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IN THIS ISSUE:

- * Honeycutt will retire from Southern in 1993
- * Honeycutt praised for holding seminary together
- * FMB loses 14 Europe missionaries; 8 join Fellowship
- * ABP to start newsletter for Baptist laypeople
- * Irrelevant Baptist media creating 'crisis,' ABP chairman warns
- * Critics say statement masks plot to seize Texas convention
- * Layman says WMU should begin sending missionaries overseas
- * Poll downplays influence of parents on children
- * National Affairs Briefing in the red, asks for help

Honeycutt will retire
from Southern in 1993

By Marv Knox

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- Roy Honeycutt, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary since 1982, will retire at the end of 1993 -- two months after his 67th birthday but three years earlier than planned.

Honeycutt announced his decision during the seminary trustees' fall meeting Oct. 12 on the Louisville, Ky., campus.

Although he previously said he would retire at 70, Honeycutt said his decision was not made under the pressure of critics but in "the best interest of the seminary."

Honeycutt's tenure as president has paralleled a theological/political controversy within the Southern Baptist Convention. Critics have attacked both Honeycutt and the seminary for alleged liberalism, while supporters contend the school and its president reflect traditional high standards of ministerial training.

Two years ago, the seminary appeared in gridlock between fundamental-conservative trustees, who wanted to overlay increasingly restrictive conditions for faculty employment, and faculty, who felt the new rules violated standing employment policies.

But in April 1991, Honeycutt engineered trustee and faculty approval of a "covenant renewal" statement which protected the current faculty while agreeing to take the school in a more conservative direction.

Despite the criticism and pressure from all sides, Honeycutt's retirement decision "came at my initiative and only after most serious reflection and prayer," he told the trustees and several hundred faculty, staff and students.

Honeycutt noted he is healthy and still committed to the seminary and its future.

"The conclusion to retire was personal and private," he said. "Until I had firmly reached my conclusion, only June (his wife) knew of my consideration and final decision.

"The singular nature of my decision is important for friends and all who love Southern Seminary to hear clearly: No member of the board of trustees knew I was considering announcing my retirement, nor did any trustee suggest or imply that I should retire. Nor did other persons -- whether among colleagues at the seminary, alumni and friends, or my family. No one of those suggested I should consider retirement at this junction of life.

"The decision to retire was initially difficult," he admitted. "Yet it became increasingly plausible and acceptable. For a variety of reasons, I became convinced that at this juncture in our covenant life an orderly transition in the presidency would contribute positively to the seminary's mission."

In an interview, Honeycutt elaborated on those reasons for announcing his retirement.

"I felt the time was right to elect a responsible president," he told the Western Recorder, newsjournal of Kentucky Baptists. "At this time, we have board leadership who are thoroughly committed to the maintenance of the seminary and its integrity. In my decision-making, I took that into strong consideration.

"I hoped for a strong (search) committee," he said, indicating he is satisfied with the seven trustees named to seek his successor.

In addition, he said, "the direction has been set for the seminary," noting the school is solidly within the mainstream of evangelical Christianity and Baptist life, and a strong faculty has been put in place.

"The trustees' election of a new president will bring a new sense of purpose, direction and enthusiasm," he predicted. "Basically, it's just a good time."

During his statement to trustees, Honeycutt called on each person affiliated with the seminary to continue supporting the school.

"The 14 months before us can be, if we make it, a creative period of opportunity, despite the anxieties which accompany a period of transition," he stressed.

"I urge every trustee, colleague on the faculty and staff, student, alumnus and friend of the seminary to join me as together we carry forward the seminary's worldwide ministry. Southern Seminary's unique role in the work of God's kingdom is far too significant for us to offer anything but our best efforts to function effectively during the transition in the presidency."

Honeycutt expressed confidence about the future of the seminary. "The same God" who inspired the school's founders in 1859 "will now overshadow and guide Southern Seminary," he said.

"Transitions lead to new beginnings and creative opportunities," he said. "During this period of institutional transition, I believe the course we have set together in covenant for Southern Seminary will lead her into the 21st century with wholeness, educational effectiveness and constructive ministry.

