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June 5, 1987

87-86

Peace Chairman Regrets
Delay Of Final Report

By Dan Martin

ROANOKE, Va. (BP)—The chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee has expressed "genuine regret about our inability to complete the report in time for its release a month or so prior to the convention as we announced we would try to do."

Chairman Charles Fuller, pastor of First Baptist Church of Roanoke, Va., made the comments in the wake of criticism of the Peace Committee because of its inability to make available its final report to Southern Baptists in advance of the 1987 annual meeting, scheduled June 16-18 in Cervantes Convention Center in St. Louis.

The chairman said some months ago he hoped the committee would be able to release the report a month or six weeks in advance of the annual meeting in time to allow messengers to study the final report. Following the May meeting of the group, however, Fuller admitted his hope may have been "ambitious."

The committee, created in the midst of controversy at the largest gathering in the history of the 14.6-million-member denomination — the 1985 Dallas convention which drew more than 45,000 messengers — was structured to represent every area of convention life among its 22 members.

The committee was given the task of discovering the sources of the controversy in the SBC and making findings and recommendations on ways to bring about reconciliation. It has met 14 times since it was created, made an interim report to the 1986 annual meeting in Atlanta and is required to make its final report at the 1987 annual meeting.

Fuller expressed his regret in a letter to chief executives of the 20 national agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Of the delay, he wrote: "The basic substance of the report has been finished since our meeting in May. But, there has ensued a month of effort at wording portions of the report so as to make it absolutely clear and, at the same time, not unjustifiably rigid.

"Although the result has been added delay, I am sure you would agree the care invested in wording is a very worthwhile investment."

Fuller said the Peace Committee has scheduled a meeting for Sunday, June 14, during which the group will meet "as long as is necessary to assure the release of the report in its entirety for distribution through the Convention Bulletin, which will be available the morning of the opening day of the convention, June 16."

He released the text of his letter to Baptist Press and added other comments in regard to the release of the report.

He told Baptist Press: "The report does not call for any new doctrinal statement to be applied to employees of Southern Baptist agencies or institutions. The action which created the committee instructed us that the Baptist Faith and Message Statement of 1963 was to be the doctrinal statement around which we were to build the report.

"We have followed that statement throughout, and therefore, there will be no new doctrinal statement."

In the letter, he gave agency executives a "synopsis" of the report.

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"The report is about 18 pages in length, containing seven sections, an introduction, the sources of the controversy, findings, conclusions, recommendations, notations and acknowledgements," he wrote.

"Considerable portions of the report are organized restatements of actions and releases adopted by the committee over the two years we have worked."

Of the recommendations, he said, "They number either 10 or 11, depending on the final wording, and they deal with a reaffirmation of the Baptist Faith and Message Statement, the nature of fairness in presidential appointments, the matter of the parliamentarian, the nature and place of the Bible, the proprieties and improprieties of political activity and the role of the press."

In the letter, Fuller thanked the executives for their "prayers, encouragement and cooperation" during the two years the committee has functioned.

He added: "Needless to say, the assignment given us has been one of the most demanding we have ever undertaken. I still insist that regardless of how hard and honestly we may have worked, the effectiveness of our report or the successful facilitation of it are dependant upon divine intervention."

He concluded the letter by writing: "Be assured of this. Regardless of what sides of the controversy the members represent, there has been a genuine effort to forge a way Southern Baptists can remain together and carry out the mission of world evangelization which brought us together 142 years ago. God knows my own heart has been emptied into this undertaking."

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Calendar Runs Out
Before May CP Does

Baptist Press
6/5/87

NASHVILLE (BP)—The calendar ran out before all of May's Southern Baptist Cooperative Program receipts came in.

Books closed on national Cooperative Program receipts on the last business day of the month, May 29, two days before the last Sunday, May 31. Consequently, not all the money Southern Baptists gave to the convention-wide budget in May was counted in the monthly total, reported Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the convention's Executive Committee.

The May total was \$10,189,783, or 11.4 percent behind receipts for May of 1986, which were more than \$11.5 million, Bennett announced.

The shortfall is "pretty typical" of months when a Sunday falls after the Cooperative Program books close, said Tim A. Hedquist, Executive Committee vice president for business and finance.

Nevertheless, "receipts still look good on the whole," Hedquist said. He noted more than \$2.2 million in Cooperative Program funds that were given in May arrived after books had closed. That money will be tabulated with June receipts.

Officially, the 1986-87 national Cooperative Program has received almost \$86.3 million through May, a 2.41 percent increase over the first eight months of 1985-86, Bennett said. But with the early June receipts, the budget is about 6 percent ahead of the previous year, he added.

The Cooperative Program is Southern Baptists' unified, voluntary method of financing missionary, evangelistic and educational efforts worldwide. Individual Southern Baptists contribute by giving offerings to their churches. Churches pass on a portion of their receipts to state Baptist conventions, which in turn pass on a portion of their receipts to the national Cooperative Program.

The basic national Cooperative Program budget is \$136 million for the current fiscal year.

