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July 23, 1968

Hemisphere-Wide Baptist
Laymen's Group Organized

RIO De JANEIRO, Brazil (BP)--At the conclusion of a five-day meeting here, more than 600 Baptist laymen from North, Central and South America voted to set up a hemispheric-wide organization for Baptist laymen.

They also voted to set the next meeting of the newly created organization, called the Pan American Union of Baptist Men, for 1972, and elected a six-man steering committee to plan the meeting.

Elected president of the hemispheric-wide organization was Owen Cooper, president of the Mississippi Chemical Corp., in Yazoo City, Miss., who was chairman of the Crusade of Americas committee which planned and coordinated the laymen's congress here.

The actions came during the Pan American Baptist Laymen's Evangelism Congress held as a part of the Crusade of the Americas, an evangelism campaign encompassing North, Central and South America.

Cooper, who was responsible more than any other man for coordinating the Congress, said that although the new organization would cooperate in every way possible with the Crusade of the Americas, it would continue to function permanently even after the Crusade of Americas ended in 1970.

Idea for the new organization was first proposed publicly in a speech to the Congress here by Natalio Aldo Broda, business manager for the Baptist publishing house of Argentina, who later made the motion to create the organization.

Broda was made chairman of a five-member committee which brought a report outlining what Cooper called the "framework" of the new organization.

The report, adopted after little discussion and no opposition, called for setting up a fellowship of Baptist laymen in the Western hemisphere and sponsoring a hemisphere-wide congress in 1972 and every five years thereafter, "emphasizing evangelism and personal witnessing."

The committee, in its report, listed three major purposes for the hemisphere-wide organization: (1) to develop relationships between all Baptist men in the Western Hemisphere, (2) to encourage churches to utilize Baptist men in evangelism and missionary work, and (3) to sponsor a Pan American congress of Baptist men in 1972 and every five years thereafter emphasizing evangelism and personal witnessing.

The report also recommended that national and regional congresses be held, but set up no organization structure to coordinate and plan such national and regional meetings.

In the discussion period, Cooper made it clear that the new organization would not be competitive with any existing organization, and that it would be hemispheric-wide in scope. It would not work within specific countries where laymen's organizations already exist, he said.

There was no public opposition expressed during the discussion, which was devoted mostly to questions directed to Cooper. At the time the matter was introduced, the program was one hour behind schedule.

"We could spend two or three hours changing this (recommendation) one way or another," Cooper said. "But I believe the committee has come up with a good report, and let's have a very brief discussion and then vote."

When asked how the new organization would be financed, Cooper replied: "The Lord will provide the manna."

Later, in an interview, he explained that the committee had made no recommendations for financing the organization and the next meeting. "But we financed this meeting with contributions from individuals and registration fees, and I think we can do it again."

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Asked about a possible relationship with the Baptist World Alliance, Cooper said in the discussion, "We are talking about an independent group at this time."

Later he indicated that he was not familiar enough with the Baptist World Alliance organization structure to know how a hemisphere-wide laymen's group would fit in, and that the committee did not want to pressure the Alliance to set up something it had no part in creating.

This is something that could be discussed and settled at the next meeting in 1972, he added.

Several questions in the discussion centered around whether women and pastors would be able to participate in the organization and attend the hemispheric-wide Congresses.

Cooper said that the steering committee could discuss these matters and bring recommendations to the 1972 meeting, but he felt that the preponderance of people attending should be laymen.

Named to the six-member steering committee were representatives of each of the six regions of the Crusade of the Americas--North America, Central America and Mexico, the Caribbeans, Northern South America, Brazil, and Southern South America. The four officers plus two others comprise the steering committee.

OFFICERS are Cooper as president; Rigoberto Steller of San Jose, Costa Rica, a government public relations worker, as vice president; Samuel Prato of Caracas, Venezuela, a construction engineer, as secretary; and Broda of Buenos Aires as treasurer.

The two other representatives on the steering committee are Roderick James of Kingston, Jamaica, a pharmaceutical company representative; and Jacinto Calmon, an attorney in Rio de Janeiro.

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Maxey Jarman Urges Baptists: Stick To Bible, Not Politics

RIO De JANEIRO, Brazil (BP)--Emphasizing the Bible's place in evangelism, an influential Baptist layman from Nashville, Tenn., Maxey Jarman, urged Baptists to stick to evangelism and avoid political and social issues.

Jarman said that evangelism is so much more important than social issues that it is almost like the difference between love and hate.

