

in a delayed echo caused by the vastness of the Superdome, and being startled by bigger-than-life images of themselves projected on huge screens. Delegates who raised a question about a measure recommended by the officers could look forward to responses from the general vice president and associate secretary of the General Conference standing at the podium presenting the item, another general vice president chairing the session and an associate secre-

tary sitting next to him at a long table on the platform. Often the General Conference president, sitting at the edge of the long table, would also answer a speaker. Further comments on delegates' remarks were sometimes provided by other delegates appointed by the General Conference, seated close to the front, where they could easily be recognized by the chair. Under this circumstance, a point from the floor could only be sustained if several successive speakers made

G.C. Alumnus Gives Historical Perspective

by F. E. J. Harder

New Orleans marked the high point of the nine General Conference sessions I have attended in quality of leadership, participation by delegates and facility of organization.

Upbeat Reports

There was an obvious determination by the officers to project a high tone of optimism in their reviews of the past quinquennium. Except for the treasurer's report, existing problems were, for the most part, referred to in generalities or glossed over and ignored.

Membership. In 1950—my first session as a delegate—the world membership stood at 750,000, about 30 percent of which was in North America. Now the world membership has reached nearly 4.5 million, 15 percent of which is in the North American Division. The world church exceeded its goal for the Thousand Days of Reaping by 12 percent, while the North American Division fell short by more than 40 percent. If these rates of growth continue for the next 15 years, church membership will approach 11 million, with less than 10 percent in North America.

Finance. Because of fluctuating currency exchange rates, annual comparison reporting of a multicurrency operation in terms of U.S. dollars cannot give a true picture of values in terms of local purchasing power. When the dollar strengthens, as it has during recent years, tithes and offerings from non-dollar countries appear to decrease, and when the dollar weakens, they appear to increase. And when 80 per-

cent of the church's income is in dollars, missions appropriations convert into substantially more local real value when the dollar is strong than when it is weak. As the treasurer warned, comparisons between years of strong and weak dollars do not accurately represent the patterns of world giving.

The decrease in tithes and offerings from North American members raises legitimate concern for recipients of General Conference funds. However, this does not indicate a lessening support for the church from American members. They are simply responding to the escalating urgency of calls for greater support of local church, conference and institutional needs. It seems likely that this trend will continue as the membership in North America becomes an ever-smaller percentage of the total and as internationalization of the General Conference leadership proceeds. An increasing portion of the church's mission effort must be borne by other divisions as their fiscal maturation catches up with their growth.

I was impressed again, as during my nine years at General Conference headquarters, with the high quality of General Conference financial leadership. Few funds are more carefully guarded and more skillfully managed than those of the General Conference.

Division Reports. The evening reports from the various divisions are always anticipated as the climax of each day. At this session these reports were given on film with minimal participation by division officers and delegates. They were informative and tended to keep within the allotted time but lacked much of the personal enthusiasm and excitement of the "live" presentations given in previous sessions. I especially felt that the North American report was something less than it might have been. To give an articulate, dynamic pulpit master such as Charles Bradford a prepared script, subject him to the regimentation of a media director and congeal him on film is unfair!

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the same argument.

Role and Function of Church Organizations. The first major debate revolved around the report from the Role and Function of Church Organizations Commission, chaired by Francis W. Wernick, a general vice president. In many different ways, the document attempted to enhance the central authority of the General Conference.

The first day of debate, Friday, discussion was so desultory that Wilson rose to a 'point

of personal privilege' to admonish the chairman for too rapidly pushing provisions to a vote and the delegates for not taking church structure sufficiently seriously. He said the church needed to adopt well-chosen rules and regulations approved by all, because after the document before them was adopted, members would need to follow it. He said that he was not offended by the word *obedience* and that 'organizationally there is no real autonomy in the Seventh-

Business Sessions

Business sessions were distinguished by superb chairmanship. Proceedings were kept orderly and chairmen went the second mile to be fair and keep cool under stress.

Delegate participation in the discussions was the most open and free that I have witnessed at any General Conference session. For the most part, speakers were candid and articulate, showing a clear understanding of the issues and offering reasonable (though frequently controversial) suggestions.

Two issues raised the most heated responses: (1) African representation on the General Conference administrative staff; and (2) the consolidation of the Home and Family Service with the Sabbath school, stewardship, youth and lay activities departments into a department of church ministries.

