

CHRISTIAN AID: THE POLITICS OF CHARITY

By Bernard Smith

The British Charity known as Christian Aid (CA) is a department of the British Council of Churches (BCC) and its Board of Trustees and Director are appointed by that council. The British Council of Churches is itself an associated council of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and is bound by its constitution to advance the aims of the WCC. It does this partly by advancing the views and goals of the WCC throughout Britain, and also by collecting funds for the various WCC aid programs which — as has been well documented and we will see later — include aid to African terrorist organizations.

Is Christian Aid Intended to be Political?

This question has been answered by the Reverend Dr. Kenneth Slack, former Director of Christian Aid, preaching in Westminster Abbey:

Christian Aid's role is not just that of a relief organization, of a supplier of palliatives...Christian Aid is committed constantly to be seeking disturbing change — change that will give power to the powerless, that will set the cry for justice on the lips of those who have been trodden into the ground...If this be political, then I say to you that the whole gospel is political...Christians must be political and therefore Christian Aid must be political... (1)

Dr. Slack was succeeded in 1982 by the Rev. Dr. Charles Elliott, who stayed only briefly, retiring suddenly and without explanation in September 1984. Dr. Elliott was also convinced that charity was not enough — there must also be revolutionary change. At the 1978 Lambeth Conference he said:

We can no longer pretend that the social and economic structures of our civilization will enable the 600 million people who lack for food, shelter, water and clothing to meet their basic needs. If we take the Gospel seriously, we are obliged to engage in revolutionising those structures. From that there can be no escape. (2)

These quotations suggest that the age of “soup kitchen” charity is over: we have entered the era of the political charity.

Let us examine some examples of CA charity to see what this means.

Christian Aid and the 'New Internationalist'

The monthly magazine of Third World politics entitled "New Internationalist" was financed by CA and OXFAM from its first issue in 1973 until 1981: CA's contributions were in excess of £100,000. Both charities withdrew their support on the advice of the Charity Commission but issued a statement saying that they still supported the magazine's objects. What are these objects? They are frankly stated by the publisher in each issue:

To report on the issue of world poverty; to focus attention on the unjust relationship between the rich and the poor worlds; to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary within and between nations if the basic needs of all are to be met; and to bring to life the people, the ideas and the actions in the fight for world development.

The leaders of CA and OXFAM repeatedly denied any editorial responsibility. CA helped to finance the magazine, said Dr. Slack, "to create a forum for debate."⁽³⁾ But it was a forum where only one side was allowed to speak. The issue for May 1979 shows the characteristic political bias. It purported to be a "Human Rights" issue. It had an article on the deprived Indians of Canada and another defending the claim of Andrew Young, U.S. Representative at the United Nations, that there were "hundreds, perhaps thousands" of political prisoners in the U.S.A. A full-page article, headed "Slipping Into Darkness," described the West German government's fight against the Baader-Meinhof terrorists. It began:

An autistic child huddles in a corner, locked in his own self-delusions, occasionally flailing out at the world of reality he cannot comprehend. His obsession with himself prevents him from rationally communicating with or understanding the people around him.

What might be thought to be a picture of a terrorist is, in fact, the writer's view of the people of West Germany – "an autistic nation." Democratic society, he says, is endangered not by the terrorist but by the "militarized" German police.

In this issue on Human Rights there was no article on Communist countries: only in the West, it seemed, were Human Rights denied.

That example could be multiplied many times: it is representative of the magazine's crudely anti-Western, anti-capitalist stance. Two-thirds of the human race are living in poverty and hunger because of the selfishness of the other third. The power of the Western nations must be broken if the hungry are to be fed and economic justice secured. The magazine seems to be motivated less by a desire to help poor countries than to damage rich ones. It recalls a recent remark by economist Lord Bauer:

There are various disaffected groups in the West which have come greatly to dislike private property and the market system. Some of these groups envisage the Third World as a weapon in what is in effect an undeclared, one-sided civil war in the West.(4)

Christian Aid and the 'Community and Race Relations Unit'

CA is one department of the British Council of Churches and CRRU – the Community and Race Relations Unit – is another. CRRU has a Projects Fund that makes grants every year to about 100 groups in Britain that are “offering active resistance to society's oppression of black people.”(5) CA makes an annual grant of money to CRRU to be used to aid groups approved by CA. In 1984 CA gave CRRU £123,000. A list of organizations that benefit is published annually by the British Council of Churches. The recipients are mostly obscure West Indian and Asian groups. Their full addresses are not given and the descriptions offered are brief and too often misleading. Here is one from the 1980 Grants List:

Alinsky Community Training Project, Liverpool. A training scheme to promote self-organization among the Liverpool black community, using the techniques developed by Saul Alinsky in the USA. The grant helped with teaching expenses.

