

URANTIA Brotherhood
Ninth Triennial Delegate Assembly

Chicago, Illinois
June 25-26, 1988

Alternate Delegate's Report

You will soon see Stephen Zendt's fine article for Developments that gives a wonderful sense of the spiritual and familial fragrance of the Triennial Delegate Assembly. That leaves it to me to supplement Steve's observations with my own remarks on the grittier and more mundane aspects of the event.

I'll start with the weather and our defenses against it: 105° was ten degrees hotter than I'd ever endured in the Chicago area before. Our air conditioners, though a blessing, were about as quiet as jet traffic. And the room, though picturesque and historic, was also bursting at the seams--another five Societies and we'd have had to move. But this time, we coped. And the next day was in the low sixties--the good old Midwest for you.

Group Process Overview: The Delegates and Alternates were a fine bunch of people, maybe forty percent of whom either Steve or I knew. The eighteen Delegates arranged themselves around two long tables placed end-to-end, with the Alternates sitting directly behind their respective delegates. This held the first-line group to manageable size while permitting Delegate/Alternate pairs to confer readily and quietly, poke each other, etc.

As Steve reports, in general the discussion proceeded with much good will, and with only a scattering of tangential or obtuse comments (including a few from me). I remember a couple of remarks that I would characterize as uncalled for; and they both came from the same person, who eventually apologized for one of them. But this was the exception; I also heard at least two and perhaps as many as four veteran delegates praise this Triennial as the best by far that they had ever attended.

Participation: Contributions came readily and evenly enough from around the group. Among the delegates, my impression is that about seven (including ours) were active; another six and a half (Chicago First Society's Delegate was absent Sunday) were moderately active; and the other four were mostly silent--though two of these fell into the rare-comments-but-good-ones category. Similarly for the Alternates, about four (including ours) were active; another six were moderately active; and the other seven (the Alaska Society could not afford to send an Alternate) were mostly silent, with perhaps two of these among the rare-but-good. By my reckoning, SFBAUS was one of three Societies (with Oklahoma and Orvonton) where both Delegate and Alternate waxed active.

Possibly unrelated to the preceding--but possibly not--it may be worth noting that thirteen of the eighteen Delegates were

men, and twelve of the eighteen Alternates were women. This might lead you to wonder a bit, but it's also fair to note that five Societies (including ours) sent two men, while four Societies sent two women. Of the nine Societies that sent one of each, however, only one sent a woman as its Delegate.

I did hear one complaint (from a woman) that a few loud and unbashful men had the effect of intimidating her so that she chose mostly to keep silent. She assured me that I wasn't one of the L. and U.M., which I was glad of; but I still think and hope that in general, people who wanted to speak got to. I also observe that quiet people may be participating intensely in all that goes on; it's just that I'd like to hear from them more.

Leadership: As Steve reports, Tom Kendall chaired our selection process for General Councilors, and Harry McMullan did the same for our consideration of proposed resolutions. Both did sterling work, and Harry was especially effective not only in group time management but in making sure that the more reticent members got to speak whenever they indicated they wanted to. In addition, Brotherhood President Dave Elders did a clear and amiable job of leading the brief formal parts of our assembly, and Paul Snider gave a provocative keynote speech--one that Steve and I plan to get copies of. Among other things, Paul said (I think) that he believes the time for the URANTIA Book to go really public is still about sixty years away.

Selection of General Councilors: For whatever reasons, we took an unusually long time to get started on this, as well as to agree on the ground rules. I had assumed there was a fairly standard and obvious approach, so I was surprised by the relative confusion that seemed to prevail for a while. Once we got going, however, we moved in smart and duly deliberate order through our list of some thirty-six candidates.

We did take time at the outset for an important discussion on the issues of confidentiality and tone; I believe we settled on aiming for the positive, but also for candor, and saying about any candidate only what we would theoretically be ready to tell the candidate in person. And as we went along, I'd say we held to this rather well.

In terms of geography, most candidates came from ten areas: Chicago (5 nominees); New York/CT/NJ and Washington State (4 each); Oklahoma, Florida, and Dallas (3 each); Colorado, LA/Las Vegas, Kansas, and SF Bay Area (2 each). There were also single candidates from South Dakota, upstate NY, Illinois/Iowa, Alaska, Maryland, and Ontario, Canada. In terms of total numbers, with fifteen Councilor slots open (including three partial/replacement terms), having just slightly over two nominees for each position seems a bit thin to me--why not, say, twice as many?

We then proceeded to consider each candidate, pro and con, for up to five minutes. In terms of perceived qualifications, Steve and I tended generally to agree. By my very rough count,

about a dozen candidates looked really impressive; another twenty or so looked good; and maybe four or five seemed either to be not really what we had in mind, or needed more time for more people to get to know more about them. After lunch Steve and I came up with a list of fifteen candidates we both agreed on, plus another two that mostly I was interested in. As things turned out, thirteen from our list got elected, plus one from my own short list, so we were quite pleased with the wisdom of the electorate.

The pattern of the voting interests me a great deal, and I believe some of this can be shared. Ten candidates were elected on the first ballot: eight (Bruyn, Clark-Heinberg, Elders, Dreier, Faw, Jameson, McMullan, and Lawrence) by near-consensus, and two (Dogim and St. Denis--our first international Councilor in a while) by majority vote. The other two nine-year term Councilors (Johnston and Wells) came very close on the first ballot but required, I think, one more. The six-year term (Robertson) and the two three-year termers (Finstad and Lange) had, respectively, the next largest first-ballot totals, but required up to maybe half a dozen additional rounds to get elected.

As said, Steve and I feel very good about who got elected. What troubles me just a bit, though, is uncertainty about the way we handled candidates who did not receive a majority on the first ballot. I think there were several other candidates with significant first-ballot totals who did not eventually get elected. Though I can't remember who they were, I can't help but wonder if any of them may have been somewhat artificially or arbitrarily squeezed out by the various cut-off levels and other procedures we adopted for subsequent rounds. Mostly this is a procedural issue, but for the greatest assurance of fairness and democracy, I think the Triennials need more consistency on this.

Resolutions: I've run out of time to write much about this one, but I've got much to answer for, so I'll start by holding forth at our meeting, then issue a supplementary report if there's any demand for it. To sum up in haste: The process was fun for me, boring for some, and probably of reasonable interest for most. I believe we considered and passed more resolutions than any Triennial in history, and as Steve reported, I may have set a record on our collective behalf by submitting the most resolutions ever.

Lest this get too heady, though, let me move right on to add that, again on our behalf, I probably accumulated the highest negative vote total of any Society in Triennial history. Most of our resolutions lost, you see, though a number of them became moot because what they requested was already happening, and a number of others were passed in somewhat different versions offered by other Societies. So although basically we bombed, I think we had some impact. Details at the meeting. I also answer questions.

The End: I thoroughly enjoyed everything, even the heat, and would recommend this to any of you. Thanks for sending me.

Norm Heland