(BP)--FEATURES
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention
produced by Baptist Press
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
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May 4, 1971

SBC President Urges Harmony
At Convention in St. Louis

EDITOR'S NOTE: Following is an interview with Carl Bates, president of the Southern Baptist Convention and pastor of First Baptist Church, Charlotte, N.C. The interview was conducted by Toby Druin, associate editor of the Biblical Recorder, Baptist state weekly newspaper in North Carolina. Bates reviews his first year as president of the SBC, reflects on the upcoming annual SBC session in St. Louis, June 1-3, and indicates he is willing to serve an additional term as president.

QUESTION: How would you describe your first year as president of the largest Protestant-evangelical religious group in the nation?

ANSWER: Busy! And demanding. But I would be untrue to the experience to fail to add that it also has been deeply satisfying. I have found myself at times really assured that somebody somewhere is praying for the president of the Southern Baptist Convention. There has been liberty and freedom that I could not have had any other way. At times I had speaking assignments under fatigue and found myself literally carried away in the spirit. I know this is because my own church has kept its promise to pray for its pastor while he attempts to carry this responsibility. Many close, personal friends across the convention have prayed for the president.

Q. You were elected president at what was labeled by some observers as a "bitter" convention, and at that time you announced that you hoped to be a peacemaker. Do you feel that you have accomplished your task in bringing a measure of healing to the SBC?

A. This remains to be seen. I have tried to speak kindly of any person or persons whose point of view is different from my own. I have granted him the right to differ without shutting him out or marking him off, and I have tried to be fair and considerate and Christian toward the various viewpoints around which people have polarized. But I have done this not because I have felt that it would issue in a "cooling down" of the situation, but because it is the way I live. I have lived here in North Carolina with people with whom I have differed almost diametrically, but we have been warm friends and brothers in Christ. We have tried to promote a great program to the glory of our Lord, and we have succeeded.

Q. Are there other factors that have led to the more peaceful atmosphere that seems to prevail?

A. There has been a wide concern for a greater spirit of harmony that may turn out to be as important a concern as the things that caused the bitterness at Denver. Whatever happened there happened because people were concerned. This same concern now seems to express itself and direct itself toward harmony because I think we saw what could conceivably happen if we did not assume the vital marks of a true Christian believer. Our Lord said, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another". "And he gave the critical and unbelieving world the right to examine the genuineness of our profession. I think our concern now is that the world shall know that we really are true followers of Jesus Christ. It is my personal hope that in St. Louis this will be the dominant thought in our minds and hearts--that we shall all pray the report goes out from our meeting that these people truly love one another, and love God.

Q. There continues to be some discussion and criticism of the handling of the withdrawal of Volume One of the Broadman Bible Commentary as ordered by the Denver Convention. How do you feel about it?

A. I feel we are obligated by the action in Denver to give the Sunday School Board a real chance to resolve the matter.

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Q. Have you found any particular issues that seem to be uppermost in the minds of Southern Baptists?

A. There seems to me to be as much concern expressed about the various colleges in the Southern Baptist Convention as any other individual part of Southern Baptist life. And there is the normal discussion of what is taking place in our seminaries. There is as much concern about our approach to education as about any other phase of Southern Baptist life.

Q. Do you see any significant trends in Southern Baptist life?

A. I think I see evidence of a real revival among Southern Baptists. This is not just a surface thing; it is a deep searching for the presence and power of God.

Q. What is your appraisal of the apparent spiritual awakening among the nation's youth?

A. These young people have finally realized that they cannot build their lives on man-made systems. They have begun to sense that they have been the victims of manipulators and persons with vested interests. They are all at sea and are in a great search for meaning and a foundation on which to build their lives. It could be the start of the greatest turn to God this world has ever seen if we could get the message to them in language they can understand. This is one of the greatest challenges we face. There has always been a generation gap, but there never has been a credibility gap such as they see in the church. Now that these young people have recognized the credibility gaps in other approaches, we must find ways to present to them the New Testament. If we don't do this we are going to miss an opportunity that may never come again.

Q. What are some of the questions you are most often asked?

A. It depends on who I am having dialogue with. If it is college-age or teen-age young people, they want to know what the New Testament teaches. Surprisingly enough, they are not interested in the various philosophical and theological expressions of the Christian faith. They ask me, "Tell us in understandable terms what the New Testament teaches about the Christian faith." Pastors usually want to know what impressions I have gathered about Southern Baptist life and most are grasping for some encouraging signs.

