

# PASTOR GENERAL'S REPORT

TO THE MINISTRY OF THE  
WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD



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## PRESS RELEASE RE MR. ARMSTRONG'S RECENT TRIP

Tuesday, February 15, 1983  
Tokyo, Japan

Herbert W. Armstrong, Pastor General of the Worldwide Church of God, met with Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone today in Tokyo. The meeting marked the seventh prime minister of Japan the church leader has visited. Nakasone graciously accepted a gift of Steuben crystal and the two discussed the current labor and trade problems facing Japan and the United States.

As the discussion ended, Prime Minister Nakasone autographed the cover of the Plain Truth, a rapidly growing news magazine of over 5.5 million circulation whose cover featured the Japanese leader.

Armstrong, editor-in-chief of the worldwide magazine, has just completed a four-week fact-finding trip to the Far East. During his overseas visit the past month, King Bhumibol of Thailand decorated Armstrong with the rank of Commander of the Most Noble Order of the Crown of Thailand. President Marcos of the Philippines, two days later, bestowed upon him the Presidential Merit Medal at Malacanang Palace.

This week in Tokyo, Emperor Hirohito's brother, Prince Mikasa, who had previously decorated Armstrong to the highest level a non-Japanese citizen can receive, bestowed yet another honor upon the ninety-year-old patriarch.

Armstrong, college founder, church leader and magazine editor, has been invited to meet with over 60 world leaders during the past 14 years to discuss possibilities of world peace.

Interviewed by the press and media, Armstrong is said to be the foremost authority on world peace.

The group will be departing late this week for their Pasadena-based headquarters.

## FROM MINISTERIAL SERVICES

### International News

Australian Report Our second national Summer Educational Programme (December 23 to January 13) was a great success. Two hundred and sixty campers from all over Australia (and one from Malaysia) gathered at our beautiful S.E.P. camp site on the edge of Lake Moogerah, a two-hour drive from our regional office at Burleigh Heads.

For an action-packed three weeks, our young people participated in and received instruction on a wide range of activities--archery, riflery, horse riding, rock climbing and abseiling [repelling], agronomy, dancing, photo-

graphy, lapidary, leathercraft, geology, water skiing, camp improvement, bush craft, orienteering [wilderness skills] and natural history.

We were especially grateful for the support given by the visiting S.E.P. staff from Pasadena. Mr. Kevin Dean, Youth Opportunities United Director, attended the camp as Mr. Armstrong's representative and gave valuable direction and guidance on implementing Mr. Armstrong's policies for the youth in God's Church.

Also assisting at the camp from Headquarters in Pasadena were Mr. Dean's assistant in the Y.O.U. Office, Mr. Jeb Egbert and his wife Barbara, Mr. Ross Jutsum of Music Services, and six Ambassador College students. Their enthusiasm and support added immeasurably to the success of the camp.

We also wish to convey special thanks to all S.E.P. staff drawn from the membership of the Church. Their tireless efforts in supporting our young people at the camp were most appreciated.

We were pleased to welcome to Australia this month Mr. and Mrs. Mark Ellis and their sons, David, Benny and Charles. After five years of ministering to the brethren in Ireland, Mr. Ellis is now pastoring the congregation in the south Sydney area.

This month we were once again blessed with a fine increase in income--up 23.5% over January last year. Our mailing staff was kept busy processing 14,428 letters and mailing out over 21,000 envelopes containing booklets and articles for interested readers.

Responses to Mr. Armstrong's semiannual letter of October, 1982 have come in quite strongly and, so far, 11,945 of our Australian subscribers have returned their literature request coupons. These responses represent 17.5% of the Australian PLAIN TRUTH mailing list.

Some semiannual letter responses from the Asian area have already reached us, but because of the distances involved, it will be some months yet before results from these countries become available.

Spanish-language Area News As we look back on 1982, it has proven to be the greatest year of growth by far in the history of the Spanish-speaking area of the Work of God.

