

Discussion Paper for June 27th MFW Meeting

The Wales We Want

The Quaker Testimony to the World – that there is that of God in all people - has been a personal and corporate standard for Quakers over time. Fox and the early Friends recognised it and it created a template by which they could aim to be patterns and examples to every one. It is, however, no longer sufficient for us just to shape our own lives to our Testimony. It is the state, in thrall to Big Capital, that defines our actions. We can mitigate it in small ways, by petitions, letters, campaigns, by conscientious objection to consumption, but the society, of which we are a part, continues to march towards global climate catastrophe. It still makes and sells armaments that slaughter millions in distant lands. It still operates to increase inequality and, as we have seen latterly, it is still capable of mismanagement and confusion.

Return to the Old Order?

The Coronavirus Pandemic has brought nations to a standstill but that is presenting situations that many people thought were impossible. The old order has been dealt a body blow, but many will want to bring it back, people for whom it worked well, for whom it produced vast riches, while increasing poverty for others. For many the immediate concern is to restore the economy, ignoring the real crisis of global climate breakdown. A global catastrophe caused by the insistence on growth at all costs.

For many the pandemic has increased their problems, locked down into a small flat, income coming in fits and starts, illness, loss of loved relatives, fear; however, the lockdown has opened all manner of possibilities. The natural world has fewer threats to its balance, people have experienced working from home, not having to commute, having more time, being more aware of the people around them, community.

Many of the political choices of the recent past have impacted on our ability to cope with the pandemic, yet the political balance still seems to favour the status quo. There is an awareness of the possibilities for change, but without any clear definition of how that change should be led. In that situation the status quo becomes the easy option, needing less imagination or detailed thought to make that the target. The alternatives are harder.

Wales – a bright light

Wales, since devolution, has inspired with its legislation, particularly as all Government action has to be measured against the well being of future generations. A brilliant piece of legislation. In spite of the name change of the 6th May, to reflect that it now has full law-making powers and the ability to vary taxes, the Senedd Cymru still limited to legislative devolution under a “reserved powers” model. That model limits its power to matters other than those reserved to the UK Government, which remain substantial.

As we reflect on the Wales that we, Quakers in Wales, want to see established, we have to be aware that many of the changes we want are controlled by the reserved powers of the UK Government, which is not restricted to legislation that would benefit the well being of future generations. This limitation cannot be allowed to colour our vision of the Wales we want to live in, although it does affect the way in which we may progress towards it.

Peace

- We want to live in a Wales which lives in peace with the rest of the World.
- We welcome the appointment of Eluned Morgan as Minister for International Relations in the Senedd and urge her to use her to advocate for a more peaceful, just and equal world.
- We want our children and young people's education to include the knowledge, skills and behaviours that promote a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and an appreciation of Wales' contribution to sustainable development as set out in Sustainable Development Goal 4.7
 - We do not want
 - to have any industry that manufactures or contributes to manufacturing weapons of war.
 - an economy that benefits from the sale of weapons of war or of forceful repression.
 - our country to house training grounds or research facilities that practice and develop the practicalities of war.

Education

- We welcome the new Welsh curriculum with its emphasis on four core purposes which support young people to develop the skills and attitudes to fit them for life and work as ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world including critical thinking, creativity, adaptability and emotional intelligence.
- We want our schools to educate our young people to understand:
 - how to live, work and play with others, co-operating rather than competing,
 - how their nation needs to live to limit the impact on the planet, because climate breakdown is endangering their future,
 - Wales' place in the world, in terms of language and culture, interdependency, sustainability, equality and human rights,
- an education system that is free for all, available to all, no matter what age.
- an education system that recognises, nurtures and values the abilities and gifts of each person, and does not confine learning to subjects that just feed the world of work.

Environment

- We want to live in a Wales which has learnt to:
 - live in balance with its environment,
 - have a chemical footprint that minimises global warming,

- create energy only through non polluting methods,
- allow, design and create an environment that absorbs more carbon dioxide from the air than we create,
- hold rainfall naturally so that it is released gently and avoids flooding,
- encourage bio-diversity to flourish naturally.
- All of which would benefit a population that is then living, and able to work, in a country of beauty, clean air and good food.

Health

- We want an integrated health service,
 - that treats disease where it occurs, but is designed to prevent it,
 - with good communication and managed interaction between hospitals, home care, care homes and GPs.,
 - to be a service free at the point of need, for both health and care
- For a generation the UK has trained only one third of our requirement for doctors and nurses, content with a colonial attitude that drew key workers from the rest of the world.
- We welcome the new NHS app that has been introduced for Wales, Consultant Connect, which is set to reduce the need for patients to travel for unnecessary hospital admission and referrals.

JUSTICE

- We want a Justice infrastructure in Wales which supports Senedd Cymru legislation,
- A prison service which provides education and training to assist prisoners to function within society when released,
 - that provides prison places within reach of family and other supporters,
 - that treats prisoners with respect,
 - that provides accommodation of a good standard
- a professional probation service that provides support for prisoners leaving prison promptly and effectively.

Ownership of the Commons

The Commons are those resources that are used by communities, e.g our health system, our forests, and open lands, our settlements, our energy provision, our water and natural resources. Rather than have these resources owned either by private enterprise or the Nation they should be owned in common by the people who use them. This system

- obliges people to work together, to sustain their resources and decide how the income should be used
- gives community life a clear focus
- depends on democracy in its truest form
- destroys inequality
- provides an incentive to protect the living world
- creates, in sum, a politics of belonging in the form of Community Land Trusts, Community Energy Trusts, Community Housing Trusts, etc.

Transport

- We want a Wales that has an integrated transport system
 - taking pressure off roads and delivering people where and when they want.
 - effectively brings travellers and goods into and out of Wales but also which carries travellers around the country.
 - which aids equality of opportunity, bringing work opportunities to deprived communities, and,
 - allows public transport commuting to the centres of the economy.

Technology

- We want a Wales of equal technological opportunity,
- where home workers can continue to live in the countryside,
- where small businesses and agriculture can utilise mobile phone systems and the latest generation of WiFi to be able to work in complementary ways with others in the UK and beyond.
- that values the data of its population and works to benefit from it, working with the data based businesses rather than just being utilised by them.

General

- We in Wales strive to be the first nation to eradicate person on person physical, emotional and sexual violence. We are proud that the Senedd has banned the smacking of children.
- We commend the Welsh Government's ongoing work to counter and eradicate domestic violence
- We strive to eradicate poverty and any form of discrimination.
- We encourage the Welsh Government in their work to improve financial integration and to use community based initiatives such as Credit Unions to assist.
- We want a Wales that has open and full land registry showing who are the beneficiaries;
- with open and full disclosure of tax returns, where the income occurred and who

were the beneficiaries of holding companies.

- We strive to create a country where each person living in Wales, of whatever nationality, rejoices in their Welsh identity, culture and nation.

Peter Hussey : Indebted in particular to Frances Voelcker, Jane Harries, Ruth Moore Williams and Tricia Bridgewater