



# BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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December 31, 1979

79-217

Dominica Work Stop  
May Slow Recovery

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--More than 100 Southern Baptist volunteers scheduled to help in the reconstruction of hurricane-ravaged Dominica may be affected by an apparent strike by Dominica government employees.

Because all airport and dock personnel are government employees, no supplies and personnel will be able to get in if the strike materializes.

Workers for the government, the largest employer on the Caribbean island, left their jobs on sick leave Dec. 27 and did not return to work Dec. 28, according to a report from Southern Baptist missionary Don B. Snell on the island. Workers are demanding a 95 percent pay raise.

Worker strikes are not uncommon in Dominica, which gained independence from Britain only a year ago. In June, a strike virtually shut down the island, closing even the grocery stores, and toppled the existing government.

Even though the political turmoil may hamper efforts, the laymen overseas office of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board is continuing with its plans to send more than 100 volunteers to the island in the next six weeks. "We are hopeful, but not necessarily optimistic, that we will be able to get volunteers in and continue in the reconstruction and medical ministries," said James W. Cecil, the board's associate consultant on laymen overseas.

Cecil said that 72 of the volunteers standing by are involved in a project sponsored by the Mississippi Baptist Convention's Brotherhood department.

In the five months since Hurricanes David and Frederic hit Dominica and the Dominican Republic, more than 132 Southern Baptist volunteers have helped in reconstruction and medical efforts on the islands.

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Foreign Board Sends Relief  
To Cyclone-Damaged Mauritius

Baptist Press  
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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has sent \$10,000 to buy blankets and help in home repair on Mauritius where cyclone Claudette left thousands homeless.

In a cable requesting the money, missionary Norman W. Wood reported that property and crop damage was extensive in the Dec. 22 cyclone. He indicated that six were dead; 39 were injured; and 4,000 were left homeless. Wood and his wife are the only Southern Baptist missionaries stationed on the Indian Ocean island.

**Braswell Calls Khomeini  
Senile and Embittered**

By Sharon Roberts

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Intense student concern over the Iranian crisis surfaced in a spontaneous rap session at a Student Conference on World Missions at which former missionary to Iran, George Braswell, called Ayatollah Khomeini a "senile, embittered man with a persecution complex."

Currently associate professor of church history and missions at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Braswell taught comparative religions at the University of Tehran from 1967 to 1974. He said that since the 1940s Khomeini has worked toward two goals: getting rid of the shah and building an Islamic nation.

In response to questions about the plight of the hostages, Braswell said, "I tend to think that if Ayatollah Khomeini says the hostages will be freed, they will be and will be left unharmed."

Braswell said the repressive reign of the shah had created fear in the Iranian people. "Now they are releasing all their pent-up frustration," he said.

The former missionary said it is questionable whether Iranian leaders are more interested in the shah's return or striking out against U.S. foreign policy. "If they can get the shah, they will try him and probably execute him," said Braswell. "If they cannot, they will try the U.S. through the hostages."

He attributed the current backlash against America by Iranian citizens to a feeling that the U.S. invested its interests in the shah, forgetting the masses.

"Politically we keep making the same mistakes by forgetting the needs of the masses," said Braswell.

The students also questioned Braswell about how to relate with Muslims on their campuses.

He urged them to take advantage of witnessing opportunities and to become knowledgeable about other religions.

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**Students Escape Death,  
Continue to Conference**

Baptist Press  
12/31/79

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Ten Baptist college students narrowly escaped death on their way to a missions conference when the van they were riding in hit a bridge abutment and flipped over.

"We're 10 walking miracles," said Terri Chapman, one of the riders, when it was discovered the most serious injuries were a sprained ankle and bruises.

The students, from East Central Oklahoma State University, Ada, Okla., were on their way to the Student Conference on World Missions in Nashville and had driven all night when their driver fell asleep at 6:30 a.m.

Brownsville Baptist Church, Brownsville, Tenn., lent the students its van so they could continue on to the conference.

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Successful Ethnic Ministries  
Overcome Cultural Differences

By Jim Lowry

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptists have become the most culturally pluralistic denomination in the world by recognizing the right of people to retain cultural differences in their worship practices, according to a language missions expert.

Jim Lewis, assistant director of the language missions department of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, told students at a world missions conference in Nashville that America, long known as the melting pot of the world, probably should really be called a tapestry, or mosaic, because melting pot implies that everyone is the same.

"In America, our philosophy has been for everyone to conform to us," Lewis said. "We have become cultural chauvinists who believe our way of doing things is the norm."

"As Southern Baptists we have recognized that to be different is not to be wrong, it is just to be different. Every person has the right to be different because these differences are what give us our identity."

Southern Baptists, long seen as a regional, white, middle class group, have congregations among 77 nationalities in 70 languages, and with 90 American Indian groups and deaf persons.

