

# Family Fervor

## *Hits Capitol Hill*

By Gary M. Ross

**I**n the presidential race of 1980, Ronald Reagan advocated a number of wholesome values: family, work, neighborhood, peace and justice. None of these, of course, was exclusively his to promote.

For example, Adventists, Mormons, and other religious and secular groups have long taught, and continue to affirm in practice, the importance of family as the basic unit of society.

Just now family-related legislation preoccupies U.S. representatives on Capitol Hill. It may become a unifying theme of the post-Reagan era. As one observer said, "This thing's got legs and breadth and depth."

What accounts for the family fervor of our time? In what legislative directions does the concern with family take us? Which of its manifestations already elicits an Adventist response?

Explanations come easily to mind. When Pat Robertson, currently a mouth-

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schools with interscholastic sport programs has been well documented by a number of studies.<sup>32</sup> Such programs affect not only the status structures of high school students but also the daily operation of the school. The effect is disruptive to the educational program and may even result in less-effective school leadership, since male coaches are often viewed as good educators and candidates for administrative positions.<sup>32</sup>

## Funding Problems

5. *Interscholastic athletic programs deprive educational programs of resources, facilities, and staff and could seriously affect the support of the Adventist community for its schools.*

The actual cost of interschool athletic programs is difficult to assess because public and private schools have different sources of income. For church-related schools and colleges, funding sources are limited to tuition, fees, endowments, denominational support, gifts, and gate receipts.

The costs of an athletic program include the expense of erecting or preparing buildings, fields, and tracks, upkeep, coaching salaries, equipment, travel, insurance, substitute teacher salaries (at the high school level), salaries of athletic and academic support personnel (at the college level), and scholarships. The belief that intercollegiate athletic programs can be self-supporting is a myth; they are, on the average, "excessively deficit producing."<sup>33</sup> Cheerleaders, drill teams, marching bands, and pep squads can add significantly to the total cost.

Money consumed by athletic programs deprives academic and other legitimate educational programs of needed resources, facilities, and personnel. In many institutions adequate physical education and recreational facilities are sacrificed for athletic facilities, and academic personnel are sacrificed to employ coaches and their staffs.

While college coaches tend to be full-time, nonteaching personnel, high school coaches are frequently full-time teachers who receive additional salary for coaching responsibilities. Ben Harris decries

the excessive number of [high school] coaches required to administer the . . . athletic programs who must also teach classes. This situation can, and usually does, result in problems. Finding a person who is qualified to coach girls' volleyball and also teach general science can present problems. This situation tends to "load" a school with persons who place most of their energies and time on the coaching responsibilities of the job rather than on . . . teaching.<sup>34</sup>

The financial stability of most Adventist colleges and secondary schools is a critical concern to the church. Few parents or students would be willing to pay addi-

tional tuition and fees to support an interschool athletic program. Only a handful of students would be recruited or lost because of the presence or lack of interschool sports. And it is unlikely that the church would fund such activities. In fact, the presence of such programs on Adventist campuses could have a negative impact on levels of support.

Adventist schools have provided wholesome recreation for their students for nearly a century. These intramural programs reduce the competitive aspects of sport, are relatively inexpensive to operate, and are reasonably safe. Nor do they disrupt the academic program.

It seems strange that at a time when escalating costs and other concerns are causing many public, private, and church-related institutions to eliminate such programs, some in our church would have us consider reversing our historic position opposing interschool athletics. □

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piece of the New Christian Right, assails the moral relativism of the nation and indicts family brokenness as one of its

causes, he touches a nerve. People listen to him and, as the polls and primaries indicate, they even endorsed his candidacy.

At the other end of the political spectrum the Democratic Party is seeking that magic issue to which voters will resonate. Having discovered little fervor in the populace about the budget deficit or trade imbalance, they have ignited fires with the theme of "Our Family, Our Future." Here, one Congressman said, is "good policy and good politics." Exclaimed another Democrat, "decency and self-interest have merged." Of course, making family their political trademark entails wresting the label from Republicans and squaring family-related spending programs with federal responsibility.

Meanwhile, organized labor climbs aboard—trying like the Democrats to reshape an image in order to build membership. Painfully aware that traditional labor bills affecting the workplace get tagged as special-interest legislation even as they ignore the continued feminization of the work force, laborites find in family just the cozy rubric needed. Under it they now place their agenda.

