Dear Friend: A Letter about Climate Change

I am so glad we were able to be together at our Half Yearly Meeting of Southeastern Yearly Meeting. We come back year after year because we know this to be the least scheduled, most leisurely, best-fed, and most spontaneously joyful meeting of our year. It is also the most serendipitous, like the lovely conversation we had when it was only the two of us working on the jigsaw puzzle.

Thank you for being so honest with me. I am glad that I got to hear about the work you have done to care for our Earth. Please know I completely understand your fatigue, grief, and hopelessness about any real change coming in time to be meaningful. I understand your saying that you cannot find the energy for this work any more, and that it is just too painful.

I know very well the pain you feel, and I also want to tell you how I keep on with the work. I am of German ancestry, with great-grandparents who emigrated to this country. Since I have been old enough to understand the Holocaust, I have been horrified to think that I might have been one of those who did nothing to help the Jews. I believe that climate change is the Holocaust of today, and I have to do better. I have to do my part.

I also sustain the work by asking myself this question; "Who do I want to be? Literally, who am I?" I know very well that we may not succeed in turning back this steady march toward climate catastrophe. We who profess to love our children may hand them a lethal world for their future. I know all of that, and there are nights when it keeps me awake. Nevertheless, I want to be one who steps forward. I want to hear my own leadings and speak out in my own voice. I want to join with the growing numbers of others who work for this long effort.

I have surrendered a need to know the future. I have given up knowing the outcome. I do this work because today I can create myself to be one who acts on what I care about. I only know this day, and what matters to me, and that is enough.

I do it to be who I want to be. Thanks for our talk.

I love you,

Mary Jo

Mary Jo Klingel
November 30, 2015



COP21, from page 1

the governments did or did not do. It is about us: the people. Be encouraged, Friends: the Spirit is strong.

Second: the police state is growing. The fear of Islam is growing. Of course you know that. But recall how I started: Paris still holds the memories of the men on horseback and on foot who killed and died in the Crusades. From the Crusades came the legal and moral reasoning that led to the Doctrine of Discovery: the papal bulls that enabled colonization. From colonization comes climate change. France was one of the pulsing centers of colonization. Nation-states tend to choose “security” (increased policing, crackdown on immigrants, and increased harassment of black and brown bodies) over the more difficult task of economic transformation. Will we look back at this agreement as a rare moment when nations came together, before all the fear of change and unresolved pasts comes to the fore and violence consumes us? I hope I am wrong

when I suggest that it is possible.

And so we have an old and familiar question: How do we hold up the truth that peace is less expensive and far more worthwhile than various forms of war?

Third: I have no doubt that voices of faith made a difference. We must now increase our efforts of transitioning into ways of living not built on extraction and plunder. Quakers, of course, have potentially strong roles to play in this process to ensure that the global war hawks do not add to the difficulty of transitioning into a green society. It is not for us alone—never alone, but with our brothers and sisters of other faith traditions, in our roles in “secular” society. Might we bring the best of who we are into the tremendous game of chance of human survival within which we now are caught. May the Spirit be with us, opening us to who we have yet to become. ☞

The New Climate Change Agreement: The Real Work Begins Now

By Lindsey Fielder Cook
QUNO Climate Change Representative

COP 21 ENDED ON A SATURDAY NIGHT, and on Sunday, I went to the local Quaker Meeting in Paris for worship. I gave thanks for the previous night’s achievement, when nearly 200 countries (except Nicaragua) supported what their representatives described as a “balanced” agreement. After I spoke, a woman visiting from England stood up and described the climate change conference as a failure for not bringing in systems change.

There was truth in both.

From the perspective of more than two years’ work to help build understanding between climate change negotiators, the final hours of the COP 21 were historic. Historic because negotiations have been burdened by issues far beyond the challenge of anthropogenic climate change. Tension in the negotiation room often evolved from continued experiences of power abuse that for some stretch back to colonial times; economic competition, rather than climate science, was more likely to influence positions. This led to the profound situation where developed countries held historic responsibility for anthropogenic greenhouse gas emis-



Celebrating the historic Paris Agreement at COP21.

sions (GHG), while developing countries were responsible for the majority (and increasing levels) of current GHG emissions. A global effort was essential, but an inability to find a “fair way forward” was destroying our chances to keep anthropogenic climate change from threatening the collapse of ecosystems and thus the long-term survival of our current human civilization.

