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May 5, 1972

**Church Lobbying Aired
 Before House Committee**

WASHINGTON (BP)--Religious, civil liberties and legal organizations argued in testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee here that restrictions on churches and other charitable organizations to "influence legislation" should be lifted or liberalized.

Testimony was presented urging the softening of restrictions against such groups by representatives of the National Council of Churches of Christ and several member denominations, the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Bar Association, and several others.

Although the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs did not appear at the oral hearings, John W. Baker, acting executive director, prepared a written statement for the Ways and Means Committee. His view was based on action by the Baptist Joint Committee in its March meeting.

At issue were bills introduced by some 70 members of the House of Representatives and a bipartisan coalition in the Senate. Most of the bills seek to clarify existing legislation concerning specific restrictions now imposed on churches and charitable, scientific, educational and other organizations affecting their lobbying activity.

The current Internal Revenue Code grants tax exemption to such organizations, "no substantial part of the activities of which is carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting, to influence legislation," and which do not participate in political campaigns.

William P. Thompson, stated clerk of the general assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., represented the National Council of Churches at the hearing. He emphasized the fact that the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution places churches in a unique situation as well as guarantees to them the rights of free speech, press, association and petition.

Referring to the First Amendment, Thompson declared: "These clauses mean that churches cannot be controlled, sponsored, or supported by government. Government cannot become entangled or involved in the internal affairs of churches, nor define their doctrines or tenets for them.

"Similarly," he continued, "we believe that it is not the province of government to define or evaluate the purposes of churches, nor how they shall serve those purposes, nor how much of that service may be devoted to legislative issues, nor to what public the churches' efforts on these subjects must be directed."

The General Synod of the United Church of Christ and the Board of Christian Social Concerns of the United Methodist Church joined and endorsed the testimony offered by Thompson.

In his written presentation to the committee on behalf of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Baker did not take a position on any of the proposed bills on church lobbying now in Congress. The written testimony did, however, say that the Muskie-Scott bill in the Senate was moving in the right direction. This bill liberalizes the definition of "substantial part" of the activities of churches in influencing legislation.

Baker interpreted this view of the Baptist Joint Committee as meaning "that the state should not want to define for the churches their religious purposes and their mission.

"Even if the state does desire to do so, it is constitutionally prohibited from that action by the religion clauses of the First Amendment," Baker continued.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) took the position that denial of tax exemption for churches and other charitable organizations that otherwise qualify, on the basis of their efforts to influence legislation is a violation of the first amendment guarantee of freedom of speech and the right to petition the government.

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Hope Eastman, acting director of the Washington office of ACLU, documented four points in her testimony:

1. The Internal Revenue Code cannot curtail churches and other organizations, that otherwise qualify, from participation in the legislation process as a condition of tax exemption.
2. Current restrictions on the legislative activity of churches and similar organizations are unclear and vague, thus giving to the Internal Revenue Service room for the practice of "selective enforcement."
3. The government lacks a compelling interest in restricting the legislative activity of tax exempt organizations.
4. Current limitations on the activities of church groups violate the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of religion.

Mrs. Eastman stated that, although ACLU prefers a lifting of all restrictions on the legislative activities of churches, the proposed liberalizing bills "are an improvement over current law."

Two spokesmen from the Nixon administration appeared to be in conflict with each other, thus leaving the views of the President unclear. Russell E. Train, chairman of the President's Council on Environmental Quality, endorsed the view that tax exempt groups should be able to lobby without losing their tax exempt status.

Edwin S. Cohen, assistant secretary of the Treasury, argued that the liberal proposals for tax exempt organizations are "too broad." He urged the Ways and Means Committee to modify the bills to restrict the organizations' activity in lobbying the "grassroots" to build public support for legislation.

Other witnesses either supported or opposed the liberalizing proposals for divergent reasons.

Governor George Wallace of Alabama, although not appearing in person, sent a statement to the committee in which he said that he is "unalterably opposed to this legislation in that it can serve no useful purpose in this country."

The Wallace statement asked Congress to "remove the tax exempt status of nearly \$200 billion in property and income of private foundations and the commercial properties owned by the churches throughout the country."

Members of the Ways and Means Committee explained to Wallace's representative that much of such tax exemption was already removed by the Tax Reform Bill of 1969.

Mac Asbill Jr., of the American Bar Association, commended the proposals to liberalize regulations on the legislative activities of charitable organizations. However, he said that the American Bar Association would favor lifting all such restrictions.

