

# adventist currents

Volume One, Number One July 1, 1990

the Newsletter

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## Clippings

### Did you know that . . .

- The minutes of weekly GC Committee meetings do not necessarily reflect discussion or even actions taken, if they were not on the printed agenda to begin with.
- For all its concern about trademark protection, the GC Corporation has not sued the Reformed Seventh-day Adventist Church for use of the name Seventh-day Adventist.
- Neal Wilson wrote his own spate of monthly, pre-quinquennial campaign devotionals on the latter rain. It is widely believed that these pieces are calculated to maintain his reign as world church leader.
- The GC Unrestricted Fund balance declined an average of \$6 million per year between 1985 and 1989 -- from \$87.4 million to \$63.4 million.
- A witticism circulating at GC headquarters this spring suggested that *Spectrum* editor Roy Branson should apologize to Gorbachev for comparing Neal Wilson's administration to the Soviet government.
- The Adventist Health System lost \$102.2 million on just its diversified businesses (nursing homes, retirement centers, travel agencies, etc.), between 1984 and 1988.

## Will Neal Wilson Will Be Re-elected

### A presidential report card – Part I

It was during the summer of 1988 – a few months before Annual Council in Nairobi, Kenya – that *Currents* learned of Neal Wilson's intention to climb Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania and first realized that Wilson did not feel that two-and-a-half terms as SDA world church leader were enough.

If anyone doubted that Wilson intended to seek a third term, those doubts were erased by the series of monthly two-page "devotionals," stating Wilson's desire for the "latter rain" to fall upon the church and its workers, that appeared over his byline in both *Ministry Magazine* and in the monthly issue of the *Adventist Review* that is distributed free to every North American Division household.

Wilson became General Conference president in 1978 when he replaced the faltering Robert Pierson between quinquennial sessions; and it was the words of his acceptance remarks that first caused this writer to be nervous about him. His words contained both a vivid example of his consummate political and communication skills, and a forewarning of his willingness to wield power:

If my face appears drained of color it is because I recognize something of the sacredness of the vote that has just been taken.

Wilson managed to tell those present that he was humble, that their votes were sacred, and that his election was ordained of God – all in one sentence.

Neal Wilson has been president, and many of his colleagues and subordinates say dictator, of the General Conference for the past twelve years.

The overwhelming majority of the many GC workers *Currents* has spoken with – as well as a large cross-section of field personnel – say that it has been twelve years too long. *Currents'* significant but informal sampling, taken primarily from North American Division personnel and GC workers of North American background, has revealed only one or two workers who would like to see Wilson return for a third term.

Those objecting to Wilson's re-election fall into two distinct categories: those whose desire to see him out of office is tempered by their reservations regarding the competence and administrative orientation of his potential successors, and those who simply want him out.

No previous GC president has had Wilson's overall ability. He has excellent interpersonal skills, superior communication talent, an unusually quick and reliable memory, above average energy, and the will to focus his energy and abilities – along with an absolute grasp of church organizational rules and structure – to satisfy what appears to be an unlimited desire for control. But it is precisely these exceptional gifts of Wilson's that have made the consequences of his errors in judgment so far reaching.

Anyone who has had a sustained working relationship with Wilson, from his Middle Eastern associates during the forties and fifties, to his peers (if he has any) at the GC today, knows that he continually plays political hardball, in an arena where it is always assumed (or pretended) that politics do not exist.

Writing to Neal Wilson in the aftermath of the 1989 Spring Meeting of the GC Committee at which pay raises for Adventist Health System administrators had been voted, nearly doubling their already substantial salaries, GC director of auditing, David Dennis, reminded the GC president of his modus operandi. Dennis was concerned about the way the recommendation was advanced to a final vote.

It seemed to me that the democratic process was not taken very seriously. . . . I find it hard to understand why a vote was not taken at the conclusion of the day-long discussion on Wednesday.

Instead, you recommended and moved that the motion be tabled. Then, late Thursday, the matter was brought back for consideration after much of the opposition had dispersed. . . .

