

A Minute Adopted By The Indian Affairs Committee Baltimore Yearly Meeting Religious Society of Friends Summer of 2010

As a matter of principle and conscience, certain papal bulls and English and other European charters that endorse and enshrine claims of appropriation and domination should be rescinded. Likewise, the 600 year old "Doctrine of Discovery," which permitted colonization in places unclaimed by any other European Christian nations, should be repudiated. In this matter, we follow the lead of U.S. Indian scholars and of indigenous activists from many countries such as Peru who actively pursue these ends.

We acknowledge that Quakers benefited from the Doctrine of Discovery when William Penn was given tribal lands by the King.

We greatly regret that inherent rights of tribal sovereignty and land were diminished to a "privilege" of occupancy. And we recognize that even that practice was abridged and ignored at the convenience of the federal government and private land seekers.

We believe the public should be made aware that an 1823 Supreme Court case, based on the discovery doctrine, codified a policy that was cited as recently as 2005 to dismiss Indian land rights. And the public should be made aware that the discovery doctrine also provides a convoluted rationale for our government's continuing and complete power over tribes.

We believe it is appropriate for religious groups to call public attention to (a) assumptions and presumptions permeating our thinking and (b) witting and unwitting acquiescence by people today to the notion that to the victor goes the spoils--permanently.

We support efforts by Quakers, Episcopalians, Unitarians, and other faith groups to raise the consciousness of decision-makers in order to change policy.