

Introduction to the Remuneration Commission Report to the Annual Council of 2002, by Gerry D Karst

This is now our second look at the report from the Remuneration Study Commission. You will recall that at the time of the Spring meeting we read the report and entertained a useful and healthy discussion.

There was strong and encouraging affirmation for the philosophical foundation of the report that is grounded in Biblical and Spirit of Prophecy principles.

A few questions developed however, concerning the guidelines and their implementation with the result that the document was approved in principle, and the delegates requested opportunity between Spring Meeting and this Annual Council for interested persons and entities to submit suggestions to the committee for changes and amendments.

Those suggestions were received and the commission met on September 10 and 11 to consider them. With 12 world divisions, over 100 Unions and attached fields, more than 300 Conferences plus multiple institutions, only 8 written submissions were received. Some suggested making no change. Some made helpful editorial suggestions. One or two raised questions but offered no solutions. One major submission was substantive and received considerable attention. As a result it is my opinion that we have a better document for having delayed its implementation.

Allow me to make a few observations. This task is more complex than any of us realized. In a global community with varying economies, and with church employees being drawn from a mix of local, inter-union and intra-union, along with Inter-Division employees with a broad set of working policies to address different situations, it is impossible for the church to maintain a single unified remuneration scale for the world. In fact, while we continue to hear that we have a unified wage scale; reality suggests a very different picture. We have found multiple situations in which entities and organizations are outside of policy with regard to their current approach to remuneration.

It has been suggested that a couple of General Conference institutions have gone their own way and are way outside policy. I wish to correct a misconception. A couple of institutions are on a different remuneration plan than the rest of the church entities, but they are within policy. They are within policy because this body, the General Conference Executive Committee granted them authorization to move toward community rates, and that authorization is currently in the working policy of the General Conference. Some may disagree with the rates that have been set, but they have not acted outside policy.

One of the terms of reference for the Remuneration Study Commission was to establish guidelines for the world divisions in developing their remuneration plans. This is a decentralization of the process. The responsibility now shifts to the divisions to apply the policy within the guideline that we will vote today. The Seventh-day Adventist church is growing rapidly, and with a faith community approaching 20 million, and

operating in an ever diverse economic climate, it is no longer advisable to try and regulate remuneration from one central office.

At the same time we need safeguards and guidelines that keep us together as a church family. The preservation of our unity, the transferability of employees from one branch of the work to another without financial loss or gain is a goal that we must never abandon.

Let me repeat again for emphasis, that the only safe course of action is a constant spiritual appeal that we interpret the guidelines on the philosophical foundation established from the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy. We have studied and earnestly prayed that the Lord would lead us to articulate a philosophy that is in harmony with divine principles and that we will have the strength of our convictions to adhere to those principles.

Finally, I want to appeal to this body to deal with this item today. The Commission has nothing more to recommend. We've been over the ground many times and from many directions. To refer it back to the commission again will not accomplish anything different than what you have in your hands at this time. When I on behalf of the commission present this final report, the initiative will belong to you. The document will now be yours and I urge you examine it, discuss it, cautiously amend it if necessary, but finish with it today.

Now let's turn our attention to the report.