

June 14, 1959

Anti-Red China Stand  
Upheld in Close Vote

DES MOINES, Ia.--(BP)--The American Baptist Convention here voted 245 to 234 to uphold the U. S. State Department's stand against recognizing Communist China.

The vote came on an amendment offered by O. K. Armstrong of Springfield, Mo., former Republican Congressman.

Armstrong, who at last month's Southern Baptist Convention in Louisville helped spearhead passage of a resolution against obscene literature, introduced the amendment to a resolutions committee report in the following words:

"We the delegates to the American Baptist Convention support the policy of our government in denying diplomatic recognition to Communist China and support the policy of our State Department and the United Nations in refusing to seat the regime of Communist China as a member of the UN."

Discussion of the Red China issue came up at the American Baptist Convention as a result of action last year by the world order study conference of the National Council of Churches, of which the American Convention is a member.

The world order study conference had recommended recognition of the Red regime.

The close vote on the issue totalled only 479 out of 2885 voting delegates registered at the 1959 convention. In all, about 8000 to 10,000 persons attended.

The principal argument of Armstrong and supporters of his amendment centered on what they termed "the need to take a stand in support of our own government."

Lee Westrate of Arlington, Va., a member of the resolutions committee, opposed Armstrong, saying, "This amendment will hamper freedom of inquiry. I don't think there's any doubt that American Baptists support our leaders even as we now pray for them in Geneva."

The committee's unamended resolution called on American Baptist churches to study objectively the matter of recognizing Red China.

Robert Towner, pastor from Madison, Wis., said the action on the amendment "will repudiate the leadership of one of the greatest Baptists we have---Dr. Edwin T. Dahlberg."

Dahlberg, pastor, Delmar Baptist Church, St. Louis, Mo., is president of the National Council of Churches. Delmar Church, dually-aligned with American and Southern Conventions, is called the "northern church with the southern exposure."

-30-

Front Royal Pastor  
Takes Northern Post

FRONT ROYAL, Va. --(BP)--Paul Leonard Stagg, pastor of First Baptist Church here, has been appointed program associate in the division of evangelism, American Baptist Home Mission Societies.

He assumes that office July 15. The appointment was announced at Des Moines, Ia., where the societies met in connection with the 1959 session of the American Baptist Convention.

Stagg has been pastor of the Front Royal church since 1947. He and 12 other ministers in Front Royal drew up a statement last year opposing a request to use their churches for segregated private schools.

The congregation, however, voted nearly 2-1 to repudiate this statement, and segregated private schools were opened in three Front Royal churches, including First Baptist.

-more-

In presenting Stagg for appointment, Jitsuo Morikawa, director of the division of evangelism, said: "Stagg has proven himself to be a responsible minister of Jesus Christ, when in the crucially-critical issue of the problem of public school desegregation in Front Royal, Va., he took a forthright and unmistakable Christian stand. To be a real evangelist, a man must witness faithfully to the radical implications of the Christian gospel in whatever context he is."

Stagg's new position will involve the continued creation and administration of a program of evangelism for the churches of the American Baptist Convention.

In a letter to W. B. Carter, chairman of the church's deacons, Stagg said, "In view of my desire to keep the church from being divided, and in view of the difficulty of doing creative work in such an atmosphere, but from no sense of fear, I feel the time has come for me to resign my pastorate. I hope my past witness will not be lost, and may help others in similar situations. I regard my new position as a very challenging and exciting mission and look forward to it greatly."

Born and reared in Louisiana, where he graduated from Louisiana College, Pineville, Stagg has been associated with both the American and the Southern Baptist Conventions.

After graduating from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., in 1939, he was pastor of the Montgomery, W. Va., (American) Baptist Church, until 1942. He then became a chaplain with the Air Force, 1942-46, also under the American Baptist Convention. Following intensive graduate study at Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary, New York City, he took the pastorate of the Front Royal (Southern Baptist) church.

-30-

Gezork, Tuller Lead  
American Convention

DES MOINES, Ia.--(BP)--A seminary president has been elected president of the American Baptist Convention, and the Convention has also elected a new general secretary.

