



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(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, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201-3355, Telephone (214) 720-0550
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. Hasley, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20036, Telephone (202) 544-4226

September 27, 1985

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Historical Commission
Nashville, Tennessee
By Martha Skelton

85-119

Baptist Nurse Presumed Dead
In Quakes; Mexico Aid Rushed

MEXICO CITY (BP)--Baptists in Mexico City continued to help neighbors devastated by dual earthquakes as reports listed a 22-year-old Baptist nurse as missing and presumed dead, the first known Baptist casualty.

Thus far, surveys indicate damage to Baptist church buildings to be light.

Noemi Avila Betancur, a nurse in Mexico City, is the only Baptist church member known to be among the 10,000 reported missing in the earthquakes. Officials list more than 4,600 dead, 8,000 injured, and 17,000 homeless in the city. An estimated 50,000 persons are without jobs--at least temporarily--according to reports. Damage estimates have reached \$1 to \$2 billion U.S.

Betancur, a member of Bethel Baptist Church, had just reported for the 7 a.m. shift at General Hospital when the first earthquake struck Sept. 19. Her body has not been recovered.

The 55 Baptist congregations in greater Mexico City were, for the most part, spared the horrible suffering of so many of their fellow citizens. Several churches reported some families without homes or jobs. One congregation, Emmanuel Baptist Church, reported structural damage to its building and may have to spend up to \$10,000 to repair its ceiling, according to Eldon Sturgeon, a Southern Baptist representative and member of the Baptist Aid Committee.

The 35 Southern Baptist representatives who live in the Mexico City area and work with the National Baptist Convention of Mexico in joint educational and church efforts were uninjured and reported no damage to their homes.

Baptists were among the first to respond to the disaster. At Mexico City's First Baptist Church, located two blocks from the hard-hit Paseo de la Reforma area but which sustained only plaster damage, church members, led by Martha Ortiz, pastor's wife, were serving food and coffee to neighbors and rescue workers by 1 p.m. Sept. 19. The Ortiz home is attached to the church.

A low-rent apartment building across from First Baptist Church fell, trapping many. The building housed 37 families, and 21 bodies were recovered from the ruins. Mrs. Ortiz was called upon to help identify bodies and comfort relatives and friends waiting to see if loved ones were rescued. She worked especially with mothers so distraught they hindered rescue workers by clawing in the rubble to find missing children.

The Baptist Aid Committee was organized Sept. 21 to coordinate the Baptist disaster response. Members are Librado Ramos, senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Mexico City, committee president; Roberto Torres, convention executive director; Raul Castellanos, convention treasurer; Carlos Amaro, director of missions for the Central Baptist Association, which includes Mexico City, and Sturgeon, who also is associate executive director for the convention.

Money, food and clothing began to pour in from Baptist churches almost immediately. An emergency allocation of \$25,000 in hunger funds from the Foreign Mission Board reached the city the afternoon of the first quake. The funds made possible the immediate purchase of foodstuffs for teams of volunteers at First Baptist Church and the Mexican Baptist Theological Seminary. The seminary, located in suburban Ciudad Satelite, was not seriously affected by the earthquake.

Another \$10,000 in hunger funds was sent Sept. 26 and Don Turner, FMB consultant in human needs, was to spend Sept. 26-27 in Mexico City, helping assess longrange needs.

Because of its location, First Baptist Church was the hub of the Baptist crisis response from which food, medicine and clothing were distributed to 20 shelters and other churches.

On Sept. 19 they fed 500 people. Three days later, 3,000 to 4,000 sandwich meals were being prepared daily at the seminary by volunteers from the student body, staff, faculty and nearby churches. In the mornings they sent large pots of cooked beans, rice and pasta to First Baptist Church, according to Minnie Hicks, Southern Baptist representative, who supervised the seminary's volunteers.

First Baptist's volunteers were cooking 1,500 meals a day in their kitchen in addition to what was brought in from other places, according to Pastor Juan Ortiz. The church also housed overnight 235 people. A medical dispensary offered treatment and preventive immunization by five doctors and 10 nurses. They treated approximately 500 people in the first few days.

The convention's media ministry was able to provide several thousand first lessons in the Bible correspondence courses to go with the sandwich meals prepared at the seminary; each sack included tracts and a little message slip with greetings from Baptists. By Sept. 23, stores of tracts and the correspondence courses were nearly exhausted. The Baptist media office ordered 30,000 more tracts and 20,000 more correspondence course lessons printed.

