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March 11, 1985

85-26

Gambling Opponents
Collared In Two States

By David Wilkinson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Southern Baptists and other anti-gambling opponents scored back-to-back victories recently when state legislatures in Mississippi and Texas defeated pari-mutuel betting bills.

The twin losses represent a significant setback for gambling industry leaders who this year have targeted key southern states for expansion of legalized gambling through pari-mutuel betting and state-sponsored lotteries. Pari-mutuel legislation is still under consideration in several other states, including Georgia, Kansas and Tennessee.

A bill which would have allowed voters in two Mississippi counties to decide whether to establish county racing commissions was defeated in the state Senate, 27 to 21, after earlier passing the House. A motion to reconsider temporarily revived the legislation, but the motion was later tabled, killing the bill for the current session.

A few days later the Texas House surprised gambling proponents by defeating a pari-mutuel bill 95-52. Supporters of the bill have conceded defeat, admitting they lack enough strength to muster the two-thirds majority required to reconsider the legislation.

The results were particularly sweet for anti-gambling leaders since many observers in both states had been predicting passage of the gambling legislation.

In both states, Southern Baptists figured prominently in public opposition to the pari-mutuel bills. State Baptist moral concerns agencies helped marshal opposition, editors of both state Baptist papers editorialized against the bills, and many pastors urged their congregations to register their concern with elected representatives.

Paul Jones, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission, said pari-mutuel supporters in that state were shocked by the reversal of announced intentions of support by a number of senators who apparently "got the message" from voters in their home districts. The horse lobby, which had flooded the state with a paid advertising campaign prior to the vote, got only 21 of the 31 vote it had predicted.

Jones pointed out that the night before the vote one senator received 15 telephone calls at his hotel before asking the switchboard to hold all calls. The next morning the legislator had 70 messages urging him to vote against pari-mutuel gambling.

"Efforts had been underway for many months to form an active coalition among various groups in Mississippi who are opposed both to pari-mutuel and lottery gambling," he said. "Obviously, those efforts bore fruit."

In an earlier vote, the state Senate overwhelmingly rejected pro-lottery legislation.

In Texas, Phil Strickland, director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, said he was "surprised by the margin of victory, although it became apparent before the vote support for the bill was eroding." During the last legislative session two years ago a pari-mutuel bill was passed by the Senate and lost by only two votes in the House.

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
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Texas Baptists, Strickland said, "responded well to the challenge." While pro-gambling legislators in the Senate plan to introduce new pari-mutuel legislation, Strickland said the House vote "certainly puts them in a deep hole. The war is not over yet, but we've won a major battle."

Foy Valentine, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, praised Baptist leadership in both states who helped fashion effective anti-gambling coalitions.

"Their labors have shown once again that the power of government is in the hands of the people and that an involved group of citizens still can have more influence than a handful of gambling lobbyists," he said.

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House Panel Begins Hearings On Abortion Clinic Violence

Baptist Press
3/11/85

WASHINGTON (BP)—A House Judiciary Committee panel has begun hearings on whether violence and other activities directed at clinics which perform abortions violate the constitutional rights of patients and employees of the clinics.

At a Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights hearing March 6, chairman Don Edwards, D-Calif., declared the purpose of the hearings "is emphatically not to debate the pros and cons of abortion."

Instead, Edwards said the hearings would examine the violence and other disruptive activities at abortion clinics and consider what role the federal government has in protecting the constitutional rights of employees and patients of the clinics.

In its first hearing, the committee heard of witnesses—including a patient and operators of clinics performing abortions—describe a variety of disruptions staged by abortion foes, ranging from arson to harassing phone calls and chants to patients and employees.

Edwards suggested "the harassment and intimidation of patients and staff" may be as injurious as the recent rash of bombings and burnings "in discouraging the exercise of constitutional rights."

In later hearings, Edwards said the panel hopes to hear from the Justice Department on why a federal civil rights law making it a crime to interfere with the exercise of a constitutional right "is not being applied to violence against women exercising their rights to enter reproductive health centers."

"Reproductive rights are constitutionally protected," Edwards said, "yet the Justice Department has not intervened here."

