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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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85-96

## July Cooperative Program Receipts Drop Sharply

By Craig Bird

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Prospects of Southern Baptists meeting the 1984-85 basic operating budget through the national Cooperative Program were dimmed by July receipts.

Contributions to the worldwide mission and education programs funded through the unified budget were \$8,732,631 in July--a decrease of 12.94 percent (\$1,298,348) from gifts in July 1984, of \$10,030,979.

However, the yearly totals continue to run significantly ahead of the 1983-84 fiscal year. After 10 months of the fiscal year, the national Cooperative Program has received and disbursed to the 20 SBC agencies included in the budget \$96,867,253. That is \$6,266,515 (6.92 percent) ahead of the same figures a year ago.

The basic operating budget for 1984-85 is \$118 million. Contribution will have to exceed an average of \$10.5 million in each of the final two months to reach that figure.

From January through June monthly gifts through the national Cooperative Program averaged more than \$10.3 million, including three months over the \$10 million mark: \$10.8 million in January; \$10.1 million in March and \$10.3 million in May.

The monthly average for all 10 months is \$9.69 million. A monthly average of \$9.83 million is necessary to meet the basic budget.

The July percentage reflected a large drop not only because it was the second lowest month in the current fiscal year but also because July 1984 was the second highest month for 1983-84 (and at the time the second highest month in Cooperative Program history).

The only other time in the past decade when July income was low compared to the first nine months of the fiscal year was in 1980 (when was it seventh out of 10). The following two months showed major increases, including the August receipts which were the third highest month of the 1979-80 year.

The falloff was widespread with 19 of the 37 state conventions affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention contributing less in July 1985, than in July 1984. On the year however, 34 state conventions are running head of a year ago.

And the \$96.9 million total after 10 months is more than Southern Baptist gave through the national Cooperative Program in any entire year prior to 1982-83. After 10 months five years ago (1979-80) the figure was \$59,490,755 and 10 years ago (1974-75) it was \$34,299,849--increases of 38.59 percent and 182.41 percent respectively.

Florida, Georgia and Illinois are the three state conventions which have given more than \$1 million to the national Cooperative Program and are also in double digits in percentage increase. Florida, with total contributions of \$8,107,690, is 14.63 percent (\$1,034,718) ahead of last year; Georgia (\$8,617,409) is up 13.82 percent (\$1,046,127), and Illinois (\$1,540,776) is up 12.83 percent (\$175,187).

Texas is in its usual spot as the top dollar giver through the national Cooperative Program with contributions of \$17,196,402.

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL  
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES  
Historical Commission, SBC  
Nashville, Tennessee

Jackson Churches Challenge  
'Political Action' Ruling

By Al Shackelford

JACKSON, Tenn. (BP)--A class action lawsuit to exempt churches from being classified as "political action committees" under the Tennessee Campaign Financial Disclosure Act was tried Aug. 7 in Chancery Court of Madison County.

Thirteen Jackson-area churches--nine of them Southern Baptists--declined to file disclosure forms and instead brought suit against the State of Tennessee on the grounds that such classification violates the freedom of religion guarantee of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

At the conclusion of the day-long trial, Judge Joe Morris announced he will review the testimony and the filed briefs and render his decision at a later time.

The 1980 act declares any organization which spends as much as \$250 in support of a candidate or referendum issue would be a political action committee and must file financial disclosure forms, listing receipts and expenditures.

On Aug. 29, 1984, Attorney General Michael Cody issued an opinion that churches which spent at least \$250 in seeking to defeat an Aug. 2, 1984, liquor-by-the-drink referendum were subject to filing the financial forms within 48 days after the election.

The referendum was defeated by 40 votes.

The churches' lawsuit seeks a declaratory judgment that the statute is a "serious violation of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution which guarantees religious liberty and the separation of church and state."

At last Wednesday's trial, the plaintiff churches presented several pastors and representatives of various religious organizations who testified that the churches' participation in the liquor referendum was on the basis of religious and moral grounds, rather than for political reasons.

The state's defense declared that under the disclosure act as passed by the Tennessee General Assembly the churches must be treated like any other organizations.

Lee Boothby, attorney for Americans United for Separation of Church and State, told the court the ultimate issue is whether or not the legislation as applied to churches is unconstitutional. Boothby assisted Jackson Attorney Michael Tabor in representing the churches.

Representing the state, Cody declared that the issue is fair and equal treatment for all groups, including churches. He noted each church in the suit had contributed to a political action committee (Citizens Against Drug Abuse) or had purchased advertising in relation to the August 1984 liquor referendum. "This is basically a legal issue," Cody said.

