

The 2000 Toronto Session

PART ONE OF FOUR

This is a very brief overview of a few of the highpoints of our 57th General Conference Session, held on June 29-July 8 at the SkyDome and Metro Toronto Center, in Toronto, Canada.

Although balloons were dropped from the ceiling, sculptures, postage stamps, and paintings were unveiled; clowns, puppets, and pantomines were outside “acquainting non-Adventists with our message,” and a host of glorious statistics were trumpeted,—a number of very serious actions were, at the request of leadership, dutifully taken by the delegates to the Toronto Session.

Here are the most significant of them:

- Two of every ten Annual Councils can henceforth change certain parts of the *Church Manual*, without later Session approval.
- Church members can more easily be eliminated, since the term, “disfellowship,” has been changed to “remove from membership.”
- Worldlings can more easily be brought into the church, since baptism is, in many cases, no longer necessary.
- Divorce and remarriage standards have been seriously diluted.

SOME STATISTICS—Here are some of the statistics from the Toronto Session:

“The SkyDome was filled to capacity [on the final Sabbath] and overflow halls needed to seat those wishing to view the concluding events. One estimate puts at around 80,000 the number of Adventists and their families in Toronto for the high

point of the ten-day Session.”—*Session 2000 News*, July 8, 2000.

“Afterward [on Sabbath afternoon], in the streets and parks outside the SkyDome, Session visitors from more than 150 countries mingled and enjoyed outdoor music performances from around the world.”—*Ibid.*

“Every 28.91 seconds, someone becomes a Seventh-day Adventist. Every 4.73 hours, a new Adventist church is organized . . . With 1,090,848 accessions in 1999 alone (a rate of 10.73 percent), church membership neared—and has since crossed—11 million members . . . The ratio is now one Adventist in 552 [one Adventist for every 552 people in the world]. Adventists can now be found in 205 of the 229 countries and areas of the world recognized by the United Nations, with 91.6 percent of membership living outside of North America . . . For every 66 church members, one denominational worker is employed—a total of 166,000 . . . The fastest growing division, from 1994 to 1999, was the Southern Asia Division, with a 63.19 percent increase . . . China has 250,000 baptized members and 2,600 Sabbathkeeping congregations . . . For every 100 that joined during the quinquennium [past five years], 24 left.”—*Session 2000 News*, June 30, 2000.

“The delegations of this Session represent more than 11 million members and 204 countries. The working force on the payroll of the church numbers 165,882.”—*GC Bulletin #2*, p. 22.

SESSION COSTS—It is estimated that the church paid \$20 million to hold the Toronto Session, and pay the expenses of the delegates. The estimated 80,000 visitors paid at least \$30 million

“STREET MINISTRY”

THE LATEST WAY TO TRAIN OUR YOUTH TO BE WORLTLINGS

Someone sent us a copy of a sheet handed to Adventist youth who came to Toronto. Parents did not know that, when their young people went to the youth auditorium at Toronto, they would be emotionally captured into what you will read below.

This is what was printed on a sheet they were handed at their youth meetings, to entice them into worldliness out on the streets of Toronto,—in the hope that, when they returned home, they would go out on their own streets; into the cafés; and bars, where the alcoholics, drug pushers, and gangs are—and act like clowns or dance before them!

TORONTO NEWS

The city of Toronto has been flooded with SDA leaders from all around the world. And then to top it off, SDA youth have taken over the streets of Toronto with a new style of evangelism. Over 300 SDA youth are here for training and seminars in street ministry.

With over 25 ministries on the streets of Toronto, this will definitely “impact Toronto.”

STREET MINISTRIES

Christian Café. Need a place to hang out with other young people who want to share Christ in a café?

Christian Magicians and Balloons. God created rabbits, but can you pull one out of a hat? Use your slight of hand skills to share the gospel in this unique ministry.

Clown and Balloon Ministry. Learn all the clown techniques for sharing the gospel with a smile, a red nose, and big shoes.

Compassion Ministry. Feeding the homeless, visiting the children’s hospital, and parking meter mayhem is all part of the compassionate ministry.

Creative Movement Ministry. Those who are coordinated and inclined to tap their toes to music will enjoy this ministry.

Drama Ministry. Drama is powerful on the streets. Those who have dramatic skills and enjoy performing need to check out this ministry.

Mime Ministry. Preaching the gospel with painted faces, white gloves, and lots of gestures is an excellent way to minister.

Nighttime Revival Meetings. Each evening we will have revival meetings. Bring the new friends you’ve met through your ministry on the street. Some of the features will be music, drama, and youth speakers.

Puppet Ministry. Singing songs and telling people about Jesus, using puppets is what this ministry is all about.

Recreation Ministry. Love sports, American football, European football, Aussie rules football? How about baseball? Sports may be your ministry!

Storm Co. Specifically designed for youth directors. Learn how to put it all together and design outreach ministries for your conference, union, or division. Participate in an actual *Storm Co* event in Toronto.

Street Artists. Ever wanted to paint a really big mural? How about the side of a building? Hey, check this one out.

Video Ministry. Ever wanted to make a film on the street? Then point the camera to this ministry.

—Source of this information sheet:

<http://www.andrews.edu/CYE/IT2000/events.html>

and

adventistnews@lists.gc.adventist.org

“We need to study methods whereby we may preach the gospel . . . Let no one think that God will approve of a method which will require a man to act the part of a clown, or like a man who has lost his senses.”—*Signs, March 19, 1894.*

“I am instructed that we shall meet with all kinds of experiences that men will try to bring strange performances into the work of God . . . The message was given that all theatrical performances in connection with the preaching of present truth were to be discouraged and forbidden.”—*Evangelism, 137.*

“Satan will work with all his deceiving power . . . Thus it has been in the past, and thus it will continue to be . . . Deception will come to human minds, paralyzing spiritual discernment, and the deceiver will succeed in mingling the common fire with the sacred, until sacred things are brought down to a level with common, earthly imaginations, and conducted after the manner of worldly maxims, meeting the world’s standard.”—*Review, May 30, 1899.*

“Many urge that by uniting with worldlings and conforming to their customs they might exert a stronger influence over the ungodly. But all who pursue this course thereby separate from the Source of their strength. Becoming the friends of the world, they are the enemies of God.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets, 607.*

“The work in the large cities is to be done after Christ’s order, not after the order of a theatrical performance. It is not a theatrical performance that glorifies God.”—*9 Testimonies, 142.*

“Not one jot or tittle of anything theatrical is to be brought into our work, God’s cause is to have a sacred, heavenly mold . . . Let nothing of a theatrical nature be permitted, for this would spoil the sacredness of the work.”—*Evangelism, 137.*

“The things you have described as taking place in Indiana, the Lord has shown me would take place just before the close of probation. Every uncouth thing will be demonstrated. There will be shouting, with drums, music, and dancing. The senses of rational beings will become so confused that they cannot be trusted to make right decisions. And this is called the moving of the Holy Spirit . . . A bedlam of noise shocks the senses and perverts that which if conducted aright might be a blessing. The powers of satanic agencies blend with the din and noise, to have a carnival, and this is termed the Holy Spirit’s working . . .

“No encouragement should be given to this kind of worship. The same kind of influence came in after the passing of the time in 1844. The same kind of representations were made. Men became excited, and were worked by a power thought to be the power of God . . .

“At these demonstrations demons in the form of men are present, working with all the ingenuity that Satan can employ to make the truth disgusting to sensible people; that the enemy was trying to arrange matters so that the camp meetings, which have been the means of bringing the truth of the third angel’s message before multitudes, should lose their force and influence.

“The third angel’s message is to be given in straight lines. It is to be kept free from every thread of the cheap, miserable inventions of men’s theories, prepared by the father of lies, and disguised as was the brilliant serpent used by Satan as a medium of deceiving our first parents. Thus Satan tries to put his stamp upon the work God would have stand forth in purity . . .

