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83-191

Southern Baptists React To Meese Hunger Views

By Stan Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)--Presidential counselor Edwin Meese III's Dec. 8 statement that the government has no "authoritative figures" demonstrating there are hungry children in America has drawn sharp reactions from Southern Baptist leaders active in hunger relief programs.

In an interview with wire service correspondents, Meese, President Reagan's personal lawyer and one of his principal political advisers, expressed doubt "that there are hungry children" in the United States. "I've heard a lot of anecdotal stuff," he added, "but I haven't heard any authoritative figures...."

He labeled reports hunger in America is increasing "allegations which have been unsubstantiated until now," and added "some of the allegations are purely political."

Paul R. Adkins, director of Christian social ministries for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta, labelled as "downright silly" Meese's comment that "people go to soup kitchens because the food is free and...that's easier than paying for it."

Adkins added: "The man (Meese) is really insensitive to the needs of human beings during this time of economic crisis."

The fact the soup kitchens exist, Adkins said, points to the extent of the hunger problem. Meese, Adkins added, "would have been better off waiting for the presidential commission's report (on hunger in the U.S.) rather than spouting off about something he did not have the facts in hand to substantiate."

W. David Lockard, director of organization for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission in Nashville, commented: "At the season of good tidings and great joy, here is more 'bad news' from the administration. The poor and hungry have not heard much good news from the Reagan administration and it is extremely bad news when a top presidential aide declares the poor and hungry do not exist."

Lockard, who has special responsibilities in hunger alleviation and education, said the soup kitchens are "not an experience anyone would choose to go through if they did not really need the food."

Statements like Meese's, Lockard added, "may provide a key to understanding the callousness and lack of concern which has frequently been displayed by policies and budget priorities of the administration. Certainly they (the administration) are not compelled to care for the non-existent."

Two other Southern Baptists, laywoman Patricia Ayres, a member of First Baptist Church, San Antonio, Texas, and Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs Executive Director James M. Dunn, helped draft a reaction statement by Bread for the World, a nondenominational citizens movement which seeks governmental initiatives to combat hunger at home and abroad.

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Bread for the World's statement, adopted at a quarterly executive committee meeting Dec. 13, challenged the Reagan administration to implement a 1981 law establishing a system of nutrition monitoring for low income Americans. Such monitoring, the Washington-based organization declared, "could answer Meese's questions and tell the nation, once and for all, what many church groups already know and what many surveys have already revealed: hunger is very real in the U.S."

The statement also said: "Although Bread for the World differs sharply with...Meese's statement...we welcome the attention he has drawn to this national tragedy." Part of the "tragedy," says Bread for the World, is the jump in 1982 to 34 million Americans living below the poverty line, while only 21 million benefit from the federal food stamp program.

Ayres, an activist laywoman who also serves on the SBC Christian Life Commission, told Baptist Press "reports of dramatic increases in the number of people seeking assistance from public and private food programs, including those in our churches, studies made by numbers of groups, as well as government statistics, attest to hunger as a growing reality in the U.S."

She challenged churches to help alleviate conditions "by providing food, by assisting those in need to take advantage of the programs for which they are eligible and by encouraging the government to strengthen its programs."

Dunn, a board member of Bread for the World since 1976, issued a statement declaring "most of us need no more studies to convince us hunger is rampant in this land of plenty. Serious initiatives dealing with hunger must come from the White House."

He said further that "with the national elections in 1984 all Americans should be interested in public policy affecting hunger. It is healthy for all citizens to know where the candidates stand on this issue."

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Presidential Message Asks
Americans To Pray For Peace

Baptist Press
12/15/83

WASHINGTON (BP)--Following is President Reagan's Christmas message to the nation:

It is a very special pleasure for Nancy and me to extend warmest greetings and best wishes to all of you during this most joyous of holiday seasons.

This festive occasion is celebrated in many different ways. We exchange gifts, attend church services, decorate our homes and Christmas trees, and enjoy a family dinner. But perhaps the tradition that most warms the heart is the sound of Christmas music.

