

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

WORLD HEADQUARTERS

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

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July 18, 1969

TO ALL MINISTERS IN USA AND CANADA:

GREETINGS -- and you'll be surprised, I know. Something came up over SEP admissions practices I felt obliged to settle as quickly as possible, and so have set down at the mechanical monster here to bang out a rough draft I'll have re-typed and sent to all of you.

This letter is to explain, thoroughly the whole situation in admissions and rejections for the SEP at Orr.

The criteria for acceptance was established in a meeting between Dr. Lochner, Dr. Germano and myself many months ago. I was asked whether the teen-age sons and daughters of the leading local ministers, elders, deacons and leaders on the visiting programs should not be given prime consideration, and answered in the affirmative.

In most cases (with some few exceptions, such as Mr. Raymond Cole's children, Mr. Blackwell's, Mr. Friddle's, etc.) this will mean ordained men who have come into the ministry through the local areas, and are not Ambassador Grads, since the majority of Ambassador Graduates who are ordained do not as yet have children up into teen-age.

Our next order of priorities is obvious: Accept those applying for the fourth and third and second times (in that order of priority) before you accept those applying who went to the program last year! Accept those applying for the second time before those applying for the first time, if all other things (race, attitude, recommendation of local pastor, etc.) are equal.

I told them NOT to accept very many high school graduates WHO WOULD BE COMING TO COLLEGE, and this was for some obvious reasons:

- First: We MAY have only VERY few years left in this Work, and I would rather see the younger children (who always present less of a discipline problem) receive whatever organized education and recreation Imperial can provide, since THEY MAY NEVER BE IN AMBASSADOR.
- Second: If a student is applying for college, he needs to WORK through the summer, rather than go to camp and spend money on expensive air travel, tuition, etc.
- Third: Our high school graduates have tended to be more independent, and more

unwieldy in attitude through the past years. The younger the group we have had, the better the overall spirit and attitude at camp.

Fourth: The chances are very good that, IF the student would be all that good a recommendation for SEP, he will be coming to college. This year, as a result of running TWO SEP's, concurrently, the second program for the Whites is over only a very few days before orientation. It would be VERY difficult for entering freshmen to dash home, and then dash to college, with all the preparations required in clothing, finances, etc.

Fifth: Since many of these will be coming to college very soon anyhow, and since our hope is to SPREAD AROUND the SEP opportunity as widely through the Church as possible, I established priorities for those who may never be at Ambassador, rather than those who might be here within only a few weeks.

Any Ambassador Graduate, whether in the ministry or not, should recall the difficulties of the admissions committee over the past years. We have wanted to get the TOP talent here -- and have NEVER accepted students on a "first come, first serve" basis. We have HELD the applications on a "wait list" sometimes up until a last minute PHONE call. This has never seemed "fair" to me -- knowing the difficulties in personal planning -- but it has been totally unavoidable; since not only do those on the admissions committee tend to take too much time (what with a dozen other duties each) but many applicants are inconsiderate, too, and DO NOT APPLY until a terribly late date. We COULD have been "hard nosed" about this, and simply decided NOT TO LOOK at any applications received after a certain date. But in our desire to get the BEST talent into Ambassador we felt we could not pass up a late applicant if he were really qualified.

SEP faces the SAME dilemma. We wanted to look at ALL the applications in order to satisfy the aforementioned criteria -- rather than accept on a "first come, first serve" basis. Applications have tended to come in similarly to those for the college -- a fair influx early, and then dribbles throughout the remainder of the summer. We have received up to 180 applications through the past six weeks, in dribbles of from three to five per day! And some of these were still coming in only DAYS ago!

If we had filled up with third-time requests, and then found some "VIP" children which we felt we MUST accept, we were stuck -- no place to put them! So, in many cases, notification of acceptance or rejection was taking place at about the same pace as college applications always have.

Another established criterion I mentioned was to include, insofar as possible, a built-in system to "decentralize" the applicant selection; including representative children from as many church areas as possible, in as widely scattered an area of the United States and Canada as possible.

Obviously, one of the policies has been "turnover." We would accept those who had never been prior to accepting repeats. However, we have wanted a certain

number of repeats -- those who have proved reliable and who "know the ropes" so as to give a stable influence on the new ones, and to hopefully develop counselors from among the children from outlying areas as well as Imperial or Ambassador Students.

That about sums it up. I feel a mistake was made by SEP personnel in actually depositing checks into a "holding account" prior to final decisions -- and another mistake in not having a notification LETTER which would thoroughly explain these policies so each parent would understand. (We would not expect disappointed children to be all that understanding!)

Those mistakes have now been corrected -- and are mostly being corrected by the vehicle of this letter to you all. I would like to remind all of you, however, that none of you has been placed in a position as "judge" of SEP.

In at least one complaint from an ordained minister, the following attitude was revealed, "Since the S.E.P. is truly a program for the young people of the Church of God, then provisions should be made to accept at least the majority of those applying and who have the funds to go, with the stipulation that those not accepted will have the first change (sic) the next year."