“Those things which have been in the past will be in the future. Satan will make music a snare by the way in which it is conducted.”—*2 Selected Messages, 36-38.*

while there.

POSTAGE STAMP—In preparation for the largest number of people ever to crowd into Toronto, the nation of Canada printed a commemorative stamp, which was unveiled on the first evening (Thursday, June 29) and put on sale the next day in the exhibit hall.

On the stamp was the sun breaking through the clouds over the Rocky Mountains with a gold-embossed Adventist Church logo in the background. The stamps sold in large quantities.

“The stamp is the first in North America to honor the work of the Adventist Church.”—*Session 2000 News*, June 29, 2000.

SCULPTURE—Thinking that sculpture would heighten the glory of the place, the General Conference commissioned a sculptor to produce ten full-size figures of people, supposedly watching the return of Christ. It must have cost a lot, for Victor Issa, 45, of Loveland, Colorado, spent the last two years making the set of ten full-size figures.

“After the Session, the sculpture will be permanently installed in the lobby of the Seventh-day Adventist Church world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland.”—*Session 2000 News*, July 4, 2000.

NEW CHURCH SYMBOL—A new denominational logo was also unveiled at the Session. An open Bible has a vertical cross sticking out of it, from which three feathers arise. (The logo on each issue of the Toronto GC Bulletins is somewhat different: six feathers rising above an open Bible in shape suggesting a flame.)

NEW PAINTING—Darrel Tank, an Adventist artist, was asked to produce a new painting, expressly symbolizing Christ blessing those in attendance at the Toronto Session. The painting, about 36 inches wide by 12 inches high, portrays the Toronto skyline, with Christ just above it with His hands outstretched. The most intriguing part of the painting is the fact that both hands are portrayed with the fingers in the papal blessing position. This is the thumb and first two fingers extended, and the fourth and fifth fingers folded in.

The pope has used this “blessing hand” for centuries, in a hypnotic weaving back and forth motion, to impart the spirit to his followers.

The slightly curved thumb and two finger pattern reaches down from ancient paganism, from whence Catholicism obtained it. In the mystery religions, three slightly curved lines stood for the 666.

“Many delegates have purchased autographed posters of Tank’s painting as mementos of the Session.”—*Session 2000 News*, July 4, 2000.

OUTSIDE THE CONVENTION CENTER—Various groups were outside the convention center, handing out attack literature against the Holy Spirit, about Houteff’s Shepherd’s Rod prophecies about the destruction of Adventists, or similar things.

THE SKYDOME AND CONVENTION CENTER—The convention center (Metro Toronto Center) is almost entirely underground, and is about a city block from the SkyDome. The SkyDome, which normally houses baseball and football games, was filled with chairs, with a large podium area in the middle, plus five levels of seats encircling the center. New records were set for attendance. Daily attendance at the SkyDome alone has been estimated at between 60-62,000. Most of the SkyDome was filled each day, with the exception of the highest (fifth) level. But few wanted to be up there, since there were too many echoes there to hear anything.

THE CAFETERIA—Vege-meat, carrots, and green beans were the main dish for both lunch and supper. Each meal was \$7.50. Yet, by the end of the Session, the Convention Center Cafeteria had lost over \$100,000. Somehow, they had underrated their expenses.

Outside the convention buildings were food stands with soft drinks and “vege-dogs” for \$2.00, plus beef hot dogs for \$1.50. Adventists were purchasing from them all.

THE EXCHANGE RATE—The rate of exchange was \$1.00 U.S. to \$1.40 Canadian. So anyone with U.S. money in their pocket paid about a third more for everything. In addition, everything purchased, from food to housing, required an immense 15% sales tax! Fortunately, everyone was told they could get a refund on the 15% tax when they left the country. More on that later.

THE MUSIC—The music generally bordered on the wild. If you were there, you probably wished you had stayed at home. But occasionally something nice was sung or played. On the first Friday evening (June 30), 75-year-old Del Delker sang for the audience. The faithful wished that her type of singing was still in vogue in our church.

THE EXHIBITION BOOTHS—Each exhibition booth cost a minimum of \$150 (depending on how wide it was), and there were lots of them. At one sat Samuele Bacchiocchi, from Andrews University. Not far distant was a group of wild singers with high-power amplifiers. None other than one of the Adventist Book Centers was paying them to sit there and torment the people.

Since people could not even hear him when he spoke, Bacchiocchi got tired of the racket—and went

over to their microphone, intending to holler into it for them to get out! But the ABC was quick-acting, and cut the electricity to the mike.

Utterly disgusted, Bacchiocchi somehow got hold of another mike and shouted at them to get out and take their junk with them. He said he paid several hundred dollars for the booth he had, and he had a right to talk to people at it.

Some passers-by applauded him while others said what he was doing was not in good taste.

PRESS COVERAGE—Although the church press was there in full force, constantly churning out more press reports and news releases on events, yet, for the most part, the public press tended to ignore the convention entirely. Of course, if something bad had happened, that would have been reported; but, for some reason, nothing there seemed newsworthy enough.

THE GC BULLETINS—Oddly enough, the ten special Session GC Bulletins, which the *Review* has issued for decades, previously arrived in one's mailbox within half a week at the most after the date of publication. But this year, the GC Bulletins have been extremely slow in being mailed out. *Bulletin #10* (dated Friday, July 8) has not yet arrived.

VISITING DIGNITARIES—As usual, there was a number of visiting dignitaries from the Catholic and Protestant Churches. Each one was warmly introduced as "Father," "Reverend," etc.

But Mel Lastman, Mayor of Toronto, was introduced as "His Worship" (although that term was not included in the GC Bulletins or its net equivalent, *the Session 2000 News*). He came on the stage during the closing ceremony, just before President Paulsen's final speech. Lastman commended the church for its outstanding behavior throughout the week, and concluded his speech with the point that perhaps the Jesus we were waiting for had already returned and was in our hearts.

Those who attended the Toronto Session tell of having seen several prominent Catholics, Protestant, and Orthodox church leaders who were introduced to the audience by Bert Beverly Beach, generally followed by a speech by each one to the delegates.

On June 29, Ontario's Lieutenant Governor Hillary Weston addressed the delegation.

As already mentioned, that same evening, Mel Lastman, the mayor of Toronto spoke to the delegation. He also spoke to them again on the last night of the Session (July 8).

On July 3, Albina Guarmieri, member of the Ca-

nadian Parliament, spoke to the delegates, on behalf of Jean Chretien, the Prime Minister of Canada.

On July 4, Jean-Arnold de Clermont, president of the French Federation of Protestant Churches, spoke to the delegates.

"Clermont is a minister of the Reformed Church—one of fifteen Protestant denominations and 500 Christian organizations that make up the French Protestant Church Federation."—*Session 2000 News, July 4, 2000.*

Not mentioned in the GC Bulletins, but noted in the *Session 2000 News*, was one Canadian senator and three high-placed churchmen:

"Senator Anne Cools of the Canadian Senate addressed the Adventist World Session after participating in a panel on religious freedom and persecution . . . 'It was a real pleasure to participate in your discussion panel . . . ' said Senator Cools."—*Session 2000 News, July 5, 2000.*

That same day three religious leaders also spoke to the delegates.

"Three international religious leaders addressed the General Conference . . . The President of the American Bible Society, the Anglican Bishop of Toronto, and a representative of the World Council of Churches spoke to delegates in the SkyDome on Wednesday, July 5."—*Ibid.*

Each year, the General Conference gives a large donation to the American Bible Society.

"The president of the American Bible Society, Dr. Eugene Habecker, thanked the Adventist Church for its support of the Society."—*Ibid.*

"General Conference representatives presented a check for \$85,000 to Habecker to aid the work of the Bible Society."—*Ibid.*

"The World Council of Churches also wished the Seventh-day Adventist Church success in its Conference. 'It is hoped that this will be an occasion of thanksgiving for the redemptive gifts of mercy and love that we've received through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,' said Finley. 'May it also be an occasion to affirm what binds us as Christian brothers and sisters.' "—*Ibid.*

Another featured speaker was a bishop, introduced as "Right R__."

