

General Synod Report

Date : 14 July 2003 (Monday)

Source : EVNEWS Report

The most significant part of this day's business at the General Synod was the report '*Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church*'. There had already been a presentation on this on Saturday. Unusually there was no 'take note' motion but just a vote to set up a group to implement the proposals contained in the report. There was widespread concern about many aspects of the report and this was reflected in there being 13 amendments and over 90 people who had indicated a desire to speak in the debate. One of the amendments would have had the effect of passing the proposals back to the Archbishops' Council for further work but this was not accepted. However, eight of the other amendments were passed illustrating the disquiet about what is being proposed. The end result is that some of the draconian parts of the proposals will be (hopefully) modified.

The proposals as a whole represent part of the typical response to the problems facing the Church of England. Institutions in decline tend to draw everything to the centre in order to have more control. The prime plank of these new proposals will involve the setting up of Regional Training Partnerships. Nothing has yet been fleshed out about the role of these Partnerships. They will provide a degree of standardisation in training however they will also undermine the independent nature of training which has served the Church well in the past. It is also to be feared that this extra layer of bureaucracy will hamper the work of theological training rather than assist it. It also remains to be seen whether the costings are correct. When the National Institutions reforms were introduced much was made of the long-term savings. There was considerable short-term cost and little indication that the changes have saved the money expected.

The other significant debate was on *Children in the Church*. There were concerns about this report that it had been far too Anglican. Evangelical churches in particular will be using resources and para-church organisations that are far wider than just Anglican but little of this seemed to be recognised in the report. An amendment was put to highlight the need to learn from work done by other denominations.

In the evening there were separate meetings for the two Convocations (York and Canterbury Clergy) and the House of Laity regarding the Professional Conduct of the Clergy and the employment status of clergy.

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