Reports of suffering by American Quakers during the American Revolution quickly reached their European brethren. As early as 1776 Dutch Friends were requesting information from London concerning the situation of American Friends: “In these troublesome times, we often have to remember, with sympathy, our brethren in America. . . . If the Yearly Meeting has had any Intelligence from them, we request it may be communicated to us.” The 1776 general epistle from London Yearly Meeting noted that

By epistles received from several of the provinces in America, we have affecting information of the state of Friends in those parts; and deeply sympathize with the faithful, wheresoever they are situated, under their afflictions, and fervently desire, that this season of outward probation may be sanctified to all. We are sensible it must try the foundations of many, and we trust it may bring again to the fold some, who, during a long enjoyment of ease and tranquility in those once happy and flourishing countries, have incautiously wandered till they have almost forgotten the true shepherd of the flock, Christ Jesus.

In this same year of 1776 London Friends wrote to Philadelphia that “the minds of many amongst us [at our Yearly Meeting] were deeply affected with a Sense of your Sufferings.” This letter speaks only of British Friends praying that American Quakers would come

1 Epistles Received, IV (1758-1778), 421-422, Friends House Library, London.
2 Epistles from the Yearly Meeting of Friends, held in London, to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings in Great Britain, Ireland, and Elsewhere; from 1681 to 1857, Inclusive (London, 1858), II, 28–29.
3 Epistles Sent, V (1774-1790), 60, Friends House Library.
through their difficulties. There is no mention of needs or relief measures, for such thoughts apparently had not yet entered their minds. They did, however, offer one bit of advice or direction to their American brethren: remain "single" in mind. And they also tossed out a challenge to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting to exercise special concern for the rest of American Quakerism, as it was becoming more difficult for British Friends to help (with the growing breakdown of communications, including both travel by "public" Friends and the exchange of epistles).

An epistle from Philadelphia Meeting for Sufferings, written in November 1776 and received in London in 1777, told of increasing Quaker suffering in New York and New Jersey. This and other "intelligence" inspired London Friends to inform their brethren in Ireland that "We feel a deep Sympathy with our Suffering Brethren in America." The special letters to Irish Friends in 1778–1782 bear no further mention of American Quakers and their problems, but the general epistles to all Friends from 1777 onward kept the world family of Friends generally informed concerning the suffering state of their American colleagues.

The deep sympathy of British Friends, nourished by further reports from American yearly meetings, was pushed from feeling to action by the return of Thomas Gawthrop, a "public" Friend who had been in America traveling in the ministry for several years. Gawthrop, who had attended the 1777 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, was able to report to London Quakers first hand the suffering of Friends throughout the colonies and especially those in the Philadelphia area. His account, given upon his return at the very beginning of 1778, galvanized British Friends into action.

Immediately upon hearing from Thomas Gawthrop that Philadelphia Friends were in very great want of clothing and provisions, a number of Friends were asked to consider this matter, and to

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7 *Epistles from the Yearly Meeting of Friends, held in London, II, 30–31, 34, 38, 45, 49, 53–54.
8 Cf. *Epistles Received, IV, passim*.
take such steps as appeared to them necessary. This committee “for
the Supplying Friends in Philadelphia with Provisions & Coals,”
moved on January 19, 1778, and took immediate action. First of all,
the committee decided to send out, as quickly as possible, a “Cargo
of Provisions & Coals,” costing £4,000, in one or more vessels. The
shipment was to be consigned to such Philadelphia Friends “as
may hereafter be Judg’d proper” and to be sold to Friends “at
such rates as may be Just Sufficient to Clear the Prime Costs and
unavoidable expenses.” Secondly, an appeal for funds was to be
launched immediately “for defraying these expenses, as they arise
and to be repaid as returns may be made [by Philadelphia Friends].”
Two small subcommittees were therefore appointed, one to provide
the necessary cargo and the other to promote the authorized sub-
scription. Either or both of these subcommittees was empowered to
call the whole committee together as occasion might warrant.