After Honeycutt's announcement, trustee chairman Wayne Allen announced the members of the presidential search committee: Larry Adams, administrator of the Baptist Retirement Center in Oklahoma City, Okla.; Allen, pastor of Briarwood Baptist Church in Cordova, Tenn.; Charles Q. Carter, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jonesboro, Ga; Neal Gresham, a retired automotive executive and labor-law expert from Wing, Ala.; Carroll Karkalits, dean of the college of engineering and technology at McNeese State University in Lake

Charles, La.; P. A. Stevens, a fire-protection contractor and member of Westport Road Baptist Church in Louisville; and Rick White, pastor of First Baptist Church of Franklin, Tenn., a Nashville suburb.

Adams, Carter and White are seminary alumni. Allen and Adams serve on the committee by virtue of their positions as chairman and vice chairman of the trustees.

Allen said the search committee would work with a liaison committee, to be comprised of representatives of various seminary constituencies, such as faculty, staff, students and alumni.

"We will actively, openly seek your input," Allen said. "We particularly would like your guidance as we develop the profile for this position."

He asked for "unity on this board as we move forward" and urged trustees to "join hands and hearts...in making one of the most important decisions we can make in the life of this institution."

-30-

Honeycutt praised for
holding seminary together

By Mark Wingfield and Marv Knox

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- The day he announced his intention to retire as president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Roy Honeycutt was praised by students, faculty and trustees as the glue that has held a fragile institution together.

Silence engulfed the meeting hall Oct. 12 when Honeycutt announced plans to retire Dec. 31, 1993. Only a handful of staff members and trustee leaders knew of his intentions, and they had learned only hours in advance.

The room was packed with students and faculty who had come to hear what trustees would decide about the fate of professor Paul Simmons, who has been under fire from trustees for several years. Some students sat in teary-eyed astonishment as Honeycutt pre-empted that concern with his surprise announcement.

Trustee chairman Wayne Allen called a break after Honeycutt's presentation to allow trustees and others in the room to express their appreciation to Honeycutt.

Trustees, faculty, students and alumni united in their expressions of appreciation for Honeycutt's leadership.

Allen told the assembly Honeycutt has been the "glue that holds us together" during turbulent times.

"In my heart and in my life, this is a sad day," he said. "I know God in his infinite wisdom and will has someone for this role, but at this date it is very difficult for me to imagine it."

Allen said Honeycutt has served Southern Seminary "during a decade of difficulty beyond what most could comprehend," referring to the 13-year political and theological struggle in the Southern Baptist Convention.

"Many predicted this conflict would result in the destruction of this institution," Allen explained. But through Honeycutt's adept leadership the seminary instead has experienced "a decade of growth," he said, citing examples.

Honeycutt, he said, has embraced people on the theological right and left in "an example of true biblical faith that builds trust."

Trustee Jerry Johnson of Colorado, one of Honeycutt's harshest critics,

said even the school's most conservative trustees were saddened by the president's announcement.

"We've had some controversial things happening over the last few years," Johnson said, "but I know for a fact from my point of view that there was no pressure for him to do this. But I think we can see the wisdom in it."

Honeycutt "has made a major positive impact on this institution," Johnson explained. "He reached out to the right and to the left and tried to keep them unified. He probably slowed some people down and sped some people up in the transition."

Representatives of the two faculty organizations expressed surprise and sadness at Honeycutt's decision.

John Dever, chairman of the faculty committee and professor of church and community, said Honeycutt "has given our community superb leadership and prophetic vision during extremely troubled times."

Gerald Keown, a professor of Old Testament and president of the Faculty Association, an independent organization of professors, said Honeycutt's "able leadership in the midst of most difficult times has prevented catastrophe when such was very much a possibility."

Keown expressed gratitude on behalf of the faculty "for the personal sacrifices he (Honeycutt) has made in recent years on our behalf and on behalf of the seminary."

"We have found him to be a man of uncommon wisdom, courage and integrity," Dever added.

