

(c) Development of the Council

Of the 28 bodies who formed the group only 25 were actual signatories of the charter. Incorporation was opted in 1912 and finished in 1924. Among the incorporators were Drs. Cavert and Robert E. Speer.

A system of commissioners for government was adopted on a broad scale to implement the actions and governings of the council. It was the idea whereby a study commission composed of varying personnel would study a problem and offer recommendations to the council. The latter were not binding but reflected the ideas of the parties of the commissions. These study commissions often brought in strange ideas (interesting how liberal thinkers often get to the top of these) but if the recommendations created too much heat the council simply noted it as a conclusion and not the agreed on end of the council. This is an over-simplification, of course, and my feeling is that the study commissions usually showed the real nature of the council. Very controversial was the commission for a just and lasting peace after 1941. Hitler, and later Stalin, incidentally, did a lot of things to embarrass liberal and socialistic churchmen. It became apparent that neither Fascism nor Communism had much to offer and a quietus was placed on the matter for a season. It is worth seeing how liberals have returned to these ideals in more recent years, having rather forgotten the Nazi and Stalinist lessons.

In development the social plank was enlarged and made more active in 1932 with the acceptance of two key ideas:

There should be a practical application of the Christian principle of social well being to the acquisition of and use of wealth...with the appropriate subordination of speculation and the profit motive to the creative and cooperative spirit...

The social planning and control of the monetary and credit systems with development of the economic processes for the common good should be more carefully developed.

Practically the council expressed itself in a number of divisions...the three more basic expressions being the United Council of Church Women, the International Council of Religious Education, and Church World Service. This is not an exhaustive list but demonstrates the varied areas of interest the council sought to maintain.

Support came from contributions from groups such as the Friends of the Federal Council of Churches. Some foundation grants were given and gifts were received from member bodies and churches. The foundation grants were largely in connexion with particular projects and research matters.