

REPORT TO THE CHURCH ON THE GENERAL CONVENTION SPECIAL PROGRAM

In Seattle, in September, 1967, Presiding Bishop John E. Hines called on the Episcopal Church to "take its place humbly and boldly alongside of, and in support of, the dispossessed and oppressed peoples of this country for the healing of our national life."

In response to his leadership the 62nd General Convention set up the Special Program, giving it top priority for our Church's use of personnel, time and money for the years 1968-70.

In November, 1967, following General Convention, the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with the elected members of the Executive Council, set up a special staff unit of the Council to carry out this General Convention Special Program.

What follows is a question and answer report on what this program is, the reasons for it and what it has done as of May, 1968.

This represents but one phase of the ongoing work of the national Church.

WHAT IS THE GENERAL CONVENTION SPECIAL PROGRAM?

A new, special, program proposed by the Presiding Bishop and wholeheartedly adopted by General Convention at Seattle in September. It represents a concerted effort on the part of our Church to attack the basic problems of poverty and racism. It is a top priority piece of work within the General Church Program, that is, the national program of the Church.

It seeks to help the poor by providing manpower and money for programs set up by the poor to help themselves.

WHAT PROMPTED THE NEED FOR THIS SPECIAL PROGRAM? WASN'T THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH DOING A GOOD JOB IN THIS FIELD BEFORE?

The first point is that we haven't been doing enough. Or more accurately, what we, and society as a whole were doing, hasn't worked. One evidence of this is the fact that today, in the most prosperous period in our history, more people are on relief than ever before. And relief rolls continue to grow. Obviously, we must be doing something wrong. New approaches are called for.

The crisis in our cities, especially the violence and destruction of the summer of 1967, demonstrated this dramatically. It also demonstrated what most of us were slow to understand — namely that the "have-nots" of our society resent the handouts of people in power. This includes the Church. People on relief, for example, resent the welfare system. (Just as a man will often resent the individual who lends him money.)

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BASIC ISSUES INVOLVED HERE?

One of the most fundamental is that of powerlessness; the pride-destroying powerlessness that poor people feel; especially the black poor. There has been no way for them to have a hand in shaping their own destiny. There seems to be no way for their voice to be heard by the white majority. This realization is an important part of the new approach to the whole poverty problem.

When he proposed the Special Program to General Convention, the Rt. Rev. John E. Hines, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, put it this way: "*The grim consequences of the rioting indicate a tenaciously held conviction that any*

relief that comes will come by acquisition of, or seizure of sufficient power on their (the black poor) own part to enable them to shape their destiny, taking their place equally alongside other men. This they are prepared to do — even if they have to die in the attempt.

“Further — and this touches us at a sensitive point — many of these unfortunate people have written off the churches as possible allies in their quest for justice. They have seen little concrete evidence that church people are concerned about their plight or will take the necessary risk to help redeem it.” The slaying of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the response in rioting in cities throughout the country, illustrate that Bishop Hines spoke with deep insight.

HOW WILL THE GENERAL CONVENTION SPECIAL PROGRAM HELP?

First of all, it will demonstrate that the Church really cares. It cares enough to “take its place humbly and boldly alongside of, and in support of, the dispossessed and oppressed peoples of this country for the healing of our national life.” One of the program’s specific aims is to enable people in slums to participate in the decisions which control their lives. This means that the Church cares enough about poor people to try to meet the needs they, *themselves*, feel — not just the needs that well-meaning people on the outside *think* they have.

The General Convention Special Program is an attempt to deal with questions like these: “How can the resources of our Church, both human and financial, be intelligently and humbly enlisted in the service of the people of our cities?” as Bishop Hines put it.

“By what criteria can we enter into partnership with those groups in slum areas which have been organized by the residents and are trying to deal with the conditions that are destroying them?”

How will the Special Program help solve these problems? By giving poor people a voice in the decisions which affect their lives and futures. By helping them gain the political and economic power they must have in order to improve their lot.

The Special Program will accomplish these aims essentially by providing both funds and skilled personnel assistance. These will be used to support the organizations that people have set up themselves.