Other congregations in the city also worked with people in their areas, and sent supplies and volunteers to work at the downtown church. For instance, Peniel Baptist Church, in the northwestern corner of the city, housed 56 people, fed more than 70 and operated a dispensary.

The Mexican convention asked the churches to keep their young people out of the downtown zone because of unsafe buildings and threats of disease. But the young people did what they could. A group from Eliacim Baptist Church in the suburb of Loma Linda collected boxes of clothes and shoes to be taken downtown.

Lloyd Mann, a Southern Baptist representative, reported Baptist students at the National Autonomous University of Mexico made sandwiches Sept. 22 to take to First Baptist Church. For the most part, students worked through their local congregations to respond to the disaster.

By Sept. 25, relief efforts were shifting from the immediate crisis of the first few days to the longer term effort to care for people who will be grieving, without jobs and homeless for some time to come.

For the first few days, spiritual guidance and counseling was informally offered as volunteers worked with individuals seeking help. By Sept. 24, the aid committee named Richard Garrett, director of the Mexican Baptist Theological Seminary, to spearhead a coordinated effort to offer spiritual comfort and Christian witness.

Garrett, a Southern Baptist representative, suspended seminary classes through the first week in October so the students could divide into spiritual counseling teams with pastors and members from Mexico City's churches. Teams are working 12-hour shifts at various shelters throughout the city and at churches offering relief and shelter.

Texas Baptist Men sent a field kitchen, jackhammers and other equipment, tents, injection guns and tetanus and typhoid serums. A similar team of Oklahoma Baptists was scheduled to enter Mexico Sept. 27. Relief units from Louisiana and Mississippi reportedly left for Mexico the afternoon of Sept. 27. The aid committee plans to place the kitchens in neighborhoods with major needs that don't have a Baptist church to house relief efforts.

The crisis and Baptist response to it have given Mexican Baptists a higher profile in their capital city than they've had in the past. Radio broadcasts referred people to Baptists for help and mentioned by name the Baptist Aid committee. During the excavation of the building near the church, rescuers pulled out a body along with a pile of personal effects. The workers told bystanders not to worry, they were taking personal effects to a safe place. As with one voice, an observer said, neighbors responded, "No, take them to the church; they are taking care of us."

Porfirio Bas, a television star and musician who has been a Baptist for one year, worked as a volunteer at the central distribution point all that first week. On Sept. 25, a television news crew interviewed Bas at First Baptist Church, giving him an opportunity to tell what was going on and give a word of witness.

Texas Baptist Men
Aid Quake Victims

By Ken Camp

MEXICO CITY (BP)--After an arduous, three-day, 1,300-mile journey from Dallas, 13 Texas Baptist volunteers joined local Mexican Baptists Sept. 26 in an effort to offer beans, rice and the Bread of Life to victims of the earthquake that devastated downtown Mexico City Sept. 19.

By 6 p.m. Thursday, the Texas Baptist Men's disaster relief team was serving four long lines of hungry people from the 18-wheel, tractor-trailer rig with its portable field kitchen.

The field kitchen was set up at a sports field amid the rubble of the Tepito neighborhood, just north of central Mexico City, with the expectation of serving up to 10,000 meals per day to refugees housed in the area and in as many as 62 other shelters throughout the city.

Robert Dixon, executive director of Texas Baptist Men, and Isaac Torres, Partnership Missions consultant with the National Baptist Convention of Mexico, agreed with Mexican federal district officials on Thursday morning to set up the field kitchen at Tepito, in the shadow of the historic San Francisco de Asis Catholic Church. From there, hot meals would be taken to other distribution centers in the city.

"We want to set up in an area where we can give the greatest help to the earthquake victims and to you," Dixon told government officials. Homeless people in Tepito were conservatively estimated at 6,000.

The initial disaster relief team was scheduled to work until Sunday, Sept. 29, when members of the Texas Baptist Men's Aviation Fellowship were expected to fly in a second team. Both the first and second teams planned to train Mexican Baptists to prepare and serve meals from the field kitchen. Dixon anticipated leaving the disaster relief unit with one Texas Baptist supervisor and a trained team of local volunteers for up to two months, if necessary.

In addition to the disaster relief team, Texas Baptists also responded to the great need in Mexico in other ways. About 80 Texas Baptist Spanish-speaking counselors will serve this week in Mexico City on a one-to-one basis to witness, console and encourage disaster victims.

