



BAPTIST PRESS

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May 7, 1974

Texas Voters Reject Parimutuels in Primaries

DALLAS (BP)--Texas voters have overwhelmingly rejected the third attempt in 12 years to legalize parimutuel betting in the state.

Voters responded to the pleas of the Anti Crime Council of Texas, the Christian Life Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and other groups in downing the proposal in the primaries of both the Republican and Democratic Parties.

"On the basis of returns, voters by a margin of more than 52 per cent, rejected parimutuel betting," said Phil Strickland, an associate in Texas Christian Life Commission, who played a major role in leading the opposition to parimutuels.

The election was the third such effort in 12 years. The others were in 1962 and 1968.

"The results indicate the people are still opposed to legalized gambling in Texas," Strickland added. "We are pleased that the voters again rejected parimutuel gambling despite the massive amounts of money poured into the primary campaign by supporters of betting."

The referendum statement hinged on the legislature passing enabling laws for parimutuel betting.

"The vote and the consistent failure of gambling proposals at the polls should serve as a definite indication to legislators that the people of Texas do not want gambling," Strickland said.

While the referendum was non-binding--it had no force of law--the matter was even more critical to those opposing parimutuel gambling, because the Texas legislature currently is sitting as a constitutional convention, drafting the first revision of the state's basic document in more than a century.

An issue in the convention has been whether to include a strong anti-gambling section.

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Cooper Urges Half-Billion
Dollar Challenge to Laymen

5/7/74

By Adon Taft

MIAMI, Fla. (BP)--A half-billion dollar program that would involve more than 1,000 of the nation's top business and professional people and double mission efforts at home and abroad was proposed in an interview here by Owen Cooper, president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Cooper, a recently retired Mississippi industrialist and banker, offered the proposal as a means of offsetting what he considers to be the greatest fault of the church--the failure to present a real challenge to laymen.

"We need to challenge men in an area commensurate with their talent," said Cooper, who will step down in June after two one-year terms as SBC president. "Ushering is important, but it's no challenge for a man who runs a million dollar business to count a \$200 offering."

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"I would like to see the world divided into about 100 areas and a committee of 100 interested businessmen organized for each area and ask them: 'How can you help us double the mission work there?'" he said.

"Or take 100 square blocks of Chicago and assign a committee of 100 and ask them to tell us how we can be in mission there," suggested the one-time farm boy who now is vice president of the Baptist World Alliance and president of the Pan American Union of Baptist Men.

With such a challenge to their talents, business and professional men not only would come up with methods and programs, but would fund them because it would be something specific and they would be in on the decision-making process, Cooper said.

The half-billion dollar figure is only one-third of what Baptists gave, comparatively, for a big missions push in the 1915-20 era, pointed out the man who is chairman of the board of Mississippi Action for Progress, a self-help program for minority businesses.

The only opportunity for laymen to serve at the denominational level at present is on boards and commissions of the convention, he said. Therefore only 350 of the denomination's three million laymen are being utilized in developing and implementing Baptist mission and evangelism strategy.

"Laymen want a piece of the action, and a voice in it," he said.

And it's not just the business and professional leaders among the laymen whose talents are untapped by the church, Cooper lamented.

"Some 80,000 Southern Baptists will reach retirement age this year," he noted. "Many of them could make three years of their time available to the church at no charge. If we were really serious, we would go after them like we were electing a president or selling Florida citrus."

In addition, he said, there will be 10,000 students graduating from Southern Baptist colleges in June and another 30,000 Baptists graduating from state colleges "and we don't have a placement agency that knows what any of them is interested in doing."

Cooper has high hopes for those young people. "They've caused us some problems, but they have taught us some things. They're not so materialistic as we have been. They are more sensitive and open to non-material values."

And, he added, there is more opportunity for them to serve the church today because the church now has the concept of serving the total man.

"I see in the church the only instrument for change in society," continued the Yazoo City, Miss., resident. "And there is a growing realization of the necessity for greater involvement of lay people and efforts to train and utilize them."

In Cooper's view, that training should consist of contacting the layman at his point of interest and then showing him how to adapt his already acquired knowledge--as a doctor, lawyer, contractor, singer, etc.--to make a Christian witness by serving in a clinic for the poor, a legal aid office, the construction of housing for the elderly or by conducting services in a jail.

"The unchurched are not coming to church," he said, "so it is essential that laymen take the church to the man who works beside him."

The lay renewal program is one effort which is working along those lines, he said. And he envisions that program involving as many as 500,000 laymen in the next few years.

But the Sunday School still is the principal lay ministry in the Southern Baptist Convention, said Cooper.

The Baptists are the only major denomination who showed an increased attendance in Sunday School last year, according to recently released National Council of Churches statistics. They also were one of the few major denominations to register a gain in church membership.

Cooper attributes both those factors to a renewed emphasis on evangelism and missions which always have been Baptist strong points.

"I believe people respond to a simple, authentic presentation of the Gospel as it is outlined in the New Testament," he said. "Men need to have a life-changing experience with Jesus Christ."

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Adon Taft is religion editor of the Miami (Fla.) Herald.

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Little Rock Church Starts
Brooks Hays Endowment Fund

7/5/74

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--Pulaski Heights Baptist Church here has established the Brooks Hays Lectures in Church and Society Endowment Fund to emphasize a Christian approach to moral issues.

Hays, a native of Arkansas and a congressman from that state for 16 years, is a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention and served as an assistant to the President in the administrations of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson.

The fund "will be used to plan, promote and implement an annual series of lectures at the Pulaski Heights Church for the benefit of the church and community," said Jerry Warmath, the church's pastor.

The specific purpose of the fund, Warmath said, will be "to emphasize a constructive Christian approach to the moral issues which confront us and to consider human issues from the viewpoint of biblical faith and our Judeo-Christian heritage."

A minimum starting goal of \$20,000 has been indicated for the fund, but this will not be raised through a church campaign but on the basis of voluntary contributions. The church's trustees will administer the fund.

Hays, who now lives in Washington, D.C., will give the first lectures of the series sometime next fall.

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Gas Available in Northwest
As Youth Conference Nears

7/5/74

PORTLAND, Ore. (BP)--The gasoline shortage that provoked apprehension in the minds of Americans who planned to drive to Portland by private car or charter bus has eased in the Pacific Northwest.

A. F. Raiter Jr., manager of the Portland Convention Bureau sent this word of encouragement to prospective delegates to the Baptist Youth World Conference, to be held here July 31-Aug. 4, 1974:

"Service stations are no longer limiting purchases," and an increasing number of them are open on weekends, Raiter said.

"I am confident that this office, working in cooperation with the Automobile Club of Oregon could make available information on sources of gasoline in Portland for delegates" traveling by private car to the Baptist World Alliance-sponsored youth event.

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CORRECTIONS

In Baptist Press story mailed 5/6/74, entitled "Cooperative Program Gifts Continue to Increase," change last line of graph 5 to read: \$22,373,076 in the first seven months of the 1972-73 fiscal year to \$24,410,906 in the first seven months of the 1973-74 fiscal year.

In Baptist Press story mailed 5/6/74, entitled "Billy Graham Dispels Retirement Speculation," change the date 1975 at the end of graph 3 to read: September, 1974. In graph 7, change Graman to Graham.

-- Thanks
Baptist Press



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MAY 8 1974

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