
On The Road to Indianapolis: The 1989 Annual Council

This year our report on the Annual Council of the General Conference Committee, October 3-10 in Silver Spring, Maryland, takes a somewhat different form from other occasions. We begin with an overview of the highlights from a participant, who himself made several speeches from the floor, particularly regarding the ordination of women and interschool league sports. We then publish parts of three speeches by executive leaders of the church. Places where there has been slight editing of the talks, none of which were in manuscript form, are indicated by ellipses marks. For different reasons each talk was memorable.

For our overview of the council we invited Lawrence T. Geraty, president of Atlantic Union College and for many years leader of the denomination's archaeological expeditions in Jordan, to give us his personal perspective of the week's events.

Also, we have published the middle section of the Annual Council's opening address by Neal C. Wilson, president of the General Conference. The first part of the speech recounted achievements of the church in different parts of the world. The last part dealt with two specific cases of reconciliation: Des Cummings, Sr., retired president of the Georgia-Cumberland Conference, and Morris Venden, pastor of the Azure Hills Church in Southeastern California.

Charles L. Bradford, president of the North American Division, delivered his remarks extemporaneously from the floor of the council. They came on Thursday evening, October 5, following

a day of discussion on ordination of women and at least a half day on interschool athletics. The evening he spoke, the president of the General Conference had brought to the floor the issue of whether both parts of the action approved two evenings before should be taken to the 1990 General Conference session.

Before Bradford asked to be recognized, opponents of the ordination of women—particularly some of the retired General Conference officers still invited to Annual Councils as voting members—relied on a variety of parliamentary procedures designed to get the entire action referred to the 1990 General Conference session. They assumed that delegates from the world divisions would vote against both the ordination of women and women being permitted to perform baptisms and marriages.

When Bradford sat down he received loud and prolonged applause. One North American conference president said that around him the eyes of about 20 veteran members of Annual Council deliberations were actually glistening with tears. A union president said he considered Bradford's speech a landmark in the relationship of North America to the world field. That evening the council voted the way Bradford had urged them to do.

Toward the end of the council Jan Paulsen, president of the Trans-European Division, gave a report from the platform about events in Hungary. Although there are fewer members in the country than in the Loma Linda University Church, for years leaders of the denomination have unsuc-

cessfully attempted to heal a conflict that has inevitably involved the always-delicate relationship of the church to a socialist government in Eastern Europe. Times appear to be changing inside the Adventist church as well as in the government of Hungary.

— *The Editors*

The 1989 Annual Council: A Personal Account

by Lawrence T. Geraty

For the first time, a general church meeting was held in the new General Conference office building. At a cost of \$30 million the new building manages to be tasteful and functional without being ostentatious and elaborate. The impression is definitely one of a corporate headquarters. Missing, however, is an architectural statement that would be a unique witness to Adventism, but perhaps that will come eventually.

I was thrilled with the progress of the church. It is exciting to know that we now average 1,500 baptisms per day, our total number of members having passed the six million mark. It is remarkable that 75 percent of this number is in Africa and Latin America. I was pleased to learn that my own union, the Atlantic Union, was the fastest-growing in the North American Division. A new conference was voted in: the Quebec Conference, which in the past 10 years has gone from 600 members to nearly 3,000. Trans-European Division President Jan Paulsen shared the encouraging news that the "Egervari group" of breakaway Adventists in Hungary was rejoining the denomination. But it was probably the induction of a new division of the world field, the Soviet Union, that carried the most emotion. It was moving to see and hear the four delegates from Russia speak of their joy in seeing this day.

I appreciated the sense of mission that pervaded the annual meeting. There is to be a recog-

nition of the important centennial of the sending out in 1890 of the sailing missionary ship, *Pitcairn*. This anniversary will celebrate 100 years of Adventist missions with the hope that it will kindle anew the spirit of mission in many of our members.

There was also a sobering report of the denomination's new global strategy. An attempt is to be made within the next decade to reach all the population groups of the world which have one million or more people who have never heard about the belief and hope of Seventh-day Adventists. In order to help make this daunting project possible, the General Conference is planning on a \$7 million offering at its 1990 session in Indianapolis. A large part of that money will go for Adventist World Radio-Europe.

