



News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

---FEATURES

produced by Baptist Press

460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor
James Lee Young, Feature Editor

March 18, 1974

Rising Costs Put Squeeze On Baptist State Papers

By James Lee Young
Feature Editor, Baptist Press

Rising costs are putting a financial squeeze on many of the 33 Southern Baptist state news magazines and papers, a survey by Baptist Press shows.

Editors state that the postal increases, enacted March 2, created an additional budgetary hardship. This with inflationary costs of operation, travel, paper, gasoline and energy shortages have caused most Baptist editors to look hard for means of cutting expenses and still continue production of their publication.

A postal spokesman in Washington, D.C. said the recent rate increase is "temporary." That is, the rates will hold until after hearings by the Postal Rate Commission are completed, he said. Then, he continued, it may be decided to keep the present rates or revise them downward or upward. No date has been set for a further increase in postal rates, he said, and no date has been given for completion of hearings on the rates.

Other postal spokesmen indicated further postal increases are likely but will be determined by postal service revenue, cost of living increases and inflation and will be subject to review by the Postal Rate Commission.

Inflation in all areas has already hit hard, according to John J. Hurt, editor of the Texas Baptist Standard, circulation around 375,000 weekly.

"Skyrocketing costs with limited opportunities to increase income will plague state Baptist papers in the months and years to come... Mailing costs are soaring... Newsprint prices are not far behind," and if costs of paper weren't enough of a problem, "It is in short supply."

Alvin C. Shackelford, editor of the Indiana Baptist, was optimistic about the future of Baptist state papers.

"Although the financial squeeze certainly will continue into the near future, I do not see any reason to be alarmed about the future of Baptist state papers," Shackelford said.

"Obviously, if energy shortages persist, people will have more time to read and will need more reading material. I feel this will force the Baptist papers to fill this need."

He added that the Baptist papers "will need to begin publishing far more instructional articles to assist church leaders and officers," since travel has been and may continue to be cut back.

Julian H. Pentecost, editor of the Religious Herald in Richmond, Va., was less optimistic: "The crisis posed for Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) state papers by 'postage inflation' is in reality a denominational crisis.

"No democracy, political or religious, can function responsibly without an informed constituency." Whatever affects the Baptist papers "will inevitably affect the whole of our denominational enterprise," Pentecost warned.

He cautioned that "escalating postage costs may cause state convention and SBC agencies to reevaluate their communication philosophy and priorities, and their promotion.

"Some of these funds could more wisely be channeled into state paper ministry because state papers consistently interpret and promote the 'whole' denominational cause..."

Pentecost continued, "One of Southern Baptists' greatest needs will always be a free, responsible press; there can be no substitute for it. But editorial freedom is only a figment of the imagination without economic freedom."

Pentecost expressed the concern of other editors too, when he said, "I hope Congress will soon recognize that non-profit organizations are service oriented... Congress would be acting in keeping with American history... to provide relief. Most of the weekly and monthly Baptist state papers mail under a second class permit, but all use other postal classes for other business."

He added, "This should not be interpreted as a plea for religious favoritism; I am referring to all non-profit organizations."

The Virginia Baptist editor noted that the second class rates now in effect, particularly per piece charges, are "extreme."

Editors have taken various money and supply-saving measures as needed to cut costs and still ensure publication.

Nineteen of 33 editors responding to the Baptist Press survey say they have been forced to cut back page sizes, pages per edition, and increase advertising and subscriptions, or at least consider these remedies.

But raising subscription prices can present a problem that might produce negative results. Joe T. Odle, editor of the Baptist Record in Jackson, Miss., said, "We hardly lost a subscription" when the paper's rates were increased in 1972. He cautioned, "We feel, however, that we would think a long time before further raises."

The Mississippi paper raised its advertising rates at the same time in '72. Between \$40,000-\$50,000 advertising is carried by the publication annually, Odle said.

The Mississippi editor said he believes more Baptist state papers will come to a less expensive newspaper format as several have done in going to a tabloid format, "but I believe it would be disastrous for us to substitute some type of convention-wide publication for the state convention papers," as some have suggested.

The battle to cut costs goes on, although as yet none of the Baptist papers has been forced to cease publication or even given serious consideration to such drastic action. The Biblical Recorder in Raleigh, N.C., and the Christian Index in Atlanta, have not replaced staff members when they left recently. Remaining personnel have doubled up on their duties.