For this reason, it was extraordinary to hear South Africa, as spokesperson for the G77 and China (the largest block of developing countries), describe the

Continued on next page

new climate change draft as “balanced.” In October, the negotiations were in such a fragile state that this same delegation alluded to black South African apartheid experiences to describe the negotiation proceedings.

What the COP 21 achieved, with the exceptionally effective role of the French COP Presidency and dedicated work from the UNFCCC Secretariat, was to find ways forward on the main blockages: how to share fairly yet effectively the responsibility for GHG emission reduction; how to anchor sufficient financial (and other forms) of support; how to strengthen compliance and include a temperature goal; how to (or not to) include human rights; and how to define the “legal form.” It was historic that nearly 200 countries considered the outcome “balanced”; having the buy in of all is essential for a truly global effort.

The following brief observations of strengths and weaknesses may be helpful.

- **On ambition:** In a remarkable and unexpected move, nation-states agreed to a more ambitious temperature goal than was expected; specifically, a “global average temperature goal to well below 2C above preindustrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5C”. However, time is limited. Current GHG emission levels would lead us to temperature rises of +4C above pre-industrial levels, and the non-legally binding “national targets” (INDCs) would reduce this to about 3C if fully implemented. A global “stock take” is set for 2023, by which time we may have missed our chance to keep temperatures to a 1.5C rise (noting that we are already at + 0.85C).
- **On temperature goal:** Language is included of a “long-term temperature goal” connected to “global peaking ... as soon as possible” and “to undertake rapid reductions thereafter in accordance with best available science” and to achieve balance (net carbon) by 2050. However, “balance” rather than “near zero carbon is of concern because it encourages offsets rather than focusing mitigation action completely on the de-carbonization of economies.
- **On compliance:** Much stronger language was used than was expected, including INDC cycles every five years and targets that must be increased from the preceding INDC (which means no backsliding). However, while countries are legally bound to “prepare, communicate and maintain” INDCs, there are no legally binding mitigation targets.
- **On adaptation:** The agreement includes the establishment of a global goal on adaptation to

enhance “adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience, and reducing vulnerability to climate change,” and recognition of this role in protecting people and livelihoods.

- **On rights:** The “rights language” in the Preamble is extensive and includes phrases like “climate justice,” “Mother Earth,” “sustainable lifestyles,” as well as “ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, including oceans, and the protection of biodiversity.” However, human rights, rights of Indigenous peoples, and gender language did not make the “operative section” of the Agreement and were taken out of the Adaption section.
- Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island States (SIDS) were stated clearly as vulnerable countries with special adjustments. However, while the LDCs category includes a significant number of African countries, the push to bring all of Africa under a vulnerable status was not successful.
- There is concern over unclear accountability on future finance targets.
- There is concern over the level of support for loss and damage.
- There is concern that language on climate change-induced displacement, migration, and planned relocation did not make the main Agreement and is dealt with in the (weaker) COP decision paper.
- There is concern over the failure to include shipping and aviation emissions.

The new climate change Agreement gives nation-states a framework for global efforts in reducing anthropogenic GHG emissions. Seen as “balanced,” it can encourage significant and urgent action worldwide. Yet the Agreement itself is not a solution to the climate crisis: rather, it is a framework that can enable urgent and sufficient action. The real work begins now: Continue to learn and teach others about the root causes of anthropogenic environmental crises. Seek ways forward for sustainable and just lives. Encourage and ensure that our leaders make the responsible and urgent policy decisions necessary, including our global obligation to humanity and this earth.

In this way, our English Friend was right; although the Agreement is a framework, it is not, in itself, “systems change.” Such change begins within: to build a social, economic, political, and spiritual transformation so that our actions do not destroy the lives of the most vulnerable now, and jeopardize all our future generations.

