



BAPTIST PRESS

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March 29, 1968

Baptist Spokesman Asks For Judicial Review Law

WASHINGTON (BP)--A Baptist leader here urged Congress to enact a judicial review bill in an effort to make it easier to test the constitutionality of acts of Congress on First Amendment grounds.

Walfred H. Peterson, director of research services of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, testified before a subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee that is having hearings on the subject of judicial review.

The U. S. Senate twice, in 1966 and in 1967, has passed overwhelmingly a judicial review bill, but this is the first time it has received any attention in the House of Representatives.

The current series of hearings began on March 6 with testimony from members of Congress and a representative of the administration.

Two more hearings were held on March 27 and 28. Another day of hearings are scheduled for April 3, and after that further hearings will be held if the Judiciary Committee wishes.

Rep. Emanuel Celler (D., N.Y.) chairman of the House Judiciary Committee has been cool to the judicial review bill, as has been the leadership of the House of Representatives. In the light of known attitudes in the House it is not likely that action will be taken on judicial review soon.

Another factor that may slow down the bill is the New York Case. *Flast vs. Gardner*, now before the Supreme Court on the question of "standing to sue." Some Congressmen feel that it is inappropriate to push judicial review in the House at present lest it be interpreted to mean that Congress is trying to influence the decision of the Supreme Court in a case now under consideration.

In the Baptist testimony, Peterson pointed out that he was speaking only for the staff of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. The committee itself has taken no formal stand on judicial review, but it has encouraged its staff to follow the developments in this field.

Neither have any of the Baptist conventions sponsoring the Baptist Joint Committee passed any special resolutions specifically on the judicial review bill before Congress.

However, Peterson pointed out that the Baptist constituencies would be glad for some provision to speed up judicial review of church-state issues in much recent legislation enacted by Congress.

Although Peterson testified in favor of the judicial review bill, he also said under cross-examination by Rep. Edwin E. Willis (D., La.) that he felt the issue is not so urgent until the Supreme Court makes its decision in the *Flast* case.

Peterson concluded his testimony by pointing out that the Supreme Court has no difficulty in handling taxpayers suits arising under state laws, but that it has had trouble finding ways to handle such cases involving federal funds.

"This could conceivably lead to a dual standard of establishment, one for the states and one for the federal government," he said.

Under this situation, he continued, "it is possible that a single state official will someday be responsible for administering a federally financed program affecting church-state relations that he could not administer were it a state financed program."

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**Sunday School Board's
Founder's Room Relocated**

NASHVILLE (BP)--The room where the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention was organized May 26, 1891, is being restored in the first floor lobby of the board here.

The original room was the study of W. R. L. Smith, pastor of First Baptist Church, Nashville, at that time.

It was built in 1884 and remodeled only once since its beginning. In 1921 the ceilings were lowered and the fireplace was closed. The doors were also relocated in the remodeling.

At the first meeting only 10 of the 40 summoned to the initial session of the board were present.

First Baptist Church is being remodeled and the study was torn down last fall. Board members agreed that the room should be restored and rebuilt in the lobby of the board and be called "Founder's Room."

Much of the old material from the room has been used in the room at the board. Every effort has been made to preserve the original character and atmosphere of the room, Hardie Bass, chief architect for the board, said.

The room will be furnished with reproductions of the pieces used in Smith's study. The original brass spittoon, however, will be placed in the restored room, Bass said. A dummy fireplace with a flat hearth will be built, using the old brick from the church.

The restored study will be 13 x 20 feet, and will be completed April 30.

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**Richard Owen To Retire
As Tennessee Editor**

3/29/68

NASHVILLE (BP)--Richard N. Owen has announced plans to retire Sept. 30 after 18 years as editor of the Baptist and Reflector, official weekly newsmagazine of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

Owen's retirement was made public in the March 28 issue of the Baptist and Reflector, which goes weekly to nearly 74,000 Baptist homes in Tennessee.

Owen, 70, became editor of the Baptist state paper for Tennessee on Sept. 1, 1950, after being elected to the position on June 1 of that year. When he took over the editorship, circulation was at about 43,000.

Before becoming editor of the state paper, Owen was pastor of several Tennessee Baptist churches, including the First Baptist churches of Clarksville, Paris, Elizabethton, and Milan, Tenn.

He was a president and vice president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, and since becoming editor, has been president of the Southern Baptist Historical Commission, president of the Southern Baptist Historical Society, and vice president of the Baptist Press Association.

He is a graduate of University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville. Union University in Jackson, Tenn., awarded him an honorary doctor of divinity degree.

No successor has been named by the committee. In the March 28 issue of the Baptist and Reflector, Owen wrote two editorials, one commenting on his 17½ years as editor, and another outlining what he considered to be the qualities the committee should seek in an editor at the request of those who share in nominating his successor.

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Georgia Baptist Body
Cites Long Mercer Ties

ATLANTA (BP)--A statement which reaffirms the historic relationship between Mercer University in Macon, Ga., and the Georgia Baptist Convention was adopted here by the convention's executive committee.

The statement reminded the Baptist college's trustees and administration of "the strong ties and the cooperative relationship" between the convention and the school since it was established in 1833, and that these ties be strengthened.

The resolution came in response to a statement adopted by the Mercer trustees in response to accreditation standards. The Mercer statement told the accrediting body that Mercer will "welcome the expression of any wish, opinion or judgment of any person or body of persons on any matters, yet after having considered these, the Mercer trustees as a body will make the decisions on them in accord with their conscience and responsibility as trustees."

Reacting to this statement, the Georgia Baptist Convention Executive Committee "reminded" the Mercer trustees that (1) the school was established by the convention and operated by convention elected trustees, (2) the school makes annual reports to the convention, (3) Georgia Baptists are giving the school financial support, (4) the convention "should continue to exercise its rights under the charter to elect trustees," and (5) there is a provision that no institution may incur indebtedness without special convention authority.

The president of the Georgia Baptist Convention, J. Robert Smith of Statesboro, Ga., said he saw no conflict between the Mercer and the Executive Committee statements. "They are merely an effort to clear the air with the accrediting agencies."

Some observers noted that there has been increasing tension between the convention and the school, especially since the Mercer trustees voted recently to ask its executive committee to study the possibility of seeking "all federal funds and help available." The study is to be completed in April.

At the meeting here, William T. Haywood, financial vice president at Mercer, explained that the other Mercer statement had no connection with the federal funds study proposal, although both matters were discussed at the same trustees meeting.

Later during the meeting here, Pastor D. Perry Ginn of Gainesville, Ga., offered a motion authorizing appointment of a special committee to bring about severance of ties between Mercer and the convention should the Mercer trustees vote in April to seek federal funds, but Ginn's motion was tabled.

Meanwhile, a controversy has been raging in Macon because Mercer has asked the city to declare 35 acres of adjoining property as urban renewal and sell it to Mercer for future expansion.

Homeowners objected because the plan would call for demolition of private homes, many of which are not substandard.

Mercer officials told the Macon City Council that it must have the 35 acres of land and some additional property for an \$11 million expansion plan covering 12 years. The area in question is just east of the campus.

While a spokesman for a dozen homeowners in the area who objected to the proposal claimed the majority of the residences are not substandard, the chairman of Mercer's trustees, Attorney T. ~~Oldwin~~ Martin, argued that 74½ per cent of the homes were substandard.

R. Douglas Feagin, urban renewal director in Macon, told the local Kiwanis Club that he doubted the Mercer proposal would be approved "due to the low priority that is usually accorded such projects by the government."



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