Africa. The Africans argued that they account for about one quarter of the church membership and that their leaders are well educated. Africans run their own governments and are represented in the United Nations in New York. They asked, 'Isn't it about time we were represented in Washington?'

It was clear from the president's remarks that he was deeply concerned with obtaining continued strong financial support from North America, a factor that could not be ignored by the nominating committee. These instances illustrate the increasing difficulty of maintaining (and defending) the special relationship of the North American Division to the General Conference.

Consolidation. When the proposal for consolidation was brought to the floor, it quickly became evident why it had not been adopted sooner. Adventists resist change in organization almost as vehemently as they resist modifications in doctrinal expression. However, the time for fragmented and overlapping departmentalization is past, and departmental leaders defending their 'dukedom' knew they were fighting a losing battle.

'*Rubber Stamp*'? The division caucuses and the nominating committee cooperated with leadership but were not always acquiescent. Delegates had easy

access to 15 floor microphones, and they used them! Several documents that had benefited from much previous discussion had to be withdrawn, including one dealing with guidelines for Sabbath observance. Delegates refused not only to approve the guidelines, but even to record that the document had been received.

Authority. Some may regard as a paradox the willingness of this most democratic of all general sessions to approve a document on the Role and Function of Denominational Organizations which clearly leans toward a more authoritarian General Conference. I see this willingness as evidence first, that the delegates recognized that to preserve unity in a rapidly growing world church with increasing complexity of organization and more and more international leadership, a strong central government is essential; and second, that democratic procedures minimize the reluctance to delegate authority.

General Observations

It was heartening to have a reaffirmation of the committee system of church governance but disappointing to see a president referred to as 'the chief executive officer.' A more appropriate term would be 'presiding officer,' for in a committee system executive power resides in the executive committee at which the president presides and to which he is directly responsible.

Although nomenclature is significant, far more important is the quality of leadership and the actual process followed. On both counts the New Orleans General Conference session deserves liberal kudos. Democracy in practice requires strong leadership or it disintegrates into anarchy—the ground from which tyranny springs. Leadership was strong and democracy was real.

Every convention—whether of a learned society, professional association, political party or church delegation—is likely to have some pluses and some minuses. At this session, the pluses outweighed the minuses so far as to be overwhelming. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a better church for having had the Superdome experience.

day Adventist Church." There were those who said, "Let the Holy Spirit speak, and the Spirit will speak differently in different places." "I don't subscribe to that philosophy," Wilson replied. "The Holy Spirit always and in every place speaks the same language." He concluded that "some conformity is needed. There may even need to be some uniformity."

Comments that first day were directed at basic assumptions. Russell Staples, chairman of the department of mission at the SDA Theological Seminary, raised a point that kept recurring—broad claims in the document that the General Conference *was* the church—rather than a part of the church, along with individual members, congregations and the denomination's myriad institutions and jurisdictions. Wernick responded with a formulation he repeated often: "The General Conference simply is the sum of all these organizations."

Robert Lloyd, a young pastor in the Pacific Union, said that he saw in the document a great deal about authority and power, but not "a lot about servant leadership." Several speakers commented on the document's insistence that the world divisions did not constitute a separate level of church organization but an integral part of the General Conference rising directly from the unions.

By Sunday, the second day of general business sessions, specific provisions were being hotly opposed. The most controversial item occupied the general sessions well into Monday: combining at the General Conference and division levels the present lay activities, Sabbath school, stewardship and youth departments, together with the Home and Family Service, into a single, large department of church ministries. Speakers from the denomination's largest division, Inter-America, overwhelmingly opposed the proposal. They particularly objected to eliminating the youth department. Neville Condappa pointed out that in Inter-America half the members were young people. Ted

Wilson, speaking as acting secretary of the Africa-Indian Ocean Division, opposed the proposal because it appeared to address an administrative problem at General Conference headquarters with a structural solution unnecessarily involving the divisions. "In the Africa-Indian Ocean Division we work together in a fine way. If at the General Conference level there is difficulty between departments, let the nominating committee take that into consideration and make some personnel changes."

One felt that the opposition expressed by mid-level church officials to the merger of departments arose from the same passion for pluralism of power that has led laypeople to ask for greater representation at the union, division and General Conference levels of the church.

However, strong speeches from North and South American laymen and General Conference leaders supported department consolidation. D. W. Holbrook, president of the General Conference Home Study International, gave a long and impassioned plea for creation of the new department. Such reorganization would allow much more effective coordination and evaluation of performance; further, he said, if the church turned away from this proposal, it would never attempt the more thoroughgoing reorganization many had been strongly urging. Many felt that his address turned the tide in favor of creating the new department.

