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June 19, 1974

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Hatfield Urges Christians To Lead Fight Against Hunger

ST. PAUL, Minn. (BP)--Sen. Mark O. Hatfield (R.-Ore.) has called on Christians in the United States to take the lead in combatting the world food crisis through several means, including setting aside this year's Thanksgiving as a special observance.

Addressing the Conservative Baptist Association of America at its annual convention in St. Paul, the senator declared that "today our world stands on the brink of famine. Yet, all the world knows that there are harvests of plenty in America."

He told the Baptist body, to which he belongs, that Thanksgiving should be set aside as a time when Christians throughout the land join to express their thanksgiving for our plenty, not by a feast, but by a sacrificial outpouring and sharing of our plenty with the needy."

Appealing to the biblical example of Egypt's preparations for the seven years of famine, the Oregon senator noted, "We have not been as prudent as Egypt." Instead, he said, "farmers were paid not to grow crops on as much as one-seventh of our cropland, and grain was left to rot in silos."

Besides the suggestion on Thanksgiving, Hatfield challenged Christians on a practical level to meet the world's suffering and hunger by:

--Setting aside specific amounts in congregational budgets directed to "meeting the needs of starving people in some particular point of the world"

--Considering a "graduated tithe, which increases in its percentage according to the amount of one's income"

--Renewing the "Christian discipline of fasting as a means for teaching us how to identify with those who hunger"

--Analyzing "our own habits of food consumption"

Hatfield warned that evangelistic efforts are futile in trying to win a person who "spends his waking hours struggling for enough physical bread to avoid starvation. How can we dare share this message of Christ, the bread of life," he asked, "without trying to fill his empty stomach with food?"

Calling such a posture "one of the tragedies of the church today," and one "which surely grieves the Holy Spirit," Hatfield declared that choosing between evangelism and social action is to make a division not found in the scriptures or in the life of Christ. "This is a false dichotomy which we have created," he stated, "and which we must allow God to destroy."

Hatfield said Americans consume a disproportionate amount of the world's supplies of energy and foodstuffs and are therefore particularly responsible for setting new national priorities and commitments.

He pointed to the fact that 1975 federal budget calls for a military budget of \$90 billion, amounting to "63 per cent of the funds Congress can actually control."

"By contrast," he stated, "all the funds proposed in this year's budget for the purpose of providing humanitarian and economic assistance to other nations, and to disadvantaged people, comes to \$1.9 billion."

Because of those priorities, "there is no safety and no security for a nation with only 6 per cent of the world's population, but using 40 per cent of the world's resources, unless that nation commits itself to the sacrificial service of the world's needs."

The response of Christians, Hatfield urged, must include being "made sensitive to the suffering of our fellow man," allowing ourselves "to feel uncomfortable about our wealth, our life-style, our diet and all our subtle worship of affluence."

He said Christians should let God's spirit "convict us anew of sin," and discard "all those rationalizations that would somehow prevent us from understanding and reaching out to those who suffer."

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Court Rules on Sunday
School Board Property Taxes

6/19/74

By Gomer Lesch

NASHVILLE (BP)--After 18 months of deliberation and one complete rehearing, the Tennessee Supreme Court has ruled on the property tax liability of the Baptist Sunday School Board and United Methodist Publishing House here.

The 3-2 ruling affirmed in part the decision of the Chancery Court handed down April 15, 1971.

The state court's decision determined that publishing and printing of materials for distribution to members of the parent denomination or to be used in specific programs of the parent denominational organization are uses of property which are exempt.

This would appear to include materials produced by the Sunday School Board's church services and materials division, including Convention Press items.

Publishing and printing of books for the general public, according to the state Supreme Court decision, even though the subject matter of such books is religious, is not a use of property which is exempt. The Chancery Court earlier had held that materials of a general religious nature are exempt.

James L. Sullivan, president of the Sunday School Board, stated, "We cannot determine our property tax liability until several confusing aspects of the decision are clarified. The complexity of the case is demonstrated by the lengthy time taken by the state Supreme Court before the decision was handed down and by the lingering misunderstanding concerning printing.

"We own no printing presses," he continued, "yet one of the justices refers to the printing operations of both the Methodist and Baptist houses as if we did own printing presses. The decision raises a number of still unanswered questions."

Two justices, Chester C. Chattin and William H. D. Fones, issued a dissenting opinion which concurred with the majority for the most part, disagreeing only on the point of prorating tax payments "on the printing press property." Since the Sunday School Board owns no printing press property, this dissent apparently does not apply to this agency.

The majority opinion cited some areas of the board's work which are clearly exempt from property tax, some which are clearly not exempt and set forth a general formula for determining liability on areas which are not clearly in either category.

Special Justice W. M. Leech wrote a separate concurring opinion stating his feeling that the statute which applies in the case is ambiguous and needs to be changed. Although it is "susceptible to more than one interpretation," Justice Leech agreed that the majority opinion is "just and equitable."

The Tennessee law at issue in the case provides property tax exemption for "the real estate owned by any religious, charitable, scientific, or educational institution occupied by such institution or its officers exclusively for carrying out the purposes for which the institution was created or for which it exists."

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In 1969, the Metropolitan Nashville tax assessor placed a new assessment on Sunday School Board Nashville property. A similar assessment was made against the Methodist house.

The appeal to the state Supreme Court was taken after the issue was not satisfactorily and clearly decided by the metropolitan and state boards of equalization or the Chancery Court and state Court of Appeals. Rulings of the lower bodies were appealed by both the publishing houses and the metropolitan assessor because of lack of clarity.

"The lack of clarity still exists in some measure," states Sullivan, "and we are deliberating about the advisability of future action."

