



## **-- BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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### **New Building for SBC Gets Preliminary Okay**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Detailed planning for a \$6.5 million office building to house the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee was authorized during the committee's September meeting.

After hearing a proposal by William A. Fortune, a Knoxville, Tenn., builder and vice chairman of the committee, members approved, without opposing vote, proceeding with plans for the structure, which, if approved, would replace the current SBC Building at 460 James Robertson Parkway.

Fortune was named chairman of the SBC Building Long Range Study Committee in February 1980. Serving with him are current Executive Committee members Dotson M. Nelson Jr. of Birmingham, Ala., and Rodney Landes, of El Dorado, Ark.

The action approving making the detailed study also named W. Dewey Presley of Dallas and the "president of the SBC" to the committee. The current SBC president is Bailey E. Smith of Del City, Okla.

In making the presentation for the study committee, Fortune told the Executive Committee the current building has "served the SBC well for 18 or 20 years, but, like people, it gets old and can no longer serve the needs for which it was created."

After a year and a half of study--which included questionnaires to the five SBC agencies which share the current 44,000-square-foot building--Fortune said it was determined a new building was needed which should contain at least twice as much floor space, and would cost in the range of \$6 to \$7 million.

"I wondered how the SBC could get such a building in our lifetime," he said, adding that construction costs currently are rising one percent per month, or about \$65,000, on a \$6.5 million building.

"In April or May (of 1981) I came on the idea where our company would design and build and then lease the building to the SBC," he said.

Fortune, president of Rentenbach Engineering Co., of Knoxville, told members of plans to finance the building with Industrial Revenue Bonds, lease it to the Executive Committee for 20 years at an estimated \$12 per square foot annually, and then, at the end of the period, sell it to the SBC for \$1.

In order to allow such a transaction with Fortune, the Executive Committee approved an allowable exception to the SBC Business and Financial Plan, which says agencies "shall

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refrain from entering any business transaction with a trustee or employee" as "normal operating procedure."

The bylaws allow exceptions "at the discretion of the board of trustees in any case wherein it appears that a commodity or service is unavailable on a more favorable basis from any other source, or a commodity or service, at the discretion of the board, is found to be in the best interest of the agency."

Members, however, questioned Fortune about the possibility of conflict of interest.

In response, Fortune said: "The only thing our firm would get would be the tax shelter. Translated, that means we can depreciate the building and use it as a tax shelter. Our accountant says that means we can use \$1.5 to \$1.6 million for around 10 years."

He added current rental in Nashville is \$14 a square foot "bare floor," and \$16 to \$18 finished, and he said he believes he can provide finished space for about \$10 to \$12 per square foot.

"If somebody can give you a better deal, I'll get on his bandwagon. I am only interested in serving the Lord the best way I can," Fortune said.

The new building would be built on a tract adjacent to the Baptist Sunday School Board complex at Ninth Avenue North and Commerce Streets in downtown Nashville.

At the September meeting, committee members accepted the tract, valued at an estimated \$400,000, as a gift from the BSSB. The offer, made by BSSB trustees in their August meeting, is contingent on the construction of a building at the site.

For the committee, Fortune presented preliminary plans, prepared by Earl Swensson Associates Inc., a Nashville architectural firm, which calls for two levels of parking, three floors of meeting rooms and four floors of office space.

Fortune said he believes the design "represents the space we will need to take us into the 21st century."

Comparing the buildings, he said the current structure, which cost \$1.2 million when it was built in 1961, has 44,649 square feet of floor space and 60 parking spaces. The proposed building would have 81,756 square feet of floor space and 115 parking spaces.

Fortune said the current structure was built at a time when the SBC Building housed 40 employees, and the 212-seat auditorium was sufficient. Now, 80 persons work in the SBC Building and participants overflow into the halls for Executive Committee meetings.

Fortune estimated the current building is worth "around \$1.5 million" on "today's real estate market."

Currently, the building is paid for and costs about \$6 to \$8 per square foot per year for maintenance and utilities.

Housed in the building are the Executive Committee, the Christian Life Commission, Education Commission, Stewardship Commission, Southern Baptist Foundation and the Seminary External Education Division.

'Charitable Immunity'  
Doctrine Struck Down

By Larry Crisman

COLUMBIA, S. C. (BP)--Churches, institutions and agencies of the South Carolina Baptist Convention are no longer immune to law suits "in tort" under a recent ruling of the South Carolina Supreme Court which abolished the doctrine of "charitable immunity."

A. Harold Cole, executive secretary-treasurer of the state convention, said the convention's churches and institutions which do not have adequate liability insurance coverage protecting them against such suits should take steps to obtain the protection.

"In handing down this ruling," Cole explained, "the court could not have been more specific. This means churches and other charitable-type institutions will be subject to suit for incidents which have occurred within the last six years."

Preston Callison, attorney for the General Board of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, explained that law suits "in tort" are those arising from willful or negligent acts.

"Although I do not expect a sudden surge of suits against our churches and institutions," said Cole, "we can expect that the number of suits may increase, and the amounts of the judgments could grow in the next few years."

