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Older People Explosion  
Demands Public Action

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WASHINGTON (BP)--Problems of the "retirement revolution" and the growing poverty conditions of older people were aired by a U. S. Senate special committee on aging here.

Sen. Harrison A. Williams Jr., (D., N.J.), chairman of the committee declared that economic problems will not be solved for the elderly of the future "unless this nation takes positive, comprehensive actions going far beyond those of recent years."

A special task force working paper on "Economics of Aging" revealed many of the urgent problems facing the nation by the population explosion of older people.

The paper pointed out that there are now 20 million persons 65 years or older in the nation. Half of these are 73 and over. Between 1960 and 1985 this age group will rise 50 per cent, while the population 85 and older may double.

Religious groups throughout the nation are showing increasing concern in recent years for the elderly poor. There are 16 homes for the aged operated by state conventions affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

In his opening remarks at the hearing, Sen. Williams summarized some of the major points made in the task force report. They are:

\* Many old Americans who are poor did not become poor until they became old. Approximately three out of ten people 65 and older--in contrast to one out of nine younger people--are living in poverty.

\* There is an income gap between older and younger people. This has long been recognized, but a less well-known fact is that this gap is widening. Generally speaking, elderly couples and singles have less than half the income of those still in the work force.

\* There is every reason to believe that the economic position of persons now old will deteriorate markedly in the years ahead. There is no good reason for thinking that low income in old age is a transitional problem that, given present trends, will solve itself.

\* Americans in middle-age or even younger should be concerned about projections and other studies which indicate that Social Security, private pensions and other forms of retirement income are not improving fast enough to reverse or significantly counter present economic trends.

Sen. Williams called the task force report "A disturbing document." He indicated that in addition to the hearing on economic problems of the aging, future hearings would probe into income maintenance of widows, health needs and rising medical costs, homeownership and taxation of the aged, employment in later years and early retirement trends and their meaning.

Among the many experts on economic problems of the aging who testified at the hearing was Edwin F. Shelley, president of the National Council on the Aging.

Shelley declared that the economic condition among aged persons in this country, "if fully and properly understood, would be considered intolerable by legislators and voters alike." He exploded the myth that Social Security and Medicare had reduced old people's financial problems satisfactorily.

One of the problems faced by the older people, Shelley said, is "the invisibility of the elderly poor," thus making the general public unaware of their tragic poverty conditions.

Shelley further declared that "our society has grown too complex to rely on individual generosity." He called for "a nationwide living standard, below which no elderly person in this country should be expected to live."

The hearing before the Williams' special committee on aging was not on specific legislative proposals but "to provide a public forum for intensive discussion" of the increasing plight of the aging population. It is expected that as further hearings are held, specific remedial programs will be proposed.

Students, Adults Schedule  
Meeting To Influence SBC

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--An estimated 100 to 150 Baptist students will meet here jointly with perhaps 50 to 100 adults prior to the Southern Baptist Convention to deal with church renewal and to plan ways to influence the convention to act on current theological and social issues.

The students are affiliated with a loosely-organized group called Baptist Students Concerned, which demonstrated at the Southern Baptist Convention last year in Houston, and held a dialogue session with SBC leaders expressing deep concerns about such issues as poverty, racism, and the war in Vietnam.

The adults are members of a recently-organized "action group" called the E. Y. Mullins Fellowship, named for the late Southern Baptist Theological Seminary president and SBC president who united the convention after a theological and church history controversy in 1999.

Both groups will hold two joint sessions at the St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church here on Monday, June 9, and will split into separate sessions on Tuesday, June 10, just prior to the opening of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Principal speakers at the joint sessions on Monday will be Samuel Hill, religion professor at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; and George Schweitzer, chemistry professor at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Open discussion on issues, not speeches, will be the major concern of both groups in their separate sessions, said the leaders of each organization.

The issues of concern to the two groups are somewhat different, but as Stuart Sprague, student at Duke University in Durham, N.C., said: "We are going in two parallel directions, and we have a lot of common ground."