Some papers, like the Hawaii Baptist, have cut "deadwood" out of circulation lists. Some have initiated or are investigating more economical means of production and administration. More telephoning and letter writing are replacing travel. Some are depending more than ever on Baptist Press to cover events across the SBC. Volunteers are being pressed into service to provide information on activities affecting the state conventions and local churches.

Other editors are seeking subsidies from their state convention, or at least increases in budget allocations for their papers.

Other SBC agencies asked to respond, such as the Woman's Missionary Union and the Brotherhood Commission, indicated that rising costs were taking a toll similar to that of the Baptist state papers. Possible subscription increases, postal rate increases, and paper stocks were among major concerns.

In Alaska, Troy Prince, editor of the Alaska Baptist Messenger, said they had to begin using a local printer rather than the presses of the Southern Baptist General Convention of California in Fresno. The Alaska paper has been reduced from 12 to 8 pages and has asked for subscription price increases.

Prince noted, "We are going to have to 'drive' very carefully."

Group Urges Appraisal of Baptist Retirement Plans

DALLAS (BP)--The annual Conference of Southern Baptist Business Officers here urged denominational organizations to review their retirement and pension plans for employees.

This would be done, the conference said, "with the goal of assuring every employee and staff member the opportunity to establish an adequate pension program with reasonable vesting and maximum portability."

"Vesting" refers to the employee's right to pension funds built up in his name. "Portability" refers to the right of the person to take the right to these pension funds with him when he changes pastorates or other positions within the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

The 125 conference participants also adopted a resolution calling for "Christian stewardship in the use of God-given resources."

The resolution took note that the "nation is now in the midst of an energy crisis" and that there are "limited supplies and even critical shortages of numerous natural resources."

It said, "All Southern Baptist churches, agencies, organizations, conventions and institutions [should] take the initiative wherever possible, including cooperation with government measures, for the conservation of energy and other natural resources."

This, the resolution continued, would be "an expression of our Christian view of the immorality of any waste of these resources."

The conference includes business officers of child care institutions, churches, educational institutions, homes for aging, hospitals, boards and agencies and state conventions within the SBC.

The group honored L. Taylor Daniel of Dallas, senior vice president for development at the SBC Annuity Board, who will retire from that position before the next annual meeting of the business officers.

Daniel, the resolution acknowledged, "was instrumental in the bounding of the conference in 1963 and has continued to provide unique leadership and wise counsel to the conference." Daniel coordinates arrangements for the conference sessions each year held in Dallas with the Annuity Board as host.

The conference named Daniel as an "honorary life member."

J. Milton Curtis, from Alabama Baptist Children's Home, Troy, was elected general chairman of the Conference of Southern Baptist Business Officers.

A related organization which meets simultaneously, the Southern Baptist Computer Users' Association elected Harvey H. Kennedy of the Annuity Board as its president.

Organized in 1972, the computer group aims "to maintain effective data processing services in keeping with the highest professional standards of quality and integrity."

-30-

Four Baptist Leaders
Plan Moscow Visit

3/18/74

WASHINGTON (BP)--A Baptist World Alliance (BWA) party of four U.S. denominational leaders will visit Baptists in the U.S.S.R. April 1-15.

Robert S. Denny, general secretary of BWA, said that the group will travel in the Soviet Union at the invitation of the All Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (AUCECB).

Participants will include James L. Sullivan of Nashville, president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board; Robert C. Campbell of Valley Forge, Pa., general secretary of American Baptist Churches in the USA; Warren R. Magnuson of Evanston, Ill., general secretary of the Baptist General Conference; and Jerry A. Moore of Washington, D. C.,

-more-

pastor of Washington's Nineteenth Street Baptist Church, which is affiliated with the National Baptist Convention in the USA, Inc.

Mrs. Campbell, Mrs. Magnuson and Mrs. Sullivan will accompany their husbands.

Denny said that the part members, before flying to Moscow, will worship with Swedish Baptists in Stockholm and visit with Swedish leaders who are planning for the 13th Baptist World Congress there in July 1975.

The itinerary in the U.S.S.R. is being arranged by Alexei Bichkov, general secretary, and other leaders of the AUCECB. The tour is planned to coincide with observance of the Easter season.

-30-

Holcomb Nominated for
Unexpired FCC Term

3/18/74

WASHINGTON (BP)--Luther Holcomb will be nominated by President Nixon to fill an unexpired term on the Federal Communications Commission.

