

**A PRONOUNCEMENT ON JUSTICE AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:
A MANIFESTO FOR AMERICAN ACTION IN THE
STRUGGLE AGAINST WORLD POVERTY
A Pronouncement Approved by General Synod VI (1967)**

The moment has come for a renewal of American commitment to international development. Public indifference and governmental retreat must be overcome. New attitudes, new policies, and new actions are required.

The poverty of two-thirds of the human family is the starkest economic fact of our time. It is more than a material condition: it is a moral outrage. The sufferings and the degradation of the poor have been made intolerable in our generation. The nations together now possess the technological capacity to lift the burden of poverty from the backs of every people. Everywhere poverty has become a seedbed of social and political revolution.

Believers in a prophetic religious faith must discern the will of the God of justice who is Himself active in the very midst of the revolutions of the disinherited. As the gap between the rich nations and the poor nations tragically expands, the imperatives of that faith cry for justice and for compassion. These imperatives are not merely inner attitudes. They call for action. They confront the United States with special force because it is of all nations the richest and the most powerful. This nation has done much to develop the science and technology which provide the promise of triumph over world poverty, and which has persuaded us to launch a War on Poverty at home. But our very affluence tends to muffle the cries of human need and to stifle our response to them.

We in the richer nations are failing to fulfill our obligations to the two billion children of God who are poor, our brothers and sisters who bear His image and are beloved of Him as much as any one of us. We are failing morally and we are failing politically. The policies of the United States government reflect this failure. As the costs of international development have mounted, the Executive has proposed and the Congress has voted successive decreases in the American contribution. During the Marshall Plan (1948-53) the United States gave two per cent to all of Asia, Africa, and Latin America primarily for loans rather than grants. It is true that aid to Europe and economic and technical assistance to the developing nations have called forth unprecedented funds from the United States government and have made substantial contributions to human welfare. Yet it is also true that disillusionment and apathy have overtaken United States development policy at the very time that the wisdom of experience is ripening, the fruits of scientific study are becoming genuinely significant, and the opportunities for acceleration in development are rising. It is particularly unfortunate that the shrinking of American vision and support comes at a time when bitterness and despair are growing in the poorer nations.

The inadequacies of United States development policy are not only financial. There is a failure to come to terms with nationalism and with the ideological and political variations of fundamentally nationalist revolutions. There is a failure to understand development problems from the inside out—as the leaders and peoples of developing nations themselves must face those problems. There is a failure to get beyond the donor's preoccupations with dollars and with "American know-how" to the nurturing of indigenous leadership and institutions upon

which authentic national development must depend. There is a failure to forge those structures of international trade and of multilateral development strategy and decision-making which are responsive to the realities of power which the poorer nations confront.

The churches of America are called by the God of justice whom they worship to become wholeheartedly involved in the struggle against world poverty. The churches bear special witness to the claims of justice. They testify to the meaning of sacrifice. They know that repentance and reconstruction are the active agents of reconciliation. Their social witness and their world-wide ministries are summoned to a determined effort to expand the American contribution to international cooperation between the richer nations and the poorer nations.

The churches can do much to arouse the American public and to inspire an effective new constituency on the issues of world poverty. Yet the churches must not act alone. They must work together in the fullest possible ecumenical fellowship. They must join their efforts with those of governmental leaders, business, labor, and farm groups, citizens' organizations, foundations and universities. And they must work in company with religious leaders and others from the developing nations in order that they may think and act from an authentically international perspective.

It is not generosity or sacrifice alone which impels us to speak to the issues of world poverty. The interdependence of national economics is now so far advanced that the prosperity of every nation is fatefully tied to that of every other nation. The development of the new nations is as necessary for Americans as it is for them. The peace of the world is also at stake. Although peace cannot be secured without a rule of law, no rule of law can succeed unless it is established upon foundations of political and economic justice.

