

(BP) --- FEATURES

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
Telephone (615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Jim Newton, Assistant Director

March 27, 1969

Fite Says He Needs Time To Get Used To Being Free

WAYNESBORO, Ga. (BP)--David Fite, returning to his home here after four years in a Cuban prison, said he needs time to "get used to being free again."

"I have to re-learn the American way of life and I want my children to know and be proud of their country," said Fite in an interview with the Augusta (Ga.) Chronicle.

His three sons include one now four years old who had never before seen his father's country. The two others, now 10 and 12, don't remember it, for they were babies when they went with their parents to Cuba in 1960.

The youngest son had hardly seen his father except behind bars. He was one month old when Cuban guards arrested Fite on charges of illegal currency exchange and espionage.

The boys were fully informed about their father's plight from the beginning. "We never made up stories for them about where I was," Fite said. "They assumed responsibility as men of the house.

"It was harder on Margaret (Mrs. Fite) than on me," he added. "She had to take complete charge of the family and their needs."

The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board provided funds for the family's needs while Fite was in prison, but all food, clothing, and "every single item" is rationed in Cuba and it was not easy for them.

Although he was ill with hepatitis during the early years of his imprisonment, Fite looks not at all like a man just out of prison. His dark hair is not streaked with white, nor is his face lined.

His robust look is the result, most likely, of his last 18 months in prison which were spent working in Cuban fields, and from the vitamin pills his wife was allowed to provide.

Asked about a slight hesitancy in his speech, Fite chuckled and confessed he was thinking in Spanish and translating into English, "especially when I talk about things I've talked very little about in English."

Saying he was not discriminated against as an American while in prison, Fite added, "I'm lucky; with my coloring, if I kept my mouth shut, they thought I was a Cuban."

The prisoners were not allowed literature, books or newspapers not published by the Cuban National Press. They were not allowed to hold religious services, but managed to get a copy of the Bible and "found ways to minister."

"My strong faith in God and a sense of call and purpose in life sustained me during these years," Fite said.

About his parents, who worked unceasingly for their son's release, Fite said: "Their unending efforts paved the way for the act of mercy on the part of the Cuban government and facilitated our ability to leave the country so rapidly."

His father, pastor of Rosemont Heights Baptist Church in Waynesboro, and his mother spent 51 days in Cuba in 1967 pleading with authorities for their son's release.

Asked why he believes he was released, Fite said: "I believe it was a humanitarian act on the part of the Cuban government which took into consideration the needs of my family and the health of my inlaws, and our desire to return to the U.S."

He was referring to the eyesight problems which plagued Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Caudill, both of whom suffered cataracts in Cuba. Caudill was allowed to have surgery while he was in prison, and was later released under house arrest because of his eyesight problems.

Fite spoke often in the interview of friends he made in prison. There are still about 20 Americans imprisoned there, he said, including a farmer and a businessman he knew who were accused of espionage.

What of the churches?

"No Baptist Convention of Western Cuba churches were closed by the government, nor has any had to close for lack of pastors in spite of the fact more than half of them were arrested," he said.

Margaret and David Fite went to Cuba in 1960, dedicated and hoping to help. They've come home nine years later, maybe disappointed, but without bitterness, and obviously with a deep love for the Cuban people.



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Secret Task Force Report
Warns Nixon On Education

REGIONAL OFFICES

ATLANTA Walker L. Knight, Editor, 1350 Spring Street, N.W., Atlanta, Georgia 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Billy Keith, Editor, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) RI 1-1996
WASHINGTON W. Barry Garrett, Editor, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

BUREAU

BAPTIST SUNDAY SCHOOL BOARD Lynn M. Davis, Jr., Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37203,
Telephone (615) 254-1631

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Richard M. Nixon's task force on education, in an ill-kept secret report, has warned that the church-state issue could "become once again a lively area of controversy that could cause the new administration a great deal of trouble."

The possibility of trouble for federal aid to education because of church-state problems was foreseen by the task force in two areas: (1) an effort to rearrange the method through which federal aid is channeled to education, and (2) lawsuits challenging the constitutionality of some aspects of present education legislation.

The task force also warned "that establishing his image as an education-minded President must be one of Mr. Nixon's highest priorities for his initial weeks in office."

The reason given for this admonition was that "we do not believe that President Nixon, with all his varied and high qualifications for office, would at present by most Americans be considered to have the kind of special concern for education that the times require."

Another conclusion of the education task force was that federal expenditures on education should not be cut back. Rather, it said that it would take at least \$2 billion in additional funds to implement its recommendations.

President Nixon's announced policy in regard to task force reports on various government proposals has been that they would not be made available to the public. (Baptist Press and other news agencies, after a Washington Post scoop, made numerous efforts to get copies of the report. The White House, however, has not yet released the report to the public.)

The education task force, headed by Alan Pifer, president of Carnegie Corporation of New York, made its report to President-elect Nixon prior to his inauguration. Then in February the Washington Post obtained a copy from an unrevealed source and published a summary of its findings. Similar summaries appeared in other education publications.

More recently, someone not on the task force gave a copy to Rep. John Brademas (D., Ind.) who published the complete text of the document in the Congressional Record. As yet, there has been no information released as to who the members of the task force might be other than Pifer.

In releasing the report, Brademas said: "I think it will be helpful to have in mind the recommendations made to the new President by his own education task force."

