

Quaker South Asia Interest Group Notes

Saturday 23rd October 2021

Time: 10.30am to 12.30am followed by lunch break and then 1.30pm to 3pm.

Location: 12 Montagu Place, Leeds, LS8 2RG

& On Zoom.

Participants

Abu Siddique (Bachchu), Cora Gallagher, Rob Gallagher, John and Sue Smithson, Anne Smith, Liz Schweiger, Martin Schweiger, Stuart Morton, Pat Saunders, Ann Noel Clark, Penny Robbins, Ivan Nutik, Joya Bannerjee, Adrian Glamorgan, William Knox, Gerald Connyham, Ann Kurra, Stephannie and Ram Ramamurthy, Liz Watson, Tracey Martin.

Ann Noel Clark told us that Andrew Clark had prepared his memoirs prior to his death. These are now available in digital format. We will seek to make these available QSAIG members.

Apologies

Judith Baker, Maggie Waterworth

10.30am Welcome and opening Meeting for Worship

10.40am Introductions

10.55am Minutes of our last meeting. (Circulated with this agenda)

11.00am 'Addressing colonialism and racism in QPSW work'

Led by Tracy Martin. At least 4 other QSAIG members attended a Woodbrooke Course on this topic which was largely led by Tracey.

A course was run at Woodbrooke examining international development and associated racism and colonialism. Faith communities often assume, incorrectly that they are exempt from racism.

We all need to consider what has been the impact of colonialism been on an area where we have personally of worked?

Thailand has not been colonised but has been influenced by colonies all around it and during the Vietnam War a lot of American influence. Sex industry largely a product of rest and recreation for US troops. White people seen as educated and wealthy.

How has colonialism influenced the place where you work or have worked?

What is the history of this place and what are the influences that continue? How might colonialism and a history of colonialism affect the work being done following the end of the colony status

Bachchu said when a country is colonised there is investment and associated development of education, transport infra structure and postal systems. These are developed for the benefit of the colonisers but should provide benefits that last after colonisation is finished. Links develop to other parts of the world. Who dominates whom?

What assumptions are made about those who have come to help?

William Knox said, when you went to a rural area there was an assumption that we came with money, but Quakers did not bring money. Effort went of relationships. Why was the white person automatically assumed to be the boss? Power relationships and expectations are important to consider. May be different if you are a woman.

Ann Noel-Clark said that Andrew Clark had thoughts on these subjects.

Rob Gallagher first in Bangladesh from 1978 to 2020. Westerners are no longer regard as being so well informed as more Bangladeshis now travel around the world.

Gerald reminded us that leadership issues matter for the Palestine accompaniers. The accompaniers are not leaders but supporters and being alongside is a strong principle. Stuart is looking at power and influence of white people in Britain. White people may not recognise power and influence is present in relationships. White people have passports and can move easily. Most people around the world do not have passports. Self-reliance can be rocked by support following disasters, it can build dependencies.

Pat Saunders had discussions with Ataur Rahman (of GUP). Problems should be dealt with locally. Internationally we must stop doing harmful things. Maps were done for colonialism but can be used for longer term benefit.

What is it appropriate for us to do?

Ann Kurra, went to stay in Kashmir. Invited with the males because she was white. She noted the fear of speaking out.

Difference in pay for local and international staff, also reflects in attitude to health & safety.

Ivan Nutik is aware of language which is part of a power system. Hegemonic dominance. Language may prevent learning.

Anne Smith, try to listen to the least powerful person who does need to be heard. Ask who is not there? And why.

Stephanie said things are changing, but serious (racial discrimination) legacies are present in the UK.

Does advertising by NGOs make things worse by emphasising passivity among the beneficiaries?

How should we do things differently, so we do not reinforce colonialism?

Are the colonisers actually colonising themselves?

Some papers available from Tracey.

Radiators for Norway link ~ see this excellent summary:

<https://marketingthesocialgood.com/2013/08/13/the-power-of-promotion-radiators-for-norway/>

12 noon Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) Asia West Pacific Section. Led by Adrian Glamorgan.

24,000 Friends in Asia West Pacific. Mostly evangelical. Cyril Gare was the first secretary. A lot of work with Aboriginals particularly in Perth.