Baylor University Medical Center, Dallas, sent \$200,000 of medical supplies, primarily blank syringes and tetanus serum, and reported that about 80 doctors, nurses and other trauma specialists were standing by if needed. Also, Denton, Texas, Baptist layman Jim Hutchinson flew pediatrician Roy Toledo of Denton to Mexico City with a planeload of medical supplies.

Bill Gray, Texas Baptist Partnership Missions coordinator, flew to Mexico City soon after the earthquake to assess needs and offer assistance. He reported one of the greatest needs is demolition equipment, including 50 jackhammers and air compressors, 20 electric metal saws, 200 manual saws for cutting steel reinforcement rods and 100 acetylene torches.

The disaster relief team's long journey to Mexico City began at 1 p.m. Monday, Sept. 23, with a brief prayer meeting led by William M. Pinson Jr., executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

"We respond to the tragic situation in Mexico City out of a deep conviction that we ought to care for, and show God's love too, all people," Pinson said as the Dallas volunteers gathered on a vacant lot in south Dallas. Other volunteers joined the team during stops at Waco, Austin, San Antonio and Laredo.

In spite of careful vehicle inspection before setting out, mechanical problems plagued the crew on their way to Mexico City. In Central Texas, four tires on the 18-wheeler had to be replaced, and on the steep mountain roads of Central Mexico, the big rig kept overheating.

Mechanic Bob Gilley of Lake Palestine Baptist Church, finally had to replace a bursted hose with two smaller ones pieced together with electrical duct tape and a clamp improvised from a HAM radio mast. Mechanical malfunctions, communication problems, missed connections and other troubles worked together to delay the team's entry into Mexico City, frustrating their efforts to begin serving hungry people in dire need.

Larry Peltz, of First Baptist Church of Plano, who alternated with John LaNoue, Texas Royal Ambassador director, in driving the truck, said the delays "make me nervous because I know how badly we need to get to Mexico City."

Dixon told the volunteers God was at work even in the midst of setbacks. We have seen the affirming hand of God upon our work," he said, citing examples of persons who made professions of faith in Christ as personal savior because of the delays.

He pointed to an instance where a young man was led to Christ by Ernie Liebig, manager of Timberline Encampment in Lindale, Texas, and Jesse Garcia, pastor of First Mexican Baptist Church, Texas City, during a delay at Nuevo Laredo.

"The wait on the border was exasperating when we were so anxious to get into Mexico," said Liebig, "but God had a purpose in our waiting."

At Nuevo Laredo, a sergeant in the Mexican army was assigned to the disaster relief unit as official escort. He travelled in a van with Dixon and Manuel Galindo, dean of student life at Valley Baptist Academy, Harlingen. Before arriving at Monterey, Dixon told volunteers: "Manuel shared the gospel of our resurrected Jesus with our sergeant, and he has prayed to accept Jesus as his Lord and Savior."

At military headquarters in Monterey, the sergeant was scheduled to turn the convoy over to another escort. However, he asked the general there to allow him to escort the volunteers all the way to Mexico City without pay, even though he was scheduled for a day off. His general granted permission and gave the sergeant a day's wages out of his own pocket.

En route to Mexico City, the disaster relief team stopped at a small roadside cafe where they met Mrs. Juanita Morales, a member of West End Baptist Church of Houston. She had been in Mexico City at the time the earthquake demolished the Hotel Can Cun where she was staying and left her trapped for hours in the rubble.

"We knew there must have been people looking for us," she said, describing her thoughts while trapped beneath the debris. "We just prayed."

As tears streamed down her cheeks, Mrs. Morales thanked the disaster relief team for coming to Mexico and pledged her prayer support for their efforts.

From the time they crossed the border, the Texas Baptist volunteers were met with expressions of gratitude and generous displays of hospitality. On several occasions, cafe proprietors, service station attendants and other business owners refused to allow the volunteers to pay for any goods or services they received.

At a restaurant in San Luis, nationally acclaimed bullfighter Luis Procura, with tears welling in his eyes, asked for the privilege of buying breakfast for the team.

The initial team included Dixon, LaNoue, Galindo, Gilley, Peltz, Liebig, Garcia, James Watson, director of the Frio River Baptist Association in Pearsall; Mike Mojica, associate director of missions, Austin association; Larry Blanchard, First Baptist Church, Lindale; Charlie Moore of Richardson Heights Baptist Church, Richardson; John Brown, Faith Baptist Church, Princeton, and Ken Camp, BGCT public relations staffer.