CA gave the group £1,550. Few English people reading that description would know that Alinsky was an American revolutionary who organized workers on military lines to challenge the civil authorities. Alinsky trained “community organizers” whose aim was “to develop sufficient mass power to force municipal government to change their oppressive domination of the poor.” The organizer acts as

. . . a veritable general . . . for this theory is essentially military . . . it relies on the capacity of neighbourhoods

for militant disruptive power Alinsky emphasises offense(6)

The money from CA helped, we are told, with "teaching expenses." We are now in a better position to know what the Liverpool blacks were being taught.

A complaint was made to the Charity Commission by a member of the public on the grounds that since the Alinsky Project was clearly a political group the grant was contrary to charity law. It took the Commissioners over a year to decide that "financial support for the Alinsky Project could not be construed as legitimate use of charitable funds." (7) CA assured the Commission that no further grants to this group would be made. But how many grants to similar groups go unnoticed by those who put money in Christian Aid envelopes?*

Christian Aid and Development Education

The popular idea that all the money collected by CA goes to feed the hungry and clothe the poor is mistaken: a great deal goes to prepare the general public for the revolutionary changes advocated above. This is called "development education." In 1984 CA spent £579,861 on development education in Britain and £443,537 on "overseas students." Some insight into what "development education" means may be gained from the fact that in 1978 the Charity Commission ruled that grants made by CA to a department of World Council of Churches known as CCPD – the Commission on Churches' Participation in Development – were unlawful since the objects of CCPD were to "finance political action, mobilize public opinion and effect structural change within societies." (8) The following is an extract from a CCPD publication:

Development education is more than information. Through it motivation can develop for political action by groups, aimed at policy changes through pressure on decision-makers, or at organising to confront the establishment.

In countries where conditions are reasonably favourable, groups exist that are committed to change, social justice and people's participation . . . It is vital for CCPD to dialogue with and support these groups . . . One of the most important experiences arising from such involvement is that of conflict with the dominating powers of the world." (9)

* It is interesting to note that the original request for a grant to be made to the Alinsky Project came from David Sheppard, Bishop of Liverpool.

In their own words the CCPD clearly reveal that “development education” is a euphemism for training in revolutionary politics.

Christian Aid and Human Rights

This is another area in which charity throws a flimsy veil over politics. In the first quarter of 1979 CA made grants totaling £425,804 to seven groups concerned with “human rights” in South America. The Charity Commission ruled against all of them on the grounds that “there is nothing inherently charitable in investigating and documenting violations of human rights.” One of the seven groups was the Guyana Human Rights Association. The following is CA’s own account of what the money was given for:

To complete the funding of a report they have prepared documenting the irregularities and fraudulent nature of the referendum held in July 1978 to legitimise changes in the constitution, without a popular vote being necessary. Publication of this report and its distribution throughout the Caribbean will not only bring pressure to bear on the Guyana government but demonstrate the need for constitutional safeguards for civil liberties in other Caribbean states. (10)

It appears from this that CA’s sole object in making the grant was to hold up to public odium the government of a friendly Commonwealth country. Had it not been for one person who complained to the Commission this is another grant that would have passed unnoticed by those who donate to CA. Not unreasonably, they assume that their money is being used to feed and clothe the needy.

In the teeth of the Commissioners’ ruling against “human rights” grants, two more such grants were made by CA in 1980: one of £2,500 to the BCC’s Advisory Forum on Human Rights and the other of £1,500 to the Chile Committee for Human Rights; the latter was for “educational material” about Latin America. Again, as a result of a complaint, the Commissioners ruled against them.

Christian Aid and South West Africa’s Peoples Organization (SWAPO)

Between 1978 and 1982, CA gave £35,000 to refugee camps run by the Namibian terrorist group SWAPO. The fact that

such camps often contain children and adults who have been abducted or otherwise forced to leave their own country to be trained as terrorists is ignored by CA. It also ignores the long list of atrocities committed by SWAPO against the civilian population of Namibia.

When Members of Parliament from the All-Party Namibia Parliamentary Group visited Namibia in January 1985 they reported that the Anglican Church there is locally known as "the religious wing of SWAPO" and were surprised by its "apparent open commitment to SWAPO." They also found that many Namibians, both black and white, regard the Namibian Council of Churches "as leaning towards support for SWAPO." In the year July 1984 to July 1985 this organization received grants from CA totalling £123,000.

