

(BP)**- - BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICESBC 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, 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. Hastey, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

April 4, 1985

85-40

Cooperative Program
Becomes Battleground

By Dan Martin

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—The Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' unified plan of supporting missions and education, could be seriously damaged by the continuing controversy in the 14.3-million member denomination, key leaders believe.

Former SBC President James T. Draper Jr. warned the Cooperative Program could collapse if current president Charles Stanley is defeated during the 1985 annual meeting in Dallas.

Draper, pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, said "thousands of churches" could withdraw support if a "massive attempt...financed by Cooperative Program funds" and led by denominational executives is successful in denying Stanley a second one-year term.

Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta, said: "I think Jimmy (Draper) is trying to get people's attention. He is trying to get them to admit we have problems and to be willing to sit down and talk about them. If godly men will sit down and talk about these problems like godly men, we can come to agreement. If we don't and continue to call each other names, we have major problems," Stanley said.

Stanley said First Baptist Church, Atlanta, has doubled Cooperative Program giving to \$250,000 for 1985, and has "made no provision to do anything, whether I win or lose."

He commented the way Southern Baptists "go about facing our problems" could affect the denomination's witness. "The worst thing that could happen is that our witness could go down the drain. It could hurt every church and every pastor if we act in an unChrist-like manner. We can either demonstrate a beautiful example of how Christians can settle their differences, or we can demonstrate an attitude that would destroy our witness for generations to come."

Baptist Press contacted key leaders for response to Draper's comments, including pastors of the five churches which gave the largest amounts to the Cooperative Program, and two pastors from each of the opposing wings of the denomination.

The pastor of the top Cooperative Program church, Dan Vestal of First Baptist Church of Midland, Texas, said: "The whole Cooperative Program and mission enterprise of Southern Baptists is based on trust. My greatest fear since the beginning...is that our trust which holds us together is being eroded," said Vestal, whose church gave \$944,512 through the Cooperative Program last year. "It will inevitably affect our giving."

Vestal said the church is "committed to the cooperative way of missions and theological education." He added: "The distrust in the denomination is growing, and I grieve and lament about that. The fight in the convention is obsessing us. Winning people to Christ and building up churches is taking second place. The controversy is possessing and obsessing us."

John Sullivan, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church of Shreveport, La., said: "I doubt the Cooperative Program is so fragile it will collapse, but there is no doubt it will be hurt."

Broadmoor Baptist Church, which last year gave \$588,858 as the fifth place CP church, "has no intention of doing anything other than supporting the Cooperative Program," Sullivan said.

He said the basic issue in the dispute is "more philosophical than theological. The question is: 'Will I support significantly that which I cannot appreciably control?' I think we must get a committee together and begin negotiating our differences. I use 'negotiation' advisedly, because in a negotiation, no one gets everything he wants."

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Jim Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church of Orlando, Fla., said he believes the Cooperative Program "is being used by both sides and I hate to see that happen. I have a concern that some would grade spirituality by how much they give. I also do not think it is fair to use it (the CP) as a tool to badger others to take certain positions."

Henry, whose church was ranked third with gifts of \$626,532, said the congregation "has no plans to do anything other than what we are doing. Of course, if we see a deterioration (in the theological stance of national agencies) we would have to consider changes."

Richard Jackson, pastor of North Phoenix (Ariz.) Baptist Church, where the congregation placed second with \$687,500 in gifts last year, said it is his hope contributions will reach the \$1 million level soon.

"Several years ago I was nominated for president (of the SBC)," Jackson said. "I didn't get elected. The next year the church doubled its giving. I don't think the laypeople in this convention want to see missions giving used to hold anything over anybody's head. I think a lot of pastors will be surprised if they try (to withhold CP giving)."

Winfred Moore, pastor of First Baptist Church of Amarillo, Texas, and widely touted as the man who will run against Stanley at the 1985 annual meeting, said the Texas congregation "will keep right on giving just like it has been" regardless of who is elected. The church, which last year placed fourth with \$591,428, will do so, said Moore, "because we are giving to the Lord and to his work."

Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church of Memphis, and president of the SBC for one term (1980), said he is "committed to the Southern Baptist Convention and to cooperative missions. But I have a higher commitment and that is to the Word of God."

He said if he leaves Dallas feeling the "convention has taken a direction away from the Word of God, then we would have to make a decision about how we could place our money so as to be as cooperative as possible without compromise. We have some deep theological convictions and I will not crucify those convictions on the altar of cooperation."

William L. Self, pastor of Wieuca Road Baptist Church in Atlanta, and a leader of the moderate faction, said the church "did not withdraw funds when the 'fundamentalists' took over in 1979. I am a Southern Baptist by conviction, not by convenience."

He referred to the effort to withhold funding as "manipulation and intimidation. We are a family and families don't do that to one another."

Two other representatives are pessimistic about the future.

"I know of nobody who can bring us together because the issues are so deep and strong," said Bailey E. Smith, president of the SBC 1980-81, and pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, Okla. "We have two denominations now; we should just admit it and move on."

Smith said the Oklahoma City-suburban church cut CP giving from \$175,000 in 1984 to \$125,000 this year as a protest against a "seminary president who is going around the country on Cooperative Program money trying to defeat Charles Stanley. My deacons said they weren't going to pay for that. I had to work to keep them from cutting it more."

Cecil Sherman, pastor of Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, said he has "given up hope" of a reconciliation. He called the threat to withhold or withdraw funds "intimidation, bullying and putting a gun to the head of the denomination."

"These 'fundamentalists' have a medieval frame of mind: they are right and everyone else is wrong. I am not willing to create an authoritative arrangement where they know the 'mind of the Lord' and all the rest of us become servile and follow. I would give up my Baptist birthright if I listened to that kind of pious bullying," he said.

FCC Refers Durham Complaint
To Department Of Justice

By Larry Chesser

WASHINGTON (BP)—The Federal Communications Commission has concluded its investigation of a complaint alleging Houston appeals court judge Paul Pressler taped and released to the press portions of a telephone conversation with a Southern Baptist seminary student and has referred the matter to the Department of Justice.

J. Stafford Durham, a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., filed an informal complaint with the FCC Sept. 14, 1984 alleging Pressler taped their Sept. 1, 1984 telephone conversation without his prior consent or knowledge and later released portions of the taped conversation which appeared in a Houston newspaper.

The FCC followed its normal processes in asking AT&T Communications and Southwestern Bell to investigate the taping complaint. In their reports to FCC, both companies said they communicated to Pressler that taping phone conversations without prior consent violates tariff provisions under which they operate, but that the Texas appeals court judge refused to answer questions about the matter.

A spokesperson for FCC said Durham's complaint was forwarded to the Justice Department because of its allegation that portions of the tape were released to the press.

"If we receive a complaint here at the Commission and it is not something within our jurisdiction, we routinely refer the matter to the federal or state agency or agencies that would have jurisdiction over the issues raised," said Kathi Kneff, a public utilities specialist with FCC.

"In this particular complaint the release of the information of the alleged tape would be a civil matter not within our jurisdiction," she added.

A Justice Department spokesman told Baptist Press the question in such cases is whether information released from the tapes is "used for injurious means."

According to Kneff, the taping of a conversation without prior consent or knowledge of the parties involved violates tariff regulations. After substantiating such violations, a warning from local phone companies is normally issued and a loss of service could result if violations continue.

Although neither AT&T nor Southwestern Bell indicated in reports to the FCC they had substantiated Durham's allegations, Kneff wrote Durham the companies were "adequately responsive" to the complaint notice.

"The phone companies were responsive to our complaint notice even though it is not clear the calls were placed in their territory," Kneff told Baptist Press.

In its report to the FCC, Southwestern Bell stated a company official contacted Durham who described the circumstances of the conversation he alleged was taped and released to the Houston Chronicle.

Later, the Southwestern Bell official contacted Pressler "to advise him of Mr. Durham's allegation to the FCC."

The report said "Judge Pressler declined to comment on the accusation" and the Bell representative "verified that Judge Pressler is aware that such an action would be a violation of the tariff." The report concluded that the company was "unable to substantiate Mr. Durham's allegation."

In its report, AT&T noted it was "impossible" to determine whether it or some other interexchange carrier provided the service to the calling party. However, its officials contacted Durham and Pressler in response to FCC's complaint notice.

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The AT&T report said a company official contacted Pressler in March "to determine if he had used AT&T Communications service to call Mr. Durham of Stamping Ground, Kentucky, and recorded the conversation without prior consent and to inform Judge Pressler that had he done so, he would have been in violation of the AT&T Communications F.C.C. Tariff No. 1. Judge Pressler refused to answer any questions regarding this complaint."

The FCC has forwarded the reports to Durham along with a copy of its letter to the Justice Department. Kneff said this action concludes FCC's handling of the matter unless Durham elects to file a formal complaint with the agency.

Durham, Pressler
Respond To Action

By Dan Martin

C-N

WASHINGTON (BP)—"Well," said J. Stafford Durham, "it looks like Goliath killed David this time."

Durham, 28, commented after he was notified the Federal Communications Commission has concluded an investigation into his complaint that Houston appeals court judge Paul Pressler taped and released to the press portions of a telephone conversation Sept. 1.

The report concludes the FCC, AT&T Communications and Southwestern Bell Telephone Co. were "unable to substantiate" Durham's charges, which had been filed with the FCC Sept. 14, 1984.

Baptist Press contacted both Durham and Pressler for comments following the FCC action.

Durham, who is due to graduate from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in May, said he had been sent a packet of information by the FCC, which included all correspondence as well as detailed instruction on how to file a formal complaint.

Durham said that while he would file the first complaint again under similar circumstances, he probably will not pursue the formal complaint. "I don't have the time or the money to go to Washington and go through hearings and testimony," he said.

"I really don't want to sue anybody. I just want him (Pressler) to admit what he has done. But he won't do that, even now," Durham said, adding he does not "understand why they (the FCC) couldn't substantiate the allegations when he (Pressler) has admitted in print he did it. I guess what they couldn't substantiate was whether he (Pressler) did it on their (AT&T and SWBTS) equipment."

"It is interesting that he (Pressler) maintains he hasn't done anything wrong, but when an outside party called, he wouldn't even admit to doing it. If he really believes he hasn't done anything wrong, it looks like he wouldn't mind telling anybody about it," Durham said.

Pressler, contacted in Tampa, Fla., where he was speaking in several churches, said the AT&T report is "erroneous because I clearly informed them I did not make my long distance calls through AT&T. I did not use AT&T long distance service and that should have been properly reported. Therefore, they (AT&T) were not involved and should not have been involved."

He said he "discussed various aspects of the matter with Southwestern Bell and there was no need to make further comments due to its insignificance."

While not directly saying he tape recorded the conversation, Pressler alluded to the matter by commenting: "When my first conversation with Staff Durham was completely and totally misrepresented, I felt it was necessary for me to protect myself against further misrepresentations.

"When the student was apparently manipulated by the administration of the school subsequent to our second conversation and contradicted himself, it was important that I show his factual inconsistencies."

Pressler also noted: "It is my understanding that every President of the United States since Harry Truman has taped telephone conversations without advising the other parties that the conversations were being taped."

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He concluded: "This is another attempt by the 'liberals' to divert attention from the fact that the issue in the Southern Baptist Convention is what Scripture is. They constantly try to make non-issues issues in order to vilify anyone who seeks to have problems corrected that exist in the SBC."

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FMB-F

Lowly Soybean Joins Battle
Against African Malnutrition

By Mary Jane Welch

Baptist Press
4/4/85

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—After a lifetime of battling malnutrition among Nigerian infants, Southern Baptist missionary Ruth Womack has added the lowly soybean to her arsenal.

Use of the protein-packed bean has developed into an art form in the Orient and a technological marvel in the United States, but until two years ago no soybean thrived on Nigerian soil.

A successful bean was discovered just in time to meet a critical need at Kersey Children's Home in Ogbomoso, Nigeria, where Tennessean Womack and fellow missionary nurse Sharron Hawk of Texas help restore malnourished infants to health.

Nigeria hasn't been hit by the mass starvation of some African countries, but a tightening noose of drought, falling oil prices and strict import controls has increased malnutrition among Nigerian children. Around 300 children received treatment annually at Kersey in the early 1980s. The number climbed to 500 last year.

Kersey hasn't escaped the food shortages increasing throughout Nigeria, either. Last December Womack found herself with a dwindling supply of canned milk and no way to replenish it. She also observed many of the babies at Kersey suffering from diarrhea. When a doctor suggested a soy-based formula might cut down on diarrhea, Womack thought she'd found the answer to both problems.

The two nurses traveled to Togo to buy the soy-based formula. They took a month's supply home with them and ordered enough for another six months. But the Nigerian border closed and the order never made it to the country.

The women were searching desperately for milk when the solution came in an unexpected way. Womack says the Lord sent it.

On Christmas Eve she offered her extra bedrooms to two women looking for a place to stay in Ogbomoso. One was fellow missionary Alma Rohm, a teacher in Aileron. The other was Nell Monday, a specialist in nutrition and plant development from Cornell University in New York, who was in Nigeria to work with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture in Ibadan. Monday was experimenting with yams, the starchy food staple in western Nigeria.

As the nurses discussed the frustrating search for milk, Monday suggested they make their own soy milk. The idea had never crossed the missionaries' minds. How would they do it? And where would they find soybeans?

Monday didn't know, but she thought the soybean department at the institute would have a recipe for soy milk. They might even have some soybeans to give. She put Womack in touch with the soybean department.

Yes, they had a recipe for soybean milk and they gave her two bags of soybeans to get started.

The head of the soybean department had tried for 10 years to find a soybean which could thrive in Nigeria. He'd finally succeeded two years earlier and had given some of the beans to a farmer in Ikoyi, a village 15 miles from the Kersey home.

The farmer's beans did so well that 12 of his neighbors decided to help themselves to a few. The trouble came when they harvested the new bean: it tasted terrible.

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The neighbors wasted no time in complaining to the farmer, who went to the agricultural institute for help. If they couldn't eat the beans, the Nigerians wanted to sell them to somebody else.

By that time the staff at Kersey was turning 37 pounds of soybeans into milk daily. Womack assured the farmers she'd buy all the soybeans they wanted to get rid of.

Meanwhile Womack, who always has taught families how to eat nutritiously with locally available products, was experimenting with the soybean. She learned how to cook it with baking soda to destroy the enzyme which gave it an unpleasant taste. She used soybeans instead of the melon seed normally used in soup. She substituted soybeans for black-eyed peas in akara, a Nigerian fritter, and other popular foods.

Soybeans, she discovered, have roughly twice as much protein as black-eyed peas. In a Nigerian diet based on yam flour—almost pure starch—the extra protein can make the difference between health and malnutrition.

When the agricultural institute's dietitian failed to provide recipes the farmers liked, Womack offered the expertise of the Kersey staff. The farmer in Ikoyi secured the town hall next to the local mosque one Saturday and invited everyone he knew. Kersey staffers spent half the day cooking soybeans in at least six different ways, mostly in familiar foods, and passing out samples.

The demonstration was such a hit that classes in soybean cooking are now offered every Saturday at Kersey.

Womack was scheduled to retire this year after 38 years in Nigeria, but she's too excited about soybeans to come home. She's returning to Africa after a short furlough in the United States to spend another year working at Kersey. She hopes a volunteer will come to help out so she and Hawk can go into villages, telling people about the soybean and how it can help make them and their children healthy and strong.

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BJC-N

Chesser To Leave (BP)
For Arkansas Newspaper

By Stan Haste

Baptist Press
4/4/85

WASHINGTON (BP)—Larry G. Chesser, congressional correspondent in the Washington bureau of Baptist Press, has announced his resignation to accept the position of news editor of daily newspaper in Arkansas.

An Arkansas native, Chesser, 37, will become news editor of the Log Cabin Democrat, Conway, Ark., later this spring. He has covered the U.S. Congress and other Washington beats for the past five years, earning several writing awards from the Baptist Public Relations Association. In addition, he has been information assistant for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

The 1970 Ouachita Baptist University journalism graduate also earned a master of divinity degree in 1979 from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. While at Southern seminary he was news director and managing editor of The Tie, the school's national alumni publication.

Between his studies at Ouachita and Southern, Chesser was sports editor at the Log Cabin Democrat. He also covered sports for the Arkansas Democrat, Little Rock.

He is married to Nancy J. Matthews, a nurse. The Chessers have two daughters, Caren, 16, and Rachel, one.

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Charles Stanley Calls for
Discussion of SBC Problems

By R.G. Puckett

N.C. Paper
C-N

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)—Charles Stanley, pastor of Atlanta's First Baptist Church, paid his first visit to Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and told the students he came as an "encourager" to strengthen "their hearts in ministry" and to help them avoid some of the pain and heartaches he knew they would encounter.

At a luncheon with the faculty, administration and some invited guests, Stanley called for "us to sit down and talk about our beliefs and possible differences" because the situation is so explosive (within the denomination) that something needs to be done.

He also met with students for an hour-long dialogue during which he restated his opposition to ordained women serving as pastors of local congregations but added that women "...have the privilege of being obedient to God, no matter what anybody thinks."

"It is not for me to tell you what to do or not to do," Stanley insisted.

His appearance at Southeastern was the first visit to any of the six SBC-owned and operated seminaries since Stanley was elected president last June in Kansas City, Mo. He has an appointment at Southwestern seminary in a "few days" and has accepted an invitation to visit Midwestern seminary in Kansas City but the date has not been determined.

Stanley told a near-capacity chapel audience that "obedience to God (is) the bottom line, the final criterion." He added: "Our purpose is to glorify God."

Stanley never used the words "inerrancy" or "infallibility" which are two code words to describe the Bible in the current SBC controversy, but he did call upon the students to leave the seminary with their confidence in the Bible intact.

"Some of you have computers, and you know when the computer breaks down and you don't have the manual and no technician is available, if you take the back off the computer and go in there with pliers, a screwdriver and other tools and start cutting out, rewiring and changing things, you are in for trouble," he said.

In a press conference which included secular media immediately following his chapel message, Stanley was asked about ways to unify the convention: "It can't be done in one convention and I don't think any man can do it. God will have to do it, and I think he can do it. People ask me about a split (in the SBC), no, I don't think we are going to have a split.

"Some folks may decide they just can't live with certain things and may feel free to do something else. If they feel that way, they have a right to choose to do that," Stanley added.

He said he has enjoyed being president of the Southern Baptist Convention and "meeting a lot of interesting folks."

Stanley said he understood Billy Graham had been misquoted by the press on his statements about the problems in Southern Baptist life but he would agree that "...all sin, divisiveness and disobedience ultimately has its root in the devil. That doesn't say who is right and who is wrong—we all have the right to our opinion—but all sin and suffering has to be traced back to him (the devil)."

"The devil is at work everywhere, not any more in the Southern Baptist Convention than other places. Anywhere he can create divisiveness which slows down the work of God, he will do it, getting people to fussing with each other, rather than realizing who the real enemy is.

"We are not each other's enemies, and I think there is an attitude which has developed in some people's minds that we are each other's enemies. Those of us who are saved by God's grace are brothers and sisters in Christ...so we are not each other's enemies," he emphasized.

At the luncheon with faculty and administration, Stanley said the situation in the convention is so "explosive" that the time "has come for us to sit down and talk about what we believe and understand each other better."

Stanley made no specific charges against the school or any faculty member, stating only some things he had heard or been told but which he "did not know to be true because I have not talked with you (the faculty) on a personal level."

Some faculty members said they are tired of being accused of things of which they are not guilty. They decried the suspicion and distrust which has been sown by some critics in the convention, and many added that their performance and beliefs were a matter of public record through years of teaching, preaching and publishing.

In the afternoon dialogue with students, Stanley reaffirmed his opposition to women ordained to be pastors of local churches but called for women to be able to serve in every facet of the work of the church.

"I personally do not think (a woman) should be ordained as a pastor.... As president of the convention, I am not going to say I believe women should be pastors of churches. I didn't believe it before I became president; I don't believe it now."

On the matter of support for SBC seminaries, Stanley said if he did not support Southeastern, "I wouldn't be here today." In response to a question, he said several months ago he recommended that a young person attend Dallas Baptist Theological Seminary (where his son and daughter are students) which is not a convention-owned seminary. At the time Stanley said he "was frustrated...and had a lot to learn (about the SBC)...if someone asked me today what I would choose I would probably say Southwestern."

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, located in Fort Worth, Texas, is the largest of the six SBC seminaries and is Stanley's alma mater.

Commenting on Southern Baptist agencies and institutions, Stanley said, "I went to the Foreign Mission Board, to the Home Mission Board, to the Sunday School Board, and I got my eyes opened about a lot of things."

"I was encouraged by what I saw, so encouraged, I said to my people (First Baptist, Atlanta) I believe in what I see going on and we should at least double what we've been giving to the Cooperative Program which will bring it up to about \$250,000 this year."

Stanley said he feels the 1984 SBC resolution on women was worded wrongly. "I think women should serve in every capacity in the church; I just don't think they should be the pastor."

Stanley was greatly influenced in his early years by his maternal grandfather, a Pentecostal Holiness evangelist from Siler City, N.C. He made his profession of faith in Christ at the age of 12 during a service in which a woman preacher of the Pentecostal Holiness faith delivered the sermon and extended the invitation.

In response to a question from a student concerning rumors that some persons are being added to committees and boards of the agencies and institutions who are hostile to the entity they serve, Stanley said he would not appoint any hostile person to any position.

"No one should serve anywhere who is hostile. I'll not appoint anyone who is hostile. If I see someone who is hostile, I'm not going to put him on anything," Stanley insisted.

Presidential appointments are crucial in the SBC structure, particularly in the Committee on Committees which names the powerful Committee on Boards, Agencies and Institutions. Stanley chaired that committee in 1983.

Last September, Stanley pledged to the editors of state Baptist papers that he would not stack the committees, that he would seek a balanced and fair representation among those he appointed. At that session in Nashville he indicated he would seek counsel for appointments from the state convention presidents and the executive directors.

He commented during his visit to Southeastern that some of the state leaders already had made some good suggestions while others seemed to be recommending only their friends. He reported that one state executive had made a trip to Atlanta to talk with him face-to-face about the appointments from his state.

African Relief Package
Approved By Congress

By Larry Chesser

BJC-N

WASHINGTON (BP)—Congress has given strong approval to an \$800 million African famine relief package and sent the measure to President Reagan for his signature.

The \$800 million package cleared by both houses April 2 represents a compromise between a \$1 billion measure passed earlier by the House of Representatives and a \$685 million figure approved by the Senate. Final House passage came on a 400-19 vote while the Senate agreed to the conference report on a voice vote.

Two Baptist hunger relief advocates applauded the congressional action.

"The action by the U.S. Congress is a clear signal that the American government has crossed the road to help those Africans who have been stripped by drought, war and poverty," declared Robert Parham, director of hunger concerns for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "The legislation is an example of how Christian citizenship can positively influence public policy."

Bread for the World President James M. Dunn told Baptist Press, "The action should be applauded, the Congress commended and those responsible encouraged to hasten delivery of the aid, cutting bureaucratic blockades." Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, serves on a voluntary basis as president of Bread for the World, a Christian citizens' lobby for hunger concerns.

Two concerns emerge from the congressional action, Dunn said.

"First, Baptists need to continue giving for hunger relief through the Foreign Mission Board because it is more efficiently provided, promptly delivered and accompanied by a proper Christian witness." He added Christians "need to intensify our efforts as citizens to insure that government does exactly what people expect and what lawmakers intend."

