



"Alert" cover, 1955.

Photo courtesy of Adventist Heritage Centre, Australia.

Alert, Australasian Division

MILTON HOOK

Milton Hook, Ed.D. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, the United States). Hook retired in 1997 as a minister in the Greater Sydney Conference, Australia. An Australian by birth Hook has served the Church as a teacher at the elementary, academy and college levels, a missionary in Papua New Guinea, and as a local church pastor. In retirement he is a conjoint senior lecturer at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored *Flames Over Battle Creek*, *Avondale: Experiment on the Dora*, *Desmond Ford: Reformist Theologian*, *Gospel Revivalist* the *Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series*, and many magazine articles. He is married to Noeleen and has two sons and three grandchildren.

From 1955 until 1987 *Alert* was the premier temperance journal in the South Pacific Division. It made a strong contribution to the ministry of health in the South Pacific Division until it was discontinued in 1987.

Early Temperance Work

Advocacy of temperance matters was one of the earliest avenues used by the pioneer Seventh-day Adventist missionaries to Australia. Henry Scott printed and shared a set of temperance charts in 1885 with the Victorian Alliance, a group active in promoting the temperance cause! The ten full-color charts in the set graphically depicted the dire effects of alcohol and tobacco on the various organs of the body. The set was often advertised for sale in the

mission periodical for the handsome sum of £3 10s.²

On September 24, 1887, the Seventh-day Adventist missionaries formed their own temperance society with Scott as its president. They called it the Australian Health, Temperance, and Social Purity Association. It was modeled on Dr. Kellogg's American Health and Temperance Association. Participants were urged to pledge one or more of four options available. They could take the Social Purity Pledge, promising to be pure in thought and act and to eschew immodest language and dress. The Anti-Alcohol Pledge was for those promising to abandon all alcoholic drinks. The Anti-Alcohol and Tobacco Pledge added a promise to give up smoking, chewing, and snuffing tobacco. The Total Abstinence Pledge involved a taboo on alcohol, tea, coffee, tobacco, opium, and all narcotics and stimulants.³ This temperance body proved to be abortive, for it was never again mentioned in the mission periodicals. Temperance principles did, however, continue to be promoted in the columns of the church periodicals.

A Revival of Emphasis

At the 1941 Australasian Union Conference Session, it was voted to revive the temperance ministry with lectures in the local congregations and church schools, targeting the children and youth. The thrust of the message was to be the same as the pledges of the 1880s. It would operate under the modified title Australasian Temperance Society of Seventh-day Adventists. A separate department at the Australasian Union Conference level was established with Albert Anderson as temperance secretary.⁴ Later, Reuben Hare was elected to replace Anderson.⁵ Temperance matters, however, became muted as religious liberty and public relations were added to Hare's portfolio.⁶

To lift the Australasian Temperance Society from the doldrums, a reorganization was undertaken in 1955 with Ronald Vince appointed to provide Hare with some secretarial assistance in temperance work.⁷ Plans were laid to enlist 10,000 members.⁸

Plans Realized

Hare's main vehicle for the temperance message became a 24-page monthly periodical he called *Alert*. Early in 1955 he dispatched a sample copy to all the local church temperance secretaries, urging them to have the church members sign the abstinence pledge and pay an annual subscription of 10 shillings.⁹ The first issue of *Alert* was dated April 1955. It was printed by the Signs Publishing Company using a black and one other color process in a digest format.¹⁰ The pages featured testimonials from sporting figures of the day, such as Australian athletes John Landy and Marjorie Jackson,¹¹ and swimming greats, such as Murray Rose.¹²

For approximately 12 months Robert Parr replaced Hare as editor¹³ until in April 1959 Ernest Steed began more than 7 years as temperance secretary and editor.¹⁴ Steed was a vigorous promoter, raising the circulation from approximately 3,000 per month to 14,171 in 1966.¹⁵ Some free copies were given to public school teachers and put into public school libraries.¹⁶ The magazine was enhanced in 1966 with full-color covers.¹⁷ The periodical not only spoke out against tobacco and alcohol but also was at the forefront of strong opposition to the illegal narcotics trade.

The coming of Ron Taylor to the editor's chair in November 1966 put someone with medical training in charge of the periodical for the first time. Taylor was a trained nurse. His office not only edited *Alert* but also was the hub of his creation, the Narcotics Education Service. His makeover of the periodical saw an end to its monthly digest format and, eventually, the issuing of the periodical every two months. It was a larger magazine with fewer pages, 20 in total (1966),¹⁸ which dropped to 16 in 1967¹⁹ but rose 24 in 1969.²⁰

Winston Dowling replaced Taylor in mid-1977,²¹ but the periodical was losing popularity, and a cheaper grade of paper had to be used in order to remain financially viable.²² An attempt was made to revive prospects in 1987. Gail Rowe (later Ormsby) began as editor in January 1987 with a larger magazine, one having full color throughout its glossy 32 pages.²³ However, only three issues were published before the periodical was terminated. Temperance themes continued to be voiced in other Australasian magazines such as *Good Health* and *Signs of the Times*.

SOURCES

Alert, vols. 1–33. Shelf Periodicals. South Pacific Division Heritage Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, NSW.

Anderson, A. W. "The Australasian Temperance Society of Seventh-day Adventists." *The Missionary Leader*, March 1942.

"Constitution of the Australasian Temperance Society: Article VIII. Amendments." *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, January 3, 1955.

Hare, Reuben E. "Be a Crusader for Temperance!." *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, March 14, 1955.

Israel, M. C. "The Australian Mission." *Signs of the Times*, November 26, 1885.

"Proceedings of the Australasian Division." *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, January 3, 1955.

Seventh-day Adventists Yearbooks. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1943–1988.

Steed, Ernest H. J. "Australasian Temperance Society." *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, January 31, 1966.

Taylor, R. W. "Report of the Temperance Department." *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, December 5, 1966.

"Temperance." *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, October 1887.

"Temperance Charts." *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, September 1887.

NOTES

1. M. C. Israel, "The Australian Mission," *Signs of the Times*, November 26, 1885, 714–715.?
2. "Temperance Charts," *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, September 1887, 143.?
3. "Temperance," *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, October 1887, 157.?
4. A. W. Anderson, "The Australasian Temperance Society of Seventh-day Adventists," *The Missionary Leader*, March 1942, 1–2.?
5. Reuben E. Hare, "Be a Crusader for Temperance!," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, March 14, 1955, 3.?
6. "Australasian Division," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1956* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1956), 67.?
7. *Ibid.*?
8. "Constitution of the Australasian Temperance Society: Article VIII. Amendments," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, January 3, 1955, 4.?
9. Hare, "Be a Crusader."?
10. *Alert*, April 1955.?
11. *Alert*, May 1955, 1.?
12. *Alert*, August 1957, 1.?
13. E.g., *Alert*, March 1958.?
14. E.g., *Alert*, April 1959.?
15. R. W. Taylor, "Report of the Temperance Department," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, December 5, 1966, 18–20.?
16. Ernest H. J. Steed, "Australasian Temperance Society," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, January 31, 1966, 8.?
17. E.g., *Alert*, January 1966.?
18. E.g., *Alert*, November 1966.?
19. E.g., *Alert*, May/June 1967.?
20. E.g., *Alert*, November/December 1970.?
21. *Alert*, May/June 1977.?
22. E.g., *Alert*, November/December 1979.?
23. *Alert*, January/February 1987.?