Two major facts were cited by the task force in its admonitions to President Nixon to establish immediately a new education image and to proceed on an implementation of federal education programs. First, in the past six years "some 60 new educational measures have been passed by Congress." Second, "the American people have come to accept and to expect a vastly enhanced federal role."

The report said that the new situation in educational needs has arisen because of three factors:

1. "The emergency of urgent national needs in education which could only be met by federal involvement;
2. "An enormously expanded public awareness of the relationship of education to the solution of a variety of national problems; and
3. "The inadequacy of state, local and private sources of funding for education in the face of ever increasing costs."

In regard to new administration plans for funding education the task force referred to Nixon's campaign speech in which he favored federal block grants to states. This statement, the report said, "has already in our opinion come perilously close to reopening the (church-state) issue."

It continued, "We recommend that neither he nor any high official of his administration make any further allusions to block grants until the full implications of new methods of federal financing of education in regard to the church-state issue can be fully explored."

"Since more than 30 states, including three of the largest, have provisions in their constitutions which tightly restrict aid to parochial schools," the report said, "Catholic officials will in all probability be strongly opposed to any move on the part of the administration which appears to have the effect of turning federal education dollars into state educational dollars."

In view of the probability of taxpayers' suits on the constitutionality of aspects of federal aid to education, the task force recommended that the new President set up a special study group of federal officials to review the effects of possible adverse court decisions. The group should be prepared with proposals for new legislation if the need should arise, the report advised.

"Needless to say," it continued, "such a review should be conducted as quietly as possible in order not to risk the danger of stirring up premature public controversy."

Among other recommendations, the education task force suggested:

--That the president should hold unpublished meetings with minority groups to try to work out solutions to education problems in urban areas;

--That the civil rights provisions of the laws and the rulings of the courts be rigidly enforced;

--That a new urban education act be proposed to Congress;

--That the federal government take massive steps toward improvement of higher education in the nation; and

--That the new administration move swiftly in its proposals for improving and renewing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which expires on June 30, 1970.

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C O R R E C T I O N

Please substitute the following new lead on the Baptist Press story mailed 3-25-69 headlined, "Southwestern Religion Prof Seeks to Clarify Resolution". The new lead is suggested at the request of the person being quoted. It should read:

DALLAS (BP)--The secretary-treasurer of the Southwestern Baptist Association of Baptist Teachers of Religion, Joe Boles, said in an interview here that all Baptist professors of religion were not the source of a recent controversial resolution passed by another group of Baptist professors of religion criticizing publicity surrounding a book by W. A. Criswell of Dallas.

Also, in graph 4, please change the copy by eliminating the phrase, "I want to make it clear," so that the fourth graph reads as follows:

Boles, also an associate professor of Christianity at Dallas Baptist College, said in response to questions that "the resolution in question represents only men in an organization which draws membership mainly from the Southeastern part of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Pickup with rest of story as sent. Thanks.

--Baptist Press

Four Baptist Professors
Get AATS Study Grants

(3-27-69)

DAYTON, Ohio (BP)--Four professors from two Southern Baptist seminaries have been named among 36 scholars to receive highly-prestigious study grants from the American Association of Theological Schools with offices here.

The grants will go to two professors at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, and to two professors at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

Announcement of the study grants was made by David S. Schuller, associate director of the American Association of Theological Schools which accredits theological seminaries. The grants will go to:

-more-

Dale Moody, professor of theology, and Jay Wilkey, associate professor of music, both at Southern Seminary in Louisville; and to E. Luther Copeland, professor of missions, and John I. Durham, associate professor of Old Testament interpretation, both at Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest.

The four Baptist scholars were awarded the \$4,000 grants in competition with faculty members from more than 100 theological schools. The awards will supplement the professors' salaries while they are on sabbatical leave, allowing them to engage in special study.

Moody, who received a similar grant from the AATS in 1961, will spend the academic year in Europe and the Bible lands, studying for six months at Rome at the Gregorian University, and the remainder of the time in travel and research.

Wilkey, one of two professors to receive an award in the field of church music, will study at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) and at the University of Tokyo, Japan. He will investigate the relationship between Oriental and western music.

Copeland, who is writing a text book on an introduction to Christian missions, will spend most of the study leave at the University of Chicago.

Durham, who is preparing a commentary on the Psalms, will do Old Testament studies at Heidelberg and Oxford Universities in Europe.

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Ministers' Wives Slate
Mini-Mardi Gras Lunch

(3-27-69)

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Several hundred wives of Southern Baptist ministers will meet here June 11 during sessions of the Southern Baptist Convention for a "Mini-Mardi Gras Luncheon.

The 12:45 Wednesday luncheon will be held at the Royal Orleans Hotel, only a few blocks from the Rivergate Auditorium where the convention will hold its sessions.

The program will feature soloist Martha Branham of Dallas and comedian Grady Nutt of Louisville, Ky.

Tickets for the luncheon will be on sale at the convention hall beginning Monday, June 9 at a cost of \$4.75.

"Sorry about that ticket price," said Mrs. Avery Lee of New Orleans, vice-president of the organization, "but it was the best we could do in New Orleans."

Mrs. Andrew Hall, of Fayetteville, Ark., president, suggests that the ministers' wives save a June wedding fee and exchange it for the price of a luncheon ticket.

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Nashville, Tennessee 37219

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DAVIS C. WOOLLEY HO
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
127 NINTH AVE. N.
NASHVILLE, TENN. 37203