President Wilson was invited by the vice president chairing the meeting to make the last speech before the session voted. Wilson noted his son's position, saying that he was not surprised at such a public disagreement. It was a family tradition, he said, for different generations to argue about church matters, and he had debated many times with his own father. However, he added wryly, he had found over the years that in these debates between father and son, the father was usually right. He pleaded for approval to respond to the

many calls for General Conference reorganization.

The delegates responded by voting with the General Conference leadership in favor of reorganization. Subsequently, D. W. Holbrook was voted director of the new General Conference department of church ministries.

Demands for Greater Representation. The next day, Tuesday, the demands of the church of the South for greater representation among General Conference officers boiled out of the nominating committee and into the general session. The day before, an African delegate had asked when the one out of three Adventists from Africa would be represented by an officer at the General Conference. Even the Roman Catholic Church, he said, had an African cardinal.

When the nominating committee announced their final two nominees for the five general vice presidencies, it was clear that only one of the five would be a non-American. K. G. Vaz, director of the ministerial department of the West Indian Union in the Inter-American Division, immediately rose to say that "if the General Conference is to be truly representative, the nominating committee cannot think just about North America, but also about Japan, the Philippines, Inter-America and Africa, where there is large representation. I strongly recommend that for the preservation of unity, the nominating committee consider international representation in the upper bracket of our world church. I move that this report be referred back to the nominating committee." The motion was seconded but defeated.

When the suggested vice presidents were then voted into office, David K. Amponsah, an ordained minister from the Central Ghana Conference in the Africa-Indian Ocean Division, moved that "the next names that come to this floor for vice presidents, associate secretaries and field secretaries reflect the international nature of this church."

Wilson opposed this motion in his most

vigorous and impassioned address of the 1985 General Conference session. First, he noted, there had been several references to the Third World, but "these particular designations are not Seventh-day Adventist terms but have been created because of political problems in our world." Adventists, he said, "must refrain from becoming politically involved to the extent that we are placed in conflict with each other within the church."

He continued, "Let me just tell you very candidly that the North American Division is also facing serious financial problems," and therefore "they have asked us repeatedly to cut down the General Conference staff in Washington." Through reductions in staff, including election of five instead of the eight general vice presidents elected at the previous General Conference session, he hoped to cut almost \$2 million from the General Conference Washington budget.

Finally, he wanted the delegates to understand that according to the bylaws, division presidents "are first vice presidents of the General Conference," and "report to the General Conference president." Repeatedly he invoked the comparison of vice presidents to cardinals. "Before this session ends, I predict we will have two African 'cardinals' among our 15 vice presidents (10 division presidents and five headquarters vice presidents)." Referring to the fact that the Far Eastern Division is the one remaining division with a non-indigenous president, he noted that "there is no 'cardinal' from all the countries of the Far East, while there will probably be two 'cardinals' from Africa."

Repeatedly throughout his address he invited the Africans and delegates from other Third-World countries demanding greater representation to remember another part of the world, the socialist Eastern European bloc. One wondered whether he were contemplating the creation of a new division with its own cardinal when he said, "If this church really wants to think about representation from areas where there is very little

ongoing continuous contact with the church, we should be paying more attention to that group than any of the others that have been mentioned."

He concluded bluntly, "I would certainly hope, my brothers and sisters, that you will defeat the motion that is on the floor before you. It is a divisive motion."

Almost as dramatic as the speech by the president was the quick, equally blunt reply by Joseph McCoy, secretary and youth director for the South Central Conference in the Southern Union. "Many times," he said, in the Adventist Church "the real will of the people is lost because one who has ascended to a position of responsibility is, by his charisma, determination and intellect, able to get his way." Removing any doubt that he intended his remarks to be a response to the president, he said he understood the Africans' position and pointedly concluded, "I think, with all respect, that it is political when an assembly is told how to vote."

After the exchange, Amponsah said that his motion had already made his point, and he withdrew it. Before the end of the General Conference session, J. J. Nortey, a citizen of Ghana and previously the division

treasurer, was elected president of the Africa-Indian Ocean Division. Also, Matthew A. Bediako, president of the West African Union Mission (which employs Amponsah), was elected to the post of field secretary, the first African to serve as a General Conference officer.

