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**Root Out White Racism,
Baptist Seminar Told**

WASHINGTON (BP)--Southern Baptists were urged to root out white racism from their churches by three major speakers at a Christian Citizenship Seminar sponsored by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission here.

The admonitions came from a Negro civil rights worker, the staff director for the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, and a War On Poverty official and former Southern Baptist pastor.

William H. Crook, director of Volunteers In Service To America (VISTA), declared that the report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (the Kerner Report) had given the church a second chance to be relevant.

He chided churches for fleeing to the suburbs, but said that as a result of the Kerner Report, it appears that the action is now in the suburbs instead of the inner city.

Crook, a Southern Baptist in East Texas before joining the War On Poverty, contended that racism exists in, and has been encouraged by, the white churches of America.

"Now the church is where the action is, for there is racism in the church," Crook said. "It has a second opportunity to be relevant, if it will deal with its members in rooting out bigotry and racism."

"If we can deal with that question with candor and courage, it will be by far the most effective contribution the church can make," Crook declared. He added, however, that the church will have this opportunity only fleetingly, and it must act boldly, swiftly and courageously.

Earlier, Crook chided the church that had "like a fastidious woman, grabbed her purse, gathered her skirts about her, and fled that scene (the inner city) to the safe suburbs.

"Many churches have sold their real estate at great profit and with the proceeds have built new edifices of irrelevancy in the suburbs," Crook stated. "No amount of rationalization can cleanse us from the guilt of that flight."

He urged the churches, not only to deal with racism in their suburban situations, but also to return to the inner city and follow the example of Jesus Christ in ministering to the poor.

"The church must with guilty heart, determined step, and humbled spirit retrace her steps, because along that same path some time ago in haste to depart reality, she misplaced her soul," Crook concluded.

Another VISTA worker, Miss Dorothy Routh of Atlanta's regional office of VISTA, presented what some conference participants described as a "gripping" and "moving" description of how it feels to be poverty-stricken.

Miss Routh, the daughter of SBC Executive Committee official Porter Routh, described the domestic Peace Corps work among the poor as offering an opportunity for positive action to do something to help these people recover, physically, mentally and spiritually.

"The greatest poverty," she added, "is the spiritual and mental poverty that lets poverty exist. The guilt is on those who do nothing about poverty and condemn those who suffer it. I'd like to see the church more closely involved in the fight against poverty."

Earlier, the executive director of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, David Ginsburg, presented an analysis of the Kerner Report and urged the group to take the first step toward Christian action, which he said must be the "extrication of the roots of racism from our institutions, our laws, and ways of life."

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Negro civil rights leader Bayard Rustin of the A. Philip Randolph Institute in New York City agreed strongly with the finding of the Kerner Report in identifying white racism as a major factor in the riots of 1967.

The former aide to Martin Luther King laid the blame for tensions between blacks and whites to the lack of justice on the part of white people.

"If there is violence, it is because whites teach Negroes that they can't get anywhere without violence," Rustin said.

Violence is inevitable as long as there is injustice in society, for the Old Testament, he said, teaches that where there is justice, social order will prevail; but where there is injustice, social disorder is inevitable.

Rustin chided the group because there were no black ministers present, but added it was not the fault of the people present. He drew applause, saying, "Your society has to take the responsibility for creating an institution that cannot be Christian."

"The church has been split into black and white as a result of society," he stated. "How can it be Christian when it does not practice what Christianity teaches--that there is neither Jew nor Gentile, white or black?" he asked.

Rustin observed that Negroes do not revolt simply because they do not have jobs, education or housing, but because they see little hope for these things.

If they could be given a glimmer of hope, it would forestall rioting and give the nation time to take steps that would help solve the problem, he said.

He said it was up to white society, the people who have money and power to do something, to take the first step toward reconciliation of the alienated Negro.

Rustin specifically suggested a \$2 minimum wage, a guaranteed annual income for all who cannot work, a public works program to provide jobs for the unemployed, free medical care, paid salaries for school children, and abolition of the current welfare system, which he said is "degrading" and "destroys human dignity."

Rustin was one of the most controversial figures to take part in the seminar. A one-time imprisoned conscientious objector, he has been arrested 24 times in civil rights activities, and has helped direct the 1963 civil rights march on Washington and the 1964 New York school boycott.

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Vietnam Question Faced
At Baptist Conference

3/28/68

WASHINGTON (BP)--To get out of Vietnam now or stay and keep trying to win -- that was a major question 250 Southern Baptists at the three-day Christian Citizenship Seminar were asked to consider here.