Four days later, on January 23, 1778, it was reported that more
than £4,000 had already been subscribed toward the relief of Phila-
delphia Friends. These subscriptions were ordered to be paid into
the hands of the Quaker banking firm of Smith, Wright, and Gray
as soon as was convenient, and the following Friends (or any three
of them) were authorized to draw upon this fund as they might
have occasion: Daniel Mildred, John Roberts, Robert Barclay,
Jacob Hagen, Owen Weston and John Warder. At this same
meeting it was noted that many Friends had expressed a desire to
add a “further supply” to the cargo to be “distributed gratis to
poor Friends” of Philadelphia. Decision on this matter, however,
was postponed. On January 30 the full committee, on the recom-
mandation of the subcommittee which had met at the Pennsylvania
Coffee House on the 29th, decided to fill up the ship which had
been procured by adding two hundred or more barrels of flour to
be given “to those who have not wherewith to purchase.”

10 General Committee for the Relief of Friends in Philadelphia Minutes, 1, Friends House
Library.
11 Ibid., 2.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid., 5.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., 6.
Even as the committee was finalizing its plans John Fothergill, on February 9, brought in a letter from Philadelphia (written on December 16, 1777) which had just reached London by way of Ireland. Philadelphia Friends reported the unfortunate state in which they and other inhabitants of that city found themselves. Just before the British troops occupied Philadelphia, the American forces had removed all the provisions from the city, except for what might last the inhabitants for a very short period. When the British took possession the Americans passed a law providing the death penalty for anyone caught bringing food or fuel into the city. Twenty thousand inhabitants, whose numbers were swollen by the army, seamen, and refugees, placed such a demand on what little material was available that "Flour is sold for near 3 Guineas per Hundred, Ship-bread more; beef and pork & all other provisions, & Fuel, nearly in the same proportion." The whole situation had been exacerbated by the fact that the "Traders who came with, and followed the [British] Fleet, as well as the Drawers of Bills for the Supplies of the Army, & Navy" had for some time past refused to accept the old legal paper currency in payment "at a time when few have any Silver or Gold"—even those "who are allowed to be wealthy," because of "means having been devised for two Years past to deprive the Inhabitants of them." As a result Philadelphia Friends were unable to obtain sterling bills of exchange to purchase those items when they might become available. Also, there was an extreme shortage of salt, so that there would be no supplies of salted provisions for the next spring and summer. Finally, they reported that there had been widespread destruction and havoc wrought by the two armies for many miles around the city, with many "of our peaceable Brethren being stripped of nearly their all, as to provisions, live Stock, Bedding, and Apparel." Philadelphia Friends then requested that English Friends procure for them certain supplies and ship them "as you may judge best in good sailing Vessels, insuring the Amount against all Risques, as far as you can." Their request was for 1,000 barrels of best Irish beef (or "the equivalent thereto, if in Tierces"), 400 barrels best

17 Ibid., 14.
18 Ibid., 9.
19 Ibid., 10.
Irish pork, 200 kegs best Cork or other best Irish butter, 1,000 hundredweight of good wheat meal, 500 hundredweight of best ship biscuit, 500 bushels of best peas (or, if cheap, 1,000 bushels), £25 sterling value in oatmeal, £25 sterling value in hulled barley, £50 sterling value in double Gloucester cheese, £50 sterling value in Cheshire cheese, 200 “Chaldrons large coal,” and a quantity of good Hampshire or other bacon well cured.\(^*\)

The large group of Philadelphia Friends which had empowered eleven of their members\(^*\) to send this request to London promised that “you shall be reimbursed (for the Advances yourselves, and the other Friends on your Side, may make for payment thereof) so soon as we are in a Capacity to do it, which we hope, notwithstanding our present Sufferings, and gloomy prospects, Divine Providence will enable us to do.”\(^*\) They also wanted British Friends in general to know that

The wants and distresses of the poorer Sort of People, and many who were in better Circumstances until lately, are such as we consider it our Duty to recommend as Objects of great want & compassion & assure you, that any charitable Donations which may be made, and arrive here for their benefit, Friends will hand out with great care, and fidelity.\(^*\)

The existing Cargo Committee, which London Yearly Meeting Friends had already established in January, then named a number of individuals to accept the names of any volunteers who “are disposed to promote this benevolent Design.”\(^*\) The work of this new subcommittee is not dealt with here, for it has very little real connection with the cargo ship.

The cargo which had already been collected (almost immediately following Gawthrop’s return and report) was loaded by February 13. A carefully prepared letter (“which being several times read, was, with some alterations, agreed to, and is to be signed by the Committee”) was also to be sent to the same Philadelphia Friends who

\(^{20}\) Ibid., 11.