Tuesday morning certainly provided the session with the dramatic highpoint in the struggle over who is to lead this church—the church of the North or the church of the South. It may also have provided a clue as to why Wilson, seemingly preoccupied with maintaining the organizational unity of the denomination, was unaccountably willing to arouse deep divisions. In his Tuesday remarks, Wilson explained the force of the financial restrictions urged by the North American Division on the General Conference. "There are certain obligations relating to world institutions for which the General Conference is responsible," and, he went on, "no one pays for the operation of those world institutions except the North American Division." Notable among those institutions is the the General Conference headquarters itself, with its considerable operating budget.

Profile of a Burgeoning Church

Accessions World, 1960-1985

Period	Total Accessions	Increase Over Previous Period
1960-1964	538,696	—
1965-1969	725,875	187,179
1970-1974	964,164	238,289
1975-1979	1,230,203	266,039
1980-1984	1,692,105	461,902

Membership Growth Rates World, 1960-1984

Period	Average Annual Growth Rate
1960-1964	4.8%
1965-1969	5.3%
1970-1974	5.2%
1975-1979	5.6%
1980-1984	6.0%

These statistics are taken from a report to the General Conference session by F. Donald Yost, director of Archives and Statistics.

It appeared that Wilson had anticipated the aggressiveness of world delegates at the General Conference session and the anxiety that would produce in North American leaders. He had decided, it seemed, that his first priority was to avoid a headlong drive to create a completely independent North American Division. He would therefore appoint and reappoint large numbers of North Americans to the General Conference in order to reassure them that their traditional leadership of the General Conference was secure. Evidently, Wilson was willing to risk antagonizing the world divisions, if that were necessary, to forestall the even greater threat of an independent North American Division, frightened and alienated from a General Conference it no longer controlled.

Model Constitutions. During the past few years the North Pacific Union and several local conferences within the North American Division have adopted constitutions reflecting local priorities, particularly of lay members. Indeed, in the North Pacific Union a commission and a special session of the constituency adopted provisions over the express wishes of the General Conference officers. (See "Laity Transform North Pacific Constitution," by Terrie Dopp Aamodt, *Spectrum*, Vol. 15, No. 4, Dec., 1984, pp. 6-12.) Subsequently, the General Conference officers drafted model constitutions that they wished the General Conference session to declare virtually mandatory.

Friday afternoon, at the last general business session, lay and clergy delegates from throughout North America were poised to line up at microphones when Wilson announced that a lack of time made it impossible to discuss model conference and union constitutions. In response to careful questioning from the floor by Ronald Graybill, director of communication for the Columbia Union, Wilson said that the topic would be: (1) reviewed by divisions, unions and conferences; (2) studied at an Annual Council with adequate representation and sufficient information; and then (3) brought back to the 1990 General Conference

session. When Graybill asked for further clarification, Wilson repeated that the model constitutions would not be adopted until they came back to the 1990 General Conference session. With that, the North American delegates returned from the microphones to their seats.

Fourth Circle: Institutions and Organizations

Further removed from the activity of deciding who would be elected to lead the Adventist Church were groups not officially part of the General Conference session, or even the General Conference. For example, a large association of Adventist black women in North America gathered for meetings in a nearby hotel. Worthington Foods hosted a meal in another hotel near the Superdome.

The insistence of these diverse groups to gather at the General Conference demonstrated that members with widely differing views sustain a strong identification with the Seventh-day Adventist community. Many of the groups were not allowed space for meetings or exhibits in the Superdome. Nevertheless, their energy and commitment made them a palpable presence at the session. If the denomination were to move beyond debates over who should lead the church to discuss what its priorities for action might be, the varied impulses represented by these groups might well suggest fresh directions for the Adventist Church.

Caribbean Union College Alumni. Many colleges held meetings of their alumni, but perhaps the most elaborate was an evening banquet sponsored by the Caribbean Union College Alumni Association for some 400 members and guests in one of the ballrooms of the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Alumni who attended included General Conference Secretary G. Ralph Thompson and key academic and administrative leaders at senior colleges and conferences of the North American Division. It was said that the majority

of members in the large Northeastern Conference originally came from the Caribbean, a vivid example of the impact of the church of the South on North America.

Shepherdess International. The three meetings organized by Shepherdess International, July 2-4, drew 3,000 people to the main ballroom of the Hyatt Regency Hotel, far more than the number of delegates actually attending the concurrent general sessions inside the cavernous Superdome. While the predominantly male delegation debated the church's policies and laws, the women (and men) at the Shepherdess' meetings celebrated the life of the spirit.

