

Adventists in Wartime

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE: THE WALLA WALLA COLLEGIAN / ADRA - OUR INDEPENDENT NGO

Down through the years, the church's position had been that we should not take up arms and fight in the nation's wars.

On May 23, 1865, just after the Civil War, the *Review* published a General Conference resolution which was "a truth representation of the views held by us from the beginning of our existence as a people, relative to bearing arms . . . We are compelled to decline all participation in acts of war and bloodshed as being inconsistent with the duties enjoined upon us by our divine Master toward our enemies and toward all mankind."

Although many other Christian churches praised the Spanish-American War as an opportunity to bring Christianity to other countries, Adventist leaders openly criticized it. "Christian love demands that its possessor shall not make war. 'Put up again thy sword into his place,' is the word of the Author of Christianity," wrote A.T. Jones (a former army sergeant).

But, during World War I, our leadership of the work in Germany apostatized and encouraged its members to bear arms.

In America, the position was to let our youth become "conscientious cooperators"—and serve in the military during World War II as medical assistants and, hopefully, to receive their Sabbaths. However, many declared themselves to be "conscientious objectors" and refused induction.

But in Germany, our young people were once again bearing arms.

By the time of the Vietnam War, the Adventist position had fragmented. Some evaded the draft, others entered as noncombatants, and still others joined Project Whitecoat. This was a research program with links to the U.S. biological weapons laboratories at Fort Detrick, Maryland. Our young men were given strange, unknown diseases, and then cured (?) of them. Still other youth joined the military and fought in Vietnam. Church leaders said that all should do their patriotic duty "according to the dictates of their conscience."

Following the Vietnam carnage, thousands of Adventists voluntarily joined the U.S. armed forces as full combatants. Adventist chaplains were recruited to minister to these warriors, "without judgment;" that is, without any hints that perhaps they should not be training to kill people.

Just after the September 11 tragedy, there was, understandably, a great upwelling of patriotism in

America.

Sligo Church in Takoma Park, Maryland, our largest congregation serving our General Conference and North American Division leaders and their children, featured a Veteran's Day service in which a military honor guard marched down the center aisle of the church, with bolt-action rifles gripped to their chests!

Meanwhile, on the other side of the continent, at a Northern California Conference camp meeting, a patriotic song service was followed by a 21-gun salute with live ammunition!

A message was being sent to our youth.

At the present time, over 2,500 Seventh-day Adventist youth are serving in the U.S. military. They are fighting in Iraq or Afganistan, and are experiencing all the mind-hardening rigors of modern warfare. In order for them to serve, each one had to voluntarily join the military; for there has been no draft for decades.

In the October 2003 issue of *Reflections*, the newsletter of our General Conference Biblical Research Institute, Dr. Ekkehardt Mueller, associate director of BRI, wrote this:

"In different parts of the world church, the Iraqi war and other events have triggered a lively discussion on the question of where the Seventh-day Adventist Church stands today and how we should relate to war.

"Some claim 'There are no indications that our Adventist Church today disapproves of serving in the army in whatever capacity.' They say that 'the present state is one of uncertainty on the Adventist position regarding serving in the military.' This is not quite true. While the church ministers to non-combatant members in the military (as we do to pacifists and combatants), it recognizes that individuals make free choices and have to follow their informed conscience . . . I think the position the church has taken . . . is a wise choice because it does give guidance, but it does not prescribe."

The 1972 official position, still in effect, is this: "Genuine Christianity manifests itself in good citizenship and loyalty to civil government . . . Seventh-day Adventists advocate a noncombatant position, following their divine Master in not taking human life, but rendering all possible service to save it."

Yet, for practical purposes, the position of leadership today is decide for yourself and, either way, you will remain a member in good standing. —*vf*

The Walla Walla Collegian

Someone sent me the May 13, 2004 issue of *Collegian*, the Walla Walla College weekly newspaper. They said to look at page 2. Unfortunately, the paper was mislaid and I only recently came across it again.

Page 2 contained a full-page article strongly urging women students that, when they have sex with men, to be sure to take the birth control pill afterward. The article went into great detail, describing the values of this and noting that “the Walla Walla College Health Center . . . is a local provider of ECP [emergency contraception pills].” There was no mention of the value of abstinence, the danger of contracting disease, or how the pill kills a newly forming baby.