\(^{21}\) Ibid., 8, 12. The eleven were Samuel Emlen, Joshua Howell, William Fisher, Abel James, John Drinker, John Reynell, Owen Jones, Hugh Roberts, Robert Waln, Nicholas Waln and Joseph Bringhurst.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 11.

\(^{23}\) Ibid., 11-12.

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 12. This letter was dated Feb. 17, 1778.
were to receive the cargo. It acquainted the Philadelphians with the great concern for them which had often been felt in London. It also noted that their request had largely been anticipated, as a result of Thomas Gawthrop's information, and that in a very short period £5,000 had been subscribed for a cargo of such provisions. The Cargo Committee had "freighted the ship Mary and Charlotte, John Besnard [Mesnard?], Master" and shipped a cargo amounting to £4,815:14:8.

Philadelphia Friends were informed that, since Gawthrop had given the Cargo Committee to understand that provisions were to be "sent out on your Account," the committee's desire was that "the Cargo may be disposed of in such a manner, as to enable you to remit the Amount when Opportunity & your Conveniency may allow." No clothing had been included in this vessel, for Londoners had recently heard that a number of ships with clothing had arrived in Philadelphia. The committee recommended that, if this were not true, some of the excess provisions be exchanged for clothing—until London Friends might be informed more fully about any clothing needs of Philadelphia Quakers. Philadelphia Friends were also asked to make known, at every possible opportunity, their situation—"as divers here, notwithstanding the money Losses they have sustained in consequence of the present Troubles, by decay of Trade, and other incidents, find themselves disposed to alleviate your wants as they are able."

By March 13, 1778, the Mary & Charlotte was at Portsmouth "waiting Convoy," while Bristol Friends had sent out another vessel with "divers Articles" not in the London cargo. It was hoped that these two cargoes would "tolerably" satisfy the Philadelphia needs for the present, if the vessels arrived "in safety."

25 Ibid., 13. The cargo was directed to the eleven who had signed the appeal from Philadelphia (note 21).
26 Ibid., 14. Copies of the bill of lading and invoices were also enclosed. The necessary licenses had been obtained from the British Government, and the captain had instructions to the Commander in Chief in Philadelphia. Copies of these papers were also sent to Philadelphia Friends.
27 Ibid., 14-15.
28 Ibid., 15.
29 Ibid., 20-21. This letter went to the same eleven Philadelphians.
30 Ibid., 16.
The *Mary & Charlotte*, which had been loaded in London early in February, finally arrived at Reedy Island in the Delaware River early in June 1778. The captain, leaving the vessel there, went up to the city to get permission to bring his ship to Philadelphia (from whose harbor almost all shipping had been ordered sometime before). When a small body of Friends presented letters from the Treasury Board in London, the British admiral granted permission and the British general allowed the cargo to be landed. Within a few days the unloading of most of the cargo had been accomplished.31

Upon examination of the cargo it was discovered that the flour was generally “musty and hard,” probably either from not being fresh when shipped or not sufficiently cooled and dried when packed—for there was no evidence of damage from sea water. To prepare the flour properly for baking “much Labour is required in breaking it up, & passing it through sieves, after which we believed the Fire may take out the must, so that it may be eaten.” The flour appeared to be well ground, although the extra “coarsest sort is inferior to ours under the same character.”32 The “heated” condition of the flour also caused damage to several other parts of the shipment. The cheese, which had been stowed above the flour, in general “makes a very bad appearance, although we believe it was of good quality, most of it had been much heated, and the larger part greatly broken to pieces & run together, so that besides being reduced to an inconsiderable value, compared with sound Cheese, it has lost much of its Weight, and injured many Barrels of Flour it has run into.33

It was also discovered that most of the butter (probably from the same cause) had leaked out of the “cags,” and what little remained did not appear fit either for table or cooking. The peas, also for the same reasons, “came out mouldy and moist, at least so far as they have yet been examined.” What bacon had been surveyed appeared to be “sound and good, tho’ the loss in weight is considerable.” The beef “looks well, except one Cask which was stove to pieces on

31 John Reynell, Hugh Roberts, and eleven other Philadelphia Friends to John Fothergill, David Barclay, and six other London Cargo Committee Friends, June 16, 1778, 1, Friends House Library.
the passage." Only a small portion of the coals had been unloaded before the captain received orders from British headquarters to leave the port in a very short time, so that the rest was carried off.34

