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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

**NATIONAL OFFICE**SBC Executive Committee  
460 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219  
(615) 244-2355  
W. C. Fields, Director  
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor  
James Lee Young, Feature Editor**BUREAUS****ATLANTA** Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041**DALLAS** Orville Scott, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Tex. 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996**MEMPHIS** Roy Jennings, Chief, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, Telephone (901) 272-2461**NASHVILLE** (Baptist Sunday School Board) Gomer Lesch, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 254-5461**RICHMOND** Richard M. Styles, Acting Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151**WASHINGTON** W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4228

February 17, 1976

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Committee of Seven Reports  
On SBC Executive Committee

NASHVILLE (BP)--A Committee of Seven appointed two years ago to study the Southern Baptist Executive Committee and a possible name change for the SBC released a report here making 12 suggestions and five recommendations concerning the Executive Committee.

The committee, chaired by C. R. Daley of Middletown, Ky., editor of the Western Recorder, Kentucky Baptist state paper, completed the first part of its study last year. The 1975 session of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), meeting in Miami Beach, approved a committee recommendation that no name change be considered for the 12.7-million-member denomination.

After requesting and receiving an additional year to complete its study of the Executive Committee, the Committee of Seven conducted extensive interviews and research into the operation of the Executive Committee.

Basically, the study suggests such things as broadening the base of selection of Executive Committee (E C) members, broadening scope and depth in pre and post election orientation of EC members, increasing involvement of EC members in the EC's decision making process, improving communications and cooperation between the EC and agencies, involving all the EC members in studying agency budget requests, keeping the authority of the EC in "healthy tension" with the authority of convention-elected trustees of agencies, clarifying what the EC's "ad interim" status means, and clarifying what authority the EC has to look into the affairs of an agency.

Additionally, the Committee of Seven made several recommendations for changes in SBC Bylaw nine, which deals with the relationship of the Executive Committee to the convention and its agencies.

In a seven-point "affirmative appraisal" of the Executive Committee, the Committee of Seven also noted that the EC's organizational structure "is essentially sound," and that the EC is "indispensable in the life of the Southern Baptist Convention," that it is "blessed with highly capable and committed professional staff members" who "sincerely execute their assignments and attempt to be fair and impartial toward all agencies," that it "is endeavoring to perform faithfully the functions assigned to it by the convention," and that it exercises a policy of openness to concerned constituents.

The study was requested by the Executive Committee at the 1974 SBC meeting in Dallas, after an Executive Committee-appointed Committee of 15 completed a four-year study of convention agencies.

The Committee of Seven's report, which is subject to revision through March 1, was received by the Executive Committee at its February meeting here.

It will recommend to the 1976 convention in Norfolk, June 15-17, that the study be referred to the Executive Committee for consideration and that it bring a report on its response to the 1977 SBC meeting in Kansas City.

Elaborating on its suggestions, the Committee of Seven noted that broadening the base of selection for EC members will reduce the possibility "for personal favoritism and cronyism in the selection of nominees."

It suggested that adequate biographical data and other pertinent information on all EC nominees go to all members of the SBC Committee on Boards, Commissions and Standing Committees. Currently, the committee said, nominees from the various states and their qualifications are known only by the two members on the Committee on Boards from those states."

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On pre and post election orientation, the committee noted that strong pre-election orientation would tend to weed out those not willing to fulfill the demands and responsibilities of the position. Stronger post-election orientation, it said, would improve knowledge of the relationship of the EC to the agencies. The committee suggested inviting agency representatives to take part in such orientation.

The Committee of Seven noted the EC as it now functions "is strongly staff oriented" because most EC members "devote full time to other responsibilities and find limited time for their Executive Committee duties." It suggested several ways to achieve more involvement of EC members, including possible "use of a small group of experienced Executive Committee members to meet with professional staff as needed between regular sessions of the committee."

The committee also suggested that ways "be devised for the EC staff and members and agency staffs and trustees to be more intimately acquainted with the work of each other." It noted that "agencies feel their situations are not always understood by members of the Executive Committee. They believe that Executive Committee members should be familiar with the particular program and problems of each agency. Executive Committee members, on the other hand, sometimes feel they do not have adequate information to respond intelligently to proposals related to the agencies."

Commenting that "the one most far-reaching responsibility of the Executive Committee is the recommendation of allocations for all convention agencies receiving Cooperative Program funds," the Committee of Seven suggested that the whole EC, rather than just its program subcommittee, hear such requests. It also recommended revision in subcommittee names to make their function more clear.