When asked why the volunteers were willing to leave their jobs and families for a week to travel into a potentially dangerous disaster area, LaNoue said:

"Where there is great human need, there is a tremendous openness to the Gospel. Jesus did two things: he met human needs wherever he found them, and he brought men to God. He never did the two separately. He did them together.

"We have the privilege of doing what Jesus did."

--30--

(Camp, newswriter for the Dallas bureau of Baptist Press, accompanied the Texas disaster relief unit to Mexico City.)

Lives, Like Buildings,
Upended in Mexico Quake

By Martha Skelton

MEXICO CITY (BP)--Parts of Mexico City look like someone flapped a giant table cloth, and buildings tumbled like salt and pepper shakers.

But more than buildings are upended. People--their homes, their places of work, their family units and social ties--will never be the same.

For Linda Sturgeon Vargas, 27, daughter of Southern Baptist representatives Eldon and Jo Ann Sturgeon, the two-minute earthquake Sept. 19 was stunning.

When her second floor flat on Avenue Versailles started trembling, she crouched down in the doorway, listening to the crackling, crunching and loud crashes of what she realized later were two nearby buildings being shaken apart.

At first when she looked out, all she could see was dust from the downed buildings. Frantic voices cried, "Get them out, get them out!" Others answered, "It's too late. They're dead."

"I was so close to death. I'm stunned. I still can't believe it," she said almost a week after the original disaster. Her office building, near the hardest-hit area, is operational. But she and her husband, Tony, were evacuated from their apartment building. They salvaged their belongings, for which they are very grateful. But the loss of place, of the familiar routines tied into home and neighborhood are gone for the Vargases and many others.

Roberto Zendejas, a third-year medical resident in surgery, was in a meeting at Balbuena Hospital between Mexico City's downtown area and the airport when the first earthquake struck.

Badly wounded people started arriving within 10 minutes; the hospital admitted 600 people those first two hours. Intensive care units were converted to operating rooms to meet the overwhelming demands of the emergency.

He and other medical personnel forgot shifts and worked straight through for the next several days.

The city faces altered medical services for the foreseeable future, Zendejas points out. Up to nine major medical facilities with an approximate capacity of 5,000 beds are destroyed, he estimates.

Teri Ramirez, a cardiologist in charge of an emergency floor at Mexico City's General Medical Center, had just started her work day when the earthquake struck Sept. 19.

She and others worked for hours to get patients moved to a safe facility. Ambulatory and wheelchair patients were moved more quickly; those on beds were pushed along on their mattresses and bounced down the stairways to safety. The top three floors of the seven-story building had caved in.

In her building, 15 hospital staff persons died and approximately 10 patients lost their lives during the transition.

For Ramirez, a member of Getsemani Baptist Church in Mexico City, spiritual resources were important during the crisis, but will be even more so in the days and months to come. Evangelicals, by feeding, sheltering and caring for Mexico City's hurting people, can make a difference, she says.

In lives where even the ground is no longer solid, people need something to depend on.

Southern Baptist Growth Goals
Will Cause Construction Boom

By Charles Willis

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP)---Denominational evangelism and Sunday school growth goals point to an unparalleled construction boom for Southern Baptists, Gwenn McCormick told 100 architects from across the nation.

McCormick, director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church architecture department, told participants in the 1985 Workshop for Architects: "Southern Baptists are on the threshold of the greatest growth opportunities they have ever faced."

Citing Bold Mission Thrust, Southern Baptists' goal to present the gospel to all persons by the year 2000, and Challenge 10/90, a goal of 10 million persons enrolled in Sunday school by 1990, McCormick projected the impact of denominational growth on building construction.

He said the denomination saw no real growth in amounts spent for new construction from 1976 through 1982. However, in 1983, a gain of five percent in new construction expenditures began what he sees as a continuing trend. The 1984 convention-wide investment by churches of \$425 million for new facilities was a gain of 14 percent.

"There is every reason to expect the rate of increase to be sustained over the next four to five years," he said, predicting Southern Baptists will spend "well over \$4.75 billion for 65 to 90 million square feet of new facilities between 1985 and 1990."

