

Recommendation R-4 was adopted. Rev. Russell J. Redeker, Secretary for Church Planning and Development, presented Mr. David Beale, a consistoryman from the Mott Haven Reformed Church, New York City, who addressed Synod on suggestions for the Reformed Church to provide expanded and effective ministries to the black community. A motion to refer the suggestions of Mr. Beale to the Ad hoc Committee on Response to the Black Manifesto for consideration was adopted.

Questionnaires on Mission Goals were distributed to the delegates, who were requested to complete them before adjournment of Synod and place them in boxes provided for collection.

REPORT ON RESPONSE TO THE BLACK MANIFESTO

On Friday afternoon, June 6, the General Synod adopted a recommendation of the General Synod Executive Committee to suspend the Order of Business scheduled for the Friday evening session at 8:00 P.M. to hear Mr. James Forman of the National Black Economic Development Conference.

At the Friday evening session, President Raymond Van Heukelom introduced Miss Judith Sullivan, Mr. Che Robinson and Mr. James Forman to General Synod.

Mr. Forman explained the demands of the National Black Economic Development Conference (NBEDC), giving the reasons and justifications for them. He listed some of the projects that would be established through these funds.

1. Southern Land Banks to be cooperatively owned.
2. Four major publishing houses inside the United States, to be located in Los Angeles, Atlanta, Detroit and New York City.
3. Black TV stations.
4. Research Skill Center.
5. Establishment of a school for community involvement — training in television and radio repair.
6. Ten million dollars to work with welfare recipients' rights.
7. Twenty million dollars for the establishment of a National Black Labor Strike and Defense Fund.
8. Establishment of a United Black Appeal.
9. Establishment of a black university.

Mr. Forman said that at the Press Conference held at "475," three demands were made of the Reformed Church:

1. To implement the demands of the Manifesto which calls for the creation of four major publishing houses inside the United States.
2. To demonstrate good faith in its intentions to help in the implementation of the demands of the Manifesto.
3. A list of assets, real estate holdings, unrelated business items, pension funds and Southern investment policies, and we will negotiate what should be donated to the conference.

President Van Heukelom thanked Mr. Forman for his presentation and thanked Miss Sullivan and Mr. Robinson for accompanying Mr. Forman.

Rev. Levin B. West, pastor of Grace Chapel, Newark, New Jersey, was granted the privilege of the floor and read a statement responding to Mr. Forman's presentation.

A motion "that the demands of Mr. Forman be referred to the Committee of Reference to appoint an Ad Hoc Committee to include some members of the Standing Committee on the General Program Council, some members of the GSEC, and some black delegates" was adopted.

At the Saturday morning session, President Van Heukelom appointed the following as members of the Ad Hoc Committee on Response to the Black Manifesto:

GSEC

Harold J. Schut, Chairman
Gordon Van Oostenburg
Joseph W. Holt
Leslie Waggoner
Raymond E. Beckering

Committee on OAF

Donner B. Atwood

Black Community

Clyde Watts
Willard Moore
Edgar Dillard
John Ashley

GPC

Frederick H. Olert
Carol Hageman

Staff members to assist as requested

GPC Standing Committee

Leonard Kalkwarf
Peter J. Muyskens
Ronald Ver Steeg

The Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Response to the Black Manifesto was presented at the Tuesday afternoon session by the Chairman, Rev. Harold J. Schut.

The report was as follows:

It is a fact of history that the times of greatest human progress have been the times of greatest upheaval. We have in these more recent days been made more starkly aware than ever before that we are in the midst of a period of cataclysmic

upheaval when we are being shaken to the very foundations of our life and our Christian faith.

The appearance before this General Synod of Mr. James Forman and some of his associates of the National Black Economic Development Conference, the "liberation" of our denominational headquarters, the private conversations some of our people have had with him, have brought us to a new and far deeper understanding of the suffering and denial of manhood that vast numbers of our citizens have experienced.

Thanksgiving

We see now that God had been trying to make us aware of His will for all His children by working within the Church, but without extraordinary success. Now we see that God has spoken through a man and a cause outside the Church, even as He did through Cyrus of Persia to the covenant people of Israel, in order to call us back to our covenant with Him in Christ. Seeing now what God has done in using James Forman we have reasons for gratitude to Almighty God . . .