On the question of authority, the Committee of Seven said, "The Southern Baptist Convention began and remains a voluntary association of churches. However, as such a group increases in size and complexity, its center of power tends to shift from 'grass roots' constituents to officially elected board members and to staff personnel.

"By virtue of its assignments the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee is powerful. It needs and does have authority commensurate with its responsibilities.

"Caution should be taken," the committee said, "to prevent even an unconscious trend toward undue centralization of authority in Southern Baptist organizational life. The usurpation of undue authority by the Executive Committee over the agencies would be disastrous.

"At the same time, the agencies should recognize the need for the convention to exercise reasonable review of their affairs. The authority of the Executive Committee should be kept in healthy tension with the authority of convention elected trustees of the agencies."

Several other suggestions also dealt with clarifications which would interpret EC authority versus agency authority.

Bylaw nine (5) (a) states that the EC is to "act for the Convention ad interim on all matters not otherwise provided for . . ." The Committee of Seven noted that "acting for the Convention ad interim" is not "being the Convention ad interim" and called for clarification of this point.

The committee also commented that a fine line exists on "where the authority derived from the principle of trusteeship and the Convention-assigned responsibility of the Executive Committee meet. Some tension at this point is almost inevitable and is not altogether undesirable. Such a polity furnishes checks and balances necessary to preserve the freedom and the autonomy in Southern Baptist life."

The committee noted "considerable concern among the agencies over possible recommendations of the Executive Committee which might alter the programs of or even abolish an agency. Some early proposals of the study Committee of 15 (which unsuccessfully either recommended certain agencies cease of transfer duties to the EC) have suggested this."

It called for clarifications of various parts of Bylaw Nine in such areas as the role of the Executive Committee and the trustees of convention agencies, its advisory capacity and its authority and power. Among revisions, the most drastic, Daley said, involves Bylaw Nine (5) (i). The effect of the wording changes, Daley said, "Would tone down the investigative powers of the Executive Committee and reassert the authority of agency trustees, while still recognizing the Executive Committee's responsibility to study the affairs of the agencies and make recommendations to the convention." -30-

Executive Committee Calls  
For \$55 Million SBC Budget

NASHVILLE (BP)--Based on projections of a continued rise in receipts, the Southern Baptist Executive Committee voted here to recommend a \$55 million national Cooperative Program unified budget for the 1976-77 fiscal year.

The amount, which includes a \$49 million basic operating budget for 18 national SBC agencies and committees and the SBC operating budget, will be voted on at the SBC meeting, June 15-17, in Norfolk.

The 1975-76 budget is \$51 million, including a \$41 million basic operating budget.

Besides the \$49 million basic operating budget, the \$55 million includes a \$1,080,000 capital needs figure (same as 1975-76) and \$4,920,000 in challenge operating funds. The challenge portion is broken into two phases of \$1 million and \$3.9 million.

After basic operating needs are met, the capital needs funds would be prorated among the six SBC seminaries and the Radio and Television Commission. After that figure is met, any additional challenge funds received would be divided among the agencies and the SBC operating budget.

Under the basic operating budget, funds would be distributed as follows: Foreign Mission Board, \$23,625,918; Home Mission Board, \$9,200,000; Southwestern Seminary, \$3,077,349; Radio and Television Commission, \$2,500,000; Southern Seminary, \$2,343,180; New Orleans Seminary, \$1,821,476; Southeastern Seminary, \$1,642,581; Midwestern Seminary, \$1,115,744; Golden Gate Seminary, \$1,037,352; SBC Operating Budget, \$488,000; Brotherhood Commission, \$475,000; Christian Life Commission, \$323,000; Education Commission, \$240,000; Stewardship Commission, \$225,400; Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, \$200,000; Historical Commission, \$185,000; American Baptist Seminary Commission, \$125,000; Southern Baptist Foundation, \$125,000; and Annuity Board, \$250,000.

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SBC Disaster Committee  
Chairman Urges 'Quake Aid

Baptist Press  
2/17/76

NASHVILLE (BP)--The chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention's Disaster Assistance Advisory Committee has called on Southern Baptists to "respond generously to the widespread needs caused by the devastating earthquake in Guatemala."

"We commend the SBC Foreign Mission Board for moving promptly to alleviate human suffering and to help bring order out of the chaos that occurred on Feb. 4," said Jaroy Weber of Lubbock, Tex., committee chairman and SBC president.

"Within hours, missionary personnel on the scene had organized assistance under way. The board allocated \$100,000 in emergency funds for immediate use. Within 10 days, 10 news stories were moved through Baptist Press, the first one on the day of the earthquake," Weber said.

