

Recent Events: Fall 1999

Here are the latest developments on a number of news events, most of which we have written rather extensively about in the past.

WHAT HAPPENED TO FOLKENBERG?

Robert Folkenberg was supposed to inherit a very influential General Conference job in November, 1999. Did it happen?

In order to explain this, we need to go back a year or two. As is commonly known among the higher-ranking officers in North America, Robert Folkenberg liked to make sure he was always in charge of every activity. For some reason, it bothered him if there was anyone around who did not answer to him. In addition, he considered himself the leading pioneer in electronic communications in, and by, the church.

But there was a problem. Just as Haman was disturbed that Mordecai did not bow to him, so Bob was irritated that Three Angels Broadcasting Network (3ABN), in southern Illinois, was still independent. (By this I mean, the General Conference did not control 51% of its board.) Add to this the fact that 3ABN was gradually expanding its electronic communications base.

When Folkenberg asked the board of 3ABN to grant the General Conference a controlling voice, it voted not to do so.

Angry that he had been thwarted, Folkenberg determined to shove 3ABN aside, and develop a plan to bypass it—and build his own international communications links. In addition to our report, the *Review* mentioned the dispute. (See *Trying to Take over 3ABN [WM-777-778], August 1997.*)

Time passed, and then January 1999 brought Folkenberg to a personal crisis. You have read our reports on this, which, for some reason, have been the most completely published on the matter (now collected in: *Robert Folkenberg's Resignation: A Day by Day Account of What Took Place, third edition, 70 pp., 8½ x 11, \$4.75 + \$1.50.*)

In March 1999, as the end neared, Folkenberg's high-placed friends promised that, if he would step down from the presidency, they would arrange it so he would be hired back as head of the special communications department in the General Conference, which had earlier been assigned the task by Folkenberg to produce a satellite broadcasting system, on which millions would be spent, in competition with anything that 3ABN could possibly do.

This agreement was made, in order to avoid a terrible conflict at the forthcoming Spring Council, if Folkenberg decided to fight termination. It would be necessary to publicly disclose what he had been doing, and this would have shocked church membership.

When the April 1 Spring Council convened, according to plan, Folkenberg spoke from the podium and tendered his resignation. The next step was for him to be hired into the new General Conference position. That plan would have been voted in that afternoon—but, within half an hour after resigning, Folkenberg became miffed at something. He stomped suddenly back onto the platform, spoke in wrath about unnamed persons who were trying to get him out, and then stomped off again—to the bewilderment of the larger part of the entire assembly.

Although he later apologized, in the thinking of the previously neutral overseas officers, his temper tantrum crystallized in their minds that Folkenberg was not a safe person to be in charge of anything.

So it was voted to continue his full-time salary and refer the matter, of putting Folkenberg on as the key man in charge of the planned satellite communication project, to the Annual Council

Months passed, and many church workers, who knew what Folkenberg was like, feared he would be hired back into an important General Conference position.

But by the time the Annual Council met in October, the overseas Division presidents had time to carefully consider the matter,—and they were the ones who carried the vote in the matter.

Instead of hiring Folkenberg into this new General Conference position (which had earlier been promised to him by friends),—the entire project was closed down!

It was voted to not spend the millions of dollars needed to establish that operation, since 3ABN was already doing it on a lesser scale.

But Folkenberg, now without any church position and no likelihood of getting one, was continued on with full salary until the summer of 2000, when the next General Conference Session convenes.

So, with no position or likelihood of a job assignment in the church, Folkenberg continues to draw a full salary.

But that does not eliminate his financial problems. As you know, he was earlier the subject of a lawsuit by the Sacramento businessman, James

Moore. Although that suit was dropped, Folkenberg had already incurred some hefty legal bills.

(You will recall that he went over the head of Risk Management—the General Conference insurance department, and secretly got one of their insurers to cover a significant portion of his bills. The General Conference will have to pay for that very questionable deal, through increased insurance rates, which you will end up paying.)

But Folkenberg is also the subject of a separate litigation which David Dennis filed against him and the General Conference, for unfounded slander.

All this is costing Folkenberg money.

Folkenberg's suburban home, which you will recall was purchased in 1990 (when he moved to Maryland) with the help of special financial help from the General Conference, now has a large mortgage on it; and, we are told, Folkenberg has gone into partnership with his brother, Don, on a land development deal in southern Virginia. It is believed Folkenberg wants to use the money to help pay his legal expenses.

We are also told that Don has left his position at Global Mission (a General Conference subsidiary) while still remaining on full church salary!

Well, I know you cannot figure this out. I can't either.

THE DAVID DENNIS LAWSUIT

What are the latest developments in the Dennis-General Conference litigation?

This has been an unusual legal battle. As you may remember, in a special letter mailed to every delegate about two weeks before the 1995 General Conference Session, Robert Folkenberg promised that he wanted the whole matter brought out into the open, but that he would have to wait until the lawsuit was settled—which he expressed hope would be done quickly. That letter helped reelect him to a second term.

But, in the five years that have followed, Folkenberg has had a hired battery of lawyers, from three (3!) high-priced Washington, D.C. law firms at work delaying the suit. We have written several articles on those delaying tactics.

