



North America Puzzles Over GC Authority

NAD leaders debate the "Total Commitment" statement.

Readers can make up their own minds about the response of North America's denominational leaders to the Total Commitment document by reading the following transcript of discussion at the 1996 year-end meetings of the North American Division (NAD). The vice-president for education for North America, Richard Osborn, distributed the transcript—transcribed, from tape, by Osborn's secretary, Elaine Furrow—to presidents of Adventist colleges and universities in North America (speakers who did not identify themselves are listed as "Unknown"). Readers will note that the wording of the final action was "to receive" the document, not "approve," "endorse," or "adopt," all terms available and sometimes used by denominational bodies in response to other documents.

—The Editors

This debate began with a motion offered by Harold Baptiste (NAD Secretary) that the "Total Commitment to God" document be adopted by the North American Division.

ALFRED C. MCCLURE (NAD PRESIDENT): I have before us now the document. I trust that you understand its intent. I believe the purpose of this call is that we

each one take seriously our own relationship to the Lord and the responsibility that we have as leaders in God's Church for seeing that the resources, personnel, the objectives are those that are faithful to that which we proclaim and that we are doing our very best in carrying out that commission. I recognize that it is possible for some to interpret what is being proposed here as a heavy hand or a big brother or whatever term one might choose to use. However, I don't believe that is the intent. It is not suggesting that we need to check up on one another but that we do have responsibility as individuals and as leaders to see that we are faithful to that which we have been called and that we are giving the kind of leadership that keeps us on task. Now there may be comments or questions. However, before doing that, before opening the floor to that, I would like to propose that Elder Jacobsen come forward and share with the group the recommendations from the division officers and union presidents relative to how this document and its response might be handled.

DON JACOBSEN (ASSISTANT TO THE NAD PRESIDENT): Let me read all four of these and then I don't know if you want to deal with them separately or not, but

there really are four categories of actions. The first action we're recommending is to refer to the Health Care Summit, which will be held in December of this year, questions about the implementation of the "Total Commitment" document sections that relate to health care institutions. Near the same time in the same place the Higher Education Summit will be held, and the next one is to refer to the NAD Higher Education Summit in December. Questions about the implementation of the "Total Commitment" document sections that relate to colleges/universities are the two major ones. Next one is a little different—to ask the North American Division Office of Education, along with the union directors of education to develop spiritual assessment models for use by K-12 schools. The proposed models will be submitted to the NAD Board of Education, K-12, in February 1998. And finally to establish a representative committee to be determined by the chair that would have representation from all across the division, especially of pastors, to establish procedures for implementing other sections of the "Total Commitment" document. Numbers 1, 2, and 4 we would propose would come back to this meeting in October of 1997.

McCLURE: All right, thank you. We have a motion on the floor now, so we're not probably ready for that motion, but at least I thought you ought to hear that recommendation before we take an action on the motion before us, and then we might want to take an action on that which was recommended.

ELIZABETH STERNDAL (NAD WOMEN'S MINISTRIES DIRECTOR): Just as I was hearing it read and before I heard these four things, I wondered where it would go. And it occurred to me that, as you stated, it seemed as though it might be a little heavy handed kind of thing that we were expected to vote on. And I wondered if it would be appropriate to footnote it to our mission statement, but not have it as a stand-alone document. That was before I heard these pieces, so I think we need to go on and discuss it more, but it just seemed to me that it should be a document that attaches to our mission statement rather than a document that stands alone.

McCLURE: Are there other comments?

UNKNOWN: Mr. Chairman, I think it is a good document, but my concern is the title of the document, "Total Commitment to God." We as a church continue to emphasize doing; it's what you do rather than what you are to become. And I'm concerned someone might get the idea that I can do these things and I'm committed to God. And I've gone to some churches where you have individuals who are able to do all of the things that you listed here as a pastor, or maybe even in the area of education, and they may not be totally committed to God. Could we rather name this document, "Expectations of the Church" rather than "Total Commitment to God"?

McCLURE: You make a good point, except that we don't have the option of changing the document, even the title, because this is simply a document that has been voted by the world church, so it is in place. And therefore we are simply considering it as accepting here and then deciding what to do with it.

UNKNOWN: A second concern is that as you went through the documents I did not discover a biblical basis for all of the

items that you suggested here, and normally we set a basis, a framework, a theological framework and, as you say, we can't change it here, but I would suggest that maybe we would recommend that they would change the title from "Total Commitment" to maybe some other title.

McCLURE: Thank you.