Assuming the present ratio of attendance to enrollment of 45 to 50 percent, McCormick said Southern Baptists will have to provide space for more than 1,125,000 new persons in Sunday school by 1990. Thirty percent of these can be provided for in existing space, he said, while 10 percent will be accommodated in dual Sunday schools. The remaining 675,000 persons will require between 16 and 22 million square feet of new space, in addition to the routine building needs Southern Baptist churches have each year. By 1990, annual new construction investment by Southern Baptists will have soared by 270 percent, he predicted.

An additional factor influencing new space requirements is the goal to begin 5,000 Southern Baptist churches by 1990, McCormick said. If only 80 percent of the 5,000 new churches construct new buildings by 1990, an additional 16 million square feet of space will be required.

McCormick told architects significant opportunities to design church facilities will require an understanding of the growth thrust of Southern Baptists, an appreciation of the kinds of space which facilitate growth and execution of designs which will assist churches in their growth commitments.

--30--

News Analysis

Court Faces New Term
Divided Over Religion

By Stan Hasteley

Baptist Press
9/27/85

WASHINGTON (BP)---Journalists who cover the Supreme Court often fall back on the adjective "divided" to describe close decisions at the nation's highest tribunal, as in "A badly divided Supreme Court ruled yesterday...." Regarding the state of religion at the high court, however, the description is particularly apt at the present moment.

As it commences its new term the first Monday in October, this court is particularly divided over religion cases in two key areas of church-state litigation over the past four decades: aid to nonpublic schools and religion in public schools.

The court, in an unexpected turn of events last term, embraced again the concept of separation of church and state after a pair of terms when it seemed to be discarding it. Whereas two years ago the justices upheld tuition tax deductions at the state level for parents who send their children to parochial schools and gave approval to states' hiring of legislative chaplains, in 1985 they struck down a state law mandating silent prayer in public schools and federal and state statutes that sent public schoolteachers into church-related schools to provide specialized instruction at taxpayer expense.

--more--

On the surface such apparently contradictory decisions seem to indicate a court hopelessly adrift and without constitutional moorings. But when one remembers that all of those recent decisions came on 6-3 and 5-4 votes, what they actually point to is precisely that "divided" court.

Anchoring that end of the tribunal which appears convinced religion deserves the imprimatur of government are Chief Justice Warren E. Burger and Associate Justices William H. Rehnquist and Byron R. White. Of the three, Rehnquist is clearly the ideological leader.

Perhaps no justice ever to sit on the high court has produced a religious manifesto to match Rehnquist's dissenting opinion in last term's *Wallace v. Jaffree* decision striking down Alabama's mandatory silent prayer statute. That treatise undoubtedly marked Rehnquist's intention to lead the court in a thoroughgoing reevaluation of First Amendment religion law in the near future.

Rehnquist apparently expects President Reagan to have the chance to appoint more justices during his second term and presupposes those additions will enable his long-held revisionist views of the First Amendment to prevail--and soon.

In his approach to religion cases, no justice is more of an enigma than the Chief Justice himself. Over the past 15 years Burger has moved from being the author of the court's prevailing three-part standard in Establishment Clause cases (a challenged law must have a secular purpose, must neither advance nor inhibit religion, and must not excessively entangle government with religion) to being one of its principal critics. He appears now to agree with Rehnquist's assessment that the nation's founders wrote the First Amendment only to prevent establishment of a national church or preferential treatment of one Christian sect over another.

Justice White--John F. Kennedy's only appointment to the court--consistently has supported both aid to parochial schools and increased deference toward religious symbolism in public life. The irony of his church-state performance is that Kennedy's church-state record was perhaps better than that of any other modern president.

If Rehnquist, Burger and White anchor the high court stem in church-state law, its stern is steadied by Justices William J. Brennan Jr., Thurgood Marshall and John Paul Stevens. These three consistently hold out for a strict interpretation of the First Amendment religion clauses, the interpretation that the founders sought to separate as much as is practicable the functions of church and state.

In last June's 6-3 ruling striking down the Alabama silent prayer statute, it was Stevens who applied Burger's three-part test and found the Alabama law wanting. Stevens also underscored what he called "the established principle that the Government must pursue a course of complete neutrality toward religion."

Stevens--Gerald R. Ford's only appointment to the court--has thus joined veterans Brennan and Marshall as dependable allies of that view of the Establishment Clause law capsuled by the late William O. Douglas' injunction that "The First Amendment says what it means and means what it says." For Brennan, Marshall and Stevens, that means government has no business funding sectarian schools or enforcing religious observances on schoolchildren.

