

## SUNDAY EVENING

1. What is the philosophy underlying each proposal? Is the service voluntary or compulsory? Is it attractive to all or only to the poor?
2. What is the relationship of national service to military service?
3. What are the benefits? Is the proposal a way to recruit inexpensive public workers or is adequate compensation offered?
4. What may be the effect on voluntary service? How do the differing philosophies of each — one undertaken for religious or altruistic motives, the other for monetary gain — affect our youth and their view of society and service?

All these and other questions arise in response to the proposed legislation. The church must be an active participant in the coming debate, prepared to respond in an informed and thoughtful manner.

### Text of Resolution

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod of the United Church of Christ

calls upon the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries to call together a study group to reflect carefully on the issue of national service and its implications for both church and public life, and

suggests that the group consist of representatives of the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, the United Church Board for World Ministries, the Office for Church in Society, the Coordinating Center for Women, the Commission for Racial Justice, the Council for Racial and Ethnic Ministries, the Council for Higher Education, the Council for Youth and Young Adult Ministries, and such other groups as may be helpful, and

asks the group to prepare and make available to the church a study document for the use of all Conferences, Associations, local churches, and other bodies of the church, and

requires that a full report on the study, including possible proposals for action, be submitted for the consideration of the 18th General Synod.

Financial Implications: Subject to the availability of funds.

### 8. RESOLUTION "NUCLEAR WEAPONS MATERIAL PLANT CLOSING"

Mr. Kear then directed the delegates to the distributed materials for the revised text of the Resolution "Nuclear Weapons Material Plant Closing." Stating the recommendation of Committee 18, Mr. Kear moved and after brief discussion, it was

89-GS-41 VOTED: The 17th General Synod adopts the Resolution "Nuclear Weapons Material Plant Closing."

#### NUCLEAR WEAPONS MATERIAL PLANT CLOSING

##### Theological Rationale

God's action in Creation established a relationship of harmony among God, humanity, and the earth, within which human beings were to act as God's stewards, to treat creation and each other as God would treat them. From almost the begin-

ning humanity has rebelled against this sacred task, through sinful action declaring for itself the prerogative to make decisions according to its own standards of self-preoccupation, instead of God's shalom. Historically, such actions have been shown to be short-sighted and to lead to suffering and death. Personal indulgence, wars and environmental carelessness are evidence of this disregard for God's shalom standards: love, wholeness, peace, justice, etc.

This development of nuclear weapons has many consequences which are argued in both positive and negative ways. However, two clearly disastrous results of their development have been the escalating arms race and the enormous stores of contaminating nuclear waste that have not been, and cannot at this time be, disposed of in ways ensuring the safety of present or future generations. The latter is especially and unequivocally in violation of God's biblical intent that humanity should choose the ways of life and not death, so that we and our children may live (Deut. 30:29). It is in violation of a genuine stewardship that cares for the earth and its environment, the context for healthy human life and relationships. As stated in the 1988 Illinois Conference resolution on Environmental Stewardship (quoting Douglas Meeks, in "God and Land," Agriculture and Human Value, Fall, 1985, p. 16):

Through Christ we have been promised redemption. Romans 8:19-23 expresses the belief. "There is no such thing as a redemption of the earth without redemption of human beings, but neither is there a redemption of human beings without the redemption of the earth." This leads us to recognize our crucial relationship to God's creation. God's command to humanity is the responsibility to keep the creative process alive, not the destruction of the process, to live in the image of God as creator for the good of the whole creation, both now and into the future.

The situation of nuclear waste we have generated is an instance in which we have, in the words of the 15th General Synod Just Peace Pronouncement "mortgaged our future" for the sake of short term goals. Furthermore, as noted in past resolutions and theological statements of the Illinois Conference, the continued build up and development of new nuclear weapons carries the threat of global destruction. It is incumbent upon Christians to seek judiciously, but vigorously and without delay, for ways in which to be faithful to God's intent for human stewardship of earth and its resources. The ending of production of new nuclear weapons' fissionable materials, is a step toward controlling human carelessness with respect to the earth as a wholesome environment, and with respect to humanity's own survival. Our own and our children's future are surely at stake.

##### Background Information

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has been under fire for mismanagement at several of its facilities involved with the production of nuclear weapons. Unsafe working conditions, radioactive contamination, cover-up of past accidents, (1) and unsafe reactor operation are some of the accusations (2) leveled at DOE management by Congress, the press and an aroused public.

Part of the problem stems from the high level of secrecy surrounding the operation of DOE facilities. Another factor is that safety has generally been secondary to production; now that reactors are worn out (3) from several decades of non-stop nuclear activity, they are increasingly radioactive and dangerous to operate. Moreover, several of the major reactors are of

## SUNDAY EVENING

the graphite-moderated design (4) that exacerbated the Chernobyl disaster and should not be operated at all.