UNKNOWN: Mr. Chairman, a question first and then maybe a follow-up comment. Explain to me, please, what the intent of the motion is or what is the motion. I want to be sure what we are discussing.

McCLURE: The motion is that we accept this document as a part of the North American Division minutes and then we will decide how we want to respond to it.

UNKNOWN: And what will that mean if we do that?

McCLURE: It will mean that we are a part of the world church that is recognizing this document as having been voted by the world church and we're accepting it in this division.

UNKNOWN: Is it my incorrect understanding that the Annual Council voted it as a working document, which gives to it some sense of perhaps being adjusted in the future?

McCLURE: Elder Baptiste, do you recall the exact wording? Elder Thompson is here, too. Maybe he could help us with that question?

G. RALPH THOMPSON (GC SECRETARY): My understanding, Mr. Chairman, is that that is a possibility. It's a document that we will use to improve our effectiveness, mission, to integrate mission in all aspects of the functioning of the church or that it could be modified or expanded in later years.

UNKNOWN: In the context of our conversation yesterday morning about the difference between guidelines and policy, would it be fair to suggest that a document comes even before guidelines or is that synonymous with guidelines or policy? I'm trying to determine what it is we're voting.

McCLURE: Right. We're not voting policy. I suppose this could come in the arena of a guideline.

UNKNOWN: Mr. Chairman, I would suggest to the body, then, that we ought to vote here is a recording in the minutes that the document was presented to us, but not to reflect in the minutes any kind of action that might suggest total acceptance of it. I'm not opposed to the other four motions that send it on for further discussion and indication of how we implement it. But I think any action that's taken here without some of that discussion, without knowing what in the future may happen to the document, may be too much of a bite to take at this point.

McCLURE: Thank you.

JANET WALLENKAMP (ATLANTIC UNION): This document I think I agree with completely and the goals are worthwhile and noble. I don't find anything in it though that seems new to any of the arenas that are mentioned, including individual members. And I guess what worries me is this constant reference to assessment and evaluation means that really our commitment to God is something we answer to God alone with, and it seems to me that in a time where many of the church members are worried about it being more and more a "top down" church rather than a "bottom up" church that this adds more to the "top down" effect of the church. And I just don't know about the implementation. That worries me that our spiritual life already has a measurement in the Word of God and the Holy Spirit each convicting us. I think these institutions mentioned may benefit from this as a model for their own mission statements, but I worry about this reference to assessment and evaluation.

McCLURE: Thank you. I think you will discover that when it comes to reference to the individual member, there is nothing that suggests an assessment plan. That's for the individual to develop on his or her own. Our institutions are not islands. They are a part of an organization for which there is responsibility and accountability. And I think what is suggested here is not some "super snoop," but rather that those institutions be

encouraged to develop their own assessment model so that they will know whether or not they are accomplishing just that which they are saying they do. That I see as the intent of the document and I believe personally I think we have responsibility as an organization to see that that happens whatever responsibility we carry, whether it be a conference or a union or a division or the General Conference itself or an institution—that we just make sure that we are able to do that which we say we are doing. We proclaim that which we say we are accomplishing the mission of the church. What measures do we take to assess that?

H. BOWMAN: “Total Commitment to God” or spiritual accountability? But then I do want to express three concerns. One concern has been alluded to and that is, for many, many years the Seventh-day Adventist Church functioned as kind of a “top-down” structure. The directions came from up above and those of us below followed the directions. And we’ve been endeavoring to change that for some years. Saying that now we want to look at the grass roots and find out what the needs are and then the service organizations up above look at how they can meet those needs. This kind of flied in the face of that relatively newly stated philosophy. Because it comes to us saying this has been voted by the world church and are we a part of the world church? If so, then we need to vote to approve it. When those of us at least who are leaders of the conferences in the North American Division haven’t even seen it, that’s out of harmony with the method of procedure that we say we are following. And so that troubles me greatly. I’m troubled with a statement here on page 7. “Someday, at the great judgment bar, the Lord will ask, ‘What have you done, relying on My grace, with the gifts, talents, and opportunities I gave you?’” I don’t question that God is going to be concerned about what we have done with the in-filling of grace to serve him effectively. But my understanding is that the first question he’s going to ask is, “What have you done with my Son, Jesus?” It seems that this statement, as innocent as it may appear, really plays into the hands of those who are significantly emphasizing that the grace spoken about is power that God

gives to us for obedience rather than a grace that accepts us as we are without having to prove ourselves to God first. I sense that that is not totally in harmony with the gospel, at least as how I understand it, and as I understand that Seventh-day Adventists proclaim it. Then on page 5, under the section total commitment regarding colleges and universities, in the right-hand column it says, “employing fully committed, professionally competent Seventh-day Adventist teachers, who are actively involved in their local church, and who integrate faith and learning in the context of nurturing their students,” and so on.

