

March 8, 1959

21 Proposals Made
By Study Committee

By the Baptist Press

The Committee to Study Total Southern Baptist Convention Program will present 21 comprehensive recommendations on denominational work to the 1959 session of the Convention at Louisville May 21.

A major section of the report is devoted to recommended policies for the Convention's Home Mission Board, a topic on which the Convention deferred action at Houston last year.

Most of the other recommendations are also based on matters referred back to the committee a year ago for further study. At Houston, the Convention adopted 23 recommendations but referred 15 back to be given more consideration.

However, recommendations applying directly to the Committee on Public Affairs and one recommendation relating to Carver School of Missions and Social Work are new.

Highlights of the committee report are:

That the Home Mission Board let local conventions assume many phases of its work as soon as they can. This applies to state Baptist conventions in the United States, and the Home Mission Board's overseas work in Cuba, Panama, and Canal Zone.

That the Home Mission Board call in management consultants to review its work.

That the Home Mission Board continue its church loan activities. The Committee to Study Total Program announced it is withdrawing its earlier recommendation that the Convention establish a separate church loan agency.

That the Convention give second approval to creation of a new agency, the Stewardship Commission. First approval was granted at Houston last year. Convention regulations provide that two affirmative votes are necessary to create a new agency. Thus if this recommendation passes, the commission comes into existence.

That Carver School of Missions and Social Work not only continue to operate as a separate institution of the Convention but that its specialized work be expanded. The one new recommendation is that Carver report to the Convention each year for the next five years on its progress toward being accredited by recognized national groups.

That there be no change in status of any Southern Baptist agency at this time. Thus present boards would continue as such, commissions as commissions, institutions as institutions, etc., without moving from one category to another.

That agencies make wider use of facilities available through the Sunday School Board and that certain limits be imposed on materials which agencies may publish independently of the Sunday School Board.

That seminaries require students to pay a higher share of the cost of their education.

That those who drafted a new formula for distributing funds among the six seminaries on a more equitable basis be commended.

That the Southern Baptist Foundation operate as a separate Convention agency and that those who would give trusts, bequests, and annuities to Baptist work be permitted to choose for themselves whether it will be administered through a state Baptist foundation or the SBC agency.

That an organizational manual on work of the Southern Baptist Convention be prepared by the Executive Committee.

That the Inter-Agency Council, a non-administrative council to help co-ordinate work of the agencies, include representatives from all Convention agencies.

That the membership of the Committee on Public Affairs be specifically defined in Convention bylaws. A rewording of the bylaws describing membership of the committee is included in the recommendation. The Committee on Public Affairs, a standing committee of the SBC, is not to be confused with the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, composed of representatives of the SBC and five other Baptist conventions.

Home Mission Priority

"The Home mission program will continue indefinitely as one of the higher priority activities of the Southern Baptist denomination," the report says.

"The Home Mission Board should continue to increase its emphasis on work in areas where there is no state convention or where the state convention is not well established. . . .

"The Home Mission Board has in recent months been working with the state conventions to develop a uniform Southern Baptist Convention-wide pattern of mission work. This effort to develop a single uniform missions program should be commended. Such a missions program, identified as 'The Southern Baptist mission program' rather than as 'The state missions program' or 'The Home Mission Board's program,' should be developed and put into effect as rapidly as possible," according to the committee.

The board is to present a report to the Convention each year on progress made in implementing the policy of work with state Baptist groups.

"State conventions should be encouraged to assume administrative responsibility for direct mission work now conducted by the Home Mission Board as rapidly as possible," the committee recommends.

"While it is recognized that conditions will differ from state to state, it is suggested that the plans should provide for transfer within a period of five years except in those instances where particularly severe problems would be encountered . . ."

The committee further reports, "State conventions should be encouraged to assume full financial responsibility for all mission work in their areas as rapidly as this is feasible. . . . It is recommended that a plan be developed cooperatively by the Home Mission Board and each state convention to provide for the orderly assumption of full financial responsibility for all missions activities by the state conventions."

The "better developed portions" of work in Cuba, Panama, and Canal Zone should be "gradually transferred" to local conventions "following the same general policy as is now being applied in the homeland." New work there, as it matures, should be transferred to local supervision.

"To strengthen the Board's organization and operations further, your committee recommends that the Home Mission Board be urged to have a comprehensive survey made of its organization and operations by an objective group of professional management consultants." The proposed survey would encompass a wide area of the Board's administrative, financial, and office management programs.

The committee feels that "All agencies of the Convention should continue to utilize the services of the Sunday School Board to the maximum feasible extent for editing, publishing, and distributing printed materials, films, filmstrips, recordings, and other materials that are to be sold. . . .

What Agencies Publish

"Agencies should publish in their own names only periodicals that promote their own work, materials subject to early obsolescence, and materials for free distribution."

The recommended new Stewardship Commission, to be developed from what is now the stewardship promotion division of the Executive Committee, "should continue to sponsor the annual promotion conference and work with state conventions in the same manner and on the same basis as the Executive Committee now does."

The Stewardship Commission and the Executive Committee would work together each year in proposing a Cooperative Program budget goal for the SBC for the coming year.

"The Southern Baptist Foundation should be relieved of all responsibility for promoting giving. Responsibility for developing and promoting a program of endowment and capital giving should be assigned to the Stewardship Commission," the committee recommends.

Students at Southern Baptists' six seminaries now pay no tuition. However, the committee recommends that the seminaries "encourage their students to finance a larger share of the cost of their own education. Each seminary should adopt tuition and/or fee schedules that will permit the students to pay a larger share of the cost of their education and, thereby, permit the quality of seminary training to be improved without diverting as large an amount of Cooperative Program funds from missions as would otherwise be required."

No student who is "well-qualified" should be denied an opportunity to enroll at a seminary because of financial hardship. The committee recommends a suitable "student aid program" of grants, loans, and work opportunities.

Social Workers Needed

"Baptist churches, institutions, and mission boards indicated that there exists a need each year for at least 70 skilled church social workers and specialized mission workers to assume responsible positions in church programs, benevolent homes and hospital programs, and good-will center and other mission programs," the committee determined.

A review of courses taught at Baptist colleges, universities, and seminaries, showed that "none offers accredited or unaccredited programs which will meet the anticipated requirements of the denomination for church social workers and for some types of missionary specialists." Also none is training Baptist young people to serve as social workers in public and private secular agencies."

In the light of these facts, and the recognition that "merging Carver School with Southern Seminary was found not to be feasible," the committee proposes that Carver School of Missions and Social Work at Louisville "continue in existence and improve and expand its program."

It was noted that Carver has "in past years," eliminated courses and degree programs which duplicated offerings at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The schools have adjacent campuses.

It was noted further that Carver is seeking accreditation by nationally recognized groups including the Council on Social Work Education. It asked that the Convention secure reports from Carver each year for the next five years on its progress toward being accredited.

Inter-Agency Membership

A revised recommendation on the Inter-Agency Council from that offered at Houston will be presented. It changes the manner in which seminaries and other educational institutions will be represented on the Council and provides for representatives from the Committee on Public Affairs.

A proposed bylaw affecting the Committee on Public Affairs defines who its 15 members should be. It specifies that no more than two-thirds of the committee shall be ministers or laymen, to provide some balance between ordained and non-ordained membership.

"The Convention should commend state conventions that have appointed public affairs committees," the committee says. It should encourage other states to set up such committees.

The SBC organization manual to be developed by the Executive Committee will "define the responsibilities of each agency of the Convention for conducting specific programs and for performing other functions." This recommendation contains a suggested bylaw to be adopted to put it into effect.