Honeycutt's departure, Keown said, thrusts the seminary into a "most critical moment of decision."

Trustees' choice of a successor, Keown said, "will decide whether the seminary retains its integrity and its mission among Southern Baptists and world Christianity, or whether we move into the process of self-destruction and disintegration."

Dever said the faculty will take Allen at his word on his promise for full participation in the search process. "If we are to develop a joint vision for the future, then we must share jointly in securing the leadership to guide us in that vision," he said.

"If a conservative president is elected," Keown said, "he will need to be able to reach out to the faculty as Dr. Honeycutt has reached out to conservative trustees." But if the new president cannot or will not reach out to the faculty, he predicted, "many (professors) will have to make the decision to go."

Students have seen Honeycutt's leadership as "a strong anchor," said Ruth Davison, president of the seminary's Student Government Association. "He cares about students, about theological education, about the future.

"He has kept us focused on what the real issues are," she said.

The next president is certain to represent a more conservative viewpoint, Davison admitted, but said that doesn't have to be a negative for students. "As long as there's freedom for all voices to be heard, there's hope," she said.

Jim Graves, pastor of First Baptist Church in St. Petersburg, Fla., and president of the seminary's national alumni association, said alumni "will be united in appreciation" for Honeycutt's leadership and will accept with regret his decision to retire.

"Dr. Honeycutt has exemplified the conciliatory spirit that has been needed and is needed in moving us into the future, out of the years of controversy," Graves said.

Since alumni represent an important constituency for the seminary, they should be included in the process for selecting a new president, Graves

added. "We would be more than willing and happy to work cooperatively with the trustees."

-30-

FMB loses 14 more missionaries
from Europe; 8 join Fellowship

By Robert Dilday and Greg Warner

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Fourteen more Southern Baptist missionaries in Europe have announced plans to resign from the Foreign Mission Board, and eight of them will take new assignments with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Most of the resignations are further fallout from the damaged relationship between FMB trustees and European Baptists. One resigning administrator, Paul Thibodeaux, said the course charted by FMB trustees in Europe signals "the resurgence of Western imperialistic missions."

Thibodeaux and his wife, Margie, will leave their FMB positions by the first of the year, as will Jim and Becky Smith in Germany, Kent and Debbie Blevins in Switzerland, and Kevin and Jan Rutledge in Poland.

The eight will join the growing number of former FMB personnel moving to the moderate-conservative Fellowship, organized by opponents of the fundamental-conservative direction taken by the Southern Baptist Convention since 1979.

The other six missionaries -- John and Kathy Dammon in Austria, Lonnie and Connie Reynolds in Spain, and Rusty and Angela Shuler in Yugoslavia -- cited personal or professional reasons for resigning. The resignations were reported to the trustees' Europe committee on the first day of the board's Oct. 12-14 meeting in Richmond, Va.

Fourteen personnel resignations from one region is an unusually high figure, say board officials, although only the eight have blamed board policy for their actions.

Thibodeaux, associate to the area director for Europe, is the highest-ranking missionary to resign among the 14. His former supervisors, Area Director Keith Parker and Vice President Isam Ballenger, resigned last January, accusing the trustees of pursuing a "global agenda" of theological orthodoxy.

Thibodeaux was himself grilled by trustees in August over whether or not he agreed with his supervisors' charges. At the time he suggested a "significant number," though perhaps not a majority, of trustees are pursuing such a global agenda in Europe.

However, the Oct. 1 resignation letter from the Thibodeauxs made clear their concerns about FMB intentions on the continent.

Although the threat of communism has disappeared from "the harshest and most closed sections of our world," the couple wrote, "the peoples of Europe, and especially the believers in Eastern Europe, face a new threat -- the resurgence of Western imperialistic missions."

The couple also warned that missionaries in Europe have been targeted for unfair scrutiny. "In the push to sift and purify, character assassination is taking place and authentic God-ordained ministries are being destroyed through innuendo, gossip and outright untruths," they charged.