The subscription list of La PURA VERDAD grew by 75% in 1982 and reached 194,882 at year's end--the highest circulation on record. This breaks the previous high of 144,415 which was set in 1973. To reach this level, 109,754 new subscribers were added--more than in any other year and 39% more than the previous high in 1981.

In 1982 the circulation of the Spanish GOOD NEWS rose 17%, reaching a total of 2,320. With the offering of the magazine to all CORRESPONDENCE COURSE students, we expect a far more dramatic increase in circulation in 1983.

Although the number of co-workers and donors has been increasing substantially during the last three years, 1982 experienced a remarkable leap in these categories. A total of 2,519 new donors were added in 1982, more than ever before and 94% more than in 1981! There were 658 new co-workers added

in 1982, 60% more than in 1981. Co-workers and donors on our list were respectively 46% and 83% more than the previous year. Not surprisingly, 65% of all donors and 53% of all co-workers are from the United States and Puerto Rico.

Income for 1982 was eight percent over 1981 (U.S. income is not included). This may sound somewhat low, but it must be borne in mind that income figures are reported in U.S. dollars rather than in local currencies. Massive devaluations in some countries in 1982 have greatly affected the income reports in dollars. For example, Mexico, which accounts for roughly half of our income, had a 67% increase in income over 1981 in pesos, yet due to devaluations during the year their income shows a 10% decrease in income in dollars! Dollar income in Argentina, Chile and Peru was similarly affected due to devaluations in 1982.

Four new ministers were added in 1982 to help meet the growth and needs in the Spanish-speaking area. They were Messrs. Salvador Barragan and Daniel Vasquez, Mexico; Mr. Reginald Killingley, Pasadena, but soon to be transferred to Peru and Mr. Mauricio Perez, Colombia, but soon to be transferred to Venezuela. In addition, Messrs. Mario Seiglie (Chile) and Alberto Sousa (Argentina) were raised to the rank of preaching elder.

#### Appreciation for the Second Ministerial Refreshing Program

Dear Mr. Armstrong:

My wife and I thank you deeply for the opportunity of attending the Ministerial Refreshing Program. We came to Pasadena expecting the very best. What was awaiting us was even better than anticipated.

The Ambassador College campus was just as beautiful and inspiring as expected. The "extra" was God's Spirit present in the lives of the ministry, faculty and students. The unity, sense of purpose and attitudes were positively inspiring and stimulating.

The most helpful and informative classroom sessions, the fellowship with ministers, faculty, students and brethren all combined to make the session what you express in your presentation--most refreshing.

The brethren are excited about the news from Headquarters and all our prayers are with you and those assisting you in the Great Commission God has given to you.

Carrol and Phyllis Bryant

Dear Mr. Armstrong:

It is difficult to find words to express our feelings after attending the Ministerial Refreshing Program in January of this year. The honour and privilege to attend was a great blessing and we thank you for making it possible.

But much more we are thankful for having our minds stretched spiritually and for the spiritual tools that will enable us to better encourage and lead God's people.

It was thrilling to see how strongly God and Christ are working through you in leading the Church, teaching in the College and preaching the gospel. We pray for you daily for strength and wisdom to wear the heavy mantle God has laid on your shoulders.

Keith and Pamela Stoner

Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong:

My wife and I have just returned from the thirteenth session of the Ministerial Refreshing Program and want to thank you for having such a program and for allowing us to attend. It is so pleasant to be at Headquarters once again and to experience the esprit de corps and unity that today exists in the ministry. We thank you for being used to bring it back. The MRP has played a large role in bringing it back as well. The men you have appointed to teach the classes set a fine example and have inspired us all to work harder and better in the service of Christ. Your message to us, and especially your heart-to-heart comments at the end, were much appreciated and will be long remembered.