The real work begins now. ☞

Post-Paris Impressions

By Jose Aguto, FCNL



Climate change protestors at the Arc de Triumph. Photo credit: 350.org

LAST DECEMBER, through the generosity of Lindsey Fielder Cook and Jonathan Wooley of the Quaker UN Office, I was blessed and accredited to participate in the “Blue Zone” of the UNFCCC negotiations in Paris (COP21), during the second week. To thoroughly encapsulate the experiences, the Paris Accord, and its consequences is too unwieldy a task, but I hope these impressions of three dimensions are helpful to you.

A Remarkable Diplomatic Achievement

In international relations, the Paris Agreement is a shining monument of enlightened self-interest. Stuningly, the nation-states debated the sufficiency of the 2 degree Celsius warming limit and ultimately embraced as the better aspiration a 1.5 degree Celsius warming limit. Prior to COP21, 187 countries submitted intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs) to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Post-Paris, the INDCs became NDCs, tied to a long-term and durable global framework to reduced GHGs with increasing ambition. Many hope that these 187 nations, through the Paris Accord, have delivered the message to the private sector that “the smart money is in renewable energy,” to pivot civilization away from the fossil fuels that threaten our future.

The Paris Agreement is also a triumph of US diplomacy. Years of Congressional non-cooperation on climate action compelled the Obama Administration to steer expectations away from an agreement containing legally binding provisions. This regrettable but politically necessary restriction pre-set the stage for

modest COP21 ambitions, but also had the positive effect of inspiring the Administration, engaged in bilateral negotiations with key nations such as China, Brazil, and India for years prior to COP21, to secure commitments needed for success. This pro-active US leadership, most notably through the US-China agreement in November 2014, had that amazing effect of catalyzing 187 nations to submit INDCs prior to COP21. The Administration’s key goals were met in the accord.

However, simultaneously, all parties recognize that these NDCs, even if fully met, will not be enough to reach the 2-degree, much less 1.5 degree goal. Bill McKibben, in this New York Times article, speaks my mind: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/14/opinion/falling-short-on-climate-in-paris.html?_r=1

Nevertheless, the Paris Agreement is a tangible, unprecedented, and positive step forward by nation-states. Hopefully it will lead to a meaningful shift for climate and cultures world-wide, reducing our dependence on fossil fuels, and moving us toward a renewable energy future.

Is it enough of a step? Nation-state commitment to the Paris framework, their NDCs and increasing ambition, as well as perhaps more critically, the private sector’s embrace of the Paris “message” will be key factors in the answer.

But this is only one aspect of the multi-dimensional story; primarily the mitigation side, studded with technocratic possibilities, corporate opportunities, a rightfully more ambitious goal, a durable path, and presently insufficient steps and pace.

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Adaptation Finance

Another dimension is about the well-being of human beings living today, presently and imminently harmed by climate disruption. For, as a leader of an NGO in India rhetorically asked me, “My hometown was destroyed by typhoon two years ago. How will mitigation funding help my people?” It is well established that trillions of dollars will be needed for towns and communities like this. However, our efforts as part of the NGO coalition on climate adaptation finance, on behalf of vulnerable communities, were less than satisfactory. The Paris Agreement adopts a soothing tone regarding adaptation. But with regard to ambitious financing for adaptation the end note is found, if at all, in the adjectives.

By way of reference, COP15 in 2009 rendered the Copenhagen Accord, which though much-criticized, had a strong set of adjectives behind mitigation and adaptation funding:

Scaled up, new and additional, predictable and adequate funding as well as improved access shall be provided to developing countries . . . to enable and support enhanced action on mitigation, . . . adaptation . . . for enhanced implementation of the Convention. (Copenhagen Accord, Para 8) (emphasis added)

At COP21, we were encouraged by the proposed language in the second draft of the Paris Accord, which contained all of the italicized adjectives above, plus two other positive ones.

Developed country Parties shall provide [*new*,] [*additional*,] [*adequate*,] [*predictable*,] [*accessible*,] [*sustained*] and [*scaled-up*] financial resources to assist developing country Parties with respect to both mitigation and adaptation. Draft Paris Outcome, version 2, Art. 6, cl. 1. (10 December 2015).