The desire to find a way to peace immediately was expressed by Paul Geren, president of Stetson University of DeLand, Fla., and Sen. John Sherman Cooper (R., Ky.) in key addresses.

Representative Jim Wright (D., Tex.) of Fort Worth supported President Johnson in his stand to win the war in Vietnam.

The question focused on a portion of the seminar theme, "Christian Action in a Disordered Society."

Geren, a former foreign service officer and executive vice-president at Baylor University, declared his political support this fall for the presidential candidate whom he felt offered the best hope of bringing the earliest peace in Vietnam, regardless of party affiliation. He did not name the person.

The dovish position brought a series of hawkish questions from the Baptist preachers and laymen.

Asked why he would support a peace candidate, Geren contended it has been demonstrated that America couldn't win the values the country desired through the use of force.

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Geren, who described himself as a practical pacifist, said his peace position didn't threaten the commitment the United States had made to Southeast Asia. He explained it this way:

"We have done our best to keep it (the commitment). It's not a commitment to fight and fight forever. It's a commitment toward a security for South Vietnam."

Sen. Cooper said he favored a cessation of the bombing in North Vietnam in an effort to bring about negotiations and a settlement of the conflict.

Acknowledging he had no clear cut answer to the war, he said he still felt the halt in bombing was less of a risk than more escalation. He hinted Congress would take a long look at future Administration requests for money and men before granting them if the only reason was to escalate the war.

Pointing to accusations of imperialism against this nation, Sen. Cooper also spoke out for a United States policy that recognizes that America cannot prescribe the shape of governments in newly independent countries it's helped.

Rep. Wright said he's still convinced that what compelled the United States to become involved in Vietnam is worthy.

"I agreed with Robert Kennedy when he said in Saigon in 1962 that we are going to win in Vietnam and we will stay in Vietnam until we do," Wright said.

In an unapologetic tone Wright said the United States went to Vietnam to demonstrate to the world aggression cannot be tolerated and to defend the rights of South Vietnamese to determine the type of government they desire to have.

Wright labelled as misleading the advice of some Americans to get out of Vietnam at any price or to blow North Vietnam off the map with the big bomb.

"Aggression tolerated is aggression encouraged," Wright said. He hinted the use of atomic bombs in North Vietnam could result in a similar attack on the United States.

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Open Churches To Negroes In Crusade, Rhodes Says

3/28/68

WASHINGTON, (BP)--Southern Baptists were encouraged at the Christian Citizenship Seminar here to turn their backs upon selective evangelism in the approaching Crusade of Americas and open the doors of their churches to all groups for attendance, conversion, baptism and church membership.

Lewis Rhodes, pastor of Broadway Baptist Church in Knoxville, Tenn., predicted a new day would dawn if Crusade leaders would say to churches "we want your cooperation without discrimination and segregation."

The address by Rhodes capped the three-day seminar sponsored by the Christian Life Commission, Southern Baptists' social action agency at Nashville, Tenn.

Three obstacles hindering Southern Baptists in confronting basic problems in society include ecclesiology, their theology of salvation, and sociology, Rhodes said.

Unfortunately, Baptists excuse their lack of involvement in great issues because of ecclesiology, Rhodes said. He suggested this solution:

"If our ecclesiology prevents our meeting our responsibility to a disordered society, the answer is not to claim immunity from responsibility...It may be time to develop an ecclesiology capable of meeting our responsibility."

Rhodes acknowledged Baptist preachers in some sections of the country may face expulsion if they were to invite Negroes to church, encourage support of the poor and poverty programs, and advocate support and cooperation with the National Council of Churches.

An answer is a pastoral emergency fund to support for a reasonable time these prophets without portfolio, Rhodes said, with funds coming from state Baptist conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention.

Rhodes told Southern Baptists they would need to deal with a national irrationality and incoherent frustration among the people in this country if they hoped to cope with a disordered society.

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"No one can understand our disordered society unless he understands it in terms of the estrangement between affluence and poverty. There are other problems, to be sure, but they cannot be dealt with apart from this one."

Southern Baptists can begin the job by abandoning a laissez-faire attitude toward society and begin accepting their responsibility, Rhodes said.

Where church leaders face expulsion from congregations for trying to preach this theme, and minister and witness to all in the community, Rhodes suggested a pastoral emergency fund under the auspices of state Baptist conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention.

Rhodes told the 200 religious leaders from throughout the United States they have an opportunity in an approaching hemisphere-wide evangelistic crusade to demonstrate this spirit of love. He expressed it this way:

"...We have no trouble with dealing with great efforts when we have the will. We are not involved in an inter-continental, inter-racial, international, and inter-lingual effort, the Crusade of the Americas.