Dan and Barbara Rogers

Dear Mr. Tkach:

My wife and I have never been students at one of God's colleges so we were all the more thrilled and excited to attend the thirteenth session of the Refreshing Program. We had the added blessing of attending along with ministers from the Latin American countries, enabling us to hear firsthand about brethren and conditions in other countries where God is doing His Work.

The Ambassador campus is beautiful and wherever we went at Headquarters we could see God's way producing proper and happy results. It was a great pleasure to sit alongside the students who were always beaming and so friendly.

Headquarters continues to set us all a fine example of what conditions in the world tomorrow will be like. We certainly could see the "back on track" atmosphere throughout the campus. Thank you for giving us exactly what was needed.

Joe and Bobbi Cheperdak

Mr. Joe Tkach:

Just wanted to take this opportunity to convey and express our deepest thanks and appreciation to Mr. Armstrong, you, and all the others involved who made Ministerial Refreshing Program No. 13 such a profitable experience!

It is a joy to come to Headquarters and see the Godly orientation as reflected in the unity and teamwork of all those serving at the Headquarters of God's Work! What an honor we have been given to serve in the Work and ministry of the most High God!

Kenneth and Barbara Martin

Dear Mr. Tkach:

My wife and I want to thank you and all the men at Headquarters for a very inspiring and uplifting Refreshing Program. Never since we have been in God's Church have we seen such warmth and togetherness as we saw at Headquarters. Truly God has His Church back on track. We are praying for Mr. Armstrong and all the men at Headquarters. Keep up the good work. We all appreciate it.

Don and Colleen Erickson

### Comments From Monthly Church Reports

CONCORD, NH/MONTPELIER, VT--KEN WILLIAMS: Mr. Armstrong's taped sermons and letters are motivating the brethren. Several leaders in the congregations have commented on their need to get their priorities straight. One man stated he feels he has been asleep and is now waking up. Two others said they want to serve more than ever but feel too spread out. Some of their responsibilities are being delegated to others. Another leader said that he now recognizes the need more than ever to spend more time seeking God and with his family. Several have commented on needing to spend more time in prayer, Bible study and fasting so that they can overcome more.

ST. JOSEPH, MO--JAMES WELLS: Mr. Armstrong's tapes have really been enthusiastically received here. The brethren see more than ever before how really important his trips abroad are. He gets the real feel of how events are speeding up toward the end of this age! New letters from potential members have been coming almost every week and seeing new people at services inspires the brethren.

BIRMINGHAM (AM & PM)-JASPER, AL--KENNETH MARTIN: The brethren are most encouraged by the many positive trends in God's Work! They can see the fruits from God's blessing the efforts of His apostle, Mr. Armstrong, and the Church as a whole! The World Tomorrow telecast continues to bring in new potential member requests of a high caliber.

PORTLAND (WEST), OR--DAN FRICKE: There seems to be an increased level of Bible study for most members in the Church because of Mr. Armstrong's tapes and program. More members are attending Bible study and as a result there have been more questions. Despite the "normal problems," the attitude in general continue to be one of cooperation and responsiveness.

CLARKSBURG, WV/WASHINGTON-BELLE VERNON, PA--DAVID JOHNSON: Quite a few of the young adults who have grown up in the Church are now giving serious consideration to baptism. In every case it seems that the parents are supportive rather than pushy, and that the young people have come up with the idea on their own.

TAMPA, FL--RONALD A. LOHR: There is a good esprit de corps among our Y.O.U. Because of the good examples of four of our Y.O.U. members, we now have four young people attending Church and Y.O.U. activities even though their parents have no interest in the Church.

PORTSMOUTH-CHILLICOTHE, OH--DAVID TREYBIG: One of the counties in the Portsmouth area (Adams) has the highest percentage of unemployment in the state of Ohio with 26.2%, and the county with the largest number of members (Scioto) is not far behind with an unemployment rate of 22%. In spite of these figures, God has blessed all but one of our men with some kind of employment. In many cases the jobs do not pay very well, but at least our men have jobs. We are indeed very grateful to our Creator and Provider!

