



- - BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
Wilmer C. Fields, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Craig Bird, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Stan L. Haste, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

December 12, 1984

84-179

(Editor's note: The following story is an update of, and replaces, "SBC Squabbles Hurt Us, Say Missionaries" mailed 12/11/84.)

SBC Fights Add Frustration To Missionaries' Job

By Karen Benson

WACO, Texas (BP)—Frustration is built into foreign missions.

There are not enough volunteers to match personnel needs. Budgets shift frequently under the stress of inflation and currency changes. The distance from home is measured both in miles and in time.

Southern Baptist missionaries Al and Peggy Cummins felt those frustrations on the mission field in Nakuru, Kenya, and they were hurt.

When they returned to the United States on furlough earlier this year and found out about the fussing and bickering in the Southern Baptist Convention and threatened cutbacks in Cooperative Program giving, they became angry.

On the mission field, the Cummins didn't understand what was happening within the convention back home. "We really didn't have any inside information," Cummins said. "But I hadn't been home a week until I began to hear the charges of churches withholding Cooperative Program money. You know, that's the lifeway of doing things."

Cummins said he finds it unusual that any real attempts to stop the flow of Cooperative Program dollars haven't hurt anyone but the mission enterprise.

He said it is like the old saying: "the ones we love the most, we hurt the most."

Said Cummins, "I know there's not a one of those folks out there that would deliberately do this to hurt missions. But somehow they've got it in their heads that they're going to hurt a seminary, or a college. But you know, those places have got millions of dollars. The only ones I've seen so far that have been cut up have been those that are out there trying to do the work of the Lord on the field."

The very thing that pulls Southern Baptists together is mission causes around the world, Mrs. Cummins said. "That cements our relationships, and yet it's the very thing that's suffering by all this bickering. That's very hard to take. You've got your own problems in adjusting your life and trying to solve your own convention problems abroad, and then you've got this underlying insecurity from home. It makes it hard."

The uncertainty and uneasiness within the SBC is leading to discouragement among missionaries throughout the world, Cummins said. "It kind of gives you second thoughts about getting ready to go back overseas, 10,000 miles away from home knowing that there are those who would love to see us go under, simply because of the way they're withholding their money."

The cutbacks may eventually have an impact on other SBC agencies and institutions, Cummins said, "but I'll tell you who's going to go first—it's going to be us."

What makes the situation even worse is missionaries from other denominations have long envied the Southern Baptists for the way the denomination supports its missionaries—and that image is in danger of crumbling, Mrs. Cummins said.

--more--

"We have the very best support out there of any other denomination in the world. We don't have to spend our time begging for money, because it's there. Everyone is envious." But now, "for us to throw that away is unbelievable to me, nearly ungodly," Cummins said. "I know of so many other missionaries who would love to come under our system."

The only way for Southern Baptists to reverse this current trend, Cummins said, is for individual Baptists to become involved in mission causes and to care personally about a physically and spiritually hungry world.

"I'm astounded at Christianity at times, especially during this very difficult time in the world," Cummins said. "We've got 40,000 people dying a day, and yet the most important thing we've got going over here is fussing. You know, God Almighty is going to hold us accountable for this like we've never seen before. I'm surprised God hasn't settled this already."

"When you have an issue this tremendous, of life and death to so many people, and when there is so much shouting and tumult going on over here so that you can't hear the cries, then Satan has won."

The Cumminses, missionaries-in-residence at Baylor University, plan to return to Kenya in early January. Cummins will assume new missionary duties as a human needs coordinator, supervising Foreign Mission Board projects in Kenya relating to food distribution, clean water supplies, preventive health care, and retraining and "retooling" Kenyans to minister the gospel.

But their overriding personal interest is in helping to alleviate world hunger -- and making others aware of the seriousness of the world hunger problem.

"But sometimes we get so caught up in the millions and billions of dollars that we sort of forget that the little 50-cent pieces and dollar bills add up," Mrs. Cummins said. "Just 50 cents a day--the price of a Coke--would feed a person for a week."

"If just those few that are concerned about world hunger would say, 'Alright, I'll do without Cokes and give \$10 a month' and just make those little kinds of sacrifices, then when the drought comes and we need \$75,000, all of those 50-cent pieces are going to be there."