The end note, two days later, was a silent clunker. In the final version, all the bracketed adjectives in the sentence above were deleted (see Paris Agreement, Art. 9, cl. 1). What does this mean?

Adaptation is about helping currently vulnerable communities and peoples build resilience to climate impacts, such as through drought-resistant crops, early warning systems, and more durable water infrastructure. Contextually, developing countries need approximately \$140-300 billion per year by 2050 in adaptation finance from a baseline of approximately \$25 billion in 2012 (UNEP). And of the \$61.8 billion of climate finance in 2014 (for

both mitigation and adaptation), only 16 percent was directed toward adaptation (OECD). In Paris, those nation-states not wanting an increased global funding commitment to adaptation or mitigation won. And the communities and peoples most directly and oft-times catastrophically impacted by climate disruption, are once again, disproportionately harmed by this decision.

Human Rights and Indigenous Rights

On December 10, 2015, I pivoted to join the efforts of advocates of human rights and indigenous rights. For on that day—International Human Rights Day—the penultimate version of the draft Paris outcome was released, having deleted “human rights” from a pivotal operational clause (Art. 2, cl. 2). Further, text related to the rights of indigenous peoples was being increasingly softened or shorn off.

We could not overcome the paradoxical timing. In the final version of the Paris Accord, the clause stated: “This Agreement will be implemented on the basis of equity and in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances.”

Between the penultimate and final versions of this article, the phrase “and on the basis of respect for human rights” was deleted. In the final version, mention of indigenous peoples or indigenous rights were accompanied by soft verbs or verbal phrases such as “acknowledge,” “agree to promote cooperation,” “recognizes,” and “should respect, promote and consider.”

If human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples had been kept in this Agreement, they would have been the humane and more ecologically aware lens through which all subsequent actions would have to be considered and implemented. I was told the delegate of one nation objected to human rights language because the implementation of a current mitigation project in his nation was being hampered by human rights concerns. Thus, the exclusion of indigenous and human rights in the Paris Agreement Agreement could be interpreted as elevating mitigation efforts over human and indigenous rights. Might it create (even more?) space to enable a solar farm or REDD project to displace an indigenous community without their free, prior, and informed consent?

The gulf between *shall* and *should* is the yawning divide between *try* and *do*. If we the world are to embark upon the journey for the “thrival” of future generations, we the people of today must commit first and foremost to each other, with particular care for

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Reflections on COP21 and the Paris Negotiations

By Philip Emmi, QEW-Accredited COP21 Observer

HOW CAN ONE DESCRIBE an event designed to accommodate 40,000 attendees and reach an agreement among 195 countries on how to protect against catastrophic climate disruption? Dante's circles of Heaven and Hell may be a useful image.

The venue was located at Paris's Le Bourget Conference Center. Hall 1 was the innermost circle. It was reserved for the UNFCCC functionaries and the French Presidency headed by French Foreign Minister, Laurent Fabius. His task was to orchestrate negotiations among delegates and produce what would be known as the Paris Agreement.

Framing these negotiations are the national emission reduction targets each country recently submitted. In total, these were roughly 50 percent short of required emissions for a less-than-2C world. Major developed countries fell well short of committing to their fair share, and their fair shares are too large to be met within their boundaries. Most developing countries committed fairly to their share, but they failed to exploit their far greater mitigation potential. So central to the COP21 negotiations was the question of how could developed countries help empower developing countries to make up the global commitment shortfall. And would they?

This question meant negotiators had to navigate a thicket of principles and issues. The most difficult of these was the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and differentiated capabilities. Other issues included the balance between mitigation and adaptation, the agreement's status as a legally binding instrument, and the ambitiousness of the global temperature goal. In addition, there were questions regarding global financial support, technology transfer, institutional capacity building, and transparency and accountability.

To help keep negotiators well informed, the French Presidency and its Lima predecessor organized the Paris Lima Action Agenda. It provided a chorus of thematic events on forests, agriculture, oceans, water, resilience, adaptation, transport, buildings, finance, energy, innovation, and business plus local and municipal authorities. This was the next innermost circle

Civil society offices occupied the third innermost

circle. This space was reserved for representatives from environmental NGOs, local governments and municipal authorities, indigenous peoples



Applause in plenary hall following the agreement.
Photo credit: Patrick Cage

organizations, business and industry associations, trade unions, research and independent NGOs, women's rights organizations, youth organizations, and farmer organizations. There people met, worked, and sought to shape the terms of negotiation.