Then I looked at the other pages in this sample 16-page weekly. Here is what I found:

Page 1 - Daily meetings for the students by an Adventist “youth ministry.” “I enjoy how the speaker is so uninhibited,” said Raelynn Spady, junior physical therapy. “Sunday night, while speaking, he stood on a chair and then crouched into a ball.”

Page 3 - “Pirates of Penzance, a joint production between wwdrama and the WWC music department opened,” complete with foolish stage pictures. “Catchy tunes and clever dialogue tell the story of Frederic, a hopeless romantic, who is indentured to pirates.”

Page 4 - A 17-year Bible teacher at Walla Walla is leaving to become a field archaeologist for non-Adventists on the East Coast.

Page 5 - A dramatic photo of the “WWC Varsity Awards Night” trophy. “Students, athletes, coaches, volunteers, and parents, were recognized for a year of sports.” / A different article about “Vespers, featured a variety of musical acts.”

Page 6 - Seven items of world news were selected. One is about UFOs seen over Mexico. A second is about how Australia wants parents to have more sex, in order to produce more children. A third is about a famous stage comic who canceled a show. A fourth laughingly describes how a teenager found sex mentioned in a book at school, so “his mother has started an uprising” to get it banned. A fifth is about “a lesbian woman suing her former partner for parental rights;” and the decision “beautifully upholds the freedom of choice of same-sex partners on whether both partners will or will not be the parents.”

Page 7 - An article by a girl who cares about her confused boyfriend, Steve. The only good thing in the entire issue; this was about a student who wants a friend to find Jesus.

Page 8 - “Walla Walla lost by 30 strokes,” followed by golf statistics of students following a tournament. / An advertisement for the “Osborne Classic” at the WEC Softball Field, with a ridiculous photo of two comics.

Page 9 - Very detailed description of the Friday Varsity Awards Banquet, in the College Church Fellowship Hall, and all the awards handed out to participants in a wide variety of sports. (School banquets are usually held in the evening, and this is Friday.) / An article by the WWC sports editor, making fun of some non-WWC sports teams.

Pages 10-11 - A photo contest which the students are encouraged to enter, because someone will win \$50.00.

Page 12 - “Peanuts are so sexy. I think I love them so much that I want to marry one. Good curves and honey roasted.”

Page 13 - Ad for a weekly Wednesday WWC drama on local television: “The *O Collegian*: all the drama but more than just an hour.” Photo shows four college-age students (boy, girl, boy, girl) sitting very close together on a couch with arms on each other. The two women are wearing lowest-level under slips. / Ad

for “The Quick and the Dead.” “In this great western film, a female gun-slinger rides into a corrupt town and joins a quick-draw competition . . . It has some mild profanity and violence . . . What’s better than a chick with a gun and leather pants?”

Page 14 - A totally stupid 11-frame cartoon. / Photo of a WWC woman student choking a man student. “There’s no comic this week, but don’t worry, Natalie punished Jesse. He’s sure to guarantee one for next week.”

Page 15 - An article apparently intended to cause divisions between blacks and whites within the Adventist Church. “Most people don’t realize that within the SDA church organization there is a so-called ‘Black Conference’ and a so-called ‘White Conference’ . . . Although the prevalence of racism has diminished, the separate conferences still exist with certain differences . . . The White Conference has a more capitalistic way of distributing resources. They feel that the churches that bring in the most tithing money should receive the most resources. The Black Conference favors distributing resources according to local need.” / An article entitled “College Wisdom.” Hopefully, at last we will find some in this desolate wasteland of a college newspaper. “How do the happenings at the college rate? College wisdom (CW) will tell you: *InTents Meetings*: CW likes that old-time religion. *Hot Air Balloons*: They’re like little bubbles of happiness floating in the sky. *Classes*: Going to classes and springtime weather should be mutually exclusive. *Movies on the Green*: There’s nothing fishy about this event. Get it? Fishy? Cause they’re showing ‘Big Fish’? Oh forget it. Woosh.”