"This will probably result in much higher liability rates, and churches and other institutions must inaugurate loss-control programs which will minimize the occurrences that give rise to tort liability."

"Unfortunately, those churches which do not have liability insurance probably cannot obtain it for the period prior to the present date and may have to respond to judgment for past occurrences."

Before the court decision, churches, colleges and other charitable-type institutions were protected because the doctrine held that such charities could not be sued for inflicting injury on recipients of the charity or on other members of the public, Callison explained.

The South Carolina Supreme Court decided to abolish the doctrine after a \$5,000 suit was filed on behalf of 11-year-old Matthew Barlow Fitzer of Columbia.

The boy allegedly suffered a head injury while attending a session at Camp Greenville of the Greenville Young Men's Christian Association.

The injury reportedly occurred during unsupervised "horseplay" as a result of the Greenville YMCA's alleged failure to provide adequate supervision.

Camp attorneys maintained the camp could not be sued under the "charitable immunity" doctrine.

In a 4-1 decision, the court termed the doctrine "antiquated," "archaic" and an "anachronish."

The only dissenting justice was Bruce Littlejohn of Spartanburg, who said, "In my view, whether charitable organizations should be sued or not and, if so, under what circumstances, involves a matter of policy which should be dealt with by the legislature and not by the courts."

Callison said petition for a rehearing has been filed with the South Carolina Supreme Court. He said the General Board of South Carolina Baptist Convention may have an opportunity to participate in the rehearing.

Foreign Board Cables Funds  
For Polish Hunger Relief

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The Foreign Mission Board released nearly \$303,000 in hunger relief funds Sept. 18 for use in five countries, including \$120,000 for Poland.

The action came just two days after the board earmarked another \$600,500 in hunger and relief funds at its September meeting for use in 27 projects in 17 countries.

The \$120,000 for hunger relief in Poland was cabled to John David Hopper, Southern Baptist fraternal representative to eastern Europe, according to John R. Cheyne, the board's consultant for relief ministries.

The remaining \$183,000 went to hunger programs in Tanzania, Uganda, Haiti and Peru, Cheyne said, for such efforts as water supply, poultry projects, agricultural projects, a food-for-work irrigation project and other developmental ministries.

The board's response to Polish needs came after conversations with Hopper and the Baptist World Alliance, said Cheyne, who also serves on the BWA's relief committee.

Cheyne said Hopper, who confirmed the need in conversation with Polish Baptist leaders, will distribute the funds in cooperation with West German Baptists for purchase of grain, oil for cooking, canned goods and other items.

Three board representatives were to meet as soon as possible with European Baptist leaders in Germany to discuss what to purchase in Europe and what to ship from the United States.

The meeting participants were to include J.D. Hughey, area director for Europe and the Middle East, already on a European mission trip; his field associate, Isam Ballenger and Hopper.

"We hope to continue to do everything possible to move quickly but carefully to speed up distribution of hunger and relief funds to meet the pressing needs around the world," Cheyne said.

"We hope Southern Baptists, as we approach World Hunger Day, Oct. 11, will not only recognize the continuing needs of starving people but be willing to alter lifestyles to help meet those needs."

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O'Connor Confirmed As  
First Woman Justice

By Stan Hastey

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WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Senate made history here Sept. 21 when it unanimously confirmed Sandra Day O'Connor as the first woman justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

She will take her seat as the 102nd justice of the nation's high court when it returns to the bench Oct. 5.

Throughout four hours of discussion on the historic appointment of the former Arizona judge, liberal and conservative senators alike alternately heaped praise on O'Connor and President Reagan for appointing her.

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As time for the vote neared, the only question remaining was whether any senator would dissent from the overwhelming tide of O'Connor support. Most attention centered on freshman Sen. Jeremiah Denton, R-Ala., the only member of the judiciary committee who refused to recommend confirmation to the full Senate.

Denton, who along with two other first term Republican senators, Charles E. Grassley of Iowa and John P. East of North Carolina, filed a formal statement attached to the judiciary committee's official report objecting to O'Connor's vague answers to certain questions posed during confirmation hearings earlier this month.

All three newcomers, products of the new right movement within the Republican Party, were specifically upset that the 51-year-old O'Connor declined to disclose how she might vote in any new abortion controversies coming to the court.

But after President Reagan made several eleventh-hour telephone calls to senators who might be wavering, the unanimous 99-0 vote was recorded. The only absentee was Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., who was reportedly unable to get back to Washington from a meeting in time for the historic vote.

Appearing with Senate leaders, including Vice President George Bush minutes after the vote, O'Connor said, "I'm absolutely overjoyed. My hope is that 10 years from now, after I've been across the street and worked for a while, that they'll all feel glad they gave me this wonderful vote."

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Assault Claims Life  
Of Baptist Woman

Baptist Press  
9/23/81

ATLANTA (BP)--The daughter-in-law of a prominent Southern Baptist pastor in Atlanta was murdered and her co-worker severely injured during a lunchtime assault in a Decatur park Sept. 21.