The fourth innermost circle was the side-events room, an airplane hanger-sized space with more than 100 information booths and side-event meeting rooms. Here one could meet and hear from people doing research, organizing around thematic interests, and taking action on the ground.

These elements formed an inner zone designated the blue zone. Collectively, work in the blue zone was dedicated to defining goals, setting objectives, and delineating programs, mechanisms, and implementation tools that would ultimately be collected in the form of a binding agreement specifying actions to be taken and defining a pathway toward stronger commitments in the future.

Outside this inner sanctum was a green zone, a huge, loosely organized space open to the general public for debates, knowledge-sharing, discussions, and conviviality. This was a lively space shared by many of the same organizations listed above.

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Beyond the Le Bourget site, scattered throughout Paris were numerous venues where proponents of civil society, trade unionists, and social movement activists met to draft vision statements, organize social actions, craft slogans, create artistic representations, and motivate adherents to continued participation. Instead of the formal language of diplomacy and bureaucratic action, one would hear calls for a just transition to a fair economy, a healthy society, and a clean environment. This is where one would speak of fundamental rights, social solidarity, inclusion, responsibility, standing, and voice. Though unofficial, these events demonstrated a deep desire for change and so were an integral part of COP21.

So was COP21 a success? Well, compared to what? Relative to the US Congress, it was comparatively

successful in finding grounds for compromise. Compared to the accomplishments of prior Conferences of Parties, it was a great success. Compared to what is required to respond to climate dynamics, the Paris Agreement failed to be sufficiently ambitious. Compared to what concrete actions were needed, it at least offered a solid beginning. It also set out a pathway guaranteeing accelerated responses over time. Wisely, it did not look to the free market as a universal solution to its problems. It did strongly signal a transition away from fossil fuels and toward efficiency and renewable energy. Its success will be best gauged during implementation. The Paris Agreement did not save us from climate catastrophe (that's a collective responsibility), but neither did it close down the continuing chance to do so. ❧



In Solidarity with Those at COP 21

Some QEW Friends weren't in Paris but were participating in events in their local areas in support of change for the planet. In this section several Friends share their COP21 experiences with you. ❧

"I went on one of the local walks on Sunday, December 30, in support of the climate negotiations in Paris. Nine people from my Meeting joined a small crowd of about 375 to walk from Harvard Square in Cambridge, MA to the statehouse in Boston, something like 3.7 miles. Many students, who would otherwise have swelled our ranks, were still out of town for Thanksgiving break, but it was a goodly and dedicated bunch of folks.

"Hey, hey, ho, ho, those fossil fuels have got to go."
"Come and go with me to that land..."

Patti Muldoon and I carried the small banner we had made for the big march in September of last year and joked that the hundreds walking behind us were all Quakers because they were following our banner. It felt good to know that there were thousands of other walks and rallies going on around the world that day." —Mary Gilbert



"On December 3rd, three Friends from Quaker City Unity Friends Meeting distributed flyers in front of the Claremont, NH post office to draw attention to the UN Climate Summit in Paris and encourage personal and group actions that mitigate climate change, based on the Climate Minute from Connecticut Valley Quarter that Quaker City Unity Friends endorsed:

"We want to share this statement with the community. As concerned citizens, we need to better understand the impacts of climate change on our local communities and develop reasonable responses personally and as informed community members. Our hope is to continue to raise awareness and encourage an open dialogue between local community leaders, legislators, and concerned citizens about the need to address climate change locally." — Reb Mackenzie

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A Global Climate Insurgency

By Bob McGahey

AFTER YEARS OF FRAUGHT NEGOTIATIONS, we have a climate accord. Just getting 195 countries with different, sometimes conflicting, interests to agree was a miracle of sorts. The document breaks new ground by aiming to hold the average temperature rise below 2C, to 1.5C, and reaching carbon neutrality by the “second half of the century.” The road map for how to get there is less clear. The INDCs are not binding, relying upon peer pressure at periodic reviews to curtail carbon emissions even further than current pledges, which would take us down to 3.5C, still well beyond the threshold of climate catastrophe. The current pledges do not go into effect until 2020, although there will be an opportunity for revising upward in 2018, with the first review in 2023. This is not tough enough or fast enough.

