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January 27, 1972

New "Church Lobby Bill"
Urged in the U.S. Senate

WASHINGTON (BP)--A new bill has been introduced in the U.S. Senate to permit church groups and other "public charities" to lobby members of Congress and state legislatures concerning legislation of interest to them without jeopardizing their tax exemption.

The bill's provisions apply only to direct communications by these groups to legislative bodies on "matters of direct interest to the organization." The provisions also do not apply to grass-roots appeals to the general public, and they do not apply to efforts to influence elections, both presently restricted for tax-exempt organizations.

The new bill, S. 3063, replaces an earlier bill, S. 1408, both sponsored by Sens. Edmund S. Muskie (D., Maine) and Hugh Scott (R., Pa.), the Senate minority leader. When the first measure was introduced last March, 23 senators from both parties joined Scott and Muskie as co-sponsors.

The chief difference between the two bills is that the amended version applies only to a public charity if substantially more than one-half of its expenditures are normally in pursuance of its exempt functions other than lobbying.

"Substantially more than one-half" is interpreted in the Tax Reform Act of 1969 as "65 per cent," and "normally" refers to a four year period of an organization's experience, according to notes accompanying the Senate bill.

Muskie said that since the earlier bill was introduced last Spring, there has been "broad-scale public support" for the legislation. However, in the course of the discussions on the proposal, he continued in a speech to the Senate, concern was expressed that the original bill might be interpreted to permit a public charity to devote its predominant activities to legislative efforts.

The proposed liberalization of the present restrictions on influencing legislation extends only to public charities--"churches, schools, hospitals, and certain other groups with broad public support," Muskie explained to the Senate. The bill does not modify the present restrictions imposed on private foundations by the Tax Reform Act of 1969, he said.

"This legislation would redress a serious inequity in present tax law," Muskie told the Senate. He explained that the Internal Revenue Code permits businessmen to deduct the costs of lobbying on matters of direct interest to them, and certain noncharitable, tax-exempt organizations have the same privilege, without adverse consequences to their tax-exempt status.

"Yet similar legislative activity by a charity can cause loss of its tax exemption," Muskie declared, urging quick action to remove such "unjustifiable discrimination."

The Maine senator observed that churches and other groups "with diverse perspective and expertise" are important sources of information on legislative issues which they should be permitted to communicate.

According to the Muskie-Scott bill, "none of the following activities shall be deemed 'carrying on propaganda,' or otherwise attempting to influence legislation:

"(A) Appearances before, submission of statements to, or sending communications to, the committees, or individual members of Congress or of any legislative body of a state, a possession of the United States, or a political subdivision of any of the foregoing with respect to legislation or proposed legislation of direct interest to the organization; or

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"(B) Communication of information between the organization and its members or contributors with respect to legislation or proposed legislation of direct interest to the organization."

The bill was referred to the Senate Finance Committee which has not yet scheduled public hearings.

-30-

Texas Baptists, Mexicans
Plan Farm Reform Effort

1/27/72

DALLAS (BP)--An agricultural missions effort aimed at making desert areas of northern Mexico "blossom like a rose" has been planned by Texas Baptists with approval of the Mexican government.

Texas Baptists will provide technical assistance to "help people help themselves" in areas where the rainfall is too scant for farming. Baptists also will supply implements, seeds and equipment supplies.

"Working together in a bond of brotherhood, we can transform barren land into green farms capable of producing great quantities of food," said T. A. Patterson, executive secretary of the Baptist General Convention of Texas here.

Patterson said that while the new agricultural development is a Baptist effort, "we want to extend a helping hand to every person in need, regardless of creed or race.

"We want to carry out this ministry in the spirit of the Good Samaritan about which Jesus talked. At no point," he added, "must we lose sight of the priority of introducing men and women to Jesus. This project provides us with an open door for Christian witnessing."

The agreement calls for Baptist volunteers to help develop farm land about 10 miles into the states of Coahuilla and Chihuahua. However, the scope of operations will extend along the Rio Grande River for about 250 miles between El Paso and Big Bend National Park.

"There has been a growing enthusiasm by Texas Baptist farmers and agricultural engineers to help the Mexico border communities help themselves through the use of better farming and live-stock methods and facilities," said Elmin Howell, coordinator for the Texas Baptist River Ministry.

Howell said the River Ministry was begun by Texas Baptists several years ago to involve more people from upstate churches in missions efforts along the 889 miles of the Rio Grande River.