Rep. John R. Rarick (D., La.) opposed any further "special privilege" to presently tax exempt organizations. He charged: "This is not populist legislation; it cannot benefit the people in general. On the contrary, this is elitist legislation that can only benefit the ultra wealthy already in power in this country. This legislation would only legalize the pressure activities of the minority rule of those already in control of our society."

Rep. John B. Anderson (R., Ill.) testified in favor of more legislative activity on the part of tax exempt organizations. "We cannot function properly and judiciously as a legislative body," he declared, "if we deny ourselves full access to all pertinent information and viewpoints. Such a limitation is not in keeping with the free and open democratic process upon which we pride ourselves."

Rep. Joe Waggoner (D., La.) vigorously attacked church efforts to influence legislation as a violation of separation of church and state.

The church representatives just as vigorously asserted that churches had a right and responsibility to address themselves to moral and ethical questions that come before government.

Astronaut James Irwin
To "Launch" SBC Week

PHILADELPHIA (BP)--Astronaut James Irwin of Houston has been added to the agenda of the "blast-off" event of Southern Baptist Convention week in Philadelphia, June 4-8.

Irwin, an active Baptist layman who piloted the lunar module for Apollo 15, will give his testimony during the opening Sunday evening fellowship session, June 4, sponsored by the Woman's Missionary Union of the SBC.

The Baptist astronaut already had been scheduled to speak on Monday afternoon during the Woman's Missionary Union Convention on the topic "The Moon Missionary." Irwin was contacted in Cape Kennedy by WMU leaders who observed the Apollo 16 flight and also requested him to give his personal testimony on Sunday night. His Sunday night talk will be entitled, "I Felt God's Presence on the Moon."

Baptists of all other conventions have been invited to the Sunday meeting along with Southern Baptists. The session, open to the public, is scheduled at the Philadelphia Civic Center Convention Hall at 5:30 p.m., June 4.

Other features of the opening Sunday evening session will include a keynote address by W. A. Criswell, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Dallas; a hymn sing backed by a New York orchestra; a presentation of Philadelphia Baptist work by Kenneth Chafin of the SBC Home Mission Board; and greetings from Baptist World Alliance President V. Carney Hargroves of Philadelphia.

The Woman's Missionary Union Convention will move to the downtown Academy of Music auditorium for its sessions on Monday, with a featured address by D. Elton Trueblood, noted author and lecturer, at 1:45 p.m. Trueblood, who will be on the return lap of a speaking mission in Ireland, will address the group on "The Validity of the Christian Mission."

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PHOTOS sent to Baptist state paper editors

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North American Baptist
Women to Meet in Toronto

5/5/72

TORONTO (BP)--Mrs. Atinuke Bamijoko, past president of the Baptist Women's Missionary Union of Nigeria, will head a lineup of speakers scheduled to address the North American Baptist Women's Union when it meets here, Oct. 17-19.

Mrs. I. Judson Levy of Wolfville, Nova Scotia, president of the North American Baptist Women's Union, announced plans for the program for the October meeting.

An arm of the Baptist World Alliance, the North American Baptist Women's Union meets every five years between Baptist World Congresses. The sessions this year will be held at Yorkminster Park Baptist Church beginning the evening of Oct. 14 and concluding at noon, Oct. 19.

Mrs. Bamijoko will be the first major speaker in the opening session. A member of the Baptist World Alliance Executive Committee, she is on the faculty of the Reagan Memorial Baptist Girls' Secondary School of the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

Other major speakers will be Mrs. R. L. Mathis of Waco, Tex., president of the Baptist World Alliance Women's Department; and Robert G. Bratcher, translator for the American Bible Society, best known for his work on Today's English Version of the New Testament (Good News for Modern Man).

In observance of the 20th anniversary of the founding of the North American Baptist Women's Union, addresses will be brought by three former presidents: Mrs. Edgar Bates of Weston, Ontario; Mrs. Maurice B. Hodge of Portland, Ore.; and Miss Alma Hunt of Birmingham, Ala.

Representatives of each of the 14 organizations which comprise the Union will report on the work of their groups.

Worship will be led by Mrs. Frank Wigginton of Philippi, W. Va., long-time treasurer of the Union. Music will be coordinated by Mrs. William Wright of Toronto, vice president of the Toronto Baptist Women's Association and choir director for Renforth Baptist Church here.

A committee headed by Mrs. Frank Taylor (277 Hillcrest Ave., Willowdale 441, Ontario, Canada), is handling requests for reservations and hotel accommodations, according to Mrs. Levy.

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