The ideological division between pro and anti separationists leaves the three remaining justices somewhere in the middle. That breakdown may be a bit too neat because of Justice Harry A. Blackmun's recent propensity to gravitate toward the Brennan-Marshall-Stevens side. Of the key church-state tests in the last three terms, only once did Blackmun come down opposite that trio, in the unsuccessful challenge to a Nebraska law providing for employment of a legislative chaplain at public expense.

The remaining duo--Justices Lewis F. Powell Jr. and Sandra Day O'Connor--increasingly hold the balance of power in church-state cases. Powell, whose vote is assiduously courted by attorneys who argue these disputes, is known as the consummate constitutional technician. (The nation's lawyers, in an annual poll conducted by the ABA Journal, each year rank Powell number one in the quality of written opinions.)

Yet to separationists and accommodationists alike, Powell is the picture of inconsistency. It was he who provided the necessary fifth vote in the 1983 decision upholding the Minnesota tuition tax deduction scheme. Likewise, two years later his was the pivotal vote in the 5-4 decisions invalidating programs in New York City and Grand Rapids, Mich., that sent public schoolteachers into parochial schools.

O'Connor also has disappointed both sides in church-state disputes. In all three key parochial aid cases, she voted for the public assistance to sectarian schools. But in *Wallace v. Jaffree*, she pointedly endorsed the separationist view that "Nothing in the United States Constitution as interpreted by this Court or in the laws of the State of Alabama prohibits public school students from voluntarily praying at any time before, during, or after the school day."

Whether this three-way division will hold in upcoming cases remains to be seen. Entering the new term, the justices already have agreed to decide four church-state cases and once more will join the increasingly acrimonious debate over abortion.

In what unquestionably will be the church-state headliner of the term, the court will decide whether a student religious club at Williamsport (Pa.) Area High School was unconstitutionally discriminated against when school officials refused it permission to meet during school hours at a designated time for meetings of other extracurricular groups.

Another church-state case accepted for review involves the claim of a blind ministerial student in Washington state that he is entitled to federal and state rehabilitation funds on an equal basis with other applicants.

A third case will test the constitutionality of an Air Force regulation forbidding an Orthodox Jewish captain who is a psychologist to wear his yarmulke--or skull cap--while in uniform and on duty at a military hospital.

Yet another dispute involves a challenge to federal requirements that recipients of food stamps and Aid to Families with Dependent Children be assigned Social Security numbers. A Native American has sued the government, insisting his minor daughter be exempted because of a sincerely held religious belief that the numbers represent an evil force.

Although some of these disputes may well be settled by margins larger than those in the recent cases cited here, chances are others will be reported as having come from a "divided" court. If that happens, it will be because the Supreme Court in fact is divided over the proper role of religion in American life. In that respect, the nation's highest court merely reflects the present reality in a larger public debate.

--30--

(Stan Hastey is Washington Bureau chief for Baptist Press, news service of the Southern Baptist Convention. He has covered the Supreme Court for his organization for the last 12 terms, and for the interfaith Religious News Service for five terms.)

'Porn Rock' Hearings
Held In U.S. Senate

By David Wilkinson

Baptist Press
9/27/85

WASHINGTON (BP)--A Senate subcommittee investigating sexually explicit contemporary music heard widely differing testimony from music industry spokespersons and a newly formed parents group on the potential dangers of "Porn Rock" songs.

The intense debate between music industry representatives and Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC) leaders Susan Baker, wife of the Treasury Secretary, and Tipper Gore, wife of Sen. Albert Gore, D-Tenn., centered on the texts of contemporary songs which glorify rape, incest and suicide.

Gore, a Baptist and member of the Subcommittee on Communications which held the hearings, also participated in the highly charged dialogue.

--more--

"Some say there is no cause for concern. But we believe there is," Mrs. Baker warned. "Teenage pregnancy and teenage suicide rates are at epidemic proportions. The U.S. has the highest teenage pregnancy rate of any developed country—96 out of 1000," she said. "It is our contention that pervasive messages aimed at children which promote and glorify suicide, rape and sado-masochism have to be numbered among the contributing factors."

Mrs. Gore told the group the issue is much larger than violent and sexually explicit lyrics. "It is one of ideas and ideals, freedom and responsibility in our society. Clearly there is a tension here and in a free society there always will be. We are simply asking that these corporate and artistic rights be exercised with responsibility, sensitivity and some self-restraint. Especially since young minds are at stake," she said.