Since the program began, said Howell, an estimated 50,000 laymen and youth have given vacation time to dig wells in Mexican communities, build churches and conduct Bible Schools along the Rio Grande. Also along the river, Texas Baptists operate four medical mobile clinics in buses and trucks. The clinics are regularly staffed by volunteer doctors and nurses from throughout the state, said Howell.

The new program of technical aid by volunteer specialists was only recently worked out between Baptists and the director general of Mexico's Rural Industries, Senor Lic. Pedro de Koster and his associates. A Midland, Tex., rancher, D. L. Kite, and his wife sold their interest in 11 ranches and an irrigated farm and moved to Marfa, Tex., to direct the agricultural venture for the first year.

"It offered us an opportunity for full-time service to Christ in an area close to our hearts," said the former rancher, in explaining why he gave up a large business to direct a venture that offers him no material gain. The Mexican government assigns the property in an ejido (a rural community democratically organized) to its inhabitants to be used for their livelihood.

The general director of Ejido Organization for Mexico, Sergio Reyes Osorio, said, "It is really encouraging to perceive the integrity the program will render and how beneficial it will be to the communities in this area."

In approving the agricultural assistance pact, de Koster expressed appreciation to the Baptists: "We know of your motivations and with our agreement, we encourage you to continue in your projects."

Howell said an agricultural feasibility study showed most soils in the area to be developed are quite fertile, but the annual rainfall is only six to ten inches, and varies widely.

The area is in the third year of a severe drought, and most ejidos above Presidio have reported two consecutive crop failures.

Irrigation would change the picture entirely, said Howell. He said the possibilities through cooperation and assistance are good in El Comedor, Mexico, where people have irrigated vegetable gardens and water piped into their homes. The water is brought to El Comedor from mountain springs through a pipeline laid by the residents with aid from members of Alamo Heights Baptist Church, Midland, Tex.

"The farmers said they are willing to work hard to feed, clothe and educate their families if we provide them with management information, irrigation water, farm machinery," said Howell. He added that assistance in some cases would include flood protection, land leveling, land clearing and ditching.

Howell said the equipment needs include tractors and plows, planters and cultivators, irrigation equipment, heavy dirt moving equipment, maintenance supplies and livestock equipment.

He said Donald Baird, president of the Coleman Cotton Company, Inc., offered to donate and install a complete cotton gin in the area to be developed as soon as cotton production could be brought up to a level to warrant it.

-30-

C O R R E C T I O N

On Baptist Press story mailed 1-26-72, headlined, "Seminary Extension Creates New Home Study Institute," please change graph 2, line 2, to read: "an accrediting agency for schools of correspondence," rather than "an accrediting agency established by the Office of Education for the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare" as sent. Technically, the Office of Education did not "establish" the Home Study Council, but it did "recognize it" after careful investigation. Thanks.

--Baptist Press

Lubbock Property Gift Aids
Seminary by Nearly \$500,000

1/27/72

FORT WORTH (BP)--Nine years ago, Mr. and Mrs. Homer Jackson of Lubbock deeded two pieces of West Texas property to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary here through the Baptist Foundation of Texas.

Little did they know that today that property would net the seminary nearly a half-million dollars.

One of the tracts of land, a 177-acre farm in Hockley County, was sold in 1963 for \$78,500 shortly after it was given to the seminary. The proceeds were used to construct a building in the Student Village.

The other piece of property was a 160-acre tract in Lubbock County. Later the City of Lubbock extended its boundaries to include the acreage. The value of the land multiplied and sold last fall for \$400,000.

That amount, less closing costs and expenses, is now part of the permanent endowment of the seminary. The combined benefit of the two pieces of property was \$478,500.

"When we began thinking about our will, our thoughts centered on the seminary, and we decided our investment there would be the most profitable mission work we could do," Jackson said. "We've never regretted our decision, and are completely happy in it."

Their identification with the seminary, however, began much earlier than 1963 when they decided to deed the property to the Baptist school.

"We have been interested in Southwestern forever," Jackson quipped. In 1916 he heard L. R. Scarborough, president of the seminary, speak at Bryan Baptist Academy where he was a student. Later, J. Howard Williams, who was to become president of the school, was Jackson's pastor at Sulphur Springs, Tex.

A native of Cooke County, Tex., Jackson is a graduate of Baylor University, Waco, Tex., and Texas Tech, Lubbock, where he earned the master of arts degree. Mrs. Jackson, a native of Sulphur Springs, is a graduate of North Texas State University, Denton, Tex.

Together, they taught a total of more than 80 years in public schools in Texas. Now semi-retired, they live in Irving, Tex., and devote much of their time to travel.



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