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National Council Votes
Study of Broader Group

DETROIT (BP)--The National Council of Churches of Christ General Assembly voted here to ask its General Board to study a proposed plan to broaden its structure to include Southern Baptists, Roman Catholics, Penecostals, and other religious groups not now involved in the council.

The proposal was made in a major speech by R. H. Edwin Espy, general secretary of the National Council and an American Baptist layman.

If ultimately the National Council approves the restructure, it would radically change the nature of the National Council. Espy said that implementation might take three to five years.

In a telephone interview with Baptist Press following the Council's triennial General Assembly, Espy said that he envisioned emphasis of the new proposed council to be on "fellowship, communication and dialogue" rather than creation of a super-church ecumenical organization.

"My real concern is for communication and dialogue and fellowship and understanding and collaboration," Espy said in the interview. "As such, it would become more natural for a religious group not now in the NCC to consider membership."

He added that his hope is that a broader more inclusive body would make it easier for non-council members to become involved in the ecumenical movement, but said it was not a ploy to increase membership in the council.

On the final day of the General Assembly meeting, the delegates adopted a resolution authorizing its General Board to explore the possibility of the Espy proposal for a broader, more inclusive fellowship.

The Council also for the first time elected a former Southern Baptist Convention President as one of its vice presidents at large.

Brooks Hays, former Arkansas congressman and currently director of the Center for Ecumenical Studies at Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, N.C., was named one of 20 vice presidents at large. Hays was president of the SBC from 1958-60.

Espy said in an interview he had not discussed his plan to restructure the Council with Hays or any other Southern Baptist leader; nor had he or any other council official approached any leader of non-council denominations concerning the proposal officially.

"We'll have to approach that very carefully," Espy said, "and only after the General Board gives its official authorization. We don't want to press this in any official way at this time."

Espy said that he invisioned a "general ecumenical council" that would be open to "churches, their agencies, and para-ecclesiastical groups of various sorts."

He explained that the new body would still be comprised of the "top ecclesiastical bodies" of the various denominations, but would also consist of "autonomous units" committed to such specific tasks as education programs, social action, theological matters, worship and litery and communication.

Espy pointed out that the proposed new council would have no authority to enforce priorities except in broad policy terms, and that the annual meeting of the board would only make those decisions which reflected agreement of the constituents.

There presently are 33 Protestant and Orthodox church groups, with a total membership of 38.6 million. Catholics, Southern Baptists, and Missouri Synod Lutherans are the largest denominations not now affiliated with the present Council.

Espy told the General Assembly he hoped that the proposed new "general ecumncial council" would bring in all Christian groups not now in the National Council of Churches.

Already, there have been some unofficial talks with Roman Catholics concerning possible Catholic participation in Council affairs.

Religious News Service reported that the Espy plan plainly set forth the concern of the Council that wider ecumenical contact be established with conservative Protestants who have sometimes found the National Council too liberal.

Espy said there would be room for organizations such as the American Bible Society, the YMCA and YWCA, Protestant and Catholic college councils, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and other such "para-ecclesiastical groups."

In his speech, Espy called his plan a "radical conciliar theory," and referred to it as a 'United Nations umbrella' for a wide diversity of mission now related to fragmented boards and agencies."

He outlined the plan at the end of a lengthy address concerning changes sweeping both Christianity and society.

In the next decade, he told the 800 delegates, the National Council of Churches should "reorganize its life and labor...to offer all the Christian churches of this country a common home for the sharing of reflection and concerns, and (offer) the vital forces among the people of Christ the specialized channels they need to carry forward together their diverse ministries to humanity."

There was not immediate response from Southern Baptist Convention leaders, since no official or informal contact had been made with them by National Council leaders concerning the proposal.

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State, Baptist College
Form Cooperative Venture

12/12/69

BELTON, Tex. (BP)--A four-year Texas Baptist school and a state-supported junior college have entered into a cooperative educational venture which in years to come will allow extensive interchange of equipment, course offerings and faculty.

Under the agreement, Mary Hardin-Baylor College here offer upper level courses necessary for baccalaureate programs, with use of facilities and staff of the Central Texas (Junior) College in Killeen, Tex., in such areas as computer sciences, radio and television broadcasting, distributive education and technical teacher training programs.

Mary Hardin-Baylor President William Tanner and Central Texas President Luis M. Morton Jr., said the relationship will grow gradually, one program at a time.

By the fall of 1970, they anticipate that Mary Hardin-Baylor will begin offering an improved bachelor of science degree in business, using Central Texas College's sophisticated computer facilities.

"In this age of computers," Tanner said, "a business curriculum without access to computer science facilities is limited. Under the new program we will provide better training for students who either plan to enter business or teach it."

Other facilities soon to be available at the Killeen school, 14 miles away from the Mary Hardin-Baylor campus, include a tower which will be taller than the Empire State Building and capable of receiving educational television programs from anywhere in the nation and satellite communications.

With inexpensive equipment, Mary Hardin-Baylor will be able to monitor these transmissions or draw them from the computer's memory banks at a later date.

A television production studio and a performing arts center are among other facilities which will be available at Central Texas College.

The two schools are exploring many possibilities of offering cooperative specialized degree programs in years to come. One possibility envisioned by Tanner and Morton is development of curriculum to train teachers to instruct high school students in computer sciences. "I don't know of a school in Texas and not many outside Texas with this program," Tanner said.

Although all the terms of the relationship have not been worked out, Tanner said he foresees exchange of faculty to teach in certain areas, in addition to cooperative use of equipment and inter-campus enrollment by students in a wide range of courses.

