

7. RECONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION "500 YEARS OF AMERICAN INDIAN AND EURO-AMERICAN CONTACT: A CALL FOR NEW BEGINNINGS"

In response to a motion by Mr. John E. Aeschbury (IS) and a second,

91-GS-83 VOTED: The Eighteenth General Synod reconsiders Resolution "500 Years of American Indian and Euro-American Contact: A Call for New Beginnings."

Mr. Jeffrey H. Bates (OHIO) moved that the resolution be amended as follows: In Committee Reports, Part VII, page 8, last "Be It Further Resolved" paragraph, include the Commission for Racial Justice and African/Americans. The motion was seconded. In the discussion period, Mr. Thomas Harry Eisentrout (OHIO) suggested a break for silent prayer and calmness. By consensus, the body approved a few moments of silent reflection. The Eighteenth General Synod failed to accept Mr. Bates' amendment to the resolution.

The Moderator advised the body to vote on the entire resolution since it was reconsidered.

91-GS-84 VOTED: The Eighteenth General Synod reaffirms adoption of the Resolution "500 Years of American Indian and Euro-American Contact: A Call for New Beginnings" as originally voted in 91- GS-84.

8. RESOLUTION "SELF DETERMINATION OF PUERTO RICO AND AMNESTY FOR PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE"

Ms. Gosselink recognized the Chairperson of Committee 15, Mr. Calvin True (ME), for the presentation of the Report of Committee 15. He directed the delegates to Committee Reports, Part VII, page 9, and indicated areas where the Committee made changes while preserving the original objectives of the resolution. He shared committee and personal frustrations of time limitations on debate and the inadequate opportunity for adequate discussion on resolutions that warrant actions. On behalf of the Committee, Mr. True moved that the Eighteenth General Synod adopt the Resolution "Self Determination of Puerto Rico and Amnesty for Prisoners of Conscience."

The Rev. James Gray (NH) spoke on behalf of the committee.

The body paused for a moment of silent prayer.

There was some favorable discussion. Mr. Terry White (SC), a member of the Business Committee, on a point of information regarding the different parties in Puerto Rico, asked for clarification about sides being taken. The committee responded that its intent was not to take sides but rather to encourage the national government to give the Puerto Ricans the opportunity for self-determination.

Mr. James Blume (SC) moved to refer the resolution to the Executive Council for action. The motion was seconded, and Mr. Blume spoke to the motion. He expressed concern over the body taking sides in a potential political debate and preferred the Executive Council to use its resources to investigate the issue and provide a proper recommendation without entering a political war.

There was some discussion on the referral motion, but the Eighteenth General Synod failed to approve referral of this resolution to the Executive Council for action.

The Rev. Jennifer Russell (NH) moved the question.

91-GS-85 VOTED: The Eighteenth General Synod adopts the Resolution "Self Determination of Puerto Rico and Amnesty for Prisoners of Conscience."

SELF DETERMINATION OF PUERTO RICO AND AMNESTY FOR PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE

The Scriptures inform us that Christ had a concern and an interest for those who were in captivity and imprisoned. This concern is reflected in the beginning of His public ministry where in Luke 4:16-20 He says that He is the One who has come to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and release to the captive and freedom to the oppressed.

The Scriptures commit us to bring to your attention the cry for justice and mercy from our Puerto Rican prisoners who are subjected to discriminatory treatment from the prison officials. Because we are called by Christ to bring the good news to the captives and to preach release to the oppressed, we have a responsibility to improve the prison conditions of the Puerto Rican prisoners and to eliminate the colonial condition of the Puerto Rican people.

WHEREAS, we as Christians are called to follow the mandates of Scripture and to work for justice wherever injustice is found;

WHEREAS, the Decolonization Committee of the United Nations has since 1972 recognized that Puerto Rico is a colony of the United States;

WHEREAS, the United Nations has declared this the decade to end colonialism;

WHEREAS, Puerto Rico is one of the last remaining colonial possessions in the world;

WHEREAS, the United States is one of the few who refuse to recognize that Puerto Rico is its colony;

WHEREAS, the Puerto Rican people have never been consulted as to their status since the 1898 invasion of Puerto Rico by the United States;

WHEREAS, the Puerto Rican people have suffered under colonization for 498 years;

WHEREAS, 17 Puerto Rican women and men, whose only crime has been to advocate the cause of Puerto Rico's independence, have been tried unjustly, sentenced, jailed, and denied the basic human rights afforded common prisoners;

WHEREAS, 18 of the Puerto Ricans have invoked the international law status of Prisoners of War taking refuge in the Geneva Convention of 1949 and resulting Protocols adopted by the United Nations;

WHEREAS, the "Freedom Now!" campaign is working toward the freedom of the prisoners of conscience;