

Christ to consider the coverage of hospice care under their medical insurance plans.

Requests the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries to inform members of the church and others about the hospice concept, to serve as liaison to hospice organizations and develop a resource and communications network for United Church of Christ members involved in hospice care.

Requests the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries to monitor the implementation of legislation which provides for hospice care for all dying persons seeking that care.

#### **21. REPORT OF SECTION II CONTINUED**

Assistant Moderator Carl F. Schroer assumed the chair and called on the Rev. Robert B. Curry (ME) Chairperson, to continue the report of Section II.

#### **22. RESOLUTION ON FAIR REPRESENTATION IN CONFERENCE DELEGATIONS TO THE GENERAL SYNOD**

Mr. Curry referred the delegates to the two documents listing new business, pages 32 and 62 respectively, to the Section report, moved the adoption of the Resolution on Fair Representation In General Synod Delegations, and called on Noel Gelm (IS) Chairperson of the small group that considered this resolution, to speak to the motion. Mr. Gelm indicated that the resolution is a consolidation of the two resolutions indicated as new business and is related to the recent action of the General Synod in adopting the amendment to Bylaw 171, but goes a step further and gives additional direction to the Conferences. There was discussion. A motion to terminate debate was adopted, and it was

83 GS 78 VOTED: The Fourteenth General Synod adopts as amended the Resolution on Fair Minority Representation in Conference Delegations to the General Synod.

#### **RESOLUTION ON FAIR MINORITY REPRESENTATION IN CONFERENCE DELEGATIONS TO THE GENERAL SYNOD**

WHEREAS, the constituency of the United Church of Christ is diverse in many ways, particularly racially, and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 171 directs that the delegations from each Conference to the General Synod "shall reflect the United Church of Christ' commitment to affirmative action", and

WHEREAS, it was brought to the attention of the Fourteenth General Synod that several Conference delegations fell short of fair representation of minority constituencies,

THEREFORE, the Fourteenth General Synod requests that:

A complete report of minority representation on Conference delegations to the Fourteenth General Synod be assembled by the United Church of Christ Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Coordinator and sent to Conference Ministers and all committees responsible for nominating General Synod delegates prior to their 1984 Annual Conference meetings, so that Conference Nominating Committees may be challenged and called upon to respond in good faith to Bylaw 171 in the selection of succeeding Conference delegations;

The Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Coordinator, in consultation with the Executive Council, shall develop guidelines for use by Conferences in the selection of General Synod delegates which will assure fair representation of race, based on the minority and disabled constituencies of the respective Conferences;

Each Conference shall, within two months following the election of its Synod delegation, report to the Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Coordinator on the composition of the delegation, and on its efforts to implement the Affirmative Action guidelines for selecting Conference delegates to the General Synod.

#### **23. RESOLUTION ON THE STATUS OF THE FAMILY FARM**

Mr. Curry continued the report of Section II, referred the delegates to part II of the new business report, to the Section report, moved the adoption of the Resolution on the Status of the Family Farm, and called on Earlene Hentzel (IA) Chairperson of the small group that considered the resolution, to speak to the motion. Ms. Hentzel noted certain editorial changes in the document and emphasized the importance of the resolution. There was discussion, and it was

83 GS 79 VOTED: The Fourteenth General Synod adopts the Resolution on the Status of the Family Farm.

#### **THE STATUS OF THE FAMILY FARM**

##### *Introduction:*

One of the most complex problems facing the United States government today is the financial crisis in agriculture. Partly the product of farmers' success in improving productivity and partly the product of farm policies which have failed to stabilize farm income, this crisis threatens to erode the family farm<sup>1</sup> base of American agriculture more than any development in our lifetimes.

Neither recent Congresses nor recent administrations have responded responsibly to this growing crisis. To the contrary, there has been a tendency on the part of public officials to avoid the issue by opening public credit programs to an ever-wider group of larger farms and offering tax concessions which encourage further expansion on the part of these farms. The result is more concentration in production, diminished economic opportunity for farms of modest means, and greater financial vulnerability for our food system as a whole. These trends undermine an owner-operated system of agriculture which a substantial body of scientific literature has established as the most efficient unit of production.<sup>2</sup>

Particularly grievous has been: (1) the steady deterioration in the services afforded small farmers with limited resources by the FmHA and the corresponding shift in that agency's emphasis to larger-than-family farms; and (2) the expansion of the investment tax credit, a superfluous subsidy to capital which invites unneeded investment by tax-motivated investors in areas of agriculture already sufficiently capitalized. These policies have tended to reward the rich at the expense of the poor, and to diminish economic justice.