All the major nuclear materials production facilities are now closed, thus bringing the nation to a historic turning point; either we can proceed with the DOE plan to rebuild facilities and continue the arms race for another 30 or 40 years, or we can keep the facilities shut and negotiate with the Soviets for a mutual halt to all additional nuclear weapons production.

As safety and health questions have grown, local political struggles have developed near the sites. Citizen groups are actively engaged in public education and organizing near Hanford, Idaho Falls, Rocky Flats, Pantex, Fernald, Oak Ridge, Savannah River and elsewhere. On the national level, a substantial group of peace, environmental and safe-energy groups has come together to press for a permanent shut-down of dangerous, expensive and redundant military fuel plants.

The Soviet Union is thought by experts to be in a similar situation, burdened with military reactors at least as obsolete and dangerous as our own. (5) There exist, then, a rare opportunity to end nuclear fuel production on both sides, while still maintaining mutual nuclear deterrence at lower levels. In the words of the Rev. William Sloane Coffin, Jr., in a recent statement, "President Bush has a chance to turn a temporary necessity into a permanent virtue."

### Text of Resolution

WHEREAS, the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ, in congruence with its understanding of biblical teaching on stewardship and protection of the environment, has on numerous occasions called for the slowing and reversing of the nuclear arms race, and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Energy presently operates 27 plants and laboratories in 12 states, which together produce the fuel elements essential to nuclear explosions, and

WHEREAS, all the major nuclear materials production facilities are now closed, for a variety of safety and health reasons, resulting in a de facto moratorium in the manufacture of such fuel elements as plutonium, uranium and tritium, and

WHEREAS, the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) agreement, and the ongoing Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START), envision declining stockpiles of nuclear weapons on both sides, with a concomitant lessening of nuclear fuel requirements, and

WHEREAS, the Department of Energy has requested \$81 billion dollars over the next 20 years for the purpose of cleaning up and rebuilding production facilities, while competent outside sources have estimated the total cost at \$150 billion or more, and

WHEREAS, there is still no facility available for the safe, long term disposal of radioactive waste that would flow from a new generation of military production plants;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls on the United States Government to support the following propositions:

1. No additional production of plutonium, highly enriched uranium or tritium, and no construction of new nuclear

weapons production reactors or the special Isotope Separation facility.

2. Seek a mutual U.S. - Soviet moratorium on the production of nuclear weapons materials.
3. Fund a thorough clean-up of all nuclear production facilities under rigorous environmental guidelines.
4. Conduct an independent long-term health and safety study of all workers and communities affected by radiation releases at DOE facilities.
5. Provide economic adjustment assistance for displaced workers and for nearby communities affected by a permanent shut-down of all nuclear weapons production facilities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod calls for the distribution of this resolution to the President of the United States and all representatives to Congress.

### Footnotes:

- (1) New York Times, Oct. 6, 1988, Page 1: "Disclosures about problems at the enormous Government complex began unfolding last Friday, when two Congressional committees were told that a number of serious reactor accidents had been kept secret for as long as 31 years."
- (2) "Rocky Flats - the Arms Plant That Shouldn't be There." Washington Post National Weekly Edition, 12/26/88 - 1/1/89.
- (3) Mr. James Edwards, U.S. Secretary of Energy, 1981-82, quoted from an article in The Chicago Tribune, Feb. 24, 1989: "The problems at Savannah River are the direct and inevitable result of reactors that are approaching the end of their original design lifetimes. They were built almost 40 years ago . . ."
- (4) "Deadly Defense," published 1988 by Radioactive Waste Campaign, 652 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.
- (5) Nuclear Control Institute, 1000 Connecticut Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20036 - press release Dec. 20, 1988, quoting an assessment of Soviet capabilities prepared by the Los Alamos National Laboratory: "Soviet military production reactors are old, obsolete and unsafe. They will be shut down soon anyway."

Financial Implications: Subject to availability of funds.

## 9. RESOLUTION "UNITED STATES OVERT AND COVERT MILITARY INTERVENTION"

The next recommendation of Committee 18 brought before the 17th General Synod, Resolution "United States Overt and Covert Military Intervention," was introduced without changes to the original text. Mr. Kear moved and it was

89-GS-42 VOTED: The 17th General Synod adopts the Resolution "United States Overt and Covert Military Intervention."

### UNITED STATES OVERT AND COVERT MILITARY INTERVENTION

#### Background

The 15th General Synod of the United Church of Christ declared the United Church of Christ to be a Just Peace Church recognizing the interrelation of friendship, justice and common security from violence and affirming its opposition to the institution of war. That identification requires that we examine