Three Jackson pastors took the witness stand to declare their churches' involvement was because of Biblically-based religious convictions which relate to many moral and ethical matters.

Robert Irving, pastor of Jackson's Woodland Baptist Church, testified his church had opposed the referendum in many ways because the use of alcoholic beverages is "biblically wrong, based on many references in Scripture."

Billy Ringo, pastor of Skyline Church of Christ, Jackson, said his church opposed the liquor-by-the-drink referendum because of what liquor "does to moral character, to society in general and to families." He said the abuse of alcoholic beverages has led to family breakups, child abuse and even death.

Ringo added liquor is just one of many moral issues his church has spoken against, citing sexual immorality, gambling, pornography and violence.

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John Lee Taylor, pastor of West Jackson Baptist Church, testified opposition to liquor-by-the-drink is consistent with his church's continuing concern for this matter. He noted his church has sponsored an Alcoholics Anonymous group since 1979.

"Unquestionably, alcohol is a moral and religious issue," he said.

Taylor referred to a May 28 letter from Cody which said a pastor could preach against liquor in his pulpit and not violate the statute. "I interpret this to mean that as long as we stay in the walls of the church house, we are exempt from being a political action committee," Taylor said. "We believe the church is to go into all the world."

Taylor also told the court the 1985 Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution which expressed opposition to any law that would classify churches as political action committees.

All three pastors testified that Cody's ruling kept their churches from participating in a November 1984 referendum which would have removed package stores from Jackson.

The ruling also affected the involvement of First Baptist Church of Waverly in a November 1984 referendum to permit package liquor stores in that city, according to testimony by Pastor Maurice Coleman. The Waverly referendum passed by one vote (736-735), although two earlier package store referenda—which the church openly opposed—were soundly defeated.

The effect of the attorney general's ruling was described as "devastating" by Tom Madden, executive secretary of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, adding he had received many calls from pastors who had customarily participated in liquor referenda.

Opposition to the ruling on religious liberty grounds also was given in testimony by Forest Montgomery, counsel for the office of public affairs for the National Association of Evangelicals, Washington; Dean Kelley, director of religious and civil liberty, National Council of Churches, New York City; Robert Maddox, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, Silver Springs, Md., and Robert Destro, member of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission and assistant law professor at Catholic University, Washington.

Cody objected several times to their testimony, saying a church can speak out. "Only if it spends funds in speaking out is it required to file financial disclosure forms."

Kelley cited the ruling's negative impact in (1) time and energy needed to register as a political action committee and to file reports; (2) the "chilling" effect in discouraging action, and (3) that churches would feel it is improper to give government any supervision of religious affairs.

"We should not have to ask permission from government to do what we feel God has called us to do," Kelley said.

The state chose not to call any witnesses, but to base its case on its pre-trial brief and on a post-trial brief which will deal with issues which came up during the trial, Cody said.

After the closing statements by both sides, Chancellor Morris noted ministers have a responsibility as well as a right to speak their convictions. "There is a common bond here," Morris said. "Everyone here believes in religious freedom, freedom of the press and freedom of speech."

Morris said he is taking the case under advisement and will render his decision after studying the briefs and testimony presented.

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Texas Baptists Respond  
To Crash Of Airliner

By Terry Barone

Baptist Press  
8/9/85

DALLAS (BP)—A group of Texas Baptist Men from Meadowbrook Baptist Church, Irving, was the first mass-care group to arrive with food and refreshments after Delta Flight 191 crashed Aug. 2 at Dallas/Forth Worth Airport.

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Milfred Minatrea, Meadowbrook pastor, said the men's group monitors the fire department scanner and responds to apartment and house fires in Irving. When the airliner crashed shortly after 6 p.m., the Meadowbrook crew was on the scene by 7 p.m.

During the 37 hours the relief team worked at the site, more than 1,100 meals were served to paramedics, firefighters, rescue workers, news media and other workers.

Groups of Baptist Men from Meadowbrook, Richardson Heights Baptist Church, Richardson and Liberty Baptist Church, Mesquite, worked through the night Friday and all day Saturday, using a huge blue and yellow revival tent provided by the Texas Baptist Evangelism Division.

Minatrea said there was no need for the disaster relief team's services after Saturday, but the evangelism tent remained up until Thursday, Aug. 8 to provide shade for workers.

Even though the team was responsible for food and refreshments, Minatrea said there were opportunities to share the "love of God with several of the workers."