That same law, Edwards noted, was previously used by the Justice Department to prosecute harassment of blacks exercising their rights to enter restaurants.

Edwards said he fully supported the exercise of First Amendment free speech rights by abortion opponents but said the allegations being investigated by his panel "go beyond legitimate First Amendment protests."

An Oregon woman who elected to have an abortion for physical health reasons, described the yells and harassment which occurred outside a Portland, Ore., clinic the day she visited.

"No woman who has chosen to go to a clinic should have to go through the kind of torment the picketers caused me," said Katherine Taylor. "The powerful vocabulary that was forced upon me as I entered the clinic was nothing more than a tactic of intimidation."

Besides the impact on their patients and staff, other witnesses told of the financial costs of providing extra security necessitated by activities directed at their centers.

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After hearing the panel's testimony, committee member Patricia Schroeder, D-Colo., said abortion clinic demonstrations have "gone way beyond free speech." Schroeder compared the harassment tactics to lining up people outside a church to stop others attempting to enter, asking them if they know what they are doing.

One opposing witness disagreed with the panel's general assessment that the so-called "sidewalk counseling" occurring at abortion clinics goes beyond mere exercise of free speech rights. "For every critic who calls our offer of help 'harassment,' we can present many women who call it a Godsend and a last minute reprieve," said Joseph M. Scheidler, director of the Pro-Life Action League.

Scheidler said while some anti-abortion leaders have condemned the violent destruction of abortion facilities, his organization and others "refuse to condemn it because we refuse to cast the abortionists in the role of victims when they are in fact the victimizers."

The hearings themselves drew fire from Republican members of the subcommittee. Reps. William E. Dannemeyer of California and Michael DeWine of Ohio criticized Edwards for holding this set of hearings when he has refused during recent years to hold hearings on a Human Life Amendment to the Constitution to ban abortions.

A second hearing is scheduled March 12.

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Carters Receive Award
From Religious PR Group

Baptist Press
3/11/85

ATLANTA (BP)—Former President Jimmy Carter and First Lady Rosalynn Carter received the first Award of Distinction for communication of religious values from the Religious Public Relations Council in Atlanta March 4.

The award from the national interfaith organization of religious communications professionals was presented to the Carters by RPRC President Lloyd Householder, director of the office of communications of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Householder said the award was created "to recognize persons who have shown consistently unique and outstanding efforts to communicate religious values through channels open to them." He cited the Carters' "devout faith, ongoing churchmanship and participation in local church bodies."

The Carters are both Sunday school teachers in a Southern Baptist church in Plains, Ga., and are deeply involved in Habitat for Humanity, an international, interfaith organization which helps provide housing for the poor.

In accepting the award, Carter paid tribute to the importance of the role of communication in religion. "To devote one's life to the promotion of religious and ethical values is indeed a life worthwhile," he said. Rosalynn Carter said, "I hope our future actions will always communicate our religious convictions."

The Carters addressed their remarks of appreciation to the membership of RPRC by videotape from the office of the former president in Atlanta. The tape will be played at the organization's national convention in Chicago April 22-24.

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

National Day Of Prayer
Backed By Executive Committee

Baptist Press
3/11/85

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Southern Baptists, "and Christians everywhere" have been urged to make "every day" a day of prayer, with special emphasis on May 2.

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President Ronald Reagan, following a tradition begun in the revolutionary war and reestablished in 1952, has declared May 2 the National Day of Prayer.

The Executive Committee of the 14.3-million member Southern Baptist Convention, at its February meeting, voted unanimously to "concur in the action" and encouraged "all churches and agencies aligned with the Southern Baptist Convention to give special emphasis to the importance of prayer in our relationship with Almighty God."

The resolution was presented by Ed Drake, a layman from Dallas.

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Church Extension Key
To Increasing Baptisms

By Michael Tutterow

Baptist Press
3/11/85

DENVER (BP)—Starting churches is the only way Southern Baptists will evangelize America, a national church extension conference has been told.

