



Missionary-Minister Plants
Churches in the Northwest

By Walker Knight
For Baptist Press

The congregation files in beneath a huge deer head mounted above the door.

Hardwood floors, polished for weekly dances, reflect the sun from many windows. Light green walls and white ceilings enable the weak lighting system in the Grange Hall to be adequate.

Floyd Merrill, 60, knows "God's house" can be a rented Grange Hall in Tigard, Ore., as well as a red brick building with a steeple.

He has been responsible for starting 21 Baptist churches, most of them in Oklahoma, Oregon and Washington. In the next 10 years he fully expects to start 20 more.

The goal belongs only to Merrill. No one is setting it for him. No one is putting pressure on him to reach it. No one has to. Merrill has a built-in starter and a concern for people that's as big as the world.

His church-starting gifts have not gone unnoticed. Late in 1974, Southern Baptists in Oregon, and Washington teamed with the church extension department of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board (HMB) to appoint Merrill as a "new work starter." Then they turned him loose in the Tualatin Valley, Portland's newest bedroom community.

The valley sweeps down from the rolling hills that guard Portland's west side, and stretches more than half of the 70 miles to the Pacific Ocean. Superhighways invite the commuter to live farther and farther out. In Washington County, a major part of the valley, there are 180,000 people, only 30 percent of them affiliated with churches.

Merrill is determined to help to change the figures.

"The average new church reaches 40 persons the first year. I believe we can do that anywhere," he says.

HMB church extension staffer John Allen, however, is aware that not everyone can accomplish such tasks.

"In realizing this, we came up with the concept of the 'church starter,' a phase one approach in beginning new congregations," Allen says. "We have long known that certain men have the gifts to start new work, while others find the task frustrating."

Recent seminary graduates, though they may be energetic, generally are not trained or psychologically prepared to begin work from scratch, according to Allen.

"Consequently, we have looked for people like Floyd Merrill and his wife Betty, and we ask that they not concern themselves with buildings or even with detailed organizations.

"We will want to follow their work, say in 18 months, with someone well qualified for the second phase. We are prepared to take three years for these two steps, feeling that by then most pastors can take over," Allen says.

Merrill was enlisted by W.C. Carpenter, missions director for the Northwest Baptist Convention. Carpenter sees the phase one, phase two approach as a way to use people at their best strengths. Carpenter tells of other pastors--not Merrill--who are "good at building a congregation quickly, but if they stayed too long they'd kill the church.

"Again and again, I have seen pastors come out here and flushed with the excitement of new work, get a congregation growing in almost no time. The church would grow quickly and sometimes hit 100 or more in attendance. But then these people would get dissatisfied, the boom would bust, and they'd start wanting to run off the pastor," he says.

Whenever Floyd Merrill is around, churches just seem to start.

A native of Wannette, Okla., he first accepted work in the Northwest in 1955 with the Dishman Baptist Church in Spokane. The church was composed largely of former residents of Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas and was building a sanctuary three miles from its present one.

Six months after Merrill arrived, half the congregation decided to stay in the old location, and the Pines Baptist Church was born. Such events prove that not all church extension is planned.

While at Dishman, he led in starting five congregations, and became pastor of the last--Airway Heights Baptist Church, which serves the families of Fairchild Air Force Base. He stayed with that congregation from 1958 until moving in 1974 to the Portland area.

To start work from scratch, Merrill feels the pastor's salary has to be provided. That's why he thinks established churches need to be concerned with starting other congregations and sharing their pastors.

That's also why he is free now to start new congregations; he and his wife Betty are appointed, salaried missionaries of the Home Mission Board and the Northwest Baptist Convention.

New work usually demands some form of support from outside a young congregation. Church extension leaders of the Home Mission Board and the state convention help new work through church pastoral aid (CPA), a salary supplement that is phased out gradually as churches grow. Merrill had such CPA in his ministry at Airway Heights.

True to the advice of church extension leaders, the new congregation Merrill helped to organize at Tigard meets in rented facilities, which they expect to use until attendance is steady and topping 100.

Getting new work started in Tigard has not been easy.

"Breaking into some of these old settled communities like Tigard is a rough deal," says Merrill.