In a recent post at Common Dreams, Jeremy Brecher, a labor historian, noted that the governments of the world accepted no accountability in Paris; rather, they only went on record with a stronger common goal. Because they, and to some degree the U.N., are accountable to the vested interests which put them in power, it is up to the people to stand up and force them to be “accountable to the world’s real owners,” the people. In “A Non-Violent Insurgency for Climate Protection” (<http://fpif.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/A-Nonviolent-Insurgency-for-Climate-Protection-Foreign-Policy-In-Focus.pdf>), Brecher argues that there is legal ground for the people to rise up in multiple acts of civil disobedience to force governments, who are trustees guarding the air, oceans, forests, and potable water, to abide by the laws that safeguard these critically endangered commons in a “global law-enforcing climate insurgency.” The foundation for this is called in the US the public trust doctrine, which is based upon the Justinian code of 535 A.D., naming certain areas as *res communes*, “common things” that are not held by the state; hence the beleaguered notion of the commons. As Brecher puts it eloquently, “The governments of the world may rule the world, but they don’t run the world—that is the common property of humanity.”

Fortunately, to defend that common property, an independent climate protection movement has emerged. Brecher dates the start of the movement to



the mass International Day of Climate Action in 2009, the most widespread political action day in planetary history. This has grown in recent years into the Blockadia movement, expertly documented by Naomi Klein. Increasingly, these actions are designed as civil disobedience aimed at enforcing fundamental legal and constitutional principles that are being flouted by the authorities they are disobeying. By calling these abuses into question, they are performing their legal duty, planetary citizens mounting what legal scholar James Gray Pope calls a “constitutional insurgency.” This insurgency aims to transform the world order, which Brecher argues is more attainable than challenging individual nation-states, and has in fact happened more than once in our lifetimes. Crucially, Brecher notes that the current world order, which protects the global corporations, especially Big Fossils, is “illegitimate but mutable.”

As law-enforcing or constitutional insurgents, activists are invoking the necessity defense, which was unexpectedly successful in the case of Friend Jay O’Hara, when he and Ken Ward blocked a coal vessel at Brayton Point, MA with his lobster boat. Defendants who recently blocked an oil train in Washington state are mounting the same defense. We shall see what the court’s response will be. Even if the courts don’t accept their arguments, these actions can “redefine what climate action is all about.” If legal actions continue to fail, Brecher envisions civil society tribunals chaired by senior retired judges and other respected figures calling expert witnesses with publicly acknowledged credentials. It’s all about civil society moving into the black hole of accountability which the current world order lacks. We are part of that civil society, Friends, and, as EQAT has shown, carefully strategized and discerned actions can affect the mutable world order.

Since governments serve as trustees of the commons, environmental lawyers are working to utilize trust law to enforce the people’s rights to enjoying the benefits of these commons. It may seem far-fetched—

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one environmental lawyer calls these kinds of challenges “hail Mary passes” —but successful use of trust law could require fossil fuel companies to pay damages for the colossal waste committed against the public trust. Fair damages would pay most of what is required to transition to a zero-carbon economy and build the global Green Fund to help poor nations adapt to climate change.

Governments of the world need to be made accountable to the world’s real owners. Yes, Jeremy

Brecher, according to the Justinian code. But nobody owns the world, as the indigenous peoples will tell us. Ultimately, the world is God’s, and the building climate insurgency is about the people rising up to return the Commons to Her. Or if you prefer, to Gaia, the evolutionary miracle which brought this perfectly-placed third rock to superabundant life. Earth stewardship in these critical times means joining the insurgency to defend Gaia, with whatever gifts we have. ♪

Post-Paris from page 5

indigenous peoples who live most intimately at the interface between human society and the ecosystems upon which we depend.