"The Right R__ Terence Finley, Anglican Bishop of Toronto, brought greetings to the Session from his diocese and on behalf of the worldwide Anglican community."—*Ibid.*

Not mentioned in the *Session 2000 News*, but briefly noted in the GC Bulletins, were three others introduced by B. B. Beach on July 6.

The first was a prominent Catholic bishop, Mon-

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signor John A. Radano, “an old friend with whom we’ve been in contact for many years, who attended the session in Utrecht five years ago, representing the Roman Catholic Church” (*GC Bulletin #8, p. 25*).

The second was an important Protestant staff member of the World Council of Churches, Dr. Donna Geernaert “who represents the Faith and Order Plenary Commission. She is one of the top theologians in the world,” Beach said (*ibid.*).

The third was a Lutheran Church woman, “representing the Lutheran World Federation and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Telmor Sartison” (*ibid.*).

On Saturday night, July 8, at the last meeting of the Session, Mayor Lastman of Toronto returned to thank the Adventists for coming, and asked that they would return soon. The Adventist Session had brought more spending people to town for a week than anything else in Toronto’s history.

“The Adventists in Toronto set a great example to our city and our country. Please come back soon.”—*Session 2000 News, July 8, 2000*.

Let us now turn our attention to the meetings in the SkyDome.

OVERVIEW OF THE BUSINESS MEETINGS—

In an earlier analysis of General Conference Sessions (*Captive Sessions [WM-114-116]*), we noted that not many hours of the ten days are devoted to actual Session business. Yet that is the reason the church paid \$20 million to hold the Toronto Session!

As we view the daily business meetings at Toronto, we find that, following the morning sermon, a significant portion at the beginning of the morning and afternoon business meetings are occupied with nomination reports which include extolling the one just elected. This is frequently followed by a lengthy preplanned speech by someone about some topic (“The Future of Adventism” by George Knight, “The 20/40 Window” by T. G. Ng, the American Bible Society, etc.). For example, the Monday afternoon meeting (*GC Bulletin #7, pp. 20-23, 26-31*) was just about nominations to be accepted by the delegates (none are ever rejected), followed by comments by various

leaders on the platform about the importance of soul-winning in tropical areas of the world.

All this reduces the actual amount of time for the delegates to transact actual business. But most of the business consists of a mind-boggling whirl of tiny item changes in the *Church Manual*,—including a few big ones.

One can understand why the delegates were only too glad, later in the Session, to agree to henceforth let the General Conference and Annual Council do a lot of the future revising of the *Church Manual*. But that decision, of course, tips the balance. By so doing, Session delegates lost more of their authority—and over something dear to all of them: control of their home churches.

THE DISCUSSION ABOUT BOOKS AND THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY—During the business meeting on Sunday morning, July 2, before the *Church Manual* changes began being discussed, discussion was made of the need to produce some kind of recommendation of the Spirit of Prophecy to our people. This brought some discussion (*GC Bulletin #4, pp. 26-29*), during which several points were brought out:

First, more than once it was noted that there is an urgent need to provide information on the internet which will counterbalance the attacks against Ellen White on certain web sites.

Regarding this matter, as you may know, we have Spirit of Prophecy defense material on our *sdadefend.com* web site. But discussion was made that there existed a strong need for a web site with a name directly bearing on this point.

Upon learning this, we here at Mission Evangelism, immediately set to work producing such a web site. It will be our fourth one, and will contain a variety of defense and recommendatory material about Ellen White and the Spirit of Prophecy. More about this in a later mailing.

Second, a delegate from African Indian Ocean Division asked that the book, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, be reprinted. This request was not printed in *Bulletin #4*. This book, written by A. L. White (not by F. D. Nichol, as printed as the book’s author; I know, because A. L. White personally told me in the late 1950s), has been out of print for years. The closest equivalent is the material we have pre-

pared in various tracts and books. We will be placing that material on our new internet site.

Third, a Nigerian delegate said this:

“Joshua Oyinloye: I am here to plead with our leaders to make these books cheaper. In Nigeria, as a result of the Global Mission program thousands of people are brought into the church daily. And they don’t know our stand regarding the Spirit of Prophecy. Cheaper books would help us in implementing this resolution.”—*GC Bulletin #4, p. 28.*

As you may know, we, here at Mission Evangelism, have been trying to provide low-cost books to our people overseas for several years. We are just now in the midst of a large mailing of five different title books to each of nearly 200 people overseas. More on this in our next mailing.

“OFFICIAL STATEMENT”: NO LONGER HAND OUT BOOKS—On July 4, an official statement was released, under the headline, “Official Statement about Religious Liberty, Evangelism, and Proselytism Released,” which included this:

“Christians shouldn’t use material enticements to convert new members, said Adventist Church leaders in a statement today. ‘Conversion is an experience of the Spirit, and should therefore in no way be connected to offering and receiving material inducements,’ the statement said. People who choose to join the Adventist Church must make a ‘free, willing, and happy’ decision, said Bert Beach, director of inter-church relations, in a morning press conference.”—*Session 2000 News, July 4, 2000.*

Beach issued that statement, to placate his friends at the World Council of Churches. We keep limiting ourselves, in order to please the Catholics and Protestants.

“Well, now,” someone will say, “isn’t that a good idea; we should not bribe people with money to join the church!”

My friend, we never give people money to join the church. “What, then, do we give them?”

The answer is books. We offer them books, books, books, if they will keep coming to our evangelistic meetings. This includes Bibles, *Desire of Ages*, *Bible Readings*, *Great Controversys*, and other worthwhile missionary books.

But now, Beach wants all this stopped! Of course, if the Adventists stop spreading their books around, this will please the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, all the Catholic bishops, and all the other friends Beach has carefully nurtured.

“In the past we have not always lived up to the [ideas reflected in the statement],’ admitted Beach. He stressed that the Church’s evangelistic efforts should not focus on material rewards—a problem that has often plagued religious denominations.”—

Ibid. [in this one quotation, brackets theirs].

At the end of this two-page “official statement,” a return was made to this declaration that we must no longer give doctrinal—and any—books to people in an effort to interest them in our beliefs:

“Conversion is an experience of the Spirit, and should therefore in no way be connected to offering and receiving material inducements. While the right to engage in humanitarian activities must be fully recognized, such action must never be linked to evangelism in a way that exploits vulnerable people by offering financial and material incentives to entice them to change religion.”—*Ibid.*

Do you realize that this is a prohibition against handing out missionary books *in any kind of missionary outreach*? For shame, for shame. What are we coming to, when, to appease the people at Geneva (the World Council of Churches), we are willing to stop distributing missionary literature!

The General Conference gives a large donation to the American Bible Society every year. Instead of giving that \$85,000 to the American Bible Society to help pay their office help, would it not be better if the General Conference bought \$85,000 worth of Bibles from the American Bible Society and distributed them to our churches throughout the world field, to be offered to those attending our evangelistic efforts for the entire series?

Regarding this matter of “material enticements,” what about the crazy clown acts which we are teaching our young people to use, to entice worldlings to join with us?

OFFICIAL STATEMENT CALLS ON US TO AVOID OFFENDING TERMS—But there is more. You will recall that crucial decision agreement made a year or so ago at Geneva, by which Adventist Church leaders agreed to no longer publicly make an issue of the Bible Sabbath.

Bert Beverly Beach, our representative to World Council of Churches meetings since 1967, declares that our denomination must not use terms “offending other religious communities.”

