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produced by Baptist Press

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January 14, 1975

75-07

SBC Cooperative Program
Born Out of Adversity

By James Lee Young
For Baptist Press

The Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget began in 1925 in an atmosphere of adversity.

It was a trying time financially for Southern Baptist. The convention was heavily in debt in most phases of its work. Yet convention growth had created the need for a more equitable and efficient means of distributing mission and operating funds.

"That ours is a critical situation as a denomination all must admit."

Thus began a report from the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) Future Program Commission on May 13, 1925 that was to signal the formal beginning of a new era of cooperation among Baptists affiliating with the SBC. This was the beginning of the Cooperative Program of Southern Baptists.

The Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' basic unified budget is a plan through which some 34,665 churches channel gifts through 33 state conventions, which send a percentage on to the Executive Committee, SBC, for distribution to 18 SBC national agencies. The Baptist Sunday School Board and the Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), a convention auxiliary, do not receive Cooperative Program funds.

Before 1925, funds were designated in a hodge-podge fashion to SBC agencies by the churches. This created confusion, competition among the agencies and a lack of stability in spending, budgeting and administration.

Nor did this now oft-called "lifeline" of Southern Baptists missions financing meet with complete enthusiasm.

The proposal of such a plan met with opposition from some Baptists who felt that such a departure from tradition was practically heresy and a violation of their freedom of choice.

This was the state of affairs for Southern Baptists in 1925 as Charles E. Burts, of Tennessee, general director of the Future Program Commission, SBC, began his report to the convention.

"In presenting this body with our first annual report," Burts told the messengers, "...we frankly face the difficulties, but at the same time call attention to certain aspects which should inspire gratitude and give confidence and hope."

Burts then cited the apparent success of an every-member canvass among the then 27,517 Southern Baptist churches, noting the "thoroughness which secured most gratifying results" in enlisting pledges from church members to meet the budget needs of the denomination as well as the local church.

"We should view with alarm," however, he said, "the possibility that along with the loss of idealism which has come to the nation, our churches, too, have lost something of the world outlook and the world consciousness."

A disturbing element in the working out of a new plan for gathering in and distributing denomination-wide receipts was the "insistent demand for larger freedom of action on the part of many individuals and institutions," Burts said.

State and SBC-wide institutions, he added, "had pressed for funds on account of rapid growth and heavy financial demands, became impatient and were given the liberty to go afield with special appeals," imperiling "our whole Co-operative Program."

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1/14/75

-2-

Baptist Press

In facing the future, Burts said, "the denomination must consider certain stern facts: Our boards and institutions are at present carrying heavy debts. The denominational credit is strained

"Sane and business-like provision must be made for the immediate or the gradual retirement of these obligations and maintenance of existing institutions and activities.

"The present income as indicated by the receipts of the past year, and especially from January to May (of 1924), is inadequate."

Burts noted that per capita giving of Southern Baptists had fallen in the two years prior to 1925 from \$3.48 to \$2.62.

"While our denomination gives more in the aggregate than any other in the South (then the basic geographical limit of the SBC which now has work in all 50 states), our standard of per capita is now the lowest," Burts said. Membership in SBC churches in 1925 was 3.57 million.

While Southern Baptists' giving and debts stood as a reproach to our denomination and reveal to us our weakness, the possibility of changing and improving this record by patient and persistent effort, together with the splendid body of stabilized givers which we already have, constitutes our great denominational hope," Burts declared.

Burts recommended adoption of the report from the Future Program Commission, that "our co-operative work be known as 'The Co-operative Program of Southern Baptists' and that our commission be known as the 'Commission on Co-operative Program of Southern Baptists'."

M. E. Dodd, chairman of the Future Program Commission, then came to the podium to report in detail on the SBC's financial status.

He urged complete support of the new recommended program of funding agencies and Southern Baptist work generally.

Dodd, who was the pastor of First Baptist Church of Shreveport, La., then repeated the recommendation made earlier by Burts that SBC-wide programs of Southern Baptists be known thereafter as The Co-operative Program of Southern Baptists.

A further recommendation by Dodd urged the establishment of "a general committee with headquarters in Nashville, for the promotion of the Co-operative Program."

Both reports and recommendations from the Future Program Commission were approved by convention messengers. Two years later, the Cooperative Program (the hyphen was eventually dropped in Co-operative) Commission was dissolved with the recommendation that the Executive Committee, SBC, already in existence several years as a non-staff group, secure a staff and assume responsibility for distribution of funds to SBC-wide agencies, a duty it still has.

In concluding his report, Burts noted, "Your committee would reaffirm its belief that the only way of liquidating our debts and creating an adequate financial support of all of our institutions and activities under God is to commit ourselves thoroughly to our Co-operative Program.

"Let us here and now consecrate ourselves afresh with patience and persistence to the task of the full enlistment of all our churches and our people. And may Almighty God help us to do so."

Burts's call for loyal support by the convention will be echoed frequently in 1975, the 50th Anniversary of the Cooperative Program founding. (BP)

(BP)**BAPTIST PRESS**

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Missouri Allowed to Ban
Parochial Textbook Aid

By Stan Hasteay

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U. S. Supreme Court will not hear a Missouri case in which proponents of parochial aid sought to have overturned a lower court's decision which declared unconstitutional a state law providing free textbooks to nonpublic school pupils.

Last July 30, the Missouri Supreme Court ruled that a 1973 state law providing the textbooks in non-religious subjects to parochial school students violated the state's constitutional prohibition against such aid.

Article IX, Section 8 of Missouri's constitution declares that no government entity in the state "shall ever make an appropriation or pay from any public fund whatever, anything in aid of any religious creed, church or sectarian purpose, or to help to support any private or public school, academy, seminary, college, university, or other institution of learning controlled by any religious creed, church or sectarian denomination whatever."

The U. S. Supreme Court has ruled consistently that states may choose to prohibit outright all aid to nonpublic schools, as Missouri's constitution provides. At the same time, the court has said that states may provide textbooks, transportation and certain other services to nonpublic school children if they so choose.

Earlier in its current term, the high court affirmed a U. S. district court decision upholding Missouri's right to prohibit making transportation available to parochial school pupils.

The new case originated in St. Louis County, where a trial court ruled that the textbook law could stand because it benefited children rather than church schools directly.

But the Missouri Supreme Court reversed the lower court, stating: "Individuals, acting individually or collectively, can have and promote a sectarian purpose, and by attending a private school designed for such a purpose do, in fact, promote the sectarian objectives for which Article IX, Section 8 prohibits the expenditure of any public funds."

Supporters of Missouri's textbook law argued before the high court, in a written brief, that the withdrawal of textbooks from parochial schools amounted to a denial of their equal protection and due process rights guaranteed by the U. S. Constitution.

They also argued that Missouri's action in removing the textbooks violated their First Amendment rights of free exercise of religion and freedom of association.

A third argument was based on the allegation that Missouri officials removed the textbooks not from all private schools, but only from church-related schools.

On the last point, the other side disagreed by pointing to language in the Missouri Supreme Court decision applying the withdrawal action to all nonpublic schools, sectarian and non-sectarian.

As to the proponents' constitutional arguments that the Missouri action violated their equal protection, due process and freedom of religion and association, the other side countered: "Petitioners consistently choose to ignore the basic freedom of choice with which they are presented: A free non-sectarian public education or a sectarian private education in regard to which the state has scrupulously avoided supporting."

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"Having chosen the latter," the argument continued, "petitioners cannot equitably demand all the benefits of the former."

-30-

Supreme Court Refuses Case
Against Baylor Medical Center

Baptist Press

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U. S. Supreme Court declined without comment to hear a case brought against Baylor University's medical center at Dallas by a woman who claimed her civil rights had been violated by the implantation of electrodes in her body.

Specifically, the woman alleged that electronic devices were implanted and resulted in the "use of these devices by the respondents and others to monitor the thoughts and actions and to a certain extent manipulate and control the petitioner."

The case was brought to the nation's highest court after being dismissed for lack of federal jurisdiction by the U. S. district court for the Northern District of Texas and the U. S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

The Supreme Court's action leaves standing the lower courts' dismissal of the complaint against the medical center operated by the Baptist-owned university.