There were plenty of housekeeping details that had to be attended to. Probably one of the most important were changes made to the constitution and bylaws of the General Conference. The most significant increased the identity of the North American Division, as distinct from the General Conference itself, thus opening the way for the division to choose its own leadership, have its own budget, and schedule its own independent meetings. This was done, in part, because many are predicting a "takeover" of the denomination by the third world at a future General Conference session, if not the one in Indianapolis. Some of the changes sought will help give the North American Division a little more control over its own destiny. Though shrinking in terms of its percentage of membership in the world field, North America continues to provide 85 percent of the church's world budget.

At least three issues came before the Annual Council that are of keen interest to young people. The first is a document on courtship and marriage that forbids Adventist ministers to perform a marriage between an Adventist and a non-Adventist. Though this has always been the traditional stand, it has never been included in the church manual. Many youth workers feared that this policy could alienate precisely those who need to sense the church's love and care at a crucial time in their lives.

The second issue deals with interschool sports.

The document that came to the council from the 1988 council in Nairobi states that the Seventh-day Adventist church is against interschool sports. An attempt to broaden the document to include interchurch leagues was defeated, as was an attempt to provide opportunity for union executive committees to vote local exceptions. Despite the pleas of those who work with young people, the document was voted by a large majority. I found the procedure heavy-handed in the way it ignored input from the North American Division boards of education. The policy itself seems inconsistent—not to mention restrictive—in comparison with programs that have been voted into existence and are being monitored by local union conference committees. I am afraid it will be perceived by many young people as insensitive to successful programs that are meeting developmental needs.

The third issue dealt with the role of women in the Seventh-day Adventist church. Elder Neal Wilson reported on the recommendation of the Women's Commission that had met at Cohutta Springs, Georgia. The recommendation came with two parts. Part A recommended that women not be ordained to the gospel ministry, while part B allowed divisions to permit women to perform baptisms and marriages in a local church, provided they have received the same theological training as men, have been employed as full-time ministers, and are ordained as local elders. There were strenuous attempts by those opposed even to women baptizing to separate the two parts so that they could be voted on independently. Wilson insisted that they were a part of a single recommendation and had to be voted up or down together. In a secret ballot, 65 percent of all delegates voted Yes (287 Yes, 97 No). Even when General Conference Committee invitees (primarily North American local conference and institutional presidents) were, on a second ballot, not allowed to vote, 57 percent voted in the affirmative (104 Yes, 77 No).

One evening later President Wilson urged that the delegates separate parts A and B. That is, he recommended that Part A—refusal to permit women to be ordained—be sent to the 1990 General Conference session, since a report had

specifically been requested by the 1985 General Conference. Wilson argued that Part B—approval of women performing baptisms and marriages under specified conditions—should be considered a policy matter to be settled at the 1989 Annual Council.

A great deal was at stake on this procedural vote, since it was widely assumed that delegates (mainly clergymen) outside North America, would, at the General Conference session next year, insist on separating the motions and vote to force all divisions to deny Adventist women the opportunity, not only to be ordained, but also to perform baptisms and marriages.

The most memorable speech of the Annual Council was given extemporaneously from the floor by Charles Bradford, president of the North American Division. It followed several days of discussion of the role of women and league sports. When Bradford concluded his visionary challenge to the church the delegates uncharacteristically broke into prolonged applause. I was proud to be a North American Adventist (see p. 16 in this issue).

On the significant concerns of women, there continued to be resistance to such concepts as equal pay for equal work, the payment of a minister's spouse for "team ministry," and the need for more females in leadership positions where ordination was not required.

After an entire evening of heated debate, 81 percent of all delegates—regular and invited—voted (190 Yes, 45 No) to send only Part A to the General Conference session next year in Indianapolis, and to adopt Part B, effective immediately. The North American Division committee, meeting immediately following Annual Council, officially approved the implementation of Part B in its division.

When it came to a discussion of the significant concerns of women that had been compiled by the female delegates to the Women's Commission meeting at Cohutta Springs, there continued to be

resistance to such concepts as equal pay for equal work, the payment of a minister's spouse for "team ministry," and the need for more females in leadership positions where ordination was not required.

Although many opponents to ordination of

The only way I can justify to my constituency the actions taken on these issues is to say that the world church, because of its different experience and context, does not see the issues the same way so many of us in North America do.

women claimed to justify their position by citing lack of a specific biblical injunction, they also seemed reluctant to support measures regarding women that have nothing to do with ordination. It was pointed out to them that Ellen White had given specific counsel in favor of action on these matters, but they refused to act. That led Kit Watts, an assistant editor of the *Adventist Review* and a member of the Women's Commission, to wonder aloud from the floor if it would really have made a difference had there been specific counsel from Ellen White on the ordination of women.