This is a WRONG ATTITUDE -- and is JUDGING the program, and those who are placed over it. In the light of all the priorities I have explained, it is also totally irrelevant and beside the point. It is as UTTERLY IMPOSSIBLE to make "provisions to accept at least the majority of those applying" or to fulfill any other such boyish notion as to apply the same suggestion to Ambassador College. There are around four to five thousand children (talking of Whites, only, for the moment) who would be in the eligible age bracket for SEP.

This year instead of sending applications to ALL members, we sent only to those who asked for them. Nine hundred and twenty-five teen-agers applied -- and, using the priorities I have mentioned, five hundred eighteen of these were children falling into one of the special priority groups!

But we have maximum capacity for only three hundred and ninety-six! That means we would have to reject ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-TWO EVEN AMONG THE PRIORITY GROUP! Forty-six applied who had already applied at least twice before -- and each one of these was accepted. One hundred and four had applied once before, and these were accepted. All the ministers' children who applied were accepted, and of those recommended by the ministry, thirty-five more. Widows' children are given priority -- and sixty-four of these were chosen. Seventy-eight deacons' children were accepted. We wanted about 20% "repeaters" for good solid balance -- an absolute necessity, and these were selected on the basis of past performance.

So -- that's the whole picture. The MISTAKES that were made have been explained, and I would like each one of you to use this letter as a format for an announcement period during church services when convenient -- to dispel "feelings" people seem to get when disappointed in some desire or other. There SHOULD HAVE BEEN a

rejection LETTER, explaining these policies briefly -- and I have ordered that such a letter WILL go out, hereafter. There SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN any processing and depositing of checks if a person's child would be rejected -- and this procedure will be changed.

But there is not enough understanding of the problem among many of you in the field, either. I know a local minister can tend to become an "authority" in even subtle ways in his local area. I know that, if a family is being "cultivated" because of various qualities, and they have a young daughter they want to go to camp, and the local pastor assures the family he has given the girl his personal recommendation -- that he is made to "look bad" when a rejection is suddenly received. But frankly, fellows, in CONSIDERING THE LEVITE, and setting up the priorities on THIS basis, plus considering the WIDOWS' children who are without masculine influence, and the BIG-CITY children PRIOR to those from the Pacific Northwest (etc., etc., etc.) we have run out of space at SEP BEFORE WE EVEN DIP INTO THE "VAST MAJORITY" OF THE CHILDREN OF BRETHREN.

NEXT YEAR, UNLESS I DRASTICALLY ALTER THE POLICY (WHICH I AM SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING DOING) WE CAN TAKE ONLY THE CHILDREN OF MINISTERS, ELDERS AND DEACONS! And not even ALL of THEM!

Few of you realize the headaches in selecting the right counselors, activities directors, and work crews. You probably are unaware of the terrible concern over safety; water accidents, dirty fingernails scratching insect bites and causing blood poisoning; food poisoning worries; bad weather worries; unaware of the fact that, when planning for the group this year, we discovered the fifteen-age bracket was most representative, and found our whole uniform sizes to be out of kilter so very few will have right-fitting uniforms; few of you are aware of the terrible budgeting problems (some parents have PAID their childrens' way there, and are paying their board and room, to allow their children to WORK FOR NOTHING -- and we HAVE to accept it, because we CAN'T AFFORD TO PAY THE WORKERS A CENT!).

I want honest, constructive criticism -- in the form of meek and mild questions, suggestions, etc. But I do NOT want comments about "what seems fair" from some of you WHO DO NOT KNOW THE CIRCUMSTANCES, AND DO NOT HAVE THE FACTS!

So let's get rid of the "feelings," and realize SEP is a great PRIVILEGE -- which just like Ambassador College (only even less so) can be offered to only a VERY FEW -- we're trying to run it God's way; but mistakes were made -- and for these I sincerely apologize. Another reason they were made, quite frankly, is that we have experienced a total change in personnel, and a change in procedures (putting the processing of Imperial financing, including SEP receipting, on IBM) -- and the new people were simply not familiar with the usual way of doing things.

The processing of 925 applications is becoming a FULL-TIME JOB for a GOOD MAN, with wisdom and discretion -- yet has had to be handled by several different ones, including part-time teachers, etc.

THESE are some of the problems of Headquarters.

Well, this is growing lengthy -- but I wanted to explain it fully, so you would all be able to explain the whole thing to any dissatisfied members. Their money will be returned in full if their children were not accepted, of course.

Things are moving at the usual maximum pace here -- I have had to do one radio, and two TV programs today, and the rambling in this letter is probably part of the reason, since it is now nearly 5:00 p.m. Friday afternoon, and I have typed the last half of this after a quick meeting over a cheeseburger in my office with Dr. Germano and some fact sheets I received from him. Let's always learn to give God's Work, and His Colleges, Schools, and HIS HEADQUARTERS the benefit of the doubt, shall we?

With love, warmest personal greetings
and in Jesus Christ's own service,

Garner Ted Armstrong

