

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AFTER WORLD WAR II

A Social Document of the
ULCA



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

A Statement of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1946

1946: Adopted by Executive Board and Board of Social Missions, Reported in Minutes, 15TH Biennial Convention, ULCA, pp. 240-42.

The Church, as it proclaims Christian principles, provides the only complete and perfect solution for human problems. Serious tensions are arising today in the field of labor relationships. Here also Christian principles provide the solution. The United Lutheran Church in America presents these principles, commending their consideration to all who work and particularly to labor leaders, industrialists and all those directly responsible for the well-being, prosperity and peace of our nation.

Basic Principles

1. God's moral order recognizes no class system. In his sight all men are of eternal worth. He is no respecter of persons. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).
2. In God's sight every calling, however high or humble, which contributes to human welfare, is sacred and has His blessing. "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matthew 20:27).
3. God ordained work for all. "If any would not work, neither should he eat" (1 Thessalonians 3:10). Sloth is a sin against God and Man. Every able-bodied person should be engaged in some useful work and society should be so constituted as to make this possible.
4. God has abundantly provided the resources of the earth primarily for human benefit. Possessions are a sacred trust to be used not for selfish materialistic ends, but for human betterment today and in the future generations.
5. God expects all labor to be amply rewarded. This means an honest day's work for an honest day's pay and an honest day's pay for an honest day's work. "The labourer is worthy of his reward" (1 Timothy 5:18).
6. Our daily bread is the gift of God. Since all our earning capacity comes from Him, man lives primarily not by what he earns but by what God gives. So we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." What God gives should be received with thanksgiving.
7. God gives more than daily bread. Out of His love and mercy He has provided in Christ forgiveness of sin. He desires for everyone fullness of life. "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

8. God expects all to share the burdens of daily life, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). He requires the strong, the privileged and the able to help the less privileged and the weak. "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Luke 12:48).
9. The ultimate solution of all human conflict is not in the realm of law but in the spiritual sphere of love. There is no law perfect enough, nor human judgment wise enough in itself to solve the conflicts which arise in the selfish struggle for possessions. Not legalism but the grace of God, not contracts ultimately, but Christ's spirit of brotherhood and service in the hearts of men are the true source of blessed relationships in all human affairs.

Duties and Rights

As a corollary to the above Christian principles, the Church stresses certain fundamental duties which apply both to "management" and "labor." It believes and teaches that men need first of all today to discharge their duties, to themselves, their fellow-men and their God; if they have much, then to use their possessions as stewards of the gifts of God for which they will be held proportionately accountable, -- if they have less, then also to use what they have as stewards of the gifts of that God who expects the man of one talent also to regard that talent as a sacred trust.

1. It is the duty of all men to work. It is the duty of all Christian men so to organize their relationships that everyone may have an opportunity for gainful employment.
2. It is the duty of every man, and every man in a Christian social order should have the opportunity, to choose his work in keeping with the abilities which God has given him.
3. It is the duty of every man to provide an adequate living for himself and his dependents. It is the duty of Christian men so to order their economic relationships that, in a world where God has provided "enough and to spare" for all, every man who is worthy and willing to work may obtain an adequate living for himself and his dependents.
4. It is the right of every man to receive a wage commensurate with his abilities and, wherever feasible, in cooperation with his coworkers, to share in the direction and management of his labors.
5. It is the duty of every man to acquire and preserve the fruits of his industry against present and future needs. The social order should be so organized as to secure and protect rightful possession and enjoyment of the fruits of his industry against present and future needs.
6. It is the duty of every man to develop to the maximum, through education and training, the abilities with which God has endowed him, It should be the goal of a Christian social order to provide maximum opportunities for the education and training of all its members.
7. It is the duty of every man to provide the most favorable conditions for a happy home and family life.

8. It is the duty and right of every man to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, The social order should guarantee to every man complete freedom of worship.
9. It is the duty of every man to cooperate in the establishment and maintenance of government so that maximum civil liberties may be enjoyed by all with equal protection for all under the law without discrimination as to race, color or creed.
10. It is the right of every man freely to set up and to maintain, in co-operation with his fellow men, such forms of health and accident insurance, provision for medical care, unemployment relief and insurance, and old age pensions as will provide security against the hazards of life.
11. It is the right of every man to organize with his fellow workers for collective bargaining through representatives of his own free choice.
12. It is the duty of both management and labor to accept and support conciliation and arbitration in industrial disputes.

What the Church Must Do

To insure the performance of these duties and rights in human society the Church in a practical way should:

1. Proclaim God as the owner, man as the steward of the earth's resources, which are not to be exploited for selfish ends.
2. Champion the just cause of every man, regardless of his social status.
3. Uphold the dignity of labor, whether of heart or hand.
4. Advocate that service to society be regarded as the standard of social worth.
5. Proclaim always that the only cure for human selfishness and greed which are the common sources of industrial controversy is the Christian spirit of sacrifice for the greater good, growing out of love for God who desires men to live in a spirit of unselfish brotherhood.
6. Insist that democracy in industry is the only foundation for economic well-being.
7. Set a good example in its own affairs, such as investments, use of labor, and remuneration for services, lest it prove subversive of the principles it proclaims.
8. Seek to develop in the Church and community mutual understanding and good will between various groups.
9. Protest the use of force, violence and sabotage by either labor or management in industrial disputes.
10. Be ready and willing to arrange for conferences of management, labor and the public to consider principles of right conduct in human relationships, should the occasion arise.
11. Encourage the promotion of community clinics, and such other co-operative enterprises as are conducive to human betterment, and economic surveys.
12. Encourage the strong to share the burdens of the weak.
13. Talk more about Duties and less about Rights. One of the spiritual weaknesses of our time, from which many of our social problems progressively multiply, comes from the debilitating notion in the minds of people, which has gained

almost sanctity, that they can rest back upon things called "Rights." If men understand and do their Duty, Rights will follow, and problems will be solved,

14. Confront all men with the message of Jesus Christ, which alone satisfies the deeper human needs.