The only way I can justify to my constituency the actions taken on the three issues is to say that the world church, because of its different experience and context, does not see the issues the same way so many of us do in North America. Therefore, we must be "actively" patient, doing our part to educate church membership on the issues, recognizing that church unity (not uniformity) is worth being patient for. In the meantime, the overall impression left by many of these actions was that the delegates found it necessary to "bat-ten down the holds" of the ship, despite the fact that there could be fewer passengers as a result.

My biggest concern is that college students, with whom I work so hard to elicit commitment to the church, will not be able to make sense of some of the actions. After all, according to Nathan Pusey, president of Harvard University during my

graduate school days, a college tends to "make a man wish to think for himself. It fills him with impatience at inertia and indifference and ancient incrustations that inhibit life, confining it in dark-ened places." Fortunately for the Adventist de-nomination, Pusey also says that college "breeds in him hope and interest and alertness, makes him sensitive to the needs of others, helps him lessen the constraints of his imperious self, puts purpose in life, and gives joy in the play of mind. It stimulates concern for things deeply felt and thought and excites in the individual the prospect of shaping for himself a full adult experience continued in such concern." (Quoted by Margarita Merriman in her essay on education for AUC's October 13, 1989, *Lancastrian*.)

Lawrence Geraty is president of Atlantic Union College and a frequent contributor to *Spectrum*.

A Decade of Healing and Reconciliation

Excerpts from the General Conference President's Opening Address

I have a little four-and-a-half-year-old grandson, a precious little fellow who knows how to work his grandfather. And his grandfather loves him. He came to me a little while ago and with him he brought a little basket filled with his little treasures. And as I looked in the basket it was interesting because there I saw a little dog that, when you turned the switch on, was supposed to bark. But the little dog didn't bark anymore. Then there was a toy helicopter, but the rotor wouldn't go around. There were a few balloons, but they had holes in them so it didn't do any good to blow them up. And there was a little watch in there that, when you wound it up, was supposed tick. But it wasn't ticking anymore. . . .

Here was this little lad and he came up to me and said, "Grandpa, you can fix them, can't you?"

You know, that's the last thing a grandpa needs . . . to admit to a four-and-a-half-year-old grandson that you really can not work magic, or do those things which are superhuman. And you just have to talk your way out of it. I wasn't very successful at that because he was sure his grandfather could take care of this.

Finally, when I had exhausted all explanations, the dear little fellow, Jonathan, said, "Grandpa, when I broke my arm, Jesus fixed it and you see, it's perfectly good. But Grandpa, why can't you fix these simple things?"

Well, it was pretty humiliating, but it was a good experience for me to go through because little Jonathan had faith—he knew Jesus could fix things—but he wasn't so sure about his grandfather. . . . My brothers and sisters, fellow leaders: There is so much brokenness in this church today . . . Broken hearts, disappointments, death, broken homes, and families. And I say, "Lord, where is the Elijah message? Why isn't it working? So many broken homes." You know we're not doing a whole lot better than the world is in this matter of divorce.

Broken health. Every time we have a committee—officers' meeting—and we ask if there are any who would like some special situations remembered in prayer—some special request—we always get requests for individuals who are suffering, who've been in terrible accidents, cancer . . . cardiac problems. Frankly we have so much sorrow because of broken health.

So many broken relationships within the church . . . some little thing has come along and it wasn't healed. It continues to fester and that poison goes through the system. Then they go out and they don't come back and nobody cares much. You've got too many other things to do, too busy to go after them and try to heal it. . . .

Did they pass out those *Reviews*? . . . I hope you look at one of the editorials, a guest editorial written by Elder Bradford, on this subject of finding the missing, reclaiming those who seem to be lost, who have drifted away. And they're out there, hundreds of them, thousands of them. . . . Who cares? Who has gone after them? Please don't feel guilty. . . . I'm just asking that somehow the Holy Spirit help us realize that there's a lot of

brokenness in this church that needs to be healed!

