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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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February 13, 1984

84-24

Canada Study Committee
Begins Draft Of Report

By Dan Martin

DALLAS (BP)--Members of the Southern Baptist Convention Study Committee on Canada discussed the ramifications of seating messengers from churches in Canada during their third meeting Friday (Feb. 10).

The 21-member committee was appointed following the 1983 annual meeting of the SBC to study the issue of amending the SBC Constitution to include Canada in the territory of the 14.3 million member denomination.

During its first meeting, the committee heard presentations from representatives of the Executive Committee, Home Mission Board, Foreign Mission Board, Sunday School Board and Historical Commission and the Northwest Baptist Convention, outlining the agencies' perspective on the issue.

In the second session, members heard representatives from the Baptist Federation of Canada, the Baptist World Alliance and a Southern Baptist pastor, who has been living and working in Canada for more than 10 years.

The February session was "just for the committee members, to discuss where we are and what we want to do," said Fred Roach, chairman.

"There is a need for further discussion," Roach, a Dallas homebuilder, told committee members. "I want everybody to have ample time to say whatever they want to say before we even begin to look at anything that looks like a final report."

Roach told Baptist Press the meeting was planned as a work session after some committee members--particularly representatives from the Northwest Baptist Convention--expressed concern there had been no time for discussion in the previous sessions.

Following the second meeting, Roach asked R. Keith Parks, president of the Foreign Mission Board, and William G. Tanner, president of the Home Mission Board, and members of their staffs to prepare a proposed recommendation, which would then be considered by the committee in a series of regional meetings.

The report, drafted in mid-January by Parks and Tanner, along with Gerald Palmer, HMB Vice president of the missions section, and William R. O'Brien, executive vice president of the FMB, suggested a plan aimed at "establishing and strengthening Baptist churches in Canada with the long range objective of establishing an effective and evangelistic Canadian Baptist organization."

The draft was presented to members of the committee during meetings in Atlanta and Dallas, where it was approved with some editing. Representatives of the Northwest Baptist Convention, however, did not approve the draft and asked for further discussion.

During the meeting, several committee members admitted "some fuzziness" on the ramifications of amending the SBC constitution to include Canada as part of the territory of the denomination. Currently, the constitution limits membership to churches in the United States and its territories.

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Roach explained the committee was created after C.B. (Bill) Hogue, pastor of Eastwood Baptist Church of Tulsa, Okla., moved the constitution be amended to include the words "and Canada" in Article II.

Perry Sanders, pastor of First Baptist Church of Lafayette, La., amended Hogue's motion, to refer the question to a special committee of four members each from the HMB, FMB, Executive Committee and Northwest Baptist Convention and five-at-large members.

Roach told Baptist Press the question is not simply whether to seat Canadian churches, but to study the ramifications of such a move.

"The whole idea of referral is that there are many unique things to be considered," he said. "The messengers were not ready to consider the ramifications. We are studying the ramifications."

While committee members appeared about equally divided between those who favor seating messengers from Canada and those who are either opposed or ambivalent, Roach said the committee is moving toward a "negotiated position" which will assist Canadian churches but not seat messengers.

He characterized the February meeting as one in which committee members "considered all of the varying views. There was a lot of give and take and I think we let the differing views be expressed, and acknowledged there are alternate ways to accomplish the goals of strengthening the churches and evangelizing Canada."

The only vote the committee took during the meeting was on a motion by Gerald Stow, pastor of First Baptist Church of Cookeville, Tenn., representing the HMB, that the committee "develop a proposal paper that will express a negotiated response to the Canadian question. Such a paper would address the major issues as outlined by the committee and set forth the procedures for carrying out the same."

The motion passed without dissenting vote.

Roach appointed Kenneth Mahanes, pastor of Far Hills Baptist Church in Dayton, Ohio, representing the Executive Committee, and C. Mark Corts, pastor of First Baptist Church of Winston-Salem, N.C., representing the FMB, to draft a report. Reginald McDonough, associate executive secretary of the Executive Committee, and Roach will work with them.

The study committee will meet again in Nashville Feb. 23-24 to consider the report.

"I am not going to push them," Roach said of the committee. "I am going to let God work in their lives."

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Baptist MK, Mother
Reunited In Cyprus

By Bill Webb and Anita Bowden

Baptist Press
2/13/84

LARNACA, Cyprus (BP)--A missionary child who had been separated from her parents since Feb. 6 because of increased fighting in west Beirut was reunited with her mother Feb. 11 in Larnaca, Cyprus.