“The statement also addresses inter-church relationships and requires Adventists to respect other religious groups. ‘Individuals need to be truthful and transparent when dealing with other religious groups,’ the statement says. *‘Terminology should be used which avoids offending other religious communities.’*”—*Session 2000 News, July 4, 2000* [italics ours].

What is being referred to here? What kind of words would we use that might “offend” the WCC and the Catholics? Words like “Bible Sabbath,” “change of the Sabbath,” “conditional immortality,” “no eternal hellfire,” “obedience to the Ten Commandments,” and “the change by Rome of the Sab-

bath to Sunday.” What other words would bother the ecumenical crowd? words quoted from Daniel 7 and Revelation 12 through 17.

Are we to stop the sharing of our faith, in order to please men who trample on God’s holy law, and call it something evil that needs to be destroyed?

Later, near the end of the article, there is a return to this point, and once again Beach’s point is quoted:

“Evangelistic and missionary activity needs to respect the dignity of all human beings. Individuals need to be truthful and transparent when dealing with other religious groups. *Terminology should be used which avoids offending other religious communities.*’ Statements which are false or ridicule other religions should never be made.”—*Ibid.* [italics ours].

OFFICIAL STATEMENT ON PROSELYTISM—

As if that is not enough, Beach carried the matter a step further in “his official statement.” He made a sideways comment, that our people are not to “proselytize.”

“In the context of the dissemination of religion, the issue of ‘proselytism’ has arisen because the term ‘proselytism’ is defined in a number of ways and increasingly is being given a pejorative [very negative] connotation, associated with unethical means of persuasion, including force. Seventh-day Adventists unequivocally condemn the use of such methods.”—*Session 2000 News, July 4, 2000.*

In his statement, Beach tried to placate his friends at Geneva and Rome with a halfway assent to their concerns.

The word, “proselytize,” occurs when a Christian group gains adherents from another Christian group. The Protestants have decided that they should not make converts of one another’s church members; but, instead, they should only bring non-Christians into their churches.

Well, they have a point here. Since they all essentially believe the same thing, the Protestants might as well not try to gain converts from one another. But Seventh-day Adventists have distinct Bible teachings, not held by the other churches. We have a message that all the world needs, including other Protestants!

By the way, before concluding this section, why is Beach’s statement headlined as an “Official Statement”? Did the delegates approve it? We are not told that they did, and we find no evidence in the Toronto papers that they did. How then can a statement by Bert Beverly Beach be elevated to the status of an “Official Statement”? It can be done, by force of precedent. Beach has been arranging special deals with the National Council of Churches, World Council of Churches, Rome, and various Protestant leaders for

decades. He is something of a legend at General Conference headquarters—this man who can fluently speak over half a dozen European languages and is on first-name friendship with high-placed churchmen of over two dozen denominations.

Bert Beach, the man who dared to spend church money on a gold medal which he gave Pope Paul VI in 1977, has earned the respect and friendship of other church leaders by the compromising positions he has promised those men that he would arrange back at world headquarters. And, back at world headquarters, no one dares oppose him.

It is remarkable how things fit together when you stop to consider the overall situation. The anti-proselytizing edict was issued on Tuesday, July 4. On Monday afternoon, July 3, the delegates were told that the denomination was going to focus its evangelistic thrust on the “20/40 window,” by which is meant the Muslim/Hindu/Buddhist peoples stretching from North Africa to Indonesia. Yet, doing so, will fully satisfy the concerns of our Ecumenical friends that we not evangelize Protestant or Catholic Christians! Why must our leaders feel that they must reduce worldwide evangelization, in order to satisfy separated brethren who they are now reunited with, at Geneva and Rome?

CHURCH MANUAL DISCUSSION BEGINS—On Sunday morning, July 2, the *Church Manual* revision agenda items began.

“Ninety-one of the Session’s agenda items deal with the *Church Manual*.”—*GC Bulletin #1, p. 9.*

Have you noticed that, at Sessions, some big thing is frequently pushed? In 1980, it was the Statement of Beliefs (a complete rewriting, courtesy of Andrews University). In 1995, it was church governance (about 80 changes). This year it is over 90 changes in the *Church Manual*. Although many dealt with minor points, the sheer number tended to mask the fact that some were very important.

CHURCH MANUAL CAN HENCEFORTH BE CHANGED BY ANNUAL COUNCIL—The most important and sweeping change was that editing and changes in much of the *Church Manual* can henceforth be done by committees outside General Conference Sessions! And that is a big change!

“Change in *Church Manual* Format: Four chapters of the *Church Manual* will continue to require GC Session approval [four chapters!]. Changes to the notes (which contain explanatory and illustrative material) may be approved by the GC Executive Committee. In addition, it is recommended that the terms of reference for the *Church Manual* Committee permit the committee to perform routine editorial tasks rather than to have such matters also occupy the attention of delegates to a GC Session.”—*GC Bulletin #1, p. 9.*

Did you sense the smooth way that was worded? A lot of “explanatory and illustrative material” and “routine editorial tasks” done by others, so “the attention of delegates to a GC Session” will not be given to such matters.

You might wonder what is left for future Sessions to do? That is a good question. They can still nominate a number of highest-level officers (although not as many as earlier, due to changes in 1995).

Here is more on this very significant proposed *Church Manual* change:

“203-00Ga *Church Manual*: Proposed Format Change.” It sounds innocent enough, but this was the time bomb at the Session. Why? Because this change in the *Church Manual* will permit the North American Division (South Pacific and any other liberal divisions) to make changes in the *Church Manual* at Annual Councils!

Delegates came to the Toronto Session, wondering whether the Women’s Ordination issue was going to be raised again. But they were told by one of the speakers at the podium that it definitely was not on the agenda.

Yet that was not actually true. *Women’s ordination was on the agenda, but hidden in “203-00Ga.”*

203-00Ga called for this change to be made:

“1. To continue to produce one *Church Manual* book.

“2. To divide the content of some chapters into two types of material: (a) the main content and (b) notes containing explanatory material which will appear at the end of the chapter.

“3. To continue the practice of making changes in the main content of the *Church Manual* only at a General Conference Session. Changes to notes at the end of chapters in the *Church Manual* may be assembled for approval by the General Conference Executive Committee at the final Annual Council meeting of the quinquennium, when the final recommendations for amendments to the main content of the *Church Manual* are approved. However, the General Conference Executive Committee may address changes to the note at any Annual Council.”—*Church Manual revision, 203-00Ga.*

Previously, the *Church Manual* could only be changed by Session enactment. Henceforth, portions of it can be changed by an Annual Council. We specifically learned this spring that the proposed addition of notes was intended to enable the North American Division to add liberal content to its edition of the *Church Manual*, content which would never be approved by Session delegates.

—But, reading the actual amendment, quoted above, the changes are not limited to North America. There is nothing in the wording to indicate it will only affect a single division.

The following official summary statement of the above amendment was released by church leaders near the end of the Session:

“In another action, the delegation voted to change the format of the *Church Manual*. The content of some chapters will now be divided into two types of material: (a) the main content and (b) notes containing explanatory material which will appear at the end of the chapter.

“Changes in the main content will continue to be made only at a General Conference Session. Changes to notes, however, may be assembled for approval by the General Conference Executive Committee at the final Annual Council meeting of the quinquennium (five-year block).”—*Session 2000 News, July 7, 2000.*

What was voted in is exactly what we predicted this spring in *Checkpoints*. The *Church Manual* will henceforth be split in two. The main sections can only be changed by the Session, but the notes sections can be changed at the first Annual Council, immediately following the Session. (In this way, because changes will be voted in over four and a half years before the next Session, subsequent Session delegates are less likely to be aroused to take action against the changes.)

