ACI STATEMENT ON THE ANGLICAN CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL

Friday’s session of the Anglican Consultative Council is an embarrassment to Anglicans everywhere, and a sad display of procedural confusion. Members were given complex resolutions right before the vote without sufficient time to study them and understand their consequences. Resolutions that had been distributed earlier were replaced by resolutions drafted by a committee largely composed of members from provinces known to be opposed to the Ridley Cambridge Draft. Before a vote could even be taken on these resolutions, however, Archbishop Aspinall introduced a third resolution that not even the chairman of the resolutions committee had seen. The proponents of these resolutions, the intent of which was to remove Section IV and so significantly alter the Ridley Cambridge Draft, could not describe them to the members in a coherent way even though their first language was English, unlike many of those voting. All three resolutions were being debated at the same time. In consultation with various members present, there is agreement that this was improper.

The first motion to remove Section 4 for review and so alter the Covenant was defeated overwhelmingly by the members of the ACC. But the proponents of delay and alteration attempted yet again to insert the main provisions of the resolution just defeated into the resolution then under consideration. This attempt was rightly ruled out of order by the chair, Bishop Paterson of New Zealand, himself sympathetic to the leadership of TEC. For reasons that are unclear, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who had himself called for a vote on Resolution A, personally challenged this ruling of the chair and it was reversed. (It has been suggested that delegates voted against Resolution A because they had an interest in other resolutions. But that should never have been the condition under which voting was taking place, and it requires that 15 of the votes were cast because of this in order actually to approve Resolution A – a matter we cannot ever know because it is pure conjecture. This puts a cloud over the entire logic of voting as such and would clearly suggest the need for a re-vote, not a moving ahead with new resolutions).

The amendment to the resolution then pending, adding back provisions of the prior failed resolution, was eventually passed by a very narrow margin. In putting this amendment to the members for a vote, not even the Chairman could describe it coherently:

 “The question is whether or not for the introduction … for the amendment or against the amendment, with the introduction of those two clauses, and the subsequent renumbering from 15 to 16."

Evidence indicates that members did not understand what they were voting on, what the Archbishop of Canterbury was proposing, or why he was proposing it.

After a break and amid much confusion, the Chairman then announced that the entire resolution had passed even though there is no evidence it had even been voted on, the previous votes having been to amend the resolution, not pass it. If the position is that the individual clauses were enacted separately, is there any evidence that this was understood by the members prior to the vote?

These events unfolded live on Anglican TV to people watching around the world. It is beyond question that these procedures were improper, confusing and manipulative. The credibility of the ACC, already questioned by the Communion’s own advisory groups, has suffered lasting damage.

Two actions are required as a matter of urgency:

1. This issue must be re-visited immediately by the ACC and voted upon in a lawful and proper manner during this meeting. The alternative is moving forward with lasting questions as to the legitimacy of the entire process. Is this in doubt?
2. An explanation must be offered by those in charge of these proceedings, including the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Chairman of the ACC, as to how such manifestly improper procedures were permitted to unfold from the outset of yesterday’s session and, indeed, of ACC-14 itself. It appears to us that things descended into chaos and no one stopped and sought to bring things to order.

If lawful and proper action on the covenant is not forthcoming from this meeting of the Council, the only appropriate response is for the Churches of the Communion to begin themselves the process of adopting the Ridley Cambridge Text.

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