Sen. Paul Hawkins, R-Fla., demonstrated for committee members the sexually explicit nature of some contemporary music by displaying album covers and video recordings. "The issue," Hawkins noted, "is too hot to cool down."

Members of PMRC are calling on the music industry to do three things voluntarily: label records with a warning about content, make lyrics available to the consumer before purchase and set up a panel to establish policy guides.

Musicians as diverse as John Denver and Dee Snider, lead singer for the rock group Twisted Sister, said the request from PMRC amounted to censorship of the music industry. At one point musician Frank Zappa, who failed to impress the Senate with his references to the First Amendment, mimicked Mrs. Baker and Mrs. Gore and was then rebuked for being "boorish" and "insulting."

Although no legislation has been introduced, the focus of the hearings was an appeal for the music industry to deal voluntarily with the issue. Bipartisan concern about explicit lyrics was expressed by a number of senators, including Ernest Hollings, D-S.C., John Danforth, R-Mo., and Slade Gorton, R-Wash.

Foy Valentine, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, applauded the hearings.

"Our society has long recognized that obscenity is not protected as speech under the First Amendment. Although most of our attention has been focused on printed material and films, it is appropriate that at this time music be examined in the same way as other forms of art," he stated.

"There is every reason to believe that there has been a marked increase in the extent and the graphic specificity with which sexually explicit and destructive themes are being treated in contemporary music," Valentine added. "At a time when the correlation between obscenity and destructive behavior is becoming increasingly clear, we need to call for responsibility on the part of an industry which exercises such a pervasive influence over America's teenagers and children."

--30--

Lack Of Transport Threatens Africa Aid

By David Wilkinson

WASHINGTON (BP)—Thousands of Africans may die between now and the November harvest because of failure to provide adequate transportation for delivery of emergency food supplies, according to two U.S. Congressmen.

Representatives Mike Synar, D-Okla., and Mickey Leland, D-Texas, who have observed relief efforts in Sub-Saharan Africa, testified Sept. 19 at a hearing of the Africa Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Synar told the subcommittee the "No. 1 concern" of his constituents in Oklahoma is the question of whether the food is reaching the African people.

--more--

Unfortunately, much of the food is not getting there because of inadequate transportation, he said. "The tragedy is that because of complacency we are facing a new crisis. Food without trucks is useless."

Synar and Leland called for an immediate augmenting of local transport systems in Western Sudan and Ethiopia through the purchase or lease of several hundred trucks to move food now in storage. Leland said there are 350,000 tons in storage in Port Sudan and 200,000 tons in Ethiopia, yet lack of transportation has kept millions of people from receiving food.

The two Congressmen specifically urged the administration to honor immediately a U.S. pledge to provide an additional 400 trucks to Ethiopia.

Both Congressmen criticized the Agency for International Development (AID) for failure to provide necessary non-food assistance such as transportation and medicine, despite "clear evidence" last winter that such needs existed.

Leland, chairman of the House Select Committee on Hunger, said food supplies in Sudan, Ethiopia, Mali and other famine-stricken countries far exceed local transport capacity after almost a year of intensive relief efforts.

"The failure to spend a few million dollars for the provision of trucks to transport food when we spend millions to send food makes no sense," he charged. "The consequence will be thousands of avoidable deaths."

Subcommittee chairman Howard Wolpe, D-Mich., praised the generosity of the American people, emphasizing that the issue "is not whether the U.S. has made a generous response" to the crisis but "whether the U.S. has used clearly available funds in a timely way to address...the critical transportation bottlenecks" preventing food aid from reaching starving people.

* Leland agreed the overall efforts comprise "a major success story." "But," he added, "the trail is littered with missed opportunities, with failures stemming from faulty assessments and unrealistic expectations."

AID administrator M. Peter McPherson described the progress made in Ethiopia, Sudan and other countries. AID, he said, "continues to adjust our policy toward transport assistance as the problems evolve."

McPherson underscored government efforts to pressure Ethiopian authorities to do more "because the United States cannot do everything alone." Government leaders in other African countries also have complicated relief efforts, he said.

Leland, however, characterized the administration's concern with the Ethiopian government's response as an "obsession." The U.S. response, he said, must be "relative to human need and not tied to burden sharing with other donor nations or political concessions on the part of the Ethiopian government."

(BP)

BAPTIST PRESS

901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203

LYNN MAY NO
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
901 COMMERCE
NASHVILLE, TN 37203

NEWS SERVICE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION