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TV Networks Pledge Less  
Violence To SBC Executive

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NASHVILLE (BP)--Officials of the three major television networks in the nation, in replying to a plea from a Southern Baptist Convention leader, have stated that fall television programming this year will seek to de-emphasize excessive violence.

The letters from the network officials came in response to correspondence from Foy Valentine, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission who wrote to the television network presidents urging them to accept a moral responsibility for combatting "the increasingly violent spirit of our nation."

Officials of all three networks said in response that television programs and movies were being screened in an attempt to prohibit excessive violence, or "violence for the sake of violence."

In one of the strongest letters, Columbia Broadcasting System President Frank Stanton told Valentine that "we are systematically screening every non-news program for violence before it goes on the air.

"Some broadcasts," said Stanton, "have been withheld entirely; others have been heavily edited. Obviously, there are certain limits. We cannot summarily ban all so-called violence...What we are trying to do is guard against those instances where violence creeps into the script only for the sake of violence, and not for any purpose essential to the drama."

Stanton stated he wanted to assure Southern Baptists that efforts to avoid excessive violence in entertainment programming on CBS will continue, and that "we have no intention of renegeing on that responsibility."

An official of the National Broadcasting Co., stated that "we've been taking a number of steps to reinforce our standards regarding the depiction of violent conflict on television." The letter was signed by Thomas Baum, director of corporate information.

"As a result of our reappraisal, there have already been significant changes in programs and in proposed scripts for the coming season's programs, and we've been reviewing movies to be scheduled on the network...Specifically, we are rejecting new program ideas that might rely too heavily on violence," Baum said.

The vice president and general manager of the American Broadcasting Co., I. Martin Pompadur, told Valentine that "our people have been directed to follow our long-standing practice of prohibiting the use of violence for the sake of violence and to give special attention to encouraging the de-emphasis of acts of violence.

"While it is not possible to accept the allegation made by some people that television per se, is responsible, somehow or other, for such lawlessness and violence, we are examining all of our network presentations--and will continue to do so," said Pompadur.

In his earlier letter, Valentine cited statistics to the effect that the average 18-year-old has watched about 15,000 hours of television, concluding that "the impressions of attempting to solve problems with violent action are deeply inbedded in his personality."

After receiving the reply letters from the network officials, Valentine said that the networks seem to want more support from the public in their control of violence in programming.

"Therefore, I encourage Southern Baptists to write the networks and their local television stations, commend them for their good programs, point out their bad ones, and further encourage them to upgrade the moral quality of their presentations across the board," Valentine said.

"Any change in the present, unbridled programming of violence and disorder will be welcomed, and the sooner the better," Valentine concluded.



By Walker L. Knight

ATLANTA (BP)--The world's largest Negro Baptist group meeting here overcame strong efforts to move it toward a more militant position on civil rights and social action.

Instead the 15,000 delegates heard president J. H. Jackson of Chicago denounce civil disobedience, urge Negroes to put the nation first, and praise president Lyndon Johnson.

The occasion was the 88th annual session of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., whose 6½ million members make it the largest of the three National (Negro) Baptists groups.

Jackson did not let the fact that the convention was meeting in the hometown of Martin Luther King Jr., deter him from again emphasizing his opposition to civil disobedience and his support of the U.S. Constitution.

Jackson, who was re-elected for his 16th term, said the civil rights fight as originally planned had been lost.

Originally the fight was to achieve integration, was to be carried out within the Constitution and was to provide first-class citizenship."

We have lost the fight psychologically, for many have lost faith and believe civil disobedience is a more powerful weapon. We have lost the nonviolent aspect of the struggle," he said, and the Negro has earned the title of the leader of riots.

Jackson was pushed hard, especially in a pre-convention meeting of the board of directors, for a program of social action.