This is not the first time that delays, tablings, straw votes, and similar strategies have been used in our convocations to push through an unpopular recommendation. . . .

Perhaps the best way to decide whether Wilson should be returned for a third term is to consider his record.

### Wilson's Credits

#### Adventist World Radio

Wilson deserves credit for his nurture of Adventist World Radio (AWR). Although AWR first began leasing air time from commercial markets in 1971, it was in 1987 that it first acquired its own transmitter in Guam — AWR-Asia. The station generated over 6,000 pieces of mail during its first year of broadcasting to a potential market of 2.5 billion people.

Plans are under way to build another transmitter in Italy for AWR-Europe, at a start-up cost of \$7.3 million. The Italy-based transmitter would have a potential audience of one billion, and, like AWR-Asia, will cost about \$1 million annually to operate. Neal Wilson is the chairman of AWR's board of directors.

#### Russian relations

Wilson has invested much time in his effort to establish relationships in the pre-glasnost Soviet Union that resulted in permission (February 1987) to establish an Adventist seminary and church headquarters in the

village of Zaoski about 70 miles south of Moscow. Adventists were provided with a burned-out school building to repair and remodel to suit their needs.

More recently, ground was broken (March 1990) for use in the construction of an Adventist publishing house near the church headquarters. Since Russian officials will only allow one religious publishing plant in the country, the SDA church had to agree to publish materials for other denominations as well. Much of the money required for the establishment of this press has come from an Adventist layman, Garwin McNeilus, who is a cement truck manufacturer in Minnesota.

Wilson's critics argue that he compromised a great deal of Adventist principle to gain this opportunity.

### Adventist membership doubles

Wilson supporters might point out that the number of Adventists in the world has doubled roughly (from three million to six million) since he took office in 1978. Some credit for this growth could be attributed to The Thousand Days of Reaping (first term) and Harvest '90 (second term) baptism campaigns. But many Adventists absolutely refuse to credit Wilson, insisting that conversion is the work not of campaigns but of the Holy Spirit.

Another perspective suggests that if the children of Adventists would become and remain members, Harvest '90 goals would have been met, for the most part, rather spontaneously.

Whenever Wilson meets with Adventist audiences, he speaks at length and in great detail of his contacts with the many world government leaders it has been his "privilege" to meet, and of how these meetings have eventuated (or may yet eventuate) in various advantages to the Seventh-day Adventist work around the world. The reality of these advantages is not easy to assess, but many church workers feel that Wilson and the church would be far better served if he spent less time globetrotting and more time protecting the church's dwindling assets.

### Wilson's losses

Regardless of whose fault they are, the dozen years of Wilson's GC presidency have been attended by great loss: loss of thousands of members; loss of hundreds of workers; loss of confidence in church institutions and leaders; loss of scores of millions of dollars (perhaps hundreds of millions, if the Adventist Health System is considered part of the church); and loss of the church's good name in the eyes of the public. A brief overview of the various crises that have confronted Wilson during his presidency may suggest where the responsibility resides for these painful losses.

## Wilson's critics argue that he compromised Adventist principle to arrange the Russian publishing house.

## Adventist Currents ————— the Newsletter

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## The Davenport scandal and cover-up

In 1979, shortly after Neal Wilson had assumed the GC presidency, two Adventist laymen independently discovered and began forcing into the open the unethical financial relationships between scores of North American Division church leaders and real estate speculator Dr. Donald Davenport. The courageous laymen were southern California philosopher/pamphleteer Sydney Allen, editor and publisher of the newsletter *Remnant*; and Collegedale stockbroker John Adam, editor of the newspaper-like *SDA Press Release*. Both were sued by Davenport for their service to Adventist members.

On July, 1981, the GC Committee voted a professional investigation by legal (Gibson, Dunn, and Crutcher) and accounting (Ernst and Whinney) firms. A year later (27 July 1982) the GC received their 624-page report. On 3 August 1982, Wilson appointed a President's Review Commission to establish which church officials were involved with Davenport and to what extent.

