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**Rural Poverty Called  
A National Disgrace**

By Beth Hayworth

WASHINGTON (BP)--A special blue-ribbon study commission has told President Lyndon B. Johnson that 14 million rural Americans are affected by poverty so widespread and so acute that it is a national disgrace.

While declaring that rural poverty in the United States has no geographical boundaries, the National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty said: "It is acute in the South, but it is present in the East, the West and the North."

Entitling its report "The People Left Behind," the 25-member presidential commission claimed that rural poor folk have been shortchanged by anti-poverty efforts and, until the last few years, largely bypassed by the nation's major social and welfare legislation.

Churches, along with other community institutions, were indicted in the government report for failing to develop programs to meet the needs of people in poverty-stricken areas.

A Baptist minister, Carlyle Marney, former pastor of the Myers Park Baptist Church in Charlotte, N. C., was a member of the 25-man commission.

The commission said there is in America today "a serious and widespread failure" to prepare the people for participating in a modern society. Schools, libraries, health facilities, churches and government units in rural areas were cited as failing to create programs to meet this need.

The 160-page publication charts the sections of the United States with the heaviest concentration of persons of low income and describes conditions in which they live. Specific recommendations are made for major changes in federal and local programs to attack the causes of their poverty.

Headed by former Kentucky Gov. Edward T. Breathitt, the commission said it was "convinced that the abolition of rural poverty perhaps for the first time in any nation, is completely feasible."

The study commission pointed out that the nation has the economic resources and the technical means to do this. "What it has lacked thus far, has been the will," it emphasized.

The commission obtained information from many sources, public and private, before assembling and analyzing the data. In the South, public hearings were held in Memphis, Tenn., and Berea, Ky.

In its opening statement, the report linked rural poverty conditions with the big city riots and charged that the consequences of rural poverty "have swept into our cities violently." It questioned the wisdom of massive public efforts to improve the lot of the poor in the inner city without comparable efforts to meet the needs of the poor in rural America.

There is more poverty in rural America, proportionately, than in the cities, according to the study. In metropolitan areas, one person in eight is poor, and in the suburbs, the ratio is one in 15. But in rural areas, one of every four persons is poor.

White persons outnumber nonwhites among the rural poor by a wide margin. Of the 14 million rural poor, 11 million are white. It is true that a higher proportion of Negroes than of whites are poor. Three out of five rural nonwhite families are classified as poor, according to commission findings.

Also, most of the rural poor do not live on farms. They live in the open country, in rural villages and in small towns.

Denying that there are such things as pockets of poverty because "poverty refuses to stay in pockets," the commission pictured the following as areas with heavy concentrations of rural poor: much of the South, Indian reservations in the Southwest and the Upper Great Plains, New England and the Upper Great Lakes.

Within the South, Appalachia, the Coastal Plain to the East, the Ozarks to the West, the Black Belt of the Old South and the Mexican-American concentrations along the Southern border were distinguished as areas with the highest percentage of poor persons.

Of the poor families in these areas, more than 70 percent struggle along on less than \$2,000 a year, the study revealed. One family in every four exists on less than \$1,000 a year.

The commission report criticized some federal farm and vocational programs designed to help these people as "woefully out of date." Instead of combating low incomes of rural people, these "relics of the past" have helped to create wealthy landowners while largely bypassing the rural poor, it charged.

In addition to low family incomes, these other poverty symptoms were cited:

\* A low level of formal schooling among adults. Three million rural adults are classified as illiterates.

\* Unemployment and underemployment. The unemployment rate in rural areas averages about 18 percent. The national average is about four percent.

\* Poor educational facilities and opportunities. There are still about 10,000 one-room schools in this country--mostly in rural America.

\* Inadequate health and medical care. Health service among low income persons in rural areas was described as "seriously deficient in quality...badly organized, underfinanced... too often discriminatory in terms of race and income and heedless of the dignity of the individual."

\* Large families. Among white rural farm families with incomes under \$2,000 the average number of births per woman is 48 percent higher than for the nation as a whole. Among nonwhites the average is 156 percent higher.

\* Poor housing. In 1960, 27 percent of occupied rural housing was classified as substandard--deteriorated or delapidated--compared with 14 percent for urban areas. A disproportionate number of the elderly occupy substandard housing in rural areas.

In order to correct these conditions which the commission said the nation has been "largely oblivious to," sweeping, detailed recommendations were made calling for action by all branches of government on the federal, state and local level as well as by private individuals and groups.

In addition to urging a re-examination of present farm programs and recommending changes in the administering of certain programs, the commission asked that present government units be redrawn to create multi-county districts, cutting across urban and rural boundaries.

Other recommendations include major policies and programs to enact full employment and manpower development programs, extensive changes in the rural educational system, public housing and expansion of health services, food distribution and family planning programs.

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Oklahoma Baptist Prexy  
To Get Honorary Degree

3/1/68

SHAWNEE, Okla. (BP)--The president of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, T. Hollis Epton, has been selected to receive an honorary doctor of divinity degree at Oklahoma Baptist University here in May. Epton is pastor of First Baptist Church, Duncan, Okla.

At the same time trustees voted to give the degree to Epton, they also appointed George R. Wilson, former missionary to Hong Kong, as professor of religious education. Wilson is currently guest religious education professor at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo.

A former pastor of Baptist churches in Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas and Arizona, Wilson was professor and administrator of the Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary while serving as a missionary.