Trustees have consistently denied they have a global agenda for orthodoxy or a vendetta against missionaries. They point to the Hamburg Agreement recently negotiated with European Baptists as a guarantee of their

commitment to goodwill.

But several of the resigning missionaries said they remain skeptical about those promises.

"We do not trust words, no matter how well articulated by the board as a whole yet contradicted by actions of a significant number on that board," the Thibodeauxs said in a memo to missionary colleagues.

"Although much has been repaired recently in terms of relations with European Baptists," the Smiths wrote in their resignation letter, "we continue to experience in our own hearts an undeniable lack of trust in the Foreign Mission Board. This stems from recent breaches of trust, as well as the continuing atmosphere of suspicion and lack of confidence on the part of some trustees toward some of our highly committed and effective colleagues."

Both couples said they decided to leave the FMB to resolve their conflicts with the FMB's new direction and so that trustees can employ administrators who wholeheartedly support their approach.

Thibodeaux, based in Vienna, and Smith, based in Berlin, are key field administrators with responsibilities in Eastern Europe whose resignations are likely to hamper the board's ministries there.

The region already is operating with reduced staff since the resignations of Ballenger and Parker. Both are now affiliated with the Fellowship, Parker as the group's Europe coordinator and Ballenger, a professor at the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, as a consultant.

Sam James, a 30-year missions veteran but a newcomer to Europe, succeeded Ballenger in June. Trustees are still seeking a replacement for Parker.

James denied Thibodeaux's charge of FMB imperialism and added, "I would be unalterably opposed to using imperialistic or paternalistic methods in Europe or anywhere else in the world. Everything we do is done with the appropriate people overseas in order to prevent that."

Trustee Skip Smith, chairman of the board's Europe committee, said Thibodeaux has a "misperception" about trustee intentions. "There is a desire for strong missions, but I can't see imperialistic control, ownership or domination in missions," he said.

Trustee Rick Scarborough of Pearland, Texas, agreed. "I don't know of a single board member who has tried to export Western imperial colonialism. We're trying to export the gospel."

It is not known what specific roles Thibodeaux and Smith will perform for the Fellowship, although both are expected to continue work in Eastern Europe.

Kent Blevins, a professor at the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland, is expected to remain in that post under Fellowship sponsorship. The Rutledges of Poland reportedly are discussing new responsibilities with Fellowship leaders.

Although some trustees sounded alarms last August at a potential loss of additional missionaries to the CBF, Europe chairman Smith responded to the Oct. 12 resignation announcements with equanimity. "If this is what they feel God wants them to do, they should do it," he said.

The Houston pastor predicted Christian witness in Europe could be expanded by the resignations. "Those (missionaries) who quit and come home and don't go anywhere -- that's the tragedy," he told ABP.

Smith said he did not expect trustees to terminate the missionaries before their announced resignation dates. "I think the overwhelming majority of the board would not want to take punitive action against them," he said.

He did express regret that the resigning missionaries had not waited to see how the principles of the Hamburg Agreement would be implemented. The

agreement, designed to renew strained ties between European Baptists and the FMB, was approved by the European Baptist Federation council Sept. 29. FMB trustees were scheduled to consider the document Oct. 14.

"They should wait and see if we put our action where our mouth is," Smith said. "I think they would find they can work with this board of trustees."

-30-

ABP to start newsletter for Baptist laypeople

By Marv Knox

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- Associated Baptist Press will begin publishing a monthly newsletter -- a digest of Baptist news targeted at laypeople.

The newsletter, which will debut in January, will cost \$25 annually and will begin with a press run of 1,000 copies, ABP board members decided during their fall meeting in Nashville, Tenn.

The newsletter will aim at several goals, said Greg Warner, executive editor of the independent news service. The goals include meeting the "unmet informational needs of Baptist laypeople and others," increasing the awareness of ABP among Baptists and the general public, and discovering new sources for news and money for ABP.

"To attempt this venture, we must admit several things," Warner said. "One, that the way Baptists have communicated in the past may not be the only way or even the primary way they communicate in the future. Two, that there are other potential Baptist readers as yet unreached by the traditional approaches. And three, that we should seek the widest audience possible for our news."

