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## MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE FELLOWSHIP

JANUARY 20-21,1995

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A Special Meeting of the General Council was held Friday, January 20, 1995, at 7:25 P.M., at the Lexington Hotel in Phoenix, Arizona.

The following members were present, constituting a quorum:

Beth Bartley, Scott Forsythe, John Lange, Sara Blackstock, Ann Garner, Eileen Laurence, Robert Bruyn, Marvin Gawryn, Joseph Liszka, Robert Burns, John D. Hay, L. Dan Massey, Michael Challis, Janice Heinberg, Steve McIntosh, Avi Dogim, Eef Hoedemaker, Harry McMullan, Lila Dogim, Gard Jameson, Mo Siegel, Stephen Dreier, Geri Johnson, Lee Smith, David N. Elders, Richard E. Johnson, Paula Thompson, Janet Farrington, David Kantor, Lucile Faw, Marilyn Kulieke.

Absent were: John Hales, Paul Knott, Lyn Davis Lear, Melissa Wells, and Stephen Zendt.

Twelve observers were present when the meeting was called to order and several others entered early in the meeting.

Lee Smith read a passage from The Urantia Book. Steve Dreier gave notice of a pot luck supper hosted by Phoenix readers to which the members of the General Council were invited.

The meeting was called to order by Stephen Dreier, President, with David Elders acting as Secretary.

The first order of business raised by Steve Dreier is the issue of the printing and distribution of The Urantia Book. He provided a brief summary of those factors leading to the necessity for us to discuss this as a body. He commented that there have been calls by readers for The Fellowship, as an organization to take some action, and calls by others for us not to get involved in the matter. He stated that the Executive Committee had passed unanimously a resolution stating that in its opinion The Fellowship should print and distribute The Urantia Book in the event that the court rules in the Maaherra case that the book is in the public domain. In addition, he stated that the Executive Committee also passed a resolution that the organization, as an organization, take no active part in the case to help see it to conclusion. A question was raised with regard to whether the Executive Committee discussed whether individuals should take action to support the case. Another question concerned whether the situation was

discussed on a values level, and what values were seen as being paramount. A further question concerned the timing of our decision to print the book; would it take place only when the courts ruled that the book is in the public domain, or would printing take place prior to that time in preparation? The response was that it would probably take place after the initial ruling, but prior to the initiation of any appeal process.

The actual motion placed before the General Council for consideration and vote was:

WHEREAS the mission of the Fellowship for Readers of The Urantia Book is the study and dissemination of the teachings of The Urantia Book; the promotion, improvement, and expansion among the peoples of the world of the comprehension and understanding of Cosmology and the relations of the planet on which we live to the universe, of the genesis and destiny of Man and his relation to God, and of the life and teachings of Jesus; and the inculcation and encouragement of the realization and encouragement of the realization and appreciation of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man - in order to increase and enhance the comfort, happiness, and well-being of Man, as an individual and as a member of society, by fostering a religion, a philosophy, and a cosmology which are commensurate with Man's intellectual and cultural development, through the medium of fraternal association, ever obedient and subservient to the laws of this country and of all countries wherein the Fellowship may extend, and

WHEREAS the Fellowship can no fulfill its mission without copies of The Urantia Book which are easily available to current and potential readers (both in terms of distribution and cost) and

WHEREAS the Fellowship was the long time sales agent for The Urantia Book and this experience would aid greatly in setting up a sales and distribution network and

WHEREAS the Fellowship has a long-standing history with The Urantia Book and has a worldwide network of friends who are committed to The Urantia Book;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Fellowship create a mechanism to print and distribute The Urantia Book if the copyright renewal is declared invalid.

Discussion on this resolution concerned our actual legal position with regard to liability and jeopardy, whether or not it avoids the real issue of making sure the case is actually resolved, whether it would, in fact, be better for us to take, as an organization, a position of support for Maaherra. Several comments were made favoring direct involvement. One suggestion was that we might find it useful to ask how Jesus might act in this circumstance, and act accordingly. Consistent with this line of thought, it was stated that the real risk of getting involved in the lawsuit as an organization was diverting our organization's mission and resources to law among believers and not to the study and dissemination of The Urantia Book.

One Councilor made the point that perhaps the real issue is not just the apparent issue of the Maaherra

case, but rather, the separation of the leadership of the organization into two poles pulling against each other to attempt to gain control over the opinions and actions of the organization. One approach to dealing with this is to enable the broader readership to participate in the discussion of the issue of supporting Maaherra and/or printing The Urantia Book in a form of open public debate. There were other very strong positions, on either side of the issue, presented by a selection of Councilors. It was observed that there may be a threat on both sides of the issue--if we support Kristen, there is risk of our getting involved in a lawsuit; if we don't there is, a high probability that someone else will print the book.

It was also suggested that we consider passing a resolution affirming the validity and authenticity of The Urantia Book and that it was authored by spiritual beings.