--Joe Tkach, Ministerial Services

#### UPDATE FROM MAIL PROCESSING

##### International Mail Center Serves a Growing Worldwide Work

The Work of God is continuing to see encouraging growth throughout the world. As the regional offices of the Work help in this great harvest, they are served in a number of ways by the International Mail Center (IMC), which is part of the Mail Processing Center here in Pasadena. Here is a brief description of this section's activities and service.

In 1982, as part of Mr. Armstrong's desire to standardize mail processing procedures worldwide and build greater unity, Mr. Ron Urwiller from the International Mail Center and I made visits to most of the regional offices. Channels of communication were opened at that time to exchange facts and ideas. Since then, IMC has served as a link between MPC and the regional offices for mail processing matters. Many ways have been found to serve the international offices more effectively and to improve the two-way flow of information.

IMC maintains subscription lists and files for several international areas and languages which do not have access to a computer. At present, this includes the Dutch, German, Italian, New Zealand, Philippines and South African subscription lists as well as English-language readers in the Caribbean, Central and South America and Japan.

Mail is received and read in each regional office, then names of new people or changes to the files are sent regularly to IMC where this data is entered into the computer. Address labels, listings and reports are then returned to the regional offices as needed.

A number of mailings to international areas are prepared and sent directly from Pasadena. These include literature requests for the Caribbean, Y.E.S. Bible lessons, Mr. Armstrong's semiannual letters to the Philippines and many others. All the necessary coordinating and scheduling for these jobs is provided by IMC.

By utilizing the services of IMC, the offices enjoy the advantages of a large computer and its support staff, without the costs of owning or leasing their own system. In addition, there are ways to mail to other countries from here, through both the U.S. Postal Service and private couriers, which are fast and economical. Due to steady worldwide growth, the International Mail Center has been kept very busy during the past year. Nearly all of the subscription lists it maintains doubled in size during 1982. All the signs so far this year indicate that this upward trend will continue.

Unusual Financial Blessings

Occasionally, members and co-workers send in tithes and offerings from unusual gifts and blessings. This week we are featuring several letters describing some of these blessings.

You might be interested to hear what God has done for us since I began tithing. About a year ago, we were living in a real dump. The house was in such bad shape that the termites had deserted us. The wiring was so bad that only two overhead lights in the whole house worked. It was so hard to heat, even with a wood stove, that water dripping in the bathtub froze before it could run out the drain.

There was a three-year urban renovation program going on in our neighborhood. At the very end of the program, after we had given up hope, they decided to take in our property. Under federal law we were eligible for up to \$15,000 in relocation benefits. This paid for a very nice brand-new mobile home. It also covered the cost of drilling a well, building a driveway, and buying and installing a septic tank. If having a free home practically handed to you is not a blessing, I don't know what is!

M.S. (Maryville, TN)

This substantial offering is the result of an insurance settlement from a car wreck I was involved in a year and a half ago. The policeman and others who saw the car were amazed I was not killed on the spot. God very definitely intervened and protected me. I am more than happy to now be able to give an extra amount to the Work that would not have been possible otherwise.

T.T. (Bartonville, IL)

My PT stand is at my husband's service station. Last week a customer gave him \$20 for gas and instructed him to "throw the balance on this," pointing to the PTs. The bill came to \$19.80. The customer returned with a five-dollar bill and said to add that to the twenty-cent balance.

Mrs. G.H. (Oklahoma City, OK)

I know that God's law of tithing works. Concerning gleanings, after we pick a crop, we usually donate ten to twenty percent to the food bank, then we go home and donate another thirty to forty percent to people who are in need. Pretty soon we have so much food on hand, it is difficult to get rid of. The more we try to give to the needy the more we receive and sometimes it gets so ridiculous I wish I knew how to shut it off.

Concerning money, I never gave it much thought before. It seemed that we always had just enough to go from one pay day to the next if we were very lucky and watched every penny like a hawk. I am now ready to give God's law of tithing with money a chance. Enclosed is a check.