Holcomb, son of T. L. Holcomb, who formerly headed the Baptist Sunday School Board, is former pastor of Lakewood Baptist Church, Dallas, and former executive director of the Greater Dallas Council of Churches.

Currently a member of First Baptist Church, Washington, Holcomb is vice chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. He was appointed to the commission by Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965 and is the only one of the original commission members currently serving.

Holcomb, a Democrat, has the backing of both Texas senators, Republican John Tower and Democrat Lloyd Bentsen, for the FCC post, which must be approved by the Senate. The Senate Commerce Committee, chaired by John O. Pastore, D-R.I., will hold a hearing. John Connally, a former Texas governor and former secretary of treasury under Nixon, is also backing Holcomb for the position.

If appointed, Holcomb would fill the unexpired term of H. Rex Lee, who resigned Dec. 28. Lee's term expires June 30, 1975.

-30-

Engineer or Missionary?
It's Hard to Determine

3/18/74

LA JUNTA, Colo. (BP)--Charles R. Rostron is a civil-consulting engineer, not a Southern Baptist missionary, or at least that's what he thought.

Nearly ten years ago Rostron and his wife went to Ibadan, Nigeria, where he was to teach civil technology on a team from Western Michigan University at Kalamazoo. At the time, he and his wife were both active in the Presbyterian Church.

When they arrived they discovered an English-speaking Baptist church and became involved in it. They taught Sunday School, sang in the choir and he was asked to be head usher.

Rostron found himself traveling throughout the bush country with the missionaries, visiting small churches and occasionally preaching. While in Nigeria, he sent to the Gideons International for some New Testaments which he gave to his students. Among the students was a Muslim man named Dapo Sarumi.

After two years of service, Rostron and his family returned to the United States, finally settling in La Junta, where they joined a Baptist church.

Years passed, and of the many letters received from the people the Rostrons left back in Africa, only two or three were from Sarumi.

They had not heard from Sarumi in several years, when one day he telephoned them.

-more-

Sarumi was in the United States in Chicago. He wanted to be baptized and had called the one man he felt could help him--a civil engineer who once had gone to Nigeria to teach.

It was arranged for Sarumi to meet with Rostron's pastor, who baptized the Nigerian. Recently, Rostron received a letter saying Sarumi would soon be joining a Baptist church in Nigeria.

Rostron said he and his wife are products of Southern Baptist mission work. Now so is Sarumi, through Rostron.

-30-

Mixed Drink Defeat Nixes
Sale of Baptist Structure

3/18/74

By Warren Barnard

CHARLOTTE, N. C. (BP)--A group of private investors, citing the lack of mixed drink sales here, has scrapped plans to turn the old First Baptist Church building into a \$2 million complex of boutiques, restaurants and a concert hall.

Robert E. Smith, a spokesman for Centre City, a group of five businessmen who took out an option on the property last December, confirmed that they had decided not to exercise that option which expired at noon March 15.

Smith said he and his four partners were not able to gain firm commitments from operators of restaurants which depend heavily on the sales of liquor to assure their profits.

"Due to the failure of liquor-by-the-drink last fall and the fact that hopes for its passage do not seem good for three to five years, they (the restaurateurs) just bailed out on the point," said Smith, president of a Charlotte design consultants firm.

Last fall North Carolina voters rejected by a 2 to 1 margin a referendum calling for the sale of mixed drinks in certain establishments. Charlotte, the largest city in the state, and surrounding Mecklenburg County voted for the proposal with more than a 60 per cent majority.

Charlotte lawyer Allen Bailey, a deacon in First Baptist Church, led the successful anti-liquor campaign in the state. Shortly after the vote, he was elected by the North Carolina State Convention as president of that one million member body.

Smith said that the restaurant owners contacted made 50 per cent of their profits from liquor-related aspects of their business and that there was too much risk involved for them without the possibility of mixed drink sales.

David Reule, head of the church's real estate committee, said the three-building facility, containing some 70,000 square feet, will go back on the market although he does not foresee any immediate sale.

First Baptist Church had been asking \$500,000 for the facility, vacant since the congregation moved in August, 1972, to a new complex in another downtown location. Carl E. Bates, a past president of the Southern Baptist Convention, is the church's pastor.

-30-

Warren Barnard is religion editor of the Charlotte News.