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Union Trustees Approve Move to Memphis Area

JACKSON, Tenn. (BP)--Trustees of Union University here voted 23-17 in a special called meeting, over objections from students and the local community, to move the Southern Baptist school to the Memphis area.

The decision, based on a \$6 million offer from two prominent Southern Baptist families in Memphis, is subject to final approval by the Tennessee Baptist Convention which meets in Memphis in November.

Both a resolution from the Student Government Association and a straw poll of the student body opposed the move. With 56 per cent of the 1,100-member student body voting in the poll, 80 per cent of that number opposed the move.

The proposed move also has raised community opposition. "The fight is not over," said David Q. Byrd, pastor of West Jackson Baptist Church and a member of the board who had opposed the move.

"We're not angry," said Byrd, who has been closely involved over the years with the study of a possible relocation of Union University, "but we feel the convention is the last voice, and we have an obligation to make our feelings known and give the messengers at the convention the facts and information we have."

Dr. and Mrs. William B. Cockcroft pledged \$5 million of the amount and Mr. and Mrs. Wallace E. Johnson, \$1 million. Dr. Cockcroft, a dentist, and Mrs. Johnson are members of the board of the 149-year-old school.

Dr. Cockcroft, chairman of the board of United Inns, Inc., the largest franchise holder of Holiday Inns in the nation, stipulated his portion of the gift would be paid over five years if the school complied with several requirements.

They included requirements that the school be "forever dedicated to teaching of the Bible and Christianity as believed and customarily taught by conservative Southern Baptists," be committed to "excellence in academic standards," endeavor to provide graduate courses, accept "no direct funds from the U.S. government for operation or expansion of the school" and change its name to one acceptable to Dr. Cockcroft and "expressive of the Christian concept."

The stipulations also require that "until the year 2000" both the school's board of trustees and board's executive committee, now comprised of 55 per cent laymen, consist of two-thirds laymen and that two Southern Baptist members of Cockcroft Charitable Trusts be added to the board--one to serve on the board's executive committee.

Originally Dr. Cockcroft said he could withhold funds "if in my opinion" the school does not follow the requirements. At the called meeting he agreed to amend that to "if in the opinion of the Executive Board of the Tennessee Baptist Convention."

A university spokesman said Johnson generally agreed with the Cockcroft proposals but added that if the move is not approved he will not give the \$1 million but will give \$1.00 to the school for every \$7.00 it raises. He is vice president of the board of Holiday Inns, Inc., and chairman of the board of Wallace E. Johnson Enterprises which specializes in big real estate developments.

Union had been in a fund campaign to raise \$8 million to finance the move from its downtown Jackson location to a new site on Highway 45 by-pass in Jackson. Some \$4 million of the goal has been pledged.

Along with the pledges of \$6 million from the two Baptist laymen, Union would be offered a 177-acre tract of land in the Ellendale community of Shelby County in the Memphis area by Investors Mortgage Services Inc. for about \$250,000. The actual value of the land has been estimated at \$1.5 million.

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Home Mission Offering
Tops \$1.6 Million Goal

9/24/73

ATLANTA (BP)--The annual offering by Southern Baptists for home missions topped its 1973 goal of \$6.6 million in mid-September, the earliest in history.

The offering, known as the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, totals \$6,603,226, with additional funds expected through December.

The offering is 12 per cent above the amount received at this time last year.

Many states showed significant increases in giving to the offering, and for the first time one state--Texas--gave more than \$1 million.

Arthur B. Rutledge, executive secretary-treasurer of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, said, "This will give us great help in moving into some fields and projects we were not able to budget for."

All funds above \$6 million are earmarked for advance in church extension, television evangelism, Christian social ministries and special mission ministries.

"I believe victory in the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering came as a result of divine blessing on human efforts," said Alma Hunt, executive secretary of the Woman's Missionary Union, Southern Baptist auxiliary which sponsors the offering in consultation with the Home Mission Board and promotes it along with the SBC Brotherhood Commission, missions organization for men and boys.

"These efforts are gradually awakening churches to an awareness of our opportunities through home missions," Miss Hunt said. "I believe the success of the offering began in most churches with the study of the home missions graded series books.

"Concern was deepened through the prayer experiences during the Week of Prayer (for Home Missions). The result is the convincing evidence that God answered prayers and blessed the sincere efforts of thousands of Southern Baptists," Miss Hunt said.

The goal for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering has been set at \$7.2 million in 1974.

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