This endeavor for “thrival” is not merely about shifting our energy source priorities, but also about shifting our hearts and minds back to the vital and fundamental relationship with Creation, in spirit and practice. When Pope Francis said, “when we destroy creation we destroy ourselves” it was a negative corollary of what indigenous peoples have been practicing since time immemorial: Treat the earth well. It was not given to us by our ancestors. It is loaned to us by our children. More than ever we need to honor and respect indigenous lifeways in right relationship with creation—not to replicate per se, but to unfold and

evolve into the many practices within our own lifeways.

The Paris Agreement is indeed a marvel of international, diplomatic, and corporate-government negotiating success. It is a significant, but modest, and admittedly insufficient first step. And in failing to commit to increased funding to help the most vulnerable communities build resilience to climate disruption, and in the exclusion of human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples in critical operative text, it has not succeeded in moving our hearts and minds in right relationship with each other and our Earth, which is where ultimately, for the sake of *thrival*, we need to be. May we as people of faith seeking fellowship and friendship with the humble, the gifted, the vulnerable, and the powerful, post-Paris, step into this vocation. ♪

Solidarity from page 8

“THE ONLY MARCHES NEAR ME in Princeton were in Philly or NYC, so I decided to create a large poster with the title, “Turn Off Fossil Fuels, Turn On a Just Transition.” Below that I added a large peace sign with the words “renewables”, “equality”, and “simplicity” making the three lines inside the circle, and then an inner loop of important themes represented by pictures: Our Cooperation For - Their health (forests), plus Their health (oceans, rivers) plus Their health (species), equals LIFE (earth and atmosphere). Pictures also moved through a just and sustainable economy, food sovereignty, indigenous rights, lifestyle change, and x’s crossing out farm factories and monocultures, etc.).

I walked the poster around town for signatures and photos. It created the opportunity for some very good conversations, including wonderful ones with children who not only signed but were very interested in the pictures on the poster. They understand the concept “clean” via showers and baths. From there they understand keeping water clean and that air also needs to stay clean. The most surprising was a group of student skateboarders outside Princeton’s Woodrow Wilson School for International and Public Affairs. All signed and took photos to post on their Facebook pages. The enthusiasm among young people was 100 percent and about 85 percent for older folks. I also encountered one angry climate denier.

It hasn’t stopped with that single day. The poster is now being loaned out day by day to various businesses and groups for more signatures and conversation. The benefits are going both ways.” —Laura Hawkins ♪



Read Shelley’s blog posts from COP21 online at
<http://www.quakerearthcare.org/blog/qew-cop21-paris>



put this in perspective: If we persist in business as usual (BAU) and follow the trajectories of carbon emissions, population, and economic growth as they exist today, we are on a path to at least 4-5 degrees C global temperature increase. The temperature increase is averaged over the globe, but increases of 8-9 degrees C at the poles and in the driest part of the world would be common. There would be enormous amounts of melting ice at the poles and in the mountains, radically changing climate everywhere, essentially resulting in climate chaos.

We have a paddle

The Paris agreement included pledges to reduce carbon emissions—called the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs)—from nearly all of the 195 countries that were present. These are voluntary pledges, as the agreement is not legally binding thanks to the US Congress (the entire agreement was crafted to avoid requiring approval from the US Congress, or it would go the way of the Kyoto Protocol and lose the support of the world's largest historic emitter). Unfortunately, the 2015 INDC pledges have us on a track to increase global temperatures 3-3.5 degrees C. That is better than BAU, but not good enough.

We have made our way into clear water with our little boat and our paddle

There is consensus among scientists that we have to limit global temperature rise to 2 degrees C to avoid global catastrophe. What we got in Paris is a global commitment to limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees C, a goal that comes closer to preserving some of the island and low-lying nations.

The shift to 1.5 degrees C should be applauded and celebrated, recognizing the importance of advocacy from island and low-lying nations and their allies in indigenous communities and civil society. However, these numbers represent a range of impacts rather than a threshold. We are seeing devastating effects of climate change now, with our current 0.85 degrees of global warming. There will be more to come, even if we actually achieve the aspirational goal of 1.5 degrees C.