Of all the songs ever sung at Christmastime, the most wonderful of all was the song of exaltation heard by the shepherds while tending their flocks on the night of Christ's birth. An angel of the Lord appeared to them and said: "Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of voices praising the Heavenly Father and singing: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.'"

Sometimes, in the hustle and bustle of holiday preparations we forget that the true meaning of Christmas was given to us by the angelic host that holy night long ago. Christmas is the commemoration of the birth of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, whose message would truly be one of good tidings and great joy, peace and good will. During this glorious festival let us renew our determination to follow His example.

Won't all of you join with Nancy and me in a prayer for peace and good will. May a feeling of love and cheer fill the hearts of everyone throughout this holiday season and in the coming year.

We hope this Christmas will be especially wonderful and that it will usher in a new year of peace and prosperity.

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Chapel Exceeds Lottie Moon Goal
In Show Of Sacrificial Giving

GRANDVIEW BECKLEY, W.Va. (BP)--A young congregation with only four members who hold full-time jobs exceeded its Lottie Moon offering goal of \$104.44 by 15 percent.

Gifts given by the 28 members of First Southern Baptist Chapel of Grandview Beckley totaled \$120, about the same as one-third of the mission's monthly budget.

The chapel, about 65 miles from Charleston, W.Va., is in a county beset by unemployment. The original goal was \$60, but Pastor Lawrence Stewart challenged members to try to give \$3.73 each, the cost, per second, of supporting Southern Baptists' world mission program.

On Sunday, Dec. 4, members staged a missions march down the aisle at the beginning of the service. When the gifts were counted, they far exceeded that goal.

"We're a very missions-minded church because we are a mission ourselves," Stewart said. "We have received support from the Home Mission Board, the Annie Armstrong offering and churches in our sister state of North Carolina."

The chapel was begun 18 months ago by Immanuel Baptist Church in Princeton, W.Va., about 45 miles away.

The congregation, in setting its original goal of \$60, was increasing its offering by 15 percent over last year. Gifts this year represent more than a 100 percent increase over last year's goal.

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Jack E. Brymer Elected
Florida Witness Editor

Baptist Press
12/15/83

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)--Jack E. Brymer, managing editor of the Alabama Baptist since 1967, has been elected editor of the Florida Baptist Witness, newsjournal of the Florida Baptist Convention.

Brymer succeeds Edgar R. Cooper March 1, 1984, as editor of the 97,000 circulation weekly publication. Cooper, editor since January 1971, will retire at the end of February.

The announcement of Brymer's election came from Carroll U. Kendrick Jr., chairman of the five-member Florida Baptist Witness Commission, which also served as the search committee.

Brymer, a native of Jefferson County, Ala., has a bachelor of arts degree from Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., and a master of arts in journalism degree from the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa.

He is a member of a number of professional organizations, including Sigma Delta Chi, Society of Professional Journalists, Public Relations Society of America, Baptist Public Relations Association, Alabama Press Association, Birmingham Press Club, Alabama Historical Association and the Alabama Baptist Historical Society.

He served a six year term on the Jefferson County (Birmingham) Board of Education.

Brymer was reared in the home of a bivocational pastor and was himself ordained to the ministry in 1965 by First Baptist Church of Graysville, Ala., where he was minister of music and later associate pastor. He also has been pastor of Westside Baptist Church of Birmingham.

Brymer and his wife, Shirley, have three children, Jack, Jr., 24; Vicki, 22, and Carissa, 14. Shirley is a registered nurse who works in the cardiac care unit of the Baptist Medical Center-Princeton.

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state newspapers by Baptist Press.

Virginia Baptist Floods
Navy With Christmas Cookies

By Ron Sauder

BOSTON, Va. (BP) --This small Virginia community was turned into a virtual funnel for chocolate chip, peanut butter, chocolate, oatmeal, raisin and sugar cookies in early December.

Nancy Lancaster estimates she assembled 10,000 pounds of cookies, all neatly packaged in fried chicken boxes.