Sandy-haired William O. Crews Jr. pastor of Metropolitan Baptist Church in Portland, which sponsors the Tigard congregation, sees the Northwest as a secular society. It is not so opposed to religion as it is apathetic, he says.

"People in crisis may turn to religion," he says, "but the masses out here live in a beautiful place, have good jobs and see no need for God."

However, some willing workers are providing optimism for expansion of Baptist work into other communities in the area. A Newberg, Ore., couple gave three acres on a side of town with no Southern Baptist church. Merrill has convinced a young military family to resettle in the area this year. A ministerial student in the area wants to be pastor of a mission congregation while in college. A vacation Bible school led by student summer workers has provided a beginning in nearby Aloha. Merrill will be preaching there soon.

It all fits into his hopes. Merrill, one of seven missionaries featured in a new book, "Seven Beginnings," by Walker Knight and photographed by Ken Touchton for the Home Mission Board, says:

"I had planned to start 20 churches in 10 years and it looks possible, really possible now." (BP)

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers

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**Supreme Court to Decide
Five New Abortion Cases**

By Stan Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U. S. Supreme Court will decide how far states may go in circumventing its historic 1973 decisions holding most states' anti-abortion laws unconstitutional. The court heard arguments in a cluster of five abortion cases from Missouri and Massachusetts.

The cases stem from efforts by those states to impose new regulations on the practice of abortion in the aftermath of the high court's decisions that most state abortion laws violate a woman's right to privacy.

The 1973 actions held that the decision to obtain an abortion is essentially one to be made by a woman in consultation with her physician. Only in the final trimester of pregnancy, the court ruled, does the state have a compelling interest in forbidding abortion.

The challenged Missouri law forbids abortion after "viability," a term defined by the statute as "that stage of fetal development when the life of the unborn child may be continued outside the womb."

The law also requires written consent of the husband in the case of a married woman seeking an abortion and, in the case of underage women, consent by parents. In addition, the law forbids the saline method of abortion after the first twelve weeks of pregnancy.

A local planned parenthood group challenged the provisions in a U. S. district court, but lost, resulting in their appeal to the Supreme Court.

In a countersuit, the State of Missouri challenged the same district court for holding that a provision in the law calling for protection of the fetus at every stage of pregnancy is unconstitutionally overbroad.

Planned Parenthood Attorney Frank Susman of St. Louis argued that the high court did not speak as an advocate of abortion in its 1973 decisions, but as an advocate of a woman's right to privacy. He noted that a number of professional organizations, including the American Medical Association, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the American Bar Association, are on record as supporting the court's position.

Susman also argued that the decision of the lower federal court upholding most of the provisions of Missouri's anti-abortion law has severely "thwarted" the 1973 decisions. Further, he argued, the challenged district court is the only one which has failed to uphold the Supreme Court since the 1973 actions.

Susman attacked all the main provisions of the Missouri law. On its definition of viability, he said that Missouri law presumes viability in the first few weeks of pregnancy, despite the high court's view that the time of viability cannot be fixed that early.

Attacking the consent provisions of the law, Susman argued that neither a woman's husband nor her parents should be required to grant permission for an abortion.

He noted that about 30 percent of those women seeking abortions are married and asked if a husband has the right to control the medical care of his wife. "There is little room for compromise," he continued. "Either the husband has veto rights or he does not."

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Susman said that the parental consent requirement also interferes with the patient-doctor relationship and that while underage women are not required such consent for other kinds of medical care, abortion is singled out.

On the other side, Missouri Attorney General John C. Danforth argued that the overriding issue in the case is whether a state legislature may decide such questions for itself. States have the right, he insisted, to regulate marriage, to protect minors, and to regulate public health.

Consent of husband and wife is "inherent in marriage. Some decisions," he went on, "are made jointly or not at all." He also noted that other Missouri laws have consent provisions, including adoption, artificial insemination and sterilization.

State legislatures and not courts, he insisted, have the power "to decide what marriage is all about."

On the question of parental consent, Danforth argued that in other areas of their lives minors are not treated as adults. They may not vote, buy liquor or cigarettes, be sued, or purchase firearms, he said. In addition, parents are held responsible for the marriage and legal transactions of minors.

