



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
480 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
W. 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 Richard T. McCartney, 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) L. Bracey Campbell III, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2798
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3808 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Stan L. Hastey, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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79-44

**Funds Bring Relief To
Flood-Stricken Baptists**

By John J. Hurt

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil (BP)--"It would have made any Southern Baptist proud and happy to see the relief on the faces of those pastors when they were told there were funds available to help their families."

That was the report of Joe E. Tarry, Southern Baptist missionary to Brazil, after he and Jose Alves Beittencourt, secretary for the Minas Gerais State Baptist Convention, visited areas damaged by what is being described as Brazil's worst flood in history.

Minas Gerais, north of Rio, is one of four states in south Brazil ravaged by floodwaters. Gov. Osanam Coelho said his state was made "a national tragedy" by the flood. Two states in north Brazil were also flooded.

Receding waters are permitting most of the people to return to their homes, some destroyed and some damaged. But some workers in industrial areas here lost factory wages and farmers have been deprived of crops in various stages of cultivation.

Fred L. Hawkins Jr., Southern Baptist missionary to Brazil and coordinator of Baptist relief efforts for south Brazil, said the flood affected possibly a third of the Baptist families.

"Some state conventions are taking pastors on as missionaries and paying their salaries until the churches can again become self-sustaining," said Hawkins, a North Carolinian.

State convention budgets may face major problems, Hawkins said, because local churches suffering financial difficulties may be forced to withhold funds normally used for Brazil's own foreign mission work and other enterprises.

The SBC Foreign Mission Board allocation of \$50,000 in March for relief efforts has pushed the total of Southern Baptist help to more than \$285,000--of which \$20,000 was designated for north Brazil. Hawkins explained the Brazil missionaries allocate these funds to Brazilian state conventions, which in turn funnel funds through pastors and church committees.

Months may elapse before all state conventions have anything approaching an accurate record of church damages. Telephone lines to remote areas are down, and travel is difficult at best. Landslides and water rushing down mountain gorges handicap highway travel.

Tarry, from New Mexico, said the convention office in Minas had information that 800 to 1,000 Baptist families or Baptist-related families were directly affected by the flood. Details continue to be sketchy about the four or five Baptists reported dead. But Tarry fixed the momentary loss to Baptist families in Minas at \$340,000.

Hurt, editor emeritus of the Baptist Standard, the Texas Baptist newspaper, is on special assignment to cover relief efforts and devastation in Brazil.

Senate Panel Considers
Liberalized Refugee Bill

By Carol Franklin

WASHINGTON (BP)--Legislation to overhaul drastically U. S. refugee policy met with generally favorable comments from witnesses at a hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee here.

The measure, a joint effort by the Carter administration and Congress, would establish the first comprehensive United States refugee resettlement and assistance program. The bill was submitted by the Departments of State, Justice, and Health, Education, and Welfare. Sponsors in Congress are Sen. Edward Kennedy, D -Mass., and Reps. Peter Rodino, D-N.J., and Elizabeth Holtzman, D-N.Y.

The proposal would redefine the term refugee, raise the annual limitation on refugee admissions, set procedure for emergencies, and provide federal support for the resettlement of individual refugees, for up to two years.

Present law requires that a person show he has fled from a Communist or Communist-dominated country or a country in the Middle East. The proposed revision would define as a refugee any person outside his country unable or unwilling to return to that country because of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

Former senator Dick Clark, newly-appointed coordinator for refugee affairs in the State Department, said the change in definition was necessary because "refugee problems, unfortunately, have become a regular feature of our world."

Clark cited figures which estimate that there are more than two million refugees in Africa, more than 200,000 Indochinese in camps in Southeast Asia, and thousands more in Bangladesh, Cuba, and elsewhere.

The present ceiling of 17,400 refugees admitted annually under regular procedures would be raised to 50,000 by the proposed measure. This would not actually mean greater annual immigration, according to Kennedy, who is chairman of the Judiciary Committee as well as a sponsor of the bill. Large numbers of refugees presently are admitted under a special parole provision of the current law. That emergency provision would be retained in the new law but would be used only in special cases.

The federal support provisions of the proposal met with general acceptance from witnesses but some suggested changes. Norman V. Lourie, chairman of the National Coalition for Refugee Resettlement and executive deputy secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, said a cut-off of federal funds after two years would create hardships for states which have large refugee populations.

Ingrid Walter, director of the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, told the committee that private agencies involved in resettlement work also would like more flexibility in the time limits on federal aid.

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Information Storage
On Electrons Likely

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DALLAS (BP)--The storage of data on electrons, components of atoms, likely will be a computer industry reality in 20 years.

Arthur E. Scott, consultant with IBM's systems products division in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., predicted that advance at the eighth annual Southern Baptist Computer Users Association meeting in Dallas.