The general direction of these and other policies is therefore viewed as contrary to the Pronouncement on RURAL AMERICA: LIFE AND ISSUES adopted by the

Twelfth General Synod in June, 1979, which called for "the preservation and the strengthening of the family farm as a basic goal of national policy." Specifically, the Pronouncement addressed itself to both the farm credit and tax policy issues referred to above, and called for a termination of economic policies which discriminate against family farmers, minority persons, and women.

*Specific Issues:*

Credit: Since the 1940's the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) has provided credit as a last resort to farmers who could not get it elsewhere. Its purpose has been to help tenant farmers become owners and to help marginal farmers reach the point they could operate through normal commercial credit.

In recent years, the government has reduced services to such farmers while expanding FmHA credit to larger, more aggressive farmers. In 1978, Congress eliminated the interest subsidy from 80% of FmHA's "regular" loans, reserving the lower interest loans for "limited resources" (LR) borrowers, vaguely defined as those who could not afford the regular interest rate. At the same time, Congress established an Economic Emergency (EE) loan program for larger-than-family-sized farmers, including those who do not depend on farm income for a living. By 1979, the EE program was larger than the regular loan program, and limited-resources borrowers, the group for whom FmHA was established, were getting less than 10% of the agency's farm loans.

The present Administration has opposed re-authorization of the limited resource program and has opposed any appropriation for it. Last year, it spent only half the limited resources allocation, despite authorizing legislation requiring it to make the loans. Meantime, Congress is considering legislation to strengthen the EE program by making it mandatory.

At the same time, the Administration has generally resisted efforts to make FmHA procedures more open and fair for the borrower. This has been particularly true in the cases of requests for deferrals, or one year extensions of overdue loans in cases where the delinquency is for reasons beyond the borrower's control. A.U.S. District Court case (Curry v. Block) requires the Administration to develop criteria for such deferrals by FmHA has appealed the case to the Circuit Court. Congress is considering legislation requiring implementation of the deferral policy. About 25% of FmHA borrowers are delinquent, and that proportion is expected to increase.

Tax Policy: The general effort of U.S. income tax policy on the structure of American agriculture has been to encourage non-farm investment, concentration of production, and the separation of ownership from operation. Recent major studies by the USDA and land grant universities confirm this.

The effect has been particularly strong in livestock production which has become more capital intensive and therefore more susceptible to tax-motivated investment. The University of Missouri reports that about 13% of the slaughter hogs in the U.S. now come from large operations, and in Nebraska, the Center for Rural Affairs has documented that 24% of the feeder pig crop (an especially important crop for beginning farmers) now comes from cor-

porate hog factories. A high income investor in such a facility can receive as much as 50% of his/her initial investment back in the first year of operation through reduced federal taxes, and over the life of the facility, can receive as much as 80%. This subsidy is attracting investment capital into an area of agricultural production which is already sufficiently capitalized. USDA reports that the U.S. hog industry presently has about double the production facilities necessary to meet production requirements.

Irrigation development is another example. New technologies (sophisticated sprinkler systems) have made it possible to irrigate marginal range land which is highly susceptible of erosion. A high income developer and investor can recover about one-third of the purchase price of such land through federal and state tax breaks on the irrigation development, according to the Center for Rural Affairs. Ironically, the tax breaks work to encourage the selection first of those parcels which are most vulnerable to erosion (the higher the ratio of development costs to original purchase price of the land, the larger the tax breaks; the lower the purchase price, the more marginal the land). Most of the production from these developments is corn, a commodity in surplus.

*Theological Rationale:*

A Christian ethical approach to agriculture begins with the acknowledgment that "The earth is the Lords and the fullness thereof . . ." God the Creator has given human beings a special position in the world, with specific responsibility for the fruits of the earth and all living things. Thus the production of food and fiber—the primary task of farmers—becomes a service to God and humankind.

The Christian faith also attaches special significance to the family, where Christian love and forgiveness can best be personally experienced. The family farm has provided, throughout our history, that type of rural environment most conducive to the growth of human personality, the stability and enrichment of family life, and the strength of the community and its institutions. This pattern of agriculture has also contributed notably to national strength and the preservation of democratic attitudes and practices.

Therefore, the preservation and extension of the efficient family-type farm as the predominant pattern of American agriculture has been affirmed as a conscious goal of national policy by the Twelfth General Synod of the United Church of Christ. Furthermore, the Christian concept of justice demands that family farmers who produce efficiently and abundantly, where such production is in the national interest, should not suffer from this fact, but should receive economic rewards comparable with those received by persons operating larger-than-family-type farms or by persons of similar competence in other vocations.

Because of their ineffective bargaining position, farmers have rarely enjoyed true parity of income in the open market except during wartime periods of extreme demand. Yet sustained farm income is essential both as a requirement of justice for farmers and of stability for the total economy. Therefore, programs designed in accordance with sound economic principles and equitably administered to protect the rights and interests of small as well as large farmers, are a just, legitimate and necessary function of the federal government.

