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News Analysis

Internal Dangers Threaten
America, Commission Says

HISTORICAL COMMISSION, SBC

by Beth Hayworth

WASHINGTON (BP)--Internal dangers threaten to destroy American society unless the nation reorders its priorities and gives attention to vast social reforms, the final report of the Presidential Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence said here.

Along with the report of the Kerner Commission issued in March of 1968, this 338-page book authored by 13 prominent Americans demands the attention of church and denominational leaders along with other responsible citizens.

Chaired by Milton S. Eisenhower, the commission said: "We solemnly declare our conviction that this nation is entering a period in which our people need to be as concerned by the internal dangers to our free society as by any probable combination of external threats.

"Haphazard urbanization, racial discrimination, disfiguring of the environment, unprecedented interdependence, the dislocation of human identity and motivation created by an affluent society," were listed as internal threats to the nation.

In a chapter entitled "Religion and the Problem of Violence," the commission challenged churches to help with social reforms particularly in the areas of housing, jobs, education and self-determination.

Also, churches could help to accomplish new national goals by working "to stimulate change in attitudes," the report stated, and by joining in "a national effort to help people to live together in unity and peace and human dignity."

The chapter on the role of religion and the problem of violence was written by Terence Cardinal Cooke, Archbishop of New York, a member of the commission. The suggestions to religious leaders and groups are a part of the formal presentation and recommendations which went to the President.

Upon receiving the report, President Nixon told Eisenhower that he is "gravely concerned" about the problems analyzed and that he will "study carefully" the 81 recommendations.

In the introduction, the commission summarized the facts of violence in the country. The findings indicate, it declared, that the United States, "is the clear leader" among modern democratic nations in violent crimes.

Such violence is "dangerous" and "disfiguring" to our society, the group declared. It is "making fortresses of portions of our cities and dividing our people into armed camps."

Although the commission made a number of recommendations concerned with the system of criminal justice and political structures on different levels, it hit hardest on the need for social reform as the basis for preventing violence.

"The way in which we can make the greatest progress toward reducing violence in America is by taking the actions necessary to improve the conditions of family and community life for all who live in our cities, and especially for the poor who are concentrated in the ghetto slums," the report stated.

The panel, representing a cross-section of distinguished citizens, was especially critical of the subordination of domestic issues to the claims of "national security."

"Concentration on 'national' and international problems at the expense of 'local' and domestic concerns has left us with an enormous deficit of unmet social needs and deeply-felt social injustices," the panel members agreed.

The most likely prospect for a life of violence was described in the report as "a young poor male...uneducated and without means of escape from an oppressive urban environment."

Further, the description continues, he is a person who wants "what the society claims is available (but mostly for others)" and who sees around him illegitimate and often violent methods being used to achieve material gain.

"To be also a Negro, Puerto Rican or Mexican-American and subject to discrimination and segregation adds considerably to the pull of these other criminogenic forces," the commission said.

In its list of 31 recommendations, the violence study group suggested that at the conclusion of the Vietnam war the nation increase the annual general welfare expenditures by about \$20 billion. The panel insisted that funds spent on welfare programs also "should continue to increase until essential social goals are achieved."

Among the long list of other recommendations, the following are some which are related to the church's ministry to persons:

- * Increased police-community relations activity in slum ghetto areas;
- * Carefully controlled programs that provide low-cost drugs such as methadone to addicts;
- * Analysis and treatment of violence-prone individuals;
- * Voicing community opinion against those who break the peace or coerce through mob action;
- * Better housing for low-income families;
- * A guaranteed basic income for all American families who cannot care for themselves;
- * Special ministries to persons displaced by technology or driven by poverty from rural to urban areas;
- * The development of government and private partnership to understand the complexity of the urban social system;
- * The creation of private citizens' organizations to work as counterparts of the offices of criminal justice in major cities.

Private and governmental institutions should also encourage the development of competing news media and discourage increased concentration, the report said.

Eight recommendations dealt with controlling or eliminating violence in television entertainment programs. Specifically, parents were encouraged to express disapproval of objectional programs, do a better job of evaluating shows, and "assert their basic responsibility for the moral development of their children."

Campus disorders and the problems of youth were the subjects of two chapters and 15 recommendations. In these the commission urged greater efforts to improve communications and decision-making processes and the recognition that the campus is a mirror of the "yearnings and weaknesses of the wider society."

It also recommended lowering the voting age to 18 years, reform of the draft, more opportunities for youth in public service, more funding for OEO (War on Poverty) inner-city youth programs and support for young people who wish to engage in voluntary, non-military service to the nation.

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Oklahoma Board Votes Kansas
Aid, Increases To SBC Causes

12/17/69

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--The Board of Directors for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma voted here to come to the financial aid of Baptists in Kansas, and to recommend more funds for Southern Baptist Convention mission causes in the future.

The board approved a recommendation to contribute, if necessary, \$10,000 a year for five years to the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, designated for SBC work in Kansas. The Kansas Convention of Southern Baptists faces \$1.6 million indebtedness in its church bond and loan program.

Several other Baptist state convention boards have taken similar action recently. T. B. Lackey, executive secretary of the Oklahoma convention, is a member of a committee of state convention executive secretaries who are trying to raise \$500,000 from the various state conventions to assist Kansas Baptists.

In other action, the Oklahoma board "encouraged" the committees charged with preparing state convention budgets for the period 1973-75 to preserve their present plan for assisting Oklahoma Baptist University and Baptist Student Union programs, but to also increase funds

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available for other state and Southern Baptist Convention causes, increasing the percentage of the budget going to SBC causes each year.

During the last few years, the convention has held at 43 per cent the amount going to SBC causes, and has given 75 per cent of all funds over the budget to Oklahoma Baptist University and 25 per cent to Baptist Student Union programs.

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2,003 Conversions, 40 New
BSUs Organized, Report Says

12/17/69

NASHVILLE (BP)--Statistics released from the student department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board revealed that 40 new Baptist Student Union programs were established on campuses during 1969.

The statistics resulted from the student ministry survey which is compiled each year from reports submitted by local directors of student work on all campuses which have a Baptist Student Union (BSU).

The 611 BSUs in the Southern Baptist Convention were instrumental in the conversion of 2,003 students in the past year, the report indicated.

A total of 416,149 Baptist students were registered in the survey conducted on all campuses that have Southern Baptist student work. More than 90 per cent of these students were attending non-Baptist schools, the report showed.

The statistical analysis revealed that Southern Baptists have a capital investment of \$17,036,662 in student centers throughout the United States. The total spent for Baptist student ministries was \$4,476,271 in 1969.

More than one-fourth (103,092) of all Baptist students in the United States attended some BSU activity during the year.

The student ministry survey revealed that there are 240 full-time, 84 part-time and 182 volunteer BSU directors in the Southern Baptist Convention.

A total of 3,090 students made commitments to church-related vocations through the Baptist Student Union ministry in 1969.

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