

# A Time of Change and Challenge

By Gerald F. Clifford and L. D. Devine

**T**he 1980s have seen profound changes in the South Pacific basin. These changes have had a significant impact on the ministries of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In the early years of the decade national Labour Party governments won elections in both Australia and New Zealand and have been returned to power. These governments have a socialist mindset, and have openly and systematically set out to reorder their respective cultures through social engineering. They see education as a major tool to accomplish this goal.

At the end of its first decade of independence, Papua New Guinea continues to struggle with the challenges of tribalism, a multiplicity of

languages, and a fragile economy. Fiji has experienced political, religious, and economic stresses as two *coups d'etat* overthrew successive governments. In addition, membership in the Adventist Church has grown strongly but unevenly during the past five years. At present three out of four members in the South Pacific Division reside in the island nations of the Pacific. This situation has put considerable stress on the resources of the homeland church in Australia and New Zealand.

Some of these societal changes were already underway when the quinquennium began in 1985 and were taken into account as the South Pacific Division Department of Education established its goals for the period. Discussion within the department resulted in a three-pronged thrust, as outlined below.

## **Curriculum**

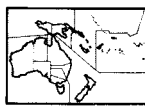
*Initiate, develop, and distribute to union and conference schools and school authorities Seventh-day Adventist-oriented curriculum-support materials in the following areas:*

- (a) *Creation/science (secondary)*
- (b) *Humanism (primary and secondary)*
- (c) *Health (primary)*
- (d) *Religious education.*

Because church and private schools in Australia and New Zealand are closely inspected and supervised by the state, a strong effort has been made to not only protect the primacy of the Adventist philosophy of education but also to actively promote it as the justification for our expensive and extensive education program. Accordingly, the department of education has been completely reorganized.

The division continues to fund the position of the education director and his administrative associate, but the homeland union and local conferences in Australia and New Zealand have funded positions for two

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associate directors with responsibility for primary and secondary curriculum development. In addition, the homeland church has also budgeted the cost of an associate director to deal with government education issues at both national and state levels throughout Australia and New Zealand.

To assist the curriculum development program several teachers have been assigned to the department of education for one-year terms. Locating the curriculum unit in the division office permits a degree of coordination that would not be possible at the union or conference levels. In addition, a mission-area curriculum director has been given a two-year assignment to produce a large volume of low-cost student and teacher resources for church schools in the island nations of the division. By the end of 1990 the South Pacific Division will for the first time be able to document its philosophy through all its K-12 curriculum materials.

#### **Administration**

1. *Extend the primary and secondary school General Conference accreditation program to include at least 50 percent of the primary and secondary schools in the home unions and all the secondary schools and union training institutions in the mission unions.*
2. *Inaugurate a school administrators'*

*professional training program for primary and secondary school principals, and deputies and selected senior teachers through annual workshops and in-service visitation by education department personnel.*

3. *Delegate progressively, responsibility for organizing, conducting, and reporting on secondary school visitations to union department personnel with division department personnel acting in an advisory/support role.*

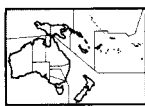
All five colleges in the South Pacific Division are now accredited, along with about half the primary and secondary schools in Australia and New Zealand. The primary and secondary self-study documents are presently undergoing their third revision. A self-study document has been prepared for the one- and two-teacher primary schools and is functioning well. In addition, a self-study document is presently being field-tested in union mission secondary schools. We expect that all Australian and New Zealand schools will be accredited by the end of 1993, along with the secondary schools in the mission areas of the division. By that time the accreditation of mission-area primary schools should also be well underway.

Each year the division sponsors a convention for school principals to provide in-service training for campus-level leadership in Australia and New Zealand. Recognizing that

many of the teachers employed by the church receive their degrees from secular institutions, the annual program at Camp Howqua has been designed to promote the unique thrust and philosophy of Adventist education.

