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April 26, 1972

Radio-TV, Brotherhood Agencies
Move Toward Four Day Work Week

By Jim Newton

FORT WORTH and MEMPHIS (BP)--Two Southern Baptist Convention agencies have moved toward operating on a four-day work week as part of a recent national trend.

The Southern Baptist Radio-Television Commission with offices in Fort Worth tried the four-day work week in January. The staff liked it so much, they voted in February to make the change permanent.

In April, the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission in Memphis, with approval of their executive committee, decided to try the four-day work week for the summer months of June, July and August.

Whether other agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention, and state convention offices, will follow the example is open to speculation. It is almost certain some executive secretaries will be watching with interest the experiment of the Brotherhood and Radio-TV Commissions.

Paul M. Stevens of Fort Worth, executive secretary of the Radio-TV Commission, is enthusiastic about the new work schedule, saying it has actually increased productivity of the staff members.

And Glendon McCullough, executive secretary of the SBC Brotherhood Commission, is seeing some definite advantages to the trial run this summer. "If we like it, we will ask our board to continue it on a permanent basis," McCullough said.

According to a report in one national newsmagazine in mid-April, a trend toward a four-day work week has now become discernible, with about 2,000 companies now following that procedure.

Actually, the Radio-TV and Brotherhood Commissions are not the first SBC agencies to operate on a four-day work week. The seminaries have been doing it for years.

"We're actually following the example of the seminaries," explained Stevens in an interview in Fort Worth. The seminaries, however, close their offices on Monday to allow their students to preach in area churches on Sunday, and travel back to the campus on Monday. Classes are Tuesday through Friday.

The Radio-TV Commission is closed on Friday, with a skeleton crew at the commission's Communications Center at 6350 West Freeway in Fort Worth to answer the telephone, operate the tape duplicating equipment, clean the offices, and do other jobs which are essential on a continuing basis.

At the Radio-TV Commission, staff members now work slightly more hours in four days than they previously worked in five days--37 hours compared to 36-1/4 hours.

Stevens said the key to productivity, however, lies in the longer day. "Psychologically our workers used to start winding up their day following the afternoon coffee break at 3:10," Stevens said. "Now that's not possible. After coffee, they go back up to their offices and really get to work."

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* "The Leisure Boom," U.S. News and World Report, April 17, p. 42.

Stevens said a spot check of the mail volume after moving to the four-day week disclosed that productivity had increased 17 per cent compared to the weekly volume during a similar five-day period under the old schedule.

An additional advantage is that the commission, which maintains numerous contacts with the radio-TV industry on the West Coast, now has an additional hour to do business with people in California. "This has meant a great deal to our marketing department," Stevens said.

The obvious benefit, he continued, is more leisure time on weekends for relaxation, improved family relations, and recreation.

The increase in leisure, however, brings with it a corresponding dilemma: how do you use this additional time?

"It depends on the character of the people involved," Stevens observed. A few have wanted to "moonlight" or take other jobs to make more money, but by action of the elected commission which approved the four-day week, no employee may accept a second job without permission, and then there must be a valid reason, Stevens said.

Some of the executives can't stay away from the office on Friday, including Stevens himself. One administrative assistant said he usually spends half the day Friday catching up on work he was unable to do during the week because of meetings, and the other half on the golf course.

What's been the reaction of the employees? "They've been overjoyed," Stevens responded. The staff tried the four-day work week for the month of January, and only one person voted against moving permanently to the schedule in February, Stevens said.

Workers at the Radio-TV Commission now labor from 7:45 to 5:30 daily, Monday through Thursday.

The proposed schedule for the SBC Brotherhood Commission in Memphis calls for working hours from 7:30 to 5:30, or 37-1/2 hours per week.

Unlike the Radio-TV Commission, which has only a skeleton crew on duty Friday, the Brotherhood Commission will be open five days a week. "Some of our employees will work Monday through Thursday while the others will work Tuesday through Friday," McCullough explained.

"The longer work day will permit us to handle telephone requests from our state Brotherhood departments on the East Coast a half hour earlier in the day, and those from state offices on the West Coast an hour later in the afternoon," McCullough said.

The Brotherhood executive said another major advantage was the additional time for staff members to be with their families. "During a period when the pace of society seems to fragment home life, we feel the four-day work week will give families of our employees more time together, and hopefully make them stronger," he said.

Both McCullough and Stevens said they had recommended the four-day week to their commissions after extensive surveys and study of other businesses that have tried it.

McCullough cited a study by the American Management Association of 143 companies on a four-day week, saying production increased in 62 per cent of the companies, and declined in only three per cent.

"Efficiency climbed in 66 per cent of the firms, and profits increased in 51 per cent of them," McCullough added. "The major problem was in scheduling, not employee fatigue as many people had thought."

Apparently the Radio-TV Commission and Brotherhood Commission are the first SBC agencies to make moves toward a four-day week, outside of the seminaries, in the current national trend in that direction. Only time will tell if they are the only ones who will try the new experiment, and join the leisure explosion.

Foundation Executives Hear
Report on Canadian Baptists

VICTORIA, British Columbia (BP)--Meeting in western Canada here, the Association of Baptist Foundation Executives elected a South Carolina executive as the organization's president and heard a report on the history and development of Baptist churches in the area.

Gilbert Skaar, a former pastor here who is now superintendent of missions for Southern Baptists in western Washington, gave the report on the history and development of 26 churches and church-type missions in three western Canadian provinces. The 26 churches are affiliated with the Northwest Baptist Convention in Oregon-Washington.

The executive secretary of the Northwest Convention, Dan C. Stringer Jr., told the foundation executives of present needs in the entire Northwest, including western Canada. He traces present progress and outlined plans for the immediate future.

Skaar said Baptist work in western Canada had been heavily supported by the Fleming Trust Fund of the Baptist Foundation of Texas. Mrs. William R. Fleming of Fort Worth was present at the meeting.

Also present was Evans Griffith, a Canadian layman from Calgary, Alberta, who is interested in leading the development of a Canadian financial organization similar to a foundation to give financial assistance to churches in western Canada.

Elected as president of the Association of Baptist Foundation Executives was Jim M. Cherry, executive secretary of the Baptist Foundation of South Carolina.

Other officers include as vice president, Harry G. Bonner, of the Northwest Baptist Foundation; and secretary-treasurer, Gordon L. Bowers of the Baptist Foundation of Texas.

The three-day program here also included lectures and group discussions on ways of handling trust funds. Richard Cunningham, professor at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., addressed the group on the stewardship of accumulated possessions.

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Rigdon Elected President
Of SBC Extension Group

4/26/72

BIRMINGHAM (BP)--Raymond M. Rigdon of Nashville was elected here president of the Southern Baptist Extension Education Association during their 17th annual session at Samford University.

Rigdon is director of the Seminary Extension Department of the Southern Baptist Convention theological seminaries, with offices in Nashville.

The association is the fraternal organization of leaders of extension programs sponsored by Baptist colleges and the six SBC seminaries.

Other new officers of the association are Joe Parham of Mercer University, Macon, Ga., vice president; Linwood T. Horne of the University of Richmond, secretary-treasurer; Lee Gallman of Samford, historian; and J. Ralph Hardee of the SBC Seminary Extension Department, reporter.

Next year the association will meet in Richmond.

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APR 28 1972

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