

Letter from an AHS Worker

Comment on Paragraph One: The letter on the other side of this sheet was sent to us in June 1994 from a special location in the United States. We say this because, although unsigned, we know the city it came from. (To protect the writer, we have retypeset it.) There are many competent leaders and workers in our denomination who are deeply concerned about the direction our church is headed. But they fear to speak, lest they be demoted or fired.

Comment on Paragraph Two and Three: We have written many reports about the terrible financial mess—over a billion dollars in debt—that the leaders of Adventist Health Systems have been allowed to put on our entire U.S. Adventist Church. Many of those earlier tracts will be found in our *Medical Tractbook*. But, in the enclosed letter, the writer specifically mentions the very shaky condition of the General Conference, not AHS. You see, both are in trouble! Yet no one will speak up and say, “These wasteful practices must stop!” It is as if everyone has been mesmerized into silence. The Bible speaks about dumb dogs who will not bark and give a warning when it is needed (Isaiah 56:10). Yet that is what the dog is paid his daily food for—to warn the occupants when the house is in danger! What good are leaders who will not protect the church, at any cost to themselves?

In these two paragraphs, the writer lists several bonuses which are given. But notice carefully who receives them: “management.” Yet those are the people who, several years ago, were given gigantic pay raises (at that time, between \$80,000 a year up to \$150,000 a year salaries; they are probably higher now).—It is management, already stuffed with money siphoned from our church, which are given these additional luxuries!

Although the writer may not know it, many of these luxuries are also given to leaders in the church as well. Although well paid, they are given special subsidies which care for most or all of their educational and medical needs.

It is well-known that, when a denominational leader is called to a new field, the church frequently buys his home. In addition, when leaders move

into the General Conference, some are given loans from special General Conference funds to purchase homes. We discussed this in our tract report on General Conference stocks and bonds (AS-14-16; 44; 45-46; all now in our *Finances Tractbook*).

About twenty years ago, a retiring teacher in the Education Department of one of our colleges told the present writer that he urges young men, who are planning to accept denominational teaching positions, not to accept calls to an academy near a conference or union headquarters. The reason is simple: The leaders will frequently fly off to Miami, or some other sunny place during the school year,—and take their wives and children with them to enjoy the “business trip.” He said one young man called him several years later and lamented the fact that his pupils were always taken on trips to Orlando or Miami. The reply, “I told you so! The only solution is to get out of there and teach in an Adventist school somewhere away from a conference office.”

The writer of the enclosed letter says that AHS management has a cocky attitude, are untouchable, and are treated with high esteem by church leaders—although those leaders know what is going on. Why is this?

The answer is simple enough: There are two paradises in Adventism. The first is upward mobility in the church. If you are pleasing men, obeying orders, and compromising successfully, as a reward you are moved every few years to a higher position in the church.

The second is a transfer into Adventist Health Systems. The pay is simply wonderful! The bonuses are even better than those received by church leaders, and, best of all, in case of a crisis in your life—a moral lapse,—you can be quietly transferred to an AHS management job. In view of all this, it is wise to cultivate friendships with AHS leaders, and say nothing that might disturb them. In addition, AHS leaders are grateful for cooperative church leaders, which let them do as they please,—so they are very willing to hire their sons and daughters, fresh out of college, and place them in good-paying jobs in AHS.

Note the statement near the bottom

of Paragraph Three: “It is a fact that AHS could sell all their facilities and still be in the red.” That statement comes from a person who knows facts about the inner working of AHS, facts which you and I can only discover with difficulty. This is a clear-cut statement that, in case of general AHS failure and bankruptcy, the creditors will not only seize all our AHS facilities (hospitals, nursing homes, etc.), but will reach into the denomination for more assets. What would those assets be? The creditors would seize union and conference offices, and local churches. Under the Federal Bankruptcy Law, they would have a right to do so.

I have frequently been asked, if that were to happen,—could the bankruptcy trustee also seize the private property and assets of individual church members?

My answer is that they would not do this, and for these two reasons:

1 - There would be enough assets in church properties in the United States to more than cover the AHS losses.

2 - The courts would not permit the assets of church members to be seized. If private properties were to be seized, it would only be concerned with those involved in obviously fraudulent activities, connected with the bankruptcy.

We live in difficult times. The impression conveyed is that all is well in the church, and that there are no problems, except from one source: those pleading for financial, doctrinal, or moral reform in the church. “Surely,” it is said, “there would be no problems at all—if we could just get rid of such troublemakers.”

Because of such attitudes, times will continue to become more difficult in our denomination. Although it is a source of deep sorrow to the sighing, crying ones in the church; because the majority do not care, it is unlikely that many corrections will be made in charting the onward course our church is headed.

And that is a tragedy.

More WAYMARKS - from —

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June 15, 1994

Gentlemen:

I am writing this letter out of a strong sense of obligation to loyal members of the S.D.A. Church across America. I cannot tell you about the present status of my relationship with Adventist Health Systems (AHS) as there probably would be retaliation. Please just trust me that I have personal knowledge of many things going on inside this entity that I feel are wrong. A friend gave me a copy of one of your articles about AHS and the mismanagement.

I am aware that the General Conference is in very bad financial shape as I write. Very reliable reports indicate it has never been as shaky as now. My concern is why AHS is allowed to conduct business as usual in these very troubling financial times. All around me I see incredible waste!! For example why is AHS allowed to pay bonuses to management when there is no rational basis for the same? Why do they pay the costs for management's kids to go to school? Why do they buy houses back from management who move and have a hard time selling their homes? Why do they still look for every excuse to throw an expensive party with the finest food in the nicest hotels, all in the name of getting new business—when businesses all around us are cutting back? Why do they still feel a need to have their own gas storage tanks and pumps with free gas for top brass?

Why in a time of cost cutting across America does AHS still pick up the tab—100% for medical, dental, and eye costs—for staff? My friends at other places of employment have little to no coverage or, at least, deductibles. No one on the outside gets braces for their kids' teeth paid for, but AHS picks it up! There are so many built-in perks for management that it is a sin. Regarding the salaries and raises of top management, I suggest people note where top brass homes are located, the types of cars they drive, and their lifestyles in these hard financial times. Any excuse to fly to another state to check a facility gives rise to a mini vacation for someone or their spouse/family. I challenge anyone to figure out what is legitimate and what is personal pleasure. What adds salt to the wound is the cocky attitude among top management, that they can do their own thing and are untouchable. Somehow top management is still treated with high esteem by the conference and our church leaders in spite of the ongoing waste! It is a fact that AHS could sell all their facilities and still be in the red. Someone has got to stop this before AHS and the conference goes bankrupt due to ongoing blatant mismanagement and apparent apathy.

A concerned member of the S.D.A. Church