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SBC Messengers To Use
High-Tech Microphones

By Marv Knox

ATLANTA (BP)—Messengers to the 1986 Southern Baptist Convention will conduct high-tech debate.

The substance of their arguments may be irrelevant in the world of technology; but the way they go about it will be state-of-the-art.

A computerized microphone monitoring system has been developed for the convention and will be unveiled at this year's annual meeting, to be held in Atlanta's Georgia World Congress Center June 10-12.

The mike system should assist convention messengers who want to participate in discussion of business while it allows the chair to conduct that business more efficiently, says Fred Wolfe, chairman of the SBC Committee on Order of Business who asked that the system be developed.

Here's how the system will work:

—About 13 microphones will be scattered throughout the four halls in which the annual meeting will be held.

—Each mike will be equipped with four switches so that the first messenger in line can register his or her intent—to speak for the proposed action, to speak against the action, to call for a point of order or to speak to a point of personal privilege.

—A microphone ordering box (MOB Box) will be located on the podium. It will have lights which indicate the position of each person who is first in line at each microphone. It also will have a digital indicator which will show which mike is next in line to speak, based upon the sequence in which the mikes were activated.

—Officials on the podium then can turn the mikes on from the MOB Box in the sequence in which debate is to be conducted.

For example: SBC discussion always is conducted so that a person speaking for a motion is followed by a person speaking against, and so on. By using the MOB Box, the chair or a colleague at the podium can recognize the first person to speak to a motion and then open the mike of the next person who wishes to share the opposing view.

Selection of the microphones will not be automatic, however. The chair or someone he designates to operate the MOB Box can override the system's sequencing preference or cancel all microphones completely.

But the high-tech mikes won't be without their high-touch component. Wolfe has contacted state Brotherhood directors and several Atlanta-area churches and secured a corps of laymen who will work at the microphones. They will greet messengers who approach the mikes, arrange them in order according to the position they wish to take and help them indicate that position on the mike's four-button switch.

The system was requested because the Committee on Order of Business wanted to achieve two accomplishments, explains Wolfe, pastor of Cottage Hill Baptist Church in

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"First, we wanted to do everything we could to give the people an opportunity to participate in the convention process," he says. "Second, we wanted to do everything possible to assist the president and the Committee on Order of Business to recognize people at the microphones in some type of orderly manner."

The microphone system, especially the monitors at each mike, also is designed to resolve a problem at recent conventions--monopolization of individual mikes by groups with particular political affiliations, he adds. "In times past, we've heard that people have ganged up and monopolized mikes. With our monitors, we will eliminate anybody with one point of view from monopolizing a mike," he promises.

The new microphone system was developed in cooperation with the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, notes Convention Manager Tim Hedquist who oversaw the project.

He notes the system particularly is well suited for conducting business from more than one location, such as the four meeting halls which will be in use in Atlanta. "With this system, the microphone which is next in order to speak to a motion may be recognized," he explains. "Previously, persons in overflow halls were second-class citizens. Because the chair could not see a light come on their microphone, they could not be recognized to speak.

"This year, not only will we have microphones in overflow halls, but we also will have closed-circuit TV cameras so that all messengers can see every speaker from every microphone."

One-time cost of the system is about \$30,000, which can be recovered through rental of the equipment to other groups, Hedquist reports, noting it can be adapted for a variety of types and sizes of meetings.

But the primary focus is on this year's SBC, where 40,000 or more messengers are expected to do business. "We believe it will greatly assist those who want to use the mike, assist the chair, eliminate confusion and save a great deal of time," Wolfe says. "We're just asking messengers to cooperate with the mike monitors and let them assist them."

Microphone Monitors*
Named For Convention*

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ATLANTA (BP)--Twenty-seven laymen from 12 states have been named to help messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention use microphones during business sessions of the meeting, to be held June 10-12 in Atlanta.

"We wrote the Baptist Brotherhood directors of all our state conventions and asked for two names from each state, and then we got additional names. We also wrote five churches from the Atlanta area and asked them for two names each," said Fred Wolfe, chairman of the SBC Committee on Order of Business and pastor of Cottage Hill Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala.