The Special Program places the Church in the midst of the poor people’s struggle without trying to do their job for them or trying to control what they do.

DOESN'T THIS PROGRAM DUPLICATE OTHER POVERTY PROGRAMS LIKE THOSE OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT?

No. It complements them. There are two chief points to remember about the underlying philosophy which guides the work of the Special Program:

- 1) Sizeable sums of money will be given directly to the people’s own local community organizations.
- 2) The money will be given for them to spend on plans and priorities that they, themselves, have set.

This approach affirms, as General Convention put it, that the poor “have the God-given capacity, if resources are

supplied, to solve the problems of which they have become victims in an affluent, industrialized, predominantly white society.”

The Federal Government is spending hundreds of millions of dollars in the War on Poverty; yet, money for the slum’s own organizations is becoming more and more limited. There are some localities where organizations of the slum dwellers themselves are non-existent or stymied or manipulated by local machine politics.

To be effective in bringing about social change, community organizations must be politically and economically independent.

WHAT IS THE COST OF THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO THIS CRISIS IN AMERICAN LIFE?

A total of \$9,000,000. Approximately \$3,000,000 per year for the 1968-70 triennium.

WHERE DOES THE MONEY COME FROM?

Slightly less than \$2,000,000 a year is part of the General Church Program (the national program of the Church). This money comes from the dioceses.

Of this \$2,000,000 approximately 1½ million was already in the approved budget proposed by the Executive Council to General Convention. This amount was for the continuation of existing programs. Five hundred thousand dollars was then added to this amount by General Convention.

To this was added a grant from the United Thank Offering of the women of the Church. The Triennial Meeting in Seattle voted \$2,265,917.47 in September. This will be increased to \$3,000,000 during the period of the triennium.

IS ALL THE WORK IN THE GENERAL CONVENTION SPECIAL PROGRAM BEING CARRIED OUT BY THE SPECIAL PROGRAM UNIT?

No indeed. The better part of the 1½ million dollars already in the budget provides for the continuation of, or redirection of ongoing programs that are being carried out by other Council units in response to the urban crisis.

HOW HAS THE SPECIAL PROGRAM AFFECTED THE REST OF THE WORK IN THE GENERAL CHURCH PROGRAM, THAT IS, THE CHURCH'S NATIONAL PROGRAM?

The General Church Program for 1968-70 adopted by General Convention is 3½ million dollars less than that proposed by the Executive Council.

In preparing this reduced program, General Convention’s Program and Budget Committee attempted to avoid cuts which would cripple essential services from the Executive Council to agencies, dioceses and districts.

There are, for example, more dollars available for the Church’s work overseas in 1968 than there were in 1967, but many of the new programs proposed by the Overseas Department cannot be undertaken.

Priorities were established with regard to the Special Program and in other areas of the Church’s work at home and overseas, assuring that money and personnel would be committed to work which was considered most urgent.

Other matters will have secondary attention. Some will obviously be curtailed.

CAN THE SPECIAL PROGRAM REALLY HOPE TO
ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING IN THIS
FIELD WITH A BUDGET OF ONLY \$9,000,000
OVER A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS?

Not by itself and not unless the people of the Church get behind it. A cardinal point in the thinking behind the program is this: much of its success will depend on how much it does to stimulate the participation of other forces in our society.

A substantial part of the program's effort is being devoted to encouraging the formation and support of broad coalitions of churches and other institutions; persuading the business sector to commit money and skills; working to bring about appropriate local, state and federal government action. Finally, the work must have the support of the people of our Church. If it is looked upon only as a program of the national Church, it will fail. As the Presiding Bishop said, "No matter what this Church at the national level may decide what we can do, both in human and financial terms, it will only be a token, a symbol, if perhaps happily a sacrament"

He then goes on to say that our men, women and young people must become engaged in the program at the local parish and diocesan level. They must become involved personally, not just financially. We cannot "attempt to use money to 'buy our way out' of our responsibility," Bishop Hines warns.

