

AN UNEXPECTED SILENCE!



*"Tell me what democracy look like!
This is what democracy looks like!"*



Samba band warms up before the start

The first 2020 Extinction Rebellion (XR) climate crisis march in London was coursing along Oxford Street, pausing at each major intersection to allow crossing traffic to be halted.

The staccato drumming of several large samba bands mingled with chants and chatting of protestors.

A sea of brightly coloured flags bearing the now familiar stylised hourglass logo wildly waved in the strong wind.

When something quite unexpected happened!



At one of the pauses, a piercing whistle sounded from the head of the procession. A tidal wave of raised hands surged from the front to the distant end of the broad column of protestors, accompanied by silence.

For about three minutes the motionless silence was held by the sea of raised hands.

Then a second whistle from the front, and a wave of descending hands accompanied a cacophony of samba drumming, wild whoops shouts and yells, and the march was moving again.

XR has adopted a set of hand signals to help non-verbal communication in meetings and noisy environments, and one very familiar with Quakers is the use of a raised hand to signal 'silence, please'. I have seen it often used in large Quaker gatherings, such as Yearly Meeting, but this

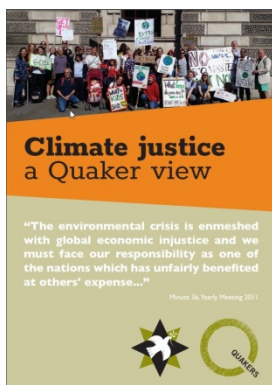
is the first time I have seen it used so effectively on a major protest march.



Good point, duck!



Hari-Krishna band joins the march with trishaw drummer and sound system



front of the procession, echoing the title of the recently released QPSW leaflet 'Climate Justice, a Quaker view'.

Brian Wardrop 22 February 2020

The transition from being immersed in an ocean of sound to silence and back again had an amazing effect, and goodness knows how it was experienced, not only by the police officers walking with us, but by the crowds of pedestrians who were watching us, many with their mobile phones deployed to catch some social media images.

They were not the only ones taking photos – police officers with cameras were prominent along the march taking video footage of the marchers. We waved and smiled at them as well, of course.

The '**Enough is Enough**' march on 21 February was organised in response to, and took as its theme the slogan from, a campaign launched in February 2020 by LBC radio host Nick Ferrari to "give police greater powers when dealing with protests which cause serious public disorder, such as XR."

The aim of the march was to turn the slogan around, and say enough is enough of inaction in the face of a climate emergency, whilst at the same time giving the police and public a procession with a carnival atmosphere of music and dancing, and with lots of love projected to the spectators along the way.

Traffic was delayed because of the procession, but the overwhelming majority of the drivers and occupants of the many taxis and buses we passed did respond by returning our smiles and waves. We made a special point of waving at children watching us from the pavement, and their parents often responded with them, some holding XR leaflets that stewards were offering as the procession passed.

As we headed down Regent Street we were joined by a Hari-Krishna trishaw rock band: two guitarists and a singer walking with a trishaw carrying the drummer and sound system, and they entertained us as we passed Trafalgar Square into Whitehall heading for our final destination in Parliament Square.

Although we didn't stay for it, I understand that the disco dancing continued at Parliament Square.

A conversation was overheard between some of the police who had accompanied us, expressing surprise at seeing the impromptu dancing within the march.

I hope that they saw a different side to our expressions of concern.

As a Quaker, I particularly liked the Climate Justice banner carried at the