



BAPTIST PRESS

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Baptist VIEWpoll
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**Nixon's Support Among Baptists
Increases After Cambodia Invasion**

by Kenneth Hayes

NASHVILLE (BP)--The number of Baptist leaders approving of President Richard M. Nixon's handling of the Vietnam war has increased noticeably since the invasion of Cambodia, the latest Baptist VIEWpoll has revealed.

A survey of a representative panel of pastors and Sunday School teachers in the Southern Baptist Convention last October disclosed that 80.7 per cent of the pastors and 70.7 per cent of the Sunday School teachers polled approved of Nixon's handling of the war at that time.

A second poll of the same panel taken after the Cambodian invasion revealed that 87.7 per cent of the pastors and 85 per cent of the teachers approved of President Nixon's handling of the situation in Vietnam.

Thus Nixon's support in the Vietnam war effort increased 7 percentage points among pastors and 14 percentage points among Sunday School teachers polled. The panel is selected to give a cross-section of public opinion within the Southern Baptist Convention

On the other hand, Baptist pastors who disapproved of the President's handling of Vietnam remained about the same in the two polls, taken eight months apart, while opposition among the laymen dropped considerably.

The October poll revealed that 11.6 per cent of the pastors disapproved of the President's handling of Vietnam, and this position had decreased only 0.5 per cent to 11.1 per cent in the later poll.

Analysis of the data reveals that the President's increased support among pastors came from the undecided element in the October poll, which dropped from 7.7 per cent to 1.2 per cent in the later poll, plus a few who disapproved of his handling in October, 1969.

The change of attitude among Sunday School teachers toward the President's handling of Vietnam between the two polls was more dramatic than among the pastors.

Between the two polls, opposition among the teachers to the President's policy dropped from 17.5 per cent to 10.6 per cent. And, the undecided vote dropped from 11.8 per cent to 4.4 per cent.

It would appear that the President's decision to invade Cambodia not only won for him the undecided vote of several among the teachers and pastors, but it also won over the major portion of his previous opposition. It should be mentioned, however, the Cambodian invasion did cause him to lose some of his earlier support.

In comparing the reaction of Baptist leaders to the Cambodian invasion with the national trend, the Gallup Poll disclosed that the same thing occurred among the American people in general.

In comparing polls taken immediately before and after the invasion, Gallup learned that the President's support on Vietnam increased 7 percentage points and his opposition decreased 4 percentage points. Also, the undecided vote dropped 3 percentage points.

The VIEWpoll findings are based on 92 per cent response of the panel members.

Retired Child Care Leader,
Ellis Carnett, Dies At 75

BROWNWOOD, Tex. (BP)--Ellis L. Carnett, 75, retired Baptist child care leader, seminarian and pastor, died in Brownwood, Aug. 19.

Funeral services were at First Baptist Church, Brownwood, Aug. 21 at 4 p.m.

From 1952-63, Carnett was president of Buckner Baptist Benevolences which operates homes for children, aging people and unwed mothers in several Texas cities.

After retiring from Buckner, he did supply preaching and served as interim pastor of First Baptist Church, Brownwood, in 1968-69.

He held pastorates in Tennessee, Louisiana and Texas.

Carnett was a native of Missouri. He attended Texas Christian University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, both in Fort Worth. He is a former director of the school of music at Southwestern Seminary, and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans.

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Birmingham Church Votes
Narrowly To Retain Staff

8/20/70

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--After eight hours of debate and 10 ballots, members of First Baptist Church here narrowly defeated a motion to fire their pastor, youth director and entire church staff.

The vote was 237 in favor of firing the staff and 241 opposing it, a margin of four votes.

Opposition to the leadership of the staff has been intensifying, observers said, since a Negro woman and her daughter, Mrs. Winni Fred Bryant and Twila, presented themselves for membership on June 28.

The church was scheduled to vote on final acceptance of the Negro pair on the Wednesday night, Aug. 26, one week following the defeat of the motion to fire the staff on Aug. 19.

The business session relating to the effort to fire the staff was a continuation of a meeting started on July 22 when a motion was offered to dismiss J. Herbert Gilmore, pastor of the church for the past 23 months, and Miss Betty Bock, youth director for the past 10 months.

Gilmore was in Tokyo attending the Baptist World Alliance when the July business meeting was held. By a vote of 188 to 186, action was postponed on the motion until Aug. 19 when the pastor would be present.

In the debate, a Birmingham attorney, Ollie Bland, charged that Gilmore was "scripturally unsound" and responsible for the disharmony and disunity in the church.

