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May 23, 1973

**Wood Hits New 'Prayer' Effort
As 'Dangerous, Unnecessary'**

WASHINGTON (BP)--The executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs labeled as "unnecessary and dangerous to the concept of a free society" a new effort by constitutional prayer amendment advocates to circumvent the Supreme Court's ruling on prayer in public schools.

James E. Wood Jr., the Baptist executive, claimed that a legislative proposal supported by a number of women's groups from across the nation, "must be viewed as an abridgement of the First Amendment and in no way an aid to real, meaningful prayer."

The suggested 33-word proposal to be introduced in Congress, as proposed by the women's groups, reads:

"Be it enacted that the Supreme Court of the United States shall not have jurisdiction to enter any judgment, decree or order, denying or restraining, as unconstitutional, voluntary prayer in any public school."

The new tactic by the prayer amendment forces was introduced at a prayer breakfast during a two-day meeting of Leadership Foundation, Inc., a Washington-based agency made up of a number of national women's organizations and individuals.

The suggested bill could be passed with only a simple majority rather than the two-thirds majority vote in Congress required for a constitutional amendment. This "would not interfere" with efforts for a constitutional prayer amendment, the sponsors say, but would be a means for getting prayer in the schools "by September of this year."

The Baptist leader said that it is "lamentable" that after a decade since the historic decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court on state-sponsored prayers that "so many Americans still have failed to understand either the limits or the reasoning of the court's decision."

Wood continued: "This is in spite of the fact that the court clearly did not rule out religion from the curriculum of the public schools, but, in effect, affirmed that the public school is not a place for worship, but for learning."

"Today, as never before in our history, there is happily widespread interest in and attention given to the role of religion in the curriculum of the public schools," Wood observed.

In a statement released in Washington, the Baptist executive noted further that the proposed legislation by the Leadership Foundation, Inc., does not have the support of organized religion.

"Rather, Catholic, Protestant and Jewish bodies repeatedly have expressed opposition to the various prayer amendments which have been offered in Congress," he said.

Two hundred and twenty-five women, and a few men, registered for the two-day seminar sponsored by Leadership Foundation. According to a spokesman for the meeting, the participants were representatives of "Republican clubs, churches and women's groups."

Senators Howard Baker (R. Tenn.) and Richard S. Schweiker (R. Pa.) and Rep. Chalmers Wylie (R. Ohio) were among a handful of congressional leaders present for parts of the program.

Wylie sponsored the unsuccessful effort in the House of Representatives in the previous session of Congress to get a prayer amendment passed. Baker and Schweiker are leading the current effort in the Senate.

It is not known at the present who in Congress will sponsor the new suggested legislation.

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Hobbs Says Lack of Understanding
Is SBC's Most Critical Problem

5/23/73

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Warnings against making the Statement of "Baptist Faith and Message" a "creed," former Southern Baptist Convention President Herschel H. Hobbs said the most critical problem facing Southern Baptists today is "their lack of faith and understanding of one another."

Hobbs, recently retired pastor of First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, traced the background leading up to the decision by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1963 to reaffirm and revise the convention's 1925 statement on the Baptist Faith and Message. Hobbs was chairman of the committee recommending the statement for adoption.

He warned against looking to "The Baptist Faith and Message" as a "Baptist Creed," stating: "It is not a creed, but a statement.

"The preamble," he continued, "carefully protects the right of the individual conscience." He added that he feels some Baptist would make a creed of the document by focusing on the body of the statement and ignoring the preamble.

Speaking to faculty and students at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary here in a lecture-dialogue session, Hobbs, visiting professor of preaching at the seminary pointed out that the committee which he chaired was appointed just across San Francisco Bay 11 years ago when the SBC met in San Francisco.

The committee, composed of all presidents of Baptist state conventions in the SBC, was asked to study the 1925 statement and recommend for approval at the convention in 1963 in Kansas City a "similar statement" or an introductory statement which might be used as an interpretation of the 1925 statement.

Hobbs, chairman of the committee and president of the SBC at the time, said that the committee "was able to make a general statement which would apply to the vast majority of grass-roots members." After much discussion and debate, the statement was approved by the 1963 convention in Kansas City.

Hobbs pointed out here that the 1925 statement came into being at a time when Baptists faced the questions being raised concerning evolution, while the 1963 statement was the result of discussions concerning "the nature of scripture."

Hobbs said the 1925 statement has been reaffirmed three times by convention vote. "If it ever needs changing, it should be done in order, and not on the spur of the moment. If the document is to be amended, it should be amended by committee as it was in 1963. It should never be changed simply on a motion from the convention floor."

Hobbs said he does not find a greater trend toward liberalism today than in any other time among Southern Baptist seminaries.

"I think 90 per cent of all Southern Baptists are right down the middle theologically, with five per cent on either side," he said. Hobbs also quoted an Oklahoma newsman who once said, "A liberal Southern Baptist is a conservative Protestant."

The problem the convention today faces is not a matter of conservative versus liberal, he noted. "The problem we face is combining people from all sections of the country with varying ideas," he said.

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Hobbs, who has been the principal preacher since 1958 for the Baptist Hour, international radio program produced by the SBC Radio-Television Commission, recently retired after 23 years as pastor of First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City.

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Gardner Joins
Music Department

5/23/73

NASHVILLE (BP)--John F. Gardner III, minister of music for four years at Olivet Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, is a new consultant in church music administration for the church music department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Gardner, a native of Little Rock, Ark., holds the bachelor of church music degree from Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, and the master of music education degree from the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

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"No, No, Nanette" Cast Told
"No, No," on Portland Hotels

5/23/73

PORTLAND (BP)--Even the 58-member cast and crew of the hit musical "No, No, Nanette" received a "no, no," answer when they requested hotel accommodations in Portland during the week of the Southern Baptist Convention here, June 12-14.

According to a report in the Oregon Journal by entertainment editor Arnold Marks, the advance manager for the hit musical, Paul Aglim, "pressed the panic button" when he could find no accommodations for his troupe of 58 actors, singers and dancers.

The group is scheduled to present "No, No, Nanette" at the Paramount Theater for five performances starting June 12.

The play is to coincide with the sessions of the Southern Baptist Convention, and hotels are booked solid during the week.

Aglim, the veteran advance man for the company headed by Don Ameche and Evelyn Keyes, said it is the first time in 10 years he has had a housing problem for any of his shows.

The catchy column describing the group's plight by Marks in the Oregon Journal, however, apparently did the trick.

The next day, someone got them a place to stay.

Later, word was received that about 250 rooms had been cancelled by individuals and charter groups that had planned to attend the convention, but cancelled plans at the last minute.

The "no, no," for at least 250 more persons seeking rooms in Portland, could thus be changed to "yes, yes."

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