

Minute of Devon and Cornwall Quaker Gathering, Exeter 12.02.2011

“29 friends are present. Bob Lovett is at the table.

Minute 04.11

We have today heard from Michael Bartlet, Parliamentary Liaison Secretary for Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM). He has described the nature of his work, rooting it firmly in the Quaker traditions described by Rufus Jones of mysticism and prophetic witness. He has spoken about equating the strength of our inward vision with our outward desire for change. He has reminded us of the manner in which early Friends were driven through a sense of conscience to address issues of equality and human rights 300 years before the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights.

Michael has outlined the breadth and different kinds of political activities supported by Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW). He has provided examples of the complex mechanics required to translate Quaker Concerns into Parliamentary legislation. He has also shared his optimism that, despite current cynicism and breakdown of trust, it is possible to bring about political change provided we go beyond our “comfortable values” and do the difficult things.

We need a well focused and articulated concern, having the authority of BYM and with a clear idea of the possibility for a programme of incremental change. As a guideline for action he reminded us of the saying, “The ship is safe within the harbour. But that is not what ships are for”

In the afternoon session we have engaged in various discussion activities seeking to widen our political understanding and encourage wider political activity. Alan Ray-Jones has introduced us to links from our own web site (swquakers.org.uk) taking friends to various sites to aid our democratic action.

We thank Exeter friends for their hospitality and hope to meet at Yearly Meeting Gathering in Canterbury in August.”

Bob Lovett - Convener, Devon and Cornwall Gatherings Committee