

A Resolution on
INVOLVEMENT OF THE POOR
(Adopted by the Program Board, January 5, 1966)

WHEREAS, the National Council of Churches has repeatedly affirmed its belief in the dignity and worth of each human being as a child of God and its support of basic human rights and freedoms including democratic participation in public affairs on the part of all persons without regard to economic or racial distinction;

WHEREAS, in Title II of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 the government of the United States has embodied these principles in a new pattern of involvement of the poor in guiding their own destinies by providing that "General Community Action Programs" shall be developed, conducted and administered with the maximum feasible participation of residents of the areas and members of the groups served";

WHEREAS, the goal of this requirement is to assist the poor to overcome their lack of income, status and power by participation in the formulation and implementation of community anti-poverty programs;

WHEREAS, it is evident that difficulties are developing in this as in other human undertakings and that trends are emerging which may circumvent or subvert the involvement of the poor in community action programs before the OEO has had sufficient experience to evaluate the effectiveness of this approach;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: that the Division of Christian Life and Mission of the National Council of Churches strongly supports continued experimentation under the provision of "maximum feasible participation" of the poor in federally funded community action programs, because we see in such involvement an embodiment of two fundamental principles which commend themselves to the Christian conscience, viz. a) recognition that every human being possesses inherent worth and dignity regardless of social or economic circumstance; and b) recognition that every person in a democratic society is entitled to participate effectively in the decisions which shape the policies and programs affecting his life;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: that we encourage the Office of Economic Opportunity to continue its efforts to find appropriate ways to implement this provision of the Economic Opportunity Act and that we oppose efforts from any source to weaken, eliminate or contravene this provision;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: that we recommend the extension of this principle and practice to other governmental anti-poverty programs wherever appropriate and to non-governmental programs including those sponsored by churches and church-related agencies;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: that we invite state and local councils of churches, denominations and their boards and agencies to adopt and work for the implementation of comparable policy positions.

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9/29/66