Spargue said the general theme for the student meeting will be church renewal in the SBC, but specific issues of concern to the students will be student participation in denominational affairs, conscientious objection to military service; the church's relation to the conscientious objector, sex education; the racial revolution, and theological issues.

Theological issues will be the major concern of the Mullins Fellowship, said William C. Smith, religion professor at the University of Richmond and one of the key men in the organization of the group.

"Freedom and openness concerning the Bible is the main issue," said Smith. Another University of Richmond religion professor, Robison B. James, said the most basic issue was "Biblical authority and the response to the Criswell book."

James was referring to a resolution adopted by another organization called the Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, which adopted in Atlanta last February a resolution deploring the publicity and advertising given to a book by SBC President W. A. Criswell of Dallas on Why I Preach That the Bible Is Literally True. The professors claimed that the advertising campaign indicated that the position in the book was the official position of the Baptist Sunday School Board, which published the book and planned the advertising.

James, who was the author of the controversial resolution which promoted a storm of protest to the liberal views of the professors as expressed in letters to the editor and editorials in Baptist state papers, is serving as the unofficial secretary-treasurer of the Mullins Fellowship. He indicated that about one-fourth of the 80 persons who have sent in their \$2 dues are professors at Baptist colleges, and a few seminary professors.

Robert Alley, another University of Richmond religion professor who was chairman of the religion professors' resolution committee, said, however, that the Mullins Fellowship is seeking to maintain a separate identity from the Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, and involve a broader base of pastors, laymen, and denominational workers who are concerned about theological openness and freedom.

James recently wrote an article entitled, "Four Biblical Planks in a Platform for Denominational Renewal" appearing in the Virginia Religious Herald defending the Historical-critical approach to biblical interpretation. He concluded by saying the whole idea of a "platform" suggests a political party, but he disavowed that the Mullins Fellowship was a political party within the SBC. "Nevertheless, it is true that great things can be set in motion only by determined and organized groups."

James, Smith, Alley and Vernon Richardson, another Richmond pastor instrumental in the organization of the fellowship, denied rumors that the organization would nominate a candidate for convention president to oppose Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas. Traditionally, the SBC re-elects its president to a second term, and Criswell has been president for one year.

James said there was a possibility that Smith might be nominated for convention president against Criswell, but as an individual nomination, not as a nominee of the Mullins Fellowship.

Several of the student leaders involved in Baptist Students Concerned expressed concern about being connected with the Mullins Fellowship concerning the Criswell book controversy and its political connotations.

"It's very important to our group to maintain our own separate identity," said Sprague in a telephone interview. "We don't want to involve ourselves in that (the Criswell book) controversy. But we do have common concerns."

Another student, Terry Nichols of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., said that they had gotten a lot of criticism from people who say "we shouldn't even identify with the Mullins group."

Both Sprague and Nichols agreed that the joint meeting between the two groups came about somewhat "accidentally," and both said there was no official connection between the two groups.

The explained that both groups had contacted the same pastor, Avery Lee of St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans, about using the church's facilities for their meetings, that both groups wanted to hear Sam Hill and George Schweitzer, and that Bill Smith was a close friend of the students and a prime mover in the Mullins Fellowship.

Nichols said the two groups got together mainly through the friendship of Smith, who for 7½ years was state Baptist student director for North Carolina Baptists. "We know and love and respect Bill Smith," said Sprague. "He was the incentive for our going to the SBC in Houston."

Smith, in an interview, said that the effort of Baptist Students Concerned in Houston was a real inspiration to those involved in the Mullins Fellowship. "They did what some of us had felt has been needed for a long long time, so we asked ourselves, 'Why don't we back them up?'"

Smith and Alley talked about the idea of an organization of adults to meet with the students or give them support in some way. Alley said that after the publicity and strong reaction to the resolution adopted by the Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, an ad hoc committee of the three professors at University of Richmond, Schweitzer (who was in Richmond for a week of speaking engagements) and four Richmond ministers drafted a joint letter proposing the Mullins Fellowship.