We pledge our support to the following policy priorities which we commend to the United States government and to the American public. We believe that these priorities reflect critically important claims of justice in the present relationships between the people of the United States and the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Policy Priorities for International Development

1. **ADEQUATE AID:** allocation of at least one per cent of the GNP (gross national product) for governmental development assistance and a total public and private allocation of at least two per cent of the GNP.
2. **INCREASINGLY MULTILATERAL:** channeling of a larger proportion of development assistance through the United Nations and other multilateral agencies such as regional development institutions.
3. **LESS BURDENSOME TERMS:** an increase in the proportion of grants and low-interest and interest-free loans in the distribution of United States development funds.
4. **LONG-TERM PLANNING:** Congressional authorization of long-term assistance for periods of up to five years in order to facilitate development planning.
5. **ELIMINATION OF "BUY-AMERICAN" REQUIREMENTS:** removal of purchase restrictions which prevent more economical procurement in other countries and which hinder industrial progress in the developing countries themselves.

6. GLOBAL COMMODITY AGREEMENTS: negotiation of effective international commodity agreements to stabilize export earnings on primary products from the developing countries.
7. FREER TRADE: liberalization of tariff policies and positive trade assistance to expand the access of the developing countries to markets of the developing countries.
8. FREEDOM FROM HUNGER: a more substantial mobilization of American agricultural technology for a maximum effort to help developing countries improve their food production and to increase food reserves to meet emergency needs.
9. REMOVAL OF COLD WAR RESTRICTIONS: elimination from aid legislation of prohibitions on food and other humanitarian assistance to countries which may be engaged in trade with certain Communist states.
10. FAMILY PLANNING: a more substantial program of helping developing countries in their efforts to confront the problems of rapidly expanding populations with education and health facilities for family planning.
11. EDUCATION FOR DEVELOPMENT: a commitment to world literacy and to the educational resources and institutions indispensable to the progress of economic and political development.
12. PRIVATE GROUPS: the fostering of co-operatives, labor unions, trade and related associations, community action groups, and other organizations in the developing countries which nurture leadership and democratic processes and which help to insure that economic assistance will be of lasting benefit.

The Responsibility of the Churches

The churches must recognize that the powers of government are more decisively involved in the struggle for justice in human life around the world than are the programs of the churches themselves. Just as there has been a shift from charity to justice in the evolution of domestic welfare policy, so the churches must not permit their own philanthropy, as generous as that may be, to distract attention from the issues of justice which are at stake in political decisions.

Yet the churches must do more than address resolutions to questions of governmental policy. When the issue is justice to the poor, the ancient demands of faith compel the churches to engage their own people and funds courageously and sacrificially in the struggle. We affirm the following as special tasks of the American churches:

1. INTERPRETATION: to interpret the issues of justice and of policy in international, development to the membership of our churches and to the general public, to the end that the nation's conscience may be aroused and its commitment to development may be renewed.
2. MOBILIZATION: to give leadership in the formation of a sustaining constituency within the American public which is informed and committed on the issues of international development.
3. CORPORATE WITNESS IN DECISION-MAKING: to bring the corporate witness of the churches to bear upon the processes of executive and legislative decision-making in matters of foreign aid and trade, population policy, food assistance, and agricultural development.

4. **CONTINUING STUDY:** to engage in a continuing process of study and education with regard to the fundamental assumptions and motives of international development and the effectiveness of alternative policies and programs in their responsiveness to human need.
5. **DIRECT PARTICIPATION:** to increase the resources and effectiveness of the churches' direct participation in world service and development projects.
6. **STYLE OF LIFE:** to manifest a style of life as persons and as institutions which does not cater to our own indulgences at the expense of our neighbors' necessities.
7. **MINISTRY OF LAY GROUPS:** to magnify the ministry of the laity in such fields as farming, teaching, business, labor and health, by increasingly enlisting these vocational groups in education and action programs for international development which are appropriate to their competence and influence.
8. **DEVELOPMENT AS VOCATION:** to inspire and nurture careers in international development as special callings worthy of our finest men and women.