

From the G.C. President

April 27, 1998

Robert S. Folkenberg

ADRA Country Director Murdered: It is with a great deal of sadness that I write to you about the terrible tragedy of this past week. No doubt you have already heard that Bent Moeller Nielsen, ADRA country director for Burundi, was shot and killed by bandits on April 22. According to reports, Bent had just dropped off a colleague when he was killed and his vehicle stolen. Bent Nielsen was one of the longest-serving of ADRA's country directors. The absence of his service and expertise will be deeply felt by his colleagues and the people of Burundi. The collective prayers and compassion of an entire denomination are extended to Bent's wife, Evelyn, and their two daughters, Florence and Christine. Your church is standing by you during this time of grief.

Anti-Smoking Legislation Needs Your Support: In May, the United States Senate will debate the most comprehensive tobacco control bill in the history of the republic. *The Universal Tobacco Settlement Act* will raise taxes on tobacco, approve the government's regulation of nicotine as a drug, and put restrictions on advertising to children. You can support this important legislation by faxing or e-mailing your support for S.1415, *The Universal Tobacco Settlement Act*. These messages can be sent to representatives from your home state and/or to the following: Senator John McCain (fax: 202-224-2862/Senator_mccain@mccain.senate.gov); Senator Trent Lott (fax:202-224-2262/senatorlott@lott.senate.gov); Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich (fax:202-225-4656/georgia6@hr.house.gov). For more information please call The Washington Institute at 202-547-7440.

A GC Week of Prayer: It was a pleasure for me to be home last week in order to participate in the annual GC Colloquium, our week of spiritual emphasis. This year our focus was on youth as Stephen Eastwood, youth pastor of the Spencerville Adventist Church in Maryland led us in worship. Stephen's perspectives on faith in Christ reminded me of the importance of the word *RENEWAL* to the Christian experience. The Lord Jesus emulated renewal for us as He pulled Himself away from ministry to spend extra time with God, the Father. These times of renewal help us to catch our breath and regain our perspectives on WHY we do what we do, and most importantly, once again commit ourselves to the perpetual pursuit of God's will for His Church. And, there is another level of renewal that dawned bright in my mind this week as I watched a 27-year-old pastor lead GC employees to the foot of the Cross. Stephen reminded me that each time a young person accepts Christ's call to share the Gospel, the world has a unique opportunity to see God, the Father and Jesus Christ through a new-born perspective. Symbolically, the cry of "Christ is risen!" becomes news once more through the fresh talents and enthusiasm of youth.

A New Director for GC Health and Temperance: Dr. Allan R. Handsides has accepted the position of Director for the GC Health and Temperance Department. A practicing physician in Ontario, Canada, Dr. Handsides was medical director for the Eastern Africa Division from 1981 to 1986. He has served his Church with distinction and we welcome Dr. Handsides to the General Conference.

Off the Back Burner

Segment #111: Before leaving Canright completely, let me retell a story that happened in New Zealand. The following report about the

1903 conference session appeared in the March 15 *Union Conference Record*:

"The gracious manner in which the Lord answered our prayers in restraining the elements and the passions of wicked men softened our hearts. . . The adversary endeavored to draw us into controversy, but the counsel so timely sent by the Lord through His servant, Sister White, effectually thwarted his plans."

It's the story behind that last phrase of the report that I want to share with you. In 1902, amidst controversy, Elder Eugene Farnsworth, and a team of workers, held a series of evangelistic meetings in Dunedin. The results could best be described as meager. Steeped in the teachings of John Knox, those Dunedin Scots were happy to listen, but slow to change their traditional beliefs.

Possibly holding a camp meeting in Dunedin would increase interest, though some wondered if members from the north would travel that far south to attend. But the decision was made to proceed. Opening day was set for January 15, 1903. Tents were pitched in the rain, but fine weather dawned for the commencement of the meetings, and it stayed that way. More than thirty delegates came for the conference session that was held in connection with the camp meeting.

The public meetings drew quite a bit of attention in the newspaper. Several local ministers began attacking Adventists from their pulpits, and in open letters to the newspaper. Elder Farnsworth, the principal visiting speaker at the camp meeting, chose not to respond. That only further infuriated the opponents. Hoping to take advantage of a question and answer session at the end of an evening meeting, one clergyman tried to force a debate. The meeting closed in confusion.

Realizing that something had to be done, late that evening the president, Elder W.L.H. Baker, called his workers together. Elder Farnsworth was still loathe to get into a debate with the critics, though all realized something must be done to protect the good name of the church. The discussion went back and forth. Finally it was decided that everyone should pray about it that night, and they would meet again before the early morning meeting.

Returning to his tent, Elder Farnsworth found a letter awaiting him from Ellen White. It had been written from Elmhaven in California on December 17, 1902. Eagerly he began to read. In part, she said, "The best way to combat error is to present truth. . . Do not dwell on the objections advanced by those who oppose the truth." Elder Farnsworth went to bed, and slept well.

The next morning, letter in hand, Elder Farnsworth went to the worker's meeting. "Well, Brethren," he said, "the Lord knew our needs long before we did." After reading them the letter, there was no debate! When the various opponents tried to unite to produce a pamphlet, using some of D. M. Canright's charges, to attack the Adventists, they began to argue so much amongst themselves that the focus soon turned to their own differences, rather than on the Adventists! As Adventists soon returned to their own homes throughout New Zealand, the story of God's providential timing was told and retold. Happily, later that year a small Adventist church was built in Dunedin. (Adapted from Ross Goldstone's *Nothing to Fear*, 1983, pp. 54-56.)