

ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND MILITARY CONVERSION
A Resolution approved by General Synod XIX of the United Church of Christ (1993)

BACKGROUND

Reduced Reliance on Military Force

WHEREAS, from its inception, the United Church of Christ has been a constant advocate for reduced reliance on military force, basing its position on the Biblical call on all Christians to be peacemakers.

WHEREAS, beginning with the Second General Synod, and continuing in almost every Synod since, the UCC has repeatedly called for reduction in armaments, and the use of these resources to meet human needs, proclaiming that God calls us to seek justice and peace in all our efforts, and reaffirming its belief that war is an ineffective means of solving international disputes.

WHEREAS, this position was most recently set forth by General Synod Eighteen in its call to reduce overall military spending substantially over the next five years.

Creation of Economic Justice

WHEREAS, military spending is reduced, and resources are devoted to economic conversion and personnel retraining, we are also reminded of our concern for the creation of economic justice.

WHEREAS, this concern of the UCC for economic justice also goes back to the Second General Synod, which states its belief that we are called by a God who searches for a church that does justice, cares for people, and lifts up the community.

WHEREAS, this Biblical call to seek justice was cited again by Synods Nine, Ten and Fourteen, remembering the constant concern of the Bible for human economic needs and for justice, and most recently in the Pronouncement of General Synod Seventeen: Christian Faith, Economic Life and Justice, which sees economic justice as a faith issue, and a “profound human responsibility.”

Specific Concerns

WHEREAS, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, it is clear that the United States should significantly reduce its military spending burden, and begin shifting these resources to other needed areas.

WHEREAS, as Congressional action in this area increases, it is clear that the economic impact of reduced defense spending will be a major concern, serving to delay needed reductions in defense contracting and downsizing of the military force structure.

WHEREAS, attention is focusing on the need for an effective economic conversion program, to ease the impact on communities from defense plant closings, and for adequate retraining for personnel released from the armed forces.

WHEREAS, the church should support these efforts, in order to clear the way for reduced military spending and a major reordering our national priorities to more urgent needs.

WHEREAS, in so doing, however, it is essential that a concern for economic justice be kept clearly in mind as well.

WHEREAS, economic conversion programs which are principally aimed at easing the potential economic distress of skilled workers in affluent communities will be discriminatory and unjust. They must be accompanied by programs designed to assist ethnic and minority groups in the inner cities as they seek to find new employment as well.

WHEREAS, reductions in the size of the armed forces will disproportionately affect ethnic minorities in our society. Job retraining programs alone will not be sufficient to alleviate the hardships that will be encountered. They must be accompanied by programs designed to create jobs in the inner cities for these workers when their training has been completed.

RESOLUTION

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Nineteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls for urgent action to reduce the size of the United States' armed forces and the level of military spending; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in order to facilitate the achievement of these goals, the Nineteenth General Synod endorses efforts to develop an effective economic conversion program for affected communities and adequate job training programs for personnel being discharged from the armed forces; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Nineteenth General Synod underscores the importance of ensuring that the principles of economic justice are central to the implementation of these programs, and that the needs of members of racial and ethnic groups who will be disproportionately affected by these actions be adequately met.

Subject to the Availability of Funds

