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-- BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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October 19, 1993

93-177

HAITI -- Missionaries' goal in Haiti under siege: help poor survive.
VIRGINIA -- How to respond to top missionary needs.
WASHINGTON -- Hunger in U.S. increases despite private efforts.
TENNESSEE -- NFMB honors Baptist layman with Owen Cooper Award; photos.
MISSISSIPPI -- Baptists, others argue proposed casino near Gulfshore Assembly.

Missionaries' goal in Haiti
under siege: help poor survive By Erich Bridges

Baptist Press
10/19/93

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (BP)--As trucks packed with Haitians streamed out of Port-au-Prince, they rolled past Southern Baptist missionaries Mark and Peggy Rutledge -- who were driving in the opposite direction.

The Rutledges, who work in Haiti's countryside, drove into the tense Haitian capital Oct. 17. They came to assess how the developing standoff between Haiti's military regime on one side and the United Nations and United States on the other might affect mission work.

"We just came in to touch base with (three other Southern Baptist workers), make sure everything is all right, go over our contingency plans and get a feeling for what's going on," said Mrs. Rutledge in a phone interview Oct. 18.

"Everyone's in good spirits. We've been through this before."

The Rutledges, of Murfreesboro, Tenn., and Glendale, Calif., respectively, work in agricultural ministries. Volunteers Ed and Mary Brentham of Belton, Texas, live in Port-au-Prince and work in well drilling and evangelism. Journeyman Todd Lowe of Central, S.C., has been studying language and culture in the capital in preparation for working with the Rutledges.

The five have no immediate intention to leave Haiti, despite warnings from some foreign embassies to their citizens to depart as fears of violence rise.

"We tend to follow the U.S. Embassy's lead," Mrs. Rutledge said. "They have several stages for going on alert or pulling out. But the embassy to this point has not issued any such warnings. We're trying to be prepared in case, but at the moment things don't seem to be to that level yet."

As the missionaries watch the situation, the Brenthams postponed a scheduled evangelistic revival until November.

Meanwhile, U.S. ships circle Haiti in a virtual economic blockade to force the regime to comply with a U.N. plan to return ousted Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to the island nation. And Haitians head for the countryside -- not necessarily fearing invasion or more violence, but anticipating the impact of the renewed embargo, according to the Rutledges.

First, fuel will dry up, making it much harder to travel out of the capital later on. Next, food will begin to disappear in urban areas.

"One problem with staying in town is that when food supplies start dwindling, there aren't any gardens," Mrs. Rutledge said. "All the gardens and farmland are out where we (live in the country). ... You can usually scrounge something even if you don't have money. Wild plants are growing and people make do. It also tends to be calmer."

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Once the Rutledges get back home to the countryside, hungry Haitians will need their agricultural ministry more than ever. It's designed to help farmers improve their yield using readily available materials and then teach the concepts to other farmers.

"Our goal is to help people learn to raise their traditional crops with slightly modified techniques that increase their production and improve the quality of the land," said Mrs. Rutledge. "It's not uncommon for farmers who have worked with us to double their crop yield off the same land and improve it steadily after that.

"We use traditional tools. We try to bring in no foreign imports. As a result, this embargo won't change how our farmers farm. We'll continue to work regardless of embargoes from now until eternity. ... The whole idea is farmers teaching farmers. That's the most effective way to make progress."

The current tension may not last until eternity, but the Rutledges have read enough -- and experienced enough -- Haitian history to know it could go on indefinitely.

"We've been here has career missionaries since 1987, and we see it as the same old thing," she said.

"This has been Haiti's history for a long, long time. What will change Haiti is Christ. Our prayer for Haitian people is they would come to know him. That'll be the solution for the Haitian people more than anything else."

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NOTE TO EDITORS: The following story can be used as a sidebar to (BP) story titled "Priority missionary jobs could help light up 'World A,'" dated 10/4/93, or as a separate informational box.

How to respond to
top missionary needs

Baptist Press
10/19/93

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--For Southern Baptists interested in helping the Foreign Mission Board fill its most urgent needs for new missionaries worldwide in 1994, Jim Riddell of the board's personnel selection department has this advice:

-- Pray that God-called people will make themselves available.

-- If you feel God may be leading you to foreign mission service, call Faith Bryan, FMB initial contacts coordinator, at 1-800-999-3113, ext. 635. Or write: Initial Contacts Coordinator, P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, Va. 23230. In either case, ask: "What do I need to do?"

-- For additional information about priority requests, ask the initial contacts coordinator for the pamphlet "Priority Personnel Requests, 1994."

-- Talk to your pastor, director of missions or a furloughing foreign missionary.

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Hunger in U.S. increases
despite private efforts

Baptist Press
10/19/93

WASHINGTON (BP)--Though private efforts to assist hungry people have increased greatly in recent years, hunger in the United States has increased by 50 percent since 1985, according to the Bread for the World Institute's annual report released recently.

As a result, government must do a better job of fulfilling its role of complementing charitable assistance, the report says.

"People need to re-examine their contributions to the anti-hunger movement," said David Beckmann, BWI's president. "Some of the effort devoted to helping hungry people must be channeled toward changing ineffective government policies which help to cause hunger.

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"Government policies can affect hungry people on a scale that dwarfs the impact of private assistance. By calling loudly and strongly on the government to do its part, private citizens can transform the politics of hunger."

The report, entitled *Hunger 1994: Transforming the Politics of Hunger*, calls on religious bodies and other organizations to motivate their members to greater involvement in influencing public policy on national and international hunger issues.

Though few food pantries or soup kitchens existed in the United States in 1980, more than 150,000 private organizations now distribute food to the hungry, the report says. These groups pass out \$3 billion to \$4 billion worth of food each year.

Among churches, more than 250,000 congregations give to emergency hunger relief. Forty-eight percent of congregations, or about 150,000, have food pantries, the report estimates.

Yet, there are about 30 million hungry Americans, and nearly 37 million people in the country live below the poverty line, according to the report. The number living below the poverty line is the largest since 1962.

Worldwide, 1.3 billion people live in absolute poverty.

The report defines absolute poverty as the "income level below which a minimally nutritionally adequate diet plus essential non-food requirements are not affordable." Hunger is a "condition in which people lack the basic food intake to provide them with the energy and nutrients for fully productive, active and healthy lives," according to the report.

"Two things seem clear from the *Bread for the World* report," said Ben Mitchell, director of biomedical and life issues of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "First, our culture is becoming increasingly sensitive to hunger needs. This is extremely encouraging. Southern Baptists are responding at a very heartening level to the needs of the suffering and starving."

Mitchell cited last year's Southern Baptist giving to hunger causes, which surpassed the previous year's amount by more than \$1 million.

"Second, government has a role in hunger relief," he said. "Solidly evangelical Christians disagree philosophically and theologically on what that role is, but all agree that federal and local governments must not do anything to restrict or otherwise hinder efforts to supply food and other kinds of relief."

The Southern Baptist Convention observed World Hunger Day on its denominational calendar on Oct. 10.

The *Bread for the World* Institute's report was released in conjunction with World Food Day, Oct. 16.

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NFBM honors Oklahoma layman
with Owen Cooper Award

By Jim Burton

Baptist Press
10/19/93

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--The National Fellowship of Baptists in Missions honored Tulsa, Okla., layman John Vanderford with the Owen Cooper Award, the highest honor bestowed by Southern Baptists for volunteer missions.

During the closing session of NFBM's Triennial Meeting, NFBM President Fred Roach of Dallas cited Vanderford's long-standing commitment to volunteer construction. A retired contractor, Vanderford and his wife, Myra, have led church-building teams in projects around the world and participated in disaster relief projects.

Vanderford is president of the Baptist Builders Fellowship of Oklahoma and a deacon at Memorial Baptist Church in Tulsa. He works closely with Brotherhood Commission trustee Joe Herndon of Duncan, Okla., who coordinates Oklahoma's out-of-state and overseas volunteer construction projects. In 1978, he planned and led in the construction of the first Oklahoma Baptist Brotherhood disaster relief mobile unit.

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Vanderford's commitment began before retirement when he had only two weeks a year to volunteer, said Laddie Adams, Oklahoma Brotherhood director.