Five months later (2 January 1983), the Review Commission tendered its report to Wilson. Three weeks after that, speaking to about 2,200 people during a 22 January 1983 Sabbath-afternoon meeting at the Loma Linda University Church, Wilson promised that approximately 50 top church officials would be publicly disciplined, and others would receive private letters of administrative disapproval and caution.

Within a month (24 February 1983) Wilson and other GC officers decided against any action on twenty of the 100 church leaders that the commission had named for various levels of discipline, and further decided not to allow the commission report to be made available in any context, or even to allow the commission to name those involved.

According to one commission member, Loma Linda ethicist Jack Provonsha, the commission's inclination was to resign in mass, because "we weren't taken seriously." Said Provonsha, "I don't think the General Conference officers should be involved in this discipline. It is a significant conflict of interest - to be

**"It is a significant conflict of interest - to be disciplining those who you depend upon for re-election." - Jack Provonsha**

I seriously question the honesty of using the initials "SDA" in connection with your press release . . . . There is only one legitimate "SDA" organization. Your organization and publication do not represent the Seventh-day Adventist Church or

any significant segment of its membership.

The consequences of the Davenport scandal were sizeable in terms of dollars lost. Based on NAD treasurer George Crumley's 1989 Spring Meeting figures, the church had \$17.9 million invested with Davenport. Add \$3.1 million lost in interest income pending settlement of claims, for a total of \$21 million. Further, add more than \$1 million "paid by the General Conference to independent consultants."

Subtracting from the \$22-plus million \$12 million recovered in claims and \$4 million insurance reimbursements, the bottom-line loss was \$6 million.

The cost in lost trust in church leaders (both those who betrayed their fiduciary trust and those who reduced and covered up the discipline) translated into additional millions of dollars in unrealized tithes. The cost to Adventist public image is difficult to calculate.

### Glacier View

In the autumn of Wilson's first full year as GC president (October 1979), Desmond Ford, an Adventist religion professor on loan to Pacific Union College from Avondale College, accepted the invitation of the Angwin area Association of Adventist Forums chapter to discuss unresolved problems with traditional explications of the sanctuary doctrine that SDA scholars had been wrestling with privately for seventy-five years.

Ford laid out the sticking points quite clearly and suggested a solution. The theological eruption that followed began with scandalized retirees living in the PUC area and spread like magma.

Almost immediately various kinds of pressure began to mount on PUC president Jack Cassell and academic dean Gordon Madgwick. The two made a proposal to Neal Wilson and the NAD leadership that Ford be given time to put his analysis of the sanctuary subject on paper and to have a committee, comprised of his scholarly brethren, assess his analysis.

Wilson rejected their proposal in favor of an unwieldy, week-long

## Chairman Neal

### SOME OF THE BOARDS WILSON CHAIRED DURING HIS SECOND TERM

- 1 Adventist Media Center
- 2 *Adventist Review*
- 3 Adventist World Radio
- 4 Biblical Research Institute Administrative Committee
- 5 General Conference Corporation
- 6 General Conference Executive Committee
- 7 Harris Pine Mills
- 8 Loma Linda Community Hospital
- 9 Loma Linda Foods
- 10 Loma Linda University
- 11 Loma Linda University Medical Center Inc.

gathering of 120-odd church workers from around the world that has ever since been simply termed, Glacier View. The enormity of the gathering and its prepublicity raised the stakes incredibly high and blew the importance of one Forum talk all out of proportion.

In spite of Wilson's assurance at the beginning of Glacier View meetings "that there has been no calculated strategy" to prejudice the case against Ford, the *Review* ran 92 pages affirming the traditional interpretation of the sanctuary doctrine during the six months leading to Glacier View. In the entire ten years preceding Glacier View, the *Review* had devoted fewer than 65 pages to the sanctuary topic; and during three of those years (1974, 1976, 1977), not a word was published in the church paper regarding this Adventist doctrinal pillar.