Shepherdess International, headed by Marie Spangler (wife of J. Robert Spangler, editor of *Ministry* magazine and outgoing director of the General Conference ministerial department) and by Ellen Bresee (wife of Floyd Bresee, Robert Spangler's successor), invited women from all over the world to report on evangelistic and service projects.

In just 10 minutes, Laura Gonzales of Trinidad galvanized her audience. She recounted her experiences as an evangelist, holding 15 crusades that led to 1,300 baptisms. She told of confronting a machete-wielding husband, outraged because his wife insisted on attending her meetings; her attacker eventually became an active layman. She also told of casting out demons. She said that people accuse women, as descendents of Eve, of having led men into sin. "Why not let women lead men back from sin to righteousness?" she asked. In some evangelistic campaigns she baptizes more men than women. She insists that women can perform some ministerial functions better than a man. "If you wanted to send a message as quickly as possible," she asked her noisily sympathetic audience, "who would you give it to—a man or a woman?" She got the uproarious agreement she had sought.

After the morning meeting, the audience eagerly rushed up to her. For 45 minutes she shook hands, hugged new friends, signed

autographs and scheduled speaking appointments. Among those most excitedly talking with Laura Gonzales were female lay evangelists from Tanzania in the Eastern Africa Division who animatedly shared their own experiences in conducting public evangelistic campaigns.

Despite her success in organizing evangelistic meetings at which she is the main speaker, Laura Gonzales is officially only a Bible worker. Privately she says, "I don't think the church has given women their rightful place." She points out that in her part of the world "the church puts men in front, no matter whether they can speak or not. We resent the fact that at the divine service women are not put in front." She has told "the brethren" many times, "You may be able to keep me from being in front during the divine service, but you can't bridle me from speaking."

Association of Adventist Women. This organization by and for Adventist women has been formed independently of the church structure, but with its knowledge and cooperation. During the session, the Association of Adventist Women hosted an awards breakfast attended by 200 people, including Mrs. W. A. Fagal and her husband, Mrs. H. M. S. Richards and two of her sons, and Warren S. Banfield, director of the General Conference Office of Human Relations.

The association honored three women for their quite different achievements. Eleanor Hetke, a missionary for 23 years in India, organized a program caring for up to 100 abandoned infants prior to their adoption. Rosa Lee Jones, choral director at the Ephesus Church in New York, presented concerts at the Detroit Institute of Arts, Kimberly Hall in Chicago and Hunter College in New York. Kathleen K. Zolbar, already a recipient of the distinguished faculty award from Loma Linda University, served on the editorial board of *Topics in Nutritional Science* and as president of the 50,000-member American Dietetic Association Foundation.

Association of Adventist Forums. About 250 delegates and guests attended three AAF-sponsored luncheons for a vegetarian Chinese meal and special reports on activities in China, Africa, Australia and Romania. The most unique experience was listening to the former president of the China Division, Hsu Hua. Arriving as a tourist from Shanghai, he did not speak at the session but did informally answer questions at this gathering of an unofficial Adventist organization. Speaking in the English he had learned as a boy in Cambridge, England, his answers touched on Chinese history, including the unfortunate alliance of some Christian missionaries with imperialistic foreign powers. He stressed the present opportunities for religious belief and reported that there may be as many Adventists in China today as there were at the time of the liberation in 1949. However, leadership among Adventists in China is now not only indigenous, but local. (For more details see the AAF newsletter, *Forum*, included in this issue of *Spectrum*.)

Christians in Crisis. Adventists formed this lay group committed to helping defend the human rights of Seventh-day Adventists and other Sabbath-keeping Christians. Under the leadership of Sidney Reiners, a teacher in Minnesota, the organization sponsored several meetings at the New Orleans Hilton. They explored the recent disfellowshipping of approximately one-fourth of the Adventists in Hungary; featured Phil Ward, the Adventist publisher in Sydney, recounting the latest developments in the Lindy Chamberlain case; and heard Noble Alexander give a first-hand account of what it was like for an Adventist to spend 22 years in a Cuban prison. (see "Cuba: Testimony of a Prisoner of Conscience," in *Spectrum*, Vol. 15, No. 3, Oct., 1984, pp. 16-23.)

Christians in Crisis made themselves one of the most visible groups at the session. Outside major entrances to the Superdome they distributed not only announcements of their meetings but information concerning Adventists who they said were suffering

violations of civil and religious rights, particularly in Eastern Europe. According to Christians in Crisis, the first time they attempted to hand out materials, Superdome guards rushed them and the local chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union had to intervene to convince the Superdome that citizens have a constitutional right to free speech on public sidewalks.