This present update will alert you to the latest developments.

On November 1, the judge met with eight (8!) attorneys representing both sides. On one side was a single attorney representing David Dennis. On the other were seven attorneys representing Folkenberg and the General Conference.

Why seven? There was a reason. As soon as the meeting began, the seven attorneys would, in tandem, speak in order to dominate the event, sidestep the reason for the meeting, overawe the judge, confuse him in regard to earlier court actions in the case,

and hinder any comments by Dennis' attorney.

Basically, this is what happened: The seven attorneys tried to revive the claim that their clients had separation of church and state "immunity." But the judge recognized that this position had earlier been rejected by the court.

The attorneys claimed they had lots of witnesses who said that Dennis was a bad person, and said these witnesses included Dennis' own children. However, the court record revealed that when they were deposed, his children had denied that charge. If the seven attorneys had so many witnesses to prove their case, why were they spending years stalling for time and trying to get the case thrown out of court, so they would not have to present them?

Then the judge came to the point of the meeting: Where, he asked, were those incriminating documents which, months earlier, he had ordered the General Conference to hand over? The seven attorneys hemmed and hawed.

Then the judge asked why the attorneys had not brought the documents by now, in view of the fact that Dennis' attorney had recently entered a motion into the court demanding them?

The name of that legal paper was *A Motion to Compel Production of Documents*. Unbelievably, the attorneys replied that they had not received a copy of that motion, which required them to immediately produce the long-ago ordered documents!

At this, Dennis' attorney stepped forward with a paper, signed by a representative of this conglomerate of high-priced law offices,—which proved they had, indeed, received a copy of the *Motion*.

David Dennis' attorney then told the judge that he must receive the court-ordered church documents, in order to properly proceed with his case, and also know how to frame his questions during the forthcoming depositions (questioning) of various church officers and Robert Folkenberg.

So the judge concluded the meeting by declaring that, since the order for the evidence had been given months earlier, and the more recent *Motion to Compel Production of the Documents* had actually been received by the foot-dragging General Conference, the judge would set December 9 as the date when he would rule on what would be done next about this problem. This is not the final trial date.

So that is where the matter stands just now.

You will recall that, during the Hawaiian lawsuit, when Pastor Marik did not take the sign down, the General Conference got the judge to order that, if he did not do so, his church would be fined \$500 per day until it was done.

Perhaps the present judge should put some teeth into his court order, that the documents be turned over to the court. (In an earlier set of tracts, we printed the legal document which listed all those documents.

As head auditor of the church for decades, David Dennis knew what to ask for.) The trial date is still future, and not yet known.

THE TRADEMARK LAWSUIT

What are the latest developments in the south Florida trademark litigation?

This case was supposed to come up for trial on October 18. But, four days before, on the 14th, the judge announced that, because he wanted to immediately concentrate on an important criminal case, he was postponing the Perez case to April 2000.

Perez' attorney asked him if the General Conference had asked that this be done, and the judge said that it was his own decision.

Then, on November 22, the board members of Perez' church group received lawsuit papers—that they also were being sued by the General Conference.

When asked why church leaders would inflict so much pain and suffering on the south Florida group, this was my response:

The General Conference knows that, if this case is handled properly, the Perez group will win the case. (See my 16-page list of the legal reasons, in our 44-page, 8½ x 11, *Legal Defense against a Trademark Lawsuit Plus the Notorious Settlement Agreement*, \$4.00 + \$1.50.) The General Conference knows this, and they are trying to frighten the little group into giving up.

Pray for the little group. This is a strategic case in the history of denominational attempts to use the trademark law as a way to destroy small groups which want to tell the world about Seventh-day Adventism. This will be the first time that an independent church group has actually taken the case to trial before a judge.

Until such a suit is won, church leaders will keep handing millions of dollars to non-Adventist lawyers to harass small groups of Advent believers.

LOMA LINDA CREATION CONFERENCE

Liberals in southern California continue to ridicule God's holy Word.

We reported in September on the efforts of La Sierra University to destroy the faith of faithful Adventist students, by requiring all students to take a core curriculum of six courses which cast doubt on the Bible and even the existence of God. (*La Sierra Rejects the Bible, Christianity, and God [WM-902]*). The situation was so bad and so many students were protesting these atheistic teachings, that the *Press-Enterprise*, in nearby Riverside, published a scathing exposé on what was taking place on the LSU campus.

Not willing to be behind in the ongoing effort to

downgrade Bible teachings, Loma Linda University decided to hold a "Divine Creation Seminar" in the LLU Church on September 24 and 25.

Senior pastor William Loveless (the individual who teaches Adventist pastors and laymen how to use "meditation" and "journaling," to increase their self-thinking visual experience) gave the keynote speech. Loveless declared, "Creation, yes,—but how?"

And that was the objective of the weekend gathering: Yes, God created everything, but how did He do it? In their subtle way, the speakers suggested that He used millions of years of evolutionary change.

In his sermon, Loveless admitted that he is an avid reader of everything Stephen J. Gould writes. Gould, a paleontologist at Harvard, is one of the most outspoken atheist evolutionists of our day.