Broken promises. I tell you, it's so easy for a leader and administrator to make a promise at a certain point, on the spur of the moment, some

In this church, if a person is given a label, because of something they've done or they haven't done, you know they carry it pretty well the rest of their lives. We don't seem to know how to forgive. We're not very good at giving people a second chance.

situation, and then have to try and find his way out of it. Some life is disappointed, destroyed in many cases. Broken promises, broken contracts, broken agreements, broken friendships . . . I have actually seen, over the last couple of years, friendships between individuals broken because they have had a different opinion on a subject. Brokenness and no real attempt is made to heal it, and it continues; the breach gets wider until you can hardly bridge the gulf. . . .

In this church, if a person is given a label, because of something they've done or they haven't done, you know they carry it pretty well the rest of their lives. We're most unforgiving when it comes to some of those things. And don't try and tell me differently. I know. It has become a concern to me. We don't seem to know how to forgive. We don't seem to know that divine science of government, to be able to combine that reconciling grace, mercy, and justice. We don't seem to know how to forget. The Lord says he does. He puts it in the bottom of the ocean. We don't know how to forget. Somebody's name comes up—"Oh, be careful, you know, remember what happened 10 years ago." We're not very good at giving people a second chance . . . I'm concerned about the lack of healing in this church. There's too much brokenness. . . .

The cross tells us that when God saw us at our worst, He loved us the most. That's what the cross says. But it isn't that way with us somehow. You see people at their worst and you sort of always

keep them in that setting. Somehow, if the Lord could just help us to do something about this and learn that divine science of government, there could be healing and reconciliation . . . So I'm saying to you this evening, what I think this church needs to go along with Harvest 90 and global Strategy, is a decade of healing and reconciliation.

Neal C. Wilson is president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Approaching the Third Millennium

by Charles Bradford

Well, brother chairman, I just want to make an appeal. The North American Division officers and union presidents set up a special committee after the 1985 General Conference session to address this question that you read from the minutes, the matter of the authority or the functions of ministry that would be granted to commissioned ministers, those who were called associates in pastoral care.

That small committee . . . brought in a recommendation. . . . It essentially said that the associates in pastoral care would be given authority to perform the same functions as licensed ministers. We did that in good faith. But it was felt by some that it might be precipitous to bring it into the 1985 Annual Council session and so we turned away from it.

One union, having seen it in the materials, . . . thought it was passed, went back home and almost directed its conferences to act accordingly. I was embarrassed when they called me. I had to tell them that we pulled it off.

Some of you were there in 1985 when we pulled it back. And you were disappointed. Some said to me, "You have not carried out the directive of the General Conference. You had it in the materials for distribution, you withdrew it." I

really couldn't give any reasons other than I was counselled to do it. We accepted the counsel and we did not press the matter. It was thought that going this route would be better; it would give the world church an opportunity to hear and to consider, to empathize with, to better understand. And that has been done.

The [Women's] Commission met in March of a year before and met again this summer. It has been on the minds and, I say, on the lips of many for a number of years—almost, brother chairman, a decade. . . . Meanwhile, we're still discussing, *we are still discussing!*

It is a terrible burden trying to lead the division in soulwinning when you are constantly discussing these all-consuming issues. . . . Here we are in 1989, facing the last decade in the 20th century, looking on the eve of the third millennium—on the *eve of the third millennium!* That's where we are! And we have discussed this matter and discussed it and people have taken sides and some have said, "I'm not going to lose! I will use every ruse that I can—every political, every parliamentary motion and maneuver—I'll use it, so that I will not lose! I will have my way!" I would hope that in the church of the living God, we could come to the place where it would not be a win-lose situation.

I had to tug at myself to speak tonight because I know it will be misunderstood. Some will think that I am grandstanding, or playing to the gallery. But let me speak on.

This North American Division is the tax base of the world church. And if the superstructure outgrows its tax base, we have a tottering institution. Now I speak plainly; I speak boldly. I say that if we don't get on with the mission here in North America, and start winning people to this message as we should be, the church is going to suffer all around the world. There is nothing wrong with this North American Division that 100,000 fully instructed born-again new believers could not solve.

The tithe dollar is the transaction that has the greatest impact upon this world church. When I baptize—and it is going to be my privilege and happy circumstance, I hope, in a few days, to do that more and more—when I baptize that dear

little sister down in whatever little city it is, maybe she is on welfare. But when she comes to church on Sabbath morning, she makes out her little tithe envelope and she puts in \$10 tithe, and two dollars winds up in Silver Spring, Maryland. That's impact! Giant Food only gets \$1.50 out of \$100 or more. That's right. This church has the greatest system in the world! But you know what we are doing? We are destroying it! That's what we are doing, we are destroying it!