Christian Aid and Nicaragua

When Charles Elliott took over from Dr. Slack as Director of CA, he spent a week in Nicaragua with the Witnesses for Peace, a group of "peace-activists" who had stationed themselves on the border between Nicaragua and Honduras to forestall, by non-violent means, any possible U.S. invasion of Nicaragua. Dr. Elliott was accompanied from this country by Dr. Michael Hollings of Notting Hill and Keith Sutton, Bishop of Kingston. On his return, Dr. Elliott wrote a piece for Christian Aid News under the heading "Nicaragua's Spirit of Forgiveness" from which the following is taken:

Again and again we met people, from simple campesinos to ministers of state, who emphasized to us the readiness of the people of Nicaragua to forgive and be reconciled with those who currently harass and kill them . . . The key point is this. Because Christian values are at the heart of the Nicaraguan experiment, forgiveness, political forgiveness is central in political and social attitudes. What a lot we have to learn from that! (11)

Elliott's rhapsodic account of Marxist Nicaragua was matched by a double-page article in the previous issue of this paper subtitled "In Nicaragua 'the Kingdom of God is built with great effort.'"

It is now a year and a half since Elliott's visit and the latest news from Nicaragua suggests that the Kingdom of Heaven is still some way off. The following report is taken from the *Financial Times*, 17th October 1985:

The state of emergency, announced late on Tuesday, gives the Nicaraguan government and its security services sweeping powers of arbitrary arrest, detention and investigation. The right to Habeas Corpus has been removed as has the right of appeal. Telecommunications and mail can now be subject to interception, and homes and offices can be subjected to spot searches without prior authorisation of the civil powers. Rights to free assembly, freedom of expression and the right to strike have all been suspended and a new wave of heavy Press censorship is anticipated.

Evidence that Nicaragua is a repressive Marxist dictatorship leaves CA undisturbed. In Nicaragua, CA believes, the long-awaited "revolution of the poor" has triumphed and is now menaced by the armed might of capitalist America. As a political myth it is far too useful to be discarded merely because it conflicts with the facts. Accordingly, CA has given £2,300 to a group called Church Action for Central America (CAFACA) to finance the production of posters aimed at American tourists in London. The posters depict homeless Nicaraguan children and bear the caption "Pray that Nicaragua be left to live in peace." (12)

Christian Aid and Disarmament

In *Christian Aid News*, dated April/June 1982, CA identified itself with the disarmament movement. Its editorial denounced the British Government's decision to buy the U.S. Trident 2, described the notion of a "credible nuclear deterrent" as "obscene" and urged CA supporters to attend the mass lobby of Parliament on April 27th organized by the United Nations Association. The object of the lobby was to stop the "arms race" and limit the export of weapons.

In the same issue, on the opposite page, was an article headed "Blood on our Hands" arguing that our first duty as Christians is to spend our money feeding the hungry rather than on armament: "for the price of one jet fighter we could set up 40,000 village pharmacies." It ended with the slogan, "Disarm for development." Presenting the reader with a "clear choice — guns or bread," the writer did not consider the possibility that a sensible society might want to defend itself as well as feed itself.

The author of the article was Professor John Ferguson, President of the Selly Oak Colleges at Birmingham which, we

are told, offer a wide variety of "Christian studies." He is also Chairman of the United Nations Association and was formerly Education Secretary at the BCC.

Christian Aid and Shell International

In 1983, CA linked itself with TRAIDCRAFT, a non-profit making, mail order group that imports goods from the Third World to sell in the United Kingdom. Its object is to benefit the producer rather than the consumer by creating employment in the Third World. "Traidcraft upholds love rather than profit maximization as the guiding principle behind its trading activities." (13) The attraction of this for CA, which holds Western capitalism responsible for the poverty of the Third World, is plain.

In the CA/Traidcraft Spring Catalogue for 1984 is a page of cartoons and captions. Prominently displayed is a remarkably silly aphorism by the playwright Bertolt Brecht, a Stalin Peace Prize Winner: "Famines do not occur, they are organised by the grain trade."

More interestingly, on the same page is the following:

Shell is now the largest seed merchant in the world. By buying up seed patents, it can make sure only varieties needing fertiliser etc., are available . . .

Adjoining that text is a cartoon showing a peasant receiving a packet of Wonder seeds and thinking:

I'm going to need Wonder Fertiliser, Wonder Irrigation, Wonder Herbicides, Wonder where I'll get the money.

A Shell shareholder sent this page to Shell International and got a reply from B.N. Fox, Head of Agricultural Public Affairs, from which I extract the following:

It was good of you to draw our attention to the item since it is in fact erroneous . . . The statement that 'Shell is now the largest seed merchant in the world' is incorrect. There are in fact many private and public companies a great deal larger.

The second claim that 'by buying up seed patents' etc., implies that Shell Companies manufacture fertiliser, which is not so.

