

No. 8769

PROGRESS REPORT ON RESOLUTIONS PROCESS FOR THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

RECEIVED by the General Assembly

The General Board in 1986 referred Business Item 0961 to the Task Force on Renewal and Structural Reform.

For a number of years, but particularly following the Des Moines Assembly, persons and groups have expressed concern about the resolutions and/or the business session of the General Assembly. These concerns included:

1. Whether social justice resolutions are appropriate business items, especially given diversity of opinion about the moral and/or political implications of such issues;
2. the appropriateness of substitute resolutions framed by the General Board, and whether (as in Robert's Rules of Order) these should be considered prior to the original resolutions;
3. the time consumed by these resolutions, and whether they "crowd out" adequate consideration of General Office and General Unit reports;
4. the wisdom of a General Board (considering the Resolutions in depth) bringing recommendations that the General Assembly "adopt" or "not adopt;" and
5. whether voting "yes" or "no" is the only, or best, manner of dealing with all resolutions.

Having heard these concerns, the General Board referred the question, in a motion framed by William S. Bouldin, to the Task Force on Renewal and Structural Reform.

The Task Force met November 24-25, 1986. Because of a very heavy agenda (business items completed are elsewhere in this docket), the Task Force was unable to complete this assignment. However, a progress report was given to the January 1987 Administrative Committee, and is given to the General Board.

The Task Force has previously considered some of the questions "piece meal" as individual business items. The most important: upon our recommendation, the Rules of Debate for the General Assembly were amended to insure that framers of an original resolution would be recognized (if they desired) to give the first negative speech on any substitute resolution. This guaranteed that their concerns would be heard by the Assembly.

In deliberation on General Board Business Item 0961, the Task Force:

- 1) affirms that the General Office and General Unit reports are substantive business items, and that the integrity of the time marked for their individual consideration ought be respected. We may wish to amend the Rules so that a motion to receive them as a group and without discussion would be "out of order;" and
- 2) believes it would be helpful were the General Office to prepare a brochure instructing individuals and/or congregations how to write resolutions. Many are rewritten or voted down because they are poorly written or have an improper format, etc.

Beyond early consensus on these two questions, we listed approximately 20 suggestions or ideas for further exploration, discussion, or model testing.

The Task Force recognizes the importance of this item on its agenda, believes that the Task Force should do its work with great care, and invites ideas and insights from the General Board or the church at large. The time for the November 1987 meeting of the Task Force is being expanded so that this issue particularly may receive full review.

The Task Force submitted this progress report to the 1987 General Board, with the suggestion that it be forwarded to the General Assembly for information.