



'DEAC'--One Respons
To Economic Crisis

By Toby Druin

HOMINY, N.C. (BP)--When unemployment began climbing toward 10 per cent last fall in Buncombe County, everyone got concerned. The people at Hominy Baptist Church, Candler, decided to do something about it.

Pastor Fred Werhan preached to his people about their responsibilities to their neighbors in hard times. The deacons brought it up for discussion.

"To be honest, says David Bryson, chairman of the church's deacons, "it was getting around to where we were thinking it might be us who might be laid off next."

Whatever prompted it, the deacons organized "DEAC," an acronym for Deacon Economic Assistance Committee. It's the church's way of saying it cares about and is trying to do something for its members who have been hurt by the economic crunch.

The committee, comprised of Bryson, Werhan and deacons Tom Orr and C.O. "Dusty" Rhodes, maintains a list of people in the congregation who have been laid off or cut back in their hours and who need assistance.

Thus far 35-40 wage-earners in the 650-member congregation have been directly affected by the layoffs that have idled thousands in Buncombe County, including some 2,000 persons at American Enka Corp., Candler's largest employer. Many more still work but have been cut back to four days a week.

"Mainly we just try to keep in contact with the people, letting them know we're concerned," says Bryson, who heads security operations for Sears in Asheville.

He arranged for an evening security job for one man from the church who had been cut back to four days a week at American Enka.

All the Hominy deacons, especially those on the DEAC, have tried to inform themselves about the services available to people caught in the crunch--such as unemployment compensation and food stamps.

They have had some unusual experiences in dealing with the people.

"We've found some people who aren't really hurting," Werhan says. "Right now, they're just enjoying a good vacation. Some are better off now drawing unemployment checks with no deductions, no expense of getting to and from work and not having to pay for child care. They won't take a job that pays less than their unemployment check.

"Of course, some are hurting, and those are the ones we are trying to help."

Orr, who operates a sawmill and pallet business, has had to give some of his employees temporary layoff slips and then has had to talk them into using them to get food stamps or unemployment compensation.

"Many of them just don't want to go through the rigamarole of applying for the assistance," Orr said. "And then again, these mountain cove people are pretty self sufficient."

Werhan said the "mountain pride" of most of the people keeps them from asking for anything but a job. Both he and Orr have counseled many people about the fact that they have earned the right to unemployment compensation and food stamps.

"The whole emphasis of what we're doing is not to develop a benevolent fund to dol out, although it may come to that, Werhan says. "We have \$3,000 in a maintenance fund for building and grounds and we may use it for helping our people instead of contracting the work.

"But what we're trying to do is help these people help themselves. We're trying to show through the deacon ministry that we are concerned about what is happening to the people. And it's the thought that counts."

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Wrapup

**National Acteens Conference
 Draws 11,000 to Memphis**

MEMPHIS (BP)--About 11,000 junior and senior high school girls and their adult leaders got "in touch" during the National Acteens Conference sponsored here by Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), national auxiliary of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The crowd strained the capacity of Cooke Convention Center at times as girls searched for seats in the auditorium, browsed in exhibit halls, dozed in the lobby, stood in lines at concession stands and overflowed into nearby churches for dozens of small group "encounter" conferences.

Shirley Cothran of Denton, Tex., the current Miss America, and dozens of missionaries launched the meeting with testimonials to their Christian commitment. Behind them a blue back-drop framed a huge rear-projection screen on which images constantly interpreted the conference theme--"In Touch."

Miss Cothran, a Southern Baptist and former Acteens leader, told the girls that following Jesus Christ in faith and behavior can bring satisfaction and achievements.

She gave her personal testimony, telling of a third grade "scare" profession of faith and a true conversion experience in camp at Falls Creek, Okla.

"In September I will take off the crown that I occasionally wear as Miss America, but I have an eternal crown in my heart and it is worn by Jesus Christ," she said.

"Being Miss America didn't just happen. It is something I worked hard for," Miss Cothran said, describing her dieting, exercising and talent practice in pursuit of local titles. She said that she did not meet with success until she asked God's guidance. "I had put Shirley number 1 and God number 2, and that is a losing combination."

She challenged the Acteens to stick to their beliefs about Christian behavior. She said she does not smoke, drink, use drugs, or "sleep with my boy friend. My challenge to you is that it is not necessary to compromise for an artificial high when you have an all time natural high through Jesus Christ," she said.

Melvin Torstrick, representing the SBC's Foreign Mission Board, and Jerry Scruggs, representing the SBC's Home Mission Board, presented couples who were commissioned for missionary service.

They included Mr. and Mrs. William J. Campbell from Ohio, to work with national Baptists in Nashville; Mr. and Mrs. Allen Hill from Georgia and North Carolina, to the Philippines; Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Murphy, Massachusetts and Texas, for a two-year appointment in Honolulu; Mr. and Mrs. Mike Owen, Alabama, to Guatemala.

In the closing session of the five-day conference, Carolyn Weatherford, WMU's national executive secretary, charged the girls to return to their daily routine with determination to keep in touch with themselves, with God and with the world.

"We began this meeting by commissioning missionaries. That was important, but even more important is this time of commitment for you," she said. "The conference was planned so that you could hear God speak to you. All that we have done makes no difference if God has not spoken to you," she said, urging the Acteens to respond to God's leading in their lives.

The conference featured the fifth birthday of Acteens (using a giant cake as the focal point), a wide range of musical expression, special missions presentations and discussions of future adult roles.

Juliet Mather, WMU's first fulltime professional youth leader beginning in 1921, came out of retirement in Indialantic, Fla., to give a capsule the daily news with implications for missions.

Miss Mather stressed the need for response to world hunger, for re-aligning the world's resources among the nations, for sensitivity to political situations. In a documentary on the news, she told of the Baptist involvement of the late Chiang Kai Chek.

Marge Caldwell, Houston charm teacher, turned the traditional WMU calendar of prayer into a dramatic experience for the girls and gave daily reviews of books.

The Memphis meeting was the second national convocation WMU has sponsored for girls in grades 7-12, since Acteens was founded in 1970. WMU leaders hope to schedule another meeting within the next five years for the next generation of Acteens.