It may additionally imply that by breeding disease-susceptible varieties we are forcing farmers into buying more Shell plant protection chemicals. This allegation is insupportable on a business basis alone. Who would buy

such varieties when more resistant alternatives are freely available from other breeders?

There is no Shell policy of 'buying up seed patents'. The implication that Shell is monopolising seed patents can be put into perspective by the latest EEC Common Catalogue of Plant Varieties (1981). This lists over 220 varieties of barley of which approximately 8% are owned by Shell Group companies.

Mr. Fox's reply is a comprehensive demolition of CA's allegations. In light of his comments the charity is perhaps fortunate not to have been served with a writ for defamation.

Christian Aid's New Director

In June 1985 CA announced the appointment of the Rev. Michael Taylor to succeed Dr. Elliott. The Rev. Taylor is Principal of Northern Baptist College, Manchester, which trains men for the Baptist ministry. He lectures in Ethics and Theology at Manchester University and is Vice-Moderator of the WCC's Programme on Theological Education.

After a six-weeks visit to South Africa he wrote an article for Christian Aid News headed "Heroes and Heroines in a Land Divided." The Anglican Church in South Africa disappointed him — it "seems to have failed to empower Christians for social action." Of the Baptist Church he writes:

It is true that my own Baptist Church supports the status quo by its pietism; but I met a charismatic fellowship wide awake to its political responsibilities, and Baptist anti-war protestors who had gone to prison for the sake of conscience.

What is needed in South Africa, we are told, "is not a token gesture by the Church but radical political change: reconciliation yes, but not without mustice." (14)

British Taxpayers' Forced Contributions to Christian Aid

Every charity exempted from taxes by government reduces the tax-paying base, and results in a higher level of taxes to be borne by tax-payers who do not have this privilege. When one observes tax-exempt charities and organizations in any country regularly involving themselves in political activities, one wonders at the fairness. The essence of a charity is that it is voluntary; why therefore should other taxpayers be forced

to give? In particular, those who do not share Christian Action's political views may very reasonably object to the situation.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) Church Times 9th September 1977.
- (2) Church Times 28th July, 1978.
- (3) Daily Telegraph 19th April, 1978.
- (4) Peter Bauer "Equality, the Third World and Economic Delusion."
- (5) Project Fund's Criteria for Grants (BCC, 1982).
- (6) Essay by Milton Kotler in "Radical Sociology" ed. by D. Colfax (1971).
- (7) Letter from Charity Commission to complainant, 5th February, 1982.
- (8) Report of the Charity Commissioners for 1978, p. 12, para. 27 (HMSO).
- (9) CCPU Strategy Paper, June 1973.
- (10) Christian Aid's Allocation of Funds List, January/March 1979.
- (11) Christian Aid News, April/June 1984.
- (12) British Weekly 16th August, 1985.
- (13) Christian Aid News July/September 1983.
- (14) Christian Aid News July 1985.

POLICY WITH UNEASY IMPLEMENTATION: U.S. RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT

By Yearn Hong Choi

Radioactive waste has been generated in the U.S.A. since the Manhattan Project in 1943. In the forty years since the Project ushered the world into the Nuclear Age, the use of nuclear energy, and products thereof, as well as the reliance upon nuclear defense, have been both popular and prolific. However, this nation and other industrial nations have not yet found satisfactory ways to dispose of nuclear waste. Past governmental and scientific efforts to manage radioactive waste have not always been politically and technically adequate. Human fear of radioactivity still prevails. No one wants radioactive waste and no one likes it. The animosity toward radioactive waste is much more fierce than it is toward chemical waste, solid waste, or even a prison in one's backyard.

By late 1980, the 96th Congress reached some consensus on comprehensive legislation to deal with high-level waste, low-level waste, transuranic waste, and spent fuel. This legislation incorporated many of the principle recommendations of the Inter-Agency Review Group and State Planning Council on Radioactive Waste Management. However, in the last week of the session, an impasse arose over two issues: 1) the application of the policy of defense high-level waste and transuranic waste, and 2) the role of the Federal government in the storage of commercial spent fuel. On the last day of the session, the Congress broke out those provisions of the omnibus bill dealing with commercial low-level waste and passed the 1980 Low-Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act.

The Act has, however, not been properly implemented. This paper discusses major issues and problems resulting from the implementation of the Act. More than three million cubic feet (84,900 cubic meters) of low-level radioactive waste generated by nuclear power reactors, medical research institutions, and industrial facilities in the United States were placed in commercial burial grounds in 1980. The 1980 waste was 400,000 cubic feet more than the 1979 waste (See Table 1). It is expected that the United States will generate increased quantities of radioactive waste in the future. Other industrial nations will see