

# JUSTICE AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

*This winter the Council for Christian Social Action of the United Church of Christ opened an office for international development in Washington, D. C.—the first such function to be sponsored by a Protestant denomination. The new office, established for the purpose of interpreting international development issues to the churches and educating them about the problems involved, will strive for further engagement of the churches in international development projects on three continents. The move reflects a growing trend among religious groups in this country to relate their commitments to organized efforts in international affairs and to take independent concrete actions, where necessary, in the interests of social justice.*

*The CCSA's "Manifesto" on international development, reprinted below, indicates what that body conceives of as its call to action in this sphere.*

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 have 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 U. S. gave two per cent of its gross national product as economic grants for European reconstruction. By contrast, the U. S. in 1967 was providing only 0.3 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 preoccupation 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

**Missing Page**

**Missing Page**