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South Carolina Executive Sets Retirement in 1981

COLUMBIA, S.C. (BP)--A. Harold Cole has announced he will retire as executive secretary-treasurer of the South Carolina Baptist Convention at the end of 1981.

Cole's announcement at the October meeting of the general board apparently caught trustees by surprise, although the executive previously had announced he planned to retire between age 60 and 62. He was 60 last March 23.

Cole, who has been chief executive of the 655,000-member convention since Jan. 1, 1970, has been on the convention general board staff 26 years. He moved to the executive secretary-treasurer's office after eight years as assistant secretary-treasurer. Earlier, he was director of the student ministry department from 1949 to 1956.

In a voice sometime choked with emotion, Cole read a statement recounting 40 years in the ministry, including his 26 years with the convention staff. He also has been a pastor in South Carolina, Alabama and Indiana. From 1957 to 1962 he was on the general board staff of North Carolina, first as student director and later as executive secretary of the Council on Christian Education.

The general board's committee on committees will meet within a few days to appoint a search committee. The committee will be asked to recommend an executive secretary-treasurer to the general board in its October 1981 meeting, to be presented to the convention a month later for approval.

Cole can point to a dozen major accomplishments during his term as executive secretary. One in which he expresses keenest interest is the growth in Cooperative Program budget funds from \$5.3 million to a projected \$14.5 million for 1981. Others include the purchase of the entire block on which the Baptist building is located. The grounds have been beautified, parking space doubled, and a Baptist book store building erected.

Cole said he always had wanted "to retire early enough to have energy and time to do something else." He says he enjoys opportunities to preach and to teach and wants also to write and to study. An outdoorsman, he also said he wants to spend more time hunting, fishing and playing golf.

Cole was born in Greenville County, S.C., and was ordained to the ministry there in 1941. He is a graduate of North Greenville College, Furman University and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He received an honorary doctorate from Furman in 1967. He married the former Inez Matthews in 1943 and they have two sons and five grandchildren.

New Right Leader Admits
TV Preachers Recruited

By Stan Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)--A chief spokesman for the new right has confirmed the widespread suspicion that highly visible television evangelists were recruited to the cause of conservative politics by a handful of veteran far-right organizers.

Richard A. Viguerie, invited to debate the involvement of evangelicals in politics before a group of religious communications specialists, identified four such ultraconservative leaders as responsible for putting together the game plan which resulted in the successful recruitment of such electronic superstars as Jerry Falwell and James Robison to the far-right fold.

Besides himself, Viguerie identified the key players as E.E. McAteer, Robert J. Billings and Howard Phillips. Viguerie, the direct mail master fundraiser of new right causes, downplayed his own initial role in the effort, saying the other three actually originated the plan. McAteer, Billings and Phillips "had a vision" that evangelicals could be successfully recruited in 1980 to support conservative causes, including the election of Ronald Reagan as president, he said.

"I was a Paul," he explained, "not one of the original apostles."

McAteer, a member of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., is founder and president of The Roundtable (formerly Religious Roundtable). He is credited with recruiting Robison, the Hurst, Texas, evangelist who along with McAteer put together last August's National Affairs Briefing in Dallas which showcased Reagan and new right causes. McAteer is a veteran right-wing lobbyist in Washington, having served earlier as national field director for the Conservative Caucus, the largest of what critics have labeled "extremist" right-wing organizations.

Billings, who along with Falwell founded Moral Majority, was responsible for recruiting the Lynchburg, Va., electronic preacher. Formerly head of the National Christian Action Coalition, an umbrella group which before last year was the only right-wing religious lobby in Washington, Billings recently left his post as executive director of Moral Majority to join Reagan's campaign staff, where his responsibility is to win evangelical votes for the former California governor.

Phillips, another right-wing veteran, is a former aide to Richard Nixon. He founded and is executive director of the Conservative Caucus.

For months, critics of electronic preachers such as Falwell and Robison have suspected that their political involvement sprang not so much from their own initiative but as a result of a coldly calculated effort by conservative hardliners.

Viguerie's open admission at the National Press Club gathering, however, is believed to be the first public acknowledgement of the strategy.

Viguerie, whose Falls Church, Va.-based direct mail operation has raised millions of dollars for a wide variety of conservative causes, including the Reagan campaign, declared repeatedly that what the new right set out to do was "imitate the left" and rid conservatives of the image of "losers."

"We're tired of being losers," he said.

He added he expects the new right to take over the national government "sometime in the immediate future" or not at all. Unless they are successful in their effort to govern before 1986, he went on, "it's not going to happen."

Viguerie expressed the view that because conservatives during the 1980s will have a "considerable leadership advantage" over liberals, "if we don't do it now (come to power), we never will."

Viguerie's opponent in the debate, Walter F. Fauntroy, the District of Columbia's lone representative in Congress, accused new right leaders of being shrewd manipulators who are "misleading a lot of well-intentioned religious people."

The Baptist pastor, also current chairman of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, said his objections to groups such as Falwell's Moral Majority and McAteer's and Robison's The Roundtable are not based on the political involvement of preachers.