- . . . We give thanks that while this confrontation has made us angry, God has not allowed us to turn a deaf ear to the cries of those who have suffered injustice.
- . . . We give thanks that God has made us aware again that He has a devastating Word of judgment to speak in unexpected ways through people and movements.
- . . . We give thanks that God has shown us again that if we listen to and try to understand those who cry out of the wilderness to us that there may be a way by which we can be reconciled to our brother because God in His mercy is reconciling us to Himself.
- . . . We give thanks that through confrontation, which at times is exceedingly painful, God changes us by giving us new perceptions of His will for His people.
- . . . We give thanks that we are beginning to see that it is not necessary that we have the totality of the power structure of society in order to be strong, and, that the degree to which we consciously or unconsciously have relied on the power of the human structures, we have to that degree not relied on the power of God.
- . . . We give thanks to God that through this confrontation, God has made us look again at our black brothers in Christ and in the whole black community only to realize in a deeper way than ever before how we have prevented them from attaining the kind of full manhood God intended them also to have.
- . . . We thank God that He has opened to us new situations which have made us more open to each other.
- . . . We thank God that at the very time when we were most unlovely, God in His Providence sent to us General Synod delegates of the Black Community to love us.

. . . We thank God that we have a new awareness of what it means to pray,
 "God . . . we thank Thee!"

Confession:

Even as we give our thanks to God for these and other reasons, we have been made aware of our own failures.

. . . We confess that we have had a false pride in our verticle relationships with God without being concerned sufficiently with our horizontal relationships with our brothers.

. . . We confess that we have failed to respond to the elemental human need for acceptance, and have believed we have discharged our responsibilities under God by that which we now see were superficial responses to grave injustices.

. . . We confess that we have established for too long our priorities for action on the basis of that which was easier for us to face, and not on the basis of the greatest of other human beings.

. . . We confess that we have had economic power but unconsciously have permitted it to use us instead of our using it as stewards of God's grace.

. . . We confess that we have nursed our own quirks and soothed our ruffled egos to build up our own fortresses, which were already secure, at a time when there has been a people whose total identity as men has been denied by us who are comfortable and secure within the Church.

. . . We confess that we have put our trust in programs we have designed more than in people and have manipulated and used people to accomplish our program.

. . . We confess to God that through this confrontation He has given us a new awareness of what it means to pray,

"God, be merciful unto me, a sinner . . ."

Judgment Out of Love:

As a result of this confrontation there is for us, in addition to our reasons for thanksgiving and confession, a new awareness of God's righteous Word of judgment which not only measures us, but all men and movements, including Mr. James Forman, the National Black Economic Development Conference, the values he and his group represent, and the manner in which he has acted. While we recognize now more clearly than we had before that our existing system has not produced all of that which we had hoped, we also see with clarity that our system has produced much we had not anticipated.

We reject Mr. Forman's ideology, plans, and tactics with the projected use of force, treading on the rights of other peoples with respect to the dignity of the individual or other organizations. Such statements and behavior on the part of the NBEDC are evidence that its members desire to use for themselves and their goals the very methods which they condemn the white community for having used.

Having been awakened to the injustices we have helped to shape, we deplore such methods no matter who uses them.

While we firmly disagree with the ideology Mr. Forman espouses, as well as his tactics, we do recognize that the injustices to which he points are real. We Christians have power; this Mr. Forman has amply demonstrated. We must individually and collectively take concrete action to help resolve injustices so that the Black Man can stand up and affirm in truth, "I, too, am a man!", sharing fully in his own self-determination even as do we.

Structure:

Having expressed our gratitude to God for what He has done and having tried to express honestly our sin, *this confrontation has made us see that the central issue in self-determination is the power to make the decisions which affect one's own life.* Within the Church, decision-making structures are so dominated by the presence, attitudes, values and traditions of the white people, that only by a planned restructure can minority groups have the ability to make decisions vital to their own communities, and the congregations to which they belong. A variation on this theme is the question of how black persons in ecclesiastical authority are chosen. Presbyterian church government calls for persons to elect their own representatives. Our hope and intention is that a portion of the denominational trusteeship be placed directly under the stewardship of our black brothers within the Reformed Church in America.

RECOMMENDATION #1 — That the General Synod of 1969 ask the black persons who are members of this Synod to call a caucus of black leaders within the RCA which may develop a continuing representative "Black Council for the Program of General Synod" which would share in program and capital investment decisions. The funding for this caucus is to be provided by the General Program Council.

RECOMMENDATION #2 — That the GSEC and the GPC be instructed to implement ways by which the power of decision, concerning an adequate proportion of program and capital investment, is shared with the "Black Council for the Program of General Synod."

Program Priorities:

The General Synod of 1968 voted to invest up to 15% of certain capital funds in ghetto redevelopment and to make urban missions a priority in certain program areas. The continuing injustice of urban life, especially in race relations, calls for a reaffirmation of this priority. Our denominational restructure calls for a broader, more thorough-going approach to this priority. This should include more adequate funding of current program and provision for new ventures in mission.