JUST HOW WILL THIS MONEY
GET FROM THE SPECIAL PROGRAM INTO THE
HANDS OF THE PEOPLE?

Some of it will go directly to the dioceses to assist their urban programs. Other money will be given to community organizations; some of this will be given as direct grants; some will go through an appropriate existing channel like the Inter-Religious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO).

WHAT IS IFCO?

IFCO is a not-for-profit corporation legally chartered in the State of New York. It is a working coalition of both religious and secular agencies. It includes most major Protestant denominations as well as Roman Catholic and Jewish representation. The Executive Director is the Rev. Lucius Walker, a Negro Baptist clergyman.

WHAT DOES IFCO DO?

Basically, it is a vehicle to channel the funds of religious institutions and foundations into slums and other poor communities, either urban or rural. These funds are used by the local poor people's organizations to develop the social, political and economic power bases they need to change conditions in these communities.

IFCO also provides training for the local community leaders. It helps coordinate the community organization activities of the participating religious institutions in order to avoid duplication. IFCO also keeps a close watch over the activities it is funding to see that the stated purposes are actually being achieved; to see that any wisdom and insight gained from such efforts is systematically shared with all.

The Episcopal Church, like all other participating agencies, has two representatives on the board of IFCO. In IFCO, mainline denominations rub shoulders with such new com-

munity groups as the Afro-Mex Coalition in Los Angeles and the City-Wide Citizens Action Committee in Detroit.

WILL THERE BE FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR DIRECT
ASSISTANCE BY THE EXECUTIVE
COUNCIL TO DIOCESES IN CRISIS SITUATIONS
AND FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION?

Yes, of course.

WHAT ARE THESE LOCAL COMMUNITY
ORGANIZATIONS REALLY TRYING TO DO?

The idea behind them is this: people who are powerless are the victims of those who hold the power. As long as they are powerless, they cannot help themselves. Without a base of power, they cannot enter into the mainstream of American life. Much of the frustration and despair and lack of motivation among poor people in this country stems from the feeling and fact of powerlessness. This is true both in the city slums and in abandoned rural communities.

In trying to help themselves, the poor have sought increasingly in recent years to organize themselves and work together. This activity has produced some encouraging results. Some of these local community organizations have developed positive programs of self-help. These have been designed, led and controlled by the people, themselves. They have been based on their own needs which they understand better than any outsider ever could.

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES
OF "SELF-HELP" PROGRAMS?

There are many different approaches. Some concentrate on organizing to negotiate effectively with city halls, school boards, and the business community to improve housing conditions, raise the quality of public education, create job and training opportunities.

Others work to develop consumer and producer cooperatives or provide low-cost loans for local businesses. The idea here is to help those businesses whose profits would remain in the poor communities. As it is now, most profits from businesses operated in slums wind up in the hands of those outside the community.

Voter education and voter registration programs are other examples of local self-help programs.

THIS MONEY WE ARE GIVING AWAY, DO WE
HAVE ANY CONTROL OVER IT?

Yes. We have complete control over deciding who gets the money in the first place. After that decision has been made, however, the people who receive it have complete control over how it is spent. Of course, they are required to submit a financial accounting to the Special Program Unit periodically and a yearly evaluation of how the program is progressing. This allows the Special Program Unit to see if the money is actually accomplishing the purposes for which it was given. Every grant will be reviewed each year to determine whether it will be renewed.

HOW ARE FUNDING DECISIONS MADE?

Ultimately, everything goes back to the Executive Council. The Council has authorized a Screening and Review Committee of the General Convention Special Program to sort out all requests for funds and decide which programs should

be approved. Most of these are then submitted to the Executive Council for certification. The Executive Council meets four times a year; the Screening and Review Committee meets more frequently.

Sometimes programs are so urgent that to wait for Executive Council certification is impractical. The Presiding Bishop, therefore, is authorized to certify emergency grants between Executive Council sessions.

Whether a request for funds represents an Episcopal Church program or not, the bishop of the diocese in which the program is located is *always* consulted and his opinion is given serious consideration. No bishop, however, has veto power over funding.

