

Meeting for Sufferings

Handing over of Brummana High School: Financing the Society: Concern for Rudolf Hess

MEETING FOR SUFFERINGS was held at Friends House last Saturday, September 7, with the clerk, Beryl Hibbs, and assistant clerk, Peter Eccles, at the table. A visitor, Viola E. Purvis, of New England Yearly Meeting, was warmly welcomed.

Chris Greenfield, Middle East secretary of Quaker Peace & Service, introduced a report on the handing over of responsibility for Brummana High School to a Lebanese body at the end of this month. Mentioning the long association of Friends with Brummana, he recalled that in October 1983 QPS had explained to Meeting for Sufferings that the civil war which had broken out in 1975 had led to a need for readjustment. Since then QPS had worked towards a solution which would safeguard the future of the school as far as possible, and ensure the welfare of staff and the continuation of the Friends meeting.

QPS had sold some small pieces of land to liquidate the substantial debts (of over £½ million) which had accumulated during the war, and was keeping the residue in London as a small contingency fund. During the long period of negotiation, administrative changes at the school had brought a significant improvement in baccalaureate results, the school budget had broken even and its finances were stable so far this year. It would continue as an institution through the creation of a Lebanese charitable and educational body (referred to in the Lebanon as a "Cultural Society") formed of old scholars and others committed to the school. Since last October Ralph and Jean Wadge had

been in Lebanon to represent QPS and conduct the complicated business involved.*

From the end of September QPS would be free of legal and financial responsibility for the school (though it would retain ownership of the Friends meeting house) and Andrew Clark and Chris Greenfield, probably with Clare Norton and Duncan Campbell, hoped to attend the handover.

Answering a question from the Meeting, Chris Greenfield said that the members of the Brummana High School Cultural Society included people of Muslim, Greek Orthodox, Quaker and Maronite religion. Janet Sewell expressed gratitude to all Friends involved during the past ten troubled years, when there had often seemed no possible outcome, and thankfulness for what seemed a sure arrangement. She hoped that greetings would go to Near East Yearly Meeting, which had not been able to meet since 1975. After further queries the Meeting made a minute which recognised the "patient and sensitive handling" of the negotiations, and then accepted the following minute:

For over a hundred years a community at Brummana in Lebanon has sought to serve the people of the locality through education, training and medical services. During this time our world has changed dramatically. One of these changes has been the emergence of independent nations from colonial domination. The mission begun by Theophilus Waldmeier at

*They described something of their life in West Beirut in *THE FRIEND* of August 16.

Brummana belonged to the colonial period. During the ensuing years part of Syria became the Republic of Lebanon and the Mission (medical work having been laid down in 1941) became Brummana High School, its influence known and valued throughout the Middle East. The school has been owned by British and Irish Friends through QPS and its predecessor Friends Service Council, and expatriate and Lebanese staff have faithfully served their students in seeking to bring to them a liberal education stemming from the faith and practice of the Religious Society of Friends.

Friends believe that as far as possible there should be local responsibility for the running of affairs, and that most continued foreign control nowadays, however well intentioned, is undesirable. In spite of the problems facing Lebanon at this time British Friends believe that Lebanese people are ready, capable and best fitted to undertake the running of the Brummana High School. A new Cultural Society has been set up and is assuming total responsibility for the school. We know that there will be changes in the character of Brummana High School, but we trust that it will continue to open and develop the minds of young people to knowledge in its broadest sense, and to the right values for life in the spirit of the school motto: "I serve."

Friends of London Yearly Meeting pray for the school's success, particularly at this important period in its history. Over the years deep friendships have grown between those involved with the school and we hope that individual links will be maintained. Through them we shall learn with interest of its progress. We shall continue to uphold members of the Society of Friends in Lebanon through the Friends World Committee for Consultation. To all those who have served the school in the past we express our deepest gratitude. To all those participating in this new venture we convey our loving support.

Preparing the Society's work

1980-1981 Yearly Meeting Report
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