Wilson had also specified that "Des is not on trial before this group, though some of his views are on trial." Technically Wilson spoke the truth. But five days later, on Friday afternoon, as the 100-plus attendees left for their various destinations, Wilson and seven other church leaders faced Ford with an unvoted, ten-point document. He was given the option to sign the document or resign. There was a trial of sorts, but the jury was not comprised of his peers.

Wilson's handling of this doctrinal issue resulted in large losses of workers, credibility, members, and money.

### Managing Walter Rea

Rumors that Walter Rea, a Southern California Conference pastor, was finding alarming chunks of source dependency in the writings of Ellen White began to circulate in early 1978 – the year Wilson assumed his present office.

In its attempts to deny the validity of the rumors, the White Estate further publicized the issue. On 8 January 1980 Wilson appointed a committee of eighteen church administrators, scholars, and other Adventist thought leaders to meet with Rea on January 28 and 29 at Glendale Adventist Hospital to examine the parallels he had accumulated.

At the conclusion of their two days with Walter Rea, the Glendale 18 voted "that an in-depth study on the *Desire of Ages* be implemented," and that "a person trained in scholarly methodology be asked to work with Elder Rea . . . someone with whom Elder Rea would be pleased to work."

Wilson's response was communicated on 20 March 1980 by the NAD vice president's office to Rea by way of his union and conference presidents, including the following order:

That administration inform Elder Rea that his intensive study over a period of years has largely served its purpose, and that now the General Conference will ask other individuals to carry on this work to the degree deemed necessary by the leadership of the church.

The direct result of Wilson's isolating Rea from participation in further study of the problem he had unearthed was the publication of Rea's book, *The White Lie*. Despite its literary failings and its shortfalls of grace, the book had a significant impact: loss of members, loss of trust in church leaders, loss of tithing income, and more embarrassing publicity.

### *Desire of Ages* study

Regardless of their widely varying opinions of Ellen White, most SDA members will assert their willingness to know the truth about the claim that she was using sources, perhaps regularly, without acknowledgement.

Neal Wilson was one such member. Consequently, in 1980, he appointed Fred Veltman, a PUC professor of religion who had graduate training in New Testament redaction criticism, to determine once and for all how much literary dependence there might be in Mrs. White's most loved work, *Desire of Ages*.

Veltman's 2,561-page study of fifteen randomly selected *Desire of Ages* chapters was completed in 1988 and had cost the General Conference approximately \$175,000. To date, the report has received almost one-page of coverage in the 22 September 1988 *Adventist Review* (compare that with nearly three *Review* pages devoted to Wilson's climb of Mount Kilimanjaro). Seven of the "Newsbreak" item's nine paragraphs are quotes from special assistant to Neal Wilson, Charles Taylor, who greatly minimized the extent and significance of Veltman's findings. Veltman is not quoted once, and there is only one dependent clause from his study.

Neal Wilson is quoted by Taylor as saying that Veltman's study "gives us fresh assurance that God did indeed use this human instrument as a part of His continued self-revelation and to bring great blessing to all of us."

In brief, Veltman found that 31 percent of the fifteen chapters he analyzed (not including parallel uses of Scripture) were clearly source dependent. (And this 31 percent includes averaging in a full chapter for which no attempt was made to find sources.)

He found that Mrs. White used fictionalized lives of Christ to bring a sense of realism to some of the scenes from Christ's life. And he found that Mrs. White had used source material that was incorrect – that is inconsistent with the Gospel narratives.

*Currents*, and maybe some readers, would appreciate the opportunity to ask Elder Wilson how these basic findings bring him "fresh assurance," and why that "fresh assurance" (acquired at a cost of \$175,000 to tithing payers) has not been shared more generously with the world church.

### The litigious church

The SDA church, defined as the GC Corporation, trademark registered the word "Adventist" with the US Patent and Trademark Office (Reg. No. 1,176,153) on 3 November 1981.

Two years later, at the 1983 Annual Council, specific guidelines were adopted (including legal action) for protecting these newly registered church trademarks, including "Seventh-day Adventist," "Adventist," and "Ministry," against potential infringement by church members.