But such concern has to become a lifestyle in order to be effective in the long term, Cummins said. "It has to begin with more than just somebody giving money. It has to begin with an understanding that we are accountable and responsible for what God has given us -- little or great. God may give us a lot, or he may give us a little. The question is, how will we use it. Where it all starts is with understanding and recognizing there is a problem."

--30--

Missionary Base Pay Constant;
Local Inflation Rates Vary

Baptist Press
12/12/84

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Missionaries not only live "on" the local economies in which they serve, they also live "in" that local economy.

They ride the financial roller coaster of inflation and changing currency exchange rates along with the nationals. However, one stabilizing factor is that Southern Baptist missionaries are paid a base salary computed on U.S. dollars.

Al and Peggy Cummins (see story above) provide a good example.

Kenya missionaries received four adjustments in compensation in the 12-month period between February 1983 and January 1984. One was a sizeable cost of living increase; three were cost of living decreases, William R. O'Brien, executive vice-president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board explained.

--more--

"All adjustments were cost of living changes, with no reduction in base pay. In an effort to equalize buying power of more than 3,400 missionaries in 105 countries, the Foreign Mission Board provides all the same base pay but factors in a cost of living adjustment to offset inflation and currency fluctuations," O'Brien said. "This has been a long-established policy."

The cost of living adjustments rise or fall based on a formula which includes the strength of the U.S. dollar against the local currency and inflation rates. The strength of the U.S. dollar against the Kenya shilling affected the decreases in Kenya.

In 1984, missionaries in 19 countries received upward cost of living adjustments, missionaries in 18 countries received downward cost of living adjustments and missionaries in 67 countries had no cost of living change. After a downward adjustment from December 1983 to January 1984, Kenya missionaries' cost of living factor remained the same throughout the rest of 1984.

"Missionaries live and work in difficult and intense situations, especially in the Third World, and it's natural that controversy in their support group would upset them," O'Brien said, referring to current disputes within the Southern Baptist Convention.

"But the current controversy and the current condition of the Cooperative Program (the Southern Baptist unified budget which provide voluntary support for national and worldwide mission and education programs) have no connection with cost of living adjustments experienced by missionaries. These factors have not made it necessary to decrease compensation or slow down the appointment of missionaries," he said.

--30--

Baylor's Hankamer Business
School To Receive IBM Grant

Baptist Press
12/12/84

WACO, Texas (BP)—Baylor University's Hankamer School of Business is one of 30 universities nationwide selected to receive a \$12,000 grant from International Business Machines Corp.

The money will be used to prepare a detailed proposal for a master's degree program in management of information systems, said Kris Moore, chairman of the school's information systems department.

IBM will announce in May the 12 finalists chosen to develop the master's degree program. If Baylor is chosen, the business school will receive up to \$2 million toward the degree's establishment.

Half of the money would be used to supply the school with IBM hardware and software. The remaining amount would provide student scholarships, research funds, faculty assistance, and guest lecturers and advisers.

The new degree program would be designed to give organizational, managerial and personal skills to business students trained in computer information systems. Graduates of the program would be able to advance more quickly in information systems departments and would eventually reach top-level management positions, Moore said.

Reagan Ramsower, assistant professor of information systems and coordinator of the grant project, said IBM is establishing the funding program because company leaders believe there are not enough good managers in computer technology. Many people may have the necessary computer skills but not know how to apply those skills outside their particular areas of specialization, he said.

--30--

Annie Armstrong Gifts Up;
HMB Approves 48 For Mission Posts

By Michael Tutterow

ATLANTA (BP)—Southern Baptists' gifts to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions totaled more than \$24.7 million as of Dec. 7, about a 10 percent increase over the same period in 1983, board of directors for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board were told during their December meeting.

HMB President William G. Tanner told directors the board had received more than 85 percent of the AAEO goal for a total of \$24,762,776.61. The figure, which is more than \$2.2 million above the same period in 1983, "speaks well of our people, especially in these difficult economic times," said Tanner.

Tanner also told board members Cooperative Program funds for the board were about \$2 million under its 1983-84 allotment, though total SBC gifts through the Cooperative Program hit an all-time high. Tanner added the shortfall had been predicted and did not adversely affect the board's work during 1984.

In other business, board of directors appointed six missionaries, five missionary associates and eight church planter apprentices. Also, directors approved 18 people to receive field pastoral assistance and 11 mission pastors to receive assistance, including the first woman pastor to be approved for church pastoral assistance.