The wording is carefully made: The General Conference Executive Committee (which is the Annual Council members) may discuss changes to the notes section at any Annual Council, but the changes may only be approved at the “final Annual Council meeting of the quinquennium,” which would be the Annual Council immediately after each five-year Session. We will quote it again:

“Changes to notes at the end of chapters in the *Church Manual* may be assembled for approval by the General Conference Executive Committee at the final Annual Council meeting of the quinquennium, when the final recommendations for amendments to the main content of the *Church Manual* are approved. However, the General Conference Executive Committee may address changes to the note at any Annual Council.”—*Church Manual revision, 203-00Ga.*

THE “0” AND “5” ANNUAL COUNCILS—According to the above amendment, each annual (October) council held in years ending in “0” or “5” will have the authority to make changes in the *Church*

The 2000 Toronto Session

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Manual. Plans for this were laid years ago.

The 1995 Utrecht delegates approved an agenda item which, henceforth, gave the liberal North American Division much greater voting power a majority of the time. Here is how it works:

1 - Wherever the Annual Council is held, the host Division is entitled to send all its conference and mission presidents as voting members to the Council.

2 - Three times out of every five years, Annual Councils are automatically held in the United States. The other two are held, on a rotating basis, overseas.

Here is how the pattern works. Using it, you can always know which Annual Councils will be held in Silver Spring and which will be overseas:

Each Annual Council will be held in Silver Spring, Maryland, in the fall (generally October) of every year that ends in 0, 2, 4, 5, 7, and 9.

Annual Council will be held on a rotating basis in an overseas country in the other years (1, 3, 6, and 8).

For example, the 2001 Annual Council was supposed to have been held in Jakarta, Indonesia. (But, a month ago, it was disclosed that it would be held in the United States “for security reasons.”)

If time were to last, it would take nearly 30 years for the Annual Council to be held once in each of all twelve world divisions. In that same period of time, it would be held 17 or 18 times in the U.S., which, of course, will keep it well-stacked with NAD liberal delegates.

Although Annual Councils only can enact changes in the *Church Manual* in years ending in “0” and “5,” yet those Annual Councils are always held in the United States and therefore packed with North American committee members.

One such change will be that they will now be able to include the full ordination of women ministers. Another such change concerns disfellowshipping members. More on that below.

NO MORE “DISFELLOWSHIPS”—The news headline on July 2 was: “No Adventist Will Ever Be ‘Disfellowshipped.’”

Early in the Toronto Session (Sunday afternoon),

leadership asked that the term, “disfellowshipping” be changed to “removed from church membership” (*GC Bulletin #5*, p. 27).

“In today’s business sessions, delegates to the 57th General Conference Session voted to change the term ‘disfellowshipped’ to ‘removed from membership.’ The *Church Manual* committee intended to make the term ‘less loaded with negative implications,’ said Lowell Cooper, General Conference vice president. The subheading was changed from ‘Queries Concerning Receiving and Dropping Members’ to ‘Queries Concerning Receiving and Removing Members.’”—*Session 2000 News*, July 2, 2000.

On Monday morning, July 3, the same revised wording was used in the section, “A Church Officer Removed from Church Membership.” Even though later “readmitted to church membership, this action does not reinstate the individual to the former office” (*GC Bulletin #7*, p. 20).

Here is the background on this:

The September 15, 1993 issue of *Churchbeat*, the weekly newsletter of the Collegedale SDA Church (where Southern University of SDA is located) included an inconspicuous article by Gordon Bietz, Georgia-Cumberland Conference president; here he told of developments at Folkenberg’s governance commission meetings. One sentence let the cat out of the bag:

“That [forthcoming March 1994 Cohutta Springs] discussion will include a proposal that would allow a conference committee or constituency meeting to disfellowship a local church member that the local church refuses to deal with.”—*Churchbeat*, September 15, 1993.

A copy of that issue of *Churchbeat* was sent to us, and we published it in a tract that, in October 1993, went across America and overseas (*Letter to Our Leaders—We Plead with You: Please Do Not Disfellowship Faithful Adventists* [WM-492].)

The reaction was terrific. Although about 80 changes were made in the *Church Manual* and *General Conference Working Policies* at Utrecht, the plan to let higher-level entities disfellowship church members was dropped. (*Disfellowship Item Removed from 1995 Session Agenda* [WM-592, mailed out in February 1995].)

But now, with this radical 2000 Session change, permitting the Annual Council to change the *Church*

Manual, church leadership will be able to go over the heads of local churches—and disfellowship anyone they want.

In order to soften what is coming, the 2000 Session was asked to change the word, “disfellowship,” to “remove from membership.”

BAPTISM NOT NECESSARY—The change in the *Church Manual*, regarding receiving members into the church, makes it clear that a person can more easily be accepted on profession of faith instead of being baptized, if he is

“A committed Christian coming from another Christian communion who has already been baptized by immersion as practiced by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.”—*GC Bulletin #5*, p. 27.

I find nothing in a previous edition of the *Church Manual*, which I have, that permits this. Baptism should represent an acceptance of new teachings and standards, as well as an acceptance of Christ.

A THREE-PRONGED PLAN—In addition to other developments in our church, do you see in the above two Session items, along with the next one, the workings of a three-part campaign?

(1) Leadership wants to hold as many worldlings in the church as possible. This is done through appeasing the liberal demand for women ministers, softening the marriage and divorce requirements for continued membership, and providing wild rock music to our young people at camp meetings and other gatherings.

(2) Leadership wants to be able to bring in as many worldlings off the street as possible. Plans to do this include Celebration churches which emphasize sensation, excitement, band music, and little about doctrine. “Church planting” is the latest form of this. Our young people are being trained to go out on the streets as clowns and mimes to help pull them in.

(3) Leadership wants to be able to more quickly and efficiently get rid of those who object to the radical new-modeling of our denomination. Changing “disfellowship” to “remove from membership,” and giving authority to higher-level entities to disfellowship church members greatly help this to be done.

ATTEMPT TO MODIFY “REMNANT”—On Monday morning, July 3, a woman delegate from Germany moved to insert “part of” into the statement, “the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church.” After several vigorous protests, the motion was voted down (*GC Bulletin #6*, p. 26).

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE INTRODUCED—The Divorce and Remarriage Amendment was brought before the delegates on Monday morning, July 4 (*GC Bulletin #8*, p. 23).

It was introduced by a speech by Jan Paulsen, in which he stated that a commission had been appointed by the delegates at Utrecht (1995) to study into the matter; and, Paulsen urged the delegates to accept it. Otherwise they would be redoing what the commission has already done.

Mentioning that the recommendations of the commission had already been examined by the Annual Council, Paulsen said:

“But please, let us not now go back and do the work for which we five years ago appointed a commission. If we will see the work of the commission as something that we must now begin to open and examine and address as though the issue is coming raw before us at this time, I feel, brothers and sisters, that we are taking on a task that is really quite impossible to handle in this body.

“We will share with you all the information that we have. There are no secrets in respect to this. It’s all in the public domain. At Annual Council your union presidents and division officers and lay members of the General Conference Committee had opportunity to participate fully in the review of these matters, and felt satisfied that the way by which we are processing it in bringing it back to you as part of the *Church Manual* document does in fact satisfy and meet the action taken five years ago.”—*GC Bulletin #8*, p. 23.

What he was discussing was only the single part of the many *Church Manual* revisions, dealing with the Divorce and Remarriage modifications. Nowhere else during the week do we find such an appeal being made about a certain section of the revisions. So, it would appear, the brethren were concerned to get this one pushed through.

Following Paulsen’s extended comment, more were made by various officers who declared that it was a good paper; that, to save expense, it need only be shared with delegates who wanted to see it, that an experienced committee had prepared it, and the General Conference executive committee and the Annual Council had approved it.

The document was then read by an officer, and immediately delegates began speaking from the floor. Delegate after delegate spoke in protest about one aspect or another of the document, until the end of the business meeting (*GC Bulletin #8*, pp. 23-24).

Amid the many protests, one delegate asked that the entire document be distributed to the delegates so they could personally read the Divorce and Remarriage modifications. The chair reluctantly said that this would take a lot of paper, and that it would be distributed to those who specifically requested a copy.