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CORRECTION: In the 6/3/87 Baptist Press story titled "Messengers To Face Host Of SBC Issues," Please add the following sentence to the 18th graf (on the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs): The Executive Committee created a special fact-finding committee to examine the issue.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Inerrancy Conference
Book Available At SBC

Baptist Press
6/5/87

NASHVILLE (BP)—A new book containing the major addresses and responses from the Southern Baptist Conference on Biblical Inerrancy will be available in the book store at the Southern Baptist Convention in St. Louis in mid-June.

The conference was held May 4-7 at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center. It was sponsored by the six SBC seminaries.

"The Proceedings of the Conference on Biblical Inerrancy 1987," published by Broadman Press, contains the major addresses by five outside scholars, responses from Southern Baptists and papers presented in the special interest seminars.

Major speakers were Kenneth Kantzer, chancellor of Trinity College in Deerfield, Ill.; J.I. Packer, professor of historical and systematic theology at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia; Robert Preus, president of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind.; Clark Pinnock, professor of systematic theology at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario; and Millard Erickson, dean of Bethel Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minn.

Respondents were selected to represent a wide spectrum of beliefs concerning inerrancy and included SBC President Adrian Rogers, James Flanning, pastor of First Baptist Church in Richmond, Va.; Paige Patterson, president of Criswell College in Dallas; and Bill Hull, provost at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.

The 576-page paperback book will sell for \$12.95. It will be available in all Baptist Book Stores after the Southern Baptist Convention.

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Russian Baptists Invite
Seminary Profs To Visit

By Scott Collins

Baptist Press
6/5/87

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—Southern Baptist seminary professors have been invited to teach in Russia by the president of the All Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists.

Speaking at a banquet with faculty and staff members of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary May 7, Vasily Logvinenko said he would like professors from the six Southern Baptist seminaries to visit the Soviet Union on teaching assignments.

"The best way to know the situation (among Christians in Russia) is to come and visit us," said Logvinenko, who is also pastor of Moscow Baptist Church.

Speaking through interpreter Sergie Nicholaev, superintendent for Baptist churches in the Leningrad area, Logvinenko said Russian Baptists are concerned about developing theological education. That is one way Southern Baptists and Soviet Baptists could work together, he said.

Logvinenko said Soviet Baptists need translated literature for theological education. Currently 150 Baptist seminary students in the Soviet Union study by correspondence. And Soviet Baptists are in the process of opening a seminary.

More than 500,000 Baptists worship in 5,000 churches in the Soviet Union, Logvinenko said. More than 30 percent of the converts in Soviet churches come from people with no prior relationship to the church.

"The Russian nation is very open to the word of God," Logvinenko said. "We praise the Lord for the Spirit moving all across the country."—more—

Russian Baptists preach the gospel in 26 languages to reach Muslims, Buddhists and other groups, said Nicholai Kalensnikav, treasurer and director of evangelism for the All Union Council. "It's not easy work, but God is blessing us, and people are coming to Jesus," he said.

Many Soviets under the age of 30 are moving toward Christ, Nicholaev said, noting 35 percent of Baptists in the Leningrad area fall into that age group.

"We can see a great interest today in religion among young people," he added. "The next great revival you will hear about will be in the Soviet Union."

More than 100,000 Bibles and 10,000 hymnbooks from the United Bible Society and Baptist World Alliance will be delivered to Russia next year in celebration of the 1,000-year anniversary of Christianity in the country, Logvinenko said.

Southern Baptists should pray for peace, "peace with God and peace with each other," he said.

"We have the same Lord Jesus who is King of kings and Lord of lords," Nicholaev added, "and one day we will be in his presence and sing his praises together."

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Retired Editor OK
After 2-Day Absence

Baptist Press
6/5/87

DALLAS (BP)—John J. Hurt, editor emeritus of the Baptist Standard, newsjournal of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, was in good condition in Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas June 4, after spending two nights in his automobile at the edge of an eastern Dallas county pond.

Hurt, 78, apparently became lost on the evening of June 1 while returning to his home in northern Dallas from a meeting in Garland of the Dallas County Appraisal Review Board on which he serves.

He was found in mid-afternoon, Wednesday, June 3, by a man on horseback who summoned police.

Hurt was not injured except for insect bites and sunburn and was expected to be released soon. He was hospitalized for observation and tests after going for almost 48 hours without food and blood pressure medication.

The horseback rider said he had seen Hurt the day before beside the car and Hurt had told him he was all right and that help was on the way. When Hurt was still beside the car the second day, the rider summoned police.

Hurt, a veteran newsman who retired from the editorship of the Standard in 1977, apparently became lost after leaving a meeting of the review board which hears grievances over property appraisal.

He left the meeting in Garland and apparently made a wrong turn. Instead of driving west to his home in northern Dallas, he drove northeast toward Rowlett. He stopped at a service station to ask directions back toward Dallas but apparently made another wrong turn and eventually drove into the edge of the pond. Heavy rains in the area raised the level of the water until the car became partially submerged.

His discovery ended a two-day search by authorities, family and friends and members of Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas, where the Hurts are members. Almost 50 volunteers of the church distributed notices about his disappearance and scoured the area looking for him.

