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■ EDITORIAL ■

WHAT IF...?

Looking at the church's organizational needs, *Adventist Review* editor William Johnsson asks in his March 16, 1989, editorial, "What Would Happen If...?" That, of course, is a genuine concern for our church—and one that I would like to ask about our school program in particular. Indeed, what if there were no church schools—no Christian education? What if our denomination found it necessary to close all grade schools and academies, all colleges and universities? What if suddenly we had no classrooms and gyms, or worse yet, no men and women committed enough to give their lives in this service of building souls as well as minds and bodies?

The answer, I think, is quite obvious—Adventism, as we know it, would soon cease to exist. Our church would immediately suffer a decrease in scriptural emphasis, a devaluation of church history, an eclipse of faith and learning, a dwindling of zeal for missions, an increase of unscriptural marriages, and the loss of thousands of role models whose examples of dignity and care live in the experience of their students long after time has erased the details of homework.

But then let's turn it around. What if all of our administrators were really committed to making Christian education the number-one priority of conference operations—not simply the most costly phase of the budget but—as it should be—the most important? What if pastors were rewarded as lavishly for excellence in church-school promotion as they are for promotion of Ingathering? What if Christian education were seen as evangelism at its most significant and productive best? And what if our members saw these operations as church schools and not parent schools or teacher schools or conference schools? What if the educating of our youth were more important to our members than houses and land, or TV's and VCR's? What if the people in the pew really understood and supported the idea of erecting and maintaining adequate facilities and staffs for our system? And what if the parents really believed that the true object of education is the restoration in humans of the image of God and not the acquirement of worldly honor and prestige? And what if our faculty numbers were sufficient to eliminate teacher overloads and burnouts, and teacher pay sufficient to discourage moonlighting, and teacher dedication strong enough to negate hiring of non-Adventist teachers, part-time or otherwise?

And what if our principals and presidents based all their decisions on a clear "thus saith the Lord" and refused to allow political pressures to influence student or personnel decisions? And what if our school boards and committees consisted not of persons whose prestige is enhanced because they are board members, but of individuals whose membership enhances the boards and institutions they serve? Again, I think the answer is obvious. We would experience an excitement and joy in learning and fellowship that would electrify the church. Perhaps not all but many more of our children would be taught of the Lord; our apostasy rate would decrease dramatically, our tithes percentages would increase rapidly, and the slippage of Adventist culture would be abated. We would have more Adventist families, more Adventist members, our publishing houses would print more Adventist literature, our ABC's would sell more health foods and books, and we would have more witnesses, more spiritual excitement, and more of the lasting success that always results when faith is exercised in obedience.—C.B.R.