D.J. (Portland, OR)

Three days after I was baptized into God's Church, I was awakened at 3:30 a.m. by an unusually sharp pain in my stomach. I got up

and, as it persisted, I went outside for a walk. It was then that I noticed ice forming on the cars. I immediately built smudge fires around my vineyard. The stagnant cold air began moving and the temperature came up about one degree.

Later that day no evidence of any frost damage could be observed in my vineyard. However, my nearest neighbor had his crop totally destroyed, and the next neighbor's vineyard sustained spotty damage.

My stomach pain has mysteriously vanished. My tithes and offerings will continue. The Eternal protects His investment.

V.M. (Fresno, CA)

--Richard Rice, Mail Processing Center

### ON THE WORLD SCENE

#### GERMAN ELECTION; WHY THE WEST IS LOSING; FIRES IN AUSTRALIA

Opposition leader Hans-Jochen Vogel, reversing an earlier stand, has openly appealed for support from the anti-nuclear Greens party to help topple Chancellor Helmut Kohl in West Germany's March 6 general elections. "As a candidate for chancellor I see no sense in rejecting my election by a majority of the Bundestag who have been chosen by the people just because the Greens help make up the majority," Vogel told the weekly newspaper DIE ZEIT.

Vogel, leader of the Social Democrats, previously made no bid for Greens support, although he did not openly reject it. Vogel, however, has ruled out the possibility of forming a coalition with the group. The Greens, a small party of neutralists, pacifists, ecologists and anti-nuclear activists, might hold the balance of power in the Bundestag, the lower house of Parliament.

The March 6 general election is shaping up as a test of the country's resolve to support U.S. defense policy in Europe. Greens party leader Petra Kelly said last week the group will support Vogel in the Bundestag vote for chancellor only if the Social Democratic candidate clearly rejects U.S. medium-range missiles and atomic power. And in a Wednesday speech in the Bavarian town of Vilshofen, Vogel again branded Kohl's Christian Democratic Party as the so-called "U.S. Rocket Party." Vogel said a vote for Kohl is a vote for deployment of U.S. Pershing-II and cruise missiles in West Germany.

#### How Moscow is Winning the West--by Grabbing the Real Reins of Power

Why are West Germany and most of the other West European countries (except Catholic France) so susceptible to pressure from communist/socialist propaganda these days? A Dutchman, Jan Van Houten, who writes for the West German publication, CRITICON, analyzed this phenomenon in very clear terms in the February 8, 1983 issue of the WALL STREET JOURNAL:

...Only the left seems to understand that power in modern society doesn't primarily mean controlling the means of production, the government or the armed forces, as the European right deludes itself into believing. The left has discovered that today power



means first and foremost control of the means of communication and socialization--schools, universities, churches and, above all, the mass media. It's in these institutions that public opinion is shaped and articulated and the national ethos, the idea a society holds of itself, is molded. It's where decisions are made about what will be talked about--El Salvador or the deployment of cruise missiles--or played down--Afghanistan and the Soviet arms buildup....

When in 1967 the German student leader Rudi ["the Red"] Dutschke was asked how he and his small bunch of revolutionaries thought they could achieve their ambitious goals, he answered, "By a long march through the institutions." And that's exactly what has been happening during the last 15 years or so....

The ascendancy of the left in the mass media and in so many schools and universities has led to a cultural revolution, a radical change in values, attitudes and ideological outlook. The new conventional wisdom is that equality is more important than freedom; capitalism is a system based on greed and gross inequality and hence morally inferior to socialism; the poverty of the so-called Third World is the result of Western exploitation; the most important conflict of our age isn't between Western democracy and Marxist totalitarianism but between the rich North and the poor South. [Note: The very same themes appear over and over in every issue of NEW TIMES, the English-language Soviet news-weekly.]

