

North American Division 2003 Yearend Meeting action taken on November 3, 2003.

OGC/PREn/NADUn&GCO03YE/03YE to HBT&RJH

**569-03N RELATIONSHIP OF THE CHURCH MEMBERS  
AND CHURCH INSTITUTIONS TO LABOR ORGANIZATIONS—  
POLICY AFFIRMATION**

Because recent discussions have urged that the church reconsider its historical position on labor organizations, it is

VOTED, To reaffirm NAD HR 30, Relationship of Church Members and Church Institutions to Labor Organizations, which reads as follows:

**HR 30 Relationship of Church Members and  
Church Institutions to Labor Organizations**

**HR 30 05 Biblical Background**—1. a. For more than a century the Seventh-day Adventist Church has taught its members and instructed administrators of its Church institutions that the Holy Bible clearly instructs that Christ is to be Lord of the life of every church member and church institution, and that He is to be the ultimate authority to Whom they will submit their decisions and relationships (Acts 2:36; 5:29; Colossians 3:23, 24). The Church has historically taught that its members and institutions dare not violate their individual or corporate consciences by supporting organizations, policies, or activities incompatible with the principles set forth in the Holy Scriptures (Isaiah 8:12, 13; 2Corinthians 6:14-18).

b. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is aware that unjust activities on the part of some employers and the exploitation of employees created a climate for strong labor unions. Such behavior is condemned in the Scripture. "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." (James 5:1 KJV) Jesus made His position clear when He said, "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matthew 25:40, KJV) However, Jesus never used confrontational methods such as economic or physical pressure. Labor organizations may appear to have good motives, but Christians can not unite with those who sometimes follow Christ and only sometimes trust His methods.

**HR 30 10 Historical Position**—1. Based on the biblical principles described in HR 30 05 (and many other sources), the Seventh-day Adventist Church hereby confirms its long-standing teaching that Church members should and institutions must, remain free and independent from organizations which might violate a member's conscience or interfere with the fulfillment of the mission of the Church, through its institutions, as follows:

a. Seventh-day Adventist Church members are following the historic teaching of the Church when they refuse to join or financially support labor unions or similar organizations.

b. Seventh-day Adventist institutions are following the historic teaching of the Church when they refuse to recognize labor unions as bargaining units or to enter into contractual negotiations with them or similar organizations. Institutions and administrators on all levels shall seek counsel from the North American Division Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department and the North American Division administration if confronted with requests to recognize a labor union as a bargaining unit or enter into contractual negotiations with such organizations.

2. The Seventh-day Adventist Church does not engage in political or economic activities that seek to destroy the labor movement. However, the Church will exercise its lawful right to protect itself and its institutions from involvement with labor unions, just as it endeavors to protect the rights of conscience of members who conscientiously practice the teaching of the Church in this regard.

3. Through sermons, personal counseling, church publications, and other media, church and institutional administrators as well as pastors should inform Seventh-day Adventist Church members and institutional employees of the Bible principles and the historic teachings on which the Church's position is based.

**HR 30 12 Employee Dispute Resolutions**—Seventh-day Adventist employers and employees are urged to employ the methods of Christ in the workplace and in every place. Disputes should be resolved peacefully in a way that will not create adversarial relationships. Working agreements may provide for the use of neutral and objective third parties in dispute resolution efforts. Employers and employees are to remember that Christ was a person of the second mile who taught that we should love even our enemies.

**HR 30 14 Union Membership**—Seventh-day Adventist employees in secular workplaces are to follow the dictates of their consciences in matters of labor union membership. They are to avoid unchristian activities and avoid blanket or blind support of partisan political campaigns. Where union membership is required for employment in a given industry or position, and the member elects to remain in said position, he or she should minimize participation, serve in humanitarian projects, and request that his or her union dues be applied to a charitable organization.

**HR 30 15 Resource Materials**—Documents relating to this position include:

1. 1972 Autumn Council Actions Pertaining to the North American Division, page 16;
2. General Conference Committee Minutes, September 19, 1957, and January 14, 1975;

3. Minutes of the General Conference Officers and Union Conference Presidents meeting, October 8, 1968;

4. Counsels from the Spirit of Prophecy on Labor Unions and Confederacies.