Ashleigh Dunn, 13, and her mother, Pat, from Mobile, Ala., were among six adults and five children from the Baptist mission in Lebanon who evacuated Lebanon along with approximately 900 other Americans.

Another missionary couple, Ed and Anne Nicholas, from Centerville, Mich., and Fort Worth, Texas, booked passage on a commercial ship and had hoped to leave Feb. 13, but rough seas prevented their departure.

Missionaries Mack and Linda Sacco, of Gilroy, Calif., and McAlester, Okla., and their four children; Russell Futrell, of Pineville, La., and Ashleigh Dunn traveled aboard one ship while Pat Dunn and volunteers Steve and Meriam Fox, of Centerville, Ohio, were aboard another.

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Ashleigh Dunn became separated from her parents when a government-imposed curfew trapped her and two of the Sacco children at their school in west Beirut. The three children were able to get to the Sacco home, also in west Beirut, the next day. But the Dunns live in east Beirut and Ashleigh could not cross the "green line" which divides the city.

Meriam Fox said shots were fired at the helicopter she and her husband were in as they left Beirut, but it was not hit.

All the mission evacuees were ferried from west Beirut to the port city of Jounie aboard helicopters except Pat Dunn, who traveled from east Beirut over land.

Missionaries reported American Marines handled their baggage and they were treated well during the 24-hour boat trip to Cyprus. There were doctors and a dentist aboard the ships and meals were provided. Also the Red Cross arranged for messages to be sent to the United States.

The Sacco family, after a night's rest in Cyprus, left for the States. They were scheduled to arrive in McAlester, Okla., Feb. 12. A major concern for them and for the Dunns has been the lack of regular, continuing education for their children in Beirut.

Ashleigh Dunn registered and began classes Feb. 13 at an American school in Cyprus. She and her mother plan to remain in Cyprus through the end of the semester.

Missionaries Jim and Leola Ragland in west Beirut reported Baptist churches in the city met Feb. 12 and attendance was good. "It was thrilling," said Mrs. Ragland about the service at Musaitbeh Baptist Church on the compound with Beirut Baptist School. "There were 23 people in church who need to make decisions for Christ. All of these would count (be good witnesses) for the Lord." The group included university students, bankers and teachers.

Ragland continued to urge prayer for Lebanon, saying it is "an explosive situation that could change at any time."

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Rio Grande Valley Victims
Get Beans, Tortillas and More

By Larry Brumley

Baptist Press
2/13/84

DALLAS (BP)--Texas Baptists, with help from some Colorado Baptists, are helping victims of the late December freeze which destroyed most of the Rio Grande Valley's fruit and vegetable crops and left thousands unemployed.

The Texas Baptist administrative committee has asked the State Missions Commission and the Christian Life Commission to promote a statewide "second offering" requested by Governor Mark White for Sunday, Feb. 19.

Meanwhile, pinto beans donated by a Colorado layman and tortillas collected from Dallas-area bakeries by a Dallas layman were sent to the valley this week and were picked up by Texas Baptist retirees who are giving their time and talents to build a church in McAllen. Churches of Rio Grande Baptist Association are distributing the food.

Rosemont Church, Montrose, Colo., sent 3,000 pounds of pinto beans that was given to the church by one of its members. Robert Farrell, pastor of the church, is a former member of Plymouth Park Church, Irving, Texas.

"The church (Rosemont) decided this year they wanted to give the beans to someone who needed them. Bob (Farrell) and I are from Texas, and we know about the River Ministry, and we told the church about the work along the border," said Serena Farrell, the pastor's wife.

Farrell, former pastor of a church in Pagosa Springs, Colo., arranged for two laymen who owned a logging company there to take the beans to Texas on the back of a truck scheduled to deliver a load of logs to Victoria, Texas.

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Charlie Moore, a member of Richardson Heights Baptist Church, Richardson, and owner of a Dallas travel agency, arranged for more than 24,000 tortillas to be flown free of charge to Harligen last week on Southwest Airlines.

The Texas Baptist Men retirees, who have just completed a building for a black congregation in Port LaVaca and a building for a mission in Rockport, will help in the disaster relief in the valley by distributing food and clothing to victims through local Baptist churches.

Some of the retirees, under the direction of Bud Robeson of Centerville, will help repair churches which suffered water damage from broken water pipes and whose roofs were damaged.

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story "Active Christian Lifestyle Witness To Buddhists, Al Says," mailed 2/9/84, please change the spelling of the subject's name from Al to Au.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Puerto Rican Baptists, Labels,
Ohioan Focus of CSM Meeting

Baptist Press
2/13/84

SAN JUAN, P.R. (BP)--A negative gospel, filled with labels and given to excluding those different from ourselves, is not the gospel of Jesus Christ, speakers at the annual meeting of Christian social ministries agreed.