Q. Do they have reason for encouragement?

A. Yes! If they could see as I have seen, Southern Baptists and their commitment to world outreach, they would be greatly encouraged. I believe Southern Baptists have the greatest opportunity to speak to the world in our history, provided we speak out of one of our basic principles--the New Testament as the only and all-sufficient source of faith and practice. If we will stand on that and speak with courage and boldness in this hour we will claim our greatest opportunity. I am convinced of this.

Q. Southern Baptist support of the Cooperative Program appears to have leveled off somewhat, although the first quarter of 1971 showed a healthy increase. What do we as Southern Baptists need to do in the area of stewardship?

A. We must improve our per capita giving and the various states must find ways to increase the percentage of the Cooperative Program dollar going to worldwide causes. Then, too, it is the first and primary concern of every Southern Baptist agency to promote the Cooperative Program because it is the lifeline of all that we are trying to do.

Q. You have kept a rigorous schedule as SBC president. How many miles have you traveled and how many states have you visited? Do you know how many speeches you have made?

A. I don't have any idea how many miles I have traveled. I have limited my travel to between Sundays. I promised my church I would be at home on Sundays and Wednesday nights, and it is a good thing I made the promise. I have received more than 150 invitations to speak on various programs and a quick calculation will show that I could spend the next three years away from home. I don't know how many speeches I have made, but I have spoken to many state conventions, evangelism conferences and associations and to the various boards and agencies of the convention. This constitutes a part of the pressure on the president, having to prepare an address that may not be at all like a sermon. But I am like

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most pastors who have come to this place--I give the same speech and make different applications and put in new illustrations. But someone said that sooner or later if I were permitted to preach I would make a straight line to the ministry of the Holy Spirit and spend most of my message there.

Q. How have your presidential duties and responsibilities affected your church?

A. During the year the church has paid off its indebtedness on two city blocks of downtown Charlotte. The church has put $150,000 cash in the bank and the men under my associate, Joe Burnette's direction have let a contract for new buildings ($1.8 million). I have no hesitation in saying that this church would go on if I were gone every Sunday. This is true for two reasons--I have had the finest assistant that any pastor ever had in Joe Burnette, and we have the finest leadership in our young men and the ones who were here under the former pastor when he was president. (C.C. Warren, whom Bates succeeded at FBC, Charlotte, was SBC president in 1956-57). The church has taken it in magnificent fashion. Our attendance is up, our offerings are up and the membership has shown some gain.

Q. Has there been any single incident during the year that you would consider a highlight of the year?

A. There have been many thrilling and exciting and gratifying experiences. I will never forget the closing night of the North Carolina evangelism conference when nearly 20,000 young people attended a youth rally. Another highlight was my opportunity to participate in the Foreign Mission appointment service for 27 missionaries in Louisville. I suppose it was as moving an experience as I have had all year. Close to this was the experience in New Orleans when J. D. Grey gave me the mementoes from my old hotel room where I had my conversion experience.

Q. What are a few of the things you would most like to see Southern Baptists accomplish?

A. There are two or three things we must do: 1. Southern Baptists must not only increase their activity but must deepen their commitment. I think if we let people chide us for being activists and let them hinder our efforts, we ought to bow our heads in shame. 2. We have got to find a way to combine personal and social aspects of the gospel. We must not become divided in this hour in our nation on whether we will "do" the gospel or "preach" the gospel. 3. We must find new ways to say as well as live the same old truth which has not changed in this generation and will not change in the next. If we can find ways to speak to the great vacuum that exists in the present generation the wonderful truth of the gospel of God, and if we can show that it makes a differnce in our live, it could issue in a great turning to Christ. We can be pure in the midst of immorality; we can keep our purpose in a world gone mad; we can find ways to love one another in a world that is being destroyed by hate.

Q. Will you allow your name to be placed in nomination for a second term as president?

A. If Southern Baptists want me and if I can help in some way by accepting an additional term, I will do my best if re-elected.

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Summer Missionaries
Drop Significantly 5/4/71

ATLANTA (BP)--Budget limitations have caused a 100-student reduction in the number of student summer workers appointed this year by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's department of special mission ministries.

A total of 840 students will serve compared to 938 last year. Of the 840, 640 are financially supported by the board and 200 are state Baptist Student Union appointees under the board's supervision.

This is the first time that the number of appointees has dropped significantly since the program began in 1944, said Emery Smith, associate secretary in the board's special mission ministries department. "The only regret we have is that we are not able to appoint as many as were requested," he added. The decrease in appointees has never exceeded five students.

