

(BP)**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICESBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355W. C. Fields, Director
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor
Norman Jameson, 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) 741-1998
MEMPHIS Roy Jennings, Chief, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, Telephone (901) 272-2461
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2000
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, 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) 544-4226

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Two Baptists Endorse
Panama Canal Treaties

By Stan Hasteley

WASHINGTON (BP)--Two prominent officials of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board endorsed the Panama Canal treaties in separate statements released here. The two emphasized they were speaking as individuals, not on behalf of the Richmond, Va.-based agency.

Charles W. Bryan, Foreign Mission Board area secretary for Middle America and the Caribbean, and Ervin E. Hasteley, associate consultant in the evangelism department, urged ratification of the treaties by the U. S. Senate. That body is expected to debate the treaties and vote on them within the next few weeks.

Bryan, a veteran missionary to three Latin American countries, called upon the senate to "ratify the treaty without delay." He said, "The decision of the senate on the Panama Canal treaty will have more impact on our relationship with Latin America and with all third world powers than anything that will be done in the remainder of this century.

"If the senate ratifies the treaties, they will be doing the right thing at the right time and for the right purpose. If they fail to do so, a wrong decision will be made that will bring serious consequences to our nation for years to come."

Hasteley, a missionary to Panama for 3½ years and to Mexico for 20 years, said the senate should ratify the treaties because "It is the right thing to do."

Citing the rising U. S. commitment to human rights overseas, he said that "it is only right that our government...correct an injustice done to the Panamanian people 75 years ago." He referred to the original treaty signed in 1903 by U. S. officials and a Frenchman, Philippe Bunau-Varilla, which involved Panamanians themselves "in no meaningful sense."

"I am convinced that failure to ratify these treaties would have an adverse effect upon our overseas work for ten, perhaps as many as 25 years," said the former president of the Panama Baptist Mission. "At a time when our missionaries all over the world are seeking to involve fellow national believers more fully in making strategy and sharing decision-making, it is simply crucial that our government keep faith with foreign leaders in like manner."

Bryan and Hasteley join SBC President Jimmy Allen, who said in September that "The gospel of Christ has a stake" in the treaties. Allen, pastor of the First Baptist Church of San Antonio, declared that the canal is "a symbol of colonial exploitation which cripples our witness as American Christians."

Growing support for the treaties signed last fall by President Carter and Panamanian President Omar Torrijos has come from all segments of the American religious community. In October, representatives of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Council of Churches, and the Synagogue Council of America offered their support in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations committee.

Other religious groups supporting the treaty include the Church of the Brethren, the Friends Committee on National Legislation, the American Jewish Congress, the United Methodist Church, and the Latin American Mission, an evangelical group based in Coral Gables, Fla., among many others.

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The two treaties, one governing operation and defense of the Panama Canal through 1999 and the other guaranteeing the canal's permanent neutrality, have become objects of intense political opposition by conservative groups, including the right-wing Liberty Lobby, Young Americans for Freedom, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Ironically, two Southern Baptist members of the U. S. Senate helped lead opposition to fellow Southern Baptist Jimmy Carter's drive for ratification. Senators Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.) and Jesse A. Helms (R-N.C.), two of the most conservative members of the body, have repeatedly denounced the agreements and urged their rejection.

Other well-known conservatives, however, have enthusiastically endorsed the treaties. These include former presidents Gerald R. Ford and Richard M. Nixon, former secretaries of state Melvin Laird and Henry Kissinger, the present Joint Chiefs of Staff of the nation's armed services, columnist William F. Buckley, and actor John Wayne.

The treaties, signed in September by President Carter, were actually initiated by former president Lyndon B. Johnson after a series of disastrous riots broke out in the Canal Zone in 1964. The agreements were pursued by each of Johnson's successors, presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter.

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Bible Correspondence Course
Opens TV-Commission Studio

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FORT WORTH (BP)--The lights were bright, the stage set and the cameras rolling Jan. 17 for the first video taping in the new television studio of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission in Fort Worth.

A pilot Bible correspondence course featuring Frank Pollard, preacher on "The Baptist Hour" and pastor of First Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss., is the first program being taped in the new studio. It is being presented jointly by the Radio and Television Commission and the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

The Radio and Television Commission studio--the largest exclusively religious programming studio between New York and the west coast--was dedicated in April, 1977. The \$3.3 million building that houses it and a training center for religious broadcasters, was built from money raised during a national campaign.

The production marks the first time the studio has been used and the project is the first time that the Baptist electronic media agency and its print agency will be involved in a joint missions effort.

The Radio and Television Commission produces and syndicates 40 radio and television programs heard weekly on 3,124 stations in this country. The Sunday School Board is responsible for most of the printed materials used in Southern Baptist churches.

"The skills of these two Baptist agencies are being married in a missions effort that is an arm of the denomination's Bold Mission Thrust (Southern Baptist effort to proclaim the gospel of Christ to every person in the world by the year 2000)," said Paul M. Stevens, Radio and Television Commission president.

"The Sunday School Board, skilled in Bible teaching in our churches throughout the denomination, and the Radio and Television Commission, with the skills and expertise to put it together on the air, are working together. I'm as excited as Grady Cothen (Sunday School Board president) about the possibilities."

The pilot show for the as yet unnamed series will also feature John Drakeford, author and professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Baylor University football coach, Grant Teaff. Cynthia Clawson of Nashville, Joe Ann Shelton of Fort Worth, and the New World Singers of New York will provide music.

