

A PRONOUNCEMENT *A Policy Statement of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America*

UNITED STATES IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION POLICY

Adopted by The General Board

March 21, 1952

The plight of the world's uprooted peoples creates for the United States, as for other liberty-loving nations, a moral as well as an economic and political problem of vast proportions. Among these peoples are those displaced by war, and its aftermath; the refugees made homeless by reason of Nazi, Fascist, and Communist tyranny and more recently, by military hostilities in Korea, the Middle East, and elsewhere; the expellees forcibly ejected from the lands of their fathers; and the escapees who every day break through the Iron Curtain in search of freedom. These persons long for the day of their deliverance and for the opportunity to reestablish themselves under conditions of peace and promise. A problem of equal urgency is involved in the surplus populations that cannot now be supported by the economies of their respective countries. The pressure exercised by these surplus people is of a kind seriously to threaten the stability and well-being of the entire world.

The National Council of Churches sees in this situation an issue that can be resolved only as nations, collectively and separately, adopt policies dictated by considerations not only of justice and mercy, but also of sound mutual assistance.

On the international level, we believe the United States for moral reasons, as well as in the interest of its own economic and political security, should remain steadfast in its purpose to cooperate with other nations in meeting the needs of displaced persons, refugees, and surplus populations. Through the United Nations, the United States contributed generously of its resources in the work of the International Refugee Organization. Likewise, the United States is participating in the activities of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency, and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Our country, through the United Nations, and in other ways, assisted in providing a haven in Israel for many

thousands of Jewish refugees. More recently the United States joined with sixteen governments in the creation of the Provisional Inter-Governmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe. The purpose of this Committee, in part, is to continue, for a limited period, the migration activities previously carried on by the International Refugee Organization.

The National Council of Churches rejoices in the knowledge that the United States, as a member of the family of nations, is a party to these humanitarian endeavors. We believe our country, either through existing agencies, or through a single over-all international body under the aegis of the United Nations, should continue to press for a solution of the many problems related to displaced persons, refugees, and surplus populations. We would vigorously oppose any action by Congress which would hinder, in any way, the operations of these international agencies or which would diminish the participation of the United States in them.

On the national level it is desirable that Congress adopt such emergency legislation as may be required fully to complete the Displaced Persons Program to which our country is committed. This legislation should provide for the admission to the United States of (a) those who were processed under the Displaced Persons Act but for whom visas were not available on December 31, 1951, (b) an additional number of persons of those groups for whom a clearly insufficient number of visas were provided in the original legislation, and (c) our fair share, under proper safeguards, of those who have escaped from behind the Iron Curtain subsequent to January 1, 1949, the cut-off date specified under the Displaced Persons legislation. The additional visas here recommended should be authorized within the period ending December 31, 1952, and should be granted without regard to sectarian considerations.

If and when Congress takes action along the lines

here indicated it is our position that no further legislation of an emergency character be enacted. The time is past for dealing with these matters on a piece-meal and emergency basis. Rather, it is imperative that United States policy be now shaped in accordance with the long-range requirements of the problem.

The National Council of Churches has taken note of the fact that legislation is pending in Congress looking toward the revision of our immigration and naturalization laws. We believe it is of the utmost importance that legislation be enacted that will conform with our democratic tradition and with our heritage as a defender of human rights. The adoption by Congress of enlightened immigration and naturalization laws would add immeasurably to the moral stature of the United States and would hearten those nations with which we are associated in a common effort to establish the conditions of a just and durable peace.

We do not propose at this time to pass judgment on the specific details of the proposed legislation, many of which are technical and legal in character. We believe, however, the views hereinafter set forth are in accord with the convictions of our constituent communions.

One: The Congress should make the quota system more flexible. Under existing legislation provision is made for the possible admission to the United States, each year, of 154,000 immigrants. For one reason or another, the quotas assigned to many countries are not now being filled. We believe serious consideration should be given to the pooling or adjusting of unused

quotas in order to facilitate family reunion, to provide skills needed in our country, and to offer asylum to persecuted victims of totalitarian regimes. While any permanent solution of the problems of over-population can be effected only by basic economics and social adjustments within the countries concerned, it seems clear that migration opportunities, however limited, can be a helpful factor in easing the tensions occasioned by surplus peoples.

Two: The Congress should complete the process of amending immigration and naturalization laws so that, within the quota system, all discriminatory provisions based upon considerations of color, race, or sex would be removed.

Three: The Congress should establish a system of fair hearings and appeals respecting the issuance of visas and deportation proceedings. It is right and proper that Congress shall approve such precautionary measures as may be required to ensure our nation against the infiltration of individuals hostile to the basic principles of the Constitution and institutions of the United States. We believe this end can be achieved without the imposition of such restrictive measures as would violate the American conception of justice.

We believe the people of our churches would welcome the establishment of a National Commission to study with due regard for our international objectives, the problem of population pressures throughout the world, and the possible bearing of these pressures upon our immigration policies.