The groundwork for these Annual Council actions had been in preparation for at least a year before Neal Wilson wrote to the laity in the 4 February 1982 *Adventist Review* this counsel:

According to God's Word, litigation is definitely not the Christian answer to resolving disputes and misunderstandings. . . . While it seems clear from the counsel we have that courts and attorneys are needed in our world, they were never ordained to settle matters arising within the church.

Subsequent to the 1983 Autumn Council action on trademark protection, numerous suits have been brought by the General Conference against a variety of independent Adventist ministries and publications. The reaction of the church membership to these actions and their discussion, in the *Adventist Review*, *Ministry*, and various union papers has been overwhelmingly against the lawsuits. One GC authority told *Currents* that

**The direct result of Wilson's isolating Rea from participation in further study was the publication of *The White Lie*.**

during his twenty- plus years of service, only one other issue had attracted more mail to the GC, and that almost all of it was negative.

To some observers it is a sign that the church is not really representative (and its leaders paternalistic), when issues that obviously concern a large segment of the membership are not brought to quinquennial session for a more representative judgment.

Many members feel that the only legitimate definition of church is a definition that equates church with the sum total of its members. Under such a definition, it is the members of the church who own trademark on the word "Adventist," and the members who have the legal right – so long as they are members – to use the word.

An irony – if not an impropriety – occurs when the church (defined as the GC Corporation) sues the church (defined as its members).

The question that arises is whether Wilson's counsel to church members – "You can win a court case and lose your soul" – applies to the GC Corporation. But that raises the more recondite question of whether the GC Corporation has a soul.

## Moving the GC to Silver Spring

No one knows why, but in 1981, in the third year of his presidency, Neal Wilson and his associates believed that they could build an efficient new GC headquarters on Route 29 in Silver Spring, Maryland, for no more than the money they would earn by selling their Takoma Park complex.

By the time GC officers had signed a contract (1 March 1985) to sell the Takoma Park complex for \$14 million (\$4 million belonged to the Review & Herald Pub. Association), the hope of building a new headquarters for anything near the sale price of the old property had vanished.

Within a year, at the March 1986 Spring Meeting, the estimate for the proposed headquarters had grown to between \$25 million and \$31.6 million. Also in March 1986 Warren Johns, GC general counsel, presented Wilson with a written review of the headquarters move project, which indicated that for five years the entire enterprise had been totally out of control. Most GC officers were not privy to Johns' report.

Wilson was unable to persuade the GC Committee at Spring

*Continued on page 8*

# Curriculum Vitae \*

## Neal Clayton Wilson

### Born

Lodi, California, 5 July 1920.

### Parents

Nathaniel Carter and Hannah Myrtle (Wallin) Wilson.

### Siblings

Donald, Bruce, and Joanne Woodward Wilson.

### Education

B.A., Pacific Union College in 1942.

Major: Religion.

Minors: Speech and history.

*Campus Chronicle* Speech and Chapel Editor, 1941.

*Diogenes Lantern* Activities Editor, 1941.

D.D. (honorary), Andrews University, 1976.

### Married

Elinor Esther Neumann, 19 July 1942.

### Children

Ted Norman C. Wilson, secretary, Africa-Indian Ocean Division, and Shirley Wilson Anderson.

### Employment

1939-40 Accountant, Southern Asia Division, Poona, India.

1940 Acting treasurer, Oriental Watchman Press

1941-42 Asst. to cashier, St. Helena San., Deer Park, CA.

1942 Pastor-evangelist, Wyoming.

1944 Ordained to ministry.

1944-45 Pastor-evangelist, Middle East Division, Cairo.

1945-50 President, Egyptian Mission.

1950-58 President, Nile Union.

1959-1960 Secretary, Central California Conference.

1960-1962 Secretary, Columbia Union Conference.

1962-1966 President, Columbia Union Conference.

1966-1978 Vice president of General Conference for North American Division.

