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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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77-60

Churches Oppose Forced  
Financial Disclosure

By Carol B. Franklin

WASHINGTON (BP)--Legislation currently before a House subcommittee requiring financial disclosure by all organizations soliciting charitable contributions by mail is unacceptable to religious organizations, according to testimony by several religious spokesmen here.

"We find H. R. 41 unacceptable because . . . it violates the constitutional requirement that church and state be separated," John W. Baker, associate director in charge of research services of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, told the Postal Personnel and Modernization Subcommittee of the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee.

U. S. Rep. Charles H. Wilson (D.-Calif.), chairman of the subcommittee, re-introduced the measure after it failed to reach the House floor in the last Congress. The bill "would require organizations soliciting charitable contributions from the public to disclose at the time of solicitation some basic information concerning how the money collected is actually spent," Wilson said.

Baker asserted: "H. R. 41's provisions for the establishment of uniform accounting systems and the development of procedures to assure compliance with the act would, beyond all reasonable doubt, result in excessive government entanglement with religion."

Edwin Dill, a Catholic priest and president of the National Catholic Development Conference (NCDC), an organization of religious and charitable fund raisers, echoed Baker's concern over excessive government entanglement with religion.

"The NCDC is opposed in principle to legislation in any way imposing itself upon religious fund raising. This reflects our deep belief that almsgiving and alms-asking are essentially acts of religion," Dill told the subcommittee.

"Our belief that fund raising in the name of religion should be completely unencumbered . . . is based purely and simply on the traditional attitude of the government vis-a-vis religion, an attitude which we believe leans firmly on constitutional guarantees," Dill continued.

Dill referred specifically to the Pallotines, a Catholic order recently disciplined by the church for abuses in fund raising. Despite such abuses, Dill said, he does not favor legislation which would interfere in the personal act of charitable giving.

"There are, I believe, more than sufficient forces at work both to expose and to remedy aberrations in fund raising and to protect the interests of both the public and legitimate charities," Dill said. He cited the press, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), statutes on postal fraud, and codes of ethics of religious and secular groups of fund raisers. Above these factors, he noted, "this one all-important fact: donations to charity are, by definition, freewill. There is no tax-like force compelling people to give."

Another issue the witnesses raised was the difficulty of adequately defining such terms as "membership" or "religion" in legislation.

The bill provides for the exemption of "any bona fide membership organization with respect to any solicitation for contributions by mail made by such organization exclusively to the members of such organization."

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George F. Harkins, general secretary of the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., told the subcommittee that any effort by the government "to force a common definition of the term 'membership' on the religious community" would be unacceptable. "Such an effort would involve an implicit theological judgment, and would fail to respect the pluralistic nature of the religious community and its diversity of heritage and hierarchy.

"The question of who is and who is not a member of a local congregation is not a proper subject for governmental decision," Harkins asserted.

U. S. Rep. Trent Lott (R.-Miss.) expressed his concern over the right of the federal government to mandate financial disclosure by churches. "I would probably be the one, or one of the ones, to offer an amendment to the bill exempting religious organizations," he said. "This is a serious First Amendment problem in my view. The track record of the federal government in the area of regulation is bad. It frequently becomes harassment."

Congressman Wilson opposes any exemptions, including religious organizations, as do most charitable organizations such as the American Lung Association, the National Kidney Foundation and others.

Both Harkins and Baker expressed the fears of churches about regulations which would be created to enforce the bill. "Regulatory agencies often adopt elaborate and subtle definitions which go beyond the intent of Congress, even where the congressional intent is clear," Harkins noted.

Baker conceded, "We are gun-shy because of such things as the IRS regulations on 'integrated auxiliaries' of the church which far exceed the intent of Congress and attempt to define the ministry of a church."

U. S. Rep. Gene Taylor (R.-Mo.) also questioned the effect of the bill. "My concern is for the thousands of small churches all across the country trying to do their job. Congress has unintentionally imposed bureaucratic boondoggles on people by passing laws without thinking of the consequences. I want to know if the First Baptist Zion Church of Theodocia, Mo., will have to fill out a lot of forms because they wrote me for a contribution. I'm not a member of that church but my mother was and I went to Sunday School there as a boy."

Dill objected to the provision which would require a statement as to what percentage of the money collected was used for the actual charity and what went for administrative costs. "It is my judgment that an up-front disclosure requirement is unfair to a large segment of legitimate organizations, gives unbalanced and non-comparable facts to donors, can effectively prevent donor development and will eventually lead to the demise of some worthy charitable causes," he charged.

Baker noted that the bill "would have a profoundly chilling effect on solicitations of funds by churches generally."

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Cox Elected President of  
Baptist PR Association

Baptist Press  
4/1/77

CLARKSVILLE, Ind. (BP)--James H. Cox Sr., associate editor of the Western Recorder, state newspaper for Kentucky Baptists, was elected national president of the Baptist Public Relations Association (BPRA) during the organization's annual meeting here.

