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Senator Vows To Reopen
School Prayer Issue

REGIONAL OFFICES

ATLANTA Walker L. Knight, Editor/161 Spring Street, N.W./Atlanta, Georgia 30303/Telephone (404) 523-2593
DALLAS R. T. McCartney, Editor/103 Baptist Building/Dallas, Texas 75201/Telephone (214) RI 1-1996
WASHINGTON W. Barry Garrett, Editor/200 Maryland Ave., N.E./Washington, D.C. 20002/Telephone (202) 544-4226

WASHINGTON (BP)--Senate minority leader, Sen. Everett M. Dirksen (R., Ill.) has announced he will lead a move in the United States Senate to reverse the Supreme Court's decisions on prayer in public schools.

His announcement was made in speeches here before the National Limestone Institute and the Washington Chapter of Sigma Delta Chi, a professional journalism fraternity.

In response to questioning by newsmen Dirksen refused to reveal what his specific proposals in the Senate might be.

Efforts in 1964 in the House of Representatives to pass the so-called "Becker Amendment" for religious exercises in public schools failed after five weeks of hearings before the House Judiciary Committee. The majority of the nation's religious leaders who voiced their views at that time opposed any tampering with the First Amendment of the Constitution which forbids an establishment of religion and prohibits government from interfering with the free exercise of religion.

Some Washington observers close to Dirksen report the Senator's "political antenna" is very sensitive and he feels this issue will evoke a great public response. The Republican party in the last presidential campaign included a plank in its platform asking for a prayer amendment to the Constitution.

This move by Sen. Dirksen is the second attack on recent Supreme Court decision he is leading in the Senate. The other is the ruling of the Supreme Court that all citizens in the United States are entitled to equal representation in government. Dirksen is leading the movement to adopt a constitutional amendment to reverse the legislative "reapportionment" decision of the Supreme Court.

In his speech the Senator said, "I'm not going to let nine men say to 190 million people, including children, when and where they can utter their prayers. The high and august court puts thumbs down on prayer."

An initial response to Dirksen was an editorial in the Washington Post. It said: "Of course, the high and august court did no such thing. It protected the freedom of 190 million people, including children, to pray exactly when and how they pleased in their homes and chosen churches by asserting that no governmental authority may prescribe a prayer or other form of worship in any public school."

The hearings before the House Judiciary Committee in 1964 produced three large volumes of findings. It remains to be seen whether a full-scale debate on the floor of the Senate will develop or whether hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee will be held to redo what was done in the House.

In 1963 the Senate Judiciary Committee headed by Sen. James O. Eastland (D., Miss.) announced hearings on the Supreme Court ruling in the New York Regents' Prayer Case. After only one day of testimony by selected witnesses the hearings were abruptly closed and have never been resumed.

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Only One State Snags
On Textbook Program

1-24-66

WASHINGTON (BP)--Plans for the distribution of \$100 million to states for textbooks and library materials for public and private school pupils are well underway, according to Harry L. Phillips, an administrator of the federal program.

The story was developed by Gerald Grant, staff writer for the Washington Post. A Baptist Press call to Phillips confirmed the correctness of the following information. (Later the findings of a more detailed study by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs will be released.)

To date, 42 states have submitted plans for sharing textbooks as provided under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Of these plans, 19 have been fully approved by the U. S. Office of Education.

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Oklahoma has been the only state to refuse to distribute books to Catholic school children. The State Constitution has been interpreted as prohibiting this practice.

As a result the U. S. Office of Education will designate a private agency within the state to allocate about \$50,000 worth of books to 113 private schools in Oklahoma. The cost of administering this program will be deducted from the state's allotment.

Flexibility has been practiced by the states in their efforts to be fair to private school pupils, according to Phillips.

For instance, the law requires that the books used by parochial school pupils must be approved by the public agency. But only about 10 states have interpreted this narrowly, publishing a list from which the parochial schools must choose books.

Virginia has adopted this method, but North Carolina follows a more common pattern.

In North Carolina, the public agency reviews the requests by parochial schools to see that no books are purchased that would be used to teach religion.

The books are allocated to private schools roughly in proportion to their share of the total school population. If 15 per cent of the state's school children are in nonpublic schools, they get approximately 15 per cent of the books. This will vary according to need, however, with poorer schools getting more books.

The law stipulates that public agencies hold title to the books. Plans for making them available to nonpublic (mostly Roman Catholic) schools fall into two major categories, according to Phillips.

Under one plan, books will be stored in central depositories with both public and private agencies borrowing them each semester. Under the other plan, the books will be sent directly to parochial schools on a loan basis, subject to reallocation. The terms of this plan are worked out on the local level.

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Arkansas Church Votes
To Continue SBC Giving

1-24-66

RUSSELVILLE, Ark. (BP)--The First Baptist Church here voted unanimously to continue giving its missions contributions through the Arkansas Baptist State Convention budget plan even though messengers from the church were denied seats at the Arkansas convention last November.

The convention, after lengthy debate, refused to seat the church's messengers because the church accepted members from non-Baptist denominations without re-baptizing them.

Earlier, the Dardanelle-Russellville Baptist Association had withdrawn fellowship from the church because of its policy of receiving new members and observance of the Lord's Supper.