"Will the Crusade of the Americas...insist that all cooperating churches open their doors for revival, for attendance, conversation, baptism, and church membership to all groups?

"Pastors and local churches must do more than speak; they must minister and witness to all the community. This includes the deprived Negro, white and language groups.

"We cannot say we will feed and clothe no one since we cannot feed and clothe everyone. If we do, we should apply this principle to evangelism also, saying we will witness to non since we cannot everyone."

Rhodes also suggested that conventions and assemblies include a large variety of speakers, including some who will confront Southern Baptists with the challenge of a disordered society.

In describing Southern Baptists, Rhodes viewed the majority of Baptists as cultural, historical and religious phenomenon more committed to cultural than to Christian values.

While Baptists in origin and attitude were left-wing radicals contributing significantly to the nation's struggle for independence and nationhood, the beginning of Southern Baptists is a different story, Rhodes said.

"We were born from the womb of cultural reactionism. The organization of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845 was not for theological or missionary reasons but for the preservation of a slavery-centered culture," he charged.

"Doubtless there were flourishes of oratory setting forth the justifications for the Convention, but after all the stage scenery is removed, there is the life and death struggle to preserve segregation as a social and cultural value, higher than the claims of Christ.

"A common loyalty to a social structure has been our cohesiveness, and a prevailing fear of division over the race issue is convincing evidence our loyalty to Christ is not stronger than our loyalty to our culture.

"One now committed to Southern Baptist life shudders to think what would happen if we required our members to be more committed to Christ than race, more committed to the universal church than to denomination, and more committed to humanity than to nationalism," he said.

Rhodes declared it was high time Southern Baptists repent and declare a divorce from the reason for their beginning.

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American People Need
Desire For Justice

3/28/68

WASHINGTON (BP)--The attorney general of the United States, the honorable Ramsey Clark, told a Southern Baptist Conference on Christian Citizenship here that one of the most urgent needs of the nation is "an ardent desire for justice in the hearts of the people."

The attorney general called for more church involvement in, and support for law enforcement, criminal rehabilitation and penology, and juvenile crime prevention.

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"The policeman," he said, "is the most important person in the nation, and perhaps the most neglected, the most underpaid, the most understaffed, and the most undertrained profession in the nation."

Declaring that crime is intolerable, the attorney general said that organized crime can be eliminated, but to do so, it would take immediate and bold action. "No effort can succeed without the citizenry," including the churches, he added.

In a question and answer section, the attorney general drew applause when he declared his opposition to capital punishment. Clark said he had seen no evidence to prove to him that capital punishment is a deterrent to crime.

Following the speech by Attorney General Clark, the 250 Baptists attending the conference toured both the Justice Department and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, hearing a report by HEW Assistant Secretary Paul Miller.

In a speech on the threat of crime, the executive director of the Chicago Crime Commission, Virgil W. Peterson, claimed that gambling is the basis for organized crime because it provides the money to finance organized crime.

Vice, dope, and illicit activities of all kinds are sure to follow where gambling exists--whether it is legal gambling or the undercover kind, Peterson said.

"Organized crime will be defeated when and if the majority of the people assume their duties of citizenship by their own refusal to patronize activities which support it, by speaking out against it, by testifying as witnesses, by serving as jurists, and by standing firm against corruption," Peterson declared.

In a banquet address, Christian Century Associate Editor Martin Marty urged church people to be more involved in building a political society with justice and order.

If the Christian is concerned about justice, righteousness, and compassion, he will be involved in the political order, Marty observed.

Marty warned, however, that about one-half of the people in the nation feel alienated from the group which controls the political order, and somehow this alienated one-half must be involved or else they will become permanent drop-outs.

He listed as the alienated the following groups: Black America, the students, the poor, the educators, the new left and the radical right, the clergy, and the hippies and drop-outs.

In another address, Iowa Wesleyan College President Franklin Littell of Mt. Pleasant, blasted the ultra-right, comparing the John Birch Society to Nazi facism, and calling it a threat to the liberty of America.

Littell said that there are 10,000 ultra-right radio programs a week, spewing hate and divisiveness in the nation. Many such programs, he said, are telephone call-in programs which Littell called "dial-a-lie programs."

Littell said it is the agony of the church for such blasphemy as the opening of Ku Klux Klan meetings with prayer, and the infiltration of right-wingers in the church who claim to be Christian, but act otherwise.

Littell said a national coalition of Christian citizens is needed "to clean the racists out of the Democratic party, and purge the Birchers from the Republican party."

Theme for the three-day citizenship seminar was "Christian Action in a Disordered Society."