Selected as the principle speaker was Langdon Gilkey. He is a Protestant "creation theologian" who is actually a strong defender of all aspects of evolutionary theory. He makes it sound religious by saying that God did it all.

Author of the book, *Maker of Heaven and Earth*, he was one of the Protestant traitors who testified against, and helped defeat, the Creationism law in the famous Arkansas Creationism trial of 1981. Loma Linda University felt he might be able to convince the Adventists, in attendance, who still refused to concede that evolutionary theory was totally right and Genesis 1 and 6-8 totally legendary.

On Sabbath afternoon, when the attendance was expected to be the largest (about 1,500 were there), Gilkey's attack on Bible truth was given in the LLU Church at 1:45 p.m.; this was followed at 3 p.m. by a panel discussion with a carefully chosen roster of six firm evolutionist Adventists and one Creationist (Paul Giem).

Giem was the only speaker, during the entire weekend seminar, who defended a short chronology of earth. All the others believed it has been "evolving" for millions of years, amid the horrors of suffering, sudden death, and decay.

One of the speakers, Jim Hayward (a biology teacher at Andrews), stated what he thought to be six current trends in Adventist thinking about the creation-evolution debate:

1 - Greater reliance on scientific writings and less on Scripture.

2 - A moving away, by Adventist "conservatives," from a 6,000-year chronology to 10,000 and 100,000.

3 - Increased acceptance of evolutionary change in biology.

4 - Renewed questioning about how sin and death, as explained in Genesis 1-3, would relate to evolutionary concepts—which required millions of years of terror and death.

5 - Decreasing faith in the worldwide Flood of Genesis 6-8.

6 - A deepened fascination with modern art interpretations of creationism.

We are told that one of those in attendance expressed serious reservations about whether it was possible to hold a denominational structure together when such a major doctrine was being altered by its colleges.

Something worth thinking about.

COLUMBIA UNION COLLEGE LAWSUIT

Yes, another lawsuit—and this one by the college.

As most of our readers know, Columbia Union College (CUC) is only a few miles from the headquarters of our denomination and across the street from the Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Like the General Conference, CUC has decided it is time to start suing people. —But, at great expense, it has targeted the State of Maryland!

Through the federal courts, Columbia Union College is suing the State of Maryland, in an attempt to obtain its share of funding, through the *Sellinger program*, available to private colleges and universities in that state.

Three Roman Catholic colleges receive this aid which, for CUC, would amount to more than \$800,000 a year plus heavy assistance with capital projects. The State has decided that the Catholic schools are religious to a “permissible degree,” but CUC is “too religious.”

The court battle has gone on for quite some time, and so far there appears no end in sight. When the State attorney general ruled against CUC, the college sued and the District Court ruled against it. The case was then appealed to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, which ruled that Maryland had so far failed to prove that CUC should be disqualified and ordered the case sent back to the District Court for further review.

Many Adventist believers are worried by this suit. As late as the 1960s, our denomination refused all government aid, recognizing the requirements and controls which would follow it.

But now, if we do not receive enough government aid, we sue in order to get more!

WWC AND AUC

How are Walla Walla College and Atlantic Union College doing now?

As earlier detailed in several reports on each one, both educational institutions faced a widely different

crisis; yet, for both, the cause was the same.

That cause was an intentional lowering of standards, erroneous teachings by the administration and faculty, and so much worldliness among the students that the constituencies of the several supporting conferences began to take note.

In the case of Walla Walla (WWC), there were so many protests from parents and other church members, that Jerry Patzer, the president of the North Pacific Union Conference (NPUC), tried to clean up the school. (We need more people like him!) But, ultimately, the college won—and for a simple reason:

Whenever church leaders try to bring one of our colleges or universities back toward historic doctrines and standards, the college can get the regional accrediting association to threaten withdrawal of the school’s accreditation. If that occurred, nearly all the students would leave. So WWC is just as worldly as before, but the faculty is being a little more careful for a time about publicizing the atheistic sentiments and joint faculty-student homosexual meetings.

In the northeast, parents and students tired of the worldliness at Atlantic Union College (AUC), and attendance kept dropping until the school could not pay its bills. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, we heard reports about the partially disguised hostility to our historic beliefs. Yet the situation is not much different at our other colleges and universities in North America.

(Friends, who have attended them, tell us the situation is much the same at our Caribbean, Central American, South American, and European institutions of “higher learning.” The real name for educational “higher learning” is “the deep things of Satan”: scoffing at God, religion, and the Bible; acceptance of evolutionary theory; addiction to every form of evil music, liquor, drugs, and sex.)

AUC was on the verge of closing its doors over two years ago, but the union conference pledged millions in long-term loans. However, the situation keeps worsening and enrollment remains low. The astounding part is that AUC is still operating.

I can tell you that, if Atlantic Union College would totally return to historic Adventism—and exalt pure standards,—it would be flooded with applicants from all over the continent and overseas as well, as news of what happens spreads.

It is only in repentance and heartfelt reformation that our schools and our denomination can be saved—and do the work God intended them to do.

— Vance Ferrell