Signers of the letter were Preston J. Taylor, associate pastor of First Baptist Church, Richmond; Thomas D. Austin, pastor of Montrose Baptist Church, Richmond; Raymond L. Spence, pastor of Second Baptist Church, Richmond; Richardson, pastor of River Road Baptist Church, Richmond; Smith and James. Alley and Schweitzer did not sign since they were listed in the letter as speakers for the meeting.

Alley will speak to a separate session of the Mullins Fellowship on Tuesday morning. Separate sessions for discussion of issues will also be held Monday and Tuesday afternoons.

Smith said that those who attend the sessions will **decide on which** issues to discuss, "but we won't try to take on the whole world--we'll deal mostly with theological issues."

James said that some possible issues for discussion might include book and literature publishing policies of the SBC Sunday School Board; the size of the SBC and efforts to have a more democratic representation within the convention; freedom of seminary professors to do their work with honesty, the "loss of some of our ablest and best educated youth," "inroads of special offerings on the Cooperative Program, and Biblical authority and the controversy over the Criswell book.

The students, meanwhile, will hold separate sessions on Monday afternoon, Tuesday morning and afternoon. The Monday afternoon session will deal with church renewal, while the Tuesday morning session will feature workshop sessions on issues. Tuesday afternoon will be devoted to a business session, said Sprague.

Sprague added that no decision had been made yet on whether the students will elect any officers or create a permanent organization. They may consider some resolutions for presentation to the SBC, or discuss specific ways students can be an influence on the convention.

Nichols said the students planned no demonstrations this year. "That was a good tactic last year, but I'm not sure it's useful this year," he said.

The workshop sessions will deal with such issues as seminary problems, sex education in the schools and churches, church involvement in social issues, how to effect change in convention structures, and church literature reforms, according to Tom Graves, student at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, who is in charge of the workshop sessions.

Neither the students nor the adults indicated there was any possibility that the two groups might merge. Rather, each person interviewed said the two groups want to maintain their separate identities.

"One thing we hope will happen is that people in the SBC who share our views will have a continuous group to which they can refer," Smith said. "We're not going to leave the SBC. We are Southern Baptist oriented, and we're going to stay in the SBC. We're not going to join the Presbyterians or Episcopalians. We are going to work for freedom and openness and honesty within the SBC."

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Funds Unavailable For Mercer  
Federal Grant Applications

5/2/69

MACON, Ga. (BP)--Mercer University's application for three federal construction grants will not go through this year due to lack of funds, according to a Georgia congressman in Washington.

Mercer trustees voted on Feb. 7 to seek three federal grants totaling \$570,000 to help finance erection of a fine arts auditorium, a swimming pool and an infirmary.

Rep. Jack Brinkley from Georgia, wrote of Mercer's application in reply to a query from W. Pierce Moore, pastor of Second church in Forest Park, Ga.

"According to the latest information from HEW (Department of Health, Education and Welfare), an application for a \$570,000 grant to assist in construction of three buildings was filed with the Higher Education Commission (in Atlanta) on Feb. 14, 1969. The application was not forward to Washington until April 10, 1969," wrote Rep. Brinkley.

"According to HEW there are no funds available at this time and the university will have to file a new application after July 1, 1969. The current application will not carry over to the new fiscal year."

Moore wrote to Rep. Brinkley after his church adopted a resolution urging the federal government to turn down Mercer's grants requests.

Moore is one of the sponsors of a group calling itself "Save Mercer--Oppose Government Grants" (SMOGG), which has urged churches and individuals to protest Mercer's request for government grants by writing to responsible federal officials.

The action by the Mercer trustees came despite Georgia Baptist Convention votes in 1965, '66 and '68 against tax funds for convention institutions.

The convention's Executive Committee on April 1 advised Mercer trustees to be prepared to report on their action to the convention when it meets in Atlanta, Nov. 10-12.

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