In the past year, ABP has produced 535 stories, directors were told. Although ABP stories appeared at least 1,620 times in 22 Baptist state newspapers, the average ABP story was published in only three.

"Simply put, are enough people reading what we are writing to make it worth all the effort?" Warner asked directors.

Some state papers have been told they cannot publish stories from ABP, which was started when the conservative-controlled Southern Baptist Executive Committee fired the editors of Baptist Press, the convention's official news service. Other papers are reluctant to print much news from ABP because of political pressure.

Consequently, Baptists in many states have little or no access to news produced by ABP. Those states will be the primary targets for the newsletter, directors were told.

Warner said many laypeople have asked for access to the news service but have been discouraged by the \$250 annual fee. The \$25 digest will put ABP news within reach of readers, he said.

Noting the time is ripe for the new venture, Warner said, "an ABP newsletter is one opportunity we mustn't abandon before we explore it."

The concept was developed by Bracey Campbell Co., a Nashville advertising/public relations firm, and funded by a \$20,000 grant from the Freedom Forum, a foundation started by the Gannett newspaper chain to promote freedom of the press and First Amendment issues.

Freedom Forum President Charles Overby has been chairman of the ABP board for the past two years.

The four-page newsletter will include top stories and news briefs

compiled from ABP's twice-weekly releases. The first three issues of the newsletter will include subscription-card inserts and will be sent to about 1,000 prospective subscribers.

The newsletter will more than pay for itself if paid circulation reaches 1,000, Warner said. At a circulation of 2,500, each \$25 subscription will provide ABP with \$13 in excess revenue.

"We have reached a position in our financial development where genuine expansion is possible," Warner said. "A newsletter is one mode of expansion that shouldn't cost us money but should in fact contribute some revenue, both by subscriptions and by providing an avenue for fund-raising."

That could help ABP's two-person paid staff -- Warner and Administrative Assistant Franceen Cornelius -- add a third member, he noted. The new staffer would "help in one of several needed areas -- writing and editing, newsletter production (or) administration and development."

In other business, directors heard ABP is \$37,000 ahead of budget for the first nine months of the year and expects to finish 1992 with income \$42,000 ahead of expenses.

ABP officials said the higher-than-expected revenue for 1992 reflects growth in funding from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, which so far this year has provided \$40,369 to ABP's budget, and grants totaling \$25,000 from the Freedom Forum. Those two organizations account for 47 percent of ABP funding in 1992.

ABP was the first religious organization to receive a grant from the foundation.

Other income came from state conventions (17.8 percent), churches (11.7 percent), individuals (8.0 percent), subscriptions from Baptist state newspapers (6.8 percent) and a variety of smaller sources, according to ABP's financial report.

"I don't want you to get the idea we are awash in money, however," ABP editor Greg Warner told directors. "Our funding sources are still somewhat unpredictable, and for that reason we have been conservative in our spending and delayed expansion in areas that need it."

"If our budget grows at the rate of which it is capable," Warner later told directors, ABP can consider expanding its staff by the middle of 1993.

Directors gave preliminary approval to a 1993 budget of \$172,550, a 26 percent increase over the current \$137,434 budget.

The budget anticipates income from \$80,000 from various organizations, with the largest portion expected to come from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Support from state conventions, including the largest portion from Virginia Baptists, is expected to total \$35,500 in 1993.

Other revenue is expected to come in the form of contributions from churches and individuals and fees from the service's users.

Directors authorized their executive committee to review the 1993 budget and make necessary adjustments before the budget goes into effect in January.

The ABP board asked its incoming chairman to appoint a committee to study relationships between ABP and other organizations, particularly with those organizations providing significant funding to the news service.

Directors were told a proposal currently under consideration by the Baptist General Association of Virginia will ask ABP to pursue a "shared relationship" between the two, which would allow Virginia Baptists to nominate at least one director to the ABP board.

Another study committee will consider the feasibility of ABP sponsoring internships for student journalists to work for the national news service.