The Sunday School Board, according to Sullivan, has paid property tax on all properties it owns which are not used for activities related to the charter purposes of the agency since its founding in 1891. The agency also pays taxes where clear legal determination has been made on properties it owns in Nashville and in other locations.

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Statue of Black Baptist
Proposed in Congress

6/19/74

WASHINGTON (BP)--Sen. Walter F. Mondale (D.-Minn.) has introduced legislation which would commission a statue of the late Martin Luther King Jr. to stand in the United States Capitol.

A similar measure has also been introduced in the House of Representatives by Congressman Jonathan Bingham (D.-N.Y.) and 141 co-sponsors.

King, a black Baptist pastor, would thus become the first member of his race to be so memorialized, Mondale said.

In a statement released to the press, Mondale noted that while the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and 1968 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 "stand as living monuments to Dr. King's memory, I propose that Congress act to honor this great leader in yet another way."

Mondale pointed out that "not a single Black American has been honored by having a portrait or statue placed in the Capitol" despite the fact that "this is supposed to be a building that symbolizes a government of all the people."

The presence of a memorial to the late civil rights leader in the Capitol is further appropriate, Mondale stated, because it is there that "his deeds have been felt, and the seat of government of a nation which he has profoundly affected."

Mondale praised King for having been "uncompromisingly dedicated to justice, to equality, to faith and to peace.

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McKay Accepts College
Post in California

6/19/74

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (BP)--Charles L. McKay, former executive secretary of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention, will become professor of religion at California Baptist College here in September.

McKay, pastor of the First Southern Baptist Church, Scottsdale, Ariz., for the past four years, served as the Arizona convention's chief executive for 14 years. Previously he was secretary of enlargement and evangelism for the Sunday School department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, served as pastor of churches in Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama, and was superintendent of a public school in his home community in Mississippi.

During an 18-month span of his tenure as executive secretary in Arizona, he was interim president of Grand Canyon College, Phoenix. He is a graduate of Mississippi College, earned master and doctor of theology degrees from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and was awarded a doctor of laws degree by Grand Canyon College.

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June 19, 1974

Missionary Kenneth Brooks 'Roughs' It in Yosemite

By Toby Druin

YOSEMITE, Calif.(BP)--Try as he will, Kenneth Brooks can't get much sympathy when he shares his problems as a Southern Baptist missionary here in rap sessions with other missionaries.

In fact, most missionaries probably would trade places with him, given the opportunity and the proper sense of calling, of course.

Brooks is a pastoral missionary of the church extension department of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board (HMB). He serves as the pastor of the Baptist mission in El Portal, Calif., the so-called "bedroom" community of Yosemite National Park.

Brooks lives in El Portal, and if he didn't have five mouths to feed--himself, his wife Shirley, and their two sons and daughter--he probably would be glad to pay the HMB just to be there. He admits it is a choice spot--and a great opportunity to serve God.

Southern Baptists have had a ministry in Yosemite since Dan Routledge, now a foreign missionary, began the work in 1968.

Brooks, a New Mexican and graduate of the University of Oklahoma and Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif., has been there since last fall.

A former student pilot and mechanic for Wings for Christ, an evangelical organization, and the pastor of First Baptist Church, Ingram, Calif., Brooks was in clinical pastoral education at Baptist Hospital in San Antonio, Tex., when he heard that the job in Yosemite was open. He immediately felt it was the place he ought to be serving.

He and Shirley spent their vacation there last summer, "We had some reservations about it at first, he admits. The Brooks have to live in a mobile home in the employees' housing area at El Portal, and Shirley didn't think much at first about the prospect of making a home "in a trailer."

"But after some praying and crying we felt it was what we should do," Brooks said.

Some three million people pour into the scenic park each year. Another 2,000 young persons work on the park staff each summer, and the permanent park staff totals around 150. The temptation for any missionary would be to try to reach them all.

But Brooks is concentrating in his first year on building a ministry to the permanent staff. Other ministries will follow, he says.

"If we can establish a firm work in El Portal, it will provide a strong base for extending the work into the park," he adds.

Brooks, however, isn't neglecting the park. Aided by two summer missionaries--Becky Stephenson of Birmingham and Billy Cantrell of nearby Hilmar, Calif.--they lead campfire sessions and have regular worship services both at El Portal Baptist Mission and at Yosemite Park Chapel.

The mission, related to the Southern Baptist General Convention of California through Central Valley Baptist Association, is sponsored by Berkeley Avenue Baptist Church in Turlock, Calif.

The building occupied by the mission is leased from the National Park Service and is open to any denominational group.

At present, Southern Baptists share the building with a Church of Christ congregation, alternating Sunday school and worship services on Sunday mornings.

"It works beautifully," Brooks said. "We have a great relationship." Both groups are small, usually attended by 25 to 40 persons at worship services.

Even services are held at Yosemite Park Chapel, a picturesque building erected in 1869.

Brooks' connection with the Yosemite chapel has opened an unexpected door for witnessing, he says. Many couples favor the site and the unmatched beauty of Bridal Veil Falls, El Capital and Half Dome as the setting for marriages. Brooks conducts many of the services.

But his prime concern is for El Portal. Aside from his duties at the mission and chapel and outreach into Yosemite Valley, Brooks is focusing on the community recreation program.

"There is a great need here, especially among the young people, for re-creative events," Brooks said. "For most of them their concept of the church is nil, and those who do know what the church is like don't know much. They have no goals; they are simply content to get by.

"We feel like their lives can be touched, and that is what we are attempting to do."

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(BP) Photos mailed to Baptist state papers