Then an Army National Guard contingent carted the stack of bulging boxes which Lancaster calculated measured 10 by 10 by 5 feet to Norfolk for shipment to the U.S.S. Independence, an aircraft carrier stationed off Lebanon. William Lancaster Jr., 22, is a troubleshooter for an airframe shop on the carrier.

"We didn't do it just for him. We did it for all of them," said his mother, who has spearheaded three mass cookie shipments in the last year to U.S. troops in the Mideast.

The Southern Baptist woman was inspired to start the shipments at a world mission conference. "We had some real good speakers, and they gave us some good ideas, and I just couldn't see putting it all to waste."

Many people and churches are involved in the latest project, primarily churches from five Southern Baptist associations in the state. The collection point was Mount Lebanon Baptist Church in Boston, Va., where Lancaster's husband is pastor.

She said the chaplain on the Independence calls her the "cookie lady." She does not seem to mind. Her son knew she was at work on another shipment, but didn't know his ship was the intended target.

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Lockard Urges Support
For Human Needs Bill

By Tim Fields

Baptist Press
12/15/83

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--A Southern Baptist hunger specialist is urging support for a newly introduced House bill which would place a one-year moratorium on increases in U.S. military aid to foreign governments and would increase development programs to provide food, jobs and health assistance to the world's needy.

W. David Lockard, director of world hunger education and action programs for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, said the Human Needs and World Security Bill (H.R. 4440) is a good bill which deserves the strong support of Southern Baptists.

"The bill introduced by a bipartisan group of United States Representatives will establish priorities and moral values which seek to reverse the unparalleled world-wide arms buildup which robs the hungry and needy and works against justice and stability in the world," he said.

"Military and military related aid has been the fastest growing item on the national budget for the past three years," Lockard said. "Military aid has increased from \$5.3 billion in 1981 to \$9.2 billion in 1984, while aid to meet human needs has increased a mere 10 percent which is less than the rate of inflation."

Lockard said H.R. 4440 would put a ceiling on military and military related aid with an expected savings of nearly \$1 billion in U.S. budget funds.

"Under provisions of the bill, \$220 million would be channeled to foreign development and programs that directly benefit the world's poorest people," he explained.

Funds redirected by the bill would be used for health programs, U.S. emergency food aid programs and programs designed to help children and the world's most needy people.

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"As responsible Christians, Baptists should voice their concerns to those who represent us in Washington," Lockard urged. "Arms manufacturers constantly lobby for accelerated arms trade with other nations. It is time for Congressmen to hear from their constituents on this important bill," he said.

"Every minute, 24 hours a day, children die for lack of food and inexpensive medicines and every minute the world's military budget absorbs \$1.3 million of the public treasury," he added.

Lockard said Southern Baptists and other concerned Christians should support the human needs bill for three main reasons.

"First," he said, "our nation is obligated to extend the kind of aid which meets pressing human needs and furthers the cause of justice and human rights.

"Military governments which employ military solutions to complex socio-economic problems have frequently repressed human rights. Almost one-half of the governments in developing countries are under military control and many are using military arms against their own citizens. Such repression leads to growing unrest and instability," Lockard warned.

Second, the international arms trade tends to work against peace and stability, he said. "Instead of buying security, arms transfers have aggravated economic and social insecurity in the Third World by draining precious foreign exchange, natural resources and human talent from basic human needs.

"Third," Lockard continued, "until the mushrooming arms sales are brought under control, Third World citizens will continue to suffer from the excessive burden of spending multiplied millions of dollars each year on weapons. These people may be better armed," he said, "but they will also have more poverty, sickness and hunger."

Lockard said concerned and informed Southern Baptists can play a major role in helping to redirect our national priorities and in seeking to offer desperately needed aid for human needs rather than military weapons.

"Love and justice challenge us to work on behalf of this legislation which can represent a significant step toward peace with justice," he said.

Lockard urged Southern Baptists to write a letter, telephone and make a personal visit to the U.S. Representative from their congressional district.

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Catholics, Southern Baptists
Share Educational Purpose

By Lonnie Wilkey

Baptist Press
12/15/83

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Southern Baptists and Roman Catholics travel different roads on doctrinal issues, but Christian higher education provides an intersection.