1978- President, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

### Publications

1985-1990 Quinquennium publications: Eighteen articles in the *Adventist Review*. Most of these are either editorial or devotional in nature. More difficult pieces – such as the hand-wringing over Harris Pine Mills bankruptcy and his assessment of the 1980 meetings in Glendale to evaluate Walter Rea's findings – are drafted for him by ghosts.

### Avocations

Likes to climb mountains.

\* Information for this vitae was gleaned from: *Diogenes Lantern*, 1941, and 1942. *Who's Who in America*, 1982-1983. Dunn & Bradstreet report on GC Corp., 1990.

# Interview with Neal C. Wilson

## Interview topic: Sustentation

**Warning:** The candor and brevity of the answers provided by the Seventh-day Adventist world church leader to the following questions should alert most readers to the fact that this is an imaginary interview. However, readers should be advised that the statements of fact attributed to Wilson in this sober spoof are taken from General Conference financial documents. And the parts of the answers that appear within marks of quotation are direct quotes from said documents. (For a five-dollar contribution to *Adventist Currents*, readers can receive the seven-page financial document on which this interview is based.)

**Currents:** Rumors about the insufficiency of the Seventh-day Adventist workers' sustentation fund have been rattling around the North American Division for the last year or two. But isn't that fund safe because it is required by the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) of 1974 to contain a specified balance?

**Wilson:** Certainly I believe the fund is safe. But no reports have been filed under the provisions of ERISA, because sustentation is a church-affiliated plan; and we do not feel that it is subject to the provisions of the Employment Retirement Security Act.

**Currents:** So then it is the General Conference and the local conferences that are guaranteeing the future retirement and benefit payments to retired teachers and ministers?

**Wilson:** Yes. Well, not exactly. "Whether all participants receive their benefits should the Plan terminate at some future time will depend upon the sufficiency, at that time, of the Plan's net assets to provide those benefits."

**Currents:** This is your way of hedging on payments after the second coming of . . .

**Wilson:** No! (laughs and takes a punch at the interviewer's shoulder, then seriously) Money won't be an issue for the 144,000. And the General Conference accepts no obligation to the lost.

**Currents:** Back to this old world. Then I can lose my sustentation benefits? They can be lowered? or terminated?

**Wilson:** Frankly, yes. "It is the intention of the General Conference to continue the [Sustentation] Plan indefinitely. However, the Conference has the right to revise any provision of the Plan or terminate the Plan in whole or in part for any reason at any time."

**Currents:** Who does the General Conference consider to be eligible for sustentation – that is, for the GC Retirement Plan for North America?

**Wilson:** "The Plan is a non-contributory, defined-benefit plan providing retirement, disability, health, death and survivor benefits to employees of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, General Conference institutions and all conference organizations in the North American Division, who meet eligibility requirements."

**Currents:** What sort of retirement plan is in place for the rest of the workers of the world field?

**Wilson:** Since your publication is distributed primarily in North America, I am going to address my answers to questions that pertain to that population.

**"The [General] Conference has the right to . . . terminate the Plan in whole or in part for any reason at any time."**

**Currents:** Well, uh, as you know, Ellen White counsels against investing in the stock market. Are any of the monies set aside for the Retirement Plan for North American Division church workers invested in the stock market?

**Wilson:** The pen of inspiration tells us that time and place must be considered in the application of the Testimonies. I believe that Mrs. White, were she alive today, would approve our prudent investment of the tithe reserved for retirement benefits of faithful workers.

**Currents:** How much of the Plan's tithe funds are invested in the stock market?

**Wilson:** Well, I don't know if I should mention figures, but somewhat over half of the fund is in prudent stocks.

**Currents:** You said the General Conference has nothing to hide. You agreed to be candid with . . .

**Wilson:** Yes, I did. Approximately \$75 million is invested in the market. And, under the blessing of the Lord, the market has reached record highs in the recent term.

**Currents:** Is it a fact that the General Conference has made loans from the Retirement Plan to Adventist conferences, colleges, and other institutions?