Herbert J. Gezork, president of Andover-Newton Theological School, Newton Centre, Mass., succeeds Mrs. Maurice B. Hodge of Portland, Ore., as president of the Convention. Elections took place at the annual session here.

The new general secretary, top full-time executive staff officer for the Convention, is Edwin H. Tuller of New York City. Tuller has been serving the Convention as associate general secretary and general director of the council on missionary co-operation.

Tuller succeeds Reuben E. Nelson, New York City, who did not seek re-election.

Gezork is a native of Germany, who left that country in 1936 when the Hitler regime was coming to power. He became a United States citizen in 1943. He previously was vice-president of the American Convention.

The new president has been head of the theological school since 1950. From 1939-1950, he was professor of social ethics at the seminary.

He was a fraternal messenger to the 1955 session of Southern Baptist Convention at Miami, Fla.

The American Convention presented Nelson with a bronze plaque at a special service in recognition of his leadership. He was the Convention's first general secretary, taking the post in 1950, when it was established.

-30-

American Baptists Ask  
For Minister Immunity

DES MOINES, Ia.--(BP)--Delegates to the American Baptist Convention's 1959 session here adopted a resolution calling for ministerial immunity privileges in the nation's courts.

Ministers, the delegates said, should be protected by law from having to reveal

-more-

confidences told them in their positions as pastoral counselors.

The resolution had been endorsed earlier by the General Council, leading administrative organization of the Convention.

Statutes providing ministerial immunity--also referred to as privileged communication--are in effect in Minnesota and Iowa, the General Council reported.

The Tennessee state legislature adopted a law granting ministerial immunity in state courts this year, and Florida, South Carolina, and North Carolina legislatures, among others, have had it under consideration.

The American Convention declared that Roman Catholic priests are now largely protected from revealing information told them in confessional; this resolution asks that states extend the same privileges to Protestant ministers.

The resolution also declared that it is already a principle that American Baptist ministers who receive confidential information in the course of spiritual counseling are "not morally obliged to disclose it without the consent of the other party," regardless of the existence of protective statutes.

The resolution calls on Baptists, working cooperatively with other denominations, to initiate and support measures "to enact state and federal statutes which should be based on the principle of the protection of the confidante or communicant and should provide that communications thus made should be held privileged unless the privilege is waived by those giving the information."

-30-

#### McDormand Resigns Canada Baptist Post

TORONTO, Canada--(BP)--Thomas B. McDormand, general secretary of the Baptist Federation of Canada, has announced his resignation here effective Sept. 30 to enter the field of college administration.

A leader in the co-operative Baptist Jubilee Advance, McDormand will become executive vice-president of Acadia University at Wolfville, Nova Scotia. The university is sponsored by Maritime Baptist Convention.

McDormand's term as chairman of the inter-convention Baptist Jubilee Advance committee ends in September, after he presides over a meeting of the committee in Washington, D. C. Six North American Baptist groups are participating in the Jubilee.

As executive vice-president, McDormand will be in charge of public relations for Acadia University, and will supervise alumni activity, financial campaigns, and liaison with the denomination. He also expects to give occasional lectures in the university's theological department.

About 1000 students are enrolled at the university.

McDormand is a native of Bear River, Nova Scotia, 80 miles from Wolfville. He received the bachelor of arts degree, magna cum laude, from Acadia in 1929; the bachelor of divinity degree from St. Stephen's College, Edmonton, Alberta, in 1935, and the Th.D. degree from Victoria University here in 1951.

He has been in Baptist denominational work in Toronto for 17 years, serving in three capacities. After editing Sunday school publications for the Baptist Federation of Canada for six years, he was called as general secretary of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec with offices here. He became general secretary of the Baptist Federation of Canada four years ago.

His contacts with Southern Baptists have been through the Baptist Jubilee Advance, the Southern Baptist-Canadian Baptist liaison committee, and through two books published by Broadman Press in Nashville, Tenn.

Broadman Press has published his "Art of Building Worship Services" and will release his newest book, "The Christian Must Have an Answer," in September.

McDormand has also been a member of the executive committee and the relief committee of the Baptist World Alliance.

-30-