"I am a strong advocate of the vigorous participation of churchmen... in the political process," he said. What he finds objectionable is "the application by the so-called 'Moral Majority' of religious principles to a very narrow range of secondary political issues, while blatantly opposing the application of religious principles to a broad range of primary political issues."

Fauntroy said Christian believers "have a responsibility to advocate the 'whole gospel,'" a term he said "is caught up in our Lord's inaugural address: 'The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because he hath anointed me to preach good news to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.'"

He said "ultra-right wing forces" are taking advantage of "many well-meaning born-again Christians" by using Christianity "against the very concerns for the poor that are at the heart of our Judeo-Christian faith."

The new right's causes, Fauntroy concluded, "clearly reveal why Christ warned his followers... 'Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.'"

In a related development at a time when many political analysts were concluding that the efforts of Falwell, Robison and others were backfiring, 15 leaders representing 22 main-line Christian denominations issued a list of objections to the "religious right" on theological and ethical grounds."

The 15 signed a two-page declaration protesting the claim of the religious right to represent "the moral majority" or the Christian to the exclusion of Christians who disagree with the movement's political views.

Specific objections were raised "to the list of issues which the religious right has identified as the moral agenda facing our nation" and "to the moral criteria that many in the religious right use to elevate candidates for public office."

Also objectionable, the statement went on, are "the assumption that human beings can know with absolute certainty the will of God on particular public policy issues" and "the manner in which some in the religious right are engaging in political activity."

Among those signing the document were three Baptists, Porter W. Routh, interim executive director, Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs; Robert C. Campbell, general secretary, American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.; and C.J. Malloy Jr., general secretary, Progressive National Baptist Convention.

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'Concerned' South Carolina
Pastors Meet, Boost Missions

Baptist Press
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ROCK HILL, S.C.(BP)--A group of 20 to 25 "concerned" South Carolina pastors met at Oakland Baptist Church in Rock Hill to talk about conditions in the Southern Baptist Convention and to urge participation in denominational affairs.

Leading the meeting was Cecil Sherman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Asheville, N.C., and president of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. Sherman recently put together a meeting of 16 pastors from six states in Gatlinburg, Tenn., over the same concerns.

C. David Matthews, pastor of First Baptist Church of Greenville, said the group, representative of every area of South Carolina, was "very difficult to characterize theologically."

"Our concern is not to define any kind of theological position. Our concern is for missions, for the Cooperative Program. We are concerned about a group that, on the basis of a doctrinal position, has strategized a takeover of the convention," Matthews said.

The Greenville pastor noted the main thrust of the group will be to "mobilize messengers from our own churches and other churches to go as messengers to the convention in Los Angeles."

The concern springs from published reports of a meeting addressed by Texas Judge Paul Pressler which detailed strategy for gaining control of the convention and its agencies and institutions through election of presidents committed to the "inerrancy" of the Scripture.

"For about two years I have felt this was not all that serious, that it would go away. But now I have to face the fact it is serious. I feel the future of our denomination is in great jeopardy and some of us have to come to the defense of our Baptist heritage," Matthews said.

He added: "I don't think we can sit by and watch this group, or any group, enforce doctrinal uniformity on all our agencies. If we allow that, we betray our traditions."

The informal group of South Carolinians has called another meeting for the day before the annual meeting of the South Carolina Baptist Convention. It will be in Columbia, but time and place were not announced.

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Midwestern Dedicates
Child Development Center

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Dedication of a Child Development Center highlighted the semi-annual meeting of the board of trustees at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

In a related action, directors took a collection to provide furnishings for one room of the new center as a memorial to seminary president Milton Ferguson's youngest daughter, Jo Catherine, 16, who was killed Oct. 4 in an auto accident.

Creation of a master development plan for the seminary campus and facilities, designed by a professional consultant, was approved by the trustees to support the self-study and long range planning process.

Trustees also authorized the administration to proceed with a feasibility study for the acquisition of a fully-programmed and operational computer system for the seminary, moving Midwestern toward a computer capability by early next year.

The dedication of the Child Development Center, which was built by Cooperative Program funds and gifts from the seminary family, represents the successful completion of the first major fund-raising project at Midwestern and the first step toward a comprehensive program of family life ministry for the seminary.

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Southeastern Seminary
Elects Trustee Officers

Baptist Press
10/23/80

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Businessman Sam D. Allen, a member of Bull Street Baptist Church of Savannah, Ga., has been elected chairman of trustees at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Allen was named as trustees met for their semi-annual meeting.

Other officers include John E. Roberts, pastor of Woodbrook Baptist Church, Baltimore, Md., vice chairman; Henry Finch, pastor of Oakland Baptist Church of Rock Hill, S.C., secretary, and Edgar Wyatt, member of First Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C., treasurer.

During their meeting, trustees were told Southeastern has been awarded a \$29,200 grant by Lilly Endowment Inc., of Indianapolis, Ind., for trustee education and development.

In his report to the trustees, President W. Randall Lolley announced Albert L. Meiburg, dean of the faculty, and John W. Tresch Jr., professor of evangelism, have declined reconsideration for appointment when their terms expire on July 31, 1981.

Meiburg, who also is professor of pastoral theology, has been dean since 1975. He will return to his teaching post following a one-year sabbatical in 1981-82. Tresch has not announced future plans.

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