

# (BP)---FEATURES

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Public Opinion Can Change  
Television, NAB Member Says

by Robert O'Brien HISTORICAL COMMISSION, SBC

DALLAS (BP)--A local television executive here who serves on the nine-man National Association of Broadcaster's board, says that properly channeled public opinion has the power to halt what he believes is a "disturbing trend" in television programming.

"I'm not trying to cast networks in the role of the heavies," says Mike Shapiro, general manager of WTAA-TV here, "but much of the programming which comes down the network cable violates, in my opinion, the National Association of Broadcaster's code, and is not suitable for prime time hours when children are watching."

Shapiro, who serves on the board that sets and interprets the NAB code, has some strong ideas about moral programming and what can be done to achieve it.

"The American viewing public is the best judge of what it will and will not see," Shapiro says. "Individuals and organizations which do not approve of certain programming--whether it be movies, variety show sequences, commercials or news--should let networks, local stations, broadcasters and advertisers know about it."

Shapiro points to the massive response of the public to Vice President Agnew's recent blast against news commentators as an example of how the public can express itself.

"In that case," Shapiro says, "the point was made clearly that the general American public, if asked, will express themselves on the type of programming it approves or disapproves. But people shouldn't wait to be asked if they have an honest objection to programming," he adds.

The outspoken television executive goes a step further. He believes it is up to the local station to take an interest in everything it broadcasts and to seek the opinions of viewers.

"If broadcasters do not keep basic moral values in mind," he says, "someone else will--probably eventually the federal government. No one wants that."

Shapiro, who attends a Reform Jewish Synagogue in Dallas, says his convictions have grown from "basic moral religious beliefs I've been taught all my life. Those convictions have been put to the test by the new trends in network programming," he says.

"I don't believe old moral values, which built the stability of this country should be replaced by so-called new moral values," he says. "I don't buy the idea that TV programming has to change with every fad."

With these moral values in mind, Shapiro and his station manager, J.C. Hauser, an Episcopalian, and his program manager, George Milner, a Southern Baptist, work closely together in determining program content.

Shapiro is one of only a handful of TV general managers in the United States to sponsor a letters-to-the-editors type public opinion program on his station. His "let's speak to the Manager" show was the first of its kind in the country and so far has only a few imitators.

"I could have predicted the response to Agnew's statements," he says, "Because during the nine years my show has been on the air a majority of the viewers have expressed the same sentiments."

Because of his own conviction about a local station's moral responsibility and knowledge gained from overall audience response to his TV show, Shapiro's station has run into controversy more than once by refusing a network program which it believed was not suitable for family viewing time.

Initial reaction overwhelmingly condemned his recent decision to cancel an ABC prime-time movie. Since then, however, petitions and letters sent by local Baptists and a flood of other favorable response has supported WFAA's decision to protect children from objectionable programming.

"Broadcasters come up with at least two defenses for allowing objectionable programming," Shapiro says.

"One defense is that the NAB code is too restrictive and the other is that the show in question has a good audience rating so it must be right.

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"My answer," he continues, "is that if the code is too restrictive we should change it but enforce it until changes occur. Also, a good audience rating doesn't mean that a show is moral. Broadcasters must be responsible.

"A station can't cancel everything objectionable," Shapiro says, "because the network would find another outlet in the market.

"I have been pleased by local response favoring moral programming, but such response will not be effective unless it is also directed at the networks and advertisers," Shapiro adds.

"Isolated letters will not get the job done," he says. "To be effective, individuals should encourage churches, synagogues and other organizations to respond instantaneously and in a positive manner to objectionable programming. Then and only then will the networks and advertisers be impressed enough to take the protest seriously."



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Baptist VIEWpoll  
 Martin B. Bradley, Director

Pastors, Sunday School Teachers  
 Differ On "Rebaptism" Question

by Kenneth Hayes

NASHVILLE (BP)--Slightly over one-fourth of Southern Baptist Sunday School teachers surveyed in the latest Baptist VIEWpoll feel that "any person who has been immersed by any church" should be admitted into membership of a Southern Baptist church without being "rebaptized," compared to about one-fifth of Southern Baptist pastors with the same view.

A representative cross section of Southern Baptist pastors and Sunday School teachers were asked this question in the survey: "Who should be admitted into the membership of a Southern Baptist church without being 'rebaptized'?"

Any person transferring from any, or almost any, Baptist church was the judgment of 52.6 per cent of the pastors and 31.6 per cent of the Sunday School teachers.

"Only persons transferring from a Southern Baptist church" was the alternative chosen by 31.1 per cent of the Sunday School teachers and 22.4 per cent of the pastors,

The third alternative, "Any person who has been immersed by any church," was selected by 27.9 per cent of the Sunday School teachers and 19.7 per cent of the pastors.