Cox, of Middletown, Ky., succeeds Stanton Nash, assistant to the president at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif., who will serve as awards chairman for the 1978 BPRA meeting, Feb. 14-16, Scottsdale, Ariz. BPRA will meet simultaneously with the annual national meetings of the Southern Baptist Press Association and the organization of state Baptist executive secretaries.

Other BPRA officers are Richard M. Styles, public relations consultant, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, Richmond, Va., membership vice president; Paul G. Barnes, vice president for development, Grand Canyon College, Phoenix, Ariz., program vice president; Donald S. Hepburn, director of public relations, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, treasurer; Patsey Winfrey, director of public relations, Belmont College, Nashville, secretary; and Leonard E. Hill, managing editor, Baptist Program, Southern Baptist Executive Committee, Nashville, newsletter editor.

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C. Thomas Newsom, director of public relations at Grand Canyon College, was named local arrangements chairman for the 1978 BPRA meeting.

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SBC Cooperative Program  
Giving Strong in March

Baptist Press  
4/1/77

NASHVILLE (BP)--Strong giving in March elevated the Southern Baptist Convention's national Cooperative Program unified budget to \$25,853,928 through the first six months of the 1976-77 fiscal year--10.07 percent ahead of the 1975-76 pace.

Total giving at the midway point amounts to \$53,838,127, including the \$25,853,928 in undesignated Cooperative Program funds and another \$27,984,199 in contributions designated to specific causes. Total giving is running 9.84 percent ahead of over \$49 million given at the same point last year.

In March, according to figures released by the financial planning office of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, Cooperative Program gifts totaled \$4,112,675--a strong 15.73 percent ahead of \$3,553,717 given last March. Total gifts for the month amounted to \$10,193,647, a 22.48 percent increase over \$8,322,775 given last March.

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Angola Baptists Want  
Missionaries to Return

Baptist Press  
4/1/77

LUANDA, Angola (BP)--Angolan Baptists, in annual session here, expressed desire for the return of Southern Baptist missionaries, who left this strife-torn southern African country in August, 1975, on the strong recommendation of the U. S. Consul General.

In November of that year Angola was granted its independence by Portugal, but since that time the missionaries have not been permitted to return as residents.

Baptist work continues in four major cities and districts of the country, and 41 delegates met in Luanda for the annual Baptist Convention of Angola. Five men were ordained to the ministry during the meeting.

Curtis Dixon, Southern Baptist missionary chairman of the Angola Mission (organization of Southern Baptist missionaries), has made five trips back into Angola since Baptist missionaries evacuated the country--two of the trips before the country became independent and three since that time. He and his wife are living temporarily in Lisbon, Portugal, while seeking to obtain permission to re-enter Angola as residents.

He said many of the pastors, deacons, and laymen of Angola are interested in studying through an extension program. Dixon helps to provide the materials needed for this type of training.

Mr. and Mrs. Harrison H. Pike are the other missionary couple assigned to Angola. They are on furlough in the United States. Others who were in Angola have been reassigned to other missions in Southern Africa.

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Presnall H. Wood Elected  
Editor of Baptist Standard

Baptist Press  
4/1/77

DALLAS (BP)--Presnall H. Wood, pastor of Park Place Baptist Church in Houston, has been elected editor of the Baptist Standard at a special meeting of the Texas Baptist newspaper's board of directors here.

Wood will succeed John J. Hurt, who is retiring after almost 11 years as editor of the 376,000 circulation weekly, largest of 33 state Baptist news publications. Hurt will reach the mandatory retirement age of 68 in April.

Virgil B. Henson, chairman of the Standard directors, said Wood will become editor-elect on May 15 and spend two months traveling about the state. He will assume the editorship July 15.

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Jim Lindsey of College Station, Tex., chairman of the board of directors' search committee, explained that over the last six months the committee had considered more than 60 persons and had conducted 10 interviews. Wood served as a member of the search committee but resigned, Lindsey said, when told he was under consideration.

Wood, who will be 45 on May 7, has been a member of the Standard's board of directors since 1969 and was chairman of the board in 1973-74. He will be the 11th editor to serve the Baptist Standard since its founding in 1889 and the youngest since E. C. Routh became editor in 1914 at the age of 40.

He is the author, with Floyd W. Thatcher, of "Prophets With Pens," the history of the Baptist Standard, published in 1969 and based on Wood's doctoral dissertation at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

In the foreword to the book, Wood said, "The Baptist Standard was coming into my home when I was born, and I cannot remember any time when we were without its weekly visits."

Wood was born and reared in Vernon, Tex., where E. S. James, editor of the Standard from 1954-66, was pastor of First Baptist Church. James baptized him, performed his marriage ceremony and presided at his ordination service.