In the North American Division, we have been destructive. Our attention has been taken away from the vital things. There are those who stand up and say "I am orthodox!" Show me the souls that have been baptized by your pronounced orthodoxy! There is such a thing as dead orthodoxy. The rabbis could quote the Pentateuch. But they were not, my friends, alive with a vital religion that satisfies the longings of men's hearts. We're going to make ourselves such an ingrown group, navel-gazing, looking at our own problems—introspection, until we wind up simply the keepers of the museum! We will have artifacts of the past, we will have monographs on the administration of Wilson, and Pierson, and Figuhr. But that is all that will be left. We will not have a vibrant, growing church.

It is a serious word that I speak to you. Jesus is coming soon. There are some people out there who are counting on you to lead them in ministry. There are some people who would be ashamed that we are spending God's holy money and God's holy time in several days in Annual Council, and yet we haven't come to the things that brought us here. We've held up the agenda. You are going to make it almost impossible for us to have a North American year-end meeting this year.

Now my brothers and sisters, the time has come. We must put aside all our preferences. I said to the division brethren—Elder Wilson, you allowed me to say it in Cohutta [Springs]—I said to them: "Brethren, will this provision made for commissioned ministers damage your field?" You'll remember I said that. "Will it damage you? Will it bring you to ruin? If it will, we'll turn aside."

They said, "No, it won't."

I said, "Well then, if it will not damage you, then allow the church to roll on; let the church move on. And if we have made a horrible mistake, there is such a thing as the Spirit's ministry and He will bring us back. Because, as Ellen White says, we are captives of hope. He has us in His hands. We are the remnant people of God."

Oh, I want us to march on. I want to hear the Word of God ringing throughout the North American Division, ringing throughout the world. I want to see the ministers on fire and the laymen going from door to door, and this continent stirred from stem to stern so that the brethren in other denominations will say: "You Adventists have filled this whole continent with your doctrine!" That's what I want to see happen.

Here we were on this sports thing nearly all day. Children dying of AIDS, children into drugs, teenage pregnancy, and we're arguing about a basketball game! I want to tell you, if the religion in our churches is vibrant enough, a hint to the wise is sufficient.

But it will never happen as long as we're standing on this line and you're on that line. I think that it is time for us to get on God's line. Will you please, brethren, have mercy upon us? For mercy is needed. You, brethren, need to pray for the North American Division. Pray for us!

I'm begging your pardon for taking your time, but this is the way I feel. I can but say what is on my heart. I would think that after 43 years you would allow me, for one night, to say what is on my heart, . . . to make a strong appeal to you, a fervent appeal.

Here we were on this sports thing nearly all day. Children dying of AIDS, children into drugs, teenage pregnancy, and we're arguing about a basketball game! I want to tell you if the religion in our churches is vibrant enough, a hint to the wise is sufficient. All you have to do is say, "Brethren and sisters, love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the

world, the love of the father is not in him.” And those that are in tune with heaven will say: Look, I don’t love the world. I will turn away from these things. You can make a thousand pronouncements and not change one heart! Not change one heart!

So let’s get on God’s side here, get this message going. Don’t you want to see the message go? I mean, we can do it! We can preach this message. We’ve got the greatest message in the world! And I just want us to join together. I’d be so happy. I could say then, “Let thy servant depart in peace.”

Charles Bradford is the president of the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Healing in Hungary

by Jan Paulsen

Because of the relatively high international news profile that the schism in our church in Hungary has had, most of you are acquainted with some of the things that happened. It [the schism] took place almost 15 years ago.

The group has been led by a former leader in our church in Hungary, Oscar Egervari, who is a well-trained theologian with a very, very bright mind. . . . They have today approximately 20 pastors that they are employing and they have their own separate churches throughout the country . . .

At the time of the division of the church, several hundred of our church members who were in sympathy with this particular group of leaders were disfellowshipped wrongly from the church . . . It was done by committee action of the conference and the union and not by the local church. It was in breach of the church manual. But the fact was that 518 persons had their names removed from the church records.

A number of efforts have been made over the years to try to reconcile this group, maybe particularly the last five or six years . . . There were times

when one thought there were hopeful signals that they would come together, but it ruptured again and somehow they drifted farther apart.

