



BAPTIST PRESS

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74-39

State Court Clarifies Sunday School Board Tax Petition

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Tennessee Supreme Court has replied to the petition of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board to rehear its property tax case, which has been in litigation since 1969.

The reply spoke to the four questions raised by the board in the petition, which related to the formula set by the court, the categorization of materials, the constitutionality of the matter and the further procedures to be followed.

In one major clarification, the court said property is exempt if used for activities with institutional authorization, or for activities related to institutional distribution or institutional subject matter. Previously the indication had been that exemption would apply only to property used for specifically denominationally-related activities.

The court further stated that the Sunday School Board will be responsible for "good faith allocations" in helping determine taxability of its property, indicating that the tax assessing authorities would not initially be involved in reviewing individual publications in seeking to apply the taxation formula.

The court said its formula for determining exempt and non-exempt property in metropolitan Nashville was a refinement of that given by the chancellor in his 1971 ruling.

Refining the formula, setting up the "good faith" provision, and specifying the exemption of institutionally related activities diminished the question of constitutionality, according to the interpretation of the ruling by board authorities.

The clarification further stated that administrative areas for the board's distribution system (Baptist Book Stores) will be non-taxable to the extent that these areas are distribution centers for exempt materials.

The next step in the case will be a review of the Supreme Court ruling by the metropolitan chancellor.

The tax case began in 1969 when the metropolitan Nashville tax assessor placed a new assessment on all Sunday School Board Nashville property. The case was appealed to the state Supreme Court after the matter was not satisfactorily and clearly decided by the metropolitan and state boards of equalization and the Chancery Court and state Court of Appeals.

Rulings of the lower bodies were appealed by the board and the United Methodist Publishing House whose properties were taxed at the same time, and by the metropolitan assessor, because of lack of clarity.

The state Supreme Court, which heard the case initially in December, 1972, reheard it in December, 1973, by its own request. It took this final action on August 26, 1974

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Parimutuel Gambling Defeated in Oklahoma

9/4/74

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--A parimutuel gambling proposal in Oklahoma was defeated by a 63,000-vote margin during a primary election that produced one of the largest voter turnouts in the state's history.

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Final results of the election reported 405,882 voted "no" and 342,689 "yes" to a proposal that would have legalized parimutuel horse race betting on a county option basis.

Jack L. Gritz, editor of Oklahoma's state Baptist newspaper, The Baptist Messenger, said the campaign against the proposal began last November when the state convention voted funds to oppose it. A few days before the election, Baptist churches were urged to start a telephone campaign.

"It may have been part of the difference," Gritz said. "It looked from the polls like we might lose."

Last May, Baptists in Texas combined their efforts to help defeat a parimutuel gambling proposal in that state.

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First Southern Baptist
College Woman VP Named

9/4/74

RALEIGH, N.C. (BP)--Sandra C. Thomas, former dean of Lindenwood College in Saint Charles, Mo., has been named vice president for student development at Meredith College, a four-year Southern Baptist woman's college here.

The appointment makes her the first woman vice president in the school's history, and, according to the Southern Baptist Education Commission, the first woman to hold such a position in any Southern Baptist-related college.

She is a graduate of the University of Texas, Austin, and holds a master of science degree in university student personnel administration from Indiana University and a doctor of philosophy degree in higher education and college and university administration from Saint Louis University.

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Indian Dialect Work
Growing in Guatemala

9/4/74

LA ESPERANZA, Guatemala (BP)--"Some people say that mountain has power. Some neighbors believe that the rocks and caves, even trees, have power. But I know that these things don't have power. Only God has real power."

These words, spoken by a K'ekchi' Indian as he pointed to a nearby mountain, illustrate the basic Christian commitment among a growing number of K'ekchi' believers here.

The K'ekchi', numbering nearly 280,000, are one of 23 dialect groups in Guatemala, a country where Spanish is the official language. Living in North Central Guatemala, most reside on coffee plantations or small corn farms.

