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Editorial

THE HOUSE OF LIFE

One of the painful ironies of being a sponsor of Seventh-day Adventist education is the discovery, as one travels the world around, that, while non-SDA families of prominence in various nations enthusiastically support our school system, more and more church members of means, the yuppie type, are deserting the church's system for what they suppose to be better education elsewhere.

Currently, the SDA K-12 enrollment worldwide is nearing the 700,000 mark (692,395). But of these only 51 percent, or 353,121, are children of the church. With the latest statistics from the General Conference Church Ministries Department placing the potential pool of school-age children at 3,131,034, this means that we are really serving only some 11.27 percent of our youth. Is this an adequate ministry or investment in the education of the youth of our churches who themselves represent some 51.49 percent of our membership?¹

We readily admit that Adventist education cannot be fully implemented in all nations at the moment, but even as we allow for historical or political variables, we have to recognize that there is a significant gap in what we as parents, pastors, and church administrators can do for the growing fraction of a burgeoning membership.

Perhaps we have fallen short in maintaining and equipping our schools so as to make them representative in the eyes of our middle-class members. However, secular materialism is leading many to view "excellence" divorced from strong commitment to values, as a goal worthy to pursue. Do we no longer believe that the goal of education and redemption "are one"?

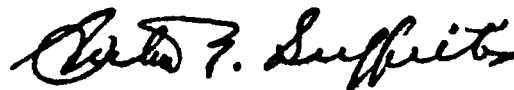
When Moses studied in Egypt, the palace schools were known as "the house of life." As a prospective Pharaoh, Moses was equipped by such schools to become, among many possibilities, political head, financial administrator, health educator, military leader, and a son of the gods. However, it was the early tutelage of godly parents, and the later training by God through exile, that led him to count "disgrace for the sake of Christ of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead for his reward" (Hebrews 11:26, NIV).²

We would be daft to argue that the schools of the land do not offer many amenities and skills that will help the youth to make it in life. But is the ultimate goal of Christian parents and their shepherds the equipping of their offspring for success in a secular career? Or are we seeking to prepare our flock for study and service both now and in the hereafter?

The seeming lack of commitment on the part of constituencies, and the local pastorate in general, to put the necessary effort into supporting and maintaining a school system that is attractive to many of our workers and financially able members, makes many in the educational community wonder if the church really believes in the total education of our children.

Some of us have always felt that our schools should be the pacesetters for the fulfillment of vision and mission; but as the church has neglected to promote with vigor the virtues of such an education, many educators are beginning to feel that the schools will rise no higher than their constituents and their leaders. Is this what the church wants? Or does it wish a system that will do everything possible to cooperate in the preparation and salvation of our youth?

If we truly wish to save our young people, then in this period of focus on global strategies, we need to reaffirm our dedication and support for a total ministry to the church, one that includes education—the house of life.



NOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ Church Ministries figures are from 3rd quarter, 1989; other statistics are from the GC World Report 1988. Current membership of the church is 6,080,531.

² From *Holy Bible: New International Version*. Copyright © 1978 by the New York International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.