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Plans Made For BEST
National Conference

602

NASHVILLE (BP)--Plans for a nation-wide study conference as part of the two-year Baptist Education Study Task (BEST) have been approved by the BEST steering committee.

The National Study Conference, an invitational-type meeting for a cross section of Baptists interested in education, will be held here June 13-16.

About 350 Baptist college administrators, faculty members, students, Baptist pastors, and laymen representing a wide cross-section of the denomination are expected to attend.

Most of the sessions will be devoted to 22 small study groups of about 15 persons each. The small groups will seek to come to grips with the complex problems currently facing Christian higher education.

Topics for the study groups include: Financing Christian Higher Education, College-Denominational Relationships; Academic Freedom and Responsibility; Religious Scope, Academic Scope, the Christian College Teacher, and Preface to a Philosophy.

Four major speakers will address plenary sessions of the conference in addition to the small group study.

Felix C. Robb, president of George Peabody College in Nashville and president-elect of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, will deliver the opening major address.

Other major addresses will be brought by Manning Patillo of the Danforth Foundation in St. Louis; and Sharvey Umbeck, president of Knox College, Galesburg, Ill.

Summary, closing address will be delivered by Duke K. McCall, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

The Southern Association of Baptist Colleges and Schools, composed of the presidents and deans of Baptist educational institutions, will meet in Nashville during the National Study Conference in a joint session with the Education Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The National Study Conference is a follow-up to 24 different regional seminars conducted throughout the nation as part of the two-year BEST program.

The 24 seminars, composed of 20 persons each, met three times in January, February, and March in an effort to grapple with the problems facing Christian higher education. The seminars sought to define the issues and get grass-roots Baptist opinion about the denomination's education efforts.

At the national meeting, the findings and summaries of the 24 regional conferences will be outlined, and the conference will seek to determine priority issues as defined by the regional groups.

During the group meetings, an effort will be made to identify the causes of the top priority issues. In the light of the causes, the National Study Conference will seek to determine optional solutions.

There will be no effort to dictate final conclusions and recommendations, however, said Rabun L. Brantley, executive secretary of the SBC Education Commission and general chairman of BEST.

Following the national conference, wide distribution of the findings and preliminary optional solutions will be made in preparation for another series of 24 regional conferences in January, February and March of 1967, and a Second National Study Conference, June 12-15, in 1967.

April 28, 1966

-2-

Baptist Press

Reactions from the information distributed following the first National Study Conference this year, and from the regional seminars, will be fed into the Second National Conference, which will seek to come up with specific recommendations.

A findings committee headed by Herschel H. Hobbs, former SBC president and pastor of the First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, Okla., will digest and summarize the actions of the Second National Study Conference in June of 1967 with a final report on recommendations.

Invited to attend the National Study Conference are the presidents, deans, business managers, trustee representatives, and student body representatives from each of the 54 Baptist colleges in the nation. A cross-section of Baptist pastors, laymen, and denominational leaders has also been invited.

Brantley said it was necessary to limit attendance to the National Conferences to those who had been invited because the sheer logistics of trying to accommodate more people in the 22 small study groups make a larger group impossible.

-30-

Photo being mailed to state Baptist papers

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Church-State Problems
Loom In Education Act

4-28-66

630

WASHINGTON(BP)---Civil liberties and church-related agencies challenged the church-state practices in the administration of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 at hearings before House and Senate committees here.

The education act is up for legislative review, amendment and extension at this session of Congress. The Johnson administration is asking for a four-year extension, but several groups are asking for only one or two-year extension while the church-state wrinkles are being ironed out.

The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs did not testify before either the House or Senate hearings, but instead submitted written surveys and analyses for the study of Congressional staffs.

During the entire course of the hearings very little, if any, opposition to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was heard. All of the attention was focused on amendments and on enlarging the Aid for the Educational Development of the nation's children.

The education act is based on the "child benefit theory," that is, public aid to children may meet Constitutional tests while aid to parochial schools may not.

It is because the Office of Education in administering the act has not carefully regarded the limitations imposed by the "child benefit theory" that the church-state problems have arisen, according to those who have expressed their objections.

Among those who have balked at the administrative regulations affecting church schools have been the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, the National Council of Churches, the American Jewish Committee, the American Civil Liberties Union, and Americans United.

The main burden of the testimony of these groups is that Congress should insist that the Office of Education administer the act in strict compliance with the legislative intent expressed when the bill was enacted into law.

Roman Catholic authorities representing the Department of Education of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC) and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Vermont expressed appreciation for the education act. They plead for further programs of cooperation between the public and private schools.

Mgr. James C. Donohue, director of the department of education for the NCWC, testified at the Senate hearing. "If I were to point to the single most important and far-reaching achievement of the act to date, it would be the rapport developing between public and private school educators," he said.

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The Elementary and Secondary Education Act has been in force for too short a period for all of the objecting groups adequately to document their contentions. However, the Baptist Joint Committee, the National Council of Churches and the American Civil Liberties Union are conducting various types of surveys across the country to discover the facts.

Due to the absence of documentation and due to the continued possibility of change in the administrative regulations, most of the objecting groups have contended for only a one-year extension of the act instead of four years. They fear that if the regulations as they now stand are continued for four years, it will then be too late to effect adequate changes.

Specifically the points of difficulty are: (1) the manner in which textbooks and teaching aids are made available to pupils and teachers in parochial schools; (2) building up the library resources for institutions instead of providing aids to pupils; (3) and the types and manner of providing special services to needy pupils in private schools.

Spokesmen for the Office of Education have contended that the act cannot be administered in accordance with the wishes of those who want strict adherence to the understandings reached during the legislative process while the act was in the making.

The leaders for closer adherence to the legislative intent of the act are beginning to say that if the act cannot be administered along clean church-state lines they have no choice but to inform their constituencies of this fact and to lead opposition to a continuation of the provisions that affect church-state relations.

Now that the hearings have closed, there will be a period of 'closed door' consultations with Congress and with administration leaders. The objectionable features may or may not be ironed out during this period of internal debate.

-30-

Annuity Board Resumes
"Years Ahead" Publication

4-28-66

238

DALLAS (BP)--The Southern Baptist Annuity Board has resumed publication of "The Years Ahead" in a brand new format after a 30-month absence from the Baptist scene.

The publication, now in a newsletter format, was resumed because of demand from ministers and lay employees who wanted more detailed information about the protection plan, according to John D. Boskas, editor.

Boskas said the newsletter will carry information which would be helpful to the 39,000 Southern Baptist ministers and denominational employees who hold plans with the board.

Such information would not be of sufficient interest to all readers to ask a state paper or some other publication to print, he said.

In an editorial, Boskas gave two reasons why the Annuity Board did not continue the original publication which was a magazine format. He said that publication had been instrumental in showing thousands of persons the value of the protection program.

"It had done its job well as a promotional magazine and it was time to retire," he said. "To continue "The Years Ahead" as an informational journal on retirement, geriatrics, aging, etc., would have required a larger staff and additional funds to do the proper kind of research."

A second reason, Boskas gave, was that numerous state papers and convention publications had opened their pages to help tell the Annuity Board story.

"It seemed inappropriate to duplicate this excellent exposure," Boskas said.

The newsletter is part of the development division's program and will be published twice this year. It is expected to be published quarterly in 1967. The old magazine was published bi-monthly, Boskas said.

-30-