The court also heard arguments in another Missouri case in which two St. Louis physicians challenged the same state law's prohibition of abortion to welfare recipients.

Almost all the arguments before the court had to do with the doctors' legal standing and not substantive issues. Most observers expect the court to deal only with the technical arguments.

The basic problem is one of jurisdiction in that the 6th U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals tried the case on its merits after a U. S. district court had refused to do so. Federal legal practice dictates that the circuit courts may deal only with questions previously dealt with by district courts.

On the Massachusetts' cases, the high court heard the state argue that a provision in its new anti-abortion law requiring parental consent for a minor woman seeking an abortion is constitutional.

The state brought the cases to the Supreme Court after a U. S. district court in Massachusetts ruled against the provision. An assistant attorney general for the state argued that while both adults and children have the right to privacy, the state can construe those rights differently.

One of his principal arguments was that parents are generally supportive of their children, rather than vindictive. In addition, as a last resort, when parents deny her request, an underage pregnant woman can ask a judge to rule that she may have the abortion.

Attorneys on the other side argued that the law is too broad in that it makes no exceptions in its consent requirements for rape or incest of other instances when a young woman might wish to keep secret a pregnancy and an abortion.

The high court may decide to sidestep making a decision on the merits of the Massachusetts cases as well. Much of the justices' questioning during oral arguments had to do with the lower district court's decision to take on the case before it had been challenged in state courts.

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Baptists Defend Religious
Liberty in Ecuador Jungle

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By Stanley D. Stamps

LAGO AGRIO, Ecuador (BP)--Despite threats and attempts to dismantle building equipment, Baptists here will continue building a chapel on a site secured over a year ago.

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The cement slab and steel beams are concrete evidence Baptists will stay to minister in this headquarters of petroleum operations in Ecuador's northeastern jungle.

Several weeks ago when a crew of volunteers led by lay pastor, Marco Toinga, began digging trenches for the chapel's foundation, a group of men armed with machetes came to the site threatening the workers.

"We don't want a Baptist church here," they told the pastor. "We already have our church. You don't have any right to build here. Go out on the edge of town to build."

Toinga and James P. Gilbert, Southern Baptist missionary, defended their right to the property which had been ceded to Baptists by the previous parochial council (local civil government organization).

Gilbert reminded the hostile group that Ecuador's constitution guarantees religious liberty.

After the confrontation, Toinga heard that the mob planned to destroy a cement mixer loaned to Baptists by an oil field construction firm. Hiding out near the site, Toinga waited for the group to approach the machine and prepare to dismantle it. He then stepped forward and asked, "Is there any way I can help you men?"

Surprised, the group stopped what they were doing and listened to the Baptist minister. Toinga persuaded the men not to destroy the machine which was neither his nor theirs.

The group continued to argue they did not want the Baptist church to build in Lago Agrio. Toinga responded: "But you are only 30 men. I know at least that many here who do want the church. I know there are many more than that, also."

After several discussions with the authorities, Gilbert secured permission for the construction to continue.

At last report, the cement slab and steel beams awaited a roof and walls for the chapel to be completed.

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Stanley D. Stamps is a Southern Baptist missionary assigned to Ecuador.

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Hatfield Challenges "Sin"
of "Ceremonial Christianity"

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3/25/76

By Debbie Stewart

WASHINGTON (BP)--The United States is guilty today of the "sin of using religion to legitimize political leadership," like many nations since biblical time, Oregon Senator Mark O. Hatfield challenged here.

Fellow Baptists stood to applaud Hatfield even before he began his remarks on civil religion at the national Christian citizenship seminar sponsored by the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"We have put God on the throne of our land instead of on the throne of our lives," the two term senator told his audience of predominantly Baptist professors, students, ministers, and denominational leaders at the Statler Hilton.

The antedote to the current "ceremonial Christianity" expressed in religious slogans on coins and in pledges rather than a religious conviction acted in daily life, Hatfield said, is to look to the Bible for the intended relation of the believer to his state.

Hatfield said Christians' primary loyalty is to the Kingdom of God. This loyalty, he continued, limits but by no means excludes allegiance to one's country. Hatfield noted that Christ resisted persuasions to emerge as a revolutionary political leader, yet Christ spoke urgently to the political unrest and social evils of his day.