The last paragraph in that section says that there must be a “spiritual master plan” developed by each institution, and this would be submitted to a General Conference-appointed international panel. A couple of concerns about that—first of all, there are occasions when we are not able to find Seventh-day Adventist individuals to fill certain positions, and occasionally we need to hire Christians who come from other communities of faith to serve in our institutions. This tends to eliminate that as an option. Or, in the very least, if an institution does find it necessary to do so, once again it gives a basis for significant criticism of that institution for functioning outside the recommendations of this document. And then I’m wondering why is it that the General Conference-appointed panel will be the one that will evaluate the spiritual master plan of institutions that are a part of a division and not General Conference institutions as such. I can understand Andrews University, Loma Linda University doing this, but colleges and universities that are operated by unions, it would seem to me if there is such a panel, that panel would be made up of division personnel rather than international General Conference personnel. It seems to me that this has potential to open up areas of significant concern and significant criticism to be directed toward some of our institutions. So those are some concerns that I have.

McCLURE: Thank you. That is helpful. You will recall that it is being recommended that this particular section be referred to the Higher Education Cabinet which will be meeting and which

will involve leadership of all those institutions in just deciding how to respond to it.

G. EDWARD REID (NAD STEWARDSHIP DIRECTOR): I would like to refer to the very first paragraph. Someone asked earlier what is the biblical basis for this and obviously we have a text there upon which the entire document rests. My concern is that the text is not spelled out completely. I think, personally, from my perspective of the great commission or the gospel commission that it actually has three parts and that is to go teach, to baptize, and then teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. In my personal judgment, an evangelical Protestant church could take this as it stands without that third component and we spent a great deal of time in the pre-session and also when we talked about church planting of upholding the unique standards of the Adventist Church and of course we’ve been talking about Net ’96 and what makes the uniqueness of the Adventist Church and so on. So I would like to see us include the full text. Obviously verse 20 is not even written out here, but if we’re only going to have one text, we should include the whole thing which would include teaching them to observe all things.

McCLURE: That you. Your comments are being recorded so that we can pass them along.

LENARD D. JAECKS (WASHINGTON CONFERENCE PRESIDENT): As I listen to Ed Reid’s speech and then the other two, I think it is very important that we understand our personal accountability to God. And I know the caution of top-down. I wish we didn’t use that quite as often as we did because I think God is on the top. And the fact of the matter is, as I understand the doctrine of the church, that yes, we are accountable to God, but he has given us a church, a body of believers that we are accountable to. And I’m afraid, at times, in our earnestness to talk about our accountability to God alone, we bypass the concept that God has given to us of mutual accountability. The eye does not say, “I am alone.” It is in a body. And I like that concept because I want to be accountable to God, but I need the members of

the body to help me understand what that is. And I think there is greater safety there. Our whole philosophy of church governance is based upon that. I don't decide, for example, that I want to be ordained. It is the body that decides that. Even the service of marriage is not just two people saying, "Well, we want to be accountable to each other so we'll go off and do it." We have accountability within the body. So while I can see some reservations, I understand, I think I understand, I'm trying to understand the concern about assessment. Maybe there is a better word someday for assessment. But to have someone, for instance, in prayer that I'm accountable to—that has been very helpful to me. I have found it a great blessing. So I hope that as we're thinking about top-down, which is a factor that needs to be always understood, that we will appreciate the need for a broader life. I think if there's anything that we need to fear in this age, [it] is our own personal independence—that we know that we have all the answers. God has chosen as I understand it to contact us and be in contact with us individually. That's one fact, but the whole philosophy of church is mutual accountability, mutual encouragement, mutual teaching, and I'm afraid that we miss that sometimes, by this very earnest desire of saying, "Well, I have my direct contact with God." So, Mr. Chairman, I have not read this document a great deal in advance myself. I think it's a safe position to be in as we're working through it. We're going to bump into some things. Maybe that's the good part of the document. It tests some of our ideas and reminds us that we are a part of a body life.

McCLURE: Thank you.