It was pointed out that there were basically four issues on the floor, all of which have merit. First, there is the resolution stating that we do not feel that the Fellowship should be involved in the Maaherra lawsuit. Then, there is the issue of our printing The Urantia Book if it falls into the public domain. Then, there is the issue of expanding the discussion into a broader forum such as the general readership. Finally, there is the sense that we need to affirm our belief that The Urantia Book is a revelation authorized by spirit beings.

Mo Siegel placed on the floor the following motion passed by the Executive Committee earlier today: That The Fellowship, as an organization, will remain uninvolved in the Foundation versus Maaherra lawsuit. It was seconded by Gard Jameson and discussion followed.

Lee Smith offered an amendment to the original motion: "but as individual religionists the General Council strongly recommends that each individual study the legal materials in this case, its impact on the purposes of the revelation and act accordingly." This amendment was seconded by Dan Massey. The amendment was defeated by a vote 22 against, 7 in favor, and 1 abstention. Further discussion ensued on the original motion.

The meeting recessed at 10:55 P.M.

Steve Dreier called the meeting back to order at 9:20 A.M. Joe Liszka read a passage from The Urantia Book to begin the meeting.

The discussion on the motion placed on the floor by Mo Siegel was postponed without objection to give the proposer and seconder time to revise the motion's wording. During the interim, other business will be considered.

Janet Farrington gave a review of the plans for IC96. The theme of the conference will be "Living Faith," and will be held at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona during the period of August 4-8, 1996. The sub-thematic approach will be the development, nurturing, and enrichment of relationships. The last day will feature a "country fair" and worship will be a frequent part of the experience. Additionally, there will be an expanded children's program which will focus on fostering a

community experience among the teens, especially. Janet reported that the registration fee for adults has been raised to \$85 per person (children will be \$30 per) to fund activities beyond what has been funded in the past. Gard Jameson noted that there will be a room dedicated to worship, open at all times, and that there will be offered an interfaith experience with a person (s) from other planetary faiths (including native American) focused on the subject of faith. Steve McIntosh commented that the planning committee has the intention to secure the rights to a local work of art expressive of the uniqueness of the area which artwork will provide a thematic link for conference materials and a commemorative poster. Sara Blackstock spoke briefly about her committee's plans to set up four environmental experiences for the kids to provide breadth of experience. The program will feature study in the morning, community and family building activities in the afternoon, with worship in the evenings. John Lange spoke about the morning theme which will move from the greater cosmic family the first day down to the human family the last day. In response to a question, Janet stated that it is expected that the lodging rates will be \$50 per day per adult.

Discussion was refocused on the resolution placed on the floor by Mo Siegel. Mo, with the assent of the seconder, Gard Jameson, withdrew his motion from the floor.

Dan Massey placed another motion on the floor for consideration by the General Council. The motion was seconded by Eileen Laurence.

WHEREAS a major purpose of The Fellowship is the social and spiritual uplift of the peoples of the world through the ministry of The Urantia Book, and;

WHEREAS, present litigation of Urantia Foundation versus Maaherra may have lasting effects on the manner in which this purpose unfolds;

THEREFORE the General Council, having determines that as an organization, The Fellowship should not take sides in this dispute, and urges all readers concerned with the future of the revelation to familiarize themselves with the importance of the issues in this case and participate according to their individual wisdom and understanding.

Discussion ranged from the sense that this motion does not really do anything to the statement by Dan that he will follow this motion, if approved, with a motion focused on implementing an informational effort designed to provide the readership with those materials required to help readers acquaint themselves with the issues to facilitate an expeditious decision on their parts. Another comment suggested that the case had been going on for four years and that those people interested in supporting the cause have done so and will continue to do so. After further discussion, the motion is withdrawn with the assent of the seconder, Eileen Laurence. Steve McIntosh placed an new motion on the floor for consideration with a second by Scott Forsythe.

RESOLVED that The Fellowship's responsibility to The Urantia Book requires that it financially support Kristen Maherra in her suit to show that The Urantia Book is in the public domain. Discussion

for and against the motion followed. There was a motion to call the question which PASSED by a vote of 27 for, none against, with 2 abstentions. The motion failed with 7 for and 22 opposed with no abstentions.

Dan Massey re-introduced the motion he withdrew previously with a second by Eileen Laurence. There was a motion to call the question which passed by a vote of 28 in favor, none against, and no abstentions. The motion passed with a vote of 20 in favor, 8 opposed, and one abstention.

The meeting recessed from 10:45-11:00 AM.

Steve Dreier reviewed the pending business before the General Council given that we need to end the formal part of the meeting at about 12:00 P.M..

