



Doors Opening for Adventist Education

By Nevil Gorski

We close the 1985-1990 quinquennium with almost 160,000 students enrolled in our 896 educational institutions, including students from kindergarten to graduate level. The increase in enrollment in the past five years equaled 28 percent of the growth that occurred during the division's first 90 years (1893-1975). We feel that the surprising increase in enrollments in the past five years is due to three reasons.

First, God has blessed the effort of the administrators and education staff as they sought to follow inspired counsel to make our education system different from other programs of education. Though there is much room for improvement, our schools, with God's blessings, have

achieved encouraging results.

Second, we believe that the church's consciousness of the value of Christian education contributes immensely to the success of the program. It impresses the members not only to assume financial responsibility for the education of their children, but also to contribute their resources, influence, and effort to purchasing properties and building new schools.

Third, the low academic level of many of the secular schools, the frequent strikes, and the lack of moral and religious training given there has caused many well-to-do non-Adventist families to look to our institutions for help. Many of these families will, through the faithful work of our teachers, find their way to Christ.

For these and other reasons the doors are open to Adventist education in the vast territory of the South American Division.

What follows is a succinct summary of different aspects of the division's educational work in its seven unions and 42 conferences and missions, which have a total of 941,527 members.

Graduate Studies

Our division first attempted to offer graduate studies approximately 20 years ago. After prolonged study the General Conference approved offering Master's degrees in theology at three of our institutions: River Plate College in Argentina, Inca Union University in Peru, and Brazil College in Brazil.

The Master's degree is also offered by the Latin-American Adventist Theological Seminary through a Seminary in Mission. This serves the district pastors, who without leaving their local fields, come every year to the institution closest to them for an eight-week program of study. This occurs during the vacation period



Many schools in the division feature modern facilities and equipment, such as computers. Pictured is a computer training class at Union School in Maraflores, Peru.

Brazil Union.



when the facilities would otherwise be unoccupied.

Without investing heavily in new buildings, this seminary has already granted a Master of Arts degree to 151 pastors and is now preparing a third group of 161 more. To complement this program, the seminary is planning to offer Doctoral programs in theology and in pastoral theology beginning in 1992-1993 at both Brazil and River Plate Colleges. Besides the theology program, the three institutions mentioned above and Chile Adventist College are preparing to offer graduate programs in other areas such as public health, administration, and education.

Universities

During the 1980-1985 quinquennium, Inca Union College (Peru) received government authorization to operate as a university level institution. The first two university-level classes graduated in 1988 and 1989, and during the past year the school was granted full autonomy. In 1989 the school enrolled about 1,300 students, 90 percent of whom were Adventists. All of the teachers are also church members.

In 1989 Chile Adventist College was granted permission to operate at the university level. Beginning in 1990 it will offer programs in commercial engineering, agronomy, and agro-industrial engineering, and will request permission to offer a Master's degree in public health beginning in 1991 or 1992.

At River Plate College (Argentina), where for years university-level programs seemed an impossible dream, the doors are opening. A study committee has been nominated by the division to study plans to add university-level courses. When that occurs, enrollment should greatly surpass the current enrollment of 500 at the tertiary level.

Brazil College is now preparing to move to a new campus. It currently has about 900 students enrolled in the theology, nursing, language, and science programs. All programs except theology are government-recognized at the university level.

Once at the new location, the school, along with three other institutions, will request government approval to establish a new university campus that will offer studies in religion, health, education, natural science, social studies, business administration, humanities, and technological studies. Forming this con-



New library at Balcarce Adventist Academy, Argentina.



sortium will enable them to meet the strict government requirements. The new arrangement will make it possible to serve thousands of young Adventists who would otherwise attend secular institutions.

Secondary Education

Secondary education used to be a weak area in our division. Far more elementary than secondary students enrolled in our schools. The past quinquennium has seen a 49 percent increase in enrollment at the secondary level. With the current plans to open new secondary schools in the next few years, we hope that the pyramid of progressing through the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels will be better balanced, thus strengthening our tertiary institutions.

