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Hawaii Baptist Leader
Argues Against Bus Aid

HONOLULU (BP)--The executive secretary of the Hawaii Baptist Convention testified here that school bus transportation for students at parochial schools would not only violate separation of church and state, but would do more harm than good to public and sectarian schools.

Edmond Walker, top executive of the Hawaii Baptist Convention, pled with the state legislature to defeat an amendment to the state constitution which would provide free bus transportation for parochial schools during a hearing conducted by the Senate education committee.

Walker said that the financial crisis facing parochial schools in Hawaii is so intense that free transportation for its students would do little except prolong the inevitable death of the schools.

He quoted a priest as saying that Catholic parochial schools in Hawaii will be dead in 10 years, and that "Not even God can save the parochial schools."

"Passage of this amendment," said Walker, "would seem to be an attempt to aid a cause admittedly lost, even to God."

He called instead for more support of the public school system, adding that the public schools "do not need money withheld from them in order to support non-public schools."

"In my judgment, the proposed amendment violates the principle of separation of church and state contained in the non-establishment clause of the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States," Walker said.

The Baptist leader shared with the senate committee a chronology of events in Hawaii in what he called "the battle over bus subsidy," saying the question has become a political issue. After a 1967 decision by a Circuit Court favoring such bus aid, the state Supreme Court overturned the decision on Dec. 12, 1968, ruling unanimously against such a bus subsidy as "unconstitutional," he reported.

Walker said that passage of the constitutional amendment would cause "further division and dissention over this issue....I plead with you," he said, "to defeat this amendment, and so spare our state further division and disunity."

"I beg you to vote down this proposed amendment to the Hawaii State Constitution," he concluded. "In so doing, you will be supporting the public schools...In all fairness, I ask you to spare our overburdened taxpayers additional expense. Defeat this amendment!"

In other testimony before the committee, the chairman of the State Board of Education, Richard E. Ando, said that the board wants every citizen in Hawaii to benefit from direct public support of education, but said wording of the present bill gave the board concern because it would apply only to students of sectarian schools. There may be many other groups which need inclusion, Ando said.

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White SBC Church First
To Join Negro Convention

4/28/69

ST. LOUIS, Mo. (BP)--For what is believed to be the first time in Southern Baptist Convention history, a predominately white Southern Baptist church here has joined the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., maintaining dual alignment with the SBC.

The action was taken by the Christ Memorial Baptist Church in St. Louis as a practical step to implement locally the "Statement Concerning the Crisis in Our Nation" as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in Houston last June.

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Bill Little, pastor of the church in suburban St. Louis, said that it was the first Southern Baptist church in Missouri to join a predominately Negro convention, and that he believed it is the first such church in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Victor Glass of Atlanta, director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's work with National Baptists, said that as far as his office could tell, it was the first SBC church to become dually-aligned with a Negro Baptist body and the SBC.

Glass called the church's action a creative step. "This is a way of saying to Black Baptists, 'you have something to give to help me, and I have something to learn from you'," said Glass.

Little said that the church voted in April to join the Antioch Missionary Baptist District Association, affiliated with the Missouri Missionary Baptist Convention, and the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc. The association, which meets May 6, has already accepted the church into its membership, Little said, and the church will send messengers to the associational meeting.

The church took the action, not only in response to the "Statement Concerning the Crisis in Our Nation" which urged local congregations to act to improve race relations, but also in response to a statement directed to the entire church by the young people urging "openness, loving acceptance, and ministry to all segments of our society."

The youth of the church, with the approval of a youth coordinating committee, presented the statement to the church last June (three weeks after the SBC action), explaining that by "openness, loving acceptance and ministry to all segments of society, we mean that the doors of our church are open to all people, and more than open, we invite and encourage all to be a part of our fellowship."

Little said that the church, located in the suburbs, has no local Negro members, but there are five Nigerian students who are members of the church. Little said the church has shown a great deal of interest and support of inner-city ministries in St. Louis.

The pastor said he felt the action was a step in the right direction, and that he wished other SBC churches would do the same, looking toward the day that the SBC and the Negro convention could merge. He admitted that day might be 20 years away.

The pastor said that reaction to the decision by the church had been very favorable. The vote was about 18 to 1 in favor of the motion. The church has about 900 members, but less than 100 were present at the business meeting when the vote was taken.

Little said that his church might not be the first in the SBC to take such action, but he had tried to learn of others, but had not been able to learn of any. There are three or four other SBC churches that are very seriously considering it.

In Kentucky, the state convention adopted a resolution urging SBC churches in that state to seek dual alignment with Negro churches. Four churches, three of them in Louisville are at various stages in moving this direction, but none have yet joined a Negro convention, said Herman Ihley, director of work with National Baptists in Kentucky.

Glass said that there is a possibility that some SBC church in Florida, Texas, California, or the District of Columbia, might also be dually-aligned but he did not have any specific information. "As far as we know, this is the first," he said.

Little said that the church has "been looking for ways to identify with the Negro community in general, and Negro Baptists in particular. We have been looking for a way to open channels of communication more clearly between the races," he added, saying he was convinced God led the church to this "concrete expression of our concern and love."

"It remains my conviction," he added, "that even now our church and other churches of all denominations have really done very little toward creative solutions to the problems of racial tension in our nation."

Little said that the church probably would not change its programs of support, and will continue to move "in the direction of the Southern Baptist cooperative work, but we want to be identified (also) with National Baptists."



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