Frankly, they had to beg to be able to see the complete amended document they were being asked to vote on! The next day, it was given to them.

“Yesterday several delegates had requested that the original commission report be made available, and today delegate Gerald Winslow, who in 1995 made the motion to reconsider divorce and remarriage, moved to distribute the full report to the floor. Minutes later, that happened.”—*Session 2000 News, July 4, 2000.*

One of the objections was that the Divorce and Remarriage changes would take the decision out of the hand of the local churches.

“Dan Jackson of the North American Division suggested that the document placed too much power with the conference/mission/field. ‘Local congregations are often in a better position to deal with these issues,’ he said.”—*Session 2000 News, July 5, 2000.*

TIME LIMITS ON D&R DISCUSSION—That afternoon, after B. B. Beach introduced Catholic, Protestant, Lutheran, and WCC leaders, Robert Kloosterhuis (chairman, as he had been that morning) asked that discussion on the Marriage and Divorce modifications be limited to three minutes. Immediately, someone stood up and moved that it be limited to two minutes. The delegates accepted this. After a fair number of comments (pp. 25-26), Kloosterhuis stopped the proceedings and called for another diversionary presentation on missions, to remove from the delegates more of the little business meeting time allotted to them.

“At this time we are going ahead with the windows on mission program.”

TIME-WASTING ADDITIONS—Without even permitting a motion or vote on whether to switch to something else, the little Business Meeting time available during the week was repeatedly filled with extraneous matters.

At one business meeting, an extended presentation on “Training for Maturity and Discipleship” was presented by Carlos Martin (pp. 26-28). Calvin Rock then strode to the podium and said this:

“But now, what we’d like to do, brothers and sisters, is turn to these members of the General Conference Committee, who represent us around the world, pastors and laypersons, and see how all of this plays out on the local scene. They’re going to mention, each of them, one of the barriers to implementing the beautiful things that Pastor Martin has been talking about” (p. 28).

Frankly, this is astounding! With only a relatively few hours in the ten-day Session allocated to business meetings,—the heart of it is used for diversionary presentations on other matters! Although the delegates only had two minutes to discuss divorce and remarriage, about 20 people were given extended time to talk about this and that (pp. 28-31). It all consisted of matters which properly belonged in a

seminar, workshop, or the evening meetings. But, no, it was inserted into the Business Meetings. Another example would be the report by the American Bible Society, which was all of the “Eleventh Business Meeting” (*GC Bulletin #9, pp. 27-31*).

THE DELEGATES DID NOT LIKE THE D&R MODIFICATIONS—The world church is now about 95% “foreign.” Although Americans, Europeans, and Australians still control the top jobs at the General Conference in Silver Spring, Maryland, the reality of church membership is rather different.

This astounding fact especially reveals itself at the five-year Sessions. The great majority of delegates are conservative while those from the Western world are liberal. Although one may have the vote, the other has the power and the ability to sidestep the vote. We have observed trickery in recent Sessions. It happened again this year. More later on how this was done.

Both concerned changes in the *Church Manual*.

First, there was the Divorce and Remarriage amendment to the *Church Manual*.

When introduced, floor debate about the matter became extremely heated, as it was perceived by the foreign delegation that the liberals from the Western world wanted to push through something which would tend to weaken the divorce and remarriage rules of the church.

Aggravating the matter was the obvious fact that the same kind of slick, new theology talk was being offered as an excuse for why the changes were needed. To the foreign delegates, it all sounded like the kind of talk they heard in 1995 at Utrecht, when the North American Division uttered similar excuses for wanting to ordain women preachers.

CHURCH LEADERS FORCED TO SUSPEND D&R DISCUSSION—The issue became so heated that church leaders had to suspend the nominating committee, so its members could be present to speak to the issue on the floor of the assembly during most of Tuesday and Wednesday.

Ultimately, the amendment became hopelessly bogged down in debate and committee work, until President Paulsen stepped to the podium and said there had been enough of this, and the delegates needed to move on to other business. It had been debated for two days (Tuesday and Wednesday).

D&R TABLED TILL THE NEXT SESSION—So upset were the delegates about the matter, that they refused to deal with it.

So, with nearly the full house of delegates present, it was voted that the entire document, bearing in mind the concerns of the delegates, be referred to the *Church Manual* Committee. This effectively

tabled it till the following Session.

“Delegates at today’s business session voted to return an amendment on divorce and remarriage, with delegate recommendations, to the *Church Manual* Committee for further revision. Barring a reversal in Thursday’s session, the document won’t be voted on until the 2005 General Conference Session in St. Louis, Missouri.”—“*Meet Me in St. Louis—Divorce and Remarriage Document Referred to 2005 Session*,” *Session 2000 News*, July 5, 2000.

Why did the reporter say, “barring a reversal”? Had he heard some of the plans. At any rate, the very next paragraph contained an ominous warning by the president of the extremely liberal South Pacific Division:

“‘By default we voted to depreciate the authority of the *Church Manual*,’ said Laurie Evans, president of the South Pacific Division. ‘People might be frustrated and take this into their own hands, which would hurt the unity of the Church.’”—*Ibid*.

The following paragraph gave the comment of a North American Division delegate: “I don’t want to live with this another five years.”

The vote to send the document back to committee was made that morning. Calvin Rock took over the chair for the afternoon session and tried to bring it back, but the delegates voted once again to send it to committee. This, of course, would effectively kill it for the Session, since it was so late in the week and the delegates had already spent two days on it.

The liberals were clearly upset. It was Wednesday, July 5, and the divorce and remarriage amendment had been tabled for five years. Something had to be done, and fast, for Friday would be the last Business Meeting. What they needed was someone who lived in a remote corner of the earth to do something daring.

HOW A FEW LIBERALS OVERRULED NEARLY 2,000 DELEGATES—Garry J. Hodgkin is a large man, about 6 foot, five inches, and president of the South New Zealand Conference, part of the extremely liberal, pro-Fordite South Pacific Division. The delegates never heard of him before; they will never forget him in the future.

On Wednesday afternoon, July 5, the decision of whether to adopt the Divorce and Remarriage amendments to the *Church Manual* had been deferred for another five years, to the 2005 St. Louis (Missouri) Session.

On Thursday afternoon, mingled among the others lined up at the delegate microphone, was Garry

J. Hodgkin. When it came his turn to speak, he mentioned simply that the next day he would move the rescinding of the divorce and remarriage amendment referral to committee. The chairman replied with a casual, “Is there a second?” Someone gave it, and that was it. The chair quickly turned to other matters, and few, if any, of the faithful recognized what had happened.

By parliamentary law, because he had made that brief statement on Thursday, he would be in a position to get the tabling motion rescinded the next morning on only a majority rather than a two-thirds vote.

Word passed around to key liberal delegates to be there early the next morning. But overseas delegates, and even their leaders, did not catch the significance of what was planned.

The next day, Friday, was the last working day of the week. Many delegates went to confirm their air tickets for their departure on Sunday, because there were rumors of an Air Canada strike and many were concerned. Others went shopping or were packing. (Some have suspected that the rumor was started to keep the delegates away from the Friday morning business meeting.)

That morning, as soon as the business meeting opened, Hodgkin was the second person to the microphone. He moved to rescind the Wednesday decision to table the Divorce and Remarriage Amendment. Someone else stood up and immediately seconded his motion.

The rescinding was passed with little opposition, for two reasons: *First*, it all happened so quickly that few understood what was happening. *Second*, there were only about 150 of the 2,000 delegates present! The rumor had accomplished its work.

Everything proceeded with a lightning speed, which only careful advance planning could have accomplished.

Immediately, Henrik Ingo stood up and moved to adopt the entire marriage and divorce amendment.