Nasty racism. Not about flags and nations. Mention Meetings not countries.

Donald Groom, strong Asian focus.

"If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

-Lilla Watson

(See: <https://invisiblechildren.com/blog/2012/04/04/the-origin-of-our-liberty-is-bound-together/>)

Belton (Belt and Road) Road Initiative to connect Asia with Africa and Europe with improved road, rail and maritime links, an initiative being driven by President Xi Jingping of China.

Hindu Kush 3rd world largest store of water. Countries need to work together to manage the water. Third pole.

Build Quaker Faith and infrastructure. First 6 months is to listen.

William Knox currently in Penang working for QUNO.

Need to get his head round the issues.

QUNO Geneva and New York will be getting new directors shortly. QUNO Geneva runs summer schools. 22 – 26 year olds.

AUKUS submarines with USA + UK + Australia raising the nuclear weapons threat.

Rob Gallagher has had recent work in Bangladesh and Laos. Given just 2 or 3 weeks to come up with answers. No time to become really aware of the issues.

12.20pm Ivan Hutnik, update on Nagaland.

Ivan reported on the work of the Naga Group.

Naga group is taking an accompanying role in its work, seeking to be sensitive to all parties.

1.30pm Update on Bhopal led by Martin Wright

35 years since the world's worst industrial disaster on 2nd and 3rd December 1984.

Views a powerpoint presentation showing aspects of the disaster and consequences including the purchase by Dow Chemicals

Letter in the Friend started the work now being undertaken by Action for Bhopal using a Restorative Justice approach.

Letters sent to Dow asking what they can do, but met with corporate excuses.
Indian Government more anxious to keep good relations with the Dow company than support their people.

UN Global Compact aims to get companies to sign up to the principles.
Action for Bhopal has written, maintaining that Dow does not comply, but Dow's reply continued to deny responsibility.

UN Special Rapporteur for toxic waste and human rights had a 3 year term. Efforts now to contact investors including pension funds to make a difference.

Does QSAIG have contact with Indian influencers?

Can ask Ekta Parishad who have HQ in Bhopal.

Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) should set standards, but so far Dow is not interested.

Ethical investment groups may be a route to follow.

Martin Wright will welcome contact details of those who can influence Dow or the Indian Government.

Fortune 500 companies include Dow and should comply with GRI.

Postscript

QSAIG members may be interested to know that the following proposals have been put forward by AfB for the agenda of #COP26:

- The scope of the conference should be broadened, to include not only climate change but eliminating toxic waste, with Bhopal as the prime case.
- Not only environmental issues but human rights should be included (clean air and clean water, and therefore health) with special reference to the impact on women and the causation of birth defects.
- These principles should apply not only to the future but to remediating pollution caused by past activities.
- The crime of ecocide should be created. The sanction should be that the polluter pays, including compensation and the cost of cleaning up. Where there has been a change in the ownership of the polluter company, the principle of successor liability should apply. There should be an expectation that the corporation will co-operate with an inquiry with a view to preventing future disasters.

1.50pm Importance of the Voluntary Sector. Led by Bachchu Siddique.

Voluntary service in development.

Bachchu, also known as Abu Siddique, is keen to understand development from bottom up. Now involved in Institute for Mother and Child which takes service to grass roots. Did workshop 2 years ago with vulnerable seeking feed back. Collective Consciences and Synergic outcome in voluntary service.

Suggestions from participants were surprising and should be included in planning. Recommendations for future work were developed.

2.10pm Jaijagat. Update from Fran Wilde.

30 year of campaigning on land rights.

Associated with Action Village India.

Walk from Dehli to Geneva, got to Armenia but stopped by Covid. Then on line presence.

2 weeks ago international youth forum run by Jaijagat. Really lively.

Peace and Justice were the starting points, now include climate as a main point.

Loving Earth Project

2 workshops to develop poetry about climate.

See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-kYP9eN5Xxw>

Poetry performances when the COP Walkers came through Birmingham.

Also at the Birmingham warehouse café.

Incinerator project has taken a lot of work. It is expected that 50 new incinerators will be built. These are great producers of CO².



JaiJagat is also busy in India. The work is being revitalised around land rights.