**Wilson:** Certainly. Why would you ask? These are deserving institutions that are training the next generation of leaders for the Lord's service. I have selected – in many cases personally – the leaders of these institutions. I have the greatest confidence in their leadership. I chair some of their boards and am at least an ex-officio trustee of all of them.

**Currents:** Is it true that you were the chairman of the board of directors for Harris Pine Mills?

**Wilson:** Yes. Why would you ask?

**Currents:** Is it true that the General Conference loaned money to Loma Linda University from one of its retirement plans?

**Wilson:** I'm happy to say, yes. Inspiration tells us that the medical work is the entering wedge that often breaks down prejudice where . . .

**Currents:** How much money?

**Wilson:** No more than they needed. Just hard construction costs to offset . . .

**Currents:** How much money?

**Wilson:** I believe, in 1988, it was around \$9.5 million. A well secured . . .

**Currents:** Was there money loaned to LLU from retirement funds in 1987?

**Wilson:** No; at least I don't recall any.

**Currents:** What about in 1989?

**Wilson:** The committee, the GC Executive Committee, voted an additional \$8.3 million for a total of \$17.8 million that was allocated, I believe, for faculty medical office construction . . . No. It was the electricity co-generation plant.

**Currents:** In an election year, such as this, it must be difficult for you to speak candidly on such a sensitive topic . . .

**Wilson:** No no, not at all. The Nominating Committee does not base its decision on political or economic concerns. The Nominating Committee puts representative names on the board and then lets the Holy Spirit lead them to the right decision.

**Currents:** But was there any other money, beyond the \$17.8 million you just mentioned, voted for LLU in 1989 from retirement funds?

**Wilson:** In fact, yes there was; and at a good rate of return too.

**Currents:** What is good?

**Wilson:** The interest rate was set in 1979 at 7.7 percent.

**Currents:** And how much money, Elder Wilson?

**Wilson:** Maybe you should ask the General Conference treasurer. He spends more time with the figures.

**Currents:** But you are the chairman of the board at LLU, at least until August.

**Wilson:** I guess the buck does stop with me. Here. I have it now. Another loan was made to LLU that totalled \$16,500,000 by 1988 and \$18,296,321, by 1989 – an increase of about \$1.8 million last year.

**Currents:** Secured?

**Wilson:** Why would you ask?

**Currents:** Because Loma Linda has quite a bit of debt. What you mentioned so far totals over \$36 million.

**Wilson:** Well, \$17 million is secured by the co-generation plant. It produces electricity for

the University and sells any overproduction to the Pacific Gas and Electric Company.

**Currents:** Has LLU sold any power to Pacific Gas and Electric?

**Wilson:** Yes, we are now. In fact the plant is running consistently at 70 percent of capacity, supplying the university and the hospital with all electrical needs including the heavy draws made on the system by the proton accelerator tests.

**Currents:** Is there other security? Anything you could liquidate quickly in an emergency?

**Wilson:** The new offices where the LLU medical faculty practice, where the medical missionaries work; that building secures the \$18 million I spoke of a moment ago. It stands on General Conference property, by the way.

**Currents:** Given your commitment to representative church structure, except when you are testifying in court, I'm sure you would have volunteered all of this information, even if we hadn't asked. But in case it has slipped your mind, can you think of any other money that has been loaned or given to LLU?

**Wilson:** I appreciate the privilege our little talk has given me to share with our people – and to the General Conference delegates especially – something of the importance of their tithes and offerings to God's movement. And I am reminded, you know the General Conference has an Operating Fund. This past year the tithes and offerings that came into the Operating Fund totalled \$169 million. That \$169 million was the entire General Conference budget for the world church.

Of that \$169 million we did make transfers to Loma Linda University in the amount of \$10,722,500. Now, personally I

**We've discussed about \$45.5 million that has gone from the GC to Loma Linda over the past year or so.**

am happy to do that. That \$10.7 million amounts to a little over 6 percent of the world church's operating fund. Now I had to push; I had to use my influence to get the other officers at our presentable new world church headquarters to vote with me. They wanted to do something else with the money. But I felt that we must guarantee the integrity, the viability of the "right arm" of the message. Can you imagine what Ellen White would think if we were to let the primary source of medical missionaries go wanting. We have been entrusted with the care of this wonderful vehicle for sharing the Gospel.