The laymen will help messengers to the convention use a new computerized microphone system designed to SBC business sessions, he said. They will greet messengers who approach the microphones, line them up according to the positions they plan to take on business issues and assist in indicating their positions on the microphone switches.

Twelve of the microphone monitors are from the metropolitan Atlanta area. They are Lawrence Saggus, W.G. Howard, Joe Lasserre, George A. Chaby, Kermit Warren, Andy Frahler, Clinch Norsworthy, Jennings Grainger, John Allen, Tim Hobbs, Ed Bingham and Joe Gaddy.

The others include Barry Creamer, Anderson, S.C.; Wendell Reed, Salem, Va.; Perry Calvert, Huntsville, Ala.; A.C. Johnson, Meridian, Miss.; Norris Stampley, Jackson, Miss.; Don Donalson, Oklahoma City;

Also Paul Helton, Pittsburgh; Fred Prouser, Harrisburgh, Pa.; Craig Baker, Wendell, N.C.; Ed King, Raleigh, N.C.; Leroy J. Oppermann, Rolla, Mo.; Russell Adkisson, Brandenburg, Ky.; W. Ray Frye, Alexandria, La.; Al Buchanan, Tupelo, Miss.; and Wendell W. Cruse, Athens, Tenn.

SBC Messengers Invited
To Black Worship Service

ATLANTA (BP)—Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta will have an opportunity to worship in the black experience on Monday, June 9.

The Black Southern Baptist Fellowship will feature a worship service especially for Southern Baptist Convention messengers at Union Baptist Church, 291 Hightower Road, N.W., at 8 p.m.

James Adam Wilborn, pastor of Union church, will preach following musical presentations by the church's handbell choir, instrumental group and combined choir.

This is the first year the fellowship, which meets annually during the SBC, will hold a worship service, said Chan Garrett, associate director of the black church relations department for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Garrett said the service's purpose is to provide all Southern Baptists with the opportunity to worship in the "black experience."

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Sullivan Urges Choice
Of Balance, Direction

By Linda Lawson

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Southern Baptists stand at a crossroads where they must choose continued argument and impasse, division or face the facts "that what we need is to advance upward, forward and onward," a retired agency executive and former president of the Southern Baptist Convention said.

James L. Sullivan, fifth president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board from 1953 to 1975 and SBC president in 1976-77, spoke on the topic, "Where Are Southern Baptists Today?" during chapel services commemorating the board's 95th anniversary.

Regaining a sense of balance and direction is the hope for the future of Southern Baptists, said Sullivan. "That's where God is and that's what the future for Southern Baptists must be."

Describing the current situation in the denomination as a "puzzle to most Baptists," Sullivan said criticism out of control is at the heart of the controversy. He contrasted attitudes of persons on both sides in the present problems plaguing the denomination with those of differing groups of Baptists in the 18th century.

Today, said Sullivan, "if we could just get Southern Baptists to calm down enough to think with their brains instead of their emotions, we'd be over 90 percent of our problems."

"In a democracy, criticism is a vehicle of change because every person, every situation, every program, every thing can be criticized justifiably," said Sullivan. "But criticism must be kept under control, and there is one of our major problems."

He said both the fundamental-conservatives and the moderate-conservatives have been guilty of lack of control in their criticism.

He cited boycottings of speakers, booing on the floor of the Southern Baptist Convention, churches instructing their messengers how to vote, holding state and local rallies to promote a particular cause, lawsuits and blunders made by leaders due to inexperience and lack of knowledge of history.

"There is a dissipation of our energy in argument. We magnify the weaknesses of other persons rather than their strengths," he said.

Sullivan contrasted the present situation with the union in the late 1700s of Particular Baptists who emphasized formal worship and an educated clergy and Separate Baptists who emphasized informality and premillennialism. Particular Baptists came from England and started congregations such as First Baptist Church of Charleston, S.C. Separate Baptists had their beginnings in Sandy Creek, N.C.

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"These two operated separately, but they had most of the things in common," said Sullivan. "They believed in Christ. They magnified the church. They believed in evangelism."