Is the Paris Agreement a success or a failure? It is a huge success for 195 countries to agree that we have to do something significant about climate change, we have to aim for limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees, and we have to agree to strengthen our commitment every five years. It's the best step forward we've had so far. To have non-legally binding INDCs that only get us halfway to our goal (if that) and to barely mention climate justice and indigenous rights (only in the preamble) is a huge failure.

Until Paris, policies and programs that were on the forefront of climate change action set goals that at best took us to eliminating most anthropogenic carbon emissions by 2050, which is what we thought we needed to do to limit temperature rise to 2 degrees C. If we are aiming for 1.5 degrees, the pace needs to quicken with a goal of no more anthropogenic carbon emission (except for breathing) by 2025; otherwise, a significant amount of carbon capture and storage will be needed as well.

We have a small boat, a paddle and we are floating in clear water: we need a fleet sailing across the ocean

How do we get anywhere near limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees? Not by going it alone in a little boat. One of the things I learned from my COP experience came from many off-site actions. I spent one afternoon with indigenous women, talking about how their experience as mothers led them to take action for future generations, how their knowledge of a sense of place led them to live in right relationship with nature, and how their spirituality gives them the strength to do this work.

I watched indigenous peoples from the Americas kayak down the Seine to bring attention to their resistance to REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) and their reliance on Pachamama (a spiritual connection to Mother Earth). I met a range of brilliant and courageous activists such as radical nuns advocating for sustainability, climate justice activists from historically black colleges and universities, and a native Californian who owns a shop five blocks from my house who organizes direct action.

It is going to take all of us to achieve the 1.5 degree goal: those on the frontlines, those in the backrooms, and everywhere in between. We will need to be part of a fleet of sailing ships rather than a single leaky boat.

What are we to do? Acting alone is not feasible nor enough. Individual actions to lower our carbon footprints are admirable and necessary, but only go so far as a way to move our little boats. The changes that need to happen are both personal and institutional. We could be transforming our electric grid to renewable energy, enhancing our public transportation (Metro and long distance), and converting to electric cars. No one can do this acting on their own or by waiting until they are carbon-emission free before urging others to act.

Second, we need to join coalitions that share our concerns—groups of faith, human rights, climate justice, peace. These are interlinked concerns. Let us see how we can be mutually supportive of each other. ♻

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Paddle to the Future

by Shelley Tanenbaum, QEW General Secretary

YOU'VE PROBABLY HEARD that saying, "Up a creek without a paddle." Just a few years ago, when it came to climate change, we were all up a dead-end creek in a leaky little boat without a paddle. Post-Paris and the "historic" Agreement, where are we now?

We have plugged the leaks in our little boat

Within the last few years, dramatic changes have been happening, giving some hope that we will pull through. These changes have included technological innovations, shifting economics, and the growing social will to DO something. Some changes that give me hope (pre-Paris) include:

- Renewable energy technology is now cheaper to use than fossil fuels and faster to implement than new nuclear power plants.
- Divesting from fossil fuels has moved the term "stranded assets" from lunacy to reality within at least the vanguard of investors ("stranded assets" are holdings that have dramatically lost their value).
- Civil society support for action on climate change is an awakening giant, stretching from the 2014 People's March in New York City, to local resistance to fossil fuel expansion (sometimes referred to as Blockadia), to transition towns.
- States and provinces are not waiting for federal



government actions. For example, California and New York have statewide plans and policies to shift to renewables by 2050; British Columbia has instituted a carbon fee; Alberta (!) has increased their carbon fee.

- Cities throughout the world (including Burlington, VT; Dardesheim, Germany; and Dharnai, India) are shifting to renewables now.
- Obama's Clean Power Plan, CAFE standards for fuel efficiency in cars, and other regulations are enough to comply with the US Paris commitment; the new Trudeau government played an important role in supporting the Paris agreement whereas the former government was antagonistic to climate change policies.

One of the biggest outcomes from the Conference of the Parties (COP) in Paris was a goal of lowering global temperature from less than 2 degrees C to 1.5 degrees C. Island nations were adamantly in support of this shift, knowing their survival depends on it. Let me

See Paddle on page 11