F. Jack Redford, director of church extension for the Southern Baptist Convention Home Mission Board, warned state Baptist church extension leaders without additional churches, Southern Baptists would fail to increase the number of baptisms (conversions).

"We will not drastically change our baptismal picture until we have more places to tell who Jesus is," charged Redford. "If we're going to get the baptismal record up to one million people, it will only happen when we have 15,000-20,000 more churches."

Southern Baptist evangelism leaders, meeting last December, had lamented the fact Southern Baptists had hovered around the 400,000 mark for annual baptisms for the past 12 years.

Records indicated baptisms also dropped during 1984. Southern Baptists have not kept pace with the growth of the nation, said Redford, who added the lag represented a "crisis" for the 14.3-million member denomination.

In 1889, there was one Southern Baptist church for every 4,000 people, explained Redford. Now Southern Baptists have one church for every 6,400 people. Another 14,000 churches are needed "just to stay even," he said.

While the "climate for church starting has improved" during the past 15 years among Southern Baptists, church starting remains bound by traditional approaches to church extension, said Redford. In addition to sponsoring traditional church programs which may not fit the context of a given community, many new churches stress the need for owning traditional church facilities, he added.

Until Baptists are convinced churches which meet in homes "are viable, we'll never evangelize America like we should," said Redford.

Southern Baptists' crisis is not in denominational squabbles, said Redford, but in the lack of new churches started. "We're politely keeping our head above the water," he explained. "We have got to accelerate church starting or we'll still be baptizing 300,000-400,000 people a year 20 years from now."

"Every person ought to know Jesus," he said. "But there is a danger they may not unless there is a church in their community."

James L. Hill, associate director of the board's church starting department, echoed Redford's statements and called for Baptists to adopt new models, including house churches, for starting new congregations.

"As the unchurched population of our nation grows, the number of persons who have little or no understanding of religious, let alone Christian, faith will multiply," said Hill. "Any strategy for reaching these people which does not take the gospel out of church buildings and into homes will not be significantly successful."

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Hill presented results of a survey of house church models which ranged from fellowship groups functioning as an outreach arm of a local church to constituted churches which meet in homes. The survey noted the models had been used with great success throughout Southern Baptist circles for discipleship, fellowship, outreach, and for beginning new points for Bible study and/or worship, indigenous church-type missions, self-supporting missions or churches and house churches.

Hill noted the first-century church grew because "early Christians took their faith into their daily lives. They did not regiment their Christian lives and witness to the limits of Sunday morning traditions and rituals."

Hill called on Southern Baptists to mobilize lay leaders to take the gospel into their homes and communities. "If Southern Baptists are to reach our nation for Christ, we must move our witness out of church buildings to places where it can be heard by the growing millions of people who will never come to our services," he said.

"There is an inactive army of lay leaders in our denomination which could change the course of the Christian faith in our society," Hill added. "May God grant us the courage to send them home with the gospel as we seek to establish and grow tens of thousands of new churches."

Church extension is vulnerable because its success or failure is measured by one annual statistic, said Gerald Palmer, missions vice-president for the Home Mission Board. But annual figures are not to be the final judgment on church extension, since the net gain in churches reflects only a portion of church extension workers' efforts, he explained.

Not every community can sustain a self-supporting church, he added. Some church-type missions should remain as such, he added.

Yet no community is too small or too far away for Southern Baptists to begin a ministry, said Palmer, who added Baptists must use a variety of models in order to reach the maximum number of people while remaining good stewards of denominational resources.

Church extension must remain a priority among Southern Baptists, Palmer maintained. The denomination will "live or die as we are used by the Spirit of God to birth new Christians and new churches," he said. In fact, church extension will determine Southern Baptists' future.

"We as Southern Baptists were born of a missionary impulse," he said. "We were born of missions and born to do missions."

Palmer noted the Home Mission Board gave church extension priority because "we saw our base of evangelism and ministry being eroded." Only by starting new churches will Southern Baptists broaden the base for missions, and thus secure a future for themselves, he said.

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Seminary Faculty Voices
Support For Ordained Woman Pastor

Baptist Press
3/11/85

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)—In a response to controversy over Home Mission Board financial support for an ordained woman pastor, the faculty of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., has adopted unanimously a statement of affirmation of her ministry.