The K'ekchi' have remained separate from the Guatemalan Spanish culture in many cases. They have kept their own language, customs and dress. Many live in remote areas not easily reached by motor vehicles.

Southern Baptist mission work among the K'ekchi' is also growing due to several missionary families who became involved in the simple life of these people.

Charles W. Bryan, Foreign Mission Board area secretary for Middle America and the Caribbean, recently reported on this work after attending a K'ekchi' Indian Bible conference here.

The 350 baptized believers and about 1,000 other Christians, not yet baptized, worship in five organized churches and ten other preaching points.

For these K'ekchi' Christians, Bible conferences take the place of the pagan fiestas, according to Mrs. Wendall C. Parker, one of the Southern Baptist missionaries assigned to K'ekchi' work.

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Bryan, missionary Richard R. Greenwood and others rode in a dugout canoe for two hours and then hiked another two hours over hills and through corn fields to reach the conference site here. Attending were 350 Indians as well as two other missionaries and A. Clark Scanlon, board field representative for Middle America.

Usually each congregation plans and finances one annual conference, inviting other congregations and guests. The host church provides the food. This year's participants consumed 400 pounds of beef in hot chile soup and 300 pounds of tortillas.

The three days were spent in Bible study and learning new hymns. National K'ekchi' pastors led in evangelistic services at night. Following the services movies were shown on the life of Christ. Sixteen people became Christians during the conference.

The participants "brought pieces of plastic or light blankets and spread them out on crude planks in the chapel building or wherever there was sufficient room," Mrs. Parker said. "Some slept out in the open. Others walked long distances over muddy paths after the night services in order to be at their homes for work the next day."

On one occasion, five people walked more than 10 hours round trip to attend the dedication of a new chapel so a new believer, the wife of a lay leader, could publicly express her faith in Christ.

"I have never been treated with greater Christian love," said Bryan after his visit with the K'ekchi'. "This was all made possible because of the dedicated service of missionaries who have moved among the K'ekchi' people demonstrating the love of God expressed in Jesus Christ."

Bryan said 50 percent of Guatemala's population is composed of language groups. There are three missionary couples assigned to the K'ekchi', the only dialect group with whom Southern Baptist missionaries have worked until recently. Mr. and Mrs. George W. Hardeman are currently in language study, preparing to begin work with the Quiche Indians. The other 12 missionaries in Guatemala serve in Spanish-language assignments.

"This does not mean we have too many serving with Spanish-speaking people," he said. "It means we have too few involved in Indian work. As much as money is needed, missionaries who can love these simple, gracious people are needed even more."

This year's conference was in the tenth anniversary year of Southern Baptist work beginning among the K'ekchi'. Mr. and Mrs. Hubert N. (Ted) Lindwall began working with the Indians in 1964.

They got unexpected help when Dr. Neil Goss, a Panama City, Fla., dentist, came on a vacation to give dental care. Lindwall went to the offices of the largest landowners in the area and offered free dental services for the laborers on the coffee farms. The offer was accepted on two of the largest.

After Dr. Goss returned to Florida, Lindwall continued to visit the two farms weekly to show films on the life of Christ and preach. The first converts were baptized in coffee-washing vats.

After Mr. and Mrs. Lindwall returned to Spanish-language work in 1966, Mr. and Mrs. Greenwood and Mr. and Mrs. Donald M. Simms moved to K'ekchi' country. They were later reinforced by Mr. and Mrs. Donnell N. Courtney and Mr. and Mrs. Parker.

Bryan said the work has grown partly because of a government land reform program. Many of the first group of believers moved away to receive free land and took their Christian faith with them, sharing it as they established new homes.

"The growth of Christianity among the K'ekchi' is one of the most thrilling experiences among Southern Baptist missionaries anywhere," Bryan said. "The work is moving and the missionaries are trying to give it substance."