Bland mentioned specifically Gilmore's views on the Genesis account of creation and the flood, the Jonah story, the virgin birth of Christ, and the infallibility of the Bible.

Harry Dickinson, professor of sociology at Samford University (Baptist) here, countered that there is a distinct difference between the law and the interpretation of the law. "What you have heard is not what Dr. Gilmore believes, but what Mr. Bland has interpreted he (Gilmore) believes," Dickinson said.

Another Birmingham attorney, Hobart Grooms Jr., the son of retired Fifth Court of Circuit Appeals Judge Hobart Grooms Sr., defended Gilmore, and claimed that "it is a bunch of bunk" to charge that Gilmore's theological views comprise the main issue.

Saying Gilmore is as "solid as a rock, theologically," Grooms stated that the only disunity the pastor had caused was in making some of the members so miserable they couldn't stand it.

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Miss Bock, who headed the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union work with the Young Woman's Auxiliary before joining the church's staff as minister of youth activities, said that she was primarily responsible for the action before the church, not the pastor.

Miss Bock, who directed the tutorial program which led Twila to accept Christ and she and her mother to join the church, said the "entire issue before us tonight is race."

Miss Bock listed the events leading up to the action of the night, and pointed out "there was no trouble until five Negro boys attended Sunday School in February." She added there were 14 resignations in the children's department in two weeks after this.

She also stated that in a deacon's meeting, the deacons had agreed the issue was not theology but race.

Miss Dorothy Scott, a former missionary journeyman to Africa, pleaded for defeat of the motion to fire the staff because of the effect it would have on mission work around the world.

"We pat ourselves on the back for working overseas, but we will not do something (to minister to Negroes) two blocks from our church."

Another layman who opposed Gilmore, Curtis Knapp, charged that the pastor had attacked the free enterprise system, which was paying his salary.

Knapp, who admitted he had attended the church only twice since Gilmore had been pastor, said he was disappointed with Gilmore's sermon and one by Foy Valentine, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, who spoke on one of the two times he attended.

"I come to worship, not hear politics and an atheist quoted from the pulpit," Knapp said. We need to "keep politics and church separate," he exclaimed.

Grooms, in a later discussion, refuted the charge of "politics in the pulpit," saying that a former pastor urged the church in 1954 against voting for a Roman Catholic for president, and "some of you say he is the greatest pastor we ever had. If that's not politics, what is?"

Grooms also stated that "...if we do away with this staff, we will do away with the church."

He warned that it would take "a ding-a-ling preacher to come to this pulpit and smile and say the words we want to hear." He added that such ministers "are cheap, and the woods are full of them."

Gilmore spoke only once during the eight-hour debate in answer to the charges. He praised the church for its commitment to stay downtown in a racially-changing neighborhood and minister to the needs of all.

"I simply took what you said seriously. I am merely implemented the commitment you have made," Gilmore said.

There were 10 different ballots, seven of them written, taken during the eight-hour meeting. Members of the church were given the written ballots as they entered.

An instructor at the Birmingham Baptist School of Nursing spoke during the debate and pointed out that though she had been a member for several years, she had not seen many of those present in the church before.

Numerous motions and amendments were made during the eight-hour session. A reporter for the Alabama Baptist, state Baptist paper in Birmingham, observed that the anti-Gilmore forces won all but the last ballot on the motion to fire the staff.

One of the motions would have excluded Miss Bock from the original motion to fire the pastor and youth director. Al Griffith objected to her being fired because there were no charges brought against her.

Another amendment would have commended the pastor and youth director and pledged the church's complete support. It was defeated by an estimated two-thirds majority.

A member of the church staff, Carlisle Driggers, minister of education, offered an amendment adding the names of Mac Goss, associate pastor; John Sims, minister of music, and his own name to the original motion listing church staff members to be fired.

Driggers' motion was approved. Another amendment to put off the vote for another week was defeated, as was an amendment to pay the staff through December 31.

As the final motion came before the group asking that the entire staff be fired effective immediately with salaries paid through Sept. 30, John Chandler, a former minister of music at the church now with the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, pleaded for the members to recognize that "the eyes of the world are upon you" as the action was taken.

It was 2:30 a.m. when the final ballot was taken, defeating the motion to fire the staff. When the result was announced, there was a sudden hush of silence. Some wept after the results were announced.

The situation in the church has attracted nationwide publicity. If Mrs. Bryant and Twila are admitted, they will be the first Negro members in the 98-year history of the church. They will be accepted or rejected as members by vote on Aug. 26 in regular business meeting when the church membership committee will recommend them as members along with all others who have joined during the month.



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