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Texas Baptists Told
'Family Fighting for Life'

By Debbie Stewart

FORT WORTH (BP)--Jimmy Allen, Southern Baptist Convention president, told 13,000 Texas Baptists that "The family is fighting for its life," as they met here to launch a statewide Family Life program at their annual evangelism conference.

The popular conference, sponsored by the evangelism division of the 2-million member Baptist General Convention of Texas, also spotlighted the Southern Baptist Bold Mission Thrust, an effort to proclaim the gospel of Christ to every person in the world by the year 2000. The conference theme was "A Bold Vision."

Texas Baptists' Executive Director James H. Landes said the family life emphasis is an extension of 1977's Good News Texas/Living Proof evangelistic campaign. L. L. Morriss, evangelism division director, served as co-chairman of Good News Texas.

"Godly families are healthier and happier," Landes said, "The Baptist General Convention of Texas has responded to a cry from Texas Baptists to come back to the Biblical family."

Between sessions of the evangelism conference, where speakers like S. M. Lockridge, California pastor, said that "The cause of evangelism has advanced on its knees" in prayer, Texas Baptists previewed dramatic films which will present television messages under the theme, "Your Family...It's Worth the Effort." The campaign will also use radio and newspapers to support the ministries of 4,000 Texas Baptist churches in upgrading the quality of family life in the state, said Landes.

Allen, pastor of First Baptist Church, San Antonio, said that "God's primary plan of evangelism is the family," and that the glorification of violence and sexual obscenity on television and in movies are among the "villians" destructive to Christian family life today.

"The darkness of Ephesus has now settled in America," Allen said. He compared modern America with the sinful society that the Apostle Paul addressed in Ephesians in the New Testament.

"The floodlights of a nation are upon us," Allen said in reference to the curiosity and interest that front-page reporting on evangelicals and born again Christians has stimulated in Americans.

Allen said a reporter recently called him from New York to ask "How long are you Baptists going to stay with this new idea of 'new birth'?" Allen explained that people have been able to be born again since the time of Christ, and he told the reporter, "Let me tell you how you can have it."

Allen said that people from throughout the nation are responding as volunteers and sponsors in the Mission Service Corps.

Roy Edgemon, church training director for the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, said at one conference session that "a bold vision" is the proper outlook for Christians who see an estimated 165 million unsaved Americans within a world of three billion lost people.

Evangelist Rudy Hernandez summed up the response of many Baptists to statistical reports on the decline of baptisms by saying, "We have enough prospects to break every record in the book."

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SBC President Meets
With Tribal Leaders

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ALBUQUERQUE, N. M. (BP)--In their first meeting ever, the president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and American Indian tribal leaders discussed ways the newly established Mission Service Corps can assist American Indians.

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Jimmy Allen, SBC president and pastor of the First Baptist Church, San Antonio, Tex., said the meeting was an "exploration of ways in which volunteers--particularly through the Mission Service Corps--can be of service on Indian reservations."

The Mission Service Corps is a plan designed to put 5,000 full-time volunteers on mission fields at home and abroad by 1982. It was adopted by messengers at the 1977 annual meeting of the 13-million member denomination in Kansas City, Mo.

"One of the very important things we told them in our meeting is that we are looking for realistic ways to serve," Allen said. "We do not want to over promise and under produce."

Allen said Indian problems and options for volunteer assistance were discussed, "including use of agronomists to help with range problems, business people to help in those areas and medical personnel to work in remote areas of the reservations."

Meeting with Allen were Peter McDonald, president of the Navajo Indian Nation; Wendell Chino, president of the Mescalero Apache Indian tribe; and Frank Tenero, chairman of the All-Indian Pueblo Council.

Representing the SBC were Oscar Romo, director of the department of language missions at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board (HMB); David Bunch, HMB director of Mission Service Corp coordination and Frank Belvin of Okmulgee, Okla., consultant on Indian affairs for the HMB.

"This initial meeting was exploratory," said Allen. "The Indian leaders had never sat down with an SBC president and other leaders before. The response was very warm.

"We feel it opened the door for Southern Baptists to share their lives and concern for Indian people. We were asking for an opportunity to walk alongside them."

Allen specified no commitments were made, but added, "they have an openness to further exploration. We are now in the process of following up...asking for meetings to discuss this in detail."

The meeting was arranged by David King, a member of First Baptist Church of Morarity, and the SBC Christian Life Commission. He also arranged a breakfast meeting between Tribal leaders and Vice President Walter Mondale on the same day SBC leaders met with them.

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Work Progresses
To Enter Bolivia

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RICHMOND (BP)--Several teams of Southern Baptists have been involved in special projects in Bolivia since April but no definite date has been set for placing permanent missionaries there, according to J. Bryan Brasington, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's secretary for Western South America, who gave an update on Bolivia at the board's January meeting.

Three groups have gone to Bolivia "helping and are getting good orientation," said Brasington, and experienced missionaries are prayerfully considering a transfer there.

Bolivia will not be added to the list of 90 Southern Baptist mission fields until missionaries are assigned there. Brasington said he was encouraged about beginning work there especially after receiving from a national Baptist a map of Bolivia with this note attached: "Don't forget us. Come to Bolivia and help us."

In his report, Brasington also said missionary Richard A. Forrester, who in May 1976 was critically injured in a fall from a Venezuelan mountain, is scheduled to return soon to the field.

"A 20th century miracle occurred," Brasington said. "Even though his right leg had to be amputated, he is now in excellent health." Forrester and his family have been living in Georgia and were scheduled to leave for Maracaibo on January 18.

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