A fourth alternative, "Any person 'baptized' in any manner by any church," was indicated by 7.4 per cent of the teachers and 2.0 per cent of the pastors. The remaining 3.3 per cent of the pastors and 2.0 per cent of the teachers chose not to respond to the question.

The same question was asked of messengers to the 1969 Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans with one difference in the alternatives. The phrase "or almost any" was not placed in the alternative "Any person transferring from any Baptist church."

The largest portion of the messengers to the Convention (36.4 per cent) chose the alternative "Any person who has been immersed by any church." The second largest portion of the messengers (28 per cent) chose the alternative "Any person transferring from any Baptist church;" and "Only persons transferring from a Southern Baptist church" was a very close third (27.2 per cent) choice.

The survey of messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention is not considered to be representative of Southern Baptists, as the VIEWpoll is for pastors and teachers. The poll of convention messengers indicated a less traditional position on the question than did the VIEWpoll panel.

The current VIEWpoll findings are based on 87 per cent response from panel members.

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Graham To Speak At SBC  
 Planning, Promotion Meet

11/24/69

NASHVILLE (BP)--Evangelist Billy Graham will speak at a Cooperative Program luncheon during the Southern Baptist Planning and Promotion Conference here, Dec. 8, the Southern Baptist Stewardship Commission has announced.

About 800 top Baptist leaders from throughout the nation have been invited to attend the annual meeting, Dec. 8-12, when Southern Baptist plans for the coming years will be outlined in detail.

Graham will speak at the luncheon beginning at 12:30 at the Sheraton Motor Inn, Attendance will be by the invitation.

The luncheon sponsored by the Stewardship Commission will be one of three general sessions for the 800 Baptist leaders during the week. All three general sessions will be on Monday, Dec. 8.

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Most of the time will be devoted to future planning, with reports on Southern Baptist plans for 1973 to 1979. Other major addresses will be presented by Edward B. Lindaman, an executive for North American Rockwell Corp., who has worked on the Appollo projects, and by Olin T. Binkley, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C.

Following the general sessions on Monday, the 800 leaders will split into about 14 different groups for additional planning conferences.

Sessions are scheduled for state Baptist executive secretaries and SBC agency heads, and state and national workers in the areas of Sunday School, church training, church music, Brotherhood, student work, Woman's Missionary Union, evangelism, stewardship, missions, seminary extension and church architecture.

Other meetings are planned for associational superintendents of missions and associational directors of religious education. Most adjourn by noon Friday, Dec. 12.

Stewardship, with the emphasis on the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget, will be the major concern discussed during the luncheon when Graham will speak.

James V. Lackey of the SBC Stewardship Commission said that in addition to Graham, there would be telephone interviews between Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board Secretary Baker James Cauthen and a SBC foreign missionary, and between Home Mission Board Secretary Arthur Rutledge and a home missionary.

Lackey added that plans also call for live entertainment from country and western music stars who play for the radio program, "Country Junction" produced by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission.

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POWERLINE Becomes Baptists'  
Most Poplar Radio Program

11/24/69

FORT WORTH (BP)--POWERLINE, an image-jolting new radio program for teens and young adults, has become the most popular and hottest program being produced by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission here.

Less than a year in production, the half-hour show is now being broadcast weekly by some 300 stations across the nation, and from transmitters in Puerto Rico, Singapore, and the Virgin Islands.

Stations carrying the show include some of the largest and most popular stations in the nation, including for example: WLS in Chicago, WRKO in Boston, KFRC in San Francisco, KIRL in St. Louis, and WFIL, Philadelphia.

The program is designed to bridge the generation gap that tends to separate Christianity from the mind of the contemporary teenager.

It makes use of the pop hit tunes of the current record charts, interspersing them with brief, down-to-earth Christian comment on contemporary life as experienced by youth in a chaotic, secularized society.

The hymn-and-stained glass image of Christianity are out, said a commission spokesman. There's no recanting of familiar Bible stories or lengthy quoting of scripture on the program.

Instead, song lyrics and titles are used throughout each program as "springboards" for comment linking the claims and promises of God to the problems of today's young people.

Urged to write in about their problems, hundreds of teen listeners have responded with cards and letters seeking advice and spiritual help, commission officials said.

A few questions are answered on the program by a panel of youth counselors. Most, however, are handled through personal letters by qualified staff members.

The commission reported that scores of youngsters have signed commitments to Christ as a result of this mail follow-up effort, and the number is growing in proportion with the increase of use of by program by stations throughout the nation.

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