UNKNOWN (ARIZONA LAY DELEGATE): I guess my concern with this document is what's not here. As I read the document, I don't find a great deal of emphasis on the management of change. We live in a fast-paced society that's changing right before our eyes. And I think we would all agree that our doctrines are not subject to change, but I would guess that everything else ought to be. And one of the difficulties of the situation like this, is that we can do an assessment, satisfy ourselves that we have met the criteria, and be totally irrelevant to

the needs that we're trying to meet. And so my concern would be—is—with the evaluation, and I don't see that here, so I don't know how we're planning to do that. But this document, if it is to be effective, needs to relate to the fact that we are ministering to people that are constantly changing. Our methods must change. Our focus, even though it is to preach the gospel, will probably result in many packages. How many of us a few years ago would have even conceived of Net '95 and '96? And how many are prepared to go to the change that will be required of us in the future to stay on the cutting edge? Very difficult sometimes in assessments to make sure that you're assessing the right thing and that we are, in fact, meeting the needs. Hopefully this document does not become a document that gives us a false sense of security.

McCLURE: Good. Thank you for the great counsel.

KEVIN SULLIVAN (ATLANTIC UNION): I'm a school teacher, and this is my first time here. And if my remarks sound somewhat emotional, there's nothing I can do to hide that. I'm speaking with some [discomfort] and, as you mentioned yourself, Elder McClure, this may sound heavy-handed. From my experience, I came out of the Roman Catholic Church and anything to me that speaks to the opening of a door where morality is legislated, I react very strongly to. One last experience I had with the Roman Catholic Church was I had become a Christian. I had become converted to Christ and I went back to attending the Catholic Church, and I remember going after Mass to the priest, saying I wanted to make a confession, I wanted to make things right. And there he stood, looking at his watch, with a cigarette in his hand, staring out of the window, and I'm pouring out my heart to this man. And it seemed to me that under these kind of guidelines he was doing his job. He would have said to his superiors, "Of course, you know, here's a guy coming back. I heard his confession." Maybe some kind of notch in his report or in his belt, but was he really doing what needed to be done, which was giving attention to a young person who was searching for God? And I would say, No. Now, I think the danger is that when we

create a document, if we're going to create it, there's got to be follow through. If we're going to create a document that creates accountability, then we're going to have to follow it through or it doesn't mean anything. And when spirituality is based on observable facts or numbers or behavior, I have a problem with that. We had a problem in the 18th century. I'm not saying this is where it's going to go, but I think we need to be cautious that it could go this way. With the Salem witch trials, this is why we have the First Amendment. The morality is not supposed to be legislated.

And one last comment. I found that in terms of a person's spirituality, I think it is largely personal. I think that my behavior as a teacher, in the way I perform, I'm accountable to my superintendent. And there have been times when I've had suggestions from them to improve my teaching that I've tried to take and has worked very well. But if you're trying to get people to be more spiritual and to be more dedicated to God, I really think that is the job of the Holy Spirit. Other people may disagree with me, but looking back over my 10 years of [being] a teacher, the things that have been most effective have [not] been things that I have been told to do because it's my job. If I'm speaking and giving a Bible lesson to children, I see their eyes opening wide and sometimes their eyes filling with tears. That's the Holy Spirit; that's not my superintendent looking over [my] shoulder. Or this past year, when our pastor had a broken leg and he was pretty much out of action, it was the Holy Spirit that told me to get on board with the Net '96, push it through, go to the zoning board meetings, organize the church. I'm not saying that to my credit; I'm just saying that that wasn't because it was some document. It was because God was moving me. And I'm just not saying that this is wrong. I'm saying we need to be very cautious. Thank you.

McCLURE: Thank you. Well stated. I would remind you that the recommendation that follows is that any procedure will come back for decision by this group next year.

GORDON BIETZ (GEORGIA-CUMBERLAND CONFERENCE PRESIDENT): This is a real good

news, bad news document. I think there are some very positive things. Many of us in leadership positions are always trying to figure out ways to have better relationships of accountability with people that we work with and I think that that is some very positive side of that. It could, however, look like an audit. And I think that some of us might have a little angst if the audit was conducted by the General Conference committee rather than my nominating committee. My nominating committee audits me every three years quite carefully, and I think that the prime locus for that kind of activity comes through the presently constituted bodies rather than shuffling those responsibilities to bodies that are not in the present organization. The real devil is going to be in the details of how this is implemented and produced, and I think that's where the people that you choose to put on those committees that are going to come back to us with the recommendations are going to be making the kinds of decisions that . . . well, we'll have a lot more discussion next time, probably. Thanks.