While writing his dissertation, Wood read every available issue of the Standard since its founding and came "to a new awareness of its power and influence."

He is graduate of Baylor University Waco, Tex., and Southwestern Seminary. He earned a bachelor of divinity degree at the seminary in 1956 and the doctor of theology degree in 1964.

Wood served as pastor of King and Purnela Baptist Churches in Coryell County, Tex., 1953-56; First Baptist Church, Goldthwaite, Tex., 1956-61; and Crestview Baptist Church, Midland, Tex., from 1961-68. He has been pastor of Park Place Baptist Church in Houston for the last nine years.

He is currently chairman of the board of trustees of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board and has served in several denominational posts. They include moderator of the Mills and Midland Baptist Associations, trustee of Hendrick Memorial Hospital in Abilene, a member of the Texas Baptist Executive Board, and member of the advisory committee of the Center for Counseling for Union Baptist Association.

He is immediate past president of the Texas alumni association of Southwestern Seminary.

Wood is married to the former Joyce Middlebrook of Vernon. They have two sons-- Jeffery, a freshman at Baylor, and Jed, an eighth grader.

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(BP) Photo will be mailed to Baptist state papers.

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Home Mission Board  
Leads BPRA Awards

Baptist Press  
4/1/77

CLARKSVILLE, Ind. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Home Mission Board collected 13 awards, including three major cash awards, in the 1977 national awards competition of the Baptist Public Relations Association (BPRA) meeting here.

The denomination's Foreign Mission Board received eight awards, while four each went to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and the South Carolina Baptist Convention; three each to the SBC Christian Life Commission and the University of Richmond; and two each to the SBC Brotherhood Commission, Oklahoma Baptist University, Stetson University and the Virginia Baptist Homes; and single awards to a number of agencies.

Major awards, with \$50 cash prizes, went to Everett Hulum, Home Mission Board, Photo Sweepstakes Award; Celeste Loucks, Home Mission Board, Frank Burkhalter Award for excellence in religious journalism; Ken Day, Home Mission Board, Arthur Davenport Award for total public relations program; tie by Donald S. Hepburn, Southwestern Seminary, and Constance Semple, University of Richmond, for total publications program; Anita Rollins,

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Valley Baptist Medical Center, public relations program; John Seelig, Southwestern Seminary, total development program; and Raleigh O. Baker, Virginia Baptist Homes, M. E. Dodd Memorial Award for achievement in films.

Besides the major awards, Hullum took first place finishes in the general information brochures and feature photo series categories; Loucks won the feature story category; Hepburn took a joint first with Seelig in the newsletter category; Seelig won the development brochure category; Semple took a first in the magazine category for "UR Magazine" and second in direct mail; and Baker took a first in motion picture category.

Tom Brannon of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, top individual award winner, took a first in letterheads and three seconds in total public relations, development brochure, and poster and promotional flyers.

Other multiple award winners were Floyd Craig of the Christian Life Commission, with two firsts in special publications and feature photo single and a second in editorial writing; Charlie Warren, then of the SBC Foreign Mission Board (now on the SBC Brotherhood Commission staff), three seconds for news writing and news photography; James R. (Bob) Harper of the Foreign Mission Board, two firsts in photography; Walker Knight, Home Mission Board, first in annual reports and second in magazine; Dan Martin, Home Mission Board, first in filmstrips and second in feature story; Jack Bailey of Oklahoma Baptist University, two seconds in general information brochures and letterheads; Lee Hollaway of the Brotherhood Commission, a first and a second in advertising categories; and Fred Cooper of Stetson University, two seconds in radio and TV production and feature photography.

Other first place awards went to Robert O'Brien of Baptist Press, SBC Executive Committee, for a news story on the connection between the Baptist Literature Board and Scripture Press; Sarah Rice, Judson College, for catalog; G. Norman Price, Foreign Mission Board, poster and promotional flyer; John Cobb Smith, SBC Radio and Television Commission, for radio and/or TV production;

Also, Lynn Clayton of Kansas-Nebraska's Baptist Digest for news publication; W. I. Terrell, Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, direct mail; K. Maynard Head, Clear Creek Baptist School, editorial/personal column writing.

Also, Nancy Carter McGough, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, for feature series; Stan Hastey, Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, for news series on Supreme Court; and Larry Goddard, Home Mission Board, advertising series.

Other second place awards went to James H. Cox of the Western Recorder for news publication; Joe Westbury, Union University, catalog; Tim Nicholas, then of Home Mission Board (now of Mississippi's Baptist Record), newsletter; Richard M. Styles, Foreign Mission Board, special publications; J. C. Durham, Home Mission Board, filmstrips; Robert M. Duck, Alabama Baptist Convention, advertising single; Fon Scofield, Foreign Mission Board, motion picture and Ann Shaff, Baptist Medical Center of Oklahoma, annual report.