

REFERRED

No. 8731

RESOLUTION CONCERNING SEAL HUNTING

REFERRED by the General Assembly to the Task Force on Christian Life Style and Ecology for appropriate study and response.

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WHEREAS, world attention has been negatively focused on Canada (and Atlantic Canada in particular) in a campaign to stop the traditional seal hunt, accompanied recently by a boycott of Canadian fish by Europeans and Americans; and

WHEREAS, recent advertisements have warned American tourists to stay away from Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada beaches for fear of being shot by a seal hunter (a low point in a long and unfair campaign against the seal hunt); and

WHEREAS, most people who have supported these campaigns by the "animal rights" groups know very little about the situation, but have been exploited by pictures of seal pups being clubbed to death; and

WHEREAS, such campaigns have continued against the 1987 hunt authorized by the Canadian government (with a quota of 57,000 adult harp seals); and

WHEREAS, this year's quota reflects international pressure rather than sound ecological principles (reducing a herd by taking the young is less threatening to a population than taking mature breeding animals - and shooting may be less merciful than clubbing); and

WHEREAS, the harp seal is not an endangered species, but numbers around two million animals in Atlantic Canada and has been growing; and

WHEREAS, each harp seal is estimated to consume 1.5 metric tons of food (mostly fish) per animal annually, for a total consumption by Canadian harp seals exceeding the annual Canadian catch of fish in the Northwest Atlantic; and;

WHEREAS, the clauses respecting humane killing in the Canadian Seal Protection Regulations are more stringent than the regulations governing the humane slaughter of domestic animals in either the United States or Canada; and

WHEREAS, the grey seal is infecting the fish of Atlantic Canada with a parasite called "seal worm" at a rate 100 times that of 25 years ago which costs many millions of dollars to remove from the fish fillets in processing (for aesthetic reasons: it is not dangerous to humans), to which the Canadian government has responded along with other North Atlantic countries and placed a bounty on the grey seal (whose numbers are increasing rapidly); and

WHEREAS, all species of seal are very damaging to the gear and equipment of fishermen and would thwart their livelihood if allowed to become too numerous; and

WHEREAS, unemployment in some of Atlantic Canada's fishing villages reaches 90% during the months of March and April, the same period that the seal hunt traditionally takes place; and in 1982 the average income of Newfoundland fisherman who sealed was only \$9180. (with their average return from sealing being \$851.); and

WHEREAS, seal hunting and fur trapping are the major traditional livelihoods of Canada's Inuit (Eskimo) people and that depriving them of this livelihood has been called an act of cultural and economic genocide by the (Anglican) Bishop of the Arctic, John Sperry; and

WHEREAS, the Christian is called to be a steward of the earth, including having a (wise) dominion over the animals, and acknowledging the need for balance in nature and the preservation of all species; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada meeting in Louisville, Kentucky, October 16-21, 1987 recommend to congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) that the issue of the seal hunt receive a wider study by their members before they consider supporting campaigns against the Canadian seal hunt; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that information regarding the seal hunt be kept by the appropriate information agencies of our church to help congregations know the fuller story; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that concern about a wise and Christian defense of the seal hunt on grounds of stewardship and ecological balance be communicated to the World Council of Churches; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that letters be sent to the Departments of Fisheries of our two nations supporting those efforts which promote a wise control of the seal population.

**Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Canada**

The General Board recommends that the General Assembly REFER Resolution No. 8731 to the Task Force on Christian Life Style and Ecology for appropriate study and response. Reasons given for this recommendation were:

1. This resolution reminds us that "wise and Christian" understandings of issues relating to ecology and social and economic concerns are not always easy to determine.
 2. The General Assembly may not be the most appropriate forum for determination of such specific issues, though we commend the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Canada for bringing this concern to our attention.
 3. The General Assembly has provided for a Task Force on Christian Life Style and Ecology (Resolution #8744) which "is interested in hearing the concerns of Disciples on ecological and life style issues."
- (Debate time 12 minutes)