HARRISON PERLA (CENTRAL CALIFORNIA CONFERENCE): Mr. Chairperson, I think this document has an incredible amount of potential and it's definitely heading in the right direction; however, the motion at hand is to accept this document, and I have a problem with the fact [that] apparently it's been accepted already by a higher body. So the motion in itself is inappropriate. It's evident by the number of comments that there is an incredible amount of discussion still needed on this document, at least among the North American Division delegates, and our suggestion is—I think what I'm hearing—is that we'd like some time to study this. So the motion, I think, needs to be amended or a previous gentleman's comments were that the minutes could state that it was presented. I'm not sure that we're accepting it. We feel it needs more revision.

McCLURE: Thank you. The motion is to accept and record it in our minutes with the proposal that we will then deal with how we direct it at that point.

ROGER DUDLEY (INSTITUTE OF CHURCH MINISTRY, Andrews University): The description of total commitment to God in

the document, I wouldn't have any trouble with. I think it is a fine description of what we might be, but I would like to come back again to the question of the assessment, a word that appears quite frequently in the document. In a discussion with one of the delegates a few minutes ago that stood at this microphone, you indicated that there was no attempt to spiritually assess individuals—church members—and that's I think quite correct, but I do notice on page four under the pastor, [at] the very bottom of the first column it says, "The division will facilitate the development of an assessment model, to be implemented by each union/local conference, which includes a self-assessment module" and so forth, and this is in connection with where it talks about spiritual outcome. Now, it's a little vague, maybe, the way it's worded, but I'm wondering if this means that the division office is going to prepare some kind of an assessment instrument that will assess the spirituality of each pastor. I mean, it could be interpreted that way. If so, I have several [questions] and then I would assume that if that's true that that might be true with the workers in the various institutions whether they are elementary, secondary, health institutions, or colleges/universities, food services, or whatever. I have quite a bit of experience with assessment instruments, as you may know, and spirituality is a very difficult thing to assess with an instrument. There are some instruments that do attempt to assess spirituality, and they may have some usefulness when they are used for self evaluation and this type of thing. But I think the underlying question in this document, which it doesn't ever state, one way or the other, but the underlying question is, Are these assessments to be used for hiring and firing? Are we talking about employment through this type of thing? Would people be assessed and then be discharged from their jobs or refused jobs because of this assessment? That would be a rather risky piece of instrument. I don't say that it says that, but the underlying tone suggests that it might possibly be, and I think we need to bring that out in the open and ask the question, if that's what we are talking about.

McCLURE: I couldn't agree with you more, Roger.

UNKNOWN: I may be jumping ahead of where we're at just a little bit, but it may make us more comfortable perhaps if we know where we're headed, looking at these four recommendations that we might vote on. If we looked at the fourth one and expanded it not only to establish procedure but also revising it. If this needs strengthening, certainly that's something that we can recommend to the General Conference Annual Council that they do and certainly as other world divisions are reviewing it, they'll find as they try and make application of it that it can be clarified in ways that will be more helpful in their fields as well. I would rather look at this as—well, you said it was not a policy, but it's a working document. And we have a notebook filled with working documents that we're revising, and I think if we can work on revisions of this, because it does have many admirable goals and aims in it, and if we can make it more functional and useful and have a committee that would be assigned to bring back recommendations not only for us to consider but that we could refer then to the General Conference as well to strengthen and clarify many of the concerns that have been expressed. I realize, though, that if we did that, the first three motions there may need to be postponed so that those organizations would know just exactly what document they would be responding to. But I think it might make us feel better if we knew that this was a document that was going to receive further work and clarification.

McCLURE: All right. Thank you. Obviously this is not etched in stone. I think we need to look at it in a way that has been suggested. We can make suggestions for change, but concurrently we ought to look at how we might feel it is appropriate that we respond to the suggestion made here.

UNKNOWN: I'm glad to see my namesake at the other mike because I was hoping to hear something about how the document was developed and put into place at the higher bodies. I would like to hear that.

McCLURE: All right. Thank you. Elder Thompson, would you like to comment?