RECOMMENDATION #3 — That the General Synod re-affirm its urban priority as expressed in the Action of General Synod, 1968, and extend it to the total program of the Church with special focus on race relations and

ministry with minorities, and that this General Synod instruct each unit to report on implementation of this priority to the General Synod of 1970.

RECOMMENDATION #4 — That the General Synod immediately create a special fund of \$100,000 to be disbursed according to the decisions of the "Black Council for the Program of General Synod", and that this be referred to the GSEC for source of funds.

RECOMMENDATION #5 — That the General Synod authorize a special appeal for funds to be disbursed according to the decisions of the "Black Council for the Program of General Synod."

RECOMMENDATION #6 — That in both new and current program activity relating to minority groups every effort be made to transfer the power of decisions to minority groups.

RECOMMENDATION #7 — That the imaginative program suggestions made by Mr. Beale in the GPC report to General Synod, 1969, be referred to the GPC and the "Black Council for the Program of General Synod."

Denominational Office Operation:

We note that the Interchurch Center is located in close proximity to some of the ghettos of New York City. It therefore should be a center of direct ministry as well as a center for directing ministries elsewhere. For example, the building contains much valuable equipment which could be useful to those ghetto neighbors who choose to acquire operating skills which would be useful in obtaining employment.

RECOMMENDATION #8 — That the General Synod instruct the GSEC to call upon the other tenants of the Interchurch Center to cooperate with it in offering facilities to local minority groups for purposes of direct ministry.

RECOMMENDATION #9 — That the General Synod instruct the General Program Council to supply funding for a black executive staff person to direct and assist in the previously mentioned programs and such others as the "Black Council for the Program of General Synod" may recommend.

Local Church:

"Nothing is real unless it is local." Programs of General Synod are dependent upon the resources of local churches for implementation. The local church is the primary scene of action. Channels of interpretation and communication, and guidelines for action must be developed.

RECOMMENDATION #10 — That each classical delegation to this General Synod be constituted an interpretative and promotional task force for its own classis with instruction to proceed immediately to interpret the decisions of General Synod concerning this Report to their respective classes.

RECOMMENDATION #11 — That the President of General Synod prepare a pastoral letter interpreting the decisions of General Synod concerning

this report to be mailed with copies of this report to every congregation in the denomination as soon as possible.

RECOMMENDATION #12 — That the General Program Council be instructed to proceed immediately to develop guidelines for local church action and to develop such further interpretative task forces as may be deemed feasible.

As individuals and as an Ad Hoc Committee we urge the adoption of the above recommendations by this General Synod on behalf of the Church. It is evident that if these, and such other recommendations proposed as the "Black Council on Program of General Synod" may in its wisdom devise are only verbally approved but not implemented, we will stand in even further judgment not only from our fellow Americans and Christians of the Black Community, but we will have to face the more awesome judgment of God.

Respectfully submitted,

Harold J. Schut, Chairman
 Gordon Van Oostenburg
 Joseph W. Holt
 Leslie Waggoner
 Raymond E. Beckering
 Frederick H. Olert
 Carol Hageman
 Leonard Kalkwarf
 Peter J. Muyskens
 Ronald Ver Steeg
 Donald B. Atwood
 Clyde Watts
 Willard Moore
 Edgar Dillard
 John Ashley

A motion to adopt the entire document and the twelve recommendations was adopted without a dissenting vote.

A motion from the floor "That the interference with the possession and use of the Reformed Church in America office facilities at 475 Riverside Drive, New York City, by Mr. James Forman and his representatives be referred to the General Synod Executive Committee with power and authority to take any action it deems necessary" was adopted.

With regard to the action taken calling for the establishment of a Black Council, Mr. Robert Harrison, Coordinator for Organizational Development, referred to organizational problems involved in granting autonomous powers and decisions to such a Council. He emphasized that his comments were not intended to criticize the action taken, as the attempt to solve the issues involved by the

action was far more important than the organizational dilemmas created. However, he indicated that the basic thrust of reorganization of the General Synod Boards and Agencies was to make a "team" out of these organizations, rather than have the various autonomous units that used to exist. He pointed to the fact that the creation of the Black Council was a reversal of this thrust and will need to be reversed at some future date, which reversal may be a delicate matter because of the issue of race involved. On the other hand, it would not be desirable to attempt to place any limit of time on the actions presently taken. Therefore, he requested that this future problem and need for solution be recorded in the Minutes of General Synod for use at some future date when consideration of the reversal of the present action takes place.

By common consent, this statement was ordered to be recorded in the Minutes of General Synod.