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Solon Hits 'Subsidized' Church Postal Rates

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WASHINGTON (BP)--Postal subsidies for churches and other nonprofit organizations came under heavy attack in the U. S. House of Representatives here.

"Sympathy for a worthy cause is a good old American trait, but it has gone hogwild in the setting of ridiculously low postal rates for churches, charities and other nonprofit organizations," declared Rep. Ken Hechler (D., W. Va.).

In a 15-minute speech on the House floor, the congressman appealed for an increase in both commercial and nonprofit postal rates. He said that the annual deficit for such mail now exceeds \$200 million.

Hechler quoted favorably a 1965 statement by the advisory panel on postal rates. The panel at that time questioned the intermingling of subsidies to nonprofit organizations with postal rates.

"If there is merit in these subsidies, they should be identified and included as direct payments from the budgets of the federal agencies charged with overseeing public welfare activities," the panel said.

The congressman reported the kinds of criticisms he gets when he asks for "a more rational approach to postal rates." He said he is besieged with arguments like this:

"Would you penalize your poor country churches, struggling to mail out their weekly church bulletins? How can the little church in the wildwood possibly survive if its fund drive is crippled by higher postal rates? Would you slap the crippled children in the face?"

On the other hand, Hechler said that there is a rising protest by taxpayers who feel that they are "taxed to subsidize someone else's religion."

He said that subsidized postal rates for nonprofit organizations means "that the general taxpayer is forced to pay to make up the postal deficit caused by causes in which he may not believe."

Hechler pointed out that in the past 39 years, the bulk rate for nonprofit organizations has gone up only 1/4 of a cent to 1 1/4 cents, while first-class rates in the same period have risen from 2 cents to 5 cents.

This means, he said, that first-class mail rates have risen 150 per cent while third-class nonprofit rates have risen only 25 per cent.

Further, he pointed out that in 1952 nonprofit organizations accounted for only eight per cent of third-class bulk rate mail, while now it is 17 per cent. In the same period the amount of mail in this class has risen 250 per cent from 800 million pieces to nearly 2.9 billion pieces, he said.

Hechler has introduced a bill in the House of Representatives to provide for a bulk rate of 2 1/2 cents a piece for nonprofit organizations and 4 1/2 cents a piece for commercial bulk mailings.

He cited the Postal Policy Act of 1958 that provides that nonprofit rates should be 50 per cent of the commercial rates. However, he said that in the postal rate rise in 1962 this scale was not followed and that third-class bulk rates were frozen at 1 1/4 cents.

He expressed the hope that when the postal rate bill is considered the Congress would raise the rates for both commercial and nonprofit mailings.

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New Appeal Made For
National UNICEF Day

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WASHINGTON (BP)--A new appeal has been made to Congress to authorize and request the president annually to designate Halloween as national UNICEF day.

A leading member of the House of Representatives, Congresswoman Edith Green (D., Ore.) has urged action on the legislation now pending in the Judiciary Committees of both houses of Congress.

Mrs. Green said that because Halloween is the holiday most dedicated to children, it is "most fitting" that this ancient festival be devoted to the children of the world in another way.

UNICEF is the United Nations Childrens Emergency Relief Fund. Since it was established 20 years ago, it has given assistance to disadvantaged children in 130 countries.

In a message to the House, Mrs. Green reminded the members that three-quarters of the world's one billion children live in economically underdeveloped countries.

UNICEF works with these children in the fields of health services, family and child welfare, disease control, nutrition, education and vocational guidance.

Mrs. Green pointed out to the House that even though UNICEF is best known in this country because of recent Halloween practices for children to trick-or-treat for contributions to UNICEF rather than for the traditional sweets, around the world it is the "difference between hope and despair."

In 1965 UNICEF was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, which honors the individual or institution "who has worked most or best for brotherhood amongst the nations."

Sen. Philip A. Hart (D., Mich.) is chief sponsor of a similar measure in the Senate.

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Baptist Editor Attacks
New Ecumenical Plan

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WASHINGTON (BP)--A Baptist editor here has strongly objected to a proposed new conservative evangelical ecumenical organization.

James O. Duncan, in an editorial in the Capital Baptist, District of Columbia Baptist Convention publication, urges for the idea, "Let it die now, quietly."

The conservative evangelical ecumenical move is spearheaded by Christianity Today, an independent nondenominational publication edited by Carl F. H. Henry.

At the Miami Beach meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention a motion was made by Alastair C. Walker, pastor from Griffin, Ga., that the president appoint a study committee to discuss areas of cooperation with other evangelical groups. The matter was referred to the Executive Committee of the convention.

Earlier at the Pastors' Conference, Jess Moody, pastor of the First Baptist Church, West Palm Beach, Fla., appealed for Southern Baptist participation in "evangelical ecumenicalism" in cooperation with those "who have nothing to do with liberal Christianity or the present ecumenical movement."

The Duncan editorial said, "It does not seem wise for all 'conservatives' or all 'liberals' to be encouraged to gather in their own individual groups... The worst thing that could happen to Protestantism is for it to be divided along theological lines, conservatives and liberals, rather than each denomination having both viewpoints represented in their own ranks."

"What the proposal seems to do is put the conservative evangelicals into one camp over against the National Council of Churches," Duncan said.

"In fact," he continued, "in one issue of Christianity Today they even have this diagram and even estimate that in the 'new evangelical formation' 13,000,000 conservatives would come from the National Council of Churches."

"This is sheep stealing in a big way," he charged.

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In his study of the new proposed evangelical ecumenical organization Duncan said: "We find that there are no new reasons given for the proposed togetherness of conservative evangelicals than were given for the formation of the National Council of Churches."

He observed that "most conservative evangelicals objected to these reasons for forming the council and now are expected to accept them for forming a different group."

The Christianity Today plan envisions a massive 45,000,000 member organization with possible programs of a weekly magazine, an evangelical book program, insurance and pension plans for independents, financial pools for new building construction, and other projects.

The new organization might appeal for "church-by-church identification" rather than membership by denominations as is now done in the conciliar movement, according to an editorial in Christianity Today.

The Baptist editorial attacked this approach to cooperation. "To suggest that this togetherness is to be done in a 'church-by-church' alignment is to place almost absolute authority in the hands of a few," Duncan said.

"Here lies a far greater danger than is present in the National Council of Churches where denominations come together for cooperation," he continued. "At least, in the council a denomination can bring to bear its influence and power, but in a gathering of churches, can you imagine what influence one single church would have in an organization of 45,000,000?" he asked.

Duncan predicted a serious breach in Baptist fellowship if much time is given to the new proposal. "For Southern Baptists to depart from their traditional past of not affiliating with any group other than with their fellow Baptists, would widen the breach between American and Southern Baptists and perhaps the Negro Baptists as well," he said.