### Main Concerns

Because of its very inclusiveness, the theme could lose its punch, for what *isn't* family related in the final analysis? So far, however, the proposals fit their category quite reasonably. Here are the main concerns:

- expanded child-care legislation, currently before a House committee;
- the elementary and secondary education reauthorization, now before a House-Senate conference;
- welfare reform, passed by the House but awaiting Senate action;
- job-protected family leave, approved by a House committee and awaiting floor action;
- mandatory worker health insurance, awaiting committee action in the Senate;
- an increase of the minimum wage, awaiting committee action in both houses.

Related initiatives not yet formalized include efforts to reduce infant mortality and child abuse. Older proposals repackaged for the new climate involve constitutional amendments to outlaw abortion and permit school prayer. Some Adventists suspect that the wish list of family advocates stretches also to day-of-rest legislation, but *that* is speculation.

Because child-care legislation presently focuses the family fervor, and because the General Conference has already responded to it, some elaboration here may be warranted.

Under the terms of the Act for Better Child Care Services (H.R. 3660/S. 1885)

the federal government would spend \$2.5 billion annually to enhance the availability, affordability, and quality of child-care centers, with the funds going first to the states and from them to providers via grants and to individuals via certificates or vouchers. States must match 20 percent of the federal money and skew the funds in favor of low-income families.

### An Urgent Need

One can hardly dispute that America needs something of the kind. By its regard for the young (and also the aged) a society indicates its humanity. In 1995 two-thirds of all preschoolers—15 million children—will have mothers in the work force. Formal and informal child-care arrangements now in place could not bear a burden so large and heartrending. Taking *from* the workplace those mothers who cannot arrange for their children would burden the welfare system.

Exactly how many child-care providers are there in the United States? Estimates vary widely, but the increased role of private charities in child care, especially churches, is striking. Church providers may constitute as many as one-fourth to one-third of all providers. Seventh-day Adventists maintain numerous facilities in North America, but, as it is not clear to whom they answer, data regarding them remain incomplete.

Church involvement as day-care providers, and traditional Adventist sensitivities toward parochialism ensured that the General Conference would watch with special interest the treatment of churches in pending legislation. Eventually the relevant portions of the bill were found unacceptable, and changes will be sought.

### Compliance Requirements

For example, church providers are not excluded from the federal assistance. Rather, they qualify for it *if they comply with the following restrictions:*

- Elimination of "any program or

activity that has the purpose or effect of advancing or promoting a particular religion or religion generally";

- Concealment or removal of "all religious symbols and artifacts";
- Waiver of the discriminatory (i.e., exclusive or sectarian) hiring that is allowed in section 703 of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and that was upheld by the Supreme Court in *Bishop v. Amos* (1987).

Would SDA facilities comply? Probably not. Why then the opposition from separationists like ourselves whom these provisions were intended to assuage? *The answer lies in the fact that other church providers may restrict themselves sufficiently to qualify for the proffered assistance.* If so, two things could happen that affect our self-interest and separationist stance.

First, a church provider would still be a church provider regardless of the nonsectarian content and environment that characterized its child-care program. The aura of wholesomeness would still attach to it. Might not an SDA parent accept a certificate for use therein rather than stay with an SDA provider? Could SDA providers bear such an exodus?

Second, because the federally assisted church providers would not be separately incorporated, the resulting inspection or monitoring by state authorities would constitute inspection or monitoring of the church itself. This could amount to the "excessive entanglement" that courts condemn. The Supreme Court ruling in *Aquilar v. Felton* (1985) found against a shared-time scheme (admittedly not what we are considering here) in part because the government supervision of it violated the establishment clause of the First Amendment.

### Future Prospects

These features may change as the bill moves and evolves. Two changes are currently under consideration. One continues to include church providers but reduces the demands upon them, a course of action that is even more troublesome to separationists. Another change currently advanced by the Republican party seeks parental relief through tax credits and thereby reduces the potential for bureaucracy in child-care programs.

Deficit-consciousness in Congress may prevent altogether an initiative that costs so much. Just the same, child-care fervor on Capitol Hill has made *family* Washington's latest buzz word. □

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