



The United Church of Canada General Council

GC28 The Nuclear Option for Canadians

True Document Date
December 31, 1979

WHEREAS The United Church of Canada has a deep concern for the well—being of this and future generations and believes that science and technology should serve the quest for a just, participatory and sustainable society; and

WHEREAS an ability to solve many of the problems associated with uranium mining/nuclear power has not been demonstrated; and

WHEREAS the Canadian government continues efforts to sell its CANDU nuclear reactor around the world, relying on safeguards which are questionable in their ability to ensure that plutonium (contained in the high-level radioactive wastes produced by the CANDU) will not be used in bombs or that nuclear facilities will not be the object of terrorists, or in other ways increase the potential for nuclear war; and

WHEREAS in Canada we are only now beginning to understand the long—overlooked social, economic, public/worker health and environmental costs; the ethical issues and the jurisdictional uncertainties and ambiguities associated with the nuclear fuel

system; and

WHEREAS recent research is indicating that exposure to even low levels of radiation can cause cancer in humans (especially the young and the pregnant), and threatens genetic damage not only for humans but also for plant and animal populations; and

WHEREAS no method has been developed to dispose safely of the high-level radioactive wastes from nuclear reactors, or the huge volumes of low—level radioactive wastes from uranium mines, or safely contain the radio-toxic tailings produced by uranium mills; all of which must be safeguarded indefinitely with the costly guardianship and inherent dangers being imposed on generations yet unborn; and

WHEREAS Canada is energy—rich and the Canadian government and the Science Council of Canada have identified many energy options, including conservation, with great potential for community-based as well as large-scale initiatives; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Atomic Energy Control Act, passed in 1946 and written in language reflective of the legislators' concern with military national security, is still the law of our land; and

WHEREAS the Atomic Energy Control Board requires additional funding and staffing if it is to exercise its accountability to the people of Canada; and

WHEREAS the minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is charged with responsibility for both prompting and policing the Canadian nuclear industry:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that The United Church of Canada through the 28th General Council call on the government of Canada and/or provincial governments to take the following actions:

1. REPLACE the Canadian Atomic Energy Control Act with legislation reflective of present conditions and attitudes; in particular having provision for public access to information, mandatory public hearings (with funding to enable meaningful public participation in such hearings), as well as having provision for a radical change in status and accountability of the nuclear regulatory body (Atomic Energy Control Board).

2. ARRANGE, at the earliest possible date, a national public inquiry into all aspects of the nuclear fuel system, such inquiry to be initiated with an overview and a reporting to the people of Canada on what has been learned and what uncertainties remain after the dozen or more inquiries into limited aspects of the nuclear fuel system, utilizing two-way satellite national hook-up or other modem methods to effectively enable communication to and among the people in all parts of Canada; and
3. PENDING outcome of the inquiry and full parliamentary debate on whether or not nuclear power is in the public interest, and bearing in mind that Canada has a huge stockpile of uranium, declare a moratorium on the expansion of existing facilities and/or the establishment of new nuclear facilities or uranium mines, such moratorium to extend to the disruption of radioactive deposits and the export of nuclear technology and materials; and
4. UNDERTAKE comprehensive environmental and health-related baseline studies in areas of natural occurrences of radiation and "young" uranium to determine what are the public health and genetic effects of such radioactivity and/or heavy metal on the human and animal populations, the food chain and the environment:

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Division of Mission in Canada be called on to accept responsibility and be provided with sufficient financing for:

1. EDUCATING members and adherents of The United Church of Canada and others regarding energy alternatives, the nuclear option, the consumer society and workable methods to effect meaningful public participation in the decision-making process;
2. EXPLORING the possibility of promoting, in cooperation with other churches and agencies, an international Conference on Ethics and the Nuclear System;
3. ADVISING the Prime Minister of Canada and all provincial premiers that we have taken the above action in a spirit of cooperation with government, recognizing

the seriousness of the energy problems which continue to confront our nation and endeavouring to assume our stewardship responsibilities toward the earth and its most precious resource-people.

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