

The Friends of the Sabbath is coming!

By Peter King

In April 1997, the *Friends Of The Sabbath* conference series is coming to Australia!

For those of you who already know and value these conferences, the details are at the end of this article. For the others, a short history to give a little background.

In July 1996, the first ever such conference came to Australia. The conferences are organised by the Friends Of The Sabbath which presents international speakers on a topic common to all - the Sabbath was the theme last year. Friends Of The Sabbath is an organisation dedicated to promoting " the Sabbath day as a sign to all Christians, to teach its holiness and to bring about mutual understanding and harmony between Sabbatarian Churches, groups and fellowships." (Vision Statement, Friends Of The Sabbath).

This first Jubilee was a milestone in many ways. It was the first interdenominational conference of Sabbath-keepers in Australian history. It was also the first Friends Of The Sabbath conference held outside the USA. Since then, conferences have been postulated for the UK and Mexico as well. The most amazing milestone for many, though, has been a personal one.

Many Sabbath-keepers have been feeling the isolation and perhaps a level of persecution in a world without the truth of God's Sabbath Day. Some have felt that they alone are keeping this commandment of God. This feeling was smashed by the first conference for Australia. Some attended with a sceptical attitude, but almost everyone there possessed a willingness to learn more about something they all felt was precious - God's Sabbath Day. I doubt that anyone left agreeing with every speaker. If nothing else, this is a healthy indication of the way everyone listened - actively comparing and contrasting what they were listening to with the understanding they already possessed.

Many remarked on the high standard of scholarship demonstrated by most of the speakers. Most left with their knowledge increased, as well as an upsurge in devotion to and enthusiasm for God's Sabbath. This flowed over (in my Church, anyway), in an increased devotion to God's way in general - and even the (very few) critics would have to agree that this is a valuable addition to any congregation.

The first conference was totally focussed on the Sabbath day itself. It covered many aspects of the Sabbath, from history to the many spiritual lessons it holds for mankind. The coming conference will also look at the Sabbath, but it will also address other issues. Speakers may also address other related topics like the annual Holy Days, the Kingdom of God or prophecy. However, all speakers will be aware of the interdenominational character of the congregation they will be addressing, so it is unlikely that they will be willing to hurt instead of help any others' spiritual growth.

Friends Of The Sabbath have a goal of fostering understanding and building bridges between the various Sabbath-keeping denominations. The organisation specifically states that it is NOT to be a church, but to remain a neutral organisation sharing the fellowship of other Sabbath-keepers. It is not controlled by any church, nor is it exclusive in its approach to speakers. At the San Antonio, Texas Jubilee last December, for example, over seventeen different organizations were represented. These included the Seventh Day Adventists, United Church of God (an International Association), Global Church of God and the Church of God (Seventh Day). This constructive approach to fellowship and the sharing of knowledge flows over into the conferences which *Friends Of The*

Sabbath host. There will be copies of the videos of last year's conference available as well as a wealth of literature from the various participants.

DETAILS FOR THIS YEAR

Keynote Speakers:

Dr Bryan Ball, President of the South Pacific Division of the SDA Church and author of "The English Connection" and "The Seventh Day Men";

Ron Dart, independent Church of God evangelist, presenter on the "Born to Win" radio program, and director of Christian Educational Ministries based in the USA;

Melvin Rhodes, a pastor from the United Church of God (an International Association) from the USA

a video on the East European sabbatarians by Vic Kubik, member of the Council of Elders, United Church of God (an International Association).

Dates:

Brisbane 5-6 April 1997 ring (07) 3344 5283 for details

Sydney 12-13 April 1997 ring (02) 9747 5655 for details in the first instance;

Melbourne 19-20 April 1997 ring (03) 9830 1766 for details
or try (02) 9724 2875

Please ring one of the above numbers or write to one of the address below if you are interested in attending:

Friends of the Sabbath, Australia, GPO Box 864, Sydney 2001 (Sydney conference); 18 Gabwina Street, Fig Pocket Tree, Qld 4069 (Brisbane conference); or PO Box 41, Surrey Hills, Vic 3127 (Melbourne conference).

Donations are gratefully received. Please make all cheques out to: *Friends of the Sabbath, Australia*, GPO Box 864, Sydney 2001.