Debra Griffis-Woodberry of Raleigh, N.C., minister of education and youth for Ridge Road Baptist Church in Raleigh since 1980, was approved to receive board support. She will serve as pastor of Broadneck Baptist Mission in Annapolis, Md.

Appointed missionaries were Larry M. and Clista A. Fisher of Barstow, Calif., who will work in East Bay Association in San Leandro, Calif., where he will be director of missions; Henry Joe and Martha C. Rampey of Fort Worth, Texas, to be director of Christian service ministries in York Association, York, S.C.; and Terry M. and Elizabeth Robertson of Grand Island, N.Y., who will serve as director of missions for Frontier Association, Buffalo, N.Y.

Appointed missionary associates were Danny L. and Joni L. Bice of Moore, Okla., who will be missionaries to the deaf for the state of Oklahoma; Tommy G. and Charlene W. Cupples of Benton, Mo., who will work in Indianapolis, where he will be director of missions; and Barbara Ann Davis of Harlingen, Texas, who will continue her work as a teacher at Valley Baptist Academy in Harlingen under the board's language missions division.

Those appointed as church planter apprentices, with their home state and place of service, were: Truitt L. and Patricia L. Allen of Horn Lake, Miss., serving in Manistee, Mich.; F. Thomas and Terressa L. Hall of Corte Madera, Calif., serving in Santa Maria, Calif.; Randy E. and Angella D. Stewart of Wake Forest, N.C., serving in Roswell, Ga.; and Lee B. and Deborah S. Warf of Harrodsburg, Ky., serving in Ada, Ohio.

--30--

Paramount Denies Rumor
About Film On Life Of Christ

By David Wilkinson

Baptist Press
12/12/84

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—A movie project which deals in part with "the sex life of Jesus" is not under consideration by Paramount studios, according to a spokesperson for the Los Angeles production company.

In recent months rumors have circulated in the nation's conservative religious community that Paramount was considering a film project based on the book, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, by Greek novelist Nikos Kazantzakis.

An official in Paramount's publicity department said such a movie was "never even an officially announced project. And it never will be a Paramount project."

--more--

Early this year Citizens for Decency through Law, a nonprofit antipornography organization in Phoenix, Ariz., announced in its newsletter Paramount studios might be considering such a project and published Paramount's mailing address. A CDL staff member told Baptist Press he had not read *The Last Temptation*, but "it supposedly ridicules Christianity and Christ and distorts the life of Christ."

Published in English in 1960, Kazantzakis' work is a fictional interpretation of the life of Christ. Although the novel was greeted with widespread acclaim from much of the literary community, its depiction of Jesus' struggle between his humanity and his divinity was highly controversial in many religious circles.

Adding to the confusion about the alleged film project is the persistence of an eight-year-old rumor about a supposed film titled "The Sex Life of Jesus."

The latter project was never seriously considered either in the United States or in Denmark, where the report originated. Despite widespread publicity in 1976 and 1977 that the rumor was false, petitions continue to be circulated to oppose it.

During the past six years, for example, more than 300,000 letters have poured into the Illinois attorney general's office, with volume particularly heavy around Easter and Christmas.

The misdirected and misinformed indignation has been focused on Illinois because of a rumor that a suburban Chicago company was behind the film.

--30--

Texas Baptists Give
\$3 Million For State Missions

By Terry Barone

Baptist Press
12/12/84

DALLAS (BP)--For the first time Texas Baptists have given more than \$3 million through the Mary Hill Davis Offering for state missions.

Receipts for the offering totaled \$3,041,732, a 13.98 percent increase over the \$2,668,486 received during the same period in 1983.

This is believed to be the largest amount ever received for a Southern Baptist state missions offering in one year.

The amount received thus far represents 95 percent of the 1984 goal of \$3,184,840. The largest amount ever received in a single year for the state missions offering was \$2,847,859 last year.

"It was only four year ago that we passed the \$2 million mark in giving to state missions, said Joy Fenner, executive director-treasurer for Texas WMU. "We are thankful that Texas Baptists have responded to the needs of our state in such a marvelous way."

Charles McLaughlin, director of the Texas Baptist State Missions Commission, said, "Giving over the 1984 Mary Hill Davis Offering goal would be an answer to prayer. It is significant that all of the money above the goal will go to help begin new work. But it also provides the vital momentum for Texas Baptists toward their \$30 million Centennial Offering goal to help build 2,000 new churches and missions in our state by 1990."

--30--