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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Nuclear Protest Will Equal
War Protest, Speaker Says

By David Wilkinson

NASHVILLE (BP)--Massive protest over the construction of nuclear power plants in the United States will eventually equal the public uproar over the Vietnam War, the keynote speaker at a consultation on "The Energy Crisis and the Churches" predicted here.

"Opposition to nuclear power in the United States will likely become as great an issue as opposition to the Vietnam War was," claimed Wes Michaelson editor of the Chicago-based Sojourners magazine and a former administrative assistant to U. S. Sen. Mark Hatfield (R.-Ore.).

Michaelson addressed more than 50 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) leaders during the opening session of a two-day consultation sponsored by the denomination's Christian Life Commission.

Although the administration's stance on nuclear energy is "good in some ways," Michaelson said that it only stalls the development of breeder nuclear reactors, while providing a financial impetus for building conventional nuclear plants.

That position, according to Michaelson, will eventually force the government into a stance that will require the development of breeder reactors.

"If you put millions into building conventional nuclear plants now, and then your uranium begins to run out 15 or 20 years from now, the pressure is to convert those into breeder reactors which produce plutonium," Michaelson said.

Breeder reactors, he stressed, are "far more dangerous than conventional reactors and they directly produce the stuff that you make bombs from and they produce probably the most toxic substance known to humanity.

"Those pressures," he added, "are going to be overwhelming, despite the risks, because you've already plunked all this capital into this source of energy."

Michaelson, who has done extensive research in the energy field, said the consequences of President Carter's energy plan will have harmful effects on world poverty, the welfare of native Americans and the American value system.

Even with the President's rebate proposals, the increase in energy costs will fall most heavily on the poor and disadvantaged, according to Michaelson.

He also pointed out that the main reserves of coal, uranium, oil and natural gas are on land belonging to native Americans.

"Increasingly, the developing on a large scale of these kinds of resources is going to come at the expense and into conflict with the cultures and the heritage of native Americans here in the United States and Canada," he stated.

Michaelson called for a rethinking of an American value system which encourages inefficiency and waste and called for a return to the Biblical concept of stewardship.

The two-day meeting also features presentation by Carlyle Marney, director of the Interpreter's House, Lake Junaluska, N. C.; Frances Gulick, analyst in environment and natural resources policy for the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.; Cecil Ray, general secretary-treasurer of the North Carolina Baptist Convention; Albert McClellan, associate executive secretary and director of program planning

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for the SBC's Executive Committee; John Shanks, a former church business administrator; and Gilbert M. Turner, president of Bortunco (Boring and Tunneling Company) of America, Inc.

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The 'Living' Must Rescue
The 'Dead,' Gomes Says

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NITEROI, Brazil (BP)--"Is there life on this side of death?" asked Samuel Libert, pastor of Arroyitos Baptist Church, Rosario, Argentina, as he addressed the third Pan American Congress of Baptist Men meeting here.

"In this world, if we speak in a poetic fashion, we should speak of the life without life we see in the streets and the death without death we see around us," Libert said.

"If we, the church of Jesus Christ, should attempt to heal the world, we would be forgetting that the world is not sick. That's not the problem. It's dead. The Bible says this is a world that's dead in sin."

In a brief but powerful message delivered to the congress delegates at the week-long meeting in the First Baptist Church of Niteroi, August 15-21, Libert asked the audience what "we as Christians are going to do with this dead world?"

According to Libert, non-Christians in this "dead world" are saying some critical things about Christians.

"They say we are not changing water into wine as Jesus did," he said. "Instead, they say we are changing wine to water--that we've taken the essence of the Gospel and left it without power. They say we've changed the Word of God into water so that it won't offend anyone.

"They say if the Lord would take away the Holy Spirit, some churches won't even be aware of it. They say if the Rapture (God's removing of Christians from the world) comes some 'Christian organizations' would not know it--they would go ahead with business as usual.

"They say we're living in spiritual adultery with a dead world. Is it true?" Libert asked. "Is it true that we've been so corrupted by the world that we've taken the sharpness from the gospel?"

"Is that slogan of the Crusade of the Americas still valid today? 'Christ was the only hope?' or 'Christ is the only hope?'"

"Yes, Christ is still our only hope," Gomes declared. "We who are not citizens of earth but citizens of heaven--with the power of the spirit that buries our spirit flows out of us like living water--we're surrounded by the dead world, but we are not dead!"

"We don't belong to the dead city anymore. We live in the city of life whose mayor is God. We don't need a Tower of Babel to escape the dead world.

"It's by means of the cross that Heaven has come down to us," Libert proclaimed. "It's by means of the cross that we go up to Heaven. It's by means of the cross that we are 'new men for a new world' (the theme for the congress).

"We're men of the cross who must preach Christ crucified before it's too late for other men to come out of the dead city and into the city of God.

"Let's sing out in this dead city. Let's sing out in Brazil. Let's sing out in Chile, in Argentina and in the United States. We're new men for a new world--let's sing it."

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School Board Debates
30-Second Meditation

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--A new school prayer policy was called "potentially dangerous" by a local minister here, who warned it could lead to school principals imposing their religious beliefs on children.

Mike Friedman of the First Baptist Church made his remarks during a meeting of the Clark County School District meeting in Las Vegas.

The meeting was also marked by a 30-second period of silent meditation--a dry run of the new state law that requires each school district to set aside a daily period for silent prayer or meditation.

"It could be very dangerous. Be careful when you write the policy, otherwise you're going to have problems with the various cults and sects in the country," warned Friedman. He said any policy should be specific enough to protect children's rights. "You should not allow the principal leeway to do what he wants to do."

The minister said religious pressures "could be humiliating to many of the students and you could hurt some very timid children."

It was the second time the school board discussed what kind of a policy to adopt on school meditation. A 1977 Nevada law says: "Every school district shall set aside a period at the beginning of each school day, during which all persons must be silent, for voluntary individual meditation, prayer or reflection by pupils."

The trustees disagreed over the length of the meditation period and Herman van Betten pointed out to his fellow trustees that it was difficult to keep children quiet for long.

"Try to keep kