



Peace Talk on Adventist Campuses

By Nicole Higgins and Alexander Carpenter

The outbreak of war has again raised the issue of how far Seventh-day Adventists will become involved in military activities. Growing out of an early antifederalist, isolationist tradition, the Church has often straddled the fence in wartime between jingoism and pacifism. However, with several hundred fellow believers in Iraq and many Adventists now serving in combat, the Church can no longer afford to assume this middle position.

Although official church policy has urged members who enter the military to claim noncombatant status, recent Adventist actions in Rwanda and Fiji have revealed a global character quite different from that displayed by Desmond Doss, the decorated World War II hero who served as a medic rather than bear arms. Awareness of this change has raised concerns among a growing number of Adventist faculty and students, whose concerns have escalated in view of the American drive for war and the outbreak of hostilities in Iraq.

The following article is a roundup of recent peace-promoting activities known to exist on Adventist college and university campuses around the world. The authors have also contacted seven others that have reported no organized antiwar activity. These were: Avondale College, Canadian University College, Heldeberg College, Kettering College of Medical Arts, Loma Linda University, Southern Adventist University, and Southwestern Adventist University.

Andrews University

Andrews University has recently hosted a number of peace initiatives.

Early last fall, social work master's student Melaine Neufield applied to the Fourth Freedom Forum for a grant to fund activities in opposition to war with Iraq. In October, she was awarded \$1,000 and soon after joined with political science professor Jane Sabes to organize the Peace Initiative student club, which at present has about twenty members.

Current projects of the Peace Initiative include a contest to design a peace T-shirt, which will be sold on campus to raise awareness and

funding. The group is also developing a books-of-peace display at Andrews University's James White Library and working with campus ethnic clubs to promote intracampus dialogue on peace. Several of the Initiative's members have also attended local antiwar protests.

On February 6, Andrews University students Bjorn Karlman and Alexander Carpenter organized a debate entitled "Why Whack Iraq?" which was held during an English department assembly. The debate attracted more than 170 students, as well as reporters from two local newspapers, who covered the proceedings. According to Scott Moncrieff, chair of the English department, the debate attracted the largest crowd that he had seen at a departmental assembly in fifteen years. In the final count, the pro peace side won the debate by twenty votes.

On February 20, Colman McCarthy, syndicated columnist, editorial page writer for the *Washington Post*, and adjunct professor at Georgetown University Law Center spoke at a campus-wide assembly. Calling himself a pacifist-anarchist, McCarthy enlightened students about the pacifist tradition in America. He urged them to oppose all violence and to petition for a class devoted to the philosophy of peace.

The Student Movement, Andrews University's student newspaper, has recently featured several pieces about war with Iraq, as well as a number of related letters to the editor. In addition, with Peace Initiative funding it, published a statement from professors James Hayward, Gary Land, Shandelle Henson, Dennis Woodland, Josef Greig, Linda Mack, Lael Caesar, Don Rhoads, and others in opposition to the war.

Atlantic Union College

Student leaders at Atlantic Union College have recently been considering what they can do on campus to promote peace. Among possibilities they envision are having an antiwar demonstration in neighboring South Lancaster, Massachusetts, and putting up a banner stating that Atlantic Union College students promote peace.

The student association has also tried to place televisions in prominent places on campus, with the intention of showing news only. According to student

association president Kirstie Colin, doing so might help inform students who would otherwise be ignorant of current events. Discussion of the Iraqi situation is common in history and English classes on campus, Colin also reports, and last semester Atlantic Union College had a "discussion night" about war with Iraq.

Columbia Union College

On January 20, at least thirteen faculty and students connected with Columbia Union College participated in a peace procession that started at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., and proceeded to Lafayette Square, across from the White House.

The group, which numbered about three thousand, then prayed for peace. According to history professor Doug Morgan, students from Columbia Union College who attended the procession received class credit. More recently, history professor Roy Branson moderated a Sabbath School conversation that featured four students from his government class who discussed the moral, ethical, and legal case for war against Iraq.

According to campus chaplain Sabine Vatel, the college chapel on February 12 focused on the question of peace in light of Christ's example. Plans are

currently in place for a teach-in, which will address the issue of civic duty in time of war and will be followed with a vigil for peace.

La Sierra University

With active chapters of Amnesty International and Students for Social Justice, La Sierra University has a long history of initiatives and events in regard to social action. According to Johnny Ramirez Jr., coordinator of the Amnesty International campus chapter, La Sierra's own first lady and president are among the organizations' many supporters.

Recently, small groups upwards of twenty La Sierra University students and faculty members have attended peace marches in Los Angeles. In addition,



Photo: Vaughn Nelson

La Sierra University students marching for peace.





Photo: Vaughn Nelson

La Sierra University students after a peace rally.

La Sierra students have participated in local protests each week in concert with other students from nearby University of Redlands.

On March 4 and 5, La Sierra University held a teach-in. Members of Amnesty International and Students for Social Justice asked professors to volunteer class time so students could attend. They also invited Michele Williams, Amnesty International's deputy director of the Western Region, and Sonali Kolhatkar, the producer/host of Pacifica Radio's Morning Show and vice president of the Afghan Women's Mission, to speak on the issue of war with Iraq.

Currently in the works is an information booth to enhance awareness of the war, its possible consequences, and alternate solutions through running film clips, a news board, and handouts. In addition, the History, Politics, and Society Club has discussed the possibility of hosting a debate about war with Iraq in concert with the Middle Eastern Student Association, Amnesty International, and Students for Social Justice.

Other events on the La Sierra campus have included chapels organized by the Fernando Stahl Center and a Soup and Salad session. One such session recently featured professor Jacek Kugler of Claremont Graduate University, an expert on international conflict, who analyzed the strategies and issues involved in a war with Iraq.

The La Sierra University church has become involved, as well. One recent program offered members an opportunity to urge politicians to support nonviolent democracy building by sending them packets imprinted with the words "Send rice, not bombs." Another event brought church members and university students together in a peace vigil.

According to La Sierra student Danica Boyle, leader of Students for Social Justice, many students may not be concerned about current events, but "we live in a democracy, and voicing concern/dissent regarding

foreign policy, or anything else, is being patriotic." "[I]t is important for people of all faiths to consider the realities of war and peace," she continued.

Johnny Ramirez has a slightly different perspective. "La Sierra as a whole seems to have a strong and active political conscience," he claims. "Overall La Sierra has a natural inclination, an infectious desire to promote social justice, that rubs off on people."

Newbold College

Recently, Newbold College featured a panel discussion on war with Iraq, but student attendance was reported to be low. However, on February 15 at least forty Adventists, many of them faculty and students from the college, participated in the peace march that drew more than one million people to downtown London.

Pacific Union College

The number of Pacific Union College students involved in peace initiatives is small but growing. Last term, only a couple students registered their concerns about war and peace through letters published in the *Campus Chronicle*, the college's newspaper. However, ten to fifteen have spearheaded establishment of a campus chapter of Amnesty International, according to senior biology major Nickolas Fournalad-Pour, one of the organizers. In addition, five to ten students participated in an antiwar protest that occurred in March in San Francisco.

Behavioral sciences professor Greg Schneider surmises that most students at Pacific Union College are "skeptical of the drumbeat to war." Although a majority on campus support Bush's management of the Iraqi situation, according to Schneider, he believes that a "substantial" minority stands in opposition.

Saleve Adventist University

Several professors at this French Adventist university recently organized a special worship service entitled, "The Theology Faculty Prays for Peace." In addition, the university has collaborated with other denominations in several peace-promoting projects.

Abdelkader Henni, editor of the university's newspaper, recently conducted a poll of students' perceptions about United States policy toward Iraq. The poll asked, "On a scale of 1-5, do you support the Bush administration's policies toward Iraq?" Of those who responded, 52 percent expressed total disapproval, whereas 4 percent signaled strong support.

Union College

According to English professor Chris Blake, Union College has one of the largest chapters of Amnesty International in Nebraska. Responding to the increased threat of war, the campus chapter recently organized an on-campus summit regarding the Iraqi situation. A handful of faculty and student members of Amnesty

“My general opinion about student attitudes toward war issues is that most are apathetic, or at least uninformed of events and philosophies,” claims Treye McKinney, author of one of *The Collegian’s* peace articles. Senior Chelsey Ham believes that Walla Walla students are “fairly evenly divided” in their opinions about war. However, the “anti-war segment is more vocal,” she says.

“We live in a democracy, and voicing concern/dissent regarding foreign policy, or anything else, is being patriotic.”

International also braved the cold weather and marched in an antiwar protest in the state capital of Lincoln.

In addition, a college convocation held on January 28, 2003, featured a moderated panel discussion on conscientious objection. Two veterans who had served as combatants and noncombatants—along with a current member of Nebraskans for Peace—shared their wartime experiences and current convictions regarding civic duty.

According to Blake, on-campus Sabbath Schools have also featured lively discussions about the situation in Iraq and military service and have included readings from former president Jimmy Carter’s Nobel Peace Prize speech.

Walla Walla College

Walla Walla College students have been involved in several peace-promoting activities, many in collaboration with nearby Whitman College. Among these events are protests and peace-related poetry readings. On March 3, the college supported a theatrical reading of *Lysistrata*, which occurred on the campus of Whitman College as part of a worldwide series of theatrical events to promote peace.

A comedy by Greek dramatist Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* tells the story of a group of women who withhold sex from their men in an effort to end the Peloponnesian War. Participants in the reading hope to promote healthy dialogue that discusses “what... we [can] do on a local level to stop ‘diplomacy by violence’ in our world.” *The Collegian*, the student newspaper of Walla Walla College, also recently printed two articles that discussed the Christian’s role in government, war, and peace. After publication, numerous online postings discussed these issues.

In contrast, history professor Terry Gottschall concludes that “a majority on the Walla Walla College campus is pro-war.”

Conclusion

The peace movement on Adventist college and university campuses is small but active. Concerned students and faculty who act on their own time and donate personal funds motivate each club, protest, and activity.

One such student is Nickolas Fourglad-Pour of Pacific Union College, who organized the college’s chapter of Amnesty International out of disgust over his fellow students’ apathy over the suffering of humanity. When asked why he encourages the peace movement on his campus, Fourglad-Pour quotes Nobel laureate Linus Pauling: “It is time for man’s intellect to win over the insanity of war.”

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