Page 16 (last page) - “Worst consequence of horribly underpaid faculty?” WWC students with their answers and names beneath their pictures. “They won’t teach as well.” “They might take it out on the students.” “Overpaid administration.” “We end up having to pay when they take us on dates.” “I can’t afford the last payment on my mail order bride.” “Bad food.” / A news note about the pirates’ play which would make a nice girl’s face blush. / News note to stage a “walkout” on Friday and not attend class / Coming events: “Pigskin Devotional (WEC Field),” “ASWWC Fried Cookies & Coffee (next to Library),” “Lulu LaFever Concert (SAC).” News note: Because “no recreational opportunities” by the college, “anything sinful you do this weekend can be blamed on the college” . . . Then mentions two movies to go see in Walla Walla. “The most enticing Saturday night activity . . . is the Drive-In Theater . . . Drive-Ins have a mystique of romance and passion about them” . . . “The epic motion picture event of the summer, Troy, is opening this weekend at the Grand Cinemas,”—followed by a subtle suggestion to the girl who couples up that night, to “invite him over after the movie.”

Oh, you think this is something! You should read my 1996 four-tract set, entitled *Life at Walla Walla College [WM-676-679]*, which described the contents of several sample WWC college newspapers. The title subhead was this: “*One student says he is going to hell. Others demand rebellion against church authority. The faculty has started a Sodomite Support Group. And intercollegiate sports competition is the rage.*” Shortly afterward, the North Pacific Union president tried to clean up the school—but was prevented when the faculty appealed to the secular Northwestern Accrediting Association to come to their rescue—which threatened to remove their accreditation if church leaders tried to interfere. Do you still want to send your children there?

ADRA, Our Independent NGO

In the past, church members raised Harvest Ingathering funds each year by collecting money door to door from neighbors and friends. Those funds were then used directly for Adventist mission work, to help spread the message and bring others into the faith.

The funds provided for the opening of the work in new areas and helped established mission stations to operate.

But times have changed. Church leaders became dazzled by the opportunity of working closely with the U.S. federal government—and becoming the yearly channel for millions of dollars in government funds, to be used to help poor folk overseas. The funds were to be used for building communities, constructing water systems, and providing food and clothing.

But there was one little “catch” to the program: no hint of missionary work, or even a mention of it, to those being helped.

This is the story of ADRA—

Although ADRA may not be well-known by members, it is the financial giant of our denomination. **In the year 2002 alone, total aid distributed by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) amounted to more than \$220 million.** The money was used to help more than 30 million people at the lowest levels of poverty and misery.

An outstanding Christian project! A glorious opportunity for “Dorcas Society” to help work on a multi-million-dollar level! What could be better!

Yet not one whisper of the Adventist message was heard from ADRA, not one action in bringing the final message to anyone, not one baptism.

Provided with this marvelous opportunity, offered by the federal government, to be a pipeline for millions of dollars, we set up this new organization, which we called ADRA.

The transition from *Seventh-day Adventist Welfare Service* (SAWS) to ADRA occurred in the 1980s, and brought a number of distinct changes.

ADRA was incorporated independently with a separate board, its own administration, and treasury. In some cases, ADRA prepared its own salary scales—which were a little higher than those

in the church. This inequality drew off some outstanding pastors, workers, and missionaries who decided to go to work for ADRA.

ADRA became classified as an NGO (a non-governmental organization). It operates under the same conditions as other faith-based NGOs, such as those operated by the Lutherans or Baptists. The workers believe that they are doing the will of God in helping those less fortunate than themselves.

But they must follow strict guidelines: All of the funds granted by governments and other donors—including those contributed by *Seventh-day Adventists or others during Ingathering appeals*—cannot be used to promote political or religious convictions, including Christian beliefs and the unique Seventh-day Adventist message. **This restriction totally silences ADRA workers from sharing their Adventist beliefs! They cannot even pray with the people they are helping.**

In the nineteenth century, we sent out missionaries to foreign countries to evangelize. They knew their objective: to proclaim our messages and bring people into the church.

Soon, there followed teachers and medical personnel who also carried the message. All of our denominationally supported overseas workers were active missionaries.