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Ambassador Life Wins  
Freedom's Foundation Award

MEMPHIS (BP)--Ambassador Life, a monthly magazine for boys enrolled in Royal Ambassador chapters at Baptist churches throughout the nation, has won a Freedom's Foundation award as an outstanding non-profit publication.

The award went jointly to the Brotherhood Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention which publishes the magazine, and to Mrs. Mildred Dunn, the magazine's editor.

Ambassador Life was selected to receive the Honor Certificate from the Freedom's Foundation for "an outstanding accomplishment in helping to achieve a better understanding of the American Way of Life."

It was one of more than 1,400 awards presented by the Freedom's Foundation to American organizations, schools and individuals. Sixty of the top awards were presented at a special ceremony in Valley Forge, Pa., for the highest honors in various categories.

All other awards, including the citation to Ambassador Life, will be presented at regional and local ceremonies in various sections of the country this spring, but the notice of the award did not indicate when this would be. "Several months may pass before final arrangements are made in your state," said the notice.

Award winners were selected by a 34-member national jury composed of State Supreme Court justices, and heads of national patriotic, veterans and service organizations. Thousands of entries were submitted, the Freedom's Foundation reported.

Awards were judged on the basis of their support of a credo established by the Freedom's Foundation, a patriotic organization which seeks to lead individuals in America "to personally understand and maintain the American Way of Life, to honor it by his own exemplary conduct, and to pass it intact to succeeding generations as the responsibility of every true American."

The credo has three basic sections--political and economic rights which protect the dignity and freedom of the individual, constitutional government designed to serve the people, and fundamental belief in God.

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Texas Church Loan Board  
Appoints New Executive

3/1/68

DALLAS (BP)--The Church Loan Corp. of the Baptist General Convention of Texas has installed new management in line with recommendations from an investigating committee representing the state convention.

A. B. White is leaving as executive vice president and chief administrative officer after 16 years with the Texas Baptist church loan organization. He has been the only executive officer since the organization's founding.

He will remain, however, as "advisor" until retirement early next year.

Elected as his successor is Don Singletary of Fort Worth, current president of the Tarrant State Bank there. Singletary, a member of the investigating committee, will assume the newly-created title of president, and will also serve as chief executive officer.

Singletary, who has been associated with banking for 20 years and is a deacon at Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth, will assume the position about April 1.

The reorganization of the Texas Baptist Church Loan Corp., developed when the investigating committee of the convention met with those directing the Church Loan Corp., and Church Loan Association, two legally-separate boards but operating with the same officers. One handles church loans in Texas, and the other loans outside of Texas. The two organizations report a combined net worth of \$3½ million.

The convention created a committee of 100 at its 1966 session with a major assignment being an evaluation of all agencies and programs of the convention.

The committee in turn organized itself into subcommittees, one of which has been giving major attention to the two church loan groups.

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White brought the controversy into the open last September when he told the convention's Executive Board, "This is the most bewildering time I have known in my life." He said then he had been "criticized beyond description," and added, "this would not hurt had it been based on truth."

The Executive Board in September acting on a recommendation from the two loan boards during the investigation, established a "management group" which was given "final authority" in handling the loan board operations. Singletary was a member of the group and continued to serve on the investigating committee.

The new Church Loan Board management group reported to the state convention in November at Lubbock and its Executive Board, that a "mistake in judgement" had been made by the old group and administration in the purchase of California real estate. The new board added it was trying to sell the property at "a nice profit." The sales efforts are continuing.

Reorganization of the board's management came after a full day's meeting with the investigating committee. Both groups had a detailed report from auditors, which was critical of management.

Both the loan board and the investigating committee, by official action, said there was no implication anywhere of "any dishonest act."

White, formerly pastor of the East Grand Baptist Church in Dallas, had served as the chief executive officer since the association was founded in 1952. In the 16 years since then, the two boards have made loans exceeding a total of \$30 million to more than 1,100 churches.

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Haggai Gets "Unprecedented"  
Indonesia Crusade Invitation

3/1/68

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptist Evangelist John Edmund Haggai has received what he calls "an unprecedented invitation" from an Indonesian council of churches to conduct an evangelistic crusade in Indonesia in May of 1968.

The invitation came from the Djakarta Regional Council of Churches, part of the National Council of Churches in Indonesia which comprises 90 percent of all Protestant churches in that country.

Haggai explained that official sanction by the council is considered essential for the cooperation of all church groups, and that it is tantamount to government approval, which is desirable, but not necessary.

Haggai said he had received an invitation earlier from a group of Indonesian pastors and laymen not in the council, and that the support of Southern Baptist and other evangelical groups in the country was "already assured."

He pointed out that other non-Indonesian evangelistic groups which have sought the council's backing have been rebuffed. He said he was probably invited because of his organization's total evangelistic approach, and because of his Asiatic background.

Tentative plans for the Haggai Indonesian crusade to include training of indigenous lay Christians in evangelism, followed by simultaneous meetings in churches throughout Djakarta, united meetings at a central location, and extensive follow-up. More than 100 United States pastors and laymen will assist in the campaign, he said.

Tentative dates have been set for the initial thrust beginning April 29, the simultaneous meetings May 5-15, and the united crusade May 17-19.

It will be the first overseas crusade the Haggai Evangelistic Association has conducted under the program of evangelism-missions launched this year. Haggai said he has cancelled all other plans for the period in order to respond to the invitation, but his city-wide crusade in the United States will continue.

"Doors have been open to the Gospel as never before in this predominately Moslem nation," Haggai said. "Since the overthrow of Sukarno and the Communists in 1965, conversions to Christianity have numbered in the hundreds of thousands."

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