Jean Bulce, 35, daughter-in-law of Lester Bulce, pastor of Rehoboth Baptist Church, was found dead in a culvert in Glen Lake Park following the midday attack on the two women as they enjoyed lunch in the park.

Authorities said two armed men in shorts and ski masks attacked Bulce and Bettye Ann Miles while they were eating lunch. Miles escaped the assailants by climbing a fence into the yard of a home near the park, and was admitted to a local hospital and listed in fair condition. She had been beaten around the face and suffered from internal bleeding.

Authorities suspect robbery as a possible motive and are now looking for two black men seen fleeing the park about the time of the midday assault.

Bulce was a member of Rehoboth Baptist Church, where her father-in-law has been pastor for 34 years. She participated as a recreation director in the church's large sports program, coaching soccer and playing basketball and softball. Church staff reacted with dismay and said they were "shocked and saddened" by her death.

Lester Bulce has been active in Georgia Baptist life. He was vice president of the Georgia Baptist Convention from 1977-78, and is on the convention executive committee.

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First \$100 Million  
Budget Recommended

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The first \$100 million budget in the history of the Southern Baptist Convention will be recommended to the 1982 annual meeting of the denomination.

A 1982-83 Cooperative Program Budget Goal of \$106 million was voted during the September meeting of the SBC Executive Committee, including a basic operating budget of \$96,635,000; a capital needs budget of \$3,365,000, and a Bold Mission Thrust Challenge section of \$6 million.

Only the overall goal was adopted in the September meeting. A detailed budget built around the goal will be considered during the February 1982 meeting for presentation to the annual meeting in New Orleans in June.

In addition to adopting the recommendation, Executive Committee members also gave approval to a proposal to develop detailed plans for a \$6.5 million office building to house the Executive Committee and other SBC agencies.

During the three-day meeting, the committee also elected officers and authorized a report on "ascending and descending liability" of the agencies.

The proposal for a new office building came during a report of the SBC Building long range study committee, chaired by William A. Fortune, a Knoxville, Tenn., builder and vice chairman of the Executive Committee.

In connection with the proposal, the members also accepted the gift of a building site at Ninth Avenue North and Commerce Street, adjacent to the Baptist Sunday School Board, from trustees of the BSSB.

BSSB trustees made the land offer during their August meeting, contingent on the construction of an SBC office building on the site.

Fortune, president of Rentenbach Engineering Co., offered to develop, design and build an office building for the Executive Committee on the site, and to lease it back at a cost of approximately \$10 to \$12 per square foot annually. He also said the building will be given to the SBC at the end of 20 years for \$1.

Executive Committee members, who authorized an allowed exception to the denomination's Business and Financial Plan to allow the committee to do business with one of its trustees, told Fortune's committee to proceed with plans and to report back with complete details in February.

The committee elected John Dunaway, pastor of First Baptist Church of Corbin, Ky., as its chairman, replacing J. Howard Cobble, who became ineligible to serve when he moved from Georgia to Kentucky. Dunaway had been vice chairman.

Also elected were Fortune, vice chairman, and Lois Wenger, of Orlando, Fla., as recording secretary. Wenger replaced Donald Gent, of Evansville, Ind., who resigned to become chairman of the business and finance subcommittee.

A five-member committee "from within and without" the Executive Committee was authorized to oversee a study of the total implications of current legal problems of ascending and descending liability of churches, state conventions, the SBC and its agencies.

Ascending and descending liability is described as "the concept that the parent organization is legally liable for the actions of any subsidiary corporations or related institutions, even apart from any active conduct of the parent organization."

The study committee was authorized a budget of \$35,000, with \$5,000 from the Executive Committee and the remainder to be requested from SBC agencies and state conventions.

The question of ascending liability emerged for Southern Baptists in a lawsuit filed by an employee against the Baptist Brotherhood Commission, also naming the SBC as the parent organization of the Memphis-based agency.

The administrative and convention arrangements subcommittee reported it is continuing to study a proposal to grant agency status to Baptist Press, the denomination's news service, and said it will make a full report in February.

The proposal, made in a motion at the 1981 SBC in Los Angeles by Knoxville pastor Jimmy Stroud, was referred to the Executive Committee for study and a report to the 1982 annual meeting.

Messengers also voted to recommend to the 1982 SBC a change in the formula by which the Baptist Sunday School Board financially supports the SBC. The new formula, according to BSSB President Grady C. Cothen, allows escalation of the contribution in ratio to income of the board.

Members also accepted \$150,000 from the BSSB, \$100,000 of which will be allocated to the SBC operating reserve and the remainder to the operating budget.

In other action, committee members:

--Approved a \$1,832,500 budget for 1981-82;

--Authorized the lease of an automobile, including maintenance cost and operational expense, for Executive Secretary-Treasurer Harold C. Bennett;

--Heard a message from SBC President Bailey E. Smith;

--Heard reports from the 20 SBC agencies on past accomplishments and future goals.