Directors elected R. G. Puckett, editor of the Biblical Recorder, newsjournal of Baptists in North Carolina, as ABP chairman. Carl Kell,

professor of communication and broadcasting at Western Kentucky University, was chosen vice chairman and Jeff Mobley, a Nashville attorney, was elected secretary. Don McGregor, retired editor of the Baptist Record of Mississippi and ABP executive director, was re-elected treasurer.

The board adopted resolutions of appreciation for outgoing chairman Overby and three of ABP's biggest financial supporters -- the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Baptist General Association of Virginia, Baptist General Convention of Texas and Freedom Forum.

-30-

-- This story includes information from Greg Warner of ABP.

Irrelevant Baptist media creating
'crisis,' ABP chairman warns

By Marv Knox

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- The Baptist media's failure to produce news that is understandable to laypeople has created a "crisis in Baptist life," veteran journalist Charles Overby told Associated Baptist Press board members during their fall meeting.

But since the Baptist media crisis parallels a crisis in the general media, Overby added, Baptist journalists also face an opportunity to communicate news to increasing numbers of people.

Overby, who completed two years as ABP board chairman at the Nashville meeting, is president of Freedom Forum, a foundation formed by the Gannett newspaper chain to promote freedom of the press and First Amendment issues. He has been editor of daily newspapers in Nashville and Jackson, Miss.

"This 1992 (presidential election) campaign has convinced me that we have a crisis in the general media," Overby said. "And we have a crisis in the religious media.

"Ironically and sadly, the crisis is the same.... We are failing to connect with our audiences.

"In the general media, reporters and editors find their audiences dwindling. In the religious community, reporters and editors find their work being consumed more by professional clergy and church staffs and less by laymen and laywomen. Simply put, we are writing more and more for fewer and fewer people."

Freedom Forum has conducted an evaluation of the 1992 election campaign, Overby said. "The big headline is this: The candidates and the public are bypassing the traditional and general media for alternative, specialized media.

"Gone are the major emphases on newspapers and network news. Now the candidates place new and greater emphasis on radio and television talk shows, toll-free 800 numbers and a host of other direct-access media outlets.

"The candidates have learned -- and the public is discovering -- that the mainstream media are increasingly irrelevant to people's lives."

The Freedom Forum study found three talk-show hosts among the "10 most-frequently mentioned opinion leaders or pundits" -- Larry King, Arsenio Hall and Phil Donahue -- Overby reported.

"This points to a grim reality that people are relying more on non-traditional sources for their information," Overby said.

"I believe the same thing is happening within the religious media in

general and within some Baptist media in particular," he continued.

This has happened as Baptist newspapers have failed to write articles for laypeople and instead targeted themselves "almost exclusively for Baptist preachers, denominationalists and church staffs," he charged.

"The failure to communicate broadly and clearly for average Baptists represents a crisis in Baptist life," he insisted. "The failure threatens the future of an enlightened and involved Baptist citizenry. The narrow niche of some Baptist media has allowed other people and other media to define some of the most important issues facing Baptists today."

Consequently, most Baptists are uninformed and operate under the maxim, "No news is good news," Overby said.

"Some Baptist media find themselves reporting little or nothing about this historical juncture in Baptist life," he noted. "Some other Baptist media are locked into reporting minute, "Inside Baseball" details that numb the average Baptist mind.

"Beyond the controversy within the Southern Baptist Convention, the Baptist media, for the most part, have missed the opportunity to help Baptist laypeople sort out the highly charged 1992 campaign about 'family values.'"

Because they are irrelevant, even well-intentioned Baptist newspapers fail to have the impact they could have, he added.

"Despite the crisis in the general media and the religious media, I am optimistic about the future," Overby said. "The crisis within the general media can be the opportunity for religious media and Baptist media. As general-interest readers are turning away from mainstream newspapers and TV, they are looking for specialized media to help them sort out their lives."

ABP now has the opportunity to "help these disenchanting readers and viewers," he noted. "We can assist Baptist media in connecting with their audiences. We can create a vision that extends beyond denominational politics and news briefs.