Speaking to 49 Southern Baptist agency representatives, Scott said statistics show major breakthroughs are now occurring in the computer industry every two years. Many of the innovations will lead to the storage of larger amounts of information at reduced costs, Scott said.

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Michael N. Rolfe, vice president of A. T. Kearney, Inc., of Chicago, and Charles Livingstone, resource and services analyst for the management services division of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, also addressed the meeting, hosted by the Southern Baptist Annuity Board.

Van Simpson, manager of the systems department of the Sunday School Board, was elected president of the association, succeeding Ted Williams, director of aging for the North Carolina Baptist Convention.

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SBC Business Officers
Urge ERISA Changes

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DALLAS (BP)--About 180 church and agency business officers agreed to support congressional legislation to amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) of 1974--the federal pension law.

"We approve and support the efforts of members of the Church Alliance for Clarification of ERISA to clarify the ERISA 'church plan' definition," the business officers resolved at their 17th annual conference.

The Southern Baptist Annuity Board hosted the two-day conference, which focused on pension funds, records and risk management.

W. Dean Willis, named general chairman for 1979, explained that the business officers consider the amendment to the federal pension law "vital" for all Southern Baptist agencies.

The legislation is supported by the Church Alliance, a group of more than 25 religious denominations which represent their denominations' pension programs.

Identified as HR 1576, 1577 and 1578, the legislation has been introduced in the House of Representatives by Rep. Barber Conable, R-N.Y. Similar legislation is expected to be introduced in the Senate by Herman Talmadge, D-Ga., and Lloyd Bentsen, D-Tex.

The legislation is intended in part to amend the federal pension law's definition of "church plan" so as to allow it to recognize traditional church retirement programs which cover both agency and church employees.

"I speak, I think, for all Southern Baptist agencies when I say I believe this legislation is essential to the future well-being of agency pension programs and deserves our support," Willis said.

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J. Fuller Interim
Florida Executive

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3/19/79

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)--J. Woodrow Fuller, director of missions for the Florida Baptist Convention since 1969, will be interim executive-secretary of the convention until a successor is named to Harold C. Bennett, newly elected executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee.

Fuller, 64, has announced he will retire about Dec. 15, 1979.

Alton Butler, pastor of the Myrtle Grove Baptist Church, Pensacola, and chairman of the state convention's board of missions, named the search committee for Bennett's successor to include:

James L. Monroe, Fort Walton pastor, committee chairman; Robert L. Smith, Pompano Beach pastor; Emit O. Ray, Miami pastor; Andrew M. Hall, Delray Beach pastor; William H. Carter, Jacksonville pastor; Frank W. Hudnall, Marianna layman; Horace A. Andrews, St. Petersburg layman. Ex officio members are Butler and N. B. Langford, Panama City pastor and president of the state convention.

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The state executive board accepted Bennet's resignation, effective April 30, following vacation time. They presented him with a new car in appreciation of his 11 years as executive secretary. Bennett will begin work in Nashville about April 1.

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Southern Baptists Again
Largest ABS Contributor

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NEW YORK (BP)--Southern Baptists broke their own record of regular American Bible Society giving last year with contributions of \$309,204, an increase of \$57,296 from 1977.

This is the first time any denomination, exclusive of special one-time gifts, has given more than \$300,000 in a single year, according to a release from the American Bible Society. The report said Southern Baptist churches have topped the list of contributors to the American Bible Society 14 times in the last 15 years.

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod gave the second largest amount, almost \$125,000. Third was the United Methodist Church with \$103,500; fourth, the American Lutheran Church, \$96,500; fifth, the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., nearly \$84,000.

The American Bible Society, founded in 1816, is a nonprofit, nondenominational organization whose sole purpose is the translation, publication and distribution of the Holy Scriptures without doctrinal note or comment.

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Virginian Establishes Pastoral
Care Professorship at Southern

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LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Lawrence Hoover, a Baptist layman from Alexandria, Va., has provided in his estate for the permanent endowment of a named professorship at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary as part of the seminary's \$10 million "Resources for Excellence" campaign.

This action guarantees the completion of the endowment for the Lawrence and Charlotte Hoover Chair of Pastoral Care, which Hoover has already partially funded with major cash gifts.

The new chair brings the total raised in the campaign to \$5 million, and is the second named professorship established in recent months by laymen from Virginia. Earlier, Victor A. Lester of Martinsville, Va., endowed a chair of Christian preaching to be named for Lester and his wife, Louise.

A named professorship requires a minimum of \$500,000 in permanent endowment funds, with the annual income providing for a major teaching post at the seminary. Southern Seminary now has a dozen such named professorships, and is seeking another 10.

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