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Our "heresy" today, Hatfield said, is pretending that the spheres of loyalty to God and state are separate and equal. A Christian citizen instead views his allegiance to his government's legitimate requirements as "a logical corollary to his Christian beliefs."

The life of a Christian citizen, Hatfield said, may sometimes bring the believer into conflict with the norms of a society that conflict with the transcending loyalty to God.

Hatfield cited Romans 13 and Revelations 13 as biblical texts for researching the state at its best and the state at its worst. The Christian citizen has freedom responsibility, he said.

This freedom, Hatfield maintained, "is not grounds for withdrawal from political concepts and realities." The Bicentennial is a good time for the Christian citizen to "get beyond the rhetoric" of lamenting social ills, Hatfield said, and to "proclaim liberty" in concrete acts to improve society out of a rededication to God's justice.

In reply to a question on his bill regulating the use of missionaries by the CIA, Hatfield said the bill could be withdrawn if new CIA director George Bush acts on a suggestion from Hatfield.

Hatfield has urged Bush to protect missionaries from political use just as Fulbright Scholars and Peace Corps workers are protected. Hatfield said the same request in letters to former CIA director William Colby and President Gerald Ford was denied.

On the "annual exercise" of pleas for numerical increase in defense arms to keep ahead of other world powers, Hatfield said that more is involved in national security.

"You have to have a will of the people," he said, as when the American revolutionaries with patriotic convictions overcame the military superiority of King George of England.

Wrapup

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National Seminar Spotlights
Christian Citizenship

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By Robert O'Brien

WASHINGTON (BP) --Southern Baptist leaders from across the nation, seeking insights into how to relate their Christian perspective to the political processes, completed a national seminar here at the U. S. Capitol building steps with a covenant of commitment to Christian citizenship.

Registrants at the seminar, sponsored by the Southern Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission, trooped to an open air ceremony on the west steps of the Capitol where they put the finishing touches on three days of give and take with national governmental and religious leaders.

Ten U. S. senators and representatives joined an array of program personnel who interacted with some 600 registrants from 30 states on a variety of topics expressed from diverse political perspectives.

The representatives of the nation's largest Protestant denomination explored ways positive influence may be exerted in such areas as inflation, health care, public education, unemployment, civil religion, and other national and international priorities.

Using the beginning of the nation's third 100 years as a launching pad, registrants sought to avoid use of religion as an excuse to escape political responsibilities or to legitimize political leadership.

Elaborating on the type of civil religion which puts "God on the throne of our land instead of the throne of our lives," U. S. Sen. Mark Hatfield (D.-Ore.) urged Christians to shun shallow expression of faith, such as religious slogans on coins and in pledges, and put faith to work in daily life.

U. S. Rep. John Anderson (R.-Ill.) struck a responsive chord when he told his listeners that there is "no unequivocal and undisputed Christian position" on national issues.

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Although diverse in their own political beliefs and in their individual understandings of how Christian faith should inter-relate with the issues, the seminar participants responded to repeated challenges to make their faith plunge headlong into the search for national solutions.

The touchstone of making such a plunge work, indicated Anderson and others, is to be "guided by Jesus' command that we love our neighbor as ourselves."

The unemployment crisis, said United Auto Workers President Leonard Woodcock and U. S. Rep. Andrew Young (D.-Ga.) is an example of an area which needs a touch of that love. That crisis, they said, involves a much more devastating story than loss of income for persons affected.

Using Flint, Mich., as a barometer, Woodcock said that when unemployment hit 20 percent in Flint last year, the city reported the highest rate of alcoholism in the country--150 percent above Flint's norm.

Last year, the UAW president declared, there were 230 child abuse cases reported in Flint, more than twice as many as in 1973. He cited a direct relationship between unemployment and the breakdown of the American family, the increase in divorce rates in the country and increases in certain types of health problems such as heart disease, high blood pressure, alcoholism, mental disorders and suicides.

"I think in addition to the incredible toll which we can weigh. . . we are now seeing a decline in the kind of compassionate Christian spirit that should be the most prevalent in times such as these," Woodcock said.