Debra Griffis-Woodberry, a 1977 graduate of Southeastern, was called recently as pastor by the Broadneck Baptist Mission, Annapolis, Md. Under the arrangement of her employment, a portion of her salary will be paid by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

After approving her salary supplement, the Home Mission Board was criticized for its support of an ordained woman. The criticism follows the adoption of a resolution at the 1984 Southern Baptist Convention which discouraged churches from ordaining women.

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In the statement, Griffis-Woodberry, who earned two degrees at Southeastern, was cited as having "distinguished herself as a scholar, as a minister-in-training, and as a Christian person in her preparation here." The statement also said "she has served with competence on our instructional staff," and had done "excellent work" in two Raleigh, N.C., congregations.

"Given this significant history," the statement continued, "we affirm the Home Mission Board's recent approval of her for church pastoral assistance." Further, the faculty said "she lives out in her pastoral work qualities of ministry we value highly," among which were "commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ," "able preaching," and "evangelistic concern."

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Baylor Trustees Withdraw
\$24 Million Bond Issue Plan

Baptist Press
3/11/85

WACO, Texas (BP)--Baylor University trustees have formally withdrawn the \$24 million bond issue proposal presented to the Baptist General Convention of Texas in late 1984.

The bond issue plan had not been considered by the BGCT executive committee, although it had been approved by the administrative committee.

The financing plan would have helped fund the construction and renovation of several buildings, including the proposed \$13.5 million special events center.

The action was taken as the result of a 33-page legal opinion received in February from the Fulbright and Jaworski law firm in Houston. The report raised legal questions regarding the use of federal funds for buildings that would be used, in part, for religious purposes, such as hosting the annual Baptist General Convention of Texas, student revivals or other religious meetings.

J.D. Hudson, chairman of the trustee building committee, emphasized committee members are committed to the original construction and renovation plan, but will need to seek alternative methods of financing.

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Historic FBC San Francisco
Aligns With Southern Baptists

Baptist Press
3/11/85

SAN FRANCISCO (BP)--A church founded during the height of the California gold rush has become one of the newest congregations in the Southern Baptist Convention.

First Baptist Church of San Francisco was voted into membership in the San Francisco Peninsula Southern Baptist Association on Jan. 21 while retaining its relationship with the American Baptist Convention.

It is believed to be the first California church to be dually aligned with with the 14.3-million member Southern Baptist Convention and the 1.6-million American Baptist Convention.

Founded in 1849, at the height of the California gold rush, the church vies with San Francisco's First Presbyterian Church for the title of the oldest Protestant church west of the Rocky Mountains.

"We went through a two-year study of the situation, trying to become informed about Southern Baptist life," said James Higgs, pastor of the church since 1980. The vote to dually align was approved by 77 percent of the congregation.

"This city is without a significant (evangelical) model," Higgs said. "We felt we could do more by cooperating than by competing--we went this direction because we want very much to be a servant church to San Francisco."

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Budget support will be given to both the SBC and the American Baptist Convention and literature from both denominations will be used in various educational programs.

Attendance at the downtown church is approximately 350 and includes 30 different nationalities. Professors and students from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., (an SBC school) have been a part of the church's life for decades. Professors have served as consultants and numerous students have served internships.

Higgs, a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, had not been a Southern Baptist.

While First Baptist made California history with its Southern Baptist-American Baptist alignment, numerous churches in other states are dually aligned with the two denominations which split prior to the Civil War. In fact, one state convention, Washington, D.C., is dually aligned with two groups.

In California many churches, including seven in the San Francisco Peninsula Southern Baptist Association, are dually aligned with the SBC and National Baptist.

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Make Reaching Ethnics
Baptist Priority: Romo

By Michael Tutterow

Baptist Press
3/11/85

DENVER (BP)—A Southern Baptist language missions leader has challenged Southern Baptists to set a goal of reaching three percent of the American ethnic population by the year 2000.

Oscar I. Romo, director of the language missions division of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, told participants in an annual language missions conference Southern Baptists currently share the gospel with less than one-half of one percent of the language-culture people in America.

