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Impact '80 Conference
Points Toward Next Decade

NASHVILLE (BP)--More than 200 persons from across the spectrum of Southern Baptist Convention life have completed three days here at an "Impact '80s National Leadership Conference" planning denominational objectives and goals for the next decade.

Dealing with such areas as church objectives, denominational objectives, critical concerns and emphases for the 1980s, the participants from churches, associations, state conventions and SBC agencies painted with a broad brush to set the agenda for a 16-person Impact '80s Group subcommittee of the SBC Inter-Agency Council.

That group of the Inter-Agency Council, sponsor of the three-day meeting, represents step three in winnowing, distilling and summarizing massive input, which began, in step one, with 25 committees, which each met twice throughout the United States to gather grass roots grist for the Impact '80s conference mill.

In May, the Impact '80 Group will bring a summary of the conference and of further data gathered in surveys of pastors, lay persons and denominational leaders to the Inter-Agency Council, which will make recommendations for the SBC Executive Committee to act upon and bring to the SBC annual sessions for action in June in Miami Beach.

Proceeding much as the 70 Onward Study Group did for the SBC objectives of the 1970's, the Impact '80s conference surfaced concerns about how the nation's largest Protestant-evangelical denomination can continue to expand its multitude of ministries around the world in a changing, complex society.

Major emphasis centered on accomplishing that aim with a program which will "continue to be rooted in the Baptist heritage," present since the now nationwide, 130-year-old SBC was a small, struggling, rural-based denomination.

"We must face the changes of the modern world," a participant declared, reflecting the group's conscensus, "but with ministries anchored in the unchanging message of Jesus Christ."

In that context, the group reflected major concern about how to help the denomination's 34,665 churches do a better job of reaching people.

Participants experienced a degree of frustration in coping with how the SBC, which reaches into 50 states and 82 countries around the world, could come to grips with multitudes of needs and opportunities for ministry.

"We may be frustrated," declared conference speaker, Dotson Nelson, a pastor from Alabama, "but it is nothing compared to the frustration Jesus' disciples must have felt when he pointed to them and said, 'There is the world.'"

The conference expressed concern in the areas of family relationships, Bible study, training of leaders at all levels, church growth, church purpose and planning, Christian discipleship, Baptist distinctives, community ministry, stewardship development, missions, Christian fellowship and evangelism.

Grady Cothen, president-elect of the SBC's Sunday School Board, a conference speaker, reminded the participants, "People want to speak their piece. Rather than diminishing their voices, I think we need to tune them in until we've heard them all. The potential of this meeting is that those of us charged with responsibility will hear the voices.

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"The wide divergence of opinions among Southern Baptists," Cothen said, "constitutes one of our greatest strengths."

Citing fragmentation of society and the need to deal with people who cannot cope with it, Cothen said, "Increasing fragmentation will require a change of structures. We cannot be bound by the structures of yesterday, if we meet the needs of tomorrow.

"All we've said comes back," he added, "to the centrality of the Great Commission" of Christ to win the world.

E. Harmon Moore, executive secretary of Indiana Baptists, outlined the urgent need for Bible-based objectives and goals for Southern Baptists and reminded his listeners of great responsibilities they face as planners who have the attitude of service to the churches. He declared that planners "need to be prophets in the wrestle with goals and objectives."

One man, James Goodson, a Missouri pastor, rose to urge that agencies examine their method of task assignments so as not "to hamstring" the churches by making members have to attend multiple programs to get everything they need for growth.

He suggested agencies examine departments of work to find which ones are outmoded or need restructuring, and he urged that changes coming out of the Impact '80 study be "staggered" so as not to "shock the churches with massive programming changes," as he said the '70 Onward study did.

Goodson also suggested that SBC agencies shorten publication schedules of periodicals to enable them to react on shorter notice to needed emphases.

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Georgia Baptist RAs
Hike For Home Missions

Baptist Press

ATLANTA (BP)--Royal Ambassadors (RA) boys across Georgia will "hike for home missions" in February and March, 1975, in an effort expected to involve some 60,000 persons and aimed at raising $250,000 for Southern Baptists' Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions.

The RA program, operated by the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, is a mission education and action program for boys in grades one through 12.

The hike, sparked by similar events at Clairmont Hills Baptist Church in Atlanta and other churches, is built around the idea of getting sponsors to pledge to give a certain amount of money to the offering for each mile the boy they are sponsoring walks during the hike.

Davis Yaun, RA leader at Clairmont Hills Baptist Church, said his church will give a special "home mission hiker patch" to each boy who hikes a minimum of 10 miles.

Similar hikes have been held in a growing number of churches across the nation in the last couple of years. Under Yaun's leadership, the Clairmont Hills RAs have raised some $3,600 for both home and foreign missions in the last year.

First Baptist Church, Buford, Ga., raised more than $900. Youths from 16 churches in Memphis, Tenn., hiked for $3,400 for Annie Armstrong Easter Offering in 1974.

The Georgia Baptist Brotherhood department adopted the idea and is sponsoring similar hikes across the state in February and March.

Yaun, who has been working with Georgia's State Brotherhood Secretary Gene Wilson in coordinating the effort, said it is hoped that as many as 60,000 persons will be involved, including the hikers, adult supervisors and others providing refreshments along the hike routes.

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Report Your Termites, But
Not To Sunday School Board

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention churches send all kinds of reports to denominational agencies, but a totally new one has arrived at the SBC's Sunday School Board.

A North Carolina church sent a re-inspection report from its exterminator, along with a Church Audiovisual Education (CAVE) Plan order to the board's Broadman consumer sales department, according to manager Crawford Howell.

The report said there was "no visible infestation," and re-treatment was made.

Howell returned the form to the church, and a board spokesman stated that this information will definitely not become a part of the "uniform church letter," source of numerous statistics about Southern Baptist churches.

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Lottie Moon Held A
Candle To Harold Covington

Baptist Press

GREEN ROCK, Ill. (BP)--The pastor of First Baptist Church here has "caught on fire" for his work--literally.

Harold Covington, the pastor, reports it like this:

"One Sunday last December, I had just stepped down from the pulpit to extend the invitation. Without noticing, I backed up against the communion table, where some candles were burning.

"The candles were part of our emphasis for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions. For every $10 given toward our goal of $150, we lit one candle.

"I began to smell smoke and wondered what in the world could be burning. I slowly put my hand to my back, and it was my coat that was on fire. I had gotten too close to the Lottie Moon candles!"

The Southern Baptist pastor said the fire burned a large hole in his coat and ruined his trousers.

Recently at a statewide Baptist Vacation Bible School clinic in Springfield, Covington was wearing a new suit, paid for by the church's insurance policy.

And yes, Green Rock went over its goal for the mission offering, giving a total of $183.

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IMPORTANT CORRECTION:

In Baptist Press story mailed January 23, 1975, entitled "Torch Run to Celebrate 50th Cooperative Program Year," a line was dropped from graph 7. That graph should read: Rally sites and dates include: Nashville, May 15, SBC emphasis; Gadsden, Ala., May 17, mini-rally; Atlanta, Ga., May 20, home missions; Augusta, Ga., May 24, foreign missions; and Jacksonville, Fla., June 3, state missions.

Thanks,

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