Most of the compromise funding package passed by Congress involves immediate and reserve food aid for the famine-stricken regions of Africa. The \$400 million in immediate food aid includes \$384 million for the Food for Peace program administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development and another \$16 million in unobligated balances of the Commodity Credit Corporation to provide up to 200,000 metric tons of commodities. Congress specified that up to \$100 million of the immediate food aid may be spent for inland transportation and that the commodities be delivered by the end of 1985.

The package also includes \$225 million for the Food for Peace emergency reserve to remain available through fiscal 1986 as well as \$175 million in non-food aid for disaster and refugee assistance available through March 31, 1986.

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Draper, Smith, Rogers
Discuss SBC On CBN

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
4/4/85

C-N

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—The growing unrest in the Southern Baptist Convention continues to attract attention from outside the 14.3-million member denomination.

During the last week in March the three immediate past presidents of the SBC appeared on the 700 Club, hosted by Pat Robertson, to explain their perspective of the controversy and to underline the importance of the current president, Charles Stanley, being reelected next June.

James T. Draper Jr. (president 1982-84), Bailey Smith (1980-82) and Adrian Rogers (1979-80) appeared on the national talk show and gave examples (without names) of what they see as a pulling-away from a belief in the inerrancy of the Bible.

The program also included filmed comments from the presidents of two Southern Baptist seminaries (Russell Dilday of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and Roy C. Honeycutt of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.) who have been outspoken in their defense of the theological and evangelical integrity of their schools.

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Also interviewed on film was Peg Witts, an ordained minister who co-pastors a Southern Baptist church in Durham, N.C., with her husband, and Ed Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church of Houston.

Rogers, whose election in 1979 signaled the public outbreak of the struggle between so-called "conservatives" and "moderates," said seminary professors, "believe the Bible is inspired" and contains the revelation of spiritual truth, "but they do not think it can be depended on historically or scientifically." One example, he said, is some Old Testament passages about the nature of God, are downplayed as reflecting an inadequate or limited knowledge of the true nature of God.

Draper said the "only hope" of continuing the turning of the SBC to a more conservative stance is the reelection of Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church, Atlanta.

He and Robertson, whose "independent" ministries include a university, television network, missions and evangelism efforts financed in part by on-air solicitations over the 700 Club, explained how the reelection of Stanley could be advanced by Southern Baptist viewers.

Robertson urged churches to respond to the "crisis" in the SBC and send properly elected messengers to Dallas next June to support Stanley.

The three SBC pastors (Draper from First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas; Smith from First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., and Rogers, from Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn.) joined hands as Robertson prayed for the SBC and asked that God's spirit produce a "unity—not of compromise but unity on the authority of your word."

Robertson is the second prominent, non-Southern Baptist to go public in support of the reelection of Stanley in recent months. Earlier this year, Jerry Falwell predicted a split of the denomination if Stanley is not reelected.

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Harley Reelected
Stewardship Chairman

C-N

Baptist Press
4/4/85

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Jimmie E. Harley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Florence, S.C., was reelected chairman of the Stewardship Commission during the Southern Baptist Convention agency's annual meeting.

L. Roland Wilson, a layman from Naperville, Ill., was elected vice-chairman, and Ben Green, a layman from Wenatchee, Wash., was named secretary.

During the two-day session, detailed reports on the three program assignments—Cooperative Program promotion, endowment and capital giving and stewardship development—were presented.

Trustees recognized Fred M. Chapman, who directs the endowment and capital giving program area, for outstanding leadership in enabling Together We Build consultants to help Southern Baptist churches raise more than a third of a billion dollars for building needs.

The 60th anniversary of the Cooperative Program also was noted.

A highlight of the meeting was an emphasis on Planned Growth in Giving, in which commission staffers and trustees made public commitments to increase their personal giving through their churches for the next 15 years.

Planned Growth in Giving is a stewardship program designed to increase contributions to all SBC causes in support of Bold Mission Thrust, the denomination's plan to present the gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world by the year 2000.

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