Alice Gallin, executive director of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, addressed approximately 100 Southern Baptist educators during the midyear meeting of the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools in New Orleans.

The Roman Catholic educator told Baptist representatives the purpose of Christian higher education is to provide an environment which allows students to search for truth.

"Let us make clear to the students--as to ourselves and our faculties--we are interested above all in truth. The central meaning, in our lives and in theirs, is authenticity...to be what we are and to know things in their reality," she said.

Gallin said it is imperative for Christian educational institutions to integrate knowledge and values and listed the four values a student should have upon leaving a Christian college--prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude.

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Prudence, according to Gallin, is the link between the academic and the non-academic. All opportunities, in non-academic areas, where students work closely with adult role models become a means of growth in prudence. "Students assemble their value systems from basketball coaches as much as from theology teachers, perhaps more," she said.

Another important moral virtue, she said, is temperance. "Temperance keeps us from turning desires into needs and helps us to enjoy God's gifts without depriving others of them."

She noted the major problems of today's society--violence, alcohol and drug abuse and greed--all stem from a lack of temperance.

It makes one wonder, she said, if education has made any impact on people's behavior "when men and women rush out to buy Cabbage Patch dolls at outrageous prices, almost trampling others to death in order to secure one."

Finally, Gallin said, students must leave Christian colleges with fortitude--the courage to stand for what is right. "If truth is important, suffering for it is probably inevitable in some form or other."

Gallin concluded "education is a gift and the ministry of higher education is a share in the process of gift-giving."

"The Christian educator must have enormous trust in the process of education and must, in the last analysis, hope against hope God will work wonders in His own time."

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Retirement Frees Rebers
For Work in New Zealand

By Bill Webb

Baptist Press
12/15/83

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Foreign Mission Board Vice President Sid Reber and his wife, Alwilda, came to retirement just in time to take a new assignment as church planters in New Zealand.

Board members established a formal fraternal relationship with the Baptist Union of New Zealand during the same meeting they honored the couple for seven years of missionary service in Singapore and his 14 as vice president of the Office of Management Services.

Reber retires Jan. 31 and beginning April 1, the Rebers will spend two years under the New Zealand union to establish a church in a small but growing area on the nation's North Island. They will work alongside Pastor Doug Patrick of nearby New Plymouth Baptist Church, sponsor of the new congregation.

"This is an area which is growing because of oil exploration off the coast," Reber explained. "We will be working with a small nucleus of believers who are in that area. They have six or seven couples there who are willing to start the work."

Under the agreement linking the board and the Baptist union, New Zealand will not be considered a mission field. Baptist work there is well-developed, dating to 1851. The union was established in 1882 and the Baptist Missionary Society of New Zealand, which appoints home and overseas missionaries, was organized three years later.

The relationship will facilitate sending personnel to the country for partnership missions and other projects.

Bill Wakefield, the board's director for South and Southeast Asia, is elated the Rebers are going to New Zealand. "They have the background and understanding and the gifts we want for our first representatives there," he said.

"We feel the same sense of excitement we felt when we went to Singapore (as missionary associates in 1962)," Reber said. "It's the excitement of walking through a new door and walking through that door in faith."

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"We both feel we have plenty of energy. Our health is excellent. We have no reason to just sit," he said. "As long as we have energy to do whatever the Lord wants us to do, we want to do it."

Throughout their 40 years of marriage, Mrs. Reber says they've tried to maintain the same philosophy in their relationship to God: "We're available."

That philosophy led them to Singapore, then to board offices in Richmond, Va., and is again leading them overseas.

Before they were sent overseas by the board 21 years ago, Reber logged 22 years with the U.S. government, including two years as an Air Force navigator in World War II and stints with the Veteran's Administration, Civil Service Commission, War Department (later the Department of Defense) and the Internal Revenue Service.

While he was regional training officer for the IRS in Dallas, the couple was active in Gaston Avenue Baptist Church.

