

**1. SPRING MEETING REPORT:** The major agenda items at the Spring Meeting of the General Conference Committee are financial and this year they included the 1993 audited statements and 1995 budget projections.

The 1.8% tithe increase projected for 1995, offset by the last of four  $\frac{1}{4}\%$  *increases of the reversion to the North American Division*, causes an estimated *reduction in tithe funds* for the '95 world budget of US\$468,000. In addition, if the decline in Sabbath School mission offerings of over US\$1 million in '93 are projected into '94 and '95, along with other causative factors, the total estimated decrease of *tithe and non-tithe* funds will be US\$7.48 million dollars! Therefore, we had to advise world divisions to anticipate a reduction of appropriations in 1995 of up to 8% which, if implemented, would be the biggest reduction in recent history.

Needless to say, our prayer is that the tithe increase in '94 will be better than '93 and that the trend in Sabbath School mission offerings will be reversed, for the consequences of implementing this reduction will clearly be significant and detrimental. It is interesting to note that most of North America's Sabbath School offering decline would be corrected if each member gave only US\$1 more *per year*!

**2. NEW GRI LEADERSHIP:** Dr. Jim Gibson, Associate Research Scientist for the Geoscience Research Institute located at Loma Linda University, was appointed by the General Conference Committee as its new director, effective October 1, 1994, replacing Dr. Ariel Roth, who has served as the Institute's director since 1980. After retirement Dr. Roth will provide part-time research assistance to GRI.

**3. HISTORICITY OF SCRIPTURE AND THE GENESIS** account of creation came under attack last Sabbath afternoon, not by secular forces but by two retired church workers, Raymond Cotrell (retired associate editor of the *Adventist Review*) and Richard Hammill (retired vice-president of the General Conference and former president of Andrews University), during a panel debate in California.

Dr. Ariel Roth, director of the Geoscience Research Institute, accompanied by Clyde Webster (GRI associate research scientist) and Dr. Robert Brown (former GRI director), pointed out that interpretation of frequently-conflicting data can vary widely, depending on the presuppositions of the scientist. They also noted that the decline of mainline denominations has paralleled their abandonment of the authority and historicity of scripture.

**4. NEW COLLEGE IN RUSSIA:** A new SDA college on Sakhalin Island, in the far eastern reaches of Russia, is operated today by the Korean Union as an extension of its mission service in an effort to evangelize the 450,000 people of Korean descent who live in this area. The college, which began in December of 1992 with thirty theology students, accepted another thirty students this past September in theology and also expanded their offerings to include business management and foreign languages. Administrative personnel and faculty are recruited from Korea. The city of Yuzhno Sakhalin gave thirty hectares (66 acres) of land, upon which to erect the college buildings, with an additional sixty hectares (132 acres) promised in the future.

**5. SUKHUMI, ABHAZIA** used to be part of the former USSR Republic of Georgia. For more than a year, trouble has been brewing between the several ethnic groups living in Georgia and Sukhumi. Thousands have died in the fighting which erupts regularly between the two sides. Others died of exposure in their attempts to cross the mountains to safety. ADRA has been able to alleviate some of the suffering by working with the Adventist church in Sukhumi. ADRA donations received in neighboring congregations have provided US\$10,000 in cash and clothing and food. The food had to be stored in the homes of various church members to avoid having it stolen. Some volunteers walk as much as 20 kilometers every day to distribute the food and clothes to those in need.

###