More than 50 state and national Christian social ministries personnel met in Puerto Rico to do manual labor (everything from repair a concrete building to painting), discuss trends in Christian social ministries in the United States and to honor an Ohioan for outstanding achievement in the area of CSM.

The state leaders were challenged to drop labels while ministering to people.

Noting a Southern Baptist church decision to deny baptism to several Haitians who had made professions of faith in detention camps, Cecil Etheridge, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board national consultant on ministeries to the blind and migrants, claimed, "We preach a gospel of inclusion but practice one of exclusion."

Etheridge also called on state leaders to lead the way in changing Baptists' perception of the blind, focusing on ability rather than disability. Southern Baptists will see a case in point when a blind singer/pianist performs during the 1984 Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Kansas City, Mo., this June.

Mary Dan Kuhnle, director of Sellers Baptist Home and Adoption Center in New Orleans, echoed Etheridge's sentiments and called on the group to help Baptists drop the labels of "unwed" mother and father and "illegitimate" child, since the labels only dehumanize people caught up in the circumstances of pregnancy outside of marriage.

Ed Lilly, director of the Baptist Rescue Mission in New Orleans, extended the list. Alcoholics and drug abusers are not "bums" and "drunken bums." Only three percent of those who abuse alcohol or drugs wind up on skid row, he noted. The other 97 percent "are out among us, even in our churches."

He cautioned against preaching "a lot of negativism," because such tactics ostracize people, "driving them away from the church and a God who loves them."

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During the past two years Lilly has spoken in more than 40 public schools throughout the nation in an effort to educate teens about drugs and alcohol abuse. He also has expanded the mission to include beds for women and children, and noted during the past year the mission averaged caring for more than 250 people per night.

In addition to discussing trends in Christian social ministries, CSM state and national workers shed their administrative roles and practiced what they preach, helping Puerto Rican Baptists develop their own Christian social ministries projects.

Blue jean, T-shirt clad CSM workers were divided into six work groups and assigned to projects throughout Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, part of the Puerto Rico Baptist Association.

Projects ranged from painting walls and doors at the Baptist Seminary in San Juan to building bookshelves for the St. Croix (Virgin Islands) seminary extension center library; from painting rooms to be used for a Baptist center to patching concrete walls and repairing wooden eaves at a Chinese and Spanish church. Freddie Freeman, an Atlanta layman and hardware store owner, donated 86 gallons of paints, stains and varnishes for the projects.

William Tua, director of CSM for Puerto Rican Baptists, said the work teams had encouraged and strengthened Baptist work on the island.

He applauded Pete Petty, director of CSM for Arkansas Baptists, for training two Baptist Student Union students in clowning and then leading them in a worship service that resulted in 25 professions of faith in a rural Puerto Rican community. "The Lord worked a miracle," said Tua. "Just for that one happening this meeting was worth it."

Tua emphasized the contribution made by the CSM workers had enabled him to move ahead with plans to open a Baptist center in his childhood home community in San Juan. A food and clothes closet will be housed at a Baptist church where one group painted, the first step toward beginning weekday ministries in the community.

Tua also noted conferences on alcohol and drug abuse by Lilly and workshops on literacy by HMB CSM staffer Mildred Blankenship made Puerto Rican leaders more aware of the need for an expanded CSM program on the island.

Unemployment, now cresting 20 percent, divorce and alcohol and drug abuse are problems island pastors must deal with, explained Tua. He added more Baptist volunteers are needed to lead similar workshops. To help Puerto Ricans hard-hit by unemployment, Tua also pleaded for volunteers to teach residents to grow and can their own food and to provide job skill training.

Edwin I. Armitage of Cincinnati was named the recipient of the 1983 Clovis A. Brantley Memorial Award for outstanding contribution to the field of Christian social ministries.

Armitage, director of Baptist family services for Cincinnati Baptist Association, was honored for his more than 15 years work with youths in trouble with the law and their families. Armitage counsels youths, visits in homes, sponsors worship services at juvenile detention centers and works with the courts system in Cincinnati. He has also opened a counseling office in his home.

Prior to HMB appointment in 1969, he served as pastor of churches in Ohio and Indiana and was a vocational counselor with the Ohio Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation. Armitage was commissioned a chaplain by the HMB Chaplaincy Division in 1970.

The Clovis A. Brantley memorial award, named for the 36-year Christian social ministries missionary veteran, is given annually to an HMB CSM missionary to recognize outstanding achievement in the field of Christian social ministries.

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