Critical Recommendations To N. C. Council Of Churches

Several important recommendations were made to the North Carolina Council of Churches in a report from the Committee on National and World Affairs in January. Included in these recommendations were support of President Kennedy's "Peace Corps" plan; and proposals that member churches be urged to study the conditions in Cuba and other Latin American countries; that churchmen have their attention called to the fact that N. C. Congressmen have moved in the direction of isolationism in their voting; and that the N. C. Council of Churches support the 8th. Annual Southeastern World Affairs Institute, July 28-30, 1961, and the Institute held in Chapel Hill in February by the N. C. Council on World Affairs.

Support for "Peace Corps"

The Committee, recommending that the Council forward to the President of the United States an expression of its support for the basic idea of the "Peace Corps," had the following to say in support of this recommendation:

"In many areas of the world there are large populations that are illiterate, untrained, unskilled, and undernourished. They are willing and anxious to be taught how to do things for themselves. In many cases they have natural resources if they could only be taught how to use them. They are awakening to the possibilities of their own development. They need help. We, in turn, have in this country a great many young men and women with the necessary abilities and who, with proper training, could provide the skilled leadership for these emerging people. The government is in a unique position to arrange for the matching of the need for service and the need to serve."

Hemispheric Problems

A recommendation was made to the Council that member churches be urged to "study the conditions not only in Cuba but in all other Latin American countries with the view to learning how we can better assist them in solving the problems of dislocated markets, extreme poverty, undeveloped natural resources, health hazards, and overpopulation. This is not a situation of new and emerging nations as is presented in Africa and Asia today, but rather of older nations submerging.

Southern Shift to Isolationism

The Committee called the attention of the Council to "the fact that during the past ten years the voting record of the N. C. Members of Congress would indicate that there has been a decided change in the direction of isolationism.

"Instead of a strong support for legislation like the Marshall Plan, Mutual Security Assistance, and action in cooperation with other nations through the United Nations, the N. C. delegation has, since 1952, voted a majority in the negative. For example, among the 12 representatives from N. C. in the House of Representatives, there was only one negative vote on Mutual Security in 1952, and only two negative votes in 1953; but in 1954 there were ten negative votes and the negative votes have held at approximately that same high level of seven to ten negative votes since that time.

"This trend is similar to the shift from 'International-ism' to 'Isolationism' in South Carolina, Mississippi, and Louisana, and to a lesser extent in other states in the South. In fact, the trend has gone so far that the South is now, by such votes as these, far more isolationist than the Mid-West or other sections of the country. This was not true during the 1930's and the 1940's when the Southern voting record was markedly more 'internationalist' than the Middle West which was thought to be the citadel of hard-shell isolationism. We believe that this apparent shift in the viewpoint of our Members of Congress from North Carolina should be given further study and an attempt made to find out the underlying reasons for this shift and whether in fact the shift represents the informed will of the people as to the role which America should play in world affairs.

Individual Responsibility in World Affairs

The report further states, "We concur in the view expressed by the senior Senator from North Carolina that 'there must be something effectively done to get citizens of our nation to realize that the international situation is grave and that we may well be on the threshold of disaster to our way of life unless ways are found to meet the challenge of the world's problems . . .'; however, these problems are not merely, nor even most importantly 'the increasing Communist threat'. The problems are poverty, overpopulation, and frustration of vast numbers of human beings. We ask and expect our leaders of national stature to call upon us to find ways to meet the challenge of these problems. The people will respond. Not only will there be a better chance that these problems will be solved, but there will also be less time and excuse for our own people to be engaged in special interest grasping for public funds and in carping and complaining and making extreme demands as members of various pressure groups. If we as a people become committed to making the world safe, instead of just America safe, we will find the sort of vitality that comes from unity in sacrifice. Life is not a static thing. We are restless and will not be contained. Unless we are engaged in a great crusade to save others, we will be quarreling among ourselves. Unless we are on the high road, we are on the low road. If we don't have the Minute Men, we have the Minute Women. If we are not actively un-selfish, we are selfish.

"It is not up to America alone to look for ways to solve all the world's problems, but it is certainly up to America to take the lead in calling upon the other peoples of the world, through the United Nations, to solve them. We must be engaged in a great common effort with the rest of mankind, and not be merely a lonely group of satiated individuals facing, rather hopelessly, what the Senator described as 'the storm that is gathering against us'. What a depressing picture of America. How different from the vision of our founders. How different from our earlier call to the world's poor huddled masses, yearning to be free.

"If our citizens can be told the truth about what we face, and we conceive it to be the duty not only of government officials, but even more so of our church leadership both lay and clerical, to speak to us in terms not only of our world responsibilities but of the great and wonderful possibilities to do good in our time, then we are confident that our people will respond and with God's help can solve these probelms. We welcome the call."