Young, a black Georgia Democrat and former United Church of Christ minister, noted that although black people are more affected by unemployment than any other group, the unemployment problem is not just a black problem--it is everyone's problem. That also includes such problems as health insurance and increased hospital costs, he said.

Black people are confused today, he said, because all the black issues are now also white issues. Even the problem of busing is neither a black or white problem, he observed. Busing in Boston would not be as big a problem if it had not been for unemployment caused by the closing of the Boston Navy Yard.

He expressed hope that the tensions between black people and white people are giving way to the tensions between those who live for themselves and those who, in the finest sense of the Christian tradition, are willing to live for others.

Willingness to live for the benefit of others became a theme which threaded its way through the national seminar, surfacing in individual presentations and in a series of theme interpretation addresses by William Hull, pastor of First Baptist Church, Shreveport, La.

U. S. Sen. Hubert Humphrey (D.-Minn.) declared that religious communities have a special responsibility for and should take the leadership in making this Bicentennial year a creative and constructive period in U. S. history.

He said every movement of help to this country was initiated by or had the blessing of the religious community. "The labor movement didn't initiate the call for better working conditions--it was the church," Humphrey declared.

"It is from the religious communities that we have received those great affirmations about God, human nature and human society, on which the nation's political covenant was founded," Humphrey emphasized during an hour-long oration.

Even the Declaration of Independence put in words a political revolution springing from a spiritual emancipation, Humphrey declared.

Rep. Young made much the same observations about the well springs of black liberation movements in Africa and the civil rights movement in the U. S. He accused Secretary of State Henry Kissinger of a "racist assumption" that black leaders of African nations seeking liberty cannot be trusted because they might be manipulated by Russians and Cubans. What Kissinger does not understand is that every one of these leaders is a product of American Christian missionary efforts, and they first learned they were free "when someone put a New Testament in their hands," he said. -more-

U. S. Sen. Edward Kennedy (D.-Mass.), confronting his listeners with problems related to national health care, unreeled a dreary tale of escalating costs and declining services. He cited rapidly escalating costs in health care and the devastating effect it has on the abilities of Americans--especially the poor--to survive.

"What I am interested in is to provide a decent, quality health care for every citizen--not as a matter of privilege but as a matter of right," he said.

In another address, U. S. Sen. George McGovern (D.-S. D.) said he notes a tendency to scorn those who apply moral principles to public affairs. "After all the politics of hard-boiled cynicism and crass manipulation, I still believe that right exalts a nation, and I think the stain of Watergate and the blot of Vietnam on the recent history of this nation underscores the hazards and pitfalls of divorcing morality from public policy and diplomacy," he said.

U. S. Sen. Howard Baker (R.-Tenn.) and U. S. Rep. Barbara Jordan (D.-Tex.) assessed the 1976 election in give-and-take addresses from the Republican and Democratic points of view, and U. S. Sen. John Tower (R.-Tex.) made a plea for a balanced viewpoint of the Bicentennial year.

Tower said that in the Bicentennial year "we should not be so busy beating out breasts and shouting 'mea culpa' that we fail to see how strong we really are . . . and how worthwhile most things in our society really are and how honest most of the businessmen, politicians, and workers and others really are."

Harvard University theologian Harvey Cox said Americans should affirm the implications of the founding fathers' call for equality but reject their limited interpretation of equality. Unfortunately, he said, the founding fathers did not really mean all men were created equal and probably did not mean women, people who did not own property, and certainly not slaves and Indians.

Before the three-day conference closed, President Gerald Ford, in a letter to the Christian Life Commission, praised its "strong spiritual leadership" and its "positive influence on the moral climate of America and the lives of our people."

At the open air ceremony, Foy Valentine, executive secretary of the Christian Life Commission, told more than 300 participants: "We have a past worth celebrating. We have a present worth possessing and we have a future worth establishing. It is true that our spirit in the political realm is wounded. Our spirit is also wounded in the realm of religion. We have sown the wind. There can be no real surprise that we are reaping the whirlwind."

Valentine continued: "To the extent that we have been indifferent to our past and ignorant of our heritage, we have experienced an ominous loss of faith for the present and hope for the future." But Valentine concluded that "God has something far better for us . . . something better than anything we dare to hope or think."