Yet Southern Baptists' commitment to share the gospel with every person in the world by the end of the century demands the denomination direct much of its energy into language missions.

The 1980 Census identified 42.2 percent of the American population as ethnic/language-culture persons, said Romo, and language missions opportunities, "which include deaf, internationals and undocumented," exceed 117,861,108 people.

Additionally, Romo said, the Global 2000 Report to the President indicated as many as 30 percent of those born in the Third World during the next 15 years will seek to migrate to the United States.

"The nations of the world are continuing to come to America," explained Romo.

To reach three percent of the ethnic population, Romo said, would require Southern Baptists to evangelize 2.9 million language-culture people, establish 14,400 new congregations, or 960 new congregations a year for the next 15 years, begin 7,500 new units of ministry among internationals, and establish 1,600 new units of 50 members each among deaf people.

But Southern Baptists must be willing to change paternalistic attitudes toward ethnics if they are to successfully reach language-culture people with the gospel, said Romo. He noted during the first half of 20th century, language congregations were subjugated to Anglo congregations. Ethnic churches were relegated to "mission" status in order to receive financial assistance, they could not sponsor Anglo congregations, and Anglo churches designed programs to merge ethnic congregations with the sponsoring Anglo church, Romo explained.

"The predominant church, in its effort to be redemptive, became paternalistic," said Romo. Even today, he added, "our cultural myopia" discourages ethnic groups from developing contextual, self-supporting congregations.

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Southern Baptists for the most part have permitted ethnics "to worship, minister and evangelize in their language and cultural context," said Romo. Southern Baptists currently have a witness among 84 ethnic/language-culture groups, 94 American Indian tribes, internationals and deaf, he noted.

But greater ethnic involvement in planning mission strategies, particularly in urban areas of the nation, is needed in Southern Baptist life, said Romo.

Pluralism is shaping the nation's urban centers, said Romo, who noted 31 cities increased ethnic population between 1970 and 1980. He added in 13 of the nation's 20 largest metropolitan areas, the combined ethnic and racial minorities comprise more than 50 percent of the total population.

Romo called for "teamship" at associational levels which would involve language missions leaders "rather than telling them what they will do."

Reaching ethnics with the gospel primarily will be done through the work of ethnics, said Romo. In order to reach three percent of the ethnic population of the United States, Southern Baptists will need to locate and train 23,500 ethnic leaders.

By using Ethnic Leadership Development Centers (ELDs), Southern Baptists can provide local training opportunities, said Romo. "The availability and equipping of leaders will determine if three percent of the ethnic population will hear the gospel," he explained.

He also called for Baptist seminaries and institutions to develop curricula "in view of the nation's pluralistic society. The need for courses in American ethnic anthropology and modern languages is evident," he said. "If Southern Baptists don't train their leaders, others will."

Romo noted more than 72 percent of the groups "among whom Baptists minister do not hear one single piece of material in their language." The Baptist Sunday School Board, Woman's Missionary Union and the Brotherhood Commission already have made commitments to expand their language materials produce line, he announced.

Romo said often ethnic groups are criticized for a lack of baptisms. But he noted ethnic churches were among the top ten in baptisms in at least four states.

With a high response among some language groups, strong emphasis on evangelizing ethnics could lead the denomination to an all-time high in baptisms, added Romo.

"Evangelism is synonymous with missions," he said. If Southern Baptists do reach three percent of the ethnic population, noted Romo, "this could mean an additional 200,000 baptisms each year."

Romo challenged Baptists to learn from the past and lead with "aggressive confidence" in reaching ethnics in America. "We as Baptists are agents of hope," he said. "Together, we can change the face of our entire nation."

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Students Urged To Cross
Borders Through Missions

Baptist Press
3/11/85

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—Describing world evangelism not as "a program but a passion," a Texas pastor challenged students to consider a life of mission service during Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's annual student missions conference.

More than 850 conferees crossed state lines from all directions to learn about "Missions Across Borders" at the 36th annual event March 1-3 in Fort Worth, Texas. At least 40 decisions were recorded, including many commitments to mission service.

