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127 Ninth Avenue, North Nashville, Tennessee

EXECUTIVES ASK FOR \$10,000,000 PROGRAM OF WORLD ADVANCE BEGINNING IN 1950

By C. E. Bryant

NASHVILLE, Tenn.--(BP)--Executives of Southern Baptist agencies and members of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee laid tentative plans in a called meeting here September 21 for an enlarged program of world evangelism beginning in 1950.

The session had been called to consider proposals of the Foreign Mission Board for a Program of Advance which would increase the foreign mission personnel from 670 to 1,750 and the Board's annual budget from \$3,500,000 to \$10,000,000.

Members of the Executive Committee's promotion and finance subcommittees formed the nucleus for the meeting, and their recommendations will be presented to the full regular session of the Executive Committee in December. Actions there will be recommended to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Oklahoma City next May.

It was a session of deep spiritual interest with prayerful concern given to all phases of the denominational work.

Dr. M. Theron Rankin, executive secretary for the Foreign Board, likened the need for expansion to a pyramid with foreign missions at the top and the local churches at the base. He pointed out that as the top of the pyramid is increased, so must the base be proportionately enlarged.

"We recognize," he said, "that a program of world advance involves the strengthening and enlargement of the whole denominational structure at the home base as well as overseas, and that we can safely expand our work overseas only as such expansion is based on the strengthening of all the work beginning with the local church."

Such reasoning became the thinking of the group, and proposals adopted asked for maintaining of present emphasis on the Cooperative Program, both for operating needs and capital needs, reinforced with appeals for increased giving. A special offering was proposed for the Spring of 1950 to boost Cooperative Program receipts that year to a goal of \$10,000,000.

"Rejoicing in the blessing of Almighty God which has caused all Southern Baptist enterprises to prosper in recent years to a degree never experienced heretofore," said the recommendation approved by the group, "we are humbled

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nevertheless as we face the desperate need of the world for which Christ died.

"This need has been laid upon our hearts afresh by the advance program proposed by the Foreign Mission Board, following their survey of foreign fields."

The group recommended certain principles of distribution to provide for current operating needs and capital needs of the agencies through existing Co-operative Program channels, with the advance program financed by increased giving above \$6,500,000.

Time and again throughout the meeting, reference was made to seemingly inequitable division of funds by the local church. Figures and charts presented by Dr. Merrill D. Moore, director of promotion, revealed that average local churches are retaining 78.5 per cent of the collection plate dollar -- with all Cooperative Program agencies, state and southwide, receiving only 21.5 per cent. This is far from the projected goal of a 50-50 division of funds.

It was pointed out that the 50-50 plan of distribution throughout -- figured on the basis of 1947 gifts of \$132,000,000 to the local churches -- would adequately meet denominational needs as presently stated. In fact, the 12.5 per cent of the collection plate dollar reaching the Foreign Mission Board in a 50-50 division throughout would have provided last year \$16,500,000 for foreign missions.

Need for Baptist aggressiveness in this post war period was stated by Dr. Rankin: "We have tremendous resources, both material and spiritual, to exert a tremendous influence upon the life of the world today. We believe sincerely that we have an understanding of God's message in Christ Jesus that the world urgently and critically needs.

"We have determined that in making our contribution to the world, we will do so not through combinations with other religious denominations or through such combined agencies as the World Council of Churches.

"Since we are not to make our contribution in that way, Southern Baptists must organize ourselves to make our contribution in our own way."

Dr. R. Paul Caudill, chairman of the finance committee, termed the securing of increased gifts "a matter of getting the hearts of the people acquainted with the tragic needs of Christian missions. We must awaken the 50 to 60 per cent of our people who are giving next to nothing." He declared that people informed of the needs will be "so motivated that as Christians we'd rather do with less food and fewer shoes to see missionaries by the thousands going to the ends of the earth to minister in Christ's name."

Dr. Robert G. Lee, president of the Convention, said: "Unless our hearts are 25,000 miles in circumference, they are too small."

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George B. Fraser, Washington, D. C., attorney and president of the Executive Committee, presided at the meeting.

Dr. Gaudill reported that total denominational giving to Southern Baptist Convention causes had increased from \$880,000 in 1933 to almost \$8,000,000 last year. The Cooperative Program (undesignated) had increased from \$580,093 to \$5,217,762 in the same period.