Steve raised for consideration the vote taken by the Executive Committee to recommend that The Fellowship print The Urantia Book should it be declared in the public domain by the courts. Steve summarized the genesis and context for this motion and suggested that we pass the motion as written and not try to define what is meant by legally in the public domain at this time. Eileen Laurence, seconded by Janice Heinberg, moved that the General Council affirm the recommendation of the Executive Committee in this matter that:

RESOLVED that If The Urantia Book is judged to be in the public domain, The Fellowship, in order to fulfill its mission, will promptly publish and distribute The Urantia Book.

Discussion ensued. There was a motion to call the question which passed by a vote of 28 in favor, None opposed, and no abstentions. The original motion passed by a vote of 26 in favor, 2 opposed, and 1 abstention.

In response to a question, it was clarified that while the Executive Committee had the right to act to implement this motion, it is most likely that the Executive Committee would convene a special meeting of the Council to approve such action and its detailed plan.

Marvin Garwyn moved and Gard Jameson seconded a motion that the General Council affirm the spiritual authenticity and origin of The Urantia Book:

BE IT RESOLVED that the General Council of The Fellowship for readers of The Urantia Book hereby affirms that The Urantia Book was initiated, inspired, and authored by spiritual beings and exists primarily and principally as a result of the efforts of these spiritual beings and that The Urantia Book constitutes the primary revelatory, inspirational text in the religious lives of those readers who follow to its teachings. after discussion, the motion passed unanimously with a vote of 29 in favor, none opposed and no abstentions.

Dan Massey moved and Beth Bartley seconded the following motion:

**RESOLVED:** The General Council directs the Executive Committee immediately to prepare an informational package reflecting the full range of viewpoints on the significance of the Maherra case for distribution to the mailing list of active readers by first class mail as soon as possible but no later than 30 days from today.

Discussion ranged from questions concerning the degree to which fact and opinion will be confused, how much will opinions actually help people make informed decisions, whether it is worth the approximately \$10, 000 cost for mailing expense, whether the timing will not be of help to raise funds for support of the suit, that it is at the least a way to help provide information for decision-making.

A motion to call the question was moved by Scott Forsythe and seconded by Dick Johnson and passed by a vote of 24 in favor, 5 opposed, and no abstentions. The main motion passed by a vote of 17 in favor, 9 against, and 3 abstentions.

The next issue surfaced by Steve Dreier for discussion was organizational re-structuring. Steve summarized the history of the project and the reasons why it is being brought up again for consideration. The most recent action on the issue was the placement before the General Council of a motion to allow societies to elect one Councilor to the Council in addition to those elected through the current constitutional process. Because the original motion did not include language addressing what constitutes a society for the purpose of electing an additional Councilor, it was sent back to the Executive Committee to address minimum standards for society viability. The Judicial Committee considered the issue and proposed that we use the number of 20 active members, which is the same number required for initial society formation. The inclusion of such a standard might well limit the autonomy of local societies, and, therefore, would require societies to consider such an amendment consistent with The Fellowship's Constitution. The discussion centered on the issue of whether an amendment which sets a minimum standard for society participation in the process of electing an additional member of the General Council actually does constitute an abridgment of society autonomy. One suggestion was that in order to help resolve the issue we craft a letter to the societies explaining the issue and asking them to consider whether this motion is seen by them as affecting local autonomy and thereby requiring consideration by the TDA. One comment was that it is offensive to the concept of, representative democracy to allow a virtually non-existent society of one or two people to have a representative the same as a larger, active society. It was the sense of the Council that we direct the Executive Committee to contact the societies to ascertain their opinions on this issue.

Dan Massey suggested that we take straw votes to seek a sense of the body with regard to two approaches to the question--one with an active minimum requirement and one without any minimum membership requirement.

On the initial question, 16 in favor. In favor without any minimum requirement there were 12. Steve asked that the Judicial Committee seek the opinions of the societies on this issue. After that contact, the Judicial Committee may then draft language for an amendment on the issue.

The Summer Seminars will take place next summer from July 22-27, 1995 with the theme of "Spiritual Communion: Theory and Practice." The Seminars will be held on the campus of Fairleigh Dickinson University in Teaneck, New Jersey. The General Council meeting will take place at that site on July 27-28, 1995 beginning at 7 PM on July 27. The Executive Committee will take place in association with this General Council meeting at a time to be announced. It was noted that we agreed that members of the General Council can attend meetings of the Executive Committee as observers.

John Lange spoke briefly about International Fellowship Committee activities and noted that they are planning a trip to South America sometime this spring or summer. They will be going to Columbia, Chile, and Argentina. John also noted that he had sent out a Christmas message with a copy of the picture from Jerusalem on the back and said that he had received many letters in response.

Sara Blackstock passed out materials on the Family Life Committee. She gave a brief report on progress to date. She asked that we fill out the survey furnished and which was also included in the Bulletin. She noted that they had only received a few responses. Sara also reported on their attendance at the Family Life Conference held in Canada.

There being no further business, Steve Dreier adjourned the meeting at 12:30 PM.

Secretary

APPROVED:

Chairman