

THE 1987 PEACE STATEMENT (The Making of...)

I am trying to record my recollections of the Peace Statement and how it was put together at YM/SG at St Kevin's College in Oamaru in 1987. There had recently been a Defence Review Committee, to decide amongst other things, whether NZ should remain in ANZUS. There were several military people on that Committee, and a few representing other groups (including our Friend Kevin Clements). Friends got the feeling that Kevin's views had been ignored, or that he hadn't put the Quaker witness across. In fact, he had, but he had tried hard to do that. He hadn't abandoned his pacifism!

So, at that SG, one informal interest group, 20 or more, sat under a tree to talk about peace, and whether, seeing so many ideas came out, they should move into a classroom, and try to put it all into writing. So I remember us sitting in one of the classrooms, facing the blackboard. We decided to brainstorm, and to see whether a coherent statement emerged. Friends wrote their contributions on many pieces of butcher's paper stuck up round the walls. Then Friends put ticks against the ones they liked. Those with 4 or 5 ticks had to be included, while those with none or very few were marginal, or could possibly be ignored. So, gradually the Peace Statement emerged. We discussed at length what to put in and what to leave out. Catherine Benland, who was the scribe, told me that Peter Low made some good points, and Peter told me that he helped translate the Statement into French for the benefit of Francophone delegates to the FWCC Triennial at Auckland some years later. I remember that we had difficulty with the final sentence "Together let us reject the clamour of fear and listen to the whisperings of hope."

Catherine and many others toiled away for hours the evening before the final Yearly Meeting session, to put together a document which would encapsulate the hours of work in that classroom. Quoting from the Minutes of that Yearly Meeting (Minute 41) "We asked a group of Friends to try and set out afresh and with relevance to our time and place those matters which are at the heart of our Peace Testimony. Following this a group of about 14 Friends has spent considerable time in doing this and we have heard the statement which has resulted. This statement, shown as Appendix D to these minutes, is accepted with enthusiasm and we are grateful to the Friends who have done this work so sensitively and painstakingly on our behalf. We hope to distribute this statement as widely as possible and ask the QPSANZ Committee to do this work. We ask that the statement be sent out with the Epistle to all other YM's. We ask that the YM Clerk be our spokesperson in the event of press or television enquiries" had finished, there were no comments, Just a long satisfied silence. We all felt it was a really powerful Statement – I know I did.

.

Philip Macdiarmid

(I am grateful for the help I have had from many people in compiling these reminiscences)