THOMPSON: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to talk about the top-down, bottom-up references. I think we must remember that the Annual Council and this past quinquennium, two of them have [been] outside the United States. Three of them will be held here. According to the constitutional provisions voted at Utrecht last year, all the world union presidents . . . have been members of the GC Committee for many, many years but never attended. Provisions have been made for them to attend, so they were all there—all the world union presidents. From every division we have three lay persons plus pastors plus front line workers from each division. Then in the division where the Annual Council is held, all conference or mission presidents are voted to attend with voice and vote. So three out of the five annual councils within the quinquennium will be held here in this division with all the North American local conference presidents in attendance with voice and vote. Now I heard that there is a document that North American presidents weren't there. Well, when we vote Annual Council actions during those three times when it is held here with all North American Division union presidents, conference presidents, all of the other conference presidents of the 11 other divisions would have to say, "Well, I was represented." So I hope when the shoe is on the other foot, we recognize that we are engaged in a world church. And when you have all the world union presidents, when you have pastors and divisions of the world, when you have lay members from the world, when you have the whole world division officers present—now, according to how this church works, we are a representative body. We can't invite 9,055,000 members that we now have to an Annual Council. Hence, I have to conclude that within the representative form of this church, with all the union presidents of North America and the division officers, including those of the other world fields, they represent me. I may not agree with everything that was voted, but certainly as we work as a world church, that's the representative process. And the North American group will have more to say to the world than the other group because you will have three of these Annual Councils held here where in one division one will be held. We were hoping

to go to the Far Eastern Division, which will be changed in name. The Northern Asia Pacific Division next time. If we don't, then we'll go back to Brazil, which will be the South American Division in 1998. So, you know, we've got to remember the governance system of the church, which works, and that each one of us cannot be present for every meeting to speak for ourselves. Somebody speaks for us. And when we take an action at the General Conference Annual Council, with that kind of representation from the world field, including our own division leadership, then even though I may not agree with every word or sentence or expression, I can't say I wasn't represented. We were represented. Our leaders were there. And within the governance of the church, that's how it operates.

Now this paper, as you know, has been long in being born. It went through many, many, many different revisions and additions—emendations. Sent out to the world division leaders for their input. And it came through the process to the GC officers and division officers.

Then it went to the floor of the Annual Council for discussion and everything else and so it has come to us. Nothing that the General Conference votes is like the laws of the Medes and Persians. That's why even policies and recommendations and guidelines voted by this church are dynamic. They can be changed at any Annual Council as expedient in implementation as the field dictates. So the answer to whether or not this is stuck like this for the rest of time and eternity, no. Observations will come from all the world divisions—not just one, all the world divisions—and then if it seen fit that something needs to be changed through the regular process of change that we bring through Annual Council, it will be done. But indeed the world divisions, together, including North America at an Annual Council discussed this document, voted it, and I think, Brother Chairman, what you have done here with the four recommended areas to go is the area in which every division should be working and will be working as to how they will now implement or go about implementing some of the things that are written here and each

VOTED Action:

581-96N TOTAL COMMITMENT TO GOD—A DECLARATION OF SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE FAMILY OF FAITH

VOTED, 1. To receive the document entitled, Total Commitment to God, A Declaration of Spiritual Accountability in the Family of Faith, with the following recommendations for action:

2. To refer to the Health Care Summit in December 1996, questions about the implementation and any necessary revisions of the Total Commitment To God document sections that relate to Health Care institutions.

3. To refer to the North American Division Higher Education Summit in December 1996 questions about the implementation and any necessary revisions of the Total Commitment To God document sections that relate to colleges and universities.

4. To ask the North American Division Office of Education, along with the Union Directors of Education, to develop spiritual assessment models for use by K-12 schools and any necessary revisions to the Total Commitment To God document. The proposed models will be submitted to the NAD Board of Education, K-12 in February 1998.

5. To establish a representative committee to be determined by the chair to establish procedures for implementing other sections and necessary revisions of the Total Commitment To God document.

division will probably be different in its implementation. Thank you.

McCLURE: Thank you, Elder Thompson.

JUDY ST. JOHN (PACIFIC UNION): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Now I know how Bob Dole must feel when he has to follow Bill Clinton in one of the debates. That was very moving. Thank you. My name is Judy St. John. I'm a lay representative from the Pacific Union. I've been interested in the comments that have been going on today about top-down versus bottom-up. This is my first time to ever attend one of these meetings, and I'm struggling to understand a lot of what is going on. However, I would like to make a few comments about this document. In our U.S. Constitution, if a revision is wanting to be made, then it seems to me that it may be passed by Congress but then it is voted on by each individual state before that change is made. We're caught in sort of a "Catch-22" situation right now because there are those of us who may have reservations about this, and yet we're already being told that it is being imposed on us by a vote of the world church. So in one sense I'm not quite sure why we're wasting our time in debate because it seems to me it is somewhat of a foregone conclusion and yet we're called to be here to represent our church and to think about these matters. Maybe some of you have seen this document before, as this gentleman alluded to, but you know I was handed it 10 minutes ago or 15 minutes ago and it was read through and now we're expected to assimilate all of it and to understand it. We're already a church that is perceived by the outside world as having rule upon rule upon rule upon rule. Sometimes I think we're like the scribes and the Pharisees, and now we're being asked to adopt still another set of rules. It makes me wonder whether we really believe that we're saved by works or saved by faith. One problem that I have with this is that if the local program, whatever it may be, of a school, a church, a college, a conference is being assessed, the people who are doing the assessment may not perceive that that institution is fulfilling the local need. Because the needs of my church in Newbury Park, California, for instance, may be vastly different from the local church needs of the Silver

