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Do Special Fund Campaigns
Hurt Cooperative Program?

By Norman Jameson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--State and national Southern Baptist institutions have just completed or are in the midst of special campaigns to raise over \$425 million outside of the Cooperative Program, for 55 years the "lifeline" of Baptist missions and education.

Uneasiness grows among watchkeepers and analysts of Cooperative Program giving that such special campaigns will bleed off vital dollars from the general fund to the high profile agencies that have most heart appeal. The SBC Executive Committee, at its Feb. 16-18 meeting, will receive a report on the naming of a special committee to study the relationship.

The Cooperative Program began in 1925 as the channel through which now 35,600 churches voluntarily contribute for the support of 34 Baptist state conventions, 20 national agencies and institutions, including home and foreign mission boards, six seminaries and other administrative agencies. Previously, special appeals to churches provided major support for the convention's work.

In 1979 CP receipts totaled about \$184 million, or 8.8 percent of churches' \$2.2 billion collection plate income, though contributions were as high as 11.02 percent in 1927 and 10.17 percent in 1961. State conventions used \$120 million and sent \$64 million to support the national boards and agencies.

Until the special committee reports, there is no concrete evidence to determine the effect of special campaigns on Cooperative Program contributions. So the uneasiness is only intuition, as are the confident assertions by development officers that special campaigns actually boost Cooperative Program giving by increasing giving generally. "The more you give, the more you give," is a favorite quote from Owen Cooper, Mississippi layman and former SBC president, used by sponsors of special campaigns.

Cooperative Program receipts have increased only 1.22 percent in constant dollars since 1967. Since then, the number of foreign and home missionaries has increased 34 percent and the programs and staff of all agencies have grown to handle the increased needs of 2.5 million additional Southern Baptists in 1,500 more churches.

As Cooperative Program receipts fall further short of the perceived needs of agencies, more of them depend on development programs to raise additional funds. All Southern Baptist agencies are prohibited by the convention's business and financial plan from approaching churches with requests for funds. They may approach monied individuals they feel may have a special warm spot in their pocketbook for the agency or for a special project the agency has planned.

Its image as the lifeline of missions has always been the Cooperative Program's heart appeal. Appeals for funds to operate the convention or to provide staff for low visibility

commissions generates less excitement. That is why the Foreign Mission Board's recent announcement it would name a development officer and a development council caused some concern.

Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks, aware of his colleagues' sensitivities about development and the Cooperative Program, defends the board's move. "If we reach the day when because of lack of funds we retrench and stop our advance in foreign missions, that will do more to undermine the Cooperative Program than anything," he said. "Foreign missions is the heart of the Cooperative Program. If we ever reach the point where we can't advance, that will raise questions among the rank and file as to the validity of the Cooperative Program."

Editorials in Baptist state newspapers evidence growing concern over the Cooperative Program's future. Former Kentucky Baptist Convention President John T. Dunaway said in a guest editorial in the Western Recorder, "There is only so much money to go around. Therefore, the local church and the Cooperative Program will suffer."

Dunaway and Alabama Baptist Convention Executive Director George E. Bagley feel special campaigns erode Cooperative Program giving. Bagley, whose state was fourth among the 34 conventions in CP giving last year, said, "We cannot double the Cooperative Program by 1985 (a Bold Mission Thrust goal) and twice more by the year 2000 when all around us we are beset with development people and campaigns for endowments and capital funds by all of our agencies. I'm getting tired of trying."

John Scales, vice president for development at the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, who has just been handed a mandate to raise \$20 million for a potential television network, says, "There is more money out there than anyone has been able to tap for Christian causes."

Scales, who feels an "obligation to promote the Cooperative Program" in his work, says, "If we can get people to give for the Lord's causes it will promote more giving and the stronger all our programs will be. There is a joy of giving that encourages them to give more, even if it takes a designated gift to get them started."

"It's counterproductive to put the Cooperative Program on a pedestal and say 'This is what you should give to.' It has no heart appeal."

Bob Desbien, director of public relations for Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, feels seminary development efforts could positively affect Cooperative Program giving because they seek funds from non-Baptist sources, estates and trusts that are untapped by the Cooperative Program in churches.

Midwestern depends on the Cooperative Program for 77 percent of its operating budget. Southern Seminary receives just 49 percent of its operating budget through the Cooperative Program and both mission boards depend on special offerings for more than half of their budgets. The Lottie Moon foreign mission offering and Annie Armstrong home mission offering are integral parts of the boards' budgets and are not included here as special campaigns.

"Trustees don't expect the Cooperative Program to keep up with inflationary pressures," Desbien said. "They looked and said if the Cooperative Program doesn't provide the capital needs, professorships and salary increases we need, what other resources are available?"

Harold C. Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee, which recommends Cooperative Program allocations, recognizes a study may prove that special campaigns benefit CP giving, as the development people say. He and others in SBC leadership positions are just anxious to know something for sure. Currently, he says, "If we're going to believe, as we've said for 55 years, that the Cooperative Program is the main channel for our missions support, let's act like we believe it. Then special campaigns and other designated giving could relate appropriately to the Cooperative Program."

Catherine Allen, assistant to the director of Woman's Missionary Union, who has the primary responsibility to promote the \$67.25 million home and foreign missions offerings this year, says that until a study is made, anyone who says he knows how special campaigns affect CP giving is speculating. Then she succinctly states missions giving theory:

"Missions history shows that around 1900, there was a great attempt in other denominations to tap rich businessmen for missions money. They thought if you ran missions like a business with capital investments, more could be done for the Lord's work. Most of those mission boards are out of commission now. We can never, never get away from the widow's mite as the main foundation of missions support."