Especially at the upper secondary level, the training process in a boarding school is more complete than in a day school. For this reason our goal is to open a boarding academy in each conference or mission. Presently we have 22 boarding academies serving some 30 conferences or missions. Nine properties have been purchased for future boarding schools, some of which are now in the planning or building stages.

Preschool and Primary Education

Our primary schools are scattered among the 42 conferences and missions that comprise the division. The Uruguay Mission has the fewest schools, with four, while the West Bolivia Mission has the highest number, with 90. The South Sao Paulo Conference has the largest number of students, with 12,814. Although some of these schools are located very close to the equator, the most concentrated grouping centers near the Tropic of Capricorn, at 23° latitude south, in Brazil. The South American Division school farthest to the south is in Punta Arenas, Chile, at 55° latitude south. Our floating school among the Uros in Lake Titicaca, at 12,000 feet above sea level, is possibly the only Adventist floating school in the world. Some of our primary schools in the Bolivian and Peruvian plateau (altiplanos) are located at 13,500 feet above sea level in areas pioneered by Pastors Stahl and Kalbermatter.

Accreditation and Recognition

All eight institutions offering college-level work in our division are accredited by the General Conference Board of Regents. About 90 percent of our complete secondary schools

are accredited. All of our institutions at the various levels operate with the approval of their respective governments.

Public Image of Adventist Education

The Adventist educational system enjoys a very positive image among the public, the government authorities, and especially among the educational officials in South America. In many places non-Adventist dignitaries attended our schools and colleges. These people now promote and support the Adventist Church out of respect for the education they received.

In Sao Paulo, Brazil, and in Entre Rios, Argentina, nurses who graduate from our colleges are attractive candidates for jobs, due to their high standards in service and positive outlook.

While participating in a national science contest, a student from Colegio Adventista Alborada, in Callao, Peru, took first place and received an award from the Ministry of Education. As a result, his school received a complete set of equipment for its science laboratory. Because they had done the best work in science within their state, students from the Adventist Agricultural-Industrial Academy,



in Manaus, Brazil, were invited to represent the state at a national science fair.

Finances

Except for two countries—Argentina (where the government subsidizes teachers' salaries from primary through tertiary levels under certain conditions) and Chile (where the government grants fixed scholarships to students at primary and secondary levels)—Adventist education in the South American Division is financed entirely by parents and students, with some educational assistance from the constituent organizations, which is used mostly for development.

Working on the principle that parents should be responsible for their children's tuition, with help being available from the local church in cases of need, our school system has been growing financially stronger. Many fields have established their own development fund to aid education. Churches and schools may borrow from these funds to purchase property for new schools, for remodeling, and for new buildings.

Experience has shown that where the family and church jointly take financial responsibility for children's training the educational system is strengthened. Because of this, Argentina and Chile are trying to free themselves from dependency on government subsidy, for this hinders the development of strong support by church members for Christian education, slows planned advancement, and might result in future hardships to the church.

Teachers

The South American Division has more than 6,800 teachers. Most of the tertiary level teachers are certified according to strict requirements of the countries where they are employed. We still depend on many noncertified teachers at the primary and secondary levels, especially in developing areas such as the Peruvian and Bolivian plateau and the Amazon forest in Brazil, Peru, and Bolivia.

In some regions teachers who are not voted denominational "workers" (although working full time for the church) are being paid a salary below the division wage scale. The division is trying to work out a way for them to receive equal remuneration. In order to improve the skills of these teachers, the church is offering

hundreds of them the opportunity to attend a denominational complementary program that is taught during a series of consecutive vacation periods and may be completed in four or five years.

During the past year, while celebrating the Year of the Adventist Teacher, numerous ceremonies in the different unions, conferences, colleges, schools, and churches paid tribute to the work of the Adventist teacher.

New Construction

Throughout the division many primary schools are being built. On September 30, 1989, an excellent primary school was inaugurated in Curitiba, Parana, Brazil, as a result of

the joint efforts of the Curitiba Central church and the South Parana Conference.