In a business session Jan. 19, the Russellville church decided unanimously to continue sending 15 per cent of its annual \$74,000 budget to support state and Southern Baptist Convention causes through the Cooperative Program budget plan.

One day following the church's action, Pastor Charles B. Thompson presented a check for \$4,449 to the Arkansas convention in payment of the Cooperative Program budget percentage accumulated since the convention vote in November.

The church had decided to hold its normal missions contributions in escrow until making a decision on how it would handle missions gifts in the future.

There was no discussion or debate on the vote to continue the church's 15 per cent budget allocation to the Cooperative Program missions budget plan.

During December, a business session was held to discuss the situation, but action was postponed until its regular January business session.

During the discussions in December, most of the members agreed that the Baptist Cooperative Program budget plan is the best means of working together with other Baptists in the cause of world missions, reported Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine Editor Erwin L. McDonald who attended the meeting.

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"While there was no doubt that the members who spoke felt the convention erred gravely in its action against seating the Russellville messengers, all seemed to agree that any action of retaliation from the church against the convention would be less Christian," said McDonald in an editorial following the church's action. The editorial praised the church for its "Christian spirit" in the deliberations.

During the same business session, the church also voted to serve as host church for the 1966 state Baptist Student Union Convention.

A committee appointed by the Arkansas Baptist State Convention has been instructed to make an investigation of practices in the church and report back to the convention next November.

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Baptist PR Workers
Discuss Problem Areas

1-24-66

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Members of the Baptist Public Relations Association meeting here grappled with the public relations problems of their denomination, agencies, and institutions and got advice on how to improve.

During sessions at the Continental Hotel and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, The Baptist public relations specialists from throughout the nation heard panel discussions, major addresses, and participated in workshop sessions during a three-day meeting.

The executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Arthur B. Rutledge of Atlanta, outlined what he considered to be three major public relations problems facing Southern Baptists.

Rutledge, speaking during a symposium for Baptist executives, said the denomination faces major public relations problems because of the convention's "Southern" name, its reputation in race relations, and its relations with other denominations.

Rutledge said that the term "Southern" Baptist is not descriptive of the nationwide denomination with churches and missions work in all 50 states. He said there is some prejudice against the South in Northern states, and because the South has a bad image, it reflects on the denomination because it bears the name "Southern."

He urged the public relations men to use their creativity to think of a descriptive, national name instead of Southern Baptist Convention.

Rutledge said as far as the public press is concerned, Southern Baptists are generally tagged as "racists," because of the denomination's "limited involvement" in really trying to find answers to the problem of race relations. He urged the public relations workers to tell the positive stories of what Southern Baptists are doing in the area of race relations.

"Realistically we must admit we have problems in this area, and that we have a long way to go," Rutledge said. "But we must also admit we haven't done very well at letting people know we are trying."

Rutledge said another major public relations problem is the Baptist image of "isolationism" in relations with other religious denominations.

He urged Baptists to "put an end to acting as if what we are doing is the only thing being done in the name of Christianity," and to "welcome and seek opportunities for dialogue and fellowship with those of other faiths."

He said he did not at all personally favor Southern Baptist membership in the National Council of Churches, but "am convinced there are some things we can learn and things we can contribute" by having dialogue and fellowship with other denominations.

In the opening speech for the twelfth annual workshop, a former St. Louis newspaper editor and public relations man said most people in St. Louis think of Baptists' opposition to liquor lounges in the St. Louis airport when the name "Baptist" is mentioned.

Dan Forrestal suggested a long-range planned public relations program to improve the Baptist image, and urged the public relations men to be more creative in their future programs.

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During a banquet address, the executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, James L. Sullivan, urged the public relations specialists to be diligent in the "stewardship of words", for the words they use can help or hurt the denomination.

During two devotional messages, Richard Dayringer of Baptist Memorial Hospital in Kansas City and David O. Moore of William Jewell College, Liberty, Mo., agreed that popularity is not the function of public relations, and that Baptist public relations specialists must maintain honesty and integrity even if it hurts.

During the closing session, a resolution was adopted by the association pledging "to be more diligent in the stewardship of words; . . .to be more creative in communicating the message of Christianity; . . .to reflect our denomination as it really is with honesty, integrity and truth. . .and to improve and elevate the professional quality of our performance and work during the forthcoming year."

The meeting closed with addresses by Doug Dillard, church public relations specialist from Dallas, and creator of the Ministry of Ideas; and by Lloyd Wright, former Texas Baptist public relations director who is now director of press and publications for the U. S. Information Agency, Washington.

Dillard urged the denominational public relations specialists to give Southern Baptist churches and local workers more public relations help in doing locally what they seek to do nationally and state-wide.

Wright outlined the government's problems in communicating its stand on Viet Nam, saying that communications depends on the understanding the audience has of the meanings of words used.

"We find it extremely difficult to communicate in Viet Nam," Wright said. "That's because we don't think like the Vietnamese. We don't experience things the same way, and our individual reactions are therefore different."

Wright urged Baptists to communicate their message with the outside world by using terms and words that a secular audience will understand.