



February, 1983

Dear All,

One of the highlights of my Christian experience was spending the day with our World Council of Churches (W.C.C.) visiting delegate, Rev. Dr. Jacobus Shoneveld. Our church was one of only four in Oregon which was blessed with this opportunity to share with a Christian from another country who will be attending the W.C.C. Assembly in Vancouver, B.C., this summer. We owe a special thank you to Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon for arranging this opportunity.

I am deeply disturbed by a movement affot to slander and discredit the World and National Councils of Churches. Reader's Digest has been especially powerful in this effort. "60 Minutes" has jumped on the band wagon. Sloppy journalism, innuendo, narrow focusing, misrepresentation, unidentified "sources", etc., is no way to conduct a debate on mission work and mission style.

I am particularly distressed with what we used to call "red-baiting" during the McCarthy era of the 1950's. In an article responding to a piece in the Jan. Reader's Digest, the National Council of Churches (N.C.C.) flatly states that it "does not fund or otherwise support Communist governments or movements anywhere in the world." The ecumenical organization "works through churches in more than 90 countries under many forms of government to meet human need, strengthen the community of faith, and address situations of injustice." The W.C.C. works with 300 churches!

I believe it is important for us to recognize that:

1. It is a small portion of the W.C.C. and N.C.C. budgets that goes toward addressing social injustice. Most of the budgets go for theological and educational endeavors, opportunities for interfaith dialogue and world relief programs.
2. The N.C.C. and W.C.C. must take every precaution not to thwart the tender workings of churches in communist-controlled countries. Public statements condemning such governments usually lead to increased oppression of Christians in those territories. Other means of addressing oppression must be used and the churches in the concerned areas usually know what those are.
3. There are more non-white, non-Western Christians in the world than there are white, Western Christians. (This is because our overseas missions have been so successful!) We simply must face the fact that European-American theology is not the only experience and context out of which Christian thought grows. Ecumenical bodies help us to grow beyond our limits. This may be painful at times, but is necessary if we want to affirm that our God is the God of the whole world, of all peoples and of all denominations.

If you are interested in further exploring this controversy, I have all the articles referred to above and would be happy to share them with you. Let's use this controversy as an opportunity to learn and grow.

Grace and peace,

*Linda*