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January 13, 1967

NEWS ANALYSIS

Congress To Face Many
Church-Interest Issues

644

By W. Barry Garrett

WASHINGTON (BP)--The rapid-fire developments of the first week of the 90th Congress of the United States forecasts many stormy battles on issues of concern to church people.

Both the House of Representatives and the Senate opened with prayers led by their chaplains. The House members said in unison the Lord's Prayer before they plunged headlong into the bloody fight over the seating of Congressman Adam C. Powell (D., N.Y.), who is also pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church of Harlem.

No list of charges was made against Powell as the House overwhelmingly denied him his seat until a select committee of nine Congressmen conducts his "trial" and makes a report within five weeks after their appointment by the Speaker of the House, Rep. John W. McCormack (D., Mass.).

Also pending in the Senate is an investigation of Sen. Thomas J. Dodd (D., Conn.) for alleged unethical conduct in public office. Months are expected to intervene before the Dodd investigation is completed. It was begun in the 89th Congress.

The focal point of these issues seems to be the misuse of public funds by members of Congress for private purposes.

The problem of ethical conduct by members of Congress will thus come into sharp focus during the 90th Congress.

In the Senate the constitutional prayer amendment issue was again put in the hopper by Sen. Everett McKinley Dirksen (R., Ill.) who led an unsuccessful fight last year for prayers in public schools. The 1967 version of his proposal is a considerable modification of his 1966 resolution.

Sen. Sam J. Erwin, Jr., (D., N.C.) also has reintroduced his bill for "judicial review" of the constitutionality of certain measures involving government aids through religious agencies.

Erwin's bill passed the Senate last year with little difficulty, but snagged in the House where Rep. Emanuel Celler (D., N.Y.) chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, is known to be strongly opposed to it.

Earlier Sen. Mike Mansfield (D., Mont.), majority leader in the Senate, announced that the 90th Congress would have as one of its major tasks to review much of the social legislation enacted by recent Congresses.

This does not mean that it will be repealed but that it will be re-evaluated and adjusted according to the mood of the country, the effectiveness of the ways it is being administered and the needs that are being met.

President Lyndon B. Johnson's State of the Union message also indicated some of the issues ahead. Church leaders and groups throughout the country are taking varying stands on the Vietnam War. The activities of religious groups in relation to the war may pose a new church-state problem to the nation.

The president's recommendations about continued public aid for population control and family planning projects is certain to raise important religious liberty issues from some quarters.

Some of the issues that will occupy the attention of church groups are: the implementation of the model cities programs, the expansion of housing programs, the care of the sick and aging;

17

The education of the underprivileged, reconsideration of third-class postal rates, the problems of privacy involved in wiretapping and electronic eavesdropping, crime and rioting, civil rights;

Demands for elimination of capital punishment in federal offenses, adjustments in tax policies and in Social Security benefits, and anti-filibuster rule in the Senate, and reworking the military draft law.

Problems involving air and water pollution, transportation, urban development and international relations will involve church-state concerns in ways that heretofore may not have been considered to be church-interest issues by some groups.

Many church agencies will be affected directly and indirectly by these and other issues that will arise.

In short, federal, state and local attempts to solve the problems of modern society will increasingly attract church concern by all religious groups. Involvement in the public life of the nation is now an issue that can no longer be avoided by churches and church agencies.

-30-

W. Barry Garrett is Washington Regional Editor of the Baptist Press, news service of the SBC, and is director of information for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

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18 New Student Worker Named
By Sunday School Board

1/13/67 166

NASHVILLE (BP)--S. L. Harris, a native of Texas, has been named a consultant in the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's student department here.

Harris will specialize in organization and leadership in student work in a key position in the department's administration section, said David K. Alexander, secretary of the student department.

Since 1965 Harris has served as dean of students at Wayland Baptist College, Plainview, Tex.

Previously, he was director of the Baptist Student Union and Bible teacher at Texas Technological College in Lubbock, Tex., and at Sam Houston State Teachers College in Huntsville, Tex.

Harris has served as pastor of Decker Branch Baptist Church and Woodlawn Baptist Church in Austin, Tex., and at First Baptist Church in Joshua, Tex.

He received a bachelor of arts degree from Howard Payne College (Baptist) in Brownwood, Tex., a master of arts degree from Sam Houston State Teachers College in Huntsville, and a bachelor of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

Harris is a native of Miles, Tex.

-30-

19 Summers To Lecture
At Southwestern

1/13/67 98

FORT WORTH (BP)--Ray Summers, chairman of the religion department at Baylor University, Waco, Tex., will deliver the 1967 Day-Higginbotham Lectures at the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Feb. 14-17.

The general theme for his messages is "Current Areas of Gospel Study."

Summers, who holds the master and doctor of theology degrees from Southwestern Seminary, also served as professor of New Testament and Evangelism here, and was director of the school of theology from 1949 to 1952.