Some of their claims and requirements were impossible for the church to meet, such as status as a separate conference directly attached to our division, which is one request that they made a little over a year ago. But we had constantly said to them as a church that we recognized that it was wrong to have disfellowshipped this group of believers . . . We have confessed our sins publicly, and have asked for forgiveness for it and wanted to find ways by which to heal that.

Another element that was very difficult for them to accept is that over a period of many years—three or four decades—our church has been a member of the so-called Council of Free Churches in Hungary. That is a small council, consisting of seven different church entities. Maybe the most prominent in this group were the Baptists and ourselves. They maintained that this involved the church in an ecumenical situation, which was in breach of the way we stand as a church on these issues, and that therefore they would not come back as long as we maintained this particular relationship. There are many arguments one could make, but we won’t take time to do that this morning. Just keep in mind that during the 60s and 70s and 80s, up until just very recently—a few months ago—the Council of Free Churches was an instrument of the government, a sort of clearinghouse of the government. Publishing rights to churches [came] through that particular council. Visits by church officials from outside of Hungary into Hungary—authorization for these visits were channeled through this council—and also visits by church leaders within Hungary out of the country. It was an instrument with several purposes. But nevertheless, it had come to be perceived as an ecumenical activity that we were involved in as a church, and they just simply did not find this acceptable.

They also were very unhappy with the ministerial training that we gave to our young workers in Hungary because they were trained through the theological seminary of the Council for Free Churches. We didn’t have our own training school. . . . Now this sounds worse than it is

because you've got to keep in mind that most of the teachers and most of the subjects that were taught in this seminary were taught by Adventists. So all the other ministers got their training by Adventists. But obviously it left certain holes in the teaching, particularly in regard to areas that are of importance to us as a church. So it was clearly an unsatisfactory way of training our ministers. . . .

Well, last April we had a union session. . . . Prior to the union session in April, from our division, we had made clear to the brethren in Hungary that we wanted the question of the membership in the Council of Free Churches on the agenda for the delegates to consider. . . .

We put it to a secret vote to the delegates, 160 or so. Ninety percent of the delegates voted to pull out of the Council of Free Churches. So that was done. At the same time as they pulled out of the Council of Free Churches, they took an action

endorsing their acceptance of the church's position of our relation to other churches, as it is spelled out in our policy book. They took an action at that time to restructure the whole ministerial training program for our workers.

It is interesting that at the opening meeting of the union session, as an act of courtesy, they had invited one or two of the other church leaders to bring greetings, as is customary in some of these socialist countries when you have a public gathering of this kind. The newly elected president of the Council of Free Churches was there to bring greetings, and used the occasion to give a 20 minute plea for continued membership in the Council of Free Churches. But obviously that didn't pay off.

We received, in June, a letter addressed to the General Conference Committee, sent through our division from the Egervari group, asking that ne-

Reconciliation in Hungary

This is the declaration agreed to by the representatives of the General Conference, Trans-European Division and Hungarian Union, as well as the "Small Committee," referred to by Jan Paulsen in his Annual Council report, as the "Egervari group." For the report from the "Small Committee" on recent developments in Hungary, see pages 62 and 63.

— The Editors

COMMON DECLARATION

which was formulated by the following persons in Szekely Bertalan u. 13., Budapest, on September 13, 1989:

Alf Lohne, Robert Spangler, and Jan Paulsen representing the GC, Jenő Szigeti, Zoltan Mayor, and Sandor Ocsai representing the Union Committee, Oszkar Egervari, Zsuzsa Vanko, and Karoly Sonnleitner representing the Small Committee.

Translator: Laszlo Hangyas

Prior to formulating the Declaration we agreed on the following:

Our conviction is that to be united is God's will. For that reason we make every effort possible to restore the unity of the Adventist Community in Hungary. Our intention is to achieve that goal by September 1990.

DECLARATION

1. We acknowledge that a large group of brethren and sisters were disfellowshipped without having biblical reason and the basis of the Church Manual. In view of that we make a proposal to the Union and the Conferences Committees to rehabilitate and to restore the official membership of the disfellowshipped 518 persons without individual votes.

2. At the Union Session held in April 1989 the position of our Church in view of Relationship with other Christian Churches and

Denominations (See: Working Policy 075) was reaffirmed. We suggest to the Union Committee to make a declaration in regard to the fact that the above mentioned standpoint is authoritative to the Union Committee, and both the Union Committee and the Union President distance themselves from declarations made in disharmony with that standpoint.