“After South Pacific Division delegate Gary Hodgkin’s motion to rescind was carried, Henrik Ingo of the Trans-European Division moved to adopt the amendment ‘as it now appears.’”—*Session 2000 News*, July 7, 2000.

Someone immediately seconded it. As soon as the chair, Philip Follett, heard the motion, he confidently said that only a simple majority was needed to pass it (since it had been previously announced). It appears that he had been told what was about to take place.

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A couple people had opportunity to speak, before someone moved to cut off all debate, even as another delegate stood at another microphone ready to propose an amendment to it! The motion was immediately seconded, cutting off all discussion.

With only a select number of 150 delegates in the auditorium, the motions passed with little opposition. A document that had been debated for two days and tabled for five years—had suddenly been revived and passed in, what one visitor said, was about 10 minutes.

“Delegates this morning rescinded Wednesday’s referral of the Divorce and Remarriage amendment back to the *Church Manual* Committee, and then voted by an overwhelming margin to adopt the document.”—*Session 2000 News, July 7, 2000.*

All the complaints had been ignored, and the marriage and divorce modifications were enacted.

Never underrate the liberals. They are very clever.

Commenting on the enactment of the divorce and remarriage amendment, one church leader made this comment:

“ [The revision] is simply a change of language and a change of attitude—a more Christian attitude,” said Mario Veloso, General Conference associate secretary.”—*Session 2000 News, July 7, 2000.*

Significantly, even the General Conference president became involved. As soon as the marriage and divorce amendment was enacted, Jan Paulsen appealed to the delegates to not discuss the matter any more. —Yet the only reason for discussion would be to repeal the amendment. Paulsen apparently did not want that done.

“Following the vote, World Church President Jan Paulsen walked to the floor microphone and urged that no further debate be given to the divorce and remarriage document. ‘We have spent quite enough time on this one,’ he said.”—*Ibid.*

Yet, if it took only ten minutes to enact it, later in the morning when the delegates arrived back, it would take only ten minutes to rescind the previous vote and table it again.

How do we know that approximately 150 delegates were in the auditorium? Several conservative delegates stood up and counted them. One of them

was the arch-conservative, Samuel Koranteng-Pipim. Some liberals later ridiculed that count, declaring that there were probably about 500 there. But Pipim declared that there were only 150 present.

Hodgkin afterward admitted that he consulted with Laurie J. Evans, South Pacific Division president and Athal Tolhurst (another liberal Australian), as to how to draft his motions so they would be properly made. He also said he already had men in place (fellow liberals from Australia and New Zealand) to second both his motions.

STILL NO RECORD OF JULY 6-7 BUSINESS MEETING—We are unable to quote the Thursday, July 6 incident, because it is in *GC Bulletin #10* which still has not arrived in the mail.

A week ago, I asked an assistant to phone the *Review*. They told her to contact her local ABC, because that was the cause of the delay. She did so, and was told they had nothing to do with it.

Although by now, it is too late to wait longer for a copy, I asked her to phone the *Review* again. This time a different lady answered and cheerily said that it was planned for *Bulletin #10* to arrive in everyone’s mailbox by August 15, over two weeks from now (and exactly 40 days after July 6).

The July 5 Business Meeting is the last one in *Bulletin #9*. In earlier years, the *Review* prided itself on mailing out the *Session Bulletins* the next day. There may be a plan in this, for *Bulletins #7-9* contains news of non-Business Meeting events on July 6 through 8 (Thursday through Sabbath).

All that is primarily missing is the July 6 and 7 Business Meetings.

DELEGATE DISGUST AT WHAT HAD BEEN DONE—Later on Friday, as they learned what had happened, the delegates discussed this sneaky trick at great length. It was obvious that the great majority of delegates—and even most of the spectators—believed the whole thing had been railroaded through. (Ironically, they had the numbers to reverse the vote; but, as conservatives often do, they felt too unsure of themselves to take such a bold move.)

Three delegates who especially protested were Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, from the African Indian Ocean Division, and Louny Morales and Hector Hernandex of the Inter-American Division.

One of these, Dr. Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, is a native of Ghana. As some of our readers may know, he had earlier written various protest literature against women's ordination and similar topics (his book, *Searching the Scriptures*, in 1995, and three chapters in *Prove All Things*, in 2000). Frankly, Pipim must be something of a Godly genius. Coming as he does from a third-world nation, he handles the English language excellently and has a powerful mind. In addition, he stands solidly in defense of Bible-Spirit of Prophecy issues. Lastly, something that few others will do, he is not afraid to stand up and openly oppose wrongdoing! We are astounded.

At the present time, Pipim is now working for the Michigan Conference as Director of Public Campus Ministries, but he represented the African Indian Ocean Division at the Session.

He regularly returns to the African Indian Ocean Division to teach religion to their students, conduct ministerial workshops, and speak at various camp meetings. Since 1995, he has represented that division at the Biblical Research Institute in Silver Spring, Maryland. What a fine General Conference president he would make!

"Some delegates appeared stunned by the quick reversal. 'We just witnessed a series of parliamentary maneuvers,' said Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, a member of the Africa-Indian Ocean Division employed in Michigan. 'This is an item that affects the well-being of the Church.'"—*Session 2000 News, July 7, 2000.*

When asked about what happened at the Toronto Session, Pipim made this comment, which later appeared on a web site:

"My concern is that, as a church, we are slowly legitimizing a process which I describe as 'legislate now; find Biblical answers later.' This happened with the questionable Annual Council decision on baptizing wives of polygamists (1946); then came another questionable decision on ordaining women as elders (1975 and 1984). Each of these Annual Council decisions have caused deep polarization and confusion in churches. Now divorce and remarriage (2000) has been added to the list of controversial decisions . . .

"It is no secret that I am not happy about the means by which the Divorce and Remarriage amendment was passed this morning. The thought that went through my mind as it was being passed, was that these developed country delegates must think that those of us from the so-called third world are awfully dumb. As you must have seen, those from the developing world are generally more conservative and tended to have more reservations concerning this amendment. Well, just because we speak with a different accent, does not mean that we cannot think or learn. Some of these delegates from the non-industrialized world who saw this unfolding are prominent government officials in their own

countries. They cherish and seek to uphold the ideals of representative democracy in their home nations. They are very intelligent and godly. I am afraid they will learn the wrong lessons from this . . .

"Those who are really pushing the new view of divorce and remarriage—most of them from these industrialized countries such as North America, Australia, and Europe, regions that constitute less than 10% of the world Adventist membership—came in and staged their theological *coup d'etat*, because the proponents decided to do so when the overwhelming majority of delegates from Africa, Inter-America, South America, the Pacific Islands, etc., were not there. Only about 150 people—about 7% or 8% of the delegates—were present. Do you understand the dynamics? One hundred and fifty people from certain segments of the industrialized countries took advantage of the absence of a large segment of the delegates, and overturned a prior decision by an overwhelming majority of delegates."

DON'T COME UP HERE!—One interesting development occurred when, as you might expect, 3ABN decided to send a transmission truck up to Toronto. They contacted the General Conference, in order to coordinate their work with them and be able to hook into SkyDome facilities.

But the brethren told them not to come. They were not wanted. After considering the matter, 3ABN sent a truck up there anyway.

Arriving, they were told to go home. So they went across the street and rented space to set up their truck. By this time, under pressure from some influential people (3ABN has many very wealthy Adventist friends), the brethren relented and let them video some of the proceedings inside.

They had earlier rented a booth in the adjacent Toronto Center, where they handed out thousands of advertisements about their work.

ONE VISITOR'S EXPERIENCE—Expenses to, from, and during the Toronto Session were heavy. An added problem was the exchange rate on money. On all their purchases, everyone had to add 40 cents on the dollar.

