



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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SBC Re-Examines
'Canadian Question'

77-95

KANSAS CITY (BP) --Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) here June 14-16 will decide what steps to take in dealing with the long-standing "Canadian question" among Southern Baptists.

Twenty-three years ago, the Oregon-Washington (now Northwest) Baptist Convention, one of the state-level conventions of Southern Baptist churches, responded to a request for aid to a Western Canadian church, which affiliated with the state convention but not the SBC.

Now some 35 churches and missions in four provinces of Western Canada, whose members identify themselves as Southern Baptists, are affiliated with the Northwest Convention. Last year, they gave \$30,000 to the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptist unified budget.

Across the years, Southern Baptist leadership has struggled with how to relate to a nation whose Western provinces are closely bound to the U. S. in culture, economy and language--and a nation which has Baptist bodies of its own.

Suggestions that the SBC change its constitution to allow seating of messengers at SBC annual sessions have aborted because of fears that action would lead to widespread similar requests from other churches outside the territorial U. S. and concern that it would offend Canadian Baptist bodies.

But meanwhile, the Northwest Convention, working not to attract churches from other bodies but to fill spiritual needs in largely unchurched areas, has seen the work grow to the point that Southern Baptists have had to re-examine it.

In February, more than 50 Southern Baptist leaders and agency representatives met in Nashville to share views on the best way to encourage the Canadian congregations.

The fact-finding meeting, which included representatives of the Northwest Convention and the Canadian churches, was called by a special Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board committee which grew out of a motion made last year at the SBC national meeting in Norfolk.

Hazen Simpson of California successfully moved that the convention "immediately extend encouragement to Southern Baptists dwelling and working in Canada by financial assistance, plus any and all other means of support that we make available to ministry outside the United States and its territory."

The Northwest Convention, which Allen Schmidt, pastor of a Canadian Baptist church, serves as president, did not request that the SBC change its constitution to allow seating of Canadian Baptist messengers at SBC annual sessions. (Article II of the SBC constitution stipulates: "It is the purpose of the Convention to provide a general organization for Baptists in the United States and its territories. . . .--emphasis supplied.)

The leaders of the Portland, Ore., based convention simply asked that further avenues of assistance be open to them to work in areas of need in Canada.

After study, the Foreign Mission Board committee came up with a two-part recommendation, endorsed by its board of trustees, which messengers will vote on in Kansas City:

1. "That all appropriate SBC agencies be permitted and encouraged to give assistance and resource help to all Baptist churches, associations and organizations in Canada as requested, in keeping with the Southern Baptist agencies' program statements and with appropriate consultation between agencies.

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2. "That no worker whose salary is paid wholly or in part by an SBC agency shall encourage any presently existing Baptist church in Canada to affiliate with Southern Baptist work."

The wording of the first part follows very closely the recommendation made by the Northwest Convention representatives at the Nashville meeting and would, if passed, open the way for SBC agencies to assist any Baptist work in Canada--not just work affiliated with the Northwest Baptist Convention.

The second part of the recommendation, a Foreign Mission Board spokesman said, is an attempt to state that Southern Baptists do not intend to try to lure any existing Baptist churches away from other organizations in Canada.

The Canadian situation has existed for quite awhile.

In 1957, the SBC authorized appointment of a Committee on Canadian Baptist Cooperation to work with similar representatives of Canadian Baptists. It came at a time when some tensions were developing between Southern Baptists and certain Canadian Baptist bodies due to the appearance in Western Canada of Baptist churches cooperating with the Oregon-Washington Convention.

Canadian Baptist bodies had reservations about SBC intentions, fearing a "Southern Baptist invasion."

Between 1957 and 1969 Southern Baptists maintained the Committee on Canadian Baptist Cooperation to develop channels of cooperation between Southern Baptists and Canadian Baptist bodies, but eventually it became mainly a conversation with the Baptist Federation of Canada as others discontinued participation.

During this time, the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board stationed a liaison person, W. Bertram King, in Canada.

In 1969, at the recommendation of the Canadian committee, the convention discontinued the committee and approved its request that SBC representatives to the North American Baptist Fellowship become responsible for consultation with Canadian Baptists as needed. King returned to the United States.

But representatives of the Northwest Baptist Convention and their affiliated churches have continued to feel the need for the way to be cleared for SBC agencies to have the freedom to provide direct field service and other assistance in developing the programs and ministries of churches in Western Canada.

If the SBC approves the recommendation of the Foreign Mission Board, that aid would be possible for any Baptists requesting it.

Meanwhile, the Northwest Convention-affiliated churches in the Western provinces are working in an area with many unchurched people, which represents "one of the greatest challenges to the gospel of any place in the world," according to J. R. White of Alabama, chairman of the special Foreign Mission Board committee which studied the matter.

