

National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA

*Elmer
F. H.*

URGENT ATTENTION: FOREIGN POLICY AIDE

September 19, 1995

Dear Representative:

I write on behalf of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC) **to urge your opposition to the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity bill, H.R. 927, which is scheduled to be considered on the House floor this week.** We believe strongly that contrary to its stated objectives, the bill is likely to provoke a negative response that will harm efforts to achieve peaceful social, economic, and political change in Cuba.

The National Council of Churches and many of its member denominations have maintained a decades-long relationship of pastoral accompaniment with the Protestant churches of Cuba. Through Church World Service (CWS) -- our relief, refugee, and development program -- the NCC has assisted for more than thirty years in the resettlement in the U.S. of Cuban asylum seekers and refugees. Over the past four years CWS has carried out regular shipments of humanitarian assistance that is administered through the Cuban Ecumenical Council for use in nursing homes and childrens' hospitals.

On numerous occasions the NCC has called on the U.S. and Cuban governments to engage in dialogue aimed at resolving the long-standing conflict between our countries. In particular, we have urged measures that would foster greater communication and understanding between people in the U.S. and Cuba, which we view as key to achieving a more normal relationship.

Our deep concerns about the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act include the following:

1. By incorporating in U.S. policy recognition of property claims of Cubans who became U.S. citizens subsequent to the expropriation of their property, and by subjecting to sanctions anyone who "traffics" in such property, the bill is likely to strengthen hard-liners within the Cuban government and fuel renewed anti-U.S. sentiment among the Cuban population. This provision is likely be interpreted within Cuba as a move to return to the economic and social situation that existed there prior to the 1959 revolution. There is little or no support for such a move within Cuba, even among the most vehement critics of the current regime.



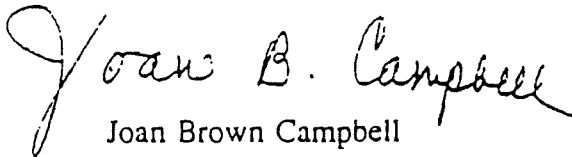
Office of the
General Secretary

2. The bill specifies conditions for the expansion of U.S. assistance that are likely to undermine diplomatic efforts to achieve a peaceful resolution of the conflict between the U.S. and Cuba. By linking broader U.S. assistance to Cuba to a highly specific set of conditions, the bill reduces significantly the diplomatic tools available to the Administration. At the same time, the bill fails to broaden humanitarian or exchange programs that foster stronger people-to-people relationships.

3. The bill reinforces regulations promulgated in August 1994 that restrict travel and shipment of goods to family members. These new restrictions have led to serious delays in efforts to secure licenses for travel to Cuba. The ability to travel to Cuba on short notice is particularly important to the pastoral accompaniment of the Protestant churches during this difficult period of transition. [Oscar: other problems resulting from the new regulations?]

The NCC believes that a new approach to U.S. - Cuban relations is long overdue. The Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidary Act represents a further deepening of an anachronistic policy in serious need of change. **I strongly urge you to oppose H.R. 927 and to support efforts to bring about more normal relations between the U.S. and Cuba.**

Sincerely,



Joan Brown Campbell
General Secretary
National Council of Churches
of Christ in the U.S.A.