In addition, responsibility for developing teachers' classroom management skills is becoming a conference responsibility for primary teachers, and for union conferences, in the case of secondary faculty. Attendance at the annual Howqua meetings is optional. However participation by a number of high-quality program presenters from outside the division has made the meetings well received, with many of the principals participating. A series of workshops are also being held at Howqua for deans, librarians, and counselors.

At present 45 administrators and teachers are being sponsored for a Master of Arts degree in administration and leadership offered by Loma Linda University. The program, which involves three summers on the Avondale College campus and one at Riverside, California, has been well received. Ten of the candidates are national educators from schools in the mission unions. During the quinquennium four educators have been sponsored for Doctoral degrees. The division has budgeted Aust. \$250,000 annually for advanced study support of its educators. In addition, many



teachers are upgrading their education by attending evening classes at local universities and through correspondence courses, for which they are given financial support.

With the establishment of Pacific Adventist College in Papua New Guinea it became apparent that we needed to coordinate the academic offerings and transfer of credits of the five postsecondary and tertiary level institutions in the division. To that end the Tertiary Education Board was recently established, with the former South Pacific Division Board of Education becoming the K-12 Board of Education.

During the quinquennium the homeland union education directors have assumed much of the responsibility for administering the church's program in Australia and New Zealand. This has allowed the division department of education staff to spend more time on curriculum development, the needs of the mission unions, strategic planning, and government-related education issues. This shift in emphasis was recently stated formally in "Toward 2000" the planning document of the department, which sets the direction for Adventist education in the South Pacific to the end of the century, should Christ's advent be delayed.

### **Teachers' Professional Development**

1. *Implement a Seventh-day Adventist teacher certification program for teachers serving in schools in the home unions of the division.*
2. *Develop a self-evaluation and professional development assistance program for teachers.*
3. *Further develop a volunteer program for experienced staff and retired teachers and administrators in the home field to participate in "on the spot," assistance and professional development programs for the mission union schools.*

In early 1989 an Adventist Teacher Certification program was established, with implementation scheduled for the 1990 school year. Orientation of local conference educational leadership is presently underway. Teachers on regular employment status are eligible to participate. In time, following satisfactory performance reviews, they will qualify not only for Teaching Ministry Credentials but also for wage parity with denominational ministers.

Formal evaluation of teacher per-

formance has been essentially unknown in the Antipodes. Recognizing the need to move in this direction, the South Pacific Division education department has begun with the teacher-certification program described above, which of course is voluntary. Recognizing the need for regular performance review for church departments, the division administration has asked the education department to prepare suitable documents. These were being piloted in the division departments during 1989. We hope that this procedure will be utilized by the union and local conferences. However, because of cultural resistance the adoption of this program will probably be evolutionary rather than revolutionary.

Advertisements and questionnaires have been placed in the division paper, the *South Pacific Record*, seeking to establish a resource bank of church member skills. Maintained on the department of education computer data bank, this information has become increasingly useful in providing expert volunteer and salaried assistance to education in the mission unions.

### **Looking Forward**

During the 1970s and early 1980s

the educational ministry of the church in the South Pacific essentially doubled in size in terms of enrollments, numbers of teachers, and schools. The present quinquennium has seen mostly consolidation as the program has stabilized. Emphasis has been placed on a renewed understanding of the purposes of Christian education and the provision of professional support for the classroom teacher.

The new quinquennium will present another set of challenges. The demand for education in the island nations of the South Pacific, coupled with the burgeoning membership, will strain the human and monetary resources of the church. In the homelands of Australia and New Zealand there is considerable public ferment as to the direction education should take in preparing young people for life in the 21st century. The South Pacific Division Department of Education staff look forward to the next quinquennium, anticipating that it may be the conclusion of the age. Should that be the case, there will be plenty of work for us in the kingdom retraining all the administrators, dentists, physicians, preachers, and other workers of the church who have become redundant! □