"There were a number of missionaries out of that church serving on the field," Reber recalls. "We would talk with them when they came home on furlough and we became very interested in foreign missions and very concerned about it."

But missions seemed like a pipe dream. "We thought there would be no opportunity for us to go because I was not a preacher or a medical doctor," he said.

They read about the need for business managers and felt they could serve that way. But by then they were beyond the age of career appointment. Their door of opportunity finally swung open when the board employed them under the newly adopted missionary associate plan in 1962.

They moved to Singapore, where he was business manager and treasurer for the organization of Southern Baptist missionaries in Singapore and Malaysia. They set up an MK (missionary kid) dorm for children of missionaries in Indonesia and Malaysia who attended the American school in Singapore. And they were the houseparents.

They got their church-planting experience when the mission asked them to plant an English-language church in Singapore. They visited prospects for two months and arranged teachers for Sunday school classes. The first Sunday, 57 people were present at what is today International Baptist Church.

At a dinner honoring the Rebers, FMB President R. Keith Parks said two qualities particularly characterize them. One is humility. "They express praise to the Lord rather than pride in oneself." The other, he said, is extravagance in the areas of personal witness and encouragement to others. "They probably have driven more miles to serve people than anyone else on the staff."

The Rebers admit they are frequently away from their own church to speak and sing in others. She usually accompanies him on the piano, something she has done since shortly after they met as teen-agers.

Since they met, they have prayed and read the Bible together, he adds. For the past several years they have gotten up at 5 a.m. for devotional time together. "We share things together and I believe it has strengthened our marriage as well as our individual relationships with the Lord."

To them, going halfway around the world to start a church after retirement is no sacrifice. "There really isn't any reason that hundreds of other couples couldn't do what we're getting ready to do," Mrs. Reber said. "I wish they would and know the joy and excitement and fulfillment that comes from launching out."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Southern Baptist Foundation
Reports Record Year

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--A record increase of \$5,623,135 in the assets of the Southern Baptist Foundation was reported to the directors at their annual meeting Dec. 6-7.

At the end of the agency's fiscal year Sept. 30 total assets were \$34,808,916, reflecting a 19.3 percent increase over Sept. 30, 1982.

Hollis E. Johnson III, executive secretary-treasurer, said the asset was due largely to additional funds transferred by other Southern Baptist Convention agencies for management as a result of "documented invested performance over two market cycles."

The year also produced a record income of \$2,784,583, achieved despite sharply lower average interest rates.

Three Nashville men were elected officers of the board of directors. Investment banker Morris Early was re-elected president; businessman John Gifford was elected vice president and banker William H. Coles Jr. was elected secretary.

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Mandatory Social Security
Examined By Senate Panel

By Larry Chesser

Baptist Press
12/15/83

WASHINGTON (BP)--Independent pastors and representatives of private Christian schools urged the Senate Finance Committee to reexamine a 1983 law making Social Security participation mandatory for non-profit organizations and their employees beginning Jan. 1, 1984.

The change from optional to mandatory Social Security coverage for non-profit organizations--including religious ones--was part of the large reform package Congress enacted in March to bolster the nation's financially-troubled retirement system.

Several witnesses at the hearing told Finance Committee Chairman Robert J. Dole, R-Kan., mandatory Social Security coverage for non-ministerial employees of churches violates the First Amendment's religious liberty protections by requiring churches to pay the employer's share of Social Security.

Another witness, Edgar D. Whitcomb, executive assistant to the president of Accelerated Christian Education, Lewisville, Texas, charged mandatory coverage for churches would jeopardize the continuation of their schools.

Lewis submitted affidavits from 23 pastors from throughout the country stating required Social Security participation would "seriously jeopardize the financial status and economic condition" of the schools they operate.

After the hearing, Dole met with several witnesses and agreed to establish a task force, including a representative of groups opposed to the change, to try to find a compromise. On possibility, a Finance Committee aide told Baptist Press, would allow non-profit church groups to treat employees as self-employed for Social Security purposes, avoiding the necessity of churches' paying the employer's share of Social Security payments.