"John is a very quiet, soft-spoken man but very capable in his leadership," said Adams, who nominated Vanderford. "He's willing to let others be in the forefront but is always consistent in his role before others and in his devotion to the Lord."

"John Vanderford's lifestyle commitment to volunteer missions is a model of the lay movement that has been sweeping our denomination," said Brotherhood Commission President James D. Williams. "His commitment to God that he made more than 15 years ago, to just be available for missions, is one that every Southern Baptist needs to consider."

NFBM is a ministry of the Brotherhood Commission's adult division. Formalized in 1986, NFBM consists of 14 affinity fellowships that recruit volunteers for missions according to skills, interests and vocations.

The Owen Cooper Award is named after the late Mississippi layman who was a founding member of NFBM and a pioneer in Southern Baptist voluntarism. He was also the last layman to serve as president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Triennial Meeting serves as a time of inspiration and reporting for the 14 fellowships, said Douglas Beggs, interim NFBM director and Brotherhood Commission program services vice president.

"Every three years when we bring the fellowships together, we learn how God is working through each of these groups," Beggs said. "It's a confirmation of all that God is doing and wants to do through lay people."

Officers elected for the next three years are Bill Rhodes, Atlanta, president; Wendell Reed, Salem, Va., vice president; Jack Knox, Memphis, Tenn., recording secretary; and Williams, treasurer.

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(BP) photo specials mailed to Oklahoma and Georgia by the Brotherhood Commission. Photos available to others upon request.

Baptists, others argue proposed
casino near Gulfshore Assembly

Baptist Press
10/19/93

By William H. Perkins Jr.

PASS CHRISTIAN, Miss. (BP)--Almost 1,000 people on both sides of the plan to locate a new casino within walking distance of Gulfshore Assembly in Pass Christian, Miss., filled the state Baptist campground's auditorium to overcapacity Oct. 12, loudly voicing their opinions both for and against the proposed gambling facility.

Lawyers for Spectrum Gaming, Inc., requested the meeting with the Harrison County Board of Supervisors after the board passed a resolution opposing the site of the 30,000-square-foot casino in the middle of a residential neighborhood just outside the Pass Christian city limits.

Consultants hired by Spectrum told the supervisors plans were either completed or underway for siting, zoning, sanitation, traffic control, environmental concerns, and other matters that will keep the casino's impact to a minimum in the surrounding neighborhood.

Supervisor Robin Metcalf questioned consultant Terry Moran on zoning and the danger to Bay. St. Louis bridge on Highway 90, a crucial transportation chokepoint adjacent to the casino site. The bridge was closed for several months after Hurricane Camille propelled debris against the bridge in 1969. Metcalf asked about evacuation plans during future hurricane threats.

Catcalls from the audience greeted Moran's response that the casino's construction will withstand high winds and the evacuation plan "would b to stay in place."

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Experts hired by the anti-casino group were critical of Spectrum's conclusions. Joseph Andre, a traffic consultant, questioned the adequacy of the casino's plans to handle increased inflow of vehicles from Highway 90.

Environmental consultant Burton Kemp said the constant addition of casinos along the Gulf Coast's shoreline will have a "devastating and permanent effect on the ecosystem."

The strongest words, however, came from Paul G. Jones II, head of the Christian Action Commission of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, which owns the multi-million dollar Gulfshore Assembly.

Jones recounted Gulfshore's 40-year history and Baptist's commitment to the facility. He also questioned the motives of the Minneapolis-based parent company of Spectrum in downsizing the casino since their initial announcement.

Jones suggested the company said one thing from Minneapolis to affect stock prices, and another thing when they came to Pass Christian to propose the casino. Spectrum officials disputed that claim in rebuttal.

Jones condemned the problems the casino will create for Gulfshore visitors and for the larger community around the campground.

"It's a bad bet," he said, to a standing ovation.

Supervisors accepted written and verbal comments from the audience and will vote in a future meeting on whether to rescind their original anti-casino resolution.

Legally, local officials in Mississippi cannot stop a casino project once voters approve gambling in a local referendum. That power rests with the state Gaming Commission in Jackson.