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September 29, 1970

Survey Discloses Extent Of Press
Freedom At SBC, State Board Meetings

CARBONDALE, Ill. (BP)--A survey conducted by the editor of the Illinois Baptist here disclosed that all state convention Executive Board meetings, and most Southern Baptist Convention agency meetings, are open to the press, especially Baptist editors.

Robert J. Hastings, editor of the weekly newspaper of the Illinois Baptist State Association, conducted the survey to determine the extent of freedom of the press with regard to attending and reporting on Baptist board meetings.

Hastings wrote to all heads of Southern Baptist Convention agencies, and to executive secretaries of Baptist state conventions, asking them if editors of Baptist state papers are welcome at their board meetings.

Without exception, the state convention executive secretaries replied that Baptist editors are free to attend their board meetings, Hastings reported.

On the whole the 21 Southern Baptist Convention agencies "are to be commended for their openness," Hastings wrote. He quickly added that three of the SBC-owned seminaries "could be more specific."

"At Southwestern (Baptist Theological) Seminary in Fort Worth, largest in the world, no outsider is admitted to a board meeting unless he is 'invited,'" Hastings reported.

He quoted Southwestern Seminary President Robert Naylor as saying, "According to our bylaws, the trustees must invite to attend any who are not actual board members."

Hastings observed that "this puts the burden of responsibility on the press, or anyone else, to 'ask.' Visitors should feel free to attend without such formalities," Hastings said.

The survey disclosed that Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., has no policy concerning attendance at board meetings, though the seminary public relations office "reports promptly to Baptist Press," according to president Olin T. Binkley.

Hastings wrote that the seminary should establish some policy on the question, because "this is too delicate a matter to leave open to debate, or the domination that might come from a strong personality serving as president or board chairman."

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, the other institution mentioned, did not have a president at the time the survey was made, but acting president James D. Mosteller said the bylaws included no restrictions forbidding press attendance at the board meetings.

Adding that he would have to check, Mosteller wrote that during a fund campaign in 1967-69, representatives of the fund raising firm helping the seminary attended subcommittee meetings only by invitation and left when their items were concluded.

Hastings, in his editorial interpretation of the survey results, wrote that the policy at New Orleans "is vague and needs to be spelled out more clearly."

Hastings also had comments on the response from the Hospital Agency of the Southern Baptist Convention, which is in the process of being discontinued as an SBC agency. Hardy M. Harrell, executive secretary of the hospital agency, replied to the survey by saying:

"It has never occurred to me that reporters would not be welcome. There are, of course, meetings that are strictly executive sessions.... Ordinarily we would expect the courtesy of seeing generally a copy of a release before it has been released."

Hastings observed editorially that the hospital agency could be liable for criticism by "expecting to see copy before it is released. While nothing may be intended by this restriction, it carries the overtone of need for 'official' approval," Hastings observed.

The report on results of his survey, carried in the Illinois Baptist, included direct quotes from each of the other SBC agency heads. The executives often used the same words, saying such things as "we'd be delighted for state editors to attend," "the press is welcome," "never had a closed meeting," "open with no restrictions," etc.

In reports on the state convention executive board meetings, the survey disclosed that all state board meetings are open to the press, but there are some restrictions against state Baptist editors attending the subcommittee meetings, and in some cases requirements for them to attend such sessions.

Hastings concluded that "few state editors have the time or inclination to attend any and every board and committee meeting throughout the state. But there is a difference," he said, "in feeling a compulsion to attend and a climate that makes him feel welcome."

He observed that the larger question is not whether the meetings are open to the press, but open to the public.

"My first conviction is that all state and SBC deliberative bodies be open primarily to the Baptist public," Hastings wrote. "The key question is not whether the press is welcome, but whether anyone who wishes may attend!"

"Baptist deliberative bodies decide issues funded by the Baptist public," he continued. "The Baptist public has a right to know the deliberations that lead to certain actions. Because the Baptist public is invited, naturally the Baptist press would be welcome.

"A private corporation, operated for profit, has a right to discuss its business in private," Hastings observed. "But a Baptist deliberative body is not for profit, and it does not ordinarily earn its own funds. Although there are exceptions, the money comes from the freewill gifts of the rank and file Baptists in the pew."

He added that he did not foresee a "great influx of visitors" at board meetings, but claimed "the principle should be established that Baptist business is conducted in the open, to be viewed by the Baptist people who are paying for it.

"For the most part, this is being done," he concluded. "Where it is not being done, it should be. And where it is not spelled out in the bylaws of the various bodies, it should be."

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Full text of the report on "Access to Information in the SBC" appears in the September 30 issue of the Illinois Baptist. Copies are available on request from the weekly paper, Box 271 Carbondale, Ill. 62901.

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Langley Elected New Leader
Of D.C. Baptist Convention

9/29/70

WASHINGTON (BP)--James A. Langley, pastor of the Pennsylvania Avenue Baptist Church here, has been elected executive secretary of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention.

Langley, 45, succeeds M. Chandler Stith who has been in this position for the past 28 years. The new executive secretary will assume his responsibilities Nov. 1.

The District of Columbia Baptist Convention, made up of 59 churches, is affiliated with both the Southern and the American Baptist Convention.

A native of Alabama, Langley is a graduate of Baylor University, Waco, Tex., and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. Langley holds the bachelor of divinity and doctor of theology degrees from Southwestern Seminary and the master of theology degree from Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, N.J.

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BP Photo mailed to Baptist State Papers.

Use Printed Page Evangelistically,
Patterson Urges Baptist Committee

EL PASO, Tex. (BP)--The outgoing director of the Baptist Spanish Publishing House here issued a challenge to an international advisory committee to "encourage church members to want to be evangelists by means of the printed page."