<sup>1</sup>A commonly accepted definition of the "family farm" as a farm operation in which the responsibility of ownership, management, labor (except at peak seasons) and financial risk is that of the family.

<sup>2</sup>The economic literature on economics of scale and farm size are voluminous and conclusive. A farm which fully employs one or two persons achieves lowest costs and optimum efficiencies. The classics in this literature are: J. Patrick Madden, *Economics of Size in Farming*, AER Report #107, USDA, 1967; Warren R. Bailey, *The One-Man Farm*, ERS-519, USDA, 1973; and Thomas A. Miller, et al, *Economics of Size in U.S. Field Corp Farming*, AER Report #472, USDA, 1981. The entire issue was reexamined by USDA as part of the "structure of agriculture" project conducted by the agency in 1980. It confirmed previous findings that "most of the technical economics . . . are attained at relatively small sizes" and concluded that "we have passed the point where any net gain to society can be claimed from policies that encourage large farms to become larger." (*A Time to Choose*, USDA, January, 1981).

<sup>3</sup>RURAL AMERICA: LIFE AND ISSUES, a Pronouncement of the Twelfth General Synod of the United Church of Christ, June, 1979.

The Fourteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ in order to restore some integrity to farm tax and credit policies which have increasingly favored high-income, expanding farms at the expense of small and modest sized family farms in the U.S., calls upon the Congress and the Administration to develop and implement policies which:

1. Restore the limited resource loan program of loans to low-equity and low-income farms and establish it as the principle loan program of the FmHA;
2. Restructure eligibility guidelines for all other FmHA farm loan programs so that only family farms are eligible for this kind of assistance;
3. Provide protection for borrowers who through no fault of their own are unable to meet scheduled loan payment but who show evidence of ability to pay when agricultural prices stabilize at levels which afford them the opportunity to do so; specifically, loan deferrals should be granted on a case-by-case basis under provisions which guarantee full and fair consideration of each applicant for a deferral and which safeguard the procedural rights of the borrower, including the right of administrative appeal; and
4. Eliminate the use of the investment tax credit for specialized farm buildings for all but family farm operations and completely eliminate the use of investment tax credit for purchase of irrigation equipment which is used to irrigate land not considered to be irrigable within soil conservation standards.

The General Synod further calls upon the Instrumentalities and other national bodies, Conferences, Associations, and local congregations to advocate for and support such measures.

#### 24. RESOLUTION ON CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Mr. Curry continued the report of Section II, referred the delegates to Advance Materials V, pages 132-134, to the

Section report and moved the adoption of the Resolution on Christian Environmental Stewardship. There was no discussion, and it was

83 GS 80 VOTED: The Fourteenth General Synod adopts the Resolution on Christian Environmental Stewardship.

#### RESOLUTION: CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

##### Summary:

This resolution considers our Christian Stewardship of God's creation. It gives special emphasis to the issue of hazardous wastes. It calls on various aspects of our corporate church life as the United Church of Christ to take actions to promote environmental protection.

##### Background:

We have come to new awareness in recent years of humankind's relationship to all of God's creation on this globe. We have learned that we are part of an intricate ecosystem; that one form of life depends on another, and it, in turn, on another, so that we are woven together in a delicate web of life.

We also have become aware that the earth is finite; that resources are limited and cannot sustain unlimited growth. Oil, water, plant life, arable land, animal species have all suffered from careless stewardship by humankind. Creeping deserts, species extinction in alarming numbers, lowering water tables, polluted lakes, rivers, and even oceans, air carrying dangerous levels of pollutants—all point to the need for very serious concern for the environment that sustains all life, including human life.

Further, human population pressures threaten this balance, for our species has grown exponentially from 3.7 billion in 1971 to a projected 7 billion by the year 2000, if present rates continue. The United States has special responsibility. We are 6% of the world's population, yet we consume one-third of the earth's non-renewable resources.

Further, we practice, and have exported, a consumptive way of life with technologies and manufacturing practices that make gluttonous use of the earth's resources.

It is in this context that we confront the special issue of the hazardous wastes that are now threatening many aspects of our total environment.

##### Biblical/Theological Understandings:

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein . . ." (Ps. 24)

As a covenantal people we understand that we have responsibility as well as privilege. Therefore, to understand the world as God's creation is to understand our responsibility as God's stewards, and our accountability to God as tenants. This means that faithful human action is always aware of the nature of creation seeking to enhance and not to destroy what has been so richly provided. This means that what humankind produces should be in harmony with the laws that govern the natural order.

Christ pictures the importance of the faithful steward "whom the master will set over his household to give them their portion of food at the proper time," and, also, the punishment due the steward who knows the master's will but does not act accordingly. (Luke 12:41ff)