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North Central Thrust
Reaches Part of Goal

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SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (BP)--North Central Mission Thrust is moving toward its goal of 3,516 Southern Baptist churches by 1990, participants in the mid-winter meeting of NCMT were told.

R.V. Haygood, executive director of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, told more than 350 persons from the seven north central states that currently there are 2,025 churches in the area, plus 286 chapels.

The goal of the fellowship when it was organized in 1973 was to double the number of Southern Baptist churches in the area by 1990. At the time of organization, there were 1,758 churches and 180 church-type missions.

North Central Mission Thrust includes the state conventions in Michigan, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio and fellowships in Iowa and Minnesota/Wisconsin.

The three-day fellowship meeting featured an array of testimonies by church planters, bivocational pastors and language mission pastors who are involved in starting work in the seven-state area.

Robert J. Hastings, editor of the Illinois Baptist, said: "In previous years, program planners invited nationally known speakers from outside the area. This year, the emphasis

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was on testimonies from grass-roots people in the area who are getting their hands and feet dirty in the actual process of starting new work."

Among those who spoke were Guy Morton, a former Boston Red Sox baseball catcher who has been pastor of a congregation in Wooster, Ohio, for 18 years and supports himself by teaching and coaching at a junior high school.

"Southern Baptists will lose the cutting edge of their growth unless they magnify the work of bivocational pastors," he said.

Another speaker, C.W. Hopson, told how he began a Baptist mission in Broadview, a suburb of Chicago, with 35 persons "including the children."

"All we had to begin with was a desk and chair," the black pastor said. "And at the time I knew practically nothing about Southern Baptists and cared less."

Last year, Hopson baptized 141 converts, received a total of 500 new members and has seen the church grow to one of the largest Southern Baptist congregations in Illinois.

Other testimonies came from Chanh Komavongsa, who was a pastor for 10 years in Laos before resettling in Iowa, and Juan Lujan, pastor of a Spanish congregation in the quad-cities area of Illinois and Iowa.

"Most of our new members are converts who have accepted Christ since coming to the United States," Komavongsa said.

Lujan, who was saved as the result of a gospel tract his son found on a sidewalk in San Antonio, Texas, just six years ago, told how on faith he quit his job and enrolled in the Mexican Baptist Bible Institute. "The tract had been put there by Illinois native Fred Bishop, who was ridiculed by some for thinking that tracts which he scattered on the sidewalk and 'prayed over' would lead anyone to Christ," Lujan said.

"Twenty months after I found Christ, I was a pastor, and when the call came from the quad-cities area of Iowa and Illinois to start a new Spanish-speaking congregation, I came by faith," he said.

In a closing message, Ernest E. Mosley, executive director of the Illinois Baptist State Association (convention) and chairman of the NCMT steering committee, said if the 52 million residents of the seven-state area are to be reached for Christ, it will not come from second-class gifts of God's people.

"We can't reach the masses by merely giving our money," Mosley said. "The first thing God wants from every person is the person himself. It's dedicated people who will reach indifferent people. If we offer our eyes and ears to God as daily gifts, he will give us eyes that really see and ears that really hear."

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Photographer Rutledge's
Parents Die On Same Day

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. (BP)--Jesse and Dora Rutledge, parents of Foreign Mission Board photographer Don Rutledge, died within three hours of each other Jan. 13.

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Mrs. Rutledge, 75, apparently suffered a heart attack at her home near Murfreesboro, and died in a local hospital. Rutledge, 78, died about three hours later in Nashville where he had been hospitalized for several days.

Don Rutledge, a former free-lance magazine photographer, joined the staff of the Foreign Mission Board in mid-1980 after having been with the Home Mission Board 12 years. He is credited with helping advance Southern Baptist photojournalism and has won numerous religious and secular awards for his work.

Rutledge, an ordained minister, helped conduct funeral services for his parents.

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Young Cattlemen
Fight World Hunger

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ITASCA, Texas (BP)--Faced with the ever-expanding tragedy of world hunger, many Christians feel helpless to fight back, paralyzed by the problem's sheer enormity.

But Texas cattlemen Brian Bassett, 8, and Allen Bassett, 11, have joined forces to give two of their most valuable possessions to help feed hungry people. They each own a cow, given to them by their grandparents. The calves produced each year by the two cows are raised and sold, and the profits go into a college education fund for the boys.

Last year gospel musicians Bob and Jan Salley challenged members of Central Baptist Church in Itasca to participate in their demonstration World Hunger Relief Farm, and the Bassett boys responded. The Salleys operate the 17-acre farm in Waco where they develop simple, effective food growth projects for poor Third World areas with cattle, goats, rabbits and assorted crops.

"Nobody coaxed the boys at all," recalled their father. "This was their own idea. They just came to me and said, 'Dad, we want to give our calves to world hunger.'"

Brian explained: "I felt real sad for the people that don't have any money or food. I thought we better help out."

The two cows' offspring will be raised and sold to support overseas construction of small, resource-efficient farms in poor nations.

The two young cattlemen hope their act of giving will motivate other Southern Baptists to reach out to the poor through the hunger farm, as well as the Foreign Mission Board's growing relief ministries.

"It's not fair for us to have all the food," Allen said. "Don't hungry people deserve some?"

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