

1. TEARS, PRAYERS, AND AN EARTHQUAKE marked the pre-Annual Council meetings during the past week in Bangalore, India.

The tears and prayers came when I asked the Division presidents to set aside our traditional agenda of reporting "good news" alone and instead include the troubling issues that keep them awake at night and for which they see no answers.

The presidents opened their hearts and shared their burdens. At the close we raised each other to the Lord in a season of prayer. It was a truly unifying experience. The presidents agreed that as crises and concerns develop they will request the prayer support of their colleagues and, in appropriate circumstances, the world Church.

Various groups and commissions brought initiatives for consideration by Annual Council, which begins tomorrow evening. Here are some of the recommendations:

! Inter-division Missionaries: This proposal removes the possibility of financial factors being a motivation for calling (or returning home) inter-division missionaries. The purpose of the change is to **a)** reinforce the importance of inter-division workers in the world mission program of the Church, and **b)** gradually increase the ability of the Church to provide inter-division missionaries for Global Mission opportunities.

! Two territorial realignment commissions reported. 1) The Baltic Union survey recommended that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania be moved from the Euro-Asia Division to the Trans-European Division effective January, 1994. 2) The Middle East Union survey recommended a more complex realignment along with a suggested process and timetable.

! Strategic Plan: The work of two commissions during the past two years culminated in the preparation of the first General Conference strategic plan. The purpose of the overall endeavor is to make the General Conference budget, as well as budgets of divisions and organizations around the world, increasingly responsive to the mission of the Church.

The two processes were: 1) the report of the recent, comprehensive world-wide survey of 18,500 members by the World Survey Commission, and 2) the report of a survey of hundreds of church leaders from around the world to identify and prioritize some of the challenges facing the Church. The Adventist Review will report on the Annual Council and the findings of the World Survey Commission.

2. AND THE EARTHQUAKE--the greatest since India's independence--devastated more than 50 villages in Maharashtra State and killed more than 10,000 people. Estimates of the loss of life run as high as 50,000. The quake shook a 1,000 kilometer-long (approximately 600 miles) area along the western coast of India, awaking many Annual Council travelers with a jolt just before dawn on September 30. On Friday Dr. M. E. Cherian, Southern Asia Division president, painted a picture of the magnitude of the tragedy to a meeting of the GC, Division, and Union officers. On hearing of the contribution of the GC and ADRA for disaster relief, the leaders of world divisions, several unions, Pacific Press Publishing Association, and Loma Linda University contributed funds that brought the total to more than \$200,000. An ADRA team has rushed to the stricken area to coordinate relief activities and to lay long-term plans for relief efforts. In the village of Killari, an estimated 80 percent of the homes collapsed during the quake. "Our houses have become our tombs," one survivor said. To date, we know of no injuries to members or destruction of church properties.

3. TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS of "Thursday Island," just off Australia's northernmost Cape Yorke peninsula, inhabit one of the three areas targeted for a new congregation by the Northern Australian Conference. These islanders differ culturally from both Papua New Guineans and Australian Aboriginals. With Global Mission and South Pacific Division assistance they have purchased land and have based a worker in the area. Pray that God will

bless this initiative among these isolated peoples.