Weber urged Baptists to make contributions through their state Baptist conventions "where they will be quickly relayed through the Foreign Mission Board to the missionaries in Guatemala for relief and rehabilitation.

"Money is the most useful gift," said Weber, who appealed to Southern Baptists to respond "in the spirit of Christ whose compassion reaches out to the victims of misfortune."

He said food and medical supplies are now available in sufficient quantities and that clothing drives "are not practical or needed at this time."

Weber said volunteers for work in Guatemala are being organized through the state Baptist Brotherhood offices, according to Eugene Grubbs, relief coordinator for the Foreign Mission Board.

"The first team of 20 workers, recruited in Florida, left for Guatemala, Sunday, February 15. Other teams for reconstruction work are being assembled to help rebuild homes and churches. A church can be rebuilt for as little as \$10,000. As many as 15 Baptist churches must be replaced," Weber said.

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He said Southern Baptist missionaries in Guatemala are working with other relief agencies to coordinate disaster recovery efforts, avoid over-lapping and provide the best use of resources.

"The missionaries," he said, "are concentrating on four agreed upon and assigned areas for their responsibility: Zone 3, the worst hit area in Guatemala City, plus four towns elsewhere."

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CBS President Lauds  
Baptist Broadcasting

Baptist Press  
2/17/76

FORT WORTH (BP)--The president of CBS Inc. said here that Southern Baptists have demonstrated "a flexibility and resourcefulness to reach out from church buildings to the needs of society at large."

Arthur R. Taylor, who addressed a national gathering of broadcasters attending the seventh annual national Abe Lincoln Awards, sponsored by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, said the denomination has been able "to extend the principles of Sunday morning to the way it lives all week long.

"You have made yours a church of not just buildings, but a church of the open air," he said.

He was referring to the work of the Radio and Television Commission, whose programs are heard on public service time on more than 3,710 radio and television stations across the country.

Taylor, who received a Distinguished Communications Merit Award from the commission for his work in helping establish the family viewing concept on television, had some comments about family viewing time.

He predicted that television's family viewing period will endure despite criticism and legal battles. He describes family viewing guidelines as "the most dramatic and far-reaching step in self-regulation in our industry's history.

"Family viewing is, in reality, simply the responsible exercise of broadcasters obligations to the public," he said. "I do not believe it stifles creativity. I feel it stimulates talented individuals to even greater heights because it closes off such easy plot-solving gimmicks as brutality.

"Admittedly, this family viewing time concept is not perfect. But it has been effective so far," he said.

He said a recent CBS study showed that overall the depiction of violence on the three national networks during prime time had dropped 30 percent from the previous year. And it dropped 39 percent on CBS alone, he said.

"Apparently the public shares our confidence in family viewing. A recent poll, taken for TV Guide magazine, showed 82 percent of the public supports family viewing and only seven percent is opposed to it."

He noted some are out to destroy the concept. "On one extreme are the cynics and self-appointed watch-dogs who have charged it is not strong enough, that it is designed to cover up business as usual. On the other extreme are those who contend it constitutes censorship--that it is too strong.

"In my opinion, neither of these two extreme viewpoints gives full consideration to the needs and desires of the American public in 1976.

"We broadcasters realize that, if we are to continue to serve the American people as their primary source of information and entertainment, we must ultimately look to ourselves for improvement," he said.

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"Television must discover new approaches for sustaining interest in action and adventure stories without falling back on the use of violence. I also believe broadcasters must continue to develop humor that is not only appealing, but responsible.

"Family viewing has helped to focus more clearly on that goal," he said. "Television has become as much a part of the family as the kitchen table or the family car. And it plays a central role in the family's conversation, in forming its views, and in reaching decisions.

"Thus, broadcasters have an especially important obligation to oversee our programming, to make sure it is responsive to the needs, the tastes and the interest of that entire group."

Besides the award to Taylor, another Distinguished Communications Merit Award went to Sol J. Taishoff of Washington, editor of Broadcasting magazine, "for the leadership role he has played in the growth of the industry and for his advocacy of responsible broadcasting."

The late Edward R. Murrow of CBS was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Communications Medal for the impact on radio and television programming which he made as "a broadcaster without peer."

Sharing top Abe Lincoln Awards honors were Leo L. Beranek of Boston's WCVB-TV and Robert Hyland of St. Louis KMOX, Lee Allan Smith of WKY Radio in Oklahoma City, Okla., who won the Abe Lincoln Bicentennial Award, and Stan Freberg of Beverly Hills, Calif., who received the commission's Christian Service Award for his contribution to religion through the creative use of spot advertisements on radio and television.