The Presiding Bishop is the chairman of the Screening and Review Committee. Other members include two representatives of the Executive Council; two representatives of the General Division of Women's Work; two representatives of the Union of Black Clergy and Laymen of the Episcopal Church and seven representatives of the poor. This latter representation covers a broad spectrum of the poor in America—Negro, Puerto Rican, American Indian, Mexican American and residents of Appalachia.

WHAT CRITERIA ARE USED IN RESPONDING TO REQUESTS FOR FUNDS?

Each program requesting funds is carefully scrutinized and must aim to achieve one or more of three goals:

Community organization on a national, metropolitan or neighborhood level (can be urban, suburban or rural); the basic purpose here is to gain social, political or economic power;

Service to the poor based on programs designed and controlled by the poor themselves. These would include training in the skills necessary to assure the effective conduct of such programs;

Community leadership training and experience in specific areas of need identified by the applicant.

Even if a program falls into one of these categories, it still must meet other criteria. It must clearly be based on the fundamental principle of assisting the poor to organize *themselves* to have an effective share in determining their *own* destiny.

A program must be carried out without regard to race, creed or ethnic origin.

No funds received can be used in connection with any individual or group which advocates violence.

The program must show clear and reasonable evidence that, given funding assistance, it is actually equipped to carry out its purpose.

IS THE SPECIAL PROGRAM DESIGNED FOR ONLY THE URBAN POOR?

Not at all. It is designed to help the *poor*; to try to breach that ever-widening gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" in our society. And there are plenty of "have-nots" in the rural areas of this nation.

For example, the Special Program recently gave financial assistance to the Southern Rural Action Project. This organization operates cooperatives and programs of self-help and rehabilitation in the poor rural counties of Georgia and Alabama.

Nor does the Special Program concentrate solely on the needs of the black poor. Realizing that much of the present condition of powerlessness in poor communities is due to the prevailing attitude of whites, the Special Program recently funded a unique group in Detroit called People Against Racism.

PAR is an organization of white people in Detroit concerned to combat racism and to work for its eradication. It will do this through the use of the mass media and through programs of education and action.

WHAT HAS THE GENERAL CONVENTION SPECIAL PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHED SO FAR?

As of April, 1968, the Special Program has made 20 grants totaling \$301,965. Five of these grants were made to dioceses and fifteen to community self-help organizations. This includes \$200,000 for the initial payment of a \$700,000 grant to IFCO authorized by the Executive Council. All grants to IFCO are made on a matching three to one basis. This means that \$600,000 must be obtained by IFCO from other sources before the Episcopal Church releases any of the remaining \$500,000.

IS THERE ANY EVIDENCE SO FAR THAT THIS WORK IS DOING ANY GOOD?

On the whole, it is much too early to see results.

In the meantime we do have a few encouraging signs. In the April 22 issue, *Newsweek* praises the work of the two recipients of Episcopal Church grants. In talking about the reaction in the ghettos to Dr. King's death, *Newsweek* said: "*In St. Louis, a heretofore inconspicuous Negro leader named William Bailey, a jobless father of nine, was instrumental in melding a black united front that organized a peaceful march of 25,000 mourners.*" Mr. Bailey is president of the Mid-City Community Congress.

"*Los Angeles's edgy Watts and its other ghettos were eerily calm, and the explanation was not hard to find. In the assassination crisis, the year-old Black Congress—an umbrella organization embracing groups ranging from the NAACP to militant Ron Karenga's US—showed its clout. The Congress organized a massive King memorial rally, assigned black-bereted Black Panthers to direct traffic, and put shaven-headed US cadets on the streets in an effective cool-in. Karenga was quick to draw the moral of the exercise. 'We have found it to be true,' he intoned, 'that the capacity to use power often eliminates the need to use it.'*"

The Afro-Mex Coalition includes the Black Congress. Mr. Karenga expresses the philosophy behind the General Convention Special Program. It is the powerless who engage in random acts of fury and destruction, not those who have a strategy for achieving their fair share of the power which shapes their lives.

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