Before it was discovered that the cargo had been damaged the contents had already been subscribed for in various parts of the city. Part of the total had been reserved for the use of Philadelphia’s three Monthly Meetings, "for the Benefit of such in Profession with us who are unable to purchase." The Managers of the Pennsylvania Hospital and those who had "the Care of the Public Poor in the Alms House & House of Employment" had also taken a part. What did not go to these and other subscribers would be sold to other people "so as to render the loss as small as may be."35

The Philadelphians, who expressed their heartfelt thanks to their London brethren for their "Brotherly Sympathy" and their efforts to help, also reported that they had received a letter from a committee of Bristol Friends with a list of provisions shipped from that city in the Live Oak with Captain Forten. Thus far, though, they had received no further account of the Bristol cargo.36 They never did receive it, for it was lost at sea and the Bristol subscribers were eventually reimbursed by the insurance on the shipment.37

Not until October 1778 did the London Friends learn that the Mary & Charlotte had arrived safely in Philadelphia. They were saddened to hear that the provisions which it carried were in a bad condition (probably as a result of being "detained on Board between four, or five Month" and being "Improperly stowed").38 The London committee then authorized the Philadelphia Friends to take £2,000 from the proceeds of the cargo and to use it to help needy Friends where possible.39 The remainder of the money obtained from the sale of provisions was to be held in reserve until further instructions were sent. The Philadelphia committee of

34 Ibid., 2.
36 Ibid.
37 General Committee Minutes, 34.
38 Ibid., 24. Minutes of Philadelphia Meeting for Sufferings (1775-1785), 187-188, where the passage was reported as having taken seventeen weeks and the cargo was said to have been "much heated & damaged." A microfilm copy of these minutes is at the Quaker Collection, Haverford College Library.
39 General Committee Minutes, 24.
eleven was asked to transmit "the Account of Sales as soon as completed."40

No accounting had reached the Cargo Committee by June 14, 1779, so that John Fothergill wrote to James Pemberton that London Friends had learned that "the cargo had arrived in very bad condition but [that they still] wish to have an account of its produce."41 On April 14, 1779, Philadelphia Friends wrote that the task of disposing of the cargo had been difficult but was nearly completed, so that a report might possibly be sent off soon.42 By the end of 1780, however, nothing more had been heard, so that London Meeting for Sufferings was writing to Philadelphia Meeting for Sufferings about this cargo which had been sent by one unofficial (and rather private) committee to another, seeking to get Philadelphia Meeting for Sufferings to put some pressure on the local committee:

such of our Members who stepped forward for your Relief, [report] that they have not yet received any Remittance from the cargo of provisions... further than the part of their Subscriptions which were directed to be retained on your side to be distributed among the Sufferers instead of drawing Bills on this city. We must therefore intreat you to direct some Enquiry to be made into this Business and that Satisfaction may be made to those Friends who were concerned therein, as speedily as you can, lest it should be disadvantageous to any future Solicitations on your Behalf should the necessities of the times make them necessary.43

Nearly a year elapsed before Philadelphia Meeting for Sufferings responded, reflecting the difficulty of communication between America and England. It noted with sorrow the complaint which had been made against the local committee which had "the care of that very burthensome Business of the Cargo." They also expressed a fear that "this Business already so exercising" might, to some degree, interrupt that "mutual Harmony & Confidence, the preser-

40 Ibid., 24.
41 Manuscripts, Portfolio 38, number 113, Friends House Library. This is a copy of the original which is in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
42 Philadelphia Committee to London Committee, dated 14th of 4th month, 1779, and signed by John Reynell and many others, Friends House Library.
43 Letters to and from Philadelphia, I (1757-1815), 182-183, Friends House Library. This letter was written Dec. 29, 1780.
vation of which is more desirable than that of outward Treasure.” Although Philadelphia Meeting for Sufferings had actually inquired into the matter in 1778, it now reported that “we are tender of so interfering as to undertake to decide upon the propriety of the representation made to your Meeting, or to enter into a vindication of the Committee of Friends here.” Also expressed was the hope that, when letters and duplicates of reports which were sent some considerable time earlier “with an Account of the Sales of the Cargo, comes to be maturely weighed, the ground of Dissatisfaction will be removed.”