However, the last story on the General Conference session in New Orleans' largest newspaper, *The Times Picayune*, featured the arrest of Adventists. Christians in Crisis had received reports that even members of congregations officially recognized by the government had been harrassed and unjustifiably arrested in the Soviet Union as recently as the first months of 1985. When a few months later the official delegation from the Soviet Union reported to the General Conference session that Adventists enjoyed religious liberty in their country, some members of Christians in Crisis were outraged.

On the final Saturday of the session a member of the group took his electronic bullhorn to the heavily traveled concrete walkway connecting the Superdome to the Hyatt Regency Hotel and proceeded to loudly condemn the delegation. Unlike the street-level sidewalks, the walkway proved to be private property and police were able to arrest the protesters for trespassing. On Saturday night, leaders of Christians in Crisis had to post bail to gain release from custody of their fellow Adventists.

While jail was a surprising place for these Adventist professionals to find themselves, they felt they had succeeded in raising the issue of human rights violations of Adventists. Inside the Superdome the subject was never a part of the official proceedings of the General Conference session.

Fifth Circle: Celebration and Worship

The large public events of a General Conference session are far removed from the formally required

task of deciding who will lead the church. Nevertheless, devotionals, sermons and pageants can create a spirit profoundly important for the morale of the thousands of church leaders who are delegates to a General Conference session.

Unfortunately, the physical environment of the Superdome did not help. Its dark, overwhelmingly empty space clashed with the speakers and films reporting on a bustling Adventist Church. Years ago the treasurers of the General Conference understandably seized an incredibly good financial package, but the critical, intangible costs were high. During the week, even

on those rare occasions when the delegates were in their seats and guests were drawn to a crucial debate, only half the floor and one-half of one of the three tiers were filled. And everything remained bathed in a dim half-light. Sabbath visitors, still only filling half the Superdome, were confronted with a Manichean darkness—hardly the place to celebrate the power of God's goodness and sense the force of a church on the march.

Parade of Nations. Happily, the church did march—right down main street, or at least Poydras Avenue. The most flamboyant event of this General Conference led costumed delegates through the length of

Third World Looks Toward 1990 Session

Eastern African Educator:

Joel Musvosvi

To fully understand the excitement felt by Africans at the 1985 General Conference session, one must remember the 1980 session in Dallas, the first attended by a large number of African delegates and observers. In 1980, the novelty of being present overwhelmed many; they did not participate verbally. Five years later in New Orleans, our African delegates spoke out. We felt that the leadership of the church listened, and that the world church was sympathetic to our cry.

Two primary concerns dominated the minds of African delegates at this session. First, the hope that a more indigenous leadership would be elected for the two African divisions. Second, the expectation that an African would be elected as a General Conference officer to represent in Washington the one million African Adventists. Such changes would enhance the self-image and identity of the African church and allow it to take its legitimate place in the world-wide Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In 1990, we expect more African delegates to participate in the General Conference session, calling for appropriate changes and demonstrating deep commitment to this church. Beyond 1990, we look forward to hosting a General Conference session on the African continent, giving more Africans the opportunity to experience the session.

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Inter-American Pastor: Wynall Kerr

The 54th General Conference session had high points as well as low points. On the positive side were well-presented devotionals, many displays, excellent organization and much joyful fellowship and reunion. Unfortunately, the session was also unbalanced and in many cases too abstract. First, North America possesses only about 15 percent of the existing church membership, yet from this small group came nearly one-quarter of the delegates and a majority of the church leaders elected at the session. This imbalance is a reflection of the desire to control and a deafness to the voice of a largely Third-World church. Minority rule is at best unsafe.

Second, the opportunity to formulate concrete plans for our church's future was ignored. Reports of growth and progress were given, but issues such as racism in the church, the escalating arms race and our stand on apartheid in South Africa—international issues that would define our church in relation to the current political, economic and sociological climate—were left untouched.

At the next General Conference session, the church must be more socially conscious. By 1990, the church must take positive action to meet the challenges of national and international politics and economics with positions that are clearly spelled out, including proposals for concrete and realistic reforms.

Also, delegations should reflect the membership size of each division. Decisions taken should reflect the thinking of the majority of the membership and not exclusively the desire of the leadership. Power and authority need to be decentralized. The time has