Lewis explained that the United States is the largest recipient of immigrants in the world, with an annual 400,000-person quota. An additional 10 to 12 million non-immigrant persons also come into the country as students, diplomatic personnel, foreign crewmen and tourists.

Lewis estimated that between 8 and 12 million illegal aliens enter the United States each year. And if a sufficient number of sponsors are available, up to 14,000 refugees are allowed to enter the U.S. each month.

This presents Southern Baptists with a challenge, especially in light of the Bold Mission Thrust goal of reaching every person in the world by the year 2000, Lewis said.

"These goals will never become reality as long as Southern Baptists preach in English and teach Sunday School just one way," Lewis said.

"We have to be sure that the message we send reaches people in a way they will understand. And we must be especially careful to encourage people to become His, not to become like us."

Lewis said one key in ministering with international persons may be to allow them to give rather than always receiving ministry. "Let them cook a meal, provide a program, sing native music or another activity which is culturally unique to them," he said.

Allen Fears War Course  
In Hostage Confinement

By Norman Jameson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Five clergymen and two Mideast affairs experts told the Ayatollah Khomeini in a Christmas Day message that Iran and the United States could be on a collision course toward war.

The seven Americans, in Tehran at the invitation of the Iranian ambassador in Washington to seek the release of American hostages held in the embassy, spoke directly with Khomeini and the context of their message has been rebroadcast over Iranian radio.

Jimmy Allen, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, led the group which told Khomeini there is growing anxiety in America that "the continued confinement is creating an atmosphere in which peaceful solutions to the crisis are increasingly difficult to achieve."

The group's message included many references to the similarities between the Christian and Islamic faiths, including the worship of a God of mercy and freedom.

They told Khomeini they had visited the graves of Iranian freedom fighters in Beheshti Zahra and had been "deeply moved by their sacrifice." Many Americans have freely sacrificed their lives for independence, they said.

"We join in prayer that the just aspirations for freedom and independence, not only for all of the peoples of the world, but also for the Iranian people, be fulfilled, not destroyed, by any force in our nation's name," they declared.

Emphasizing the Christmas season of peace and the mutual observance of the birth of Jesus, Allen said the group is praying for peace. "We are deeply troubled by the possibility that our nations are on a collision course which threatens violence and war," he said. "We pray that God, the merciful, the compassionate, will guide our peoples to discover alternative ways of dealing with the present crisis so that confrontation can be transformed into cooperation.

"We Christian leaders pray that the energy to fashion the future will not be dissipated by vindictiveness and hostility over the past. We are deeply disturbed by the continued confinement of our fellow citizens at the American embassy and by the impressions now being communicated to our people and to many of the peoples of the world, about that confinement (which) has been to call the attention of Americans and of the world to the suffering and the anger of the people of Iran, especially over the past 25 years."

Allen and the others left for Iran Dec. 22 and were expected to return Jan. 3. After their audience with the Ayatollah they spent several days talking with Iranians at all levels. Their agenda included a tour of the shah's palace and the prisons where the shah reportedly tortured and killed thousands of Iranians.

"The people are eager to talk," Allen told the Baptist Standard. "They are open, engaging, challenging us in our positions."

Brazilian Singers Share  
Talents in Reciprocal Trip

By Jim Lowry

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--For "Som Maior," a singing group from Sao Paulo, Brazil, the trip to perform at the Student Conference on World Missions meant many things, including borrowed travel money and lost jobs.

Most importantly, however, it was an opportunity for the Brazilian students and their leader, music missionary Roger Cole, for a reciprocal ministry similar to groups which have visited their country.

"We want the people here to see the fruits of their investment of nearly 100 years of mission work in Brazil, and we want them to be inspired to do more" in their own churches, Cole said.

"Up to now, it has always been a one-way street," Cole explained. "Americans have always come to minister to Brazilians. We want to show that we also have something to offer."

The 23 members of "Som Maior," which translates "The Greater Sound," are students or college-age people from 15 Baptist churches in the Sao Paulo area. Formed in 1975, it includes 12 vocalists, seven instrumentalists, sound men and directors.

Three of the men lost their jobs when they informed their employers that they were to be gone for nearly a month on the trip. The group raised its own travel money as their part of the missions effort. At the time of their departure, payment on four or five of the \$650 round-trip tickets to Miami, Fla., was still incomplete. Baptist Student Unions from 35 campuses provided money to help with expenses of the group.

In Sao Paulo, the largest industrial city in Brazil, there are 150 Baptist churches with the average membership between 50 and 500.

"Som Maior" represents a cooperative effort of the churches, providing a singing group of professional quality that can show the community what local Baptists are trying to do, through the medium of music.

"I hope this trip will bring a new maturity to these Brazilian young people as Christians," Cole said, "as well as making them more effective in using their talents for the Lord."