In the South Minas Mission, construction on a new boarding school is well advanced. The girls' dormitory, administration building, cafeteria, and kitchen are nearly completed.

At the Central Brazil Academy, the library, laundry, dairy, and running track were inaugurated on June 4, 1989.

On November 30, 1989, Balcarce Adventist Academy, in Argentina, dedicated its administration building and library.

Construction work on three new educational centers was just completed in the East Brazil Union cities of Salvador, Rio de Janeiro, and Vitoria.



Chile College has recently dedicated its new church, and a new administration building will soon be completed as well.

At the Inca Union University complex, two partially built buildings are in use—the laboratory complex and the education buildings. A new library is under construction, and a new girls' dormitory will soon be built.

The largest financial undertaking in the division at the present time is the construction of the new Brazil College campus, which will house the higher education programs currently offered at the Sao Paulo campus. The 900 hectare (approximately 2,223 acre) property with its 150,000 orange trees is undergoing a real transformation. Thus far, the first stage of the following buildings has been completed: the primary and secondary schools; two three-story dormitories; kitchen and cafeteria with three dining rooms, each seating 500; a dairy with capacity to mechanically milk 16 cows at a time; a barn; and a laundry. The following are in the second stage of construction: the men's dormitory, the building housing the higher education programs, two three-story buildings with 18 apartments that will house married students, infrastructure and paving of roads on campus.

We hope that the new Brazil College campus at Artur Nogueira, will be the main site of the future Brazil Adventist University. This will better enable us to serve the 500,000 members of the church in that country.

Textbooks

In an attempt to integrate Adventist philosophy throughout the curriculum we have begun to publish a number of textbooks in Portuguese, in addition to the Bible textbooks. Because non-Adventist schools have expressed a desire to use our textbooks, the Brazil Publishing House has developed a sale system for them. During the period between April 1988 and March 1989, 238,826 textbooks were sold to our schools and 543,223 to other schools. As a result of the use of these textbooks, which integrate faith and learning and emphasize creationism in science teaching, many people, including some teachers, have accepted the Adventist faith.

Denominational Activities

A number of religious activities are held in our schools and colleges.

Among these are the following:

Weeks of Prayer or Spiritual Emphasis. All of our primary, secondary, and tertiary schools hold two weeks of prayer each school year.

Ingathering. Students and teachers from all levels are encouraged to participate in this campaign and do so effectively in the name of their schools.

Bible Studies. Every institution offers a series of baptismal classes each year. In 1988 alone approxi-

Special Baptism of Students. Every school is encouraged to organize a special baptism of students each year in cooperation with the local pastor. In many instances this baptism takes place in the spring and is called Youth Baptism.

Canvassing. Secondary and tertiary students, and even primary pupils are encouraged to go out selling books. Currently, 2,300 students are participating in the summer canvassing program.

mately 9,000 persons were baptized through the direct work of our schools and colleges.

Bible Classes for Parents. Since many of our students are non-Adventists, the schools and colleges have been encouraged to offer Bible classes (Revelation Seminars, or a course on the life of Christ, for example) to non-Adventist parents. This has resulted in hundreds of parents being baptized; and, as a consequence, in many schools an organized church meets regularly in the school auditorium.

At the end of a Revelation Seminar at our school in Boqueirao, Curitiba, Brazil, 20 parents were baptized. The school pastor is preparing 80 more parents and approximately 100 students for baptism. In Arica, Chile, the seminar run by the teachers won five families and baptized a total of 23 persons.

Student Mission for Ministerial Trainees. We insist that every institution of higher learning organize a student mission in order to involve students and teachers in evangelism activities. Besides serving regularly in some capacity in a specific church, theology students participate yearly in a series of evangelistic meetings as assistant evangelists at either the conference, union, or division level.

In conclusion, we want to express our deepest thanks to God for the many blessings He has bestowed upon our educational institutions, students, and teachers in the South American Division. We are convinced that the better we uphold the educational standards established by the church, the greater will be the good reputation and recognition we enjoy among the public and government authorities. □