"That may mean embracing media vehicles that encourage more direct access with laypeople. That may mean coming out of our offices and even out of our churches to reach people where they are."

It also will mean leading Baptists back to their origins, he added: "No group of people has a history so linked to the grassroots as Baptists. Associated Baptist Press can make sure that we don't drift -- knowingly or unknowingly -- into Baptist elitism. ABP can lead us back to our roots and forward into the 21st century."

-30-

Critics say call for CP support
masks plot to seize Texas convention

By Ken Camp

DALLAS (ABP) -- Professed support for the Cooperative Program by fundamental-conservatives in Texas masks their scheme to seize control of the Baptist convention in that state, critics charged Oct. 8.

The alleged attempt to take over the Baptist General Convention of Texas was one of many subjects addressed by about a dozen speakers at a press conference in Dallas sponsored by the Nashville-based, laity-led Southern Baptist Denominational Relations Information Inc.

Speakers at the wide-ranging news conference also touched on the role of Woman's Missionary Union, ties between fundamental-conservative Southern

Baptists and secular political movements and the threat of "New Age Fundamentalists."

"The Cooperative Program is a smokescreen being used to mask a takeover plot," said Gracie Hatfield Hilton of Arlington, Texas. She criticized a recent statement signed by about 150 Texas Baptist pastors urging support of the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' unified budget.

The "Common Statement of Convention Support," sent to all Texas Baptist pastors in August, called on leaders of the Texas convention "to maintain the historical and traditional process of funding in the BGCT Cooperative Program budget."

Hilton refuted "the implication that current BGCT leaders do not support the Cooperative Program." She said the announced plan by the Texas Baptist Conservative Fellowship to deny incumbent BGCT president Richard Maples a traditional second term is unprecedented in Texas Baptist life.

Perry Ellis, director of the Conservative Fellowship, declined to talk to Associated Baptist Press.

The Conservative Fellowship and the authors of the "Common Statement" have thrown their support behind Rudy Hernandez, a San Antonio evangelist who is opposing Maples.

First Baptist Church of Bryan, where Maples is pastor, gave 10 percent of its undesignated gifts through the Cooperative Program last year, Hilton said. On the other hand, Village Parkway Baptist Church in San Antonio, where Hernandez is a member, gave nothing through the Cooperative Program last year and less than one percent of its undesignated receipts the previous year, she said.

Texas Baptist laypersons must not allow the Baptist General Convention of Texas to be captured by "New Age Fundamentalist" pastors who position themselves between the laity and God, said John Baugh, a retired corporate executive from Houston who spearheaded the press conference.

Some fundamental-conservative pastors have perverted the gospel and the Christian mission by turning their churches into political action groups, charged Randall Fields, a San Antonio attorney.

"Stop claiming the franchise on God," Fields said, offering a message to secular politicians wanting to co-opt the church. "We're pro-church, we're pro-First Amendment, and we vote."

-30-

Layman says WMU should begin
sending missionaries overseas

DALLAS (ABP) -- Will Woman's Missionary Union begin sending Baptist missionaries and not just supporting them? At least one prominent Baptist layman thinks it should.

"Woman's Missionary Union is the best of all Baptist agencies to send missionaries throughout the world," said John Baugh, a retired corporate executive and Baptist layman from Houston.

Baugh organized an Oct. 8 press conference in Dallas in which he and others outlined perceived threats to the Southern Baptist Convention posed by fundamental-conservatives. The meeting was sponsored by Southern Baptist Denominational Relations Information, Inc., an educational organization founded by Baugh.

Citing his fears that the vast resources of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board will be used to export controversy and "promote fundamentalist

dogma throughout the world," Baugh pointed to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and Woman's Missionary Union as potential vehicles allowing Baptists to do missions.

The Fellowship already sends missionaries overseas. The work of WMU is limited to missions support and education, but a special WMU task force is studying the shape of the organization in the future.

Asked if WMU should become a missionary-sending body, Baugh told ABP, "Who would be better qualified?"