Frank W. Patterson, director of the Spanish Baptist Publishing House for 27 years who is leaving to promote use of Baptist literature in Spanish-speaking Latin America, called on members of the international committee which advises the publishing house to lead out in instructing church members in the appropriate uses of printed materials.

"Much help is available by means of radio and television," Patterson said, citing responses to Bible correspondence courses offered on the radio by Argentine Baptists." He urged more use, however, of printed materials.

"We must speak to people where they are. We want to reach the city worker, the farmer, the student, the housewife," he continued. "But we must do this in terms of where each one is--in terms of education, culture and personal interests."

"For the most part, we now have a favorable environment," he said, quoting a Jesuit priest who predicted five years ago that there would be 50 million Evangelical Christians in Latin America within 50 years.

These opportunities, Patterson explained, challenged him and his wife to spend the next 18 months in Latin America on special assignment.

"We are not literature salesmen," he said. "But in cooperation with you and others like you in each country, we want to help promote the use of Christian literature for evangelistic outreach and Christian education," he told the committee members, most of whom live in Latin America.

In a chapel service attended by committee members and the Publishing House staff, portraits of both Mr. and Mrs. Patterson were unveiled and tribute was paid to their 30 years of work with the Publishing House.

Thomas W. Hill, a Southern Baptist missionary and the new director of the Publishing House, presided at the special chapel service, and pastor Carolos Quilo of Guatemala, a member of the advisory committee, was chapel speaker.

The chapel service honoring the Pattersons and the unveiling of the portraits came as a complete surprise to the couple.

Last April the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, which operates the Publishing House as its only "mission" in the United States--named Mr. and Mrs. Patterson special literature promoters for Latin America.

They expect to leave El Paso early in 1971, going first to San Jose, Costa Rica, for a six-month residence in Middle America. Later they will move on to Colombia and Argentina.

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New Rule On Smut Mail.
Passed By U.S. Senate

9/29/70

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Senate has passed unanimously a bill requiring unsolicited pornographic advertising to be labeled as such and permitting the return of such material to the sender at no cost to the person who receives it.

The measure, approved by a 79-0 vote, in the Senate, has been sent to the House of Representatives.

Sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D., Mont.), the bill as finally written by the Senate Post Office and Civil Service Committee would require the following label in outstanding type on all unsolicited pornographic advertising:

"The enclosed material is sexually oriented advertising, and may, if unrequested by the addressee, be returned to the sender unopened at no cost to the addressee."

Return postage would be paid by the sender plus a service charge of not less than 50 cents, according to the bill's requirements. The measure calls for a penalty of \$5,000 for each peice of such matter that is not labeled, or for failure to pay the return postage.

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The bill as introduced by Mansfield and sponsored jointly by several other Senators, would have required labeling any matter that "may be" considered obscene. The determination of what is obscene would have been left to the "sole discretion" of the addressee himself to decide what is obscene or offensive, but this was stricken from the amended bill finally passed.

In hearings several weeks ago the committee heard complaints that such a broadly written bill could cover many popular magazines, classic literature and even the Bible. In reporting the bill to the Senate, the committee noted that it had amended the bill in such a way "as to minimize these possible misapplications."

In its report, the committee said it weighed carefully the requirements for effective legislative action against unwanted smut advertising with the responsibility to protect every citizen's rights guaranteed by the First and Fifth Amendments to the Constitution.

"In the balance against those rights also is the constitutional right of privacy which has been clearly defined by the Supreme Court," the committee said.

The committee noted in the report that trespassers and uninvited salesmen may be "ordered off the doorstep" of private property or removed by the police. Through the bill as amended, the committee said it was seeking to assure this same right to protect the privacy of one's home from unsolicited pornography.

"If the sanctity and privacy of the home are protected by the common law right to eject trespassers, so should ordinary, decent family life be protected from pronomographic materials moving gratuitously into the mailbox from the mail stream," the report read.

This measure as amended involves no censorship, the report further stated. "It is silent on mail matter ordered or requested by the addressee, who, when he breaks the seal knows what to expect."

However, the bill is designed, the committee declared, "to protect the family member, possibly an impressionable child, from the shock of unsuspectingly opening and unmarked envelope and finding within it lurid and blatant sexual photographs or other sexual material."

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President Urges
Prayer For Peace

9/29/70

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Richard Nixon has asked "all Americans to pray that the scourge of war be lifted from the earth, and that the anguish of those who have felt the horrors of war be eased."

The President made his plea to the nation as he proclaimed Wednesday, October 21, as "National Day of Prayer, 1970."

An ancient prayer, "Lord, Make Me An Instrument of Thy Peace," was used as a text for the President's proclamation.

Commenting on the prayer, the President said, "The path to peace is through the hearts of men, and it seeks a particularly noble reward: The ability to examine one's own role in bringing harmony and tranquility to others."

At the same time the President proclaimed a national day of prayer, he also issued nine other proclamations for special events during October and November.

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Mrs. Ruby Hastings,
Editor's Mother, Dies

9/29/70

MARION, Ill. (BP)--Mrs. Ruby Hastings, mother of the Illinois Baptist Editor Robert J. Hastings of Carbondale, Ill., died here at the age of 77.

Mrs. Hastings was not only the mother of the current editor of the Baptist state paper, but was baptized and married by the first editor of the Illinois Baptist, W. P. Throgmorton.

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BAPTIST PRESS

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DECEMBER
OCT 1 1970
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CUTLINES:

NEW D. C. BAPTIST EXECUTIVE: James Langley, pastor of Pennsylvania Baptist Church in Washington D.C., has been elected executive secretary of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention, effective Nov. 1. (BP) Photo