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NORTH CAROLINA BAPTISTS
TO REPLACE THREE BSU MEN

GREENSBORO, N.C.--(BP)--The General Board of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina in a special session here March 30, approved a committee's recommendation that three student secretaries in North Carolina be replaced.

Over 750 interested Baptists attended the meeting. The tense fourteen-hour session of the eighty-five-member board (the convention in interim) was climaxed at 12:30 a.m. with the announcement that the trio would be relieved "effective immediately," with several months' salary in lieu of notice. Some thirty-five speakers were heard before the board went into executive session for its final four hours' deliberation.

A majority of the speakers were students whose divergent views showed there was divided opinion among students themselves as to the effectiveness of the BSU program in North Carolina. Nine members of the Chapel Hill Baptist Church which serves the University of North Carolina appeared and their statements revealed a split church brought about largely by the inability of student leaders to work in harmony with church leaders.

The seven-member committee has been at work since last November's state convention when it was named. The incident which touched off the study was the forced cancellation of the appearance of Nels S. F. Ferre, Vanderbilt University theologian, on the student convention program a week before the state convention met here. Committee chairman W. Perry Crouch said Ferre's books indicated that he "does not believe in the virgin birth, the resurrection, the incarnation, the sinlessness of Jesus, or that Jesus was Saviour and Lord."

At the outset, Crouch said, "We have not considered our committee a court. Our study was conducted on an adult level. There was no quarrel with the students at any time. We were not trying to control the thinking of our students, save as a coach would influence them."

Another committee member, Ralph A. Herring, Winston-Salem, said his impression after querying 117 pastors was that they were disturbed over the BSU, "feeling it was swinging too far away from the main stream of Baptist conviction."

Besides Chairman Crouch, the committee named by President Douglas Branch was composed of John Lawrence, pastor, Shelby; Henry B. Anderson, pastor, Durham; Boyce Brooks, pastor, Albemarle; Ralph A. Herring, pastor, Winston-Salem;

(more)

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Mrs. C. Gordon Maddrey, Ahsokie, state WMU president; and Mrs. W. K. McGee, Winston-Salem.

In preparing its report, the committee obtained information from a number of sources including letters from pastors, laymen, student secretaries, faculty members, and students from college centers; programs of state BSU conventions and retreats as to emphasis and personnel for the last seven years; a survey of reaction of a cross-section of pastors in the state, in addition to numerous personal interviews with student secretaries, students, pastors, and laymen . A comparative study of Baptist student programs in other states was also made.

The three men are James W. Ray, state secretary for the past seven years; J. C. Herrin, secretary at the University of North Carolina for eight years; and Max Wicker, secretary at Duke University for the past year.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR EDITORS

(Not for publication as a BAPTIST PRESS story)

SPECIAL NOTE: Following are the names of the three men to be replaced and the committee's comment concerning them. Use this material on your own responsibility.

Briefly, this is the committee's report concerning the three men and their answers.

RAY: "Our study convinces us that the student department has been moving away from a close relationship with other departments of our state and Convention-wide Baptist work. There seems to be a growing tendency on the part of the student department to operate independently of the other phases of Baptist work. We believe Mr. Ray has been unwise in not checking more thoroughly the personnel of his department. We believe he has been unwise in the use of a small group of individuals with a particular point of view to the exclusion of a more representative group."

In reply, Ray exhibited a long list of factual information designed to prove not only that the BSU is progressing in the state, but in participating in the Convention-wide activities on an expanding basis. "If I have known my heart, I do not have and have not had any sustained attitude of resentment, hostility, or conflict with any of my associates in the Convention." Referring to the cancellation of Ferre's appearance, he said that he accepted the decision of his superior (M. A. Huggins) but did not agree with him.

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HERRIN: "Records reveal that there has been constant friction between Secretary Herrin and many of the leaders in the Chapel Hill church. This friction has continued until it is described by some leaders as "intolerable." Attempts to mediate these differences by convention leaders have failed."

The University of North Carolina student leader exhibited general board minutes of June, 1950, showing that the program was growing under his direction, but Charles P. Burchette, Jr., who was chairman of that special committee, took the floor to say that the study was confined to only one incident that had been brought to the board's attention.

WICKER: The committee's information concerning him said, "He seemed uncertain about entering the ministry and also whether he would be a Methodist or Baptist. The ordaining council postponed his ordination in November, 1952, because he was uncertain about so many major Baptist principles. He also indicated an unbelief in the virgin birth of Jesus. He stated to the committee that there was no such thing as Baptist doctrine, but later retracted this statement." He was later ordained.

In his appearance before the board, Wicker demonstrated further uncertainty and confusion about his belief. He said, "I do not deny the virgin birth neither do I affirm it. My mind is open in the matter." Replying to other items in the committee's report, he said he considered the Christian ministry so important that he was unwilling to enter it lightly. "I was offered Methodist churches, but decided to stay in the Baptist denomination because I felt that the freedom which I love was basic in Baptist practice." He listed a number of beliefs concerning his interpretation of the scriptures.