In 1959 he became professor of New Testament at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., and served there until he assumed his current duties at Baylor in 1964.

-30-

18-19

Dirksen's New Amendment
Backs Into New Problems

644

20

By W. Barry Garrett

WASHINGTON (BP)--Senator Everett McKinley Dirksen (R., Ill.) has offered a much revised Constitutional "Prayer Amendment" to the 90th Congress in which he backs away from some of the basic concepts of his 1966 proposal.

Last year the Senator pushed for an amendment that would "provide for" and "permit" voluntary recitation of prayers by students and other public buildings. It would have been a grant of a measure of religious powers to public authorities.

The new revised version of the Dirksen Amendment says:

"Nothing in this Constitution shall abridge the right of persons lawfully assembled, in any public building which is supported in whole or in part through the expenditure of public funds, to participate in non-denominational prayer."

Dirksen asked for and was granted the privilege of having his proposal called "Senate Joint Resolution No. 1." It will be held at the desk of the Senate clerk until February 1 for the signature of any Senator who wishes to be a co-sponsor.

The 1966 version of the Dirksen Amendment, which was rejected by the Senate, reads as follows:

"Nothing contained in this constitution shall prohibit the authority administering any school, school system, educational institution or other public building supported in whole or in part through the expenditure of public funds from providing for or permitting the voluntary participation by students or others in prayer. Nothing contained in this article shall authorize any such authority to prescribe the form or content of any prayer."

The new language of the 1967 revised version seems to back away from some of the difficulties of last year's proposal. Has Sen. Dirksen now backed into a new set of troubles?

Many questions are apparent on the surface of the new proposal.

1. Do persons have to be "lawfully assembled" in order to pray while in a public building? If so, what does "lawful assembly" mean? Does it mean an assemblage gathered by the law and therefore a "captive audience"? If a "captive audience" is to be a "prayer meeting" who is to lead it?

2. Does the new draft mean that "ecumenical prayer" is approved for lawful assemblies but denominational ways of praying are forbidden? How about personal prayers that express personal needs. Who is to decide which prayers are approved and which are disapproved?

3. If lawful assembly simply means using the rights now guaranteed by the First Amendment, is the new language an open door to "pray in" lobby sessions in Congress or in other public places? How long may such "prayer meetings" last?

The First Amendment, that has been so basic for the protection of the rights of the people, says:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceable to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

Many constitutional authorities hold that the whole Bill of Rights (the first 10 amendments to the Constitution) should be considered unamendable.

The Southern Baptist Convention, the American Baptist Convention and the General Conference of North American Baptists have repeatedly affirmed support for the adequacy of the present wording of the First Amendment.

The Southern Baptist Convention resolution, which is similar to the other two, says in part:

"We, the messengers of the convention hereby affirm our support for the concepts and the vocabulary of the First Amendment, including both its prohibition upon government roles in religious programs and its protection of free exercise of religion for the people...."

"We appeal to the Congress of the United States to allow the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States to stand as our guarantee of religious liberty, and we oppose the adoption of any further amendment to that constitution respecting establishment of religion or free exercise thereof."

Judson Inaugurates New
President, Awards Degrees

322

(21) MARION, Ala. (BP)--Judson College inaugurated James H. Edmondson as the 19th president of the Alabama Baptist college for women during formal ceremonies here.

Edmondson's inauguration came a year after his election as president of the college, succeeding Conwell A. Anderson, now president of Averett College (Baptist) in Danville, Va.

Delivering the inaugural address was Charles G. Dobbins of Washington, D. C., executive secretary of the American Council on Education and a former newspaper publisher and editor in Montgomery, Ala.

During a special convocation preceding the inauguration, Judson conferred honorary doctoral degrees on Dobbins and three other Alabamians, including the president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, Herman Cobb of Gadsden, Ala.

Also receiving the degrees were Winton Malcolm Blount, president and chairman of the board of Blount Brothers Corp., Montgomery, Ala.; and Col. Paul Bainbridge Robinson, president of Marion Insittute, Marion, Ala.

Cobb, president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, is pastor of the Twelfth Street Baptist Church, Gadsden and former pastor of Baptist churches in Blountsville, Pratt City and Fairfield, Ala., and Elizabethton, Tenn.

Edmondson was vice president of the Birmingham Exchange Security Bank before assuming the Judson presidency on Jan. 14, 1966. He previously had been for five years executive vice president of the Alabama Association of Independent Colleges.

He was administrative vice president of Ouachita University (Baptist) in Arkadelphia, Ark., for six years, and chairman of Ouachita's division of business administration for four years. He also has been public relations director at Belmont College, a Baptist school in Nashville, Tenn.

The 42-year-old president is a graduate of Jacksonville State College, Jacksonville, Ala.; George Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville; and Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind., where he earned the doctor of education degree.