Also named as respondents in the suit were the neurological research division of Baylor's School of Medicine at Houston and the Scott and White Clinic, a psychiatric institution along with one of its staff members, Dr. R. K. Gaines, of Temple, Tex.

Frances Hilliard Brown, who brought the complaint, claimed in her brief before the high court that she had been unsuccessful in seeking counsel. As a result, she prepared her own written brief.

Besides protesting implantation of electrodes as constituting an abridgement of her constitutional rights, she argued that her freedom of speech had been abridged and that in effect she had been forced into involuntary servitude, in violation of the 13th Amendment.

She went on to argue the use of "such an electronic network" might open the way to "possible oppressive coercion by political parties or government agencies" which would amount to an invasion of privacy.

Taking her argument one step further, she posed the theoretical question that the "cloak of national security could be used by unethical government officials to hide a multitude of injustices against innocent individuals--extending even to the protection of organized crime."

As a rule, the Supreme Court gives little credence to such theoretical propositions. The court is more interested in hearing actual facts in which a petitioner claims injury resulting in the violation constitutional rights.

-30-

North Central States
Brainstorm to Double Work

Baptist Press

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--"Belling the Cat," the fable of mice who knew the job to be done but couldn't get past the talking stage, became the focus of attention for a meeting of Baptist leaders in the north central states.

The "cat" to be "belled," as illustrated by Ray Roberts, executive secretary of the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio, is a goal of doubling the number of churches, missions and organized ministries in the region to 3,568 by 1990.

Having proposed the goal in 1972, the executive secretaries and other Baptist leaders from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin met in Indianapolis with area directors of missions and Southern Baptist Convention agency representatives to brainstorm ways to meet their goal.

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Included in the brainstorming sessions was the presentation of a paper put together by Lyndon Collings of the Southern Baptist Home Missions Board and Charles Cheney, director of church extension for the Illinois Baptist State Association. The paper outlined a proposed calendar and programs which suggest specific ways the SBC agencies and state conventions could cooperate in the venture.

Items on the proposed calendar include launching the emphasis at the Southern Baptist annual meeting in 1976, a church growth institute, men's rallies and development of a logo for the emphasis. The work paper and participants outlined dozens of specific actions to take to achieve the goal.

Intensification of existing work through SBC agencies was asked and, with projects such as the 1980 Home Mission Graded Series being focused on the north central area, agency attention is already on the upswing.

Brainstorming ran the gamut: communicate through state Baptist papers which have subscribers who've moved into these areas where SBC work is weak; draw attention to the idea that people can leave their estates for establishment of new work, not necessarily for existing institutions; provide several houses for furloughing foreign missionaries.

Also, get associations to loan their directors of missions for three months; establish pilot projects with seminary students for credit during one-month courses of study; encourage more churches to sponsor missions outside their areas; ask state papers to list opportunities for new work; have church commissioning services for people who are moving into pioneer (new work) areas; get a Home Mission Board. US-2 program missionary appointed for each association.

Also, mail out materials on who Southern Baptists are before going into new areas to start mission work; have a common curriculum among north central churches for state week of prayer; have more circuit riding pastors, music and youth directors; ask people on foreign mission fields to pray for us; get every association participating in strategy planning.

"Let's begin defining a great church and a great pastor, not by number of baptisms or attendance," said one participant, "but . . . as one which can say, 'We've equipped x-number of people to minister.'"

-30-

(BP) Photo to be mailed to state Baptist editors.

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S. C. Baptists Top Budget
By More Than \$1 Million

Baptist Press

COLUMBIA, S. C. (BP)-- South Carolina Baptists gave to missions in record amounts during 1974, despite economic recession, surpassing a \$6.3 million budget by more than \$1 million.

The budget report, released here, shows that \$7,472,940 was given during 1974 by 1,631 cooperating S. C. Baptist Convention churches through the state's Cooperative Program unified budget.

Thirty-four per cent will be sent to nationwide and worldwide missions causes through the Southern Baptist Convention's national Cooperative Program.

In 1975, the 50th anniversary of the Cooperative Program, an anniversary challenge goal of \$8 million has been set for South Carolina Baptist churches, to be followed by a \$9 million goal for 1976.

-30-