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December 27, 1965

Advance for publication Dec. 29, 1965

Federal Aid Voted
Top Baptist Story

By the Baptist Press

News concerning federal aid to church-related institutions has been voted the top Southern Baptist story of the year by Baptist news editors throughout the nation.

The issue of church-state separation involved in federal aid to church institutions overwhelmingly topped the list of ten most significant Baptist news events of the year in balloting conducted by the Baptist Press, news service of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Nineteen out of 32 ballots ranked the federal aid issue as number one. Under the scoring system on the balloting, the federal aid story received a total of 289 points.

Ranked second, with 228 points, was news developing from the Baptist World Congress meeting in Miami Beach, Fla., where W. R. Tolbert of the Republic of Nigeria was elected the first Negro president of the world-wide Baptist organization.

Third place went to stories reporting the imprisonment and trial of two Southern Baptist missionaries to Cuba, along with 51 Cuban nationals, on charges of espionage and illegal currency exchange. The Cuban missionary imprisonment story rated 197 points.

Southern Baptist progress in improving race relations was voted the fourth top story of the year, receiving 170 points.

Fifth on the tally was news coming out of the Southern Baptist Convention's annual session in Dallas, with 155 points.

Other Baptist news stories ranked in order in the top ten list included: record year of giving tops SBC budget (6th); SBC missionaries appointed by Foreign Mission Board passes 2,000-home missionaries total 2,500 (7th); Vatican Council II meets (and stories developing from it), (8th); SBC approves hemisphere-wide crusade in 1969, (9th); and Hurricane Betsy hits Baptist churches in Louisiana, New Orleans Seminary (10th).

Five editors picked the Baptist World Congress meeting as the number one story of the year, and four others voted SBC progress in race relations as the top story. Two selected the Convention in Dallas, and two others picked the imprisonment of Cuban Missionaries Herbert Caudill and David Fite as the top story of the year.

Barely edged out of the top ten list was coverage of the resignation of two professors at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary over differences in theological views. The Southeastern Seminary story got 49 points, compared to 51 votes to number ten, Hurricane Betsy's damage to Baptist churches and New Orleans Seminary.

Tied for twelfth was: a new health benefit plan being offered during 1965 by the SBC Annuity Board, and stories covering the refusal of a Baptist association in Arkansas and the Arkansas Baptist State Convention to seat messengers from the First Baptist Church of Russelleville, Ark., because of that church's practice of "alien Baptism."

Rounding out the top 15 were: (13th) "two mission agencies launch new Journeyman and US-2 programs," (14th) "Home Mission Board reorganizes staff, Rutledge leads in projecting new programs," and (15th) "plea presented for 5,000 SBC foreign missionaries."

Biggest story of the year--the federal aid issue--actually was not one story but numerous developments all involving the same basic issue.

Southern Baptists grappled with their "traditional view" of church state separation during 1965 as they had never done before, commented one editor.

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During 1965, Baptist educators called for a more liberal view on the federal aid question, asking permission for Baptist schools to accept federal loans and grants.

More federal money was made available to church-related institutions during 1965 when Congress passed two major bills with church-state separation issues involved--the College Aid Bill, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Congress also defeated in 1965 a move to bar churches from receiving anti-poverty funds, and changed the government policy on federal loan interest renewing the question of whether or not a government loan involves a subsidy.

The crisis prompted six Baptist state conventions to appoint long-range study committees to re-examine their policies on allowing (or prohibiting) the acceptance of federal loans and/or grants by state Baptist-owned institutions.

On a nation-wide scale, the Baptist Education Study Task--a two-year depth study of the entire Southern Baptist educational picture--was initiated during 1965 by the Christian Education Commission of the SBC. BEST will have as part of its study the question of federal aid.

The second ranked story of the year, coverage of the Baptist World Congress meeting in Miami Beach, was rated significant primarily because of the election of a Negro as president, W. R. Tolbert, vice-president of the Republic of Liberia.

Numerous stories were developed from the arrest and trial of two missionaries and 51 Cuban nationals on espionage charges. They were arrested in April, tried and sentenced in May--Caudill to ten years and Fite to six years in prison.

Like the church-state separation issue "story", the fourth-ranked story on Southern Baptist progress in race relations involved numerous specific news developments during 1965.

Listed on the ballot under the broad topic of race relations were such items as: Mississippi Baptists aid in reconstruction of burned-out Negro churches; SBC observes first Race Relations Sunday in March; most Baptist schools sign Civil Rights Compliance Act; First Baptist Churches in Oklahoma City and Richmond admit Negro members, although court suit later filed to nullify Richmond action; Selma civil rights demonstrations draw variety of reactions from Baptists. One editor added to the list the story of actions by 13 different Baptist state conventions aimed at improving race relations.

Significant actions of the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Dallas, ranked the fifth top story of the year, included vote of the SBC to participate in a North American Baptist Fellowship Committee with other Baptist bodies; adoption of a record budget despite efforts to delete an allocation to the convention's Christian Life Commission; approval of two program statements for Baptist agencies; and a speech by White House Press Secretary Bill Moyers urging cooperation between church and state.

Several of the editors of Baptist state papers did not vote in the poll.

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EDITORS: For your information, here is the list of top ten stories and points given to each:

RANK	Story Description	Points
1	Baptists face issue of federal aid to church-related institutions	289
2	Baptist World Congress meets in Miami (and stories from it)	228
3	Two SBC Missionaries, 51 Cuban Baptists, imprisoned on spy charges	197
4	SBC makes progress in race relations	170
5	SBC meets in Dallas (and stories from it)	155
6	Record year of giving tops SBC budget	102
7	2,000 SBC foreign missionaries appointed; 2,500 home missionaries	94
8	Vatican Council II meets, adopts religious liberty statement	87
9	SBC approves participation in hemisphere-wide crusade in 1969	81
10	Hurricane Betsy hits seminary, Baptist churches in Louisiana	51

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