A small, descending group calling themselves "Concerned Clergy of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.," asked for a social action commission, help for the hungry people in Mississippi, aid to starving children in Biafra, support for the poor people's movement, and a denouncing of Georgia Gov. Lester Maddox and former Gov. George Wallace of Alabama.

Though action was taken on none of the proposals, proponents considered they won a major victory because they were given the opportunity to expose the membership to the ideas.

Throughout the five day meeting there was a pronounced tug of war over some memorial for Martin Luther King Jr., and the tension was heightened by Jackson's open stand against civil disobedience, a point of disagreement he had with King for years.

Despite pressure for a separate memorial service and for some recognition during his presidential address, Jackson did not even mention King's name.

Standing on the platform behind him all during the address was Ralph Abernathy, successor to King as head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. At no time was Abernathy recognized by those presiding. He is affiliated with the Progressive National Baptist Convention, a group which separated in 1961 from Jackson's convention over the question of tenure for the president.

A separate memorial service was held for King at Tabernacle Baptist Church, attracting about 200 of the delegates.

Sandy F. Ray, pastor from Brooklyn, New York spoke at this memorial service, along with Abernathy. Ray was later elected vice-president of the convention. His election was considered a victory for the "Concerned Clergy" group, and a unifying development for the convention.

Jackson earlier expressed his belief that "the solution to racism lies in religion. I don't believe we are called upon to seek integration or force ourselves into white churches."

When asked about a possible merger between his group and the Southern Baptist Convention, he said that because of the suffering of the Negro people through the years, "we know something about the cross and because of that, we may become the saviors of the Christian church." He did not expect any merger to develop.

No endorsement was given a presidential candidate, but delegates were urged to withhold commitment on any political candidate for the present time and study issues and analyze campaigns of both major parties as well as the platforms of state and local candidates.

Jackson is a strong advocate of the Negro communities need to move from "protest to production," and his position was strengthened as the convention voted to begin work on a \$9 million housing project in Miami for low and moderate income dwellers.

Also the convention purchased the Natchez (Miss.) College, from the Baptist State Convention of Mississippi for \$100,000, with the understanding the Mississippi group could repurchase the institution later if desired. The college has been in financial difficulty for a number of years.

Jackson, in his presidential address, charged the press with the imposition of the term "black" upon the Negro community. He indicated the most acceptable word was Negro, and that "black" leaves out too many who are colored.

"The use of the word 'black' is but the first step in developing an apartheid system in the United States."

The convention voted to meet next year in Kansas City.

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Council of Churches, Catholics,  
To Invite Texas Baptists To Merge

9/9/68

DALLAS (BP)--A panel of eight Protestant and eight Catholic leaders working on a merger of the Texas Council of Churches and the Catholic Conference of Texas has decided to extend an invitation to Texas Baptists to join the proposed merger.

Known as the "Committee of 16," the group will send the invitation to T. A. Patterson of Dallas, executive secretary of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, rather than to the convention in annual session, according to Methodist Bishop W. Kenneth Pope of Dallas.

"The invitation should be made very adroitly," said Bishop Pope. "We must go through the back door and find out how he (Patterson) really feels. No use in being turned down."

Patterson, in an interview here, said it would be impossible for him or any other Baptist leader to commit the Baptist General Convention of Texas to the proposed Protestant-Catholic Texas Conference of Churches.

Explaining the nature of the autonomous nature of local Baptist churches, Patterson said in an interview with WFAA-Television, "If any individual or even the state convention should decide to enter the merger it would not be binding on any single church."

Patterson said he had received no official word from the committee, but noted he had worked with several of the committee members in the area of social action and civic righteousness and had a high regard for them personally.

Gordon Clinard of San Angelo, Tex., current president of the Texas convention, said in the same newscast, "Baptists by their very nature are quite cooperative in a number of areas," but noted that Baptists are suspicious of the idea that spiritual unity will grow out of any organization.

"We have organic unity in our churches," Clinard explained, "But even in the local situation this does not always guarantee spiritual unity."