Spring, Maryland, church. While as a lay person I am all for more accountability on the part of our church institutions, I believe that that accountability rests with the local governing board and that we are to some degree trying to usurp or supersede the power of the local conference executive committee, the local school board, the local college board—and I really wonder where we're going with this document. Thank you.

McCLURE: Thank you. Once again, we're simply, we have before us a motion to record in our minutes that we have heard, reviewed the document. We're not suggesting that it must be assimilated at this point. We're suggesting that it be done over the course of the next year and that we put in place, we assign a certain group responsibility for helping us to design ways in which we might address this document. The thing that I think is important to also reiterate, it is, I believe, designed to provide for the governing body of those organizations to be the one who makes the assessment. So I hope we don't become too concerned at this point before we see how we will decide to enact or to work on or to respond to that which is being suggested here. Are you ready to vote?

UNKNOWN: I think you have dealt with most of what I was planning on saying, but perhaps a little word could help here. In church assemblies in other denominations, interchurch assemblies, too, there is a term that is used often with documents that are taken to the assembly and in this case may fit. To receive the document and then have the time as it has been already suggested to study that in more detail. We are really not prepared after just seeing the document for a few minutes to give definitive answers. And I think the proposal with the four actions suggested would allow committees to study it in more detail and bring whatever good recommendations come out of those committees to the year-end meetings this next year. So I'm just suggesting the possibility of using the term to *receive* the document as an option.

McCLURE: That is fully the intent. Thank you very much for the clarification.

MARY LOU TOOP (CANADIAN UNION): My question was, every time you've men-

tioned what we're doing, you've changed the actual words and I would feel real comfortable with the last time you did it you sounded like that's what you were meaning, but earlier you had said that we're accepting it. And I just wanted to be really clear before we vote what the intent is.

McCLURE: OK. Thank you. Elder Baptiste, would you restate the motion?

BAPTISTE: To be historically accurate, Brother Chairman, I use the word *adopt*. When I made the motion I used the word *adopt*. We can modify that, but that was my perception at the time.

McCLURE: I'm sorry, I didn't hear you. The motion before us is to receive the document. Yes, please.

MARK BUELER (FLORIDA CONFERENCE): Mr. Chairman, my name is Mark Bueler, I'm a layman down there. You've mentioned several times that the assessment process seems to be established by the division or the General Conference in most of the cases where it refers to an assessment. So I think there needs to be some clarification. It may be that the local, that the governing body actually implements whatever the process is, but it seems that the assessment process itself is division-generated or General Conference-generated.

McCLURE: Thank you for the clarification. I believe it is the intent that the assessment activity would take place at the level at which it is appropriate. However, it is suggested concurrently that a process be developed so that there is some uniformity in dealing with the various organizations, but that the assessment activity take place within the organization itself. Does that help? I see no one at the microphone. We're ready to vote on the motion that is to receive the document. All who favor the document please say, "Aye." Opposed, "No." That is carried. Now do you wish to take an action on the implementation procedure. All right, you have the recommendation before you, it's been read once. Do you want to hear it read again? It's been moved and seconded. Yes, please.

UNKNOWN: I would move that we amend

the fourth one to establish procedures for implementing and revising. Well, I'm wanting something broader than that because I'm not just wanting the other sections of the "Total Commitment" document, but I'd like to empower this representative committee to bring back proposed revisions to any part of the document to us next year. And however the secretary would like to incorporate that into a revised vote motion, I'd be happy for that. But I'd like for the intent to be that not only implementation, but also the very document itself with proposed revisions come back next year.

McCLURE: I'm not sure I understand your intent. Is it your intent that the proposed revisions be recommended to the body from which it was voted?

UNKNOWN: No. Whether we have this representative committee bring back a report next year, not only with proposed implementation, but proposed revisions, if necessary, to the document itself. We still have not adopted the document, so I'm assuming at some point down the road we are going to have to adopt it. So I'm wanting to ask that this committee . . . bring back revisions in a document that we could consider for adoption later on.

McCLURE: Is there support for that amendment?