Another problem was the very high sales tax. Purchasers were told that they could get a refund on all their sales tax when they left the country. When one individual tried to do so, this is what happened:

At the airport, he learned that he had to return to the duty-free stores in the outer terminal, in order to get the forms. This required talking his way past the customs agents. Arriving at the forms desk, he found they were in French. Very handy for the francophones (French-speaking people), but not so good for anyone else. By this time thoroughly angry, he went to the Air Canada desk and demanded forms in English. Shuffling around through papers, they

AS WE GO TO PRESS

Surprise, surprise! The day we were to go to press with this tract set, *GC Bulletin #10* arrived! (Bulletin #9 was dated July 13 on the top-right of the cover; #10 is dated July 20-27.) So here is a brief overview of its contents:

24 HOURS PER BULLETIN—Page 18 tells how the *Review* staff, at the Toronto Session, used the latest electronic equipment to produce each *GC Bulletin* in less than 24 hours. We commend them for their efforts.

“Articles for these sessions were written as the news happened, edited in about 15 minutes, dropped into the electronic copy of the magazine, and rushed to the printer right at closing time . . . Seventeen computers (office and personal), six printers, two copiers, and more than a dozen mobile phones also helped make the miracle of a daily *Review* happen.”—*GC Bulletin #10*, p. 18.

DENOMINATIONAL DEBT—I was intrigued by the graph in *GC Bulletin #2*, p. 15. According to it, “General Conference institutions” only had \$5 million in total debt by 1999. Did that figure include Adventist Health Systems (AHS) debt? We know that AHS had \$2 billion (!) in debt in the mid-1980s. (*Now Almost \$2 Billion in Debt [WM-136-138, August 1986]*).

However, in *Bulletin #10*, we learn more. A number of statistical tables are given on pp. 26-33. Of special interest are the asset and liabilities tables on pp. 31-33. A nice summary of these is on p. 33. All figures are for the year 1998.

Total denominational assets (all that the denomination is worth, financially, worldwide) totals \$13.2 billion. Total liabilities (all that it owes worldwide) is \$5.1 billion.

Those are denominational totals. But examining the upper chart on p. 33, divided into divisions and General Conference, we find that most of the assets and debt are in the General Conference and North American Division (NAD).

The General Conference has \$1.7 billion in assets and \$8 million in debts. The cause of that immense debt might be Loma Linda, which has been a big spender and is a General Conference institution. We recently reported on how its bond rating had been lowered to near-junk bond status, because of its heavy debt.

But Loma Linda may figure into the North American Division debt, which is massive indeed, and is probably due to AHS debt throughout the U.S.

NAD assets are far, far larger than any other division: \$7.8 billion, and surely must be due to our hospitals. NAD debt is a staggering \$3.3 billion!

We have often been asked, how much of church property would have to be sold to pay off AHS debt, if, because of its spendthrift ways, it ever went bankrupt. You now have the answer: Apparently one half of all denominational properties in North America would have to be sold to pay the debt. That includes all local churches, conference offices, printing houses, etc.

But I say “apparently,” because assets in Canada (part of the NAD) could not be touched (since AHS is a U.S. conglomerate of corporations). We do not have a breakdown on this, but we would estimate that at least a sixth of NAD assets, and hardly any of its liabilities, are Canadian. So this would increase the amount of loss to the U.S. church if AHS

folded.

Will AHS fold? Well, consider the fact that we reported on its acquirement of \$1 billion in debt and immediately the General Conference pressured it to eliminate that debt. Announcement was then made in the *Review* that it would do so. A year later, the debt had climbed to \$2 billion! (*See WM-136-138.*)

But by 1998, that debt had climbed. Total NAD debt is now \$3 billion, and most of it is attributable to AHS. Compare the debts of all the other divisions with NAD and the GC, and you can see that something very wrong is happening in NAD!

Total debt for the entire world field is \$5.1 billion. Of that amount, \$3.3 billion is NAD debt (not including the second highest debtor, the GC with \$784 million).

Then, on the lower part of p. 33, we have a second chart. According to it, “health-care institutions” (worldwide) have \$5.4 billion in assets, \$3.1 billion in liabilities, and a net worth of only \$2.3 billion. This means that, theoretically, all our hospitals worldwide could close down. They would have to sell most of what they had at quick fire-sale prices in order to pay their bills, if mortgage and bondholders demanded their money.

I say, “theoretically,” because, on p. 33, the top chart lists NAD debt at \$3.3 billion, and the bottom chart lists medical institution debt at \$3.1 billion. Obviously, nearly all that debt is in the NAD. Hospitals outside the NAD probably have relatively little debt.

THE MARRIAGE-DIVORCE RESCISSION VOTE—Well, here we have it on pp. 45-46. It makes interesting reading. As soon as the invocation was given, opening the meeting, Hodgkin moved to rescind the tabling of the marriage-divorce amendment. Seconded. Follett (chair) quickly said only a majority vote was needed. Clyde Morgan (head of Adventist Frontier Missions) moved to indefinitely postpone the motion to rescind the tabling of the marriage-divorce issue. Follett replied that the parliamentarian (Walter Carson, lead in-house trademark attorney) overruled Morgan’s motion. Motion passed. Hodgkin moved to enact the marriage-divorce amendment. Seconded. One spoke and asked if amendments could be made to marriage-divorce item before a vote was taken. Henrik Ingo, a European president, moved to immediately close debate. It was voted, and the marriage-divorce amendment was approved. Jan Paulsen immediately said the Session should not discuss the marriage-divorce matter anymore.

OTHER ITEMS—More special dignitaries were introduced (p. 38). In order to enforce the authority of the *Church Manual*, a new section discussing that was added to the book (p. 51). An amendment to the Youth Society section was made, urging that all our youth attend the youth meetings (p. 52). You know what happens at those meetings. A large section has been added to the *Manual* about how women are to be promoted to various positions of importance in the church (pp. 63-64). The retirement of Bert B. Beach is announced (p. 65). An amendment increasing the strictures of censure to members was given (p. 73), urging disfellowshipping to occur more speedily (p. 74). The resolution on Scripture states the only worth of the Spirit of Prophecy is that it “points to the supremacy of Scripture” (p. 76).
— *vf*

came up with one. But it turned out that he could only get a refund on his hotel bill (if it was for less than 30 days) and gifts. As for the gifts, the receipts for them must be rubber-stamped by some official located somewhere else. But his bags were already checked in, so he gave up and was thankful to escape to America with some money, though greatly reduced, still in his pocket. Yet, before boarding the plane, he could not resist the temptation to go back into the duty-free store. There he found that no cash refunds are given on the 15% tax on everything at the duty-free shop. "Didn't you know?" he was told, "That was discontinued a long time ago." So he comforted himself by filling out the refund paper for the hotel bill. He was then told that had to be mailed to the Visitor Rebate Program.

Wearied by this time, he went to the Air Canada desk to check in for his flight back to the U.S. Astonished, when asked, "Do you have a passport?" he replied, "I was told I did not need one!"

The icy response was that he could be retained indefinitely if he tried to board the plane without

one. Somehow, he managed to get on the plane.

I am not sure that he will be going back to Canada anytime soon.

KEPT OUT OF CANADA—Neither will the Rwandan delegation. Of the 29 official delegates, only seven were granted visas by the Canadian Department of Immigration to enter the country, and those seven did not include the president or secretary.

The president of the Rwanda Union Mission is Amon Rugelinyange; the secretary is Elie N. Mbuguje. The Rwanda Union Mission has 933 churches, 342,664 Adventist church members, out of a population of 8,155,000.

Yet no delegates from there went to the Toronto Session. Since only seven were given visas, it was agreed that they would all stay home. So no one went.

We reduced the print size of this article at the last minute, in order to fit the new material onto page 15. Surely the Advent people everywhere need our prayers—and a whole world needs to be told about obedience to God's law by faith in Christ.—*vf*

The following new booklet contains all our past publications on General Conference Sessions. It also includes two tracts which we have not yet released, but which we will do so in the near future (the first and last ones listed).

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