Participants ended the seminar with recitation of a responsive "covenant of commitment to Christian citizenship," led by C. Welton Gaddy of the commission staff. "We covenant together to think, speak and act as citizens of the Kingdom of God, making a difference for good in the kingdoms of this world through a citizenship worthy of the Gospel of Christ."

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers.

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Court Acts on Five
Human Rights Cases

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By Stan L. Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U. S. Supreme Court issued decisions in a series of cases involving human rights, including free speech, privacy, obscenity, and sex and race discrimination.

In three of the five decisions, the court split along ideological lines, while the other two were unanimous holdings.

The free speech case involved four candidates for president and vice-president in the 1972 election who were denied permission by the commander of the military base at Fort Dix, N. J. to make campaign speeches and distribute literature on the base.

The candidates were Dr. Benjamin Spock and Julius Hobson, candidates for the nation's two highest offices from the People's Party, and Linda Jenness and Andrew Pulley, candidates from the Socialist Workers Party.

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After being denied the permission, the four took their case to a federal district court which issued an injunction forbidding Fort Dix officials from denying the candidates access to the base for political activities. A U. S. court of appeals subsequently affirmed the district court action.

The Supreme Court, however, reversed both lower courts, holding that "it is . . . the business of a military installation like Fort Dix to train soldiers, not to provide a public forum."

Justices William J. Brennan Jr. and Thurgood Marshall dissented, accusing their fellow justices of holding that "there is no longer room, under any circumstance, for the unapproved exercise of public expression on a military base."

The case involving privacy came to the high court from Louisville, Ky., where an accused shoplifter, Edward Charles Davis III, asked a U. S. district court to declare that publication of his photograph on a police flyer warning local merchants of active shoplifters deprived him of due process of law.

Davis held that the chiefs of police of Louisville and Metropolitan Jefferson County violated his right to privacy by issuing the flyers before completion of his trial on shoplifting charges. A trial court eventually dismissed the charges.

The district court, however, sided with the police. On appeal, a federal circuit court ruled on Davis' behalf.

On further appeal, the Supreme Court reversed the circuit court, thereby siding with the district court and the chiefs of police. The court ruled that since Davis could not demonstrate sufficient "liberty" or "property" interests, his claim that he had been denied due process was invalid.

The majority also rejected Davis' claim that his privacy rights had been invaded, holding that such rights do not include publication of arrest records.

Three justices dissented, including Brennan, who said the court's decision "holds that police officials . . . may on their own initiative and without trial constitutionally condemn innocent individuals as criminals and thereby brand them with one of the most stigmatizing and debilitating labels in our society."

In the obscenity case, the high court reversed the conviction of an Alabama bookstore operator convicted of selling an obscene periodical to police officers. The case came from the Alabama Supreme Court, which had supported lower state court decisions.

The conviction of Chester McKinney was set aside on grounds that he was improperly prosecuted under the state's new obscenity law. At his trial, McKinney was not allowed to argue the question of the magazine's alleged obscenity. Instead, the lower court held that the periodical had already been declared obscene in a prior civil trial.

The nation's highest court ruled unanimously that McKinney's First Amendment free speech right was violated by the Alabama court's procedures.

Another action of the court was its refusal to rule on the claim by women employees of a Pennsylvania insurance company that they were discriminated against by their employer solely because of their sex. The women had claimed that the company's employee insurance benefits and maternity leave regulations violated the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

A U. S. court of appeals had earlier decided the case in favor of the women, but the Supreme Court held that the lower tribunal had improperly decided the case.

The reason given by the high court was that the court of appeals had no right to decide the case on its substantive issues because the court below it, a federal district court, had not done so. Federal judicial procedure provides that a circuit court of appeals may not rule on the merits of a case unless the district court below has considered the case on that basis.

In another employment case, the Supreme Court upheld the right of black and other minority workers to seniority rights if they can prove they were refused a job on racially discriminatory grounds.

The decision means that blacks and women, among others, are entitled to job security in the seniority system ahead of other employees who were hired before they were but after they first applied for jobs.

The 5-3 decision upholds the contention of several Atlanta men that the Bowman Transportation Co. violated their civil rights by denying them seniority from the date of their first application for employment.