3. We acknowledge and reaffirm our responsibilities as Christian citizens in harmony with the standpoint of the world-wide Adventist Community. We make a proposal to the Union Committee to decide and to declare that the employees of the Church as such cannot take any public responsibility or accept appointment—openly or in secret—except if that is approved by the employing organization or by the Union Committee.

4. The Union is willing to make it possible to all Church members to express their conviction freely. It should be made possible also that everybody can express his/her conviction according to Christian moral standards.

5. In this distorted situation which lasts so long we made hurts on both sides and we mutually are ready to work for brotherly forgiveness.

6. A Standing Committee is being formed now to coordinate practical questions related to the preparation of merger. The President of the Division is the Chairman of the Standing Committee with a Deputy-Chairman and the members of the Committee are three plus three representatives from both sides.

Budapest, September 13, 1989

Paulsen, Jan	Vanko, Zsuzsa
Spangler, J. R.	Sonnleitner, Karoly
Lohne, Alf	Mayor, Zoltan
Jeno, Dr. Szigeti	Ocsai, Sandor
Egervari, Oszkar	

gotiations be reopened to seek to mend, to seek to heal the church in Hungary. You see, after the union session in April they also were coming under pressure from many of their own members, who said, "Look, many of the problems are now being resolved. Why don't we go back? That is our spiritual home. We belong to the Adventist church." Many of them wanted to come back . . .

Elder Wilson, Elder Thompson, and I were able to counsel together when we were at Cohutta Springs. In response to that we called a meeting in Hungary, just three weeks ago in Budapest, of the union committee members and of the 17 or 18 members of the corresponding committee in the Egervari group. Pastor Bob Spangler and Pastor Alf Lohne joined me to try to meet with this group to see if we could work through to a solution of the problem. I will have to confess that I went to that meeting . . . wondering if this was going to fare any better.

I was told, just as I came to Budapest three weeks ago, that shortly after we pulled out of the Council of Free Churches the Baptists said, "If the Adventists are gone, why should we stay in the Council of Free Churches?" So they pulled out of the Council of Free Churches. A week before we came, the council itself was abolished.

In the socialist countries of Eastern Europe they have a ministry that deals with religious affairs. And, you know, during the past few months enormous changes have taken place—are taking place—throughout the countries of Eastern Europe—enormous political changes. . . . The ministry that deals with religious affairs in Hungary was also dissolved a few weeks ago . . . The minister who was in charge expressed verbally to me on a visit there that the government is no longer interested in regulating the religious affairs of the people. Let them do what they want and go their own way.

Now to the story of the healing here. They made a number of requests of the union and at the end of our two days of negotiation together a joint declaration was signed. In the first place, it says that the 518 who were wrongly disfellowshipped from the church should be received back into fellowship expeditiously, without delay, without individual vote or discussion. . . . This

would be done over a three to four week period. So I expect that that has been completed. Also, the Egervari group felt that over the years the union committee—the union administration—had made statements that suggested a closer affinity to the ecumenical community than where we comfortably stand as a church. They wanted the union to distance themselves from their position and statements. . . . The union committee said it was no problem. . . . And this was written into the declaration.

They also wanted to be assured that it is possible today in the Adventist church to, as private individuals, have . . . the freedom to think. . . . The union group said, "That is fine with us."

The declaration that was signed says that we believe that it is the will of the Lord that we be united again as an Adventist family in Hungary, that we will work quickly to deal with all the practical issues so that by September of 1990 we can be merged into one church in Hungary.

We will take steps to incorporate many of their ministers back into the regular ministry of the church. Where some need some further education, we will help them with further education. We set down this small committee consisting of three from the union and three from the Egervari side and I met with them. . . . At the end of it all I turned to the Egervari group and said, "When you have a division of this kind there are always two sides. Would it not be true to say that also you have contributed to the pain and hurt that has been caused the Adventist family over the many years? Would it not be right for you to acknowledge that?" And you know, I'll never forget Pastor Egervari got up. . . . with tears running down his face and confessed that they have been part of the hurt and the pain that has been caused the church in Hungary over these past few years and asked for forgiveness. It is a magnificent sight to see brothers and sisters who have been divided and separated for many years . . . parents in one group and children in another, embrace and together confess their sins and their joys at being able to be together again.