

to appear in the witness box. If they are lying (as Ward contends), they will have to coordinate their lies very well, Ward points out.

Ward publishes a newsletter about the church called *Adventist News*, which along with a dozen or so laity-organized Chamberlain support groups is raising funds for Ward's libel case—estimated to cost \$250,000.

Ward is convinced, as he tells his *Adventist News* readers, that "the Chamberlain case will be the greatest boost to Adventist evangelism Australia has ever seen. Everyone has seen the hell Lindy Chamberlain went through. She had a 10-week-old baby taken from her breast by a dingo. She had her next baby taken from her 30 minutes after its birth in jail. She has suffered from what one judge in his verdict called 'the worst campaign of gossip' and innuendo in Australian history.' But through it all, she remained true to God. Because of this, when they see Lindy Chamberlain is innocent, the people of Australia will want the God of Lindy Chamberlain."

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Innovations of a Constitutional Kind

by Bonnie Dwyer

' 'We, the delegates to the March 24, 1985, constituency meeting of the Ohio Conference, respectfully submit a request to the officers of the General Conference that a comprehensive statement applicable to church members be developed. We also request that this issue be placed on the agenda of the 1985 GC session.' Voted: 195 in favor, 116 opposed.

Ohio

The abortion issue was put on the Ohio constituency meeting agenda at the request of the First church of Cleveland. Fifteen other items for the agenda were submitted by local churches, because of a revision to the Ohio Conference constitution that sets up an initiative process.

This provision also allowed the Ohio Conference membership to record its views on women in the ministry. At the Worthington church's request, that item was placed before the Ohio delegates. For the first time anywhere, a conference went on record officially approving the ordination of women to the ministry: 295 for and 116 against.

Ohio's constitution was changed in 1984, so this year's meeting was the first to include initiatives. The large number of submissions for agenda items led the officers to designate some items as ballot measures only. The abortion and women-in-the-ministry statements were not debated at the constituency meeting. Paper ballots were used to record the wishes of the delegates.

According to Monte Sahlin, assistant to the president for nurture, the primary issue in the constitutional changes made in 1984 was how to structure adequate lay participation in the conference and church program. The Ohio constituents voted a 50 percent non-church-employee delegation to represent them at the Columbia Union Conference constituency meeting in 1986.

Many other conferences across the United States have recently re-examined and revised their constitutions and bylaws. From Georgia to Michigan and Oregon, members of the church who are not employed in the church have worked during 1985 to have their views considered in church decisions.

Georgia-Cumberland

Significant changes were made in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference constitution in 1985. There the conference committee was restructured and enlarged, geographic regions were established for selection of lay representation and subcommittees to the conference committee were created for the organizations operated by the conference.

With the creation of a subcommittee for the conference association, the association's constituency became the conference committee, legally simplifying the organization into one non-profit corporation. Another subcommittee was created to oversee the conference's kindergarten through 12th-grade educational program. All educational salaries will come out of the conference office, including the salaries for the teachers at the conference's three academies. Local schools will continue to have their own boards, but this consolidated conference salary program is a first in North America.

Other subcommittees were created for personnel, finance, the Adventist Book Centers, the camp and the conference center. These subcommittees were given autonomy in their operation, but they must make a fiscal report to the conference committee on a quarterly basis.

Georgia-Cumberland Conference's 18,000 members were divided into six geographical areas, with two lay delegates for each area on the conference committee, plus two delegates at large. That gives the laity a 50 percent representation on the 28-member committee. There are seven pastors on the committee, three conference officers (the president, secretary and treasurer), one conference departmental representative, the president of Southern College, a representative from Adventist Health Systems/ Sunbelt and a representative from the local self-supporting institutions.

These changes were suggested to the constituency by a constitutional committee that had spent 10 months working on a proposal to update the constitution. To provide their suggestions with the proper research, the committee sent out a questionnaire and invited individuals to testify before the committee. The committee studied the constitutions of other conferences within the Southern Union, the model constitution proposed by the Association of Adventist Forums and the constitutional suggestions from the General Conference.

When the changes were put before the constituents at the April meeting, they rejected a motion to wait until after the General Conference session to see what organizational actions were taken by that body. The constituents then approved the proposed constitutional changes.

The changes did not come without plenty of debate, however; the chairman of the constitutional committee met over the noon-hour on the day of the constituency meeting with people who disagreed with the wording of the proposed changes. The second presentation to the delegates in the afternoon was approved.

One of the arguments for the revisions was that more laypeople would become involved in the actual operations of the conference by appointment to the operating subcommittees. What the changes did not guarantee was a smooth election process. In spite of a voted request from the representatives, the nominating committee refused to put the name of incumbent president Gary Patterson before the delegates. This conflict over the selection of the conference president forced the constituency into a second meeting, but the nominating committee again refused to talk with Patterson about their objections to his election. Finally, at the suggestion of Southern Union Conference President A. C. McClure, William Gary, formerly president of the Gulf States Conference, was elected.

Michigan

Dissatisfaction with the structure of the large organizing committee and the ancientness of the Michigan constitution led the Michigan Conference constitution and bylaws committee to propose language to "clean up" their constitution. However, the proposals were put on hold in 1985, after the General Conference notified the conference that a model conference constitution would be on the agenda at the session in New Orleans. Since the model constitutions were not adopted at General Conference, the proposals will be considered again by the constituency in April 1986. The delegates will then have a chance to approve an early meeting of the large committee before regular constituency meetings begin and a slimmed-down dele-

gate list that does not include every church employee in the conference. This is a change several other conferences have already adopted.

As for the model constitutions being proposed by the General Conference, Vernon Alger, general counsel for the Michigan Conference, suggests those documents will require more work before they can be adopted. He said the legal language is not consistent throughout the document and will require rewriting.

By the time of the next General Conference session in 1990, many of the local conferences may have already completed constitutional changes, making the model constitutions a moot point.

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