Speaking to the Pan American Baptist Laymen's Evangelism Conference, Jarman took issue with Southern Baptist denominational leaders who, he charged, are putting social issues before evangelism.

"In my opinion, some individuals in some Baptist congregations, some holding responsible positions in denominational affairs, have gotten themselves turned upside down; have reversed the divine order of importance and put unimportant things before the vital essential responsibilities of witnessing for Christ and seeking new souls for the Kingdom," Jarman said.

The wealthy Baptist layman, chairman of the board of Genesco, Inc., which manufactures Jarman Shoes and other products, chided Baptist officials who "have taken it upon themselves to issue public statements to the press which are widely interpreted to express the doctrine for all Baptists."

Adding that no person has a right to speak for all Baptists, Jarman said he felt "resolutions passed by conventions or written manifestos are out of place in Baptist polity as they seem to indicate that such statements speak for all Baptists."

Although he did not refer to it specifically, many of the 646 Baptists attending the conference, including 147 from the United States, indicated they felt Jarman had reference to a manifesto on the racial crisis in the United States adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention recently after 71 top Baptist leaders signed the statement and publicized it widely.

"These statements and resolutions are written primarily to impress the general public," Jarman said.

"Such approaches are in reality a political move and express the desires of some individuals to make Baptists as a group influential in political affairs. Nowhere in the statement do we have any example of trying to influence government," he said.

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"Such policies can only lead to division and hard feelings," he observed. "We must by all means...stick to the supremely important obligation committed to us to spread the good news about Jesus Christ."

Acknowledging that Christians do have a responsibility to society and mankind, Jarman observed, however, that he felt that the Christian's responsibility to save souls was far more important.

"Bringing other individuals to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ is infinitely more important than our obligation to be concerned with the problems of this evil world in trying to relieve suffering, trying to get justice, and trying to keep peace," Jarman declared.

"Our responsibilities as Christians do not relieve us of these other responsibilities, but let us put everything in its proper order and place," he said.

"The obligation that we have to serve God, by witnessing to others of the new life through Christ, is so much more important than our earthly responsibilities that it is like the difference between love and hate," Jarman declared.

All people--Christians, athiests, the poor, the wealthy, black or white--have obligations to help other human beings and be good citizens of their country, and the Christian has a natural obligation to support justice for all, to help those who are less fortunate than he, Jarman added. But the Christian's real citizenship is in the Kingdom of God, he observed.

Emphasizing the centrality of the Bible in Baptist faith and practice, Jarman said that the New Testament is Baptists' only "creed, guide and authority."

"No Baptist convention, board, publishing house, seminary, college, elected official, committee or any other body can lay down any rules for the individual Baptist congregation or for the individual Christians," he said.

"If someone who claims to be a member of a Baptist congregation denies the divine inspiration of the Bible, or rejects certain parts of the Bible or claims that certain parts are not relevant or perhaps are mythical, you can establish right then and there that that person is really not a Baptist but could better be described as a wolf in sheep's clothing," he declared.

Jarman closed with a prayer for each person attending the congress to spend more time in study of the Bible.

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Lay Involvement Stressed In Evangelism Congress

By Jim Newton

RIO De JANEIRO, Brazil (BP)--Baptist laymen from 26 countries were urged during the Pan American Baptist Laymen's Congress to quit leaving evangelism up to ministers and to get involved personally in proclaiming the gospel.

The 646 laymen from North, Central and South America who attended the congress repeatedly heard pleas, from the opening speeches to the closing prayer, to put evangelism first.

Evangelism was virtually the only issue discussed during the five-day meeting here.

The evening services were devoted to evangelistic services in the 30,000-seat Maracanzinho Stadium which attracted crowds ranging from 8,000 to an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 on the closing night.

There were 143 decisions reported during the week--104 on the last night--and on one night, a show of hands indicated that about 90 per cent of the people were already Christians.

But the whole tone of the services, like the theme of the conference, was evangelistic, aimed at involving laymen in evangelism.

It was the first hemispheric-wide laymen's evangelism congress for Baptist men ever held, but it won't be the last.

On the final day, the laymen voted to set up an organization called the Pan American Union of Baptist Men, for laymen in the Western Hemisphere, and to meet again in 1972 and every five years thereafter.

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Owen Cooper, president of the Mississippi Chemical Corp., in Yazoo City, Miss., who chaired the Congress as head of the Crusade of Americas lay involvement committee which sponsored the meeting, was elected president of the newly-created organization.

Cooper brought the matter of lay involvement in evangelism to the forefront in one of the opening addresses to the congress.

