

November 15, 1991

The Council joined in intense discussion regarding St. Thomas. Issues that arose included the protocol of dealing with the Primate; the role of the Council in disputes; the requirement of Council action under Bylaw 35; various letters that have been sent to the Primate and Council members; Parish Council members bringing complaints to the Primate and Diocesan Council while Trustees and others are organizing petitions and calling for resignations, etc.; and unauthorized financial expenditures.

Mr. Shahinian moved and Dr. Onanian seconded a motion that "The Diocesan Council shall send a response to the eight parish council members who sent a letter to the Council Chairman asking to appear at a Diocesan Council meeting." The motion was defeated, 2 (for) - 8 (against). The Council did not act to authorize any meeting between Council members and any parties to the dispute.

D. Catholicos Approves Bylaw Amendment

The amendment to Bylaw 14(F), which was previously approved by the Diocesan Assembly, has been approved by the Catholicos. Dr. Onanian noted that the memorandum describing the Bylaw that was distributed to the Council contained errors. The Council by consensus agreed to correct the errors.

E. St. John's Parish asks to send Accrued Interest to Armenia

The Pastor and Parish Council of St. John's Armenian Church, Southfield, Michigan, responded to the Diocesan request for donations to buy and send food to Armenia this winter, by asking the Primate to send \$50,000 interest that has accrued on its \$900,000 donation to the earthquake fund, and asked to use that money to send food to Armenia. Judge Gurahian noted that no separate account exists for individual parish donations. The Primate will send an appropriate response, denying the request.

F. St. Stepanos Parish meets to Discuss Financial Needs

The Pastor of St. Stepanos Armenian Church, Elberon, New Jersey, reported that a special Parish Assembly was recently held to discuss the significant financial problems of the parish. One result was to raise parish membership fees. The Council awaits the receipt of the Minutes of the meeting.

G. Atlanta Armenian's Request to Form Church Council Rejected

About 50 individuals from Atlanta sent a letter to the Primate and Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian, Prelate, asking for recognition of an Atlanta Armenian Church Council. The proposed Council would arrange with the Diocese and Prelacy for clergy to visit and perform services in rented facilities that the entire Atlanta Armenian community would attend. The Council discussed the issue at length, and noted that the community in Atlanta is probably too small to support a full-time church. The Council by majority consensus agreed that a joint Church Council would not be approved but that the Atlanta Armenians could form a cultural association to arrange with the Diocese and Prelacy for church services which the entire Atlanta Armenian community could attend.

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It is the Council's understanding that the committee will take no official action without its approval, and further that the Diocesan budget will not be the source of funds for this project. Also, pursuant to a motion by the Very Rev. Fr. Baret Yeretzian, seconded by Mr. Chapien, the Council designated the Rev. Fr. Karekin Kasparian and Clement Ashekian as its liaisons to the committee on this project.

3. St. John Parish (Southfield)

The Primate reported receipt of a letter dated February 14 from the Very Rev. Fr. Paren Avedikian concerning the disposition of the relief funds raised by the Detroit community. The letter explained that the community's organizations had agreed during a meeting held on December 8 to establish a single relief fund, contributions to which would be made in care of St. John Armenian Church. The sum of \$850,000 has been raised, and permission was being requested to apply the money to a specific project from among those presented during the Vehapar's visit.

Pursuant to a motion by Mr. Chapien, seconded by Mr. Ashekian, it was agreed to advise the parish in writing of the establishment of the permanent committee, and of our intention to contact them once the committee's plans have been approved so that they can select a project. The Primate agreed to write to Fr. Paren Avedikian.

4. 87th Diocesan Assembly

In response to the Primate's request for recommendations as to the 1989 Friend of the Armenians, it was moved and approved following discussion to designate The World Community as this year's recipient. It is our intention to present the award to the Secretary-General of the United Nations or his designee, with the request that the plaque be placed in an appropriate public area at UN Headquarters. If the UN should be unwilling to place the plaque on display, a resolution designating The World Community as the recipient will be released to the media, and appropriate remarks will be presented at the Assembly banquet.

The Primate reported that two clergymen from Etchmiadzin, The Very Rev. Fr. Natan Samuel Hovhanesian and the Rev. Fr. Hagop Ashot Petrossian, will attend the Assembly and that Arshavir Gundjian will represent the Canadian Diocese. We have yet to hear from the Western Diocese.

As for our representatives, Arthur Mardigian will attend the Assembly of the Canadian Diocese, and the Very Rev. Fr. Papken Anoushian will be asked to attend the Western Diocesan Assembly. Also, if arrangements can be made, Fr. Anoushian will attend an American Bar Association conference on Tort and Religion in San Francisco on May 5-6.

Finally, Mr. Mardigian requested that the Very Rev. Fr. Haigazoun Najarian attempt to locate a secretary to assist the official Assembly Secretary.