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SOME COUNSELS HAVING A BEARING ON ORGANIZATION
AND UNION CONFERENCES

(Material assembled September 29 for R. H. Person.)

Danger of Too Much Machinery

Dear Brethren of the General Conference:--

I learn that it is proposed by some of our brethren to do away with the organization of some, at least of the branches of our work. No doubt what has led them to propose this step is that in some of our organizations the machinery has been made so complicated as really to hinder the work. This, however, is not an argument against organization, but against the perversion of it.

It is nearly forty years since organization was introduced among us as a people. I was one of the number who had an experience in establishing it from the first. I know the difficulties that had to be met, the evils which it was designed to correct, and I have watched its influence in connection with the growth of the cause. At an early stage in the work, God gave us special light upon this point; and this light, together with the lessons that experience has taught us, should be carefully considered.--
Letter 32, 1892. (December 19, 1892) (See Testimonies to Ministers, pp. 24-32 for much of what follows.)

A Call for the Division of the Field

As a people we should study God's plans for conducting His work. Wherever He has given directions in regard to any point, we should carefully consider how to regard His expressed will. This work should have special attention. It is not wise to choose one man as president of the General Conference. The work of the General Conference has extended, and some things

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have been made unnecessarily complicated. A want of discernment has been shown. There should be a division of the field, or some other plan should be devised to change the present order of things.--Testimonies to Ministers, p. 342. (E. G. White letter to Conference Presidents written August 1896.)

The E. G. White Appeal in 1901 for the Reorganization
of the General Conference

[See reproduction from General Conference Bulletin, April 3, 1901.]

Those on the Ground to Decide

God calls for human instrumentalities through which to work out His divine purposes. And while His messengers go forth into the harvest field, let those who remain at home give themselves to prayer. Let them by speaking encouraging words hold up the hands of those engaged in breaking the bread of life to hungry souls.

Those in the home field must not think themselves capable of making decisions for those in foreign fields, when they do not understand the situation. It is their duty to say to their fellow-workers in foreign fields, "You are on the ground. You know better than we what should be done in an emergency. Take counsel among yourselves. The Lord has given you a certain work to do. As help from Him who "giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not." "If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God, . . . and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."

More dependence has been placed in erring men than in the living God. Thus the ministry has become weak and the churches under their care have become weak. The idea that has prevailed that when those in foreign fields desire to make advance steps, they must ask permission of a board or committee thousands of miles away, is not according to the will of the Lord. At such a distance it is not possible for the members of the Board to comprehend the situation. The work has been greatly marred by unwise counsel, because those on the ground were not willing to take the responsibility of deciding certain questions.

Those in foreign fields should be encouraged to make God their Counsellor, to believe that He is at their right hand to help them. So many mistakes would not be made if the workers would make God their dependence, believing

that He who never makes a mistake will prepare their way before them. In every place there should be men wise in counsel, who are able to handle the matters that will come up for decision. And God must be consulted at every step. He knows the great necessities of the different fields, and He will guide all who desire to understand His will and follow in His footsteps.--

Manuscript 42, 1901 (June 2, 1901)

World Headquarters and "Different Countries"

Those who seek to bind up the work in distant fields with the work at Battle Creek by means of these agreements,* are assuming too much responsibility. They must not take to themselves power that God has not given them. They must not place themselves where the people will look to them instead of looking to God.

Christ did not follow any human model. He says to His servants, Break every yoke that men may seek to bind upon you. Do not accept any yoke that will hinder your present or future movements in my service. Stand free. Take only my yoke. When you are yoked up with me, my words will make their impress upon your characters.

All the plans formulated for our people will need to be thoroughly and carefully examined. No threads of human devising are to be drawn into the web. Unless we watch and pray diligently, the enemy will come in to spoil the pattern. Ambition must not lead us to embrace too much in our plans.

Too much power is invested in humanity when matters are so arranged that one man, or a small group of men have it in their power to rule or to ruin the work of their fellow-laborers. In the erection of medical institutions and the development of their work, there is not to be a ruling, kingly power, as there has been in the past. The kingly power formerly exhibited in the

* Note: Agreements regarding the conduct of medical institutions bringing them under one control.

General Conference is not to be perpetuated. The publishing work is not to be a kingdom of itself. It is essential that the principles that govern in General Conference affairs shall be maintained in the management of the publishing work and the sanitarium work. No one is to think that the branch of work with which he is connected is of vastly more importance than other branches.

The division of the General Conference into District Union Conferences was God's arrangement. In the work of the Lord for these last days there are to be no Jerusalem centers, no kingly power. And the work in the different countries is not to be tied up by contracts to the work centering in Battle Creek; for this is not God's plan. Brethren are to counsel together; for we are just as much under the control of God in one part of His vineyard as in another. Brethren are to be one in heart and soul, even as Christ and the Father are one. Teach this, practice this, that we may be one with Christ in God, all working to build up one another.--Manuscript 156, 1901. (July 3, 1901.) See Letter 191, 1901.