Fifteen administrative bodies of Texas church groups have already ratified the constitution of the proposed new group. Approval of 20 groups, representing 10 different denominations, is necessary before the group can be formed.

The committee of 16 set Feb. 25-26, 1969, as the dates for a constituting assembly to formally organize the new conference. Their meeting will be held in Austin, Tex., to coincide with the annual meeting of the Texas Council of Churches.

Among the goals of the joint conference, as delineated in the constitution, are: "to apply more effectively the substance and insights of the Christian gospel to the structures and institutions of this state," and to promote "the spirit of ecumenism."

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Black Baptists Evaluate  
Integration, Separatism

By Beth Hayworth

WASHINGTON (BP)--Leaders of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc., urged their members not to abandon the dream of an integrated society while they find their stance in the rapidly emerging black separatist movement.

Gardner C. Taylor of Brooklyn, N.Y., outgoing president of the seven-year-old convention, told the 5,700 registered delegates and messengers at the annual session here that they "cannot live apart from the heady ferment" now occurring among black people in the land.

"Those of us who came forward during an integrationist generation...are startled and sometimes angered by the strange new talk of separatism by young blacks," he said. Taylor described much of their talk as "angry, petulant, pointless."

The Louisiana-born Taylor, pastor of the 11,000-member Concord Baptist Church of Brooklyn, told his fellow Negro ministers that those who lead the people of God must listen carefully to the "kernel of reality" in what he called the "excessive rhetoric" of the black militants.

The Baptist leader, recently named lecturer on preaching at Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, compared the separatist idea of the black race in American society with the experience in the life of the early disciples when Jesus told them to "come apart and rest for awhile."

The same applies to a race such as ours, the Negro preacher said. "Not in isolation, but in retreat and communion among ourselves we must find our true selves...and return to the nation bearing in Christ's name the gifts of our blackness."

The executive secretary of the Progressive Baptist Convention, L. Venchael Booth from Cincinnati, Ohio, in an interview said the black separatist movement is not strong in the convention.

Identifying himself as an "integrationist," Booth predicted, however, that the movement for black identity must run its course in the nation before an integrated worship is possible.

"If I were a white man today," Booth projected, "I would not withdraw from the integrationist movement." He said the white man should work with the black man on any level possible, even to joining a Negro church.

"The white man has the right to test his welcome in a Negro church," he said, referring to the sit-ins and pray-ins in many Southern churches in the early part of the civil rights movement.

Booth, pastor of the Zion Baptist Church in Cincinnati, has been executive secretary of the Progressive Baptist Convention since its organization in 1961. Under his leadership, the convention was organized in that year, in a split with the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., in a protest over tenure of its leaders.

The new convention's constitution calls for a new president every two years. Honoring that commitment, the Progressive Baptists in this year's session elected as the new president E. R. Searcy, pastor of the Mt. Zion Second Baptist Church in Atlanta.

In his address to the convention, outgoing president Taylor urged the new officers to work for a "Baptist Ecumenical movement."

He lamented the divisions of race and philosophy in the Baptist family calling them a "shame and pain." He urged the hastening of the time when the "walls of partition will be thrown down in the home of Baptists."

In Taylor's sermon to the convention and in interviews with Booth and the new president, there were reports of increased efforts for cooperation and friendship with other Baptists.

Many of the Progressive Baptist churches are aligned also with the American Baptist Convention. All three leaders referred to "signs of friendship" with Southern Baptists.

"A new day is breaking," said Searcy, the newly-elected president from Atlanta. "I will work for it and advocate closer relationships with the Southern Baptist Convention."

The seven-year old Negro convention claims a membership of some 600-to 800 churches, according to the executive secretary, with a membership somewhere between 600,000 and a million.

"This convention has something to say to all existing Baptist conventions," Booth said. "With no property and no foundation of funds, we are tied together by a spirit of fellowship and a love of freedom."