



**BAPTIST PRESS**  
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September 23, 1970

SBC Executive Committee Opposes  
Voucher Aid, Sets Structure Study

**NASHVILLE (BP)**--The Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention adopted here a resolution opposing a proposal in Congress to provide federal aid through a "voucher" system to private and parochial, as well as public, elementary and secondary schools.

The 62-member committee also authorized a committee review of the denomination's total organization structure, delayed until February any revision of the 1971 budget allocations should contributions fail to match the budget, heard a plea for election of students to SBC boards and agencies, and listened to addresses by the new president of the Southern Baptist Convention and Baptist World Alliance.

Committee members urged Southern Baptists across the nation to write to their Congressmen opposing the federal aid program proposed by the Office of Economic Opportunity which could provide funds to private and parochial elementary and secondary schools.

The resolution said that the proposed OEO program would provide "education vouchers" which would be given to children to purchase their education in either public or church-related elementary and secondary schools.

"Such a program is potentially contrary to historic principles of proper church-state relations which guarantee religious liberty in this country," said the resolution.

John W. Baker of Washington, D.C., associate director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, said he felt the proposal was unconstitutional and would provide tax dollars to church institutions by "subterfuge."

The OEO proposal would redefine the term "public schools" to include church-related elementary and secondary schools which adhere to civil rights requirements prohibiting the discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed or religion, the committee was told.

A few committee members voiced opposition to the resolution in discussion, but the resolution passed with only a few negative votes. Vanderbilt University Student John Bobbitt of Nashville, opposed the resolution, saying he felt it was unfair for parents whose children attend parochial schools to be taxed to support public schools their children do not attend.

Bobbitt was one of five students attending the Executive Committee as special observers.

One of the students, Gary Cook of Baylor University, Waco, Tex., urged the Executive Committee to take steps to enlist more student involvement in denominational affairs.

Cook proposed that (1) a time for dialogue between students and SBC leaders be set up during the convention's next meeting in St. Louis, June 1-4, 1971; (2) that the SBC elect students to its boards and agencies, and (3) that summer internships be established to involve youth in the work of all SBC agencies.

Each of the students expressed appreciation for being invited to the sessions, but Phyllis May of Peabody College, Nashville, observed that their non-voting status was a "kind of tokenism."

Most of the discussion in the two-day session centered on the education voucher resolution, and on a proposal from the Executive Committee's finance subcommittee that in the light of economic conditions, 1971 budget allocations to SBC agencies be reduced if necessary so that no one agency would receive more than 7.32 per cent over the 1970 allocations until all the agencies received their authorized increase.

The proposal, after lengthy discussion, was postponed until the February meeting of the Executive Committee when it will be re-evaluated in the light of giving trends.

With almost no debate, the Executive Committee authorized a 15-member committee to review the total organizational structure of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The committee, headed by E. W. Price, Jr., of High Point, N.C., was appointed by action of the Executive Committee last February. It was asked to review the 42 recommendations approved by the SBC in 1958-59 to see how these recommendations have been implemented and make any recommendations for further implementation necessary.

The total denominational structure committee of 1958-59, sometimes called the Branch Committee because it was headed by the late Douglas M. Branch of Raleigh, N.C., was conducted with the aid of the management firm of Booze, Allen and Hamilton.

Both the president of the Southern Baptist Convention, Carl Bates of Charlotte, N.C., and the president of the Baptist World Alliance, V. Carney Hargroves of Germantown, Pa., brought brief addresses to the committee urging Baptists to work together in unity.

Bates, pastor of First Baptist Church in Charlotte, told the committee that on the basis of letters he receives daily, he felt there is much misunderstanding of Baptist polity as indicated by pastors wanting to know how they can pull out of the SBC or keep their churches "independent." He explained that all SBC churches are "independent."

Hargroves, pastor of the Second Baptist Church, Germantown, Pa., advocated Baptist unity around the world in efforts of evangelism, world peace and understanding, and religious liberty and human rights. He predicted that by the time the Baptist World Alliance met again 1975, there might be 35 million Baptists around the world.

During the two days of meetings here, editors of Baptist state papers attended two informal briefing sessions in which Bates discussed trends he saw in the SBC and James L. Sullivan, executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Sunday School Board, discussed problems facing the denomination's publishing house.

In other actions taken by the Executive Committee, resolutions were adopted expressing appreciation for the work of three denominational workers recently resigning or planning to retire, approved of a plan by the SBC Home Mission Board to purchase its headquarters building in Atlanta, adopted an operating budget of \$343,000 for the Executive Committee in 1971, approved requests from two seminaries for changes in the usage of previously-approved capital needs allocations, selected the Sheraton Hotel in Philadelphia as the headquarters hotel for the 1972 convention, recommended a change in the Christian Life Commission's program statement to eliminate work assigned to the SBC Home Mission Board, and elected two lay representatives to the Baptist World Alliance Executive Committee--Mrs. Robert Fling of Pleasantville, N.Y., and Doyle E. Carlton, Jr., of Wauchula, Fla.



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STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN SBC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: John Bobbitt (left), a student at Vanderbilt University in Nashville and one of five students participating in the SBC Executive Committee meeting in Nashville, expresses appreciation for being invited to sit in on the sessions. All five made similar remarks, but Phyllis May of Peabody College, Nashville (seated, second from left) added that to sit in without the right to vote is a "sort of tokenism." Garry Cook of Baylor University, Waco, Texas. (seated, third from left), urged the SBC to set up a time for dialogue with students during the SBC in St. Louis, to elect students to all SBC boards and agencies as voting members, and to sponsor summer internships at SBC agencies for students. Also participating in the sessions were Michael Maxie of University of Oklahoma, Norman, (seated at right), and Steve Horrell of Belmont College, Nashville, (not pictured). BP PHOTO.