Gradually, leaders began to see that together they could build a greater denomination, Sullivan said.

"So we find here in Tennessee in 1788, they had a bill of union introduced at the Flat Rock Baptist Church in Yadkin Association. State by state they adopted this coalition," he noted.

With this kind of diversity within a denomination that functions as a democracy, Sullivan said institutions must operate from the center of the constituency.

While the pendulum will periodically swing from one side to another, Sullivan said institutions such as the Sunday School Board must remain in the center of the constituency, risking criticism by both extremes, each of which normally makes up about 5 percent of the membership.

"If you want to know who the extremists are at each end right now, you identify those who are holding rallies during the time that the Peace Committee asked them not to. You don't identify them. They've identified themselves," he said.

In a controversy, Sullivan said the size of the two extremes enlarges, leaving the institutions "caught in the middle in a narrowing field."

He praised the efforts of the SBC Peace Committee in trying to quell the rhetoric and emotion of both sides.

"The Peace Committee is trying to quiet it down, which is the wise stand," said Sullivan. "If they could take another year and Baptists could understand the problem, I think we could come out of it."

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Review Of 8.5 Campaign
Sets Trend For 10/90

By Frank Wm. White

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SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. (BP)—Statistics from Southern Baptists 8.5 by '85 Sunday school enrollment campaign indicate the new Challenge 10/90 effort must focus on actual enrollment increases, starting new Sunday schools, reaching ethnics and enrolling non-Christians.

Challenge 10/90 is an effort to reach a Southern Baptist Sunday school enrollment of 10 million by 1990. At the end of 8.5 by '85, the Sunday school enrollment stood at a record 7.9 million.

Harry Piland, Sunday school department director, and James Lackey, special projects coordinator, in the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Sunday school department, reviewed statistics from 8.5 by '85 with state Sunday school directors at a mid-year planning meeting in Scottsdale, Ariz.

An increase in Sunday school enrollment is the most important factor in Challenge 10/90, Piland said, noting, "Unless we increase the number of unsaved people enrolled in Sunday school, we are not going to change the trend."

Although the Sunday school enrollment increased each year during the 8.5 by '85 campaign, the number of new members actually enrolled annually remained at about 900,000. And transfers from one church to another, persons moving from a church area or joining another denomination total about 800,000, leaving a net increase of about 100,000 each year, Piland explained.

"Transferring members is good, and we need to focus on getting persons into another Sunday school when they move, but we need to reach new people," Piland said. Enrolling church members could significantly increase Sunday school rolls, but "we are not going to reach the lost until we reach outside the church."

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The 8.5 by '85 statistics point to an increase in the number of non-Christians enrolled in Bible study. "The involvement of those persons in Bible study should change the declining baptism trend," he predicted.

New churches also are important in providing new opportunities to reach the non-Christians, but "we have not yet broken through in starting new churches," Piland said. Southern Baptists have started an average of more than 1,000 new Sunday schools and 440 new churches each year for the past five years.

Because many of the new Sunday schools reported are mission Sunday schools, statistical data is not available to show the net increase in Sunday schools for the five-year period. The net gain of churches has been an average of 230 per year.

Challenge 10/90 increases the goals for new Sunday schools for each of the next five years for a five-year goal of 8,000 new Sunday schools.

Enrollment of ethnic Sunday school members was one of the most significant gains during the 8.5 by '85 campaign. Ethnic enrollment increased from 81,000 to 120,000, according to church-reported statistics.

The 1985-90 goal for new Sunday schools includes 2,000 new ethnic Sunday schools. Funding and personnel have been increased in the board's special ministries department, which includes black church development and language areas. Ethnic work will receive increased emphasis at Sunday school leadership conferences, Piland said.

The 8.5 by '85 campaign relied on big events for impact. The big event approach was effective and will continue in Challenge 10/90, Lackey said.

Events such as enrollment-training clinics, people searches and Scripture distribution give members an opportunity to get involved and see others involved in evangelism, he explained.

Piland said Challenge 10/90 will focus on the same basic principles as 8.5 by '85 because that campaign proved again the basic principles of growth continue to work.

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