"Through all these years the Lord has been at work in Canada and now has brought this great nation and its spiritual need to our attention in a most unusual way," White said. "It is our desire to maintain mutual fellowship with all Baptist bodies and to work for the advancement of the kingdom of God through mutual encouragement and help."

EEOC Seeks Injunction Against Baptist Seminary

FORT WORTH (BP) --A suit expected to be a test case for all six theological seminaries of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has been filed in federal district court here against Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary by the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

The suit, filed May 24, asks for a permanent injunction which would compel the 3,850-student seminary, largest seminary in the world, to provide data required by EEOC regulations, according to Robert E. Naylor, seminary president.

The action asserts that the seminary has failed to submit EEOC Form 6, which seeks data on the seminary's staff and faculty. A seminary spokesman said the form in question is a six-part form, with six copies to a part, accompanied by a nine-page instruction sheet, which seeks information on the male, female and racial composition and salaries of seven categories of employees.

The EEOC position, as stated in the suit, contends the seminary is required to abide by the agency's regulations because it is an institution of higher learning and employs more than 15 persons.

"We feel we are exempt from compliance with the regulations because as an integrated auxiliary of the church, and as a church instrumentality which does not accept federal assistance we are exempted from the coverage of the EEOC act," Naylor said.

("Integrated auxiliary of a church" is a term coined by Congress in the Tax Reform Act of 1969, which the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has used in determining relationships of religious organizations to churches. As an integrated auxiliary, Southwestern Seminary is exempt from filing IRS' Form 990.)

Naylor noted that government requests such as the one by EEOC are an infringement upon First Amendment guarantees. "The result of a church institution being responsive and responsible to the federal government is clearly a violation of the U. S. Constitution, especially inasmuch as we do not receive federal money in any form," Naylor stressed.

The Southwestern Seminary president said all six Southern Baptist seminaries are faced with similar requests to submit data. "We would expect the suit filed against Southwestern would become a test case for all six seminaries," Naylor said.

He said the decision for Southwestern to serve as the test case was made after discussion with the other five seminary presidents, and after consultation with Southwestern Seminary trustees and legal counsel.

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Religious Bodies Favor 'Genocide Convention'

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WASHINGTON (BP)--Arthur J. Goldberg, former justice of the U.S. Supreme Court and former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, testified on behalf of 52 religious, veterans, labor and ethnic groups in favor of U.S. ratification of the so-called "Genocide Convention" before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was born in response to the deaths of 6 million Jews at Nazi hands in World War II. In December, 1946, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution declaring genocide a crime under international law. Two years later, the general assembly unanimously approved the Genocide Convention.

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In international law, the term "convention" means an agreement among sovereign nations. Broadly speaking, it is a treaty among many nations.

The Genocide Convention has been reported out of the foreign relations committee four times in 1970, 1971, 1973 and 1976. It has never reached a vote in the Senate. Every President since Truman has supported the convention.

Genocide is defined by the convention as the committing of certain acts with intent to destroy, wholly or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. The acts forbidden are actual killing, serious bodily or mental harm, imposed birth control on such a group and forcible transfer of children out of the group.

Goldberg spoke for the ad hoc committee on the human rights and genocide treaties which includes 22 religious organizations among its members. These include the American Baptist Churches, USA, American Friends Service Committee (Quakers), American Jewish Congress, Episcopal Church, Methodist Church, General Board of Christian Social Concerns, National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Unitarian-Universalist Association, and the United Church of Christ.

"Our country owes a particular obligation to remember the holocaust in which 6 million Jews lost their lives. We must symbolize our concern for human rights...the time is long overdue to symbolize our feelings about World War II," Goldberg pled after his formal statement.

"We now recognize the enormity of the offense--against the principle of human dignity as well as against Jews," Goldberg said. "We recognize that human rights are the basis of democracy....(Our failure to ratify the convention) has gone on too long. Eighty-two nations have ratified it while we have the best human rights record in the world."

U.S. Sen. William W. Proxmire (D-Wis.) testified in favor of ratification of the convention on moral and diplomatic grounds. "Our failure to ratify this treaty has been a constant source of embarrassment to us diplomatically that has puzzled our allies and delighted our enemies," Proxmire told the committee.

"State Department personnel have written me in the past and indicated that our efforts to halt the genocide that occurred during the Nigerian civil war would have been far more effective had we been a party of the convention. Instead we were viewed as moral hypocrites," Proxmire said.

Primary opposition to U.S. ratification in the past has been from the American Bar Association (ABA), which raised constitutional questions. However, the ABA unanimously reversed its earlier position and now supports the Genocide Convention.

Goldberg stated that "constitutional and other objections to the convention are frivolous."

E. Stanley Rittenhouse, Liberty Lobby, opposed ratification of the convention as did Maud Ellen Zimmerman, Voters Interest League.