**Currents:** Rumors have it that LLU is selling most of its Beaumont property along Interstate 15 for approximately \$23 million. Do you expect LLU will reduce its debt to the Retirement Fund with that money?

**Wilson:** No. The \$37.4 million in loans are paid back on a predetermined schedule. And the \$10.7 million appropriation I just spoke of is an operations grant. We made similar grants this year to Andrews University, \$3.7 million; to Oakwood College, \$1.5 million; to Walla Walla and the other schools. We support the church's future, our young people, through Seventh-day Adventist education.

And let me add another word about Loma Linda. I have a great deal of confidence in the leadership there. Dr. David Hinshaw – do you know him?

**Currents:** That depends on what you mean by know.

**Wilson:** You should really get to know him. He led the Adventist physicians in the sixties out of the city of Los Angeles (against great opposition, I must say) to Loma Linda – a place chosen with the eye of inspiration. During the late seventies and early eighties he left Loma Linda to help Oral Roberts University in its effort to become a legitimate medical school. And we are so fortunate to have Dr. Hinshaw back at LLU, more deeply involved than ever. I believe he wears four or five hats at Loma Linda. Probably only accepts a salary from one. Dr. Hinshaw is putting LLU on the map of world-class medical institutions. We have a strong leader in control there. And so I hope you are not worrying about the investment of the Lord's money in that endeavor.

**Currents:** Could there be still other GC funds going to LLU?

**Wilson:** Why would you ask? We've discussed about \$45.5 million that has gone from the GC to Loma Linda over the past year or so. If there is more, it is not specified in the financial statements.

**Currents:** There is another rumor flying that the General Conference is putting \$14 million into the Proton Accelerator now under construction by the LLU Department of Radiological Sciences.

**Wilson:** If such an allocation is being or has been made, I am not willing to discuss it now. I have to run. I hope to see you at Indianapolis. I'm climbing Mt. Whitney before the General Conference session.

## Neal Wilson Will Be Re-elected

*Continued from page 5*

Meeting (April 1986) to allocate more than \$25 million for the new building. And in the *Review* (15 May 1986) he admitted that "if we had known the cost of this project before, we probably wouldn't have sold our [Takoma Park] buildings."

The 3 May 1990 *Adventist Review* shared GC treasurer Donald Gilbert's report "that the final cost of the new world headquarters complex totaled \$34,443,873."

In 1903 Ellen White was encouraging then GC President Daniells that the world church headquarters should be moved from Battle Creek to the nation's capitol. She wrote him on June 26 saying:

In regard to Washington, I will say that twenty years ago memorials for God should have been established in that city, . . . If there is on our books and papers the imprint of Washington, D.C., it will be seen that we are not afraid to let our light shine.

Neal Wilson seemed to think Mrs. White's counsel did not apply to the 1990s. In a letter to Montgomery County officials quoted in the *Prince George's Journal*, 6 January 1986, he explained that the old Washington, D.C., address "raises misunderstandings and the suspicion that the Seventh-day Adventist church may somehow be an agency for . . . the United States government."

Had the church leaders really done their homework, and waited to sell the Takoma Park property until they were prepared to build in Maryland, the project would not have had to cost the church members \$20 million beyond the sale price of the old complex.

Or they could have been faithful to Mrs. White's counsel by renovating the old complex that now sits, in a recovering neighborhood, so conveniently adjacent to the Washington-area Metro-Rail system.

### Conclusion Next Issue!

## Coming Currents

**Sustentation, a tragedy in the making?** *Currents* begins a series of articles examining the expiring North American Division Retirement Plan. Later in the series specific steps will be suggested that those vested in the Plan can take to hedge their retirement.

**Should Neal Wilson be permitted a third term?** *Currents* completes Wilson's report card, including a partial summing of the financial cost of his leadership.