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Resolutions – 1969 – 1996 – Economic Justice, A Summary

Since the economy is highly dependent upon the environment, it cannot be allowed to undermine the integrity of ecological processes. A sustainable economy must limit consumption to the “interest” produced by the natural capital upon which it depends.

Summary of previous resolutions

There were three resolutions adopted related to economic justice prior to the resolution put forward by the Victoria Unitarian Church in 1996. In 1969, responding to a report by the Canadian Economic Council indicating that 20% of the Canadian population had been defined as living at or below the poverty level, the resolution directed the CUC to request the Federal Government to establish a “ministry and action program with the thrust of providing an adequate base of employment, health, education and housing” to ensure equal opportunities for the poor to participate in mainstream life. In 1977, a similar motion urged various levels of government to maintain a scale of old age pensions to permit the elderly to live in dignity and comfort.

In 1985 the assembly adopted a relatively complex statement extracted from a paper by the Social Action Committee of the Unitarian Church of Vancouver entitled Economic Justice and Unemployment. It included both long- and short-term recommendations.

Short-run recommendations

Job creation programs with social value.

Social assistance, Unemployment Insurance and other social programs should, at a minimum, keep pace with inflation.

Guaranteed Annual Income should be tried.

Encouragement of voluntary work-sharing programs.

Reduction of real interest rates.

Re-training programs for young people or people with obsolete skills.

Encouragement of entrepreneurs.

Longer-term recommendations

Service to others and self-development should become major goals of the society; education, collective development and self-development should be viewed as life-long processes.

Changes to the socio-economic system necessary to provide economic justice must have a moral and ethical basis.



Benefits of economic changes should be shared by everyone, which may include a more equitable set of pay relationships among various categories of jobs.

Inflation should be controlled by guidelines for price and wage increases jointly set by business, labour, consumers and government.

Economic development should be a result of consultation with businesses, consumers and labour, and should be compatible with the directions of a world economy.

All of these resolutions share a concern with ensuring that an adequate standard of living be maintained for all Canadians, and that economic decisions should find ways of bringing about equity and fairness. Each of them reflects concerns arising from the particular social and economic situation at the time they were adopted. Because these circumstances change over time, solutions proposed at one time might not be appropriate ten years later.

In 1996, the Victoria congregation proposed a Resolution on Economic Justice dealing with these issues. It reflects the same concerns. It describes Canada as “a country wealthy enough to afford just and compassionate social programs for those in need.” It urges government to consider “all reasonable alternatives rather than adopting economic and social policies that require disadvantaged groups in society to make the greatest sacrifices.”

This resolution appears to incorporate the major concerns expressed previously and empowers the Board to work with other groups, make statements, and otherwise act when governments adopt economic and social policies which create greater disparity between rich and poor. See also Health Care Resolution 1984.

Health Care

The 1984 resolution on health care also relates somewhat to the economic justice issue.

- that access to the tax-supported Medicare system be preserved and accessible to all legal residents of Canada;
- that physicians and surgeons providing essential medical services be prohibited from opting out of the Medicare system and from extra-billing their patients;
- that deterrent or user fees be prohibited;
- and that the financing of the Medicare system be by taxation and not by the collection of premiums from individuals.



While the resolution notes that the present system “does not insure the full range of health care alternatives to costly hospitalization which are required to maintain people in their own homes and communities,” it makes no recommendations for remedying this.

The resolution encouraged the CUC to participate in the Canadian Health Coalition. We did participate in a limited way for several years, but after 1990 were unable to find a volunteer who would represent us.

This resolution would allow the CUC to speak out on the principles outlined, if the Board felt comfortable relying on the single motion passed in 1984. Aside from the direct financing issues outlined, however, the resolution is not helpful in responding to current issues in health care, including such matters as fee-for-service medicine, provision of adequate home care, hospice or long-term care facilities, or “deinstitutionalization” and the consequent need for community-based facilities.

This summary is based on resolutions from 1969, 1977, 1984, 1985 and 1996.