He said: "Rescue and other workers were almost in a state of shock. There was no way to dwell on the human carnage and not be adversely affected. When they came to the tent to rest, many broke down and cried and asked, 'Why does this type of thing have to happen?'"

Minatrea said, this was when he and others had opportunity as Christians and Southern Baptists to share with them that "We don't have all the answers but we do have a security through a loving Father."

Charlie Moore, TBM Disaster Relief Coordinator for Dallas County and member of Richardson Heights Baptist Church, worked at the site where more than 130 persons lost their lives.

"I've seen a lot of gore and misery, but never anything of this magnitude," he said. "It was hard to comprehend the death that surrounded you."

Moore said he thought Southern Baptists provided a much-needed ministry since the Salvation Army was the only other religious organization which helped directly at the crash site.

"Being there gave us an opportunity to show rescue workers, firefighters, the news media and others that Southern Baptists care and that we wanted to help out in any way possible," he said.

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Chaplain Ministers  
To Survivors, Families

Baptist Press  
8/9/85

DALLAS (BP)--It was not a pleasant task, but Lea Henry, a Southern Baptist chaplain at Parkland Hospital, spent Friday night informing friends and relatives of persons aboard Delta Flight 191 whether their loved ones had survived or not.

Henry, a recent graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Forth Worth, Texas, and a member of Gateway Baptist Church in Dallas, did not work on Saturday but has worked with several of the survivors and their families since Sunday.

Two of the severely burned survivors are in Parkland's Surgical Intensive Care Unit. Henry is the chaplain assigned to the SICU.

"Delta had taken care of all the families' personal and physical needs. It was--and is--my job to help them with their emotional and spiritual needs," she said.

"One of my purposes for being with the patients and their families is to stand with them through the ordeals they encounter. They need someone who is a stabilizing force. They also need someone who will give them space to grieve and deal with their emotions."

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She said she has not had a real chance to witness to the families because "in situations like this, people don't hear the message. They do hear the concern and love of God. I represent that concern and compassion and hope that later on I can share with them."

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Airline Crash Touches  
Lives Of Mission Team

By Terry Barone

Baptist Press  
8/9/85

DALLAS (BP)--Two days before a mission team from Wilshire Baptist Church, Dallas, was to leave on a two-week trip to Tanzania, members learned their passports and visas had been aboard Delta Flight 191 which crashed Aug. 2 at the Dallas/Fort Worth airport.

The discovery set off two hectic days of activity which produced "miracles" and convinced the 10 members it is God's will they go to Africa to conduct revivals, Bible studies and dental clinics in Moshi, about 50 miles from Mount Kilimanjaro.

Tena Wash, chairperson of Wilshire's mission committee and trip organizer, said the passports had been sent to the Tanzanian Consulate in New York City July 26, for processing and should have been returned by Aug. 2.

When they didn't arrive, the travel agency booking the trip began working with the Tanzanian Consulate to trace the documents. They discovered the package, sent by certified mail, had been loaded aboard a Delta flight at Kennedy International Airport in New York City, routed through Fort Lauderdale and put aboard the L-1011 airplane which became Flight 191.

Because much of the 3,000 pounds of mail aboard the airplane was damaged, the travel agent told the group the only way they could leave on time--Aug. 9--was to replace the passports and visas.

At 1:15 p.m. Aug. 7, Wash was told she and the other nine members of the team would have to have either an old passport or a certified birth certificate and two passport photos at the passport office in McKinney, 30 miles north of Dallas, by 4 p.m.

Nine of the team members were contacted. Proper papers and photographs were assembled and they were on their way by 3 p.m.

The other member of the group was not contacted until 3:15, and had to get her bank to open the vault so she could get her birth certificate from the safety deposit box. However, she made it to the passport office just before the 4 p.m. deadline.

The travel agent flew to Houston Aug. 8 to get the passports and to work with the Tanzanian Consulate there to get the necessary visas. The tasks were accomplished in time to allow the mission group to leave as scheduled.

Wash said she could see "the Lord working in all of this. It was a miracle that we were able to contact everyone and get them to the office in time to process the paperwork. We (the mission team) had talked and prayed that if the Lord would open the doors, we would go. We decided if he did not want us there (in Tanzania) for whatever reason, he would close the door and we would accept his will for this trip."

"But the doors have opened and it is a positive sign he wants us to go," she added.

Losing the documents is not the first problem the team has faced. Members have been added and dropped out, schedule and fare problems have arisen and deadlines have been faced.

"There have been so many obstacles placed in our way," Wash said. "But it has been exciting to see how the Lord has worked things out."

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