

Other Editors
WRAL VIEWPOINT

Church Leaders?

We continue to be fascinated by various church groups which, having strayed into the political arena, presume to take debatable and controversial positions in the name of fantastically large segments of church members who have never been consulted on the questions. It is not surprising, then, that serious rifts are beginning to appear in many churches of the nation.

The National Council of Churches has a fondness for the myth that it somehow speaks for "40 million Protestants" when, as a matter of fact, the Council actually is speaking only for a handful of men or women who happen to compose the commission or committee making the pronouncement. The General Conference of the Methodist Church, meeting at Pittsburgh recently, came forth with policy statements relating to Red China and Cuba that rattled the teeth of many a Methodist back home. Yet, the press dutifully reported that the Methodist General Conference was speaking for or representing "ten million Methodists."

The net result is reminding of Mr. Dooley, the Irish wit, who once commented: "Th' dimmycratic party ain't on speakin' terms with itself." Everybody in the party, Dr. Dooley had observed, was speaking for the party, with nobody knowing what the party stood for.

The National Council of Churches, or one of its component parts, has advocacy the recognition of Red China. The Council is actively promoting Negro demonstrations, even to the point of endorsing the violation of various laws and providing bail for those arrested. It has, in one way or another, demanded the abolition of the House UnAmerican Activities Committee. Each time, and in each instance, the press has stated that the Council represents those "40 million Protestants." Suffice it to say that the National Council of Churches would be hardpressed to find even a substantial fraction of that number who agree with its actions and its positions.

The Methodist Conference, implicitly speaking for "ten million Methodists" emerged from the Pittsburgh meeting with a flurry of positions, all subject to question, all controversial, all highly debatable. A sprinkling of pious words accompanying the Methodist resolutions did little to settle the dust. Many a Methodist throughout the land was shocked and dismayed.

The leadership of the Baptist denomination in North Carolina has placed itself squarely in opposition to a constitutional amendment which would clarify the Supreme Court decision relating to prayer and Bible reading in the schools. And which would eliminate the effect of the decision in outlawing such religious practices. Baptists boast of their autonomous and democratic procedures, but here again we find church leaders taking debatable positions in affairs of government and politics, leaving the impression that they are speaking for their denomination which in fact Baptist congregations have not even been consulted.

There is no suggestion that church leaders keep silent on contemporary issues. And certainly no restrictions should be placed on their right to speak their views as individuals. But presuming to speak, or appearing to speak, for vast millions of unconsulted church members is something else again.

It is all well and good to hope and work for the brotherhood of man in this troubled world. But there is no justification, Biblical or otherwise, for the abdication of historical truth, factual awareness, and practical reality. The murderous regimes of Red China and Communist Cuba are steeped in atheism. They sneer at the principles of a nation founded on a faith in God. Yet, religious forces call for a reexamination of our relationship with these nations. It is, when all is said and done, a clear call for appeasement.

Christ could have avoided the cross had He been willing to appease and coexist with the forces antagonistic to His teachings. Thus, there may be an obvious theological defect in the positions so eagerly being taken by so many church leaders. Even so, they should not be denied their right to their views. We are troubled, as we say, simply by their presuming

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CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

India Renewed

The leaders of the parliamentary system in India are now standing on their own feet. We wish them well. They have an immense task ahead.

Reform of government, both at the center and throughout India, has only been chipped at and is now long overdue. The Congress Party in particular needs the kind of overhaul that could only come after Mr. Nehru no longer held the

reins. So does the administrative machine, both in Delhi and throughout the country. Some of this can be done at lower levels but this is a genuinely national crisis of leadership at the top. It was characteristic of India that the country and its officials wanted to leave Mr. Nehru the unquestioned leader to the end. This was a tribute of affection and great respect. Responsibility for governing was diffused as Mr. Nehru moved further away from the role of chief administrator, yet power still resided in him. The unavoidable result was what always happens when those who hold responsibility do not have the power. The bureaucracy, which always had

formidable inertia in India, became worse congested and indecisive.

It is remarkable under the circumstances that so much continued to be done reasonably well. Mr. Nehru's last days after the tragedy of the Chinese Communist attack were days of dignity. But everyone knew that the reckoning would have to come.

There will now be a fresh start. There has to be. Even those closest to Mr. Nehru had never really been free to be themselves.

Those of us who have faith in Indian democracy know that it now will be tested. For the first time since independence, India will itself have to form and assert its own character, in its own right. Self-government will have to spread horizontally and vertically through the governing ranks. Parties and officials will have to be renewed. This is the task of Mr. Nehru's plural successors.



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