G. Mc Leod Bryan Speaks On South Africa

(This is a condensation of the talk delivered by the Reverend G. McLeod Bryan, Associate Professor of Christian Ethics, Wake Forest College, at the Seventh Annual Southeastern World Affairs Institute, Saturday, July 23, 1960)

What is at stake in South Africa is the **manner** of defense and definition of "white, western, Christian civilization." A questionable social entity to say the least; what South Africa says and does with regard to it becomes significant for the whole world. For at the moment, all four qualifying parts of this term are open to criticism: just exactly what is meant by "white"? by "western"? by "Christian"? or exactly what is meant by a "civilized" nation? The easy acceptance of these labels in the nineteenth century is no longer possible in the world pluralism of the twentieth century.

Yet nowhere on earth are there people so thoroughly convinced of their reality or so fanatically devoted to their defense. With their backs against the wall, challenged by the rising nationalism of their black African neighbors and by the conscience of world public opinion, South Africans can be expected to make the most outlandish statements. Nonetheless, they clothe their defense in the purest motivation and in the most rational language. Along with the anthropologists, they wish to preserve the indigenous values of African tribalism; hence the "Bantustans." Along with the missionaries, they wish to introduce Christian values to primitive religionists; hence "Christian national education". Along with the British imperialists, they wish to extend the domain of law and arts (in Churchill's words, "to push back the jungle and to rescue man from savagery"); hence the white government's trusteeship over the African territories. Along with the pluralists, they wish to preserve each culture's contribution to the social whole; hence the defense of apartheid in terms of racial "differentialism." To themselves, it looks good on paper; to the victims and most of the world, it looks bad in practice.

The world at large, however, can have some appreciation for their predicament, if not for their methods. We have been reared on the claim that Christianity is the saving leaven of the world, that the white man is the trustee of the backward, irresponsible colored people of the world. And within this century we have fought, and won, three wars in defense of the values of western civilization. Momentarily, the propaganda term "free world" musters the same unlimited loyalty that the older slogan "white, western, Christian civilization" is supposed to have done. Myths though these may be, they have served to line people up to pay in flesh and blood for their preservation and promulgation. Therefore let us not think that there are no legitimate or debatable grounds upon which the controlling party of South African society can rest its claims. We on the outside may think they are specious and ruthless; but in their own eyes they justify their defenses on as solid a ground as we do in the disproportion of the masses of black men just one or two generations removed from tribalism. The "flood" they fear is documented in the Congo fracas. They know from the experience of three centuries on the frontier of Africa how long it has taken their own generation to assimilate the cultural values of Europe. They know all too well how their superior standard of living rests upon the introduction and control of the most up-to-date of the technological devices. Along with all the world looking at the new nation-states of Africa and Asia, they are aware of the hazards of an egalitarian democracy with its one-man, one-vote risk.

Let it be understood, that I have no desire to whitewash anybody's crimes or to make a case for apartheid. It is merely that I want the outsider to see that they have taken the very myths connected with western man's **manifest destiny** and have appropriated them for their own social destiny. They have built their case so well that they are convinced in their own minds of their rightness. More than intellectually convinced, they are religiously committed to their messianic role, like the Children of Israel in their conquest of Canaan, which has extended down to our own day in the doggedness of the Zionists in Israel. But this does not mean that their system is airtight, without logical contradictions. Any protesting African can see right through it. He cannot understand how the defenders of "White, Western, Christian Civilization" are mostly against the African's struggle toward nationalism when this same civilization has given the world the worst example of unrestrained nationalism. He cannot understand how its defenders are against the African's use of force when Western civilization has given the world the worst example of organized violence. He cannot understand how its defenders are against the African's rising population; when the surplus population of western civilization has overflowed into the world's colonies under the theory of **Lebensraum.** He cannot understand how its defenders attack the polygamous structure of much of Africa's ancient tribal societies, when the marriage and family life of western civilization, with its teen-age menace, is one of the shakiest in the world's history. He cannot understand how its defenders are against the Africans expressing their religion in a proliferation of sectarian churches, when that selfsame Western Christian Civilization introduced its faith through the divisiveness of denominationalism.

What I am saying is that South Africa, as the **only** self-labelled **white, western, Christian civilized** nation-state on the continent of Africa, has become the focal point of the struggle between the "civilized" values of the Western World and the cultural values in the African and Asiatic ways of life. And the plain fact of the matter is that neither South Africans nor anyone else in the twentieth century is able, by force of arms or superiority of techniques or the protection of the missionaries of a minority religion, to super-impose their will on other peoples of the world. The African is finally standing on his own feet, saying yes and no, and talking back to his overlords. The African is suddenly realizing that he has friends of a sort in the court of world opinion. And there are some few South Africans (white) who are at their wits' end, who are aware that the old nineteenth centry, Schweitzeriah "older brother" attitude no longer avails. These few are willing to accept Africans into the human family, and to negotiate with them at the council table. Let us hope that their voice can be heard before negotiation becomes impossible.