The Cargo Committee on March 8, 1782, acknowledged receiving a December 12, 1780, account of the sales of the cargo of the Mary & Charlotte, showing that the Philadelphia committee had collected only £2,327:14:8 sterling from the faulty provisions, which left a loss of £2,339, “exclusive of Interest.” The Philadelphia committee appears to have implied that the loss was London’s, because of the defective condition of the materials which reached America. The London group countered with a different point of view: they had been led to understand (by Gawthrop and others who had come from America) that Philadelphia Friends “might . . . be exposed to the want of necessary provisions” and also understood that “there was an equal willingness and ability to pay for them, if not immediately, at least at some more convenient Period.”

The cargo on the Mary & Charlotte was almost completely made up when the Philadelphia letter of December 16, 1777, arrived. London Friends, believing that “expedition” was important, even though their cargo was “not exact to your description” felt that it was sufficiently close “to answer the proposed purchase.”

London’s only purpose, the committee declared, was to “furnish those supplies which we had reason to believe you could not procure by any other means.” Unfortunately, however, the ship’s lengthy passage (with the result of greatly damaged goods) was rendered

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44 Ibid., I, 189–190. This letter is dated Nov. 15, 1781.
45 General Committee Minutes, 30. It is interesting to see the London committee suddenly introducing the subject of interest which had never been mentioned before!
46 Ibid., 30.
48 Ibid.
even more disastrous by the fact that when the ship finally arrived the markets had fallen. When the provisions were finally sold the prices were quite low—thus “The design was by this means in a considerable degree defeated, the benefit yielded was small, and the loss on the original expense, [the committee] received with some surprize the intelligence, that more than one half of their subscription was lost in the sale of the several articles.”

This 1782 letter, which actually came from eleven of the original subscribers to the Cargo Fund, then noted that

We, however, by no means desire to urge you to repay us by distressing yourselves. On the contrary, if the difficulties in which you have been so long involved, disable you from bearing a share of the loss on this Cargo, we hope to prevail with the rest of the subscribers of the loan (of whom we are but a few) to content themselves with the nett proceeds according to the account of Sales enclosed in your last Letter, for, as we sincerely sympathize with you in the long series of trials to which you have been, and probably yet are exposed, it is far from our intention, by this representation of our original views, to give you pain, or to aggravate your distress, which we earnestly wish, if it seem good to the All-wise Disposer of events, might be entirely removed.

Although this letter from the Cargo Committee to Philadelphia produced in return an “affectionate letter,” the January 16, 1784, reply of the London Cargo Committee shows that there still had been no satisfactory solution to the problem. The Cargo Committee had examined carefully the Philadelphia account of the 1778 arrival of the Mary & Charlotte and “your observations” on the cargo. London Friends expressed no desire “to controvert the injured condition of the cargo nor the cause to which you attribute it.” The committee’s only wish was to “terminate the subject in a manner the most generally satisfactory to all parties.”

London Friends believed that British Quakers should not suffer the whole loss. The Philadelphia committee had, apparently, felt

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49 Ibid., 31-32.
50 Ibid., 32.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid., 33. This June 21, 1783, letter does not seem to be extant.
53 Ibid., 33-34. The London committee expressed its belief that even though a larger amount of flour had been sent than was desired, this development had stemmed from “the best judgement we were able to form of your interest, which was the single motive of under-
that some portion of this loss might be "reasonably charged on the Donation Fund."\textsuperscript{54} The London committee in turn thought this to be a good suggestion, but believed that it would be better for the Philadelphia committee to approach the Trustees of the Donation Fund on this matter. Likewise, Philadelphia Friends should be the ones who determined "the proportion [of the total loss] which ought to be considered as inevitable Loss, arising from an unforeseen Concurrence of Events, & divested of the Damages incurred on the shipping."\textsuperscript{55}

The Donation Fund Subcommittee, accepting the view of Philadelphia Friends that both funds had been raised for the same purpose, authorized £1,250 (only £1,045:12:15 of which was used) to be given to those British Friends who had advanced the £5,000 to send the 1778 cargo ship from London.\textsuperscript{56} Philadelphia Friends also exerted themselves, successfully repaying the remainder of the original £5,000. The only loss to the subscribers was the interest (something not even mentioned before 1782) on the sum.\textsuperscript{57}

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