Citing the decline in influence of Christianity in the world today, Cooper said that one of the major reasons is because laymen are not accepting their full responsibility in the proclamation of the gospel.

"We leave it to the preachers and missionaries and in some cases to the women," Cooper declared. "In our country we have too many preachers waiting on tables and too many laymen doing nothing."

Cooper observed that in the New Testament there is practically no distinction made between the laity and the clergy. "I believe in theological education, but just because a man doesn't have a theological education doesn't seal his lips," he added.

A layman from Argentina, N. Aldo Brado echoed Cooper's statements, saying that the great majority of Christians believe that preaching and witnessing are the jobs of pastors, not laymen. "But we as laymen have the same responsibility to transmit the gospel," said Brado, business manager for the Argentine Baptist Publishing House.

There was little emphasis throughout the conference on social, moral, and political problems facing the world.

One of the speakers, Maxey Jarman of Nashville, Tenn., said that "bringing individuals to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ is infinitely more important than our obligation to be concerned with the problems of this evil world in trying to relieve suffering, trying to get justice, and trying to keep peace."

Jarman, chairman of the board for Genesco, Inc., which manufactures Jarman shoes and other products, said that witnessing is so much more important than social action that "it is like the difference between love and hate."

Wayne Dehoney of Louisville, Ky., told the conference that the three great problems of the world today are peace, poverty and prejudice, and that these problems can never be solved by changing society unless there is an accompanying change in the nature of man.

Dehoney said that Communism will never solve the world's problems because it does not change the nature of man, but only the structure of society.

Earlier, however, a dentist from Costa Rica, Ricardo Villalobos, told about his efforts in evangelism by trying to meet social needs of the people through working in medical and dental caravans into the interior of Costa Rica.

Villalobos told the laymen he was not a Christian when he went on the first caravan, but when he saw the love of the Christian doctors and dentists in action helping the needy, and heard of their testimony for Christ, he became a Christian.

But basically, the meeting was harmonious in spirit. There was no debate and little discussion during the sessions.

In an interview, Cooper said that the whole spirit of the meeting was tremendous and was one of the key results of the congress.

Another major result, Cooper observed, was that the Christian laymen from different countries came to know one another and felt that they could accomplish more by working together than alone. This is what led to the organization, he said.

The meeting provided either an awakening or a re-awakening among laymen that men from all nations are interested in evangelism, and a resolve on the part of individuals to intensify their personal witnessing efforts, he added.

Cooper said he was a little disappointed with the attendance from the United States, a total of 147, but he felt that the ones who came got a lot out of it.

One laymen from North Carolina remarked that the mission tour prior to the congress had made a tremendous impact, saying he was touched by the tremendous needs. "We saw the poor grovelling for food in garbage cans and in the streets," he said, asking: "What are we going to do about it?" In reply, he said the congress participants must spark an interest for missions among other laymen and quit leaving it up to the pastors and missionaries.

Cooper said that another layman from the United States told him he had travelled 4,000 miles to pray for the first time with a Negro, and now he was ready to return to the states and work for improved race relations.

About 25 Negroes travelled to Rio on a chartered plane with a total of nearly 50 Baptists from Mississippi. The congress was completely interracial and integrated.

One of the highlights of the Congress was the music by a 20-voice Negro choir from Mississippi Valley State College in Itta Bena, Miss., and by Negro soloist Robert Bradley of the National Baptist Convention, U. S. A., Inc., in Nashville, Tenn.

The Negro choir and soloist seemed to have special appeal to the Brazilian people, who have pride in the lack of racial discrimination in Brazil.

Music for the Congress was perhaps one of the most inspirational aspects, with featured sacred concerts by the youth choir from the First Baptist Church of Minden, La., Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board Music Consultant Claude Rhea and businessman Russell Newport of Springfield, Mo.

A pageant dramatizing the Crusade of the Americas hymn also drew hearty approval from the 15,000 Brazilians attending the final night session. Applause greeted the pageant about a dozen times. Several were stunned, however, when a box full of tinfoil, which was to symbolize "showers of blessings" as it glittered to the ground, fell on the head of a young girl. She was not injured badly and the pageant continued.

Several of the conference participants said in interviews that the fellowship with Christians of other nationalities and races was the most important single factor of the meeting.

Several others said that the attempt to start marshalling the talents of laymen throughout the hemisphere for the cause of Christ was the major result.