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Home and foreign missionaries, journeymen and seminary professors were on hand to discuss the geographical, language, cultural and religious borders Southern Baptists are crossing through missions.

The highlight of the opening session was the theme interpretation, written and produced by Dennis K. Parrish. The story revealed the need for missions volunteers to prepare themselves for missions and to go with the right motives.

A special feature on world hunger Saturday morning challenged conferees to alter their lifestyles so as "not to be in competition with my neighbor." Bill O'Brien, executive vice-president of the Foreign Mission Board, said such a commitment is necessary for American Christians "to attain more credibility in the eyes of the world."

A lifestyle of evangelism was also encouraged by the morning keynote speaker, Laura Fry Allen, the Home Mission Board's national evangelism consultant with women. "We're witness s wherever God has placed us," Fry reminded the students. "We should have an urgency to share our faith wherever we are."

Daniel Vestal, pastor of First Baptist Church, Midland, Texas, implored the Saturday night conferees in his keynote address to remember "Baptists started out as humble people."

"We as Southern Baptists are now an affluent and established church," Vestal said, "and one of the dangers is that we forget the people from which we came." Vestal exhorted the audience to share the Gospel with others. "Missions is not a program but a passion," he said.

During the final session Sunday, Pablo Deiros, Southwestern's guest professor of missions from Argentina, challenged participants to become personally involved in missions. "Lift up your eyes to see a world in crisis," he urged. "Lift up your eyes to see a world without Christ. Jesus is the only hope for the world."

"The only way this world will be redeemed is to leave our selfish, small worlds and go across the borders with the message of Jesus Christ," he said.

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Two Couples Honored, Past Reviewed
At Southwestern's Founders Day

Baptist Press
3/11/85

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—Two Texas couples have been honored with one of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's most "valuable and important" awards.

The B.H. Carroll Awards, given this year to Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins Garrett of Fort Worth and Mr. and Mrs. Homer Jackson of Dallas, commemorate the vision of the founder of the seminary, under whose leadership Southwestern was chartered on March 14, 1908.

The awards, presented at the annual Founders Day luncheon, were described by Southwest rn President Russell H. Didlay as "relatively new, but very valuable and important" in recognizing those "who justly deserve it for their support of the seminary."

Garrett, an attorney, was a seminary trustee from 1960 to 1968 and serves as Southwestern's counsel. Jackson, a retired educator, has been active in ranching and investments.

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Cooperative Program
Starts 1985 With Boom

By Craig Bird

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Budget support for the national programs of the Southern Baptist Convention was impressive the first two months of 1985.

In January the SBC's national unified budget received \$10,812,419 from the 37 affiliated state conventions, the largest one-month contribution total ever for the national Cooperative Program and only the third time monthly contributions had broken the \$10 million barrier.

Perhaps more significantly, February figures backed up the record month as \$9,215,791 in voluntary gifts were received to fund the SBC's worldwide mission and educational programs.

That marked the first time since 1980, when inflation was in double digits, the national Cooperative Program has put together a solid January and February. February receipts had declined in both 1984 and 1983 while a healthy increase in 1982 followed a weak January.

From 1982 through 1984, January-February receipts increased a mere \$470,418. The jump from the 1984 total of \$18,829,934 to the 1985 totals was \$1,198,276.

The results are, five months into its fiscal year, the SBC has received \$47,977,326. That reflects an increase of 8.21 percent (more than \$3.64 million) over the first five months of the 1983-84 fiscal year.

Almost 70 percent of that total has gone to the Foreign Mission Board and the Home Mission Board and another 20 percent has been divided by the six Southern Baptist seminaries. The remaining money, less than \$10 million, has been shared by eleven other national SBC agencies.

In 1979-80, after five months, the national Cooperative Program receipts were just under \$30.2 million. Five years later, receipts are up more than 37 percent.

The growth in terms of real dollars has been even more significant as inflation rates fell drastically and remain low.

Last year, for the first time, the national Cooperative Program failed to meet its basic operating budget. The 1984-85 basic budget of \$118 million appears to be within reach however.

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