How is it possible that so many people accept these dangerous misconceptions? The answer is simple. On matters that are of immediate concern, the man in the street is quite capable of making up his own mind. But when it comes to matters of which he knows next to nothing, arcane issues pertaining to foreign policy, nuclear energy or defense, he is completely dependent on the information he gets from the communications industry. If the media constantly play down the Soviet military threat or depict guerrillas in El Salvador as freedom fighters against a fascist regime, then it can only be expected that even dyed-in-the-wool conservatives will start wondering whether the deployment of new missiles in Europe is necessary and whether America is backing the right side in Central America....

There is a moral to the story. The European right must finally grasp that electoral victories will be of little avail as long as they leave the institutions of the consciousness industry to the left. Unless the present attitude changes, even the best of policies will fail. There is no doubt that the battle for the preservation of a free Europe will be won or lost not in the parliaments but in schools, churches, universities, newspapers and radio and television stations.

#### The Not-too-surprising Attitudes of Television Executives

In this column in the March 26, 1982 issue of the PASTOR GENERAL'S REPORT, we published the findings of research into the social and political

attitudes of people high up in the news media in the United States. Now, the same researchers have published a report on the attitudes of Hollywood's most influential TV writers, producers and executives. Here is a summary of the report, as received over our AP wire of February 15, 1983.

Top Hollywood creators of the entertainment fare on television are predominantly secular in outlook, politically liberal and shun religion a new study finds. It also finds that they seek to reform society toward their views...says the report of findings about Hollywood's most influential TV writers, producers and executives.

"Their value orientation is fundamentally different from that of the general public" says the report published in PUBLIC OPINION, a magazine of the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research in Washington. "On such issues as abortion, homosexual rights and extramarital sex their views diverge sharply from traditional values." Ninety-three percent of the Hollywood professionals turning out the main TV entertainment seldom or never attend religious services the findings show, compared to 41 percent of Americans who attend weekly or more often.

The study involved detailed interviews with 104 key people who make TV shows chosen on the basis of their prominence in the industry, each of them associated with two or more successful prime-time series. The three scholars who made the study...are political scientist Robert Lichter of George Washington University, professor of government Stanley Rothman of Smith College and Linda Lichter, research associate both at Columbia and George Washington Universities.

The study is part of a series being made about attitudes of leaders in various fields. A previous phase found that key professionals in the news media are far less religious than the general public. But those making TV entertainment were found to differ even more drastically with most Americans in attitudes toward religion and social and moral issues.

Among the TV entertainment makers 80 percent do not regard homosexual relations as wrong and 51 percent do not regard adultery as wrong. Of the 49 percent who do, only 17 percent feel that way strongly. Nearly all--97 percent--believe a woman has a right to decide for herself about having an abortion, 91 percent holding that view "strongly." In comparison to those views, studies find 85 percent of Americans consider adultery wrong and 71 percent consider homosexual activity wrong. On abortion, surveys of specific views about it find 73 percent want it limited to certain hard cases or banned.

Among the TV entertainment makers 75 percent call themselves political liberals compared to 27 percent of the public that does so. Most of the TV entertainment creators are white males from urban centers, 82 percent being reared in metropolitan areas, mostly in California or Northeastern cities. "Very few have roots in middle America" the report says.

It says most are well educated and "extraordinarily well paid," two thirds of them with income over \$200,000 a year.... While they affirm capitalism, most reject American social institutions and structures, saying they cause alienation.... "Two out of three believe that TV should be a major force for social reform" the report says. "According to television's creators they are not in it just for the money. They also seek to move their audience toward their own vision of the good society."

### In the Universities and the Churches...

In America's universities a small but fervent group of radical leftist professors--many of them avowed Marxists--is expanding its foothold--primarily on the eastern and western seaboard. Some colleges and universities actively recruit Marxist professors in the way they used to recruit blacks or women. The radicals--most of them former student activists of the 1960s--are especially prominent on history faculties where they attempt to recast American history in the light of Marxism's perspective on "class struggle" and oppression.

The University of California at Berkeley began the infamous "free speech" movement in 1964. But not everyone is entitled to free speech there. This past Wednesday (January 16), America's United Nations Ambassador, Jean Kirkpatrick, canceled a lecture at the University of California after she was met with hooting and jeering the day before as she attempted to explain U.S. foreign policy, especially with regard to Central America. A university spokesman said Mrs. Kirkpatrick was the "target of disruptive attempts at her lecture [Tuesday] afternoon on campus" and was driven from the stage at one point. University officials called the outbursts a denial of the Ambassador's right to free speech.

Ah, but rights for homosexuals, that's another story. Stanford University is considering whether or not to accept an anonymous donor's offer to establish a scholarship for professed homosexuals. While the university had indicated it might turn down the offer, members of Stanford's Gay and Lesbian Alliance are naturally urging acceptance.

As far as organized religion is concerned, major ecumenical religious bodies, such as the World Council of Churches (WCC) have been recently very much in the news, having been accused of supporting anti-Western and, in some cases, openly Marxist revolutionary movements. Through its Program to Combat Racism (PCR) the WCC, said the November 9, 1982 LOS ANGELES TIMES,

...since 1970...has given more than \$5 million to 130 organizations that are ostensibly fighting racism. Nor did the council deny that nearly half the money has gone to guerrillas seeking violent overthrow of existing regimes [such as SWAPO in South West Africa]. By contributing to the Program to Combat Racism, the council said, "Donors do not endorse violence, but neither do they pass judgment on those victims of oppression who are driven to take up arms as a last resort to redress grievances."

The WCC also supports, among its many programs, the "decolonization" of Puerto Rico and "aboriginal rights" in Australia.

In Australia, Worst Drought in History Spawns Massive Fires

On the heels of the worst drought in living memory in Australia--some areas have not received rain for four years--have come the most devastating brush fires in nearly 50 years. Here is a report received over our UPI teletype, dated February 17, 1983:

Walls of fire roared through two southern Australian states for the second day today, killing at least 69 people and destroying nearly 2,000 homes in the nation's worst brush fires in nearly 50 years. At least seven small towns were reported to have been totally destroyed in what a government official called "one of the greatest tragedies in our history." A stunned Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser toured stricken areas, some where looting was reported, and called the devastation "a holocaust...."

Previously, the worst Australian bushfires in terms of casualties were recorded in 1939, when 71 perished in Victoria. "But the destruction of land and homes in these incredible fires in two states far eclipses that '39 blaze in Victoria," a spokesman for the Central Fire Authority said.

A dispatch the same day over our AP machine reported the fire scene in this manner:

"It was like a giant flame thrower," said one weary firefighter. "The wind was like it came from a huge hair dryer," said a man who lost his house--one of 3,000 homes destroyed in seven towns that were consumed by wind-driven flames Wednesday and Thursday.

"The fire-hit areas of Victoria looked like they had been attacked by napalm," said Adm. Sir James Murray, the governor of Victoria state. "A panzer division going through could not have caused so much damage," said Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser after an inspection tour.

More than 4,000 firefighters had most of the fires under control by Thursday. The flames, fanned by gale-force winds, devastated 2,600 square miles of drought-stricken farmland, forest and scrub along a 500-mile stretch of Australia's southeast coast in the states of South Australia and Victoria. With the Southern Hemisphere's summer at its height, the worst drought in Australian history spawned brush fires that 60-mile winds from the central desert whipped through the Adelaide Hills and down the south coast past Melbourne into the Dandenong Ranges. The gale winds shot tongues of flame 300 feet through pine plantations and eucalyptus forests. Fully grown pine trees snapped like matchsticks.

As in the United States, there is a "morality connection" between Australia's current "trial by fire" and social conditions in that country. Perhaps more on that next time or sometime soon.

--Gene H. Hogberg, News Bureau