

Economic Justice and Social Welfare - 1981

Issues

To create a stable domestic economy; maintain systems of free enterprise and relatively unencumbered world trade; provide opportunities to educate citizens for employability and self-sufficiency; care for those who are unable to meet their own basic needs.

Background

Thus hath the Lord of Hosts spoken saying: Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother; and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you devise evil against his brother in our heart.

(Zechariah 7:10)

Judaism has always demanded that its moral values be applied to the practical problems of society. Prophets viewed the earth, its resources and the wealth derived from them as a sacred trust, to be shared justly by all. The purpose of society and government is to provide for such sharing, to ensure the security and rights of the disadvantaged. While all nations must make sacrifices if they are successfully to advance their economic systems and overcome the impact of inflation and recession, sacrifices must be distributed equitably and fairly. In the United States the economic policies reflected in proposed budget cuts increase the gap between rich and poor, favoring the advantaged and placing undue burden on the disadvantaged.

The present focus of United States budget cuts, including cutbacks in CETA and educational funding; limiting food subsidies and Medicaid, especially to pregnant women and infant children; reductions in funds for public education, paralleled by proposed tuition tax credits for private schooling, place groups one against another and can result in increased group tensions as well as crime in a society which encourages social justice.

Resolution

The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods recognizes the need for efficiency and fiscal responsibility to avoid waste but believes that the Federal budget cuts which have been enacted by the Congress place an unfair burden on the unemployed, the poor, disadvantaged minorities, the elderly and children who will have to bear the brunt of these proposed severe reductions. Since the majority of people living below the poverty line are women and the elderly, we are deeply concerned about a national fiscal policy which will lock some women into a cycle of poverty, offering no relief for their future or that of their children, and will rob the elderly of their dignity and ability to survive. Further, we deplore a budget which represents a disparate increase in military expenditures at the expense of critical core social programs.

Therefore, NFTS calls upon its U.S. members to urge their government to reassess its economic policies and its budget. In particular, we are concerned about the severe cutbacks in the areas of job training, food aid subsidies, Medicaid, medical and nutritional aid to pregnant women and children, legal aid services and child care for working parents.

We further urge our Sisterhoods to create or join existing coalitions on the local level to strengthen these efforts. Such coalitions could be with other women's groups, religious groups, labor organizations, minority groups, civil rights organizations and senior citizen groups. We further urge Sisterhoods to cooperate with Jewish communal

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agencies which, after more than two decades of receiving significant public funds to help sustain their programs, must develop alternate plans to meet the special needs of the Jewish community as well as the larger society.

Finally, We call upon all Sisterhoods in our worldwide Federation to serve as advocates on behalf of the disadvantaged and helpless and to translate, as appropriate for their societies, the above concerns into responsible action.