During the hearing, National Association of Evangelicals general counsel Forrest Montgomery urged the panel to make coverage of church employees optional again, or to treat employees as self-employed for Social Security purposes.

Similarly, Jack Clayton, Washington representative of the American Association of Christian Schools, asked Congress to pass "legislation providing for exemption for religious conscientious objection against taxation of churches" or at least delay the 1984 implementation date of mandatory coverage.

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Opposing testimony was offered by Charles Bergstrom, executive director of the Office of Governmental Affairs, Lutheran Council, U.S.A., and Robert J. Myers, former executive director of the National Commission on Social Security Reform.

The Social Security contribution "levied on earnings of covered employees has never been interpreted by Lutheran churches to constitute the violation of religious liberty that a more direct tax on the church would create," Bergstrom told the panel.

"The Social Security system has gone far in ensuring that people in their old age or in other serious circumstances can achieve at least a minimum standard of living--a proper concern for both government and church," he added.

Myers charged "the vast majority of religious organizations are in favor of the principle their employees should have the rights to the basic floor of economic security protection provided by the Social Security program, and, at the same time, bear responsibility for financing this program.

During the hearing and at an earlier press conference, opponents of the mandatory coverage warned ministers and churches would become tax resisters if the law is not changed.

William Billings, president of the National Christian Action Coalition representing more than 12,000 Christian schools, warned at the press conference President Reagan may be blamed for the change.

"Ronald Reagan promised us tuition tax credits and instead gave us a tax," Billings declared. "We hope President Reagan will realize the serious political ramifications that will occur if his Administration is forced to take pastors and church officers to court. When the IRS begins seizing church property, the blame will be placed on President Reagan."

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Mission Leaders Support
Cooperative Mission Agreement

By Patti Stephenson

Baptist Press
12/15/83

ATLANTA (BP)--Leaders of state Woman's Missionary Union, Brotherhood and missions directors have pledged full support for an agreement aimed at merging mission action efforts.

The agreement, which was formally signed in February, calls for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, WMU and Brotherhood to work together in providing mission action materials and expertise for churches.

The joint meeting at the HMB was designed to "strengthen our partnership and affirm our common goal to help churches do missions," said Gerald Palmer, HMB vice president of missions.

The cooperative agreement recognizes "we can't be effective in home missions without the support of local churches," William G. Tanner, HMB president, noted, "and we are greatly dependent on WMU and Brotherhood to channel our message to local churches."

The new plan "is a welding of approaches to missions which will greatly enhance our efforts to achieve Bold Mission Thrust," he said.

Specifically, the agreement assigns the primary responsibility for promoting and recruiting volunteers for mission action to Woman's Missionary Union and Brotherhood and calls on the HMB to provide materials and expertise for training.

It also assigns the responsibility for surveying mission needs to the church missions committee and the associational missions development program (associational missions committee), and appoints these committees as backup to WMU and Brotherhood in responding to mission needs.

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Former agreements did not prevent duplication of resources by the three organizations, resulting in unnecessary expense and creating a fragmented approach to missions, explained Robert Banks, HMB vice president of administration. "Our new approach will be more integrated and reflects a definite intent to be better stewards of funds, personnel and resources."

Carolyn Weatherford, Woman's Missionary Union executive director, praised the "growing cooperative spirit" among the SBC's missions organizations and observed, "We work best when we work together."

Though she conceded, "we can easily be overwhelmed by the scope of Home Mission Board programs," she expressed confidence in WMU's ability to "bring together a work force of women to accomplish almost any task."

Weatherford also called on the missions leaders to "work at improving our trust level" and resist the idea they are in competition.

President James Smith of the Brotherhood Commission described its purpose as "helping churches involve men in missions."

Noting there is a "great untapped potential of men waiting for someone to tell them where to go and do missions," he said the agreement will enable Brotherhood leaders to link volunteers with mission opportunities.

Banks reported new HMB mission action resources will be produced beginning in 1984 and will be sold through Baptist Book Stores. Both WMU and Brotherhood Commission will continue to produce materials for their own organizational projects, according to the agreement.

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