H. BAPTISTE: I'm suggesting—if I understand you carefully—I think you're suggesting that it should read something like this: "To establish a representative committee to be determined by the chair to establish procedures for implementing and revising"—just simply "add and revising sections of the 'Total Commitment' document." Just want the committee to also bring revisions.

UNKNOWN: Bring revisions.

McCLURE: Suggested revisions.

ELMER MALCOLM (NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE PRESIDENT): I had a question regarding revisions of the document. It doesn't seem to me that we have the authority to revise the document. We may have the authority to make decisions in addressing the document, but

it's been stated by Elder Thompson the process this has gone through. We have certainly been represented there, and it's not our position as a body here at the North American Division to reorganize this document or edit or adjust this document. So I would have a problem with a portion of this motion.

McCLURE: It is my recommendation that this body, as being suggested here, would make suggestions to the appropriate body for change. I concur with you that I don't think we have the authority to change the document.

MALCOLM: Recommendations could be made or appeals made to the body, but changes, no.

McCLURE: Rick, is that your understanding?

UNKNOWN: Yes.

McCLURE: Yes, please.

UNKNOWN: If this doesn't have the authority of a policy, why can it not be altered? I mean, if it's only a working document, can not that be adapted to that division?

McCLURE: You're asking some very difficult questions. (Laughter.) My answer to that is, No. (Laughter.)

DALE KONGORSKI (ALBERTA CONFERENCE PRESIDENT): I have a question on the amendment that has been offered. If it's an appropriate amendment because it seems to me that indeed it would, it is hostile to the intention of the original motion which was to adopt these four things. The adopting of the amendment would pretty much eliminate the first three items on this sheet because really how can these different groups address the document if the document is under revision? How would they address the implementation of the document if they don't know what it is they're implementing? And so it seems to me that it is almost a hostile amendment which is not allowable.

McCLURE: Thank you.

TOOP: I'm Mary Lou Toop from the Canadian Union and I'm a lay person, so

I'm not 100 percent sure of the structure of everything, but my question has to do with something on page six with the Adventist institutions for mass communication, including the ABCs and the publishing houses. It's the first point saying that "distribution only of that which contributes to gospel proclamation and the nurturing of church members." I know in the ABC they sell non-denominational literature plus games and food and lots of stuff that doesn't proclaim the gospel. So I'm just wondering, is there a body like the Health Care Summit or something that those things would be referred to specifically so they're dealt with by the publishing house boards or whatever?

McCLURE: I think the motion before us at the moment provides for that possibility.

TOOP: OK. So that would probably go for that.

McCLURE: Are you ready to vote on the motion? All in favor, please say "Aye." Opposed, "No." It's carried. We have come to a point in the day that there is probably not a lot of need for trying to do something else before we eat. There are some announcements that we need to make and Elder Jacobsen, would you please bring those on. Yes . . .

UNKNOWN: Mr. Chairman, I'm sorry to pause here, but it was my understanding there was an amendment to the motion on the floor. And we sort of voted everything in one capsule there, and I'm not quite sure what we voted.

McCLURE: Thank you very much for helping the chair to come to his senses. In the mind of the chair, we were voting on the document, but perhaps we ought to make clear what we were doing and therefore we ought to back up and take a motion on the amendment which is to add the wording, please.

BAPTISTE: To add the wording—let me get my notes—to provide for recommendations of revisions and under recommendation number four. So that this small committee, we'll edit it appropriately, but it would read something like this: To establish a representative committee to be determined by the chair to

establish procedures for implementing of the sections of the total document and recommendations for revisions.

McCLURE: Do you wish to speak to that?

UNKNOWN: I'll speak after they vote on that.

McCLURE: Let's vote on that amendment. All in favor please say, "Aye." Opposed, "No." Let's try again. All in favor, please say, "Aye." Opposed, "No." We're not ready to go to lunch, are we? All in favor

of the motion please raise the hand. Thank you. Those opposed, the same sign. It's carried.

UNKNOWN: Mr. Chairman, I believe that if we revise or amend the last point on this page here, that we really ought to do the same for the first two points, because as it is stated here, the expectation is that these two summits would implement, would discuss implementation of the document, and have no context in terms of revision or its impact. It seems to me that same revision ought to be done for

those first two points on the document as well. And I would move that amendment.

McCLURE: OK. Ready to vote on that amendment? All in favor please say—no, raise the hand. Thank you. Those opposed, the same sign. Well, we got closer to unanimity on that one than we did the first one. Now, Elder Jacobsen. You can see I'm hungry. Ready to vote on the main motion? All those in favor please say, "Aye." Opposed, "No." It's carried.