Tanner said such cooperative ventures will greatly enhance the future of Christian higher education.

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"Cooperative endeavors such as this open the door to use of equipment that small Baptist colleges can't afford," he pointed out, "enriching our educational program without compromising our Christian values.

"Such relationships," Tanner continued, "enhance student recruitment and will attract private foundations which will be more willing to fund cooperative efforts than small, independent schools.

"One of the most significant aspects is that this may be the way for both public and private institutions to strengthen each other and build strong community support," he said. "We will become better known to non-Baptists and Baptists will be made aware of areas of cooperation."

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Foundation Reports Trust
Corpus Reaches \$11 Million

12/12/69

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Southern Baptist Foundation meeting in annual session here reported that the total trust corpus held and managed by the service agency exceeded the \$11 million mark during 1969.

The trust corpus totalled \$11,020,708 at the end of the 1969 fiscal year, an increase of \$814,172 over the total trust corpus at the end of the 1968 fiscal year.

Although the amount of increase was not a record, the Foundation reported a record amount of cash and securities received for investment, and a record rate of return for 1969.

During the year, the foundation received \$1.8 million for investment, and earned an average rate of return for the general fund of 5.99 per cent, both record figures.

Kendall Berry, executive secretary-treasurer of the foundation, told the directors that the trust corpus would have increased much more had it not been for trends in the stock market, and for deterioration of bond securities and common stock of a more volatile nature. He added that most of this "deterioration" was simply a paper loss.

"The year 1969 has been hectic for all foundations," Berry said in his report. "Tight money and high taxes due to war and greater demands on welfare projects have been the villains in market places.

"Expenses of war continue to sap resources that could be used to better advantage should an honorable peace come soon," he added. "Many pray that such a solution may be found so that all mankind may live to better serve God and one another.

"...Even though 1969 has been hectic and the unit values of stocks and bonds have taken precipitous plunges, it is felt that renewed support of the economy of America and the entire world will soon carry stock averages to historical new highs," Berry said in his annual report.

In major action, the foundation elected Stirton Oman, Nashville business executive, as its new president, succeeding Walton Smoth of Clarksville, Tenn., who rotates off the board in June. Oman had been president of the board for numerous years previously, but had to rotate off the board two years ago.

L. B. Stevens of Nashville was elected new vice president. New recording secretary elected was John O. Ellis of Nashville. Berry was re-elected secretary-treasurer and Mrs. Christine M. Bess was re-elected administrative assistant.

The foundation members paid tribute to Mrs. Bess for completing 20 years on the staff of the foundation, and presented her a check in appreciation for her work.

The foundation is a service agency of the Southern Baptist Convention, investing reserves, endowments and trusts for all Southern Baptist agencies, and administering trusts and endowments on behalf of individual donors who wish to support Southern Baptist causes.

In his report, Berry cited several large bequests and wills benefiting Baptist causes, including an estate of more than \$180,000 of the late Miss Emma Nell Smith of Cape Girardeau, Mo., and a bequest of more than \$39,000 from the estate of Lydia and J. E. Conner of El Reno, Okla.

"We at Southern Baptist Foundation are excited about the future," Berry told the directors. "During these times, economic clouds may test our ability, even our patience. But God knows we are striving to enrich his kingdom's work here on earth. We can only do our best...and leave the increase to God."

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Brantley To Retire in 1970
From Education Commission

NASHVILLE (BP)--Rabun L. Brantley, executive secretary-treasurer of the Southern Baptist Education Commission here for the past 10 years, has announced plans to retire effective Sept. 1, 1970, his 11th anniversary as the secretary.

As the top executive for the SBC Education Commission, Brantley has coordinated services provided for 73 Baptist colleges, universities, seminaries, academies, and Bible schools throughout the nation. The commission has no operating control over any of them, however,

The chairman of the elected 17-member commission, Ben C. Fisher of Raleigh, N.C., said that Brantley would be remembered particularly for "his significant contribution in leading the Baptist Education Study Task (BEST) the most thorough study ever undertaken of Southern Baptist colleges and universities."

"Dr. Brantley has given a balanced leadership through one of the most difficult periods in Southern Baptist higher education history," said Fisher, director of the Division of Christian Higher Education for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. Fisher also commended Brantley's "genuine dedication to Southern Baptist higher education."

Special recognition will be given the retiring SBC education leader at the Southern Baptist Convention in Denver, and at the meeting of the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools meeting at Georgetown, Ky., next June, Fisher said.

A native of Georgia, Brantley was vice president of Mercer University, Macon, Ga., for three years before joining the SBC Education Commission as executive secretary.

He is a graduate of Mercer University where he received bachelor and master of arts degrees. Peabody College, Nashville, granted him the doctor of philosophy degree and William Carey College awarded him a doctor of laws degree.

Brantley has been a college professor, dean, registrar, business manager, public relations director, department chairman, and college president for Baptist institutions.

He has for 11 years president of Virginia Intermont College (Baptist) in Bristol, Va., and has taught at Tift College, Forsyth, Ga.; Mary Hardin-Baylor College, Belton, Tex., (both Baptists); and at Georgia State College, Atlanta.

Both educator and editor, Brantley was editor of the Southern Automotive Journal, a trade magazine published in Atlanta, for several years; and has edited several publications for the SBC Education Commission, including The Educator. He taught journalism and English during his 21 years on the faculties of three colleges.

He once said he never planned to teach, "I just taught." His wide background of experience as professor, dean and president has given him an understanding of the viewpoints of the men with whom he works closely as executive secretary of the Education Commission.

Fisher said that a committee of the Education Commission has been appointed to name a successor, but no decision has been reached.