The mission budget included funding for education and medical care, all financed by Sabbath School offerings and, later, by Harvest Ingathering.

Preaching the distinctive truths of our people in evangelist efforts, medical clinics and hospitals, and mission schools had primacy. Everything else was secondary to that objective.

Back in those earlier times, **whereas other mission agencies received grants from colonial governments, our church adamantly opposed government assistance.** Because of that, we were free to give the message loud and clear.

But, as time passed, the church reconsidered its opposition to government aid. This began in the 1960s and 1970s. At first, outside funds were accepted if there were no strings—no stipulations as to how the funds could be used.

But then came the 1980s, and ADRA came into

existence. **The puzzling question is why did our leaders start ADRA, when we knew in advance what it involved and what it would lead to?** The only answer must be the shower of millions of dollars which would flow through us if we signed this worldly contract.

At the present time, ADRA workers cannot even bring the people into meaningful relationships with Jesus Christ or introduce them to any of the teachings—general or special—of our people.

Although recipients of ADRA help are especially open at the time to our message, yet it cannot be given—not a peep nor a mutter.

Indeed, many of our ADRA workers are not Seventh-day Adventists! They surely could not share our message with anyone, even if permitted to, since they do not believe it themselves.

Today, Ingathering funds are handed over to ADRA, which mixes them with major donations from governments and others. In addition, according to Charles Sandefur (president of ADRA), all of the many ADRA salaries are paid directly by the Adventist Church.

An intriguing question is this: Why did not our church leaders keep SAWS in place, and continuing putting Ingathering funds into that? Apparently, it was part of our contract with the government—that all of those funds had to go into ADRA, if we were to receive government money.

Our mission work has been almost entirely transformed into a “social gospel.” However, there still remains Sabbath School and World Mission offerings (which in 2002 totaled less than \$51 million) which, one would think, could be used for genuine church missionary work. However, with an ever-increasing need of funds to maintain the “work at home,” it has increasingly been found necessary to divert them to needs in the home field.

As financial support kept dropping off, since new theology pastors began filling our pulpits, **it was voted at an annual council in the late 1990s that, henceforth, each world division would care for its own needs.** The exception at this time appears to be the 13th Sabbath mission offerings and an occasional special mission offering taken during church service. —*vf*

“The Lord has marked out our way of working. As a people we are not to imitate and fall in with Salvation Army methods. This is not the work that the Lord has given us to do. Neither is it our work to condemn them and speak harsh words against them. There are precious, self-sacrificing souls in the Salvation Army. We are to treat them kindly. There are in the Army honest souls, who are sincerely serving the Lord and who will see greater light, advancing to the acceptance of all truth. The Salvation Army workers are trying to save the neglected, downtrodden ones. Discourage them not. Let them do that class of work . . .

“But the Lord has plainly pointed out the work that Seventh-day Adventists are to do. Camp meetings and tent meetings are to be held. The truth for this time is to be proclaimed. A decided testimony is to be borne. And the discourses are to be so simple that children can understand them.”—*8 Testimonies, 184-185.*

“There may be and there is danger of losing sight of the great principles of truth when doing the work for the poor that it is right to do, but we are ever to bear in mind that in carrying forward this work **the spiritual necessities of the soul are to be kept prominent. In our efforts to relieve**

temporal necessities we are in danger of separating from the last gospel message its leading and most urgent features.

“As it has been carried on in some places, the medical missionary work has absorbed talent and means that belong to other lines of the work, and the effort in lines more directly spiritual has been neglected.

“Because of the ever-increasing opportunities for ministering to the temporal needs of all classes, there is danger that this work will eclipse the message that God has given us to bear in every city—the proclamation of the soon coming of Christ, the necessity of obedience to the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus.

“This message is the burden of our work. It is to be proclaimed with a loud cry and is to go to the whole world. In both home and foreign fields the presentation of health principles must be united with it, **but not be independent of it or in any way take its place; neither should this work absorb so much attention as to belittle other branches.**

“The Lord has instructed us to consider the work in all its bearings, that it may have a proportionate, symmetrical, well-balanced development.”—*6 Testimonies, 290.*