A Division of Responsibilities

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The kingly power formerly exhibited in the General Conference at Battle Creek is not to be perpetuated. The publishing institution is not

to be a kingdom of itself. It is essential that the principles that govern in General Conference affairs shall be maintained in the managements of the publishing work and the sanitarium work. No one is to consider that the branch of the work with which he is connected is of vastly more importance than other branches.

The Lord has declared that there should be publishing plants in various places. Supreme power should not be vested in a few large institutions. At the last General Conference the light was given, Divide the General Conference into Union Conferences. Let there be fewer responsibilities centered in one place. Let the work of printing our publications be divided.

The principles that apply to the publishing work apply also to the sanitarium work. Students should not be crowded into Battle Creek to receive an education in medical missionary lines. It is not best to gather together in one institution so large a company of people as are gathered together in the Battle Creek Sanitarium. Let medical missionary plants be made in many places.--Manuscript 13, 1903. (Written in 1902.)

Regarding the Work of the General Conference

Oakland, (Calif.) April 3, 1903

There is need of a most earnest, thorough work to be now carried forward in all our churches. We are not to understand whether all our printing plants and all our sanitariums are to be under the control of the General Conference. I answer, Nay. It has been a necessity to organize Union Conferences, that the General Conference shall not exercise dictation over all the separate Conferences. The power vested in the Conference is not to be centered in one man, or two men, or six men; there is to be a council of men over the separate divisions.

The showing by the past leadership of the Conference is not after God's order. There has been a work done of a character that has not been approved of God. The result we have before us in the ruins where once stood that large printing plant, with its expensive facilities.

The divine statutes have been set aside. The time will soon come when God will vindicate His insulted authority. "The Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." "But who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth?"

In the work of God no kingly authority is to be exercised by any human being, or by two or three. The representatives of the Conference, as it has been carried with authority for the last twenty years, shall be no longer justified in saying, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we." The men in positions of trust have not been carrying the work wisely.

The Lord calls for wise men to preside over His work and to be faithful shepherds of His flock. He has a work to be done in every city. The General Conference has fallen into strange ways, and we have reason to marvel that judgment has not fallen, showing "by terrible things in righteousness" that God is not a man that He should lie.--Manuscript 26, 1903. (April 3, 1903.)

"Divide the General Conference into Union Conferences"

There has been much working upon a wrong policy. One man has embraced so many responsibilities that it is impossible for him to give to each the proper thought that a careful performance of the Lord's work requires. Men who will carry forward in right lines the work for this time, should rally around the leaders of the work, sharing the responsibilities that they are now carrying, and thus encouraging them to stand as counsellors with their brethren, bringing all their plans before their brethren for consideration.

Whenever one man devises plans and seeks to carry them out in a manner so determined that his work savors of oppression, there is need of bringing into connection with him other minds that will keep uplifted the high standard suggested by the name we bear.

Many plans have been devised that God has not ordained. The root from which these plans have sprung is the mind of finite man. God's watchmen have been blind. They should have been wide awake to see that one man's mind, one man's judgment was becoming a power that God could not, and would not endorse. To invest one man or a few men with so much power and responsibility, is not in accordance with God's way of working.

There must be reorganization. Supreme power must not be vested in a group of men connected with a few large institutions. At the General Conference of 1901 the light was given, Divide the General Conference into Union Conferences. Let there be fewer responsibilities centered in one place.

Let the work of printing our publications be divided.

The principles that apply to the publishing work apply also to the Sanitarium work. Students should not be crowded into Battle Creek to receive an education in medical missionary lines. It is not best to encourage the gathering together in one institution of so large a company of people as have been gathered together in the Battle Creek Sanitarium. Let medical missionary plants be made in many places.

The youth who desire to become medical missionaries should not be brought in large numbers to Battle Creek. Provision should be made that they may receive an education out of and away from Battle Creek, in places where there is a different religious atmosphere. By fire the Lord removed the great argument in favor of gathering many students to Battle Creek. He swept away the Sanitarium to prevent the carrying out of the idea that Battle Creek was to be the great center for the training of medical students. To

carry out this idea would be out of harmony with the work for these last days and with the plans of the Lord.

God works by means of instruments, or second causes. He uses the gospel ministry, medical missionary work, and the publications containing present truth to impress hearts. All are made effectual by means of faith. As the truth is heard or read, the Holy Spirit sends it home to those who hear and read with an earnest desire to know what is right. The gospel ministry, medical missionary work and our publications are God's agencies. One is not to supersede the other. But you have sought to make the medical missionary work the whole body, instead of the arm and hand.--Letter 54, 1903.
(April 16, 1903.)

Ellen G. White Publications
September 29, 1970