His wife, Doris, and sons, Bob and John III, expressed their appreciation for the concern shown, the efforts of the police, church members and media to find him.

Hurt was editor of the Standard for 11 years, 1966-77, after serving as editor of the Georgia Baptist state paper, the Christian Index.

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Dollar Slide Hits
Foreign Missions

By Erich Bridges

TOKYO (BP)—While American televangelists feud over millions, missionaries in Japan are counting dollars.

The value of the U.S. dollar has plunged to its lowest level against the Japanese yen since World War II. And the fall of the once-mighty dollar on overseas markets is not just hurting Japanese corporate giants like Honda and Mitsubishi. It is hurting the work of missionaries.

Southern Baptist mission work worldwide is paid for with dollars, which missionaries convert to local currencies. When the value of the dollar drops against a local currency, missionaries lose buying power. That affects both their living expenses and their work funds.

Periodic cost-of-living salary adjustments from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board cover missionaries' personal needs. But there are no "cost-of-working" adjustments. Lost buying power overseas has the same impact on foreign missions as a decrease in mission offerings from U.S. churches.

"We've tightened our belts, and we are more careful because we aren't sure what is going to happen," said Japan missionary Phyllis Goss. "It's scary when you're on the field and this is happening. You want to do things, but there's not the money to do it."

The 201 Southern Baptist missionaries in Japan have been doing a lot of belt-tightening and budget-tightening lately. So have their colleagues in Europe and western Africa. The dollar has been sliding not only against the yen, but also against the French, Swiss and Belgian francs, German mark, English pound, Austrian schilling and other currencies.

To be effective, missionaries must travel, train national believers, start new churches, produce materials and do many other things that cost money. And when the money is tight, "cutting back" on work budgets is easier said than done.

"We have a lot of missionaries who ride bikes, who walk, who take other alternative forms of transportation if the nature of their work allows it," reported Keith Parker, director for Europe. "But this is a dollar question, a stewardship question. You can find cheaper places to live farther out. But if you save money on rent, do you really save if you have to commute in a car and pay all the upkeep and insurance?" Fuel costs in Europe, he added, are "phenomenal."

The Japan missionaries plan their work for each new year with a fixed number of dollars, which they eventually convert to yen. They anticipated getting 220 yen for each dollar last year but averaged only 165. They planned for 160 yen to the dollar this year, but during the spring the exchange rate dropped below 140. That adds up to more than a 30 percent drop in buying power during the past 18 months.

"It affects you at every level," said Gerald Burch, interim mission business manager in Japan. "What you had planned to do during the year, you wipe one-third off the top off that."

The dollar-yen exchange had inched back to around 145 by early June, but some economists do not expect it to rise much more this year. New Japan mission programs are on hold, and existing ones have been reduced. Travel is now at a bare minimum — too expensive.

The Japan missionaries rarely gather in one place except for annual mission meetings. Those in isolated areas feel the loneliness. So do their children. Meanwhile 22 new missionaries arrived last year, most with children, adding large new strains to work and education budgets.

Missionaries from neighboring Taiwan, South Korea and Hong Kong have shifted some budget funds to their Japan colleagues. The Foreign Mission Board's East Asia office has sent extra money. But the Japan budget is still running in the red. And deficits will carry over to next year.

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On the plus side, Southern Baptist missionaries in Japan and elsewhere enjoy two big financial advantages which many missionaries from other denominational groups lack. First, they receive full, regular financial support from churches through Southern Baptist Cooperative Program giving and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions.

Second, when their personal buying power drops (or jumps) because of dollar exchange rates, inflation or local economic conditions, they receive cost-of-living salary adjustments, as often as necessary. "So you can't paint the picture too bleak," said Burch.

But Japan has gobbled up \$1 million in missionary cost-of-living adjustments since the beginning of 1986. That is much more than the rest of Asia and Africa combined, and more than a third of the total spent worldwide.

And cost-of-living adjustments are not perfect. They typically take a month or two to catch up with economic conditions. When a salary adjustment is down, missionaries benefit from the lag time before it takes effect. But when it goes up, they cannot regain the dollar value they lost while waiting for the increase.

"In a high-cost area like central and northern Europe, that can make a big difference," explained Parker. "You're paying oil bills and buying winter clothes in the snow country and suddenly you lose \$300 (in buying power) from one paycheck to the next. It's a pretty big lump."

Late or not, however, the cost-of-living adjustments enable almost all missionary families to handle their personal family expenses. "We do try to react as quickly as we can," said John Moyer of the mission board's finance office. "But the (work) budgets ... are really strained" by a dollar plunge.

The dollar may regain its former strength overseas. But the cost of missions will keep rising in the advanced economies of Japan and Europe. Is it worth it?

"There's always the option of not sending additional missionaries out here or cutting the work force here," suggested Japan mission treasurer Richard Curtis. "There's been discussion of it."

But Burch does not want to see that happen: "I don't think we can very easily cut off a nation like Japan because of the cost of doing business here, the cost of being here. We've got to look at it from the same viewpoint the Lord would, and that is the value of one soul, the value of anybody coming to know the Lord. The Lord didn't count the cost, because he gave his entire life for it."