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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

**NATIONAL OFFICE**  
460 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219  
Telephone (615) 244-2355  
W. C. Fields, Director  
Jim Newton, Assistant Director

**BUREAUS**

**ATLANTA** Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041  
**DALLAS** 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996  
**NASHVILLE** (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lynn M. Davis, Jr., Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37203, Telephone (615) 254-5461  
**RICHMOND** Jesse C. Fletcher, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (703) 353-0151  
**WASHINGTON** W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

March 9, 1972

**Baptist Joint Committee Opposes  
Tax Funds for Non-public Schools**

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in semi-annual session took steps to hold the line on "separation of church and state," and at the same time took positive action on several church-state issues facing the nation.

The Baptist body expressed support for quality public education for all children and opposed tax support for non-public schools. It further approved plans looking toward a national conference on religion and public education in 1973 or 1974.

The joint committee asked its staff to help define church relationships to government agencies such as the Internal Revenue Service and Social Security, and also heard a subcommittee report on Baptist concern for national welfare reform.

The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs is a denominational agency sponsored by nine Baptist conventions in the United States. John W. Baker is acting executive director, while the agency is seeking an executive to succeed C. Emmanuel Carlson who retired a year ago.

Facing the report of President Richard Nixon's Commission on School Finance and anticipating proposed legislation to provide public funds for parochial schools, the Baptist Joint Committee reaffirmed its position opposing such funds.

The agency adopted a resolution expressing strong support for "public education for all children without regard to race, color, religion, sex or national origin."

It further urged "that all actions designed for quality education be consistent with this nation's historic position on separation of church and state, including no tax support of non-public schools."

On a related subject, the joint committee approved plans looking toward a national conference on religion and public education in an effort to find answers to problems on the subject.

It was reported that an ad hoc group of national leaders may be formed in the near future to make plans for such a national conference, to be held in 1973 or 1974 at the latest.

Objectives for such a conference, according to the joint committee, include exploration of the nature of public education and the place of religion in public education, identification and clarification of problem areas, and recommendation of solutions to the problems relating to religion and public education.

An editorial in the Report from the Capital, monthly publication of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs edited by W. Barry Garrett, and a newly formed National Council on Religion and Public Education have each expressed support of such a national conference.

A subcommittee of the joint committee worked on problems relating to ordained ministers and Social Security, and the relationship of churches to the Internal Revenue Service.

Among the issues discussed was a proposal now pending in Congress to provide a voluntary agreement to treat ministers as employed persons under Social Security.

Although it took no position on the proposal, the joint committee referred the matter to its staff requesting more information to be communicated with sponsoring Baptist bodies.

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Several unanswered questions remain, the committee pointed out, including: How does treatment of a minister as an "employee" under Social Security affect his standing as self employed under Internal Revenue Service? What will be the cost to congregations and denominational agencies if they agree to enter the voluntary agreement to treat ministers as "employees" under Social Security? What problems will be created in Social Security records for ministers who transfer from churches or agencies to others which have not entered the voluntary agreement?

Another subcommittee of the joint committee studied proposals for the reform of the national welfare system, observing that both government and churches have proper concern for the welfare of the people.

With this dual interest, the subcommittee observed, there can be areas of conflict and tension as well as areas of cooperation.

The subcommittee reported that the members felt the Baptist Joint Committee has an obligation to inform the constituencies about developments in national welfare programs, and to give leadership as points of tensions and conflicts arise, especially when religious liberty and church-state separation become involved.

In another action, the joint committee voted to send a communication of commendation to every Congressman who voted against the proposed non-denominational prayer amendment to the U. S. Constitution. The amendment was defeated in the House of Representatives last November.

The joint committee instructed its personnel committee to have a recommendation to make concerning an executive director on or before the next meeting in October, if at all possible.

A report was also presented on plans for the annual Religious Liberty Conference sponsored by the committee and scheduled Nov. 8-10 in Washington. Theme for the conference will be, "Religious Liberty and the Bill of Rights."



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460 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219

LYNN MAY HO  
HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
127 9TH AVE. NO.  
NASHVILLE TN 37203

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