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The range of mission projects to which students are assigned continues to broaden each year, Smith said. For the first time, three students will work out of government offices in Washington, D.C. With their headquarters at Johenning Baptist Center in the nation's capitol, they will conduct surveys and do research to determine how adequately the needs of Washington's poor people are being met and to set some priorities as to which needs are most acute.

Other students will work in resort areas and a number of Christian rock groups will tour the country. One group will set up a storefront sandwich shop-coffeehouse on Coney Island. Another group will live in migrant camps, working in the fields during the day and leading out in Christian-oriented activities during the evening.

The majority of the students will be involved in inner city ministries and many will lead Vacation Bible Schools and survey work.

Approximately 1,300 students applied for appointment this year. Their application revealed a growing mission consciousness, Smith said.

"The students who applied constantly expressed a desire to be used in something more than just pittling jobs," Smith said. Working with state missions directors, Smith and other department members sought to place students in projects that will constantly call on their creativity.

The department is also assigning church youth choirs to mission areas. More than 58 youth groups have already been placed and another six are awaiting assignments. These groups will pay their own traveling and living expenses. They will spend one or two weeks in mission points, presenting concerts in the evening and conducting Vacation Bible Schools or surveys during the day. Smith said he hopes that they will be used to relieve summer missionaries to meet additional needs for the period that they are in the area.

Thanks to "Campers on Mission," a new organization for Christian campers, summer missionaries working in resort or camp grounds will have additional volunteers. Christian Campers place blue fish emblems on their trailers or cars for identification. While they are in camping areas they are to seek opportunities for ministering to their fellow campers. Summer missionaries have been told to look for the blue emblem and call on these campers for assistance, Smith said.

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East German Baptists Demand
Recognition of East Germany 5/4/71

SCHMIEDEBERG, East Germany (BP)--Baptist leaders in East Germany met with the government's minister for religious affairs here, urging support for the calling of a European Security Conference and for official recognition of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany).

"We demand that our state receive its rightful place in the fellowship of nations and fully participate in the solution of the problems facing all humanity," the Baptist leaders said.

"We support the proposal that both German states (East and West Germanies) become full members of the United Nations and its constituent groups," they continued. The group also urged "equal rights for all nations of Europe," including official recognition.

The meeting of the Baptist Executive Board with the government minister of religious affairs, Hans Siegewasser, took place at the new Martin Luther King House, a Baptist center here, according to reports in European Baptist Press Service and the East German Protestant news service.

Siegewasser told the Baptist group of the development of the socialist society in East Germany, speaking of the common humanistic responsibility of Christians and Marxists. He also told of political tasks to maintain security in Europe and peace in the world.

Herbert Moret of Eberswalde, president of the East German Union of Evangelical (Protestant)-Free Churches (predominantly Baptist), responded.

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"We value the fact that Christians are called on the work with Marxists in common human responsibilities in building up the state and the great common efforts toward security and peace in the world," Moret said.

"As Christians who take seriously the biblical exhoetation to be peacemakers, we d clare our readiness to participate in these tasks of practical cooperation," he continued.

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Capital Punishment Process
Upheld By Supreme Court 5/4/71

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Supreme Court upheld in two combined cases the procedures used by juries to impose capital punishment in the 38 states which presently allow the death penalty.

In so doing, the court said: "In light of history, experience and the present limitations of human knowledge, we find it quite impossible to say that committing to the untrammelled discretion of the jury the power to pronounce life or death in capital cases is offensive to anything in the Constitution."

Justice John Marshall Harlan delivered the 42-page opinion, settled by a six to three vote of the court. Justices William Joseph Brennan Jr., William O. Douglas and Thurgood Marshall dissented.

Still not settled by the court is the question whether the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution with its ban on "cruel and unusual punishment" forbids the death penalty under any circumstances. The court has not indicated when, or if, it will rule on several cases asking for such a ruling on appeal before the Supreme Court.

The main question before the court in McGautha V. California and Crampton V. Ohio was to decide "whether the federal Constitution proscribes the present procedures" for sentencing done by juries in capital cases.

Both McGautha and Crampton, the two claimants, said that "absence of standards to guide the jury's discretion on the punishment issue is constitutionally intolerable." Both were sentenced to death for first-degree murders.

In upholding the rights of juries to determine their own procedures in imposing the death penalty, the court said that the states "are entitled to assume that jurors confronted with the truly awesome responsibility of decreeing death for a fellow human will act with due r gard for the consequences of their decision and will consider a variety of factors..."

For a court to attempt to catalog the appropriate factors in this elusive area, the opinion continued, "could inhibit rather than expand the scope of consideration, for no list of circumstances wou ld ever be really complete. The infinite variety of cases and facets to each case would make general standards either meaningless 'boiler-plate' or a statement of the obvious that no jury would need."

Justice Brennan, in a 64-page dissent, said that the court, in these two decisions, was faced with "nothing more than stark legislative abdication.

"Not once in the history of this court, until today, have we sustained against a du process challenge such an unguided, unbridled, unreviewable exercise of naked power," he said. Almost a century ago, the court found an almost identical California proc dure constitutionally inadequate to license a laundry, he added.

"Today we hold it adequate to license a life," Brennan said, declaring that he would reverse the death sentences for both claimants.

Brennan continued that the court's opinion "rests upon nothing more solid than its inability to imagine any regime of capital sentencing other than that which presently exists."

According to Citizens Against Legalized Murder, a N w York-based organization, there are 648 prisoners, including seven women, presently on death row. There are 99 in California, 78 in Florida, 43 in Texas and Louisiana, 42 in Ohio, and the remaining 343 in 33 other states.

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Supreme Court Upholds
Restrictions on Obscenity

WASHINGTON (BP)---In a joint decision, the U. S. Supreme Court upheld two major federal laws oagainst obscenity. One action held that Congress may constitutionally prevent the mails from being used for distributing pornography. The other upheld the right of customs agents to seize obscene materials from U. S. citizens at the port of entry.

Both decisions reverse the action of lower courts which had declared the laws unconstitutional.

In a seven to two decision, the court held in United States V. Reidel that the right to read obscene materials in the privacy of one's home does not carry with it the right of someone else to sell those materials.

Justice Byron White delivered the opinion of the court. Justices Will am O. Douglas and Hugo L. Black dissented.

Reidel had advertised in the newspaper a booklet, "The True Facts ab ut Imported Pornography," for sale to persons over 21. He was indicted for mailing copies of the booklet in violation of a law which prohibits the knowing use of the mails for the delivery of obscene matter.

In his complaint, Reidel claimed that the First Amendment gave him the right to do business in obscenity and to use the mails in the process.

Citing two earlier opinions, Roth V. United States in 1957 and Stanley V. Georgia in 1969, the court affirmed the convnction that "obscenity is not within the area of constitutionally protected speech or press."

The court asserted again that the state has no business telling a man, sitting along in his own home, what books he may read or what films he may watch. "Our whole constitutional heritage rebels at the thoughts of giving government the power to control men's minds," the court quoted from Stanley.

The focus of this language, the new opinion declared, "was on freedom of mind and thought and on the privacy of one's home." The right to have and view materials in private "are independently saved by the constitution," the court declared.

But, the court continued, the right to have "does not require that we fashion or recognize a constitutional right in people...to distribute and sell obscene material."

Commenting on its decision in a "postscript," the court said that "there is developing sentiment" that adults should have complete freedom to produce, deal in, posses and consume whatever communicative materials may appeal to them and that the lawy's involvement with obscenity should be limited to those situations where children are involved.

"This may prove to be the desirable and eventual legislative course," the court said. "But if it is, the task of restructuring the obscenity laws lies with those who pass, repeal, and amdn statutes and ordinances," namely, the Congress.

In the other case, United States V. 37 Photographs, the court ruled six to three that customs agents were acting constitutionally when they removed from the luggage of a returning foreign traveler obscene materials intended "solely for private use."

Citing the Stanley case also, the court said that "the private user...may not be prosecuted for possession of obscenity in his home (but) that does not mean that he is entitled to import it from abroad free from the power of Congress to exclude noxious articles from commerce.

"A port of entry is not a traveler's home," the court said, reversing the opinion of a lower court.

Three justices dissented in the latter opinion were Justices Hugo L. Black, William O. Douglas and Thurgood Marshall.

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SBC PRESIDENT PLANS FOR CONVENTION: Carl E. Bates (center), president of the Southern Baptist Convention, goes over convention plans with Joe Burnette (left), president elect of the Southern Baptist Religious Education Association, and William Jarvis (right), music director for the Southern Baptist Convention, June 1-3, in St. Louis. Bates is pastor of First Baptist Church, Charlotte, N. C.; Burnette is associate pastor, and Jarvis is minister of music for the Charlotte church. (BP) Photo by Toby Druin