Unlike Southern Baptist agencies, WMU is an auxiliary which elects its own board of directors. Alluding to recent efforts to have WMU surrender to SBC control, Baugh said, "It's time for the 'New Age Fundamentalists' to stop bullying the WMU."

Baugh told ABP he has had no indication from WMU that it would consider such a sweeping proposal as sending missionaries.

"Woman's Missionary Union is at the point of being intimidated to strangulation," he charged. Baugh said he hopes WMU leaders follow the example of European Baptists who refused to be bullied by SBC fundamental-conservatives and "find the courage to just say 'no'" to those who wish to impose their control on the organization.

It is not known if the 17-member WMU task force will propose any changes as drastic as sending missionaries overseas.

"The committee has been hard at work listening and learning," said June Whitlow, WMU associate executive director. "We don't expect any report from that committee before January when the full WMU Executive Board meets. Any speculation about WMU's future before January would be premature."

-30-

-- By Ken Camp and Greg Warner

Poll downplays influence of parents on children

GLENDALE, Calif. (ABP) -- Three-fourths of Americans believe parents have less influence on their children than do schools, government and the media, according to a new survey.

The research, by the Barna Research Group of Glendale, Calif., found Americans concerned about several aspects of child rearing, including a lack of time to do the job right.

Nearly three-fourths of those surveyed agreed with the statement, "To raise children properly, a parent must spend a lot of time with each child every day."

But even more -- 83 percent -- agreed that it is "more important that a parent spend quality time with a child than spend a lot of time with the child."

American adults also are somewhat concerned about the effects of leaving their children in day-care facilities. About one-third of those surveyed agreed with the statement, "Enrolling a child in a good child-care facility can leave long-term negative effects on the child."

However, the Barna data may indicate parents are too harsh on themselves, said at least one family-ministry expert. "Parents need to take their role seriously, but parents need to accept God's grace, even for their role as parents," said John Lepper, director of family ministries for the

Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Lepper said he believes values taught at home still have a greater impact than what children learn elsewhere. "The family system shapes the way in which a child perceives the outside world," he added.

-30-

--By Mark Wingfield

National Affairs Briefing
in the red, asks for help

DALLAS (ABP) -- The National Affairs Briefing in Dallas ended with a deficit of about \$33,000, and organizers of the Religious Right gathering have launched a direct-mail fund-raising appeal to participants.

Although up to 10,000 attended the briefing's no-cost closing rally featuring President George Bush as keynote speaker, fewer than 2,500 paid the \$25 registration fee for the Aug. 21-22 meeting, organized by Ed McAteer of Memphis, Tenn., president of the Religious Roundtable.

In comparison, about 18,000 attended the rally at the 1980 National Affairs Briefing featuring presidential candidate Ronald Reagan.

Receipts for the 1992 meeting totaled about \$150,000, including approximately \$8,000 collected from an offering taken during the briefing, McAteer told ABP.

A letter from Roundtable secretary-treasurer John Beckett sent to all registrants at the briefing revealed organizers' disappointment at the poor response.

"Even though considerable 'up front' contributions from a few people made it possible to launch this conference, we anticipated either a larger registration or larger offerings to enable us to break even," Beckett stated.

Asking registrants to contribute at least an additional \$25, he stated: "We are writing to you because it is not clear where else we can turn to cover this. The Roundtable board members have stepped forward, and some large churches are helping out, but we still need to address this remaining need."

McAteer said he could not recall specifically which churches had contributed to the NAB fund. He insisted the 1980 meeting actually incurred a larger initial deficit than the more recent meeting, but the Roundtable eventually recouped its losses.

The 1992 National Affairs Briefing featured McAteer's pastor, former Southern Baptist Convention president Adrian Rogers of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, and Richard Land, executive director of the SBC Christian Life Commission, along with political pundit Patrick Buchanan, Iran-Contra figure Oliver North and Jerry Falwell, founder of the now-defunct Moral Majority.

The briefing, billed officially as a non-partisan educational event, was followed immediately by the first meeting of "Evangelical Leaders and Laymen for Bush/Quayle '92.

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-- By Ken Camp

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