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Stevens Telegrams Four Doves:
"You Reveal Weakness, Cowardice"

FORT WORTH (BP)--A Southern Baptist executive has sent a telegram to four leading Senate doves, charging that their stand on the Vietnam war reveals "weakness and cowardice," and asking, "why don't you go to a country where the problems are your size?"

Paul M. Stevens, executive director of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission here, sent the telegram to Senators J. William Fulbright of Arkansas, Fred Harris of Oklahoma, Mike Mansfield of Montana, and George McGovern of South Dakota.

Stevens explained in an interview that he sent the telegram with the hopes that it would prompt the four Senators to accept his invitation for them to discuss the Vietnam war issue on one or both of two radio programs the commission produces.

Text of the telegram, according to Stevens, read:

"Would like to broadcast your response to the following: America's problems demand spiritual commitment and moral courage, while you reveal weakness and cowardice. If America's problems are too big for you, why don't you go to a country where the problems are your size?"

There was no immediate response from the four senators, who support the Vietnam Moratorium.

News reports of Stevens' telegram received wide coverage in the press and broadcast media nationally, with at least one major metropolitan newspaper in Texas carrying the story under an eight-column banner headline.

In an interview with Baptist Press, Stevens denied that he was calling the four Senators "cowards." He said he was only posing a "rhetorical question" to them.

He went on to define what he meant by a "rhetorical question," saying that "it is a question which is not necessarily designed to enter into conflict...and it is artificial in nature and posed without conviction one way or the other by the author."

Stevens said he had been trying for years to get leading Senators to appear on the radio programs, "MasterControl" and "Omniscope," but that "they avoid us like leprosy."

He added he had written to the Senators but had received no affirmative answer, so he sent the strongly-worded telegram hoping they would respond to it. A week later at a dinner party, he mentioned the lack of response to the editor of a Fort Worth newspaper, and the editor said a news story on the telegram might prompt a response, Stevens said.

The SBC agency head was quick to point out that he sent the telegram as an individual, not with the approval of the 37 commission members on his board.

Stevens said he was "not accusing them of moral weakness or lack of spiritual commitment, but asking them to comment on the question of the man and the state--a question asked by millions of Americans who want to know if those who are leading us lack spiritual commitment and moral courage or not."

Though he said the question was "rhetorical," Stevens obviously has strong views concerning Vietnam, and the tactics used by those participating in the Vietnam Moratorium.

"I support the position that we do not have to solve America's problems in the streets or on the battlefield," Stevens said. "America's problems should be solved as a result of prayer and seeking God's will for our nation -- that is where the problems ought to be solved."

The SBC executive said he had received no response as yet from the four Senators, and added that he really didn't expect a response.

He said that response from the general public had been favorable, with only one critical telephone call. U.S. Congressman Jim Wright of Fort Worth was among those who had called to "congratulate me personally," Stevens said.

Later, Rep. Wright visited Stevens at his home, telling of House and Senate resolutions he and several others had introduced supporting President Richard Nixon's position on the war, and opposing demonstrations as a technique to bring the war to an end. Stevens said he supported this position.

Reaction from the president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Jimmy R. Allen of San Antonio, Tex., however, was not so favorable. "It is a mistake to identify any particular policy of government in such a way as to say opponents to that policy are lacking spiritual commitment and moral courage," he said.

Allen, pastor of the First Baptist Church of San Antonio, added that "spiritual commitment and moral courage are not the sole possessions of the hawks of our country. It takes a great deal of moral courage and spiritual commitment to live by ideals which run counter to the consensus of society."

Stevens said he realized that his telegram might be interpreted in different ways by different people, but that he hoped it would be interpreted as "rhetorical question," and not as a personal blast against the senators.

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Campus Evangelism
Ministry Shaping Up

11/11/69

by Dallas M. Lee

ATLANTA (BP)--The campus evangelism ministry, a nebulous newcomer to Southern Baptist evangelism, has begun taking form.

Three major thrusts look to be strong in campus evangelism during the next year:

1. Christian witness missions--three to four days of special evangelistic emphasis on state campuses, with preparation and follow-up;
2. Special campus projects--use of personnel attached to Baptist Student Union programs for personal work among non-Christian students; and traveling folk-singing groups.
3. Pastor workshops--one and two-day seminars for pastors near college campuses, aimed at helping churches provide ministries to, for and through young people.

Workshops with pastors is the one off-campus effort, but if strong reaction is an indication, then this may develop into a major outreach to college students.

"No matter what is done on campus," said Campus Evangelism Director Nathan Porter of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board here, "if churches don't adjust to accept and relate to students we will never reach college students as a denomination.

"Students get turned on by evangelism, by contemporary Christian music, by social action and missions in the community, and then when they bring this enthusiasm and idealism and radical commitment into the church--blah, they quit, or they compromise or maybe a few stay and try to change the church," Porter said.

After pilot projects in Houston and Little Rock last year, Porter organized a series of five one-day workshops in California and involved about 100 pastors in Oakland, Sacramento, Fresno, Los Angeles and San Diego, Calif.

Their reaction, as spelled out in survey forms, ranged from "too many problems with no answers" to "a real inspiration to put youth to work in the leadership and decision-making processes of the church."

Format for the workshops was maximum discussion and minimum presentation by Porter and Milton Hughes, Baptist Student Union Director at the University of Southern California and the University of California at Los Angeles.

The workshops are sponsored jointly by the Home Mission Board and the state Baptist Student Union offices. The next one is scheduled at Stetson University at DeLand, Fla., for Florida pastors.

The Christian witness mission approach also is in the beginning stages, with the first one scheduled at Northwestern State College in Natchitoches, La., this fall. Others are scheduled for Portland State University, Oregon State University and the University of Washington.

"For the campus," Porter said, "this is sort of a substitute for the revival. Students relate their own Christian experience to the issues of the day and confront other students with the gospel personally."

The three to four day emphases will include programs at Baptist Student centers and then more personal contacts in the dormitories and on campus.

"The stress is on personal contact," Porter said. "We think of it as a penetration week."

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The special project emphasis of Porter's work is taking shape at the University of Texas in Austin, Towson State in Towson, Md., and Fresno State in Fresno, Calif.

On a state level, special projects include the use of folk-singing groups who perform on campuses, in churches and at resort areas that serve students.

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Northern Plains Baptists
Oppose Sex Education Move

11/11/69

BILLINGS, Mont. (BP)--The Northern Plains Baptist Convention, meeting here for its second annual convention, adopted resolutions opposing sex education in public schools, and expressing confidence in government leaders, and in the truth of the Bible.

More than 200 attended the sessions, adopting a total budget of \$275,460, including a state goal of \$89,840 and a \$10,773 or 12 per cent allocation to Southern Baptist world mission causes.

The convention is comprised of Baptists in four states--Wyoming, Montana, North and South Dakota, and is the second youngest Baptist state convention in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Without debate or dissention, the convention adopted a resolution asking Baptists in the four - state area to "seek divine guidance in combatting a growing amoral intrusion of the public schools in sex education."

Another resolution reaffirmed "gratitude for, confidence in, and allegiance to our country," asking for divine guidance for "those on whom the mantel of leadership has been placed."

Still another stated: "In the light of the critical attacks upon the Bible and church today, . . . we reaffirm our belief in the church and faith in the Bible, and recommit ourselves to the proclamation of biblical truth as the answer to the social and spiritual needs of our nation and the world."

Elected president of the convention was W. J. Hughes, pastor of Faith Baptist Temple in Grand Forks, N.D.

The convention meets next year at Capitol Heights Baptist Church, Bismark, N.D., Nov.3-5.

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