The Congress had its weaknesses as well as its strengths. Several North Americans seemed frustrated because the meeting was always late in starting and ending, sometimes as much as an hour off schedule. But the Latin Americans seemed unruffled by this.

The language barrier was at times a problem. Speeches had to be translated into either English, Spanish or Portuguese, causing most addresses to be twice as long as normal.

At times the meeting seemed slightly disorganized. As one conference delegate put it, "It is loose as a goose." Yet the arrangements seemed well organized, despite hazards of pre-Congress communications from North to South America.

In spite of its shortcomings, the Congress was an attempt, the first one, to involve Baptist laymen on a hemispheric-wide basis in the proclamation of the gospel.

One Baptist official called it a miracle of God. "I see God working in a mysterious way as all these factors--the 1965 Brazilian crusade, the Crusade of Americas, and this laymen's congress--come together in a mighty stream that may turn the tide for Christ," said Henry Earl Peacock, general Coordinator for the Crusade of Americas.

"How else could you explain why laymen from Ecuador would ride for six days on a bus across the mountains to attend the Congress?" Peacock asked.

Many agreed with Herschel H. Hobbs, pastor in Oklahoma City, who said in the closing address: "Now we are about to depart and go our separate ways, but we shall still be one in heart, and we expect to meet again."

Hobbs was one of numerous Southern Baptists on the program. Other major SBC speakers included Baker James Cauthen, executive secretary of the SBC Foreign Mission Board, who delivered a major evangelistic message at the stadium; George Euting of the SBC Brotherhood Commission; Roy Lyon, missionary to Venezuela; Claude Townsend, layman from Jackson, Miss.; Cooper, Peacock, Dehoney and Jarman.

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Father of SBC
Official Dies

7/23/68

JOHNSTON CITY, Ill. (BP)--William Williams, father of John Williams, Financial Planning Secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, died here Tuesday, July 23, after an extended illness.

Funeral services were to be held Thursday, July 25, at Johnston City.

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Five Texas Negroes
Get Scholarships

DALLAS, Tex. (BP)--Three seminarians and two collegians are the first Negroes to be named recipients of National Baptist Scholarships since the program was established nearly three years ago by the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Scholarship winners are Mary Violet Burns, Houston; Harvey L. Hollman, Fort Worth; and Don Arthur Washington, Fort Worth, all Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary students; and Jo Ann Pickens and Loretta Jo Shaw, both of Corpus Christi, University of Corpus Christi students.

All scholarship grants are for one year, and may be renewed each year until graduation. They are for \$500 per year.

The Texas National Baptist Scholarship Program is for outstanding Negro college and professional students and was established by the Woman's Missionary Union of Texas. Funds are provided through the annual Mary Hill Davis Offering for state missions. It is administered through the direct missions department of the State Missions Commission.

The purpose of the scholarship fund is to assist worthy and capable young Negroes in their efforts to obtain a Christian education. Recipients are required to attend one of nine Texas Baptist schools or Southwestern Seminary.

Other prerequisites include giving evidence of being a genuine Christian, being a member of a Baptist church, having pastor and teacher recommendations, maintaining a "B" average in high school, and possessing a vital interest in the advance of God's kingdom.

Miss Burns, 21, was a 1967 summer missionary to Jamaica and served as a member of the BSU Executive Council at North Texas State University, Denton.

Hollman, 26, attended Dallas' Bishop College where he was listed in "Who's Who Among College and University Students." The third seminarian, Washington, 22, also attended Bishop College where he participated in basketball, track, and football.

Miss Pickens, youngest of the recipients at 17, attended Miller High School in Corpus Christi. Miss Shaw, 18, graduated from Foy H. Moody High School in Corpus Christi.

Recommendations are presently being received for additional scholarships to be presented some time in August.

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Stewardship Staff
Member Resigns

7/23/68

NASHVILLE (BP)--W. E. Grindstaff, Director of Cooperative Program Promotion with the SBC Stewardship Commission since its beginning in 1961, has resigned, effective July 18, it was announced here by Merrill D. Moore, Executive Secretary of the Stewardship Commission.

Grindstaff came from the position of Assistant Executive Secretary of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma to become Director of Cooperative Program Promotion with the SBC Executive Committee, Oct. 15, 1960. When stewardship promotion was transferred from the Executive Committee to the new SBC Stewardship Commission, he was named to the Commission's staff.

Grindstaff served as pastor of several Oklahoma churches and was a chaplain in the United States Army. At one time, he was director of evangelism for Colorado Baptists. He is the author of several books in the area of stewardship and evangelism.

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