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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Southern Baptists Urged  
To Upgrade Ethnic Awareness

By Everett Hullum

LAREDO, Texas (BP)--Southern Baptists were challenged to accelerate their witness and ministry efforts to ethnics--especially to become involved in the plight of the undocumented alien--at the 22nd annual Home Mission Board Language Missions Conference.

The Southern Baptist Convention also was summoned to sponsor a national convocation to increase denominational agency and state convention awareness of ethnic missions needs and opportunities.

Leonel Castillo, commissioner of the U. S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), urged Southern Baptists to move on four fronts to improve conditions of those who illegally enter the United States:

--Join as volunteers in INS-trained groups that can help illegal aliens understand their rights, including possibility of gaining legal residency;

--Help improve conditions for those retained in the four INS-operated detention centers;

--Become publicly and politically active "to let public officials know you care what happens to illegal aliens."

--Target "your foreign mission efforts" to upgrade the life of people in the most common "sending areas," which have been pinpointed by the INS. "Why not attack the problem at its roots?" Castillo asked. Even minor efforts, such as providing sewing machines for women workers or helping establish small industry, could turn the alien tide, he said.

"As private citizens with deep religious concerns," Castillo told the audience of Baptist state convention language leaders, "you can do many things we (at INS) cannot. I encourage you to become involved."

Oscar Romo, director of language missions for the Home Mission Board, sounded the call for a national convocation at which SBC "professionals would not tell others how to do it--but they'd learn how to do language missions."

Romo said the convention could have 10,000 language-culture units by the year 2000. Estimates are that 2,500 of these will be Hispanic, as Hispanics become the most populous ethnic group in the United States, exceeding even blacks.

"Southern Baptists must plan, not only for the establishment of new language units, but for the nourishment and missionary involvement of this segment of our convention," he said.

Romo reported the convention's 2,900 language culture units contribute a half-million dollars to the SBC's Cooperative Program unified budget yet get little in return. Associational and state meetings seldom are geared to language needs, either in time or sessions or content, Romo said. And few training materials are available in languages other than English.

A national convocation in 1980 could awaken Southern Baptist leadership to the needs and opportunities present in a nation rapidly moving from a "melting pot to a mosaic" concept of acculturation, Romo said.

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With 135 identifiable ethnic groups in the United States, Romo said the convention must enter an "era of ethnic missions in America" which "calls for consideration to sharing the gospel from the recipient's perspective."

Romo also encouraged Baptists to minister to undocumented aliens. "It is not enough to share the gospel with the undocumented on Sunday and treat him like a slave or a criminal on Monday," he told conferees gathered to learn more about problems along U. S. borders.

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Rigdon, Castillo Honored  
At Language Conference

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LAREDO, Texas (BP)--Raymond Rigdon, director of the Southern Baptist Seminary Extension Department, and Leonel Castillo, commissioner of the U. S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, were honored during the 22nd annual Language Mission Conference of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Rigdon, who will celebrate his 10th anniversary, May 1, as director of the department, received the "Exemplary Service Award" for his leadership in making "theological education a practical reality for untold numbers" of language pastors and laypersons.

He pioneered in making basic language studies and practical ministry skills available to language persons, the award said. He also "sought to educate Southern Baptists to the wisdom of providing relevant educational experiences for those of other languages and cultures."

The language missions department of the Home Mission Board honored Castillo with its first "Human Rights Award," citing the commissioner for his efforts "to sensitize the American public to the plight and needs of undocumented persons" and "humanizing the conditions" of their arrest, confinement and deportation.

Castillo "has taken a personal interest in establishing the rights of all persons under the law," the award stated.

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House Panel to Review U. S.  
American Indian Policies

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WASHINGTON (BP)--"Sweeping oversight" hearings into federal policies and programs affecting American Indians on reservation lands have been announced by Rep. Morris K. Udall, D-Ariz., chairman of the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs.

Four hearings have been scheduled to consider federal impact on economic development for Indian reservations.

The scheduled hearing dates and agencies are as follows: March 12, Department of Interior; March 22, Departments of Agriculture and Commerce; March 27, Departments of Health, Education, and Welfare, Energy, and the Small Business Administration; and April 3, Departments of Labor and Housing and Urban Development.

"There is a two-fold purpose to holding these oversight hearings," Udall said. "One is to take a hard look at the federal government's activities affecting Indians to determine their efficiency, economics, and sensitivity to Indian needs; the second is to reaffirm congressional commitment to the Indians."

In recent years, Congress has been criticized for failing to oversee the programs of federal agencies it has created. The growing power of executive branch agencies has caused much protest from citizens across the nation.

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In a letter to tribal leaders regarding economic development and natural resources on tribal lands, Udall said that he would "initiate major, comprehensive Indian economic development legislation" and would enlist the "active support and concurrence of the Indian tribes and organizations."

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International Conference  
Projected In Juarez

By Everett Hullum

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LAREDO, Texas (BP)--Agustin Acosta, acting executive director of the National Baptist Convention of Mexico, urged Southern Baptists to join him in 1980 for the first International Conference on Evangelism and Missions.

The meeting would help celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Baptist Spanish Publishing House in El Paso and emphasize growing response of Mexican and U. S. Baptists to joint border ministries, from Texas to California, Acosta said during the 22nd annual Southern Baptist Home Mission Board Language Missions Conference.

Oscar Romo, director of language missions for the board, said Southern Baptists are committed to helping sponsor the conference, which Acosta offered to host in Juarez, Mexico. The SBC Foreign Mission Board is also involved in the planning, a spokesman said.

Romo said the Home Mission Board, working with the state conventions of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California, also planned increased efforts along the border. Meetings to complete schedules will be held later in the spring.

Only Texas now has an organized and systematic program of border ministries on the U. S. side. Called the "Texas Baptist River Ministry," it is perhaps the largest missions effort ever attempted by a state convention.

Acosta indicated Mexican Baptists' willingness to host the International Conference on Evangelism and Missions was made possible by the Mexican government's new openness to evangelical groups.

He believes the 1980 census will reveal some five million evangelicals among the nation's 60 million people. Baptists--with more than 400 churches and 48,000 members--represent only a small fraction of that number.

But the visit of U. S. President Jimmy Carter, himself a Baptist, gave the group needed publicity and recognition, Acosta said. He credited Carter's visit and the recent visit of Pope John Paul II with much of the government's change in attitude.

The Mexican constitution prohibits public religious services conducted by non-Mexicans. But the Pope held two such events during his visit. Evangelical Christians, who had petitioned the government for years seeking similar opportunities, "now demanded this for themselves," Acosta said.

For the first time the privilege was officially granted by the government, Acosta said, making the international conference "a very historic opportunity... This is the first time such an event has been allowed in a public place."

Acosta is salaried by the Mexican churches, but works closely with representatives of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, who are involved in a "program leading toward greater independence and responsibility." As the mission moves toward nationalization of the work, the national convention functions "in a sort of cooperative agreement," Acosta said.

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Ministers Urged to Cope  
With Anxiety Problems

By Mark Smith

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--A Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary professor believes that anxiety is one of the major problems faced by ministers today.

"As ministers, we must first deal with our own anxiety, and then we must help those to whom we minister deal with theirs," declared F. Dan Boling in an address at the seminary.

He defined anxiety as a "generalized state of apprehension, accompanied by restlessness and tension for which there is no apparent cause."

"At its extreme," the associate professor of religious education noted, "excessive anxiety is evidenced by restlessness, sleeplessness, disturbing dreams, stuttering and compulsive actions, such as overeating, overdrinking, overworking or overachieving."

Boling told his audience of students, faculty and area lay persons that the anxiety-ridden person finds his ability to trust God hindered. "Excessive anxiety has the ability to come between a minister and his relationship to God, as well as between the minister's congregation and their relationship to God," he explained.

"Because of this," he added, "it becomes clear why Jesus said in the Gospel of Matthew, 'Stop being anxious.'"

He outlined several causes of anxiety, including feelings of insecurity, which lead a person to gain a sense of low self-worth or self-esteem; feeling of a lack of acceptance from God, especially after serious spiritual and psychological problems; or seeking of individual identity by struggling for freedom or independence from those who have raised and nurtured a person to maturity.

Citing examples, Boling said, "As a seminary student breaks away from the cloistered atmosphere of 'the hill,' away from his professors, to establish his own theology and theory of ministry, he may face stress and anxiety.

"As a minister out on his own and leading his own group of people, the need for success, economic security and recognition from God become hidden drives which spur him on to activity or result in his becoming an anxious person."

Boling noted that stress can be dealt with by holding onto it, letting it all hang out, or by accepting it and using it in a constructive, useful manner.

He said he prefers the latter approach, explaining that a person "must admit there is anxiety in his life, must make an attempt to get in touch with what is causing him to be anxious, and must take action to overcome it."

"If you have set a goal to be pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas (the largest Southern Baptist Church, with more than 20,000 members) in order that you might be someone, acknowledge that you already are someone and get busy being the best pastor your church ever had," he charged. "Let the tinge of anxiety you may feel be a creative force in your life, moving you to action."

Boling reminded his audience that "acting responsibly leads to self-respect and to self-worth."

"And," he noted, "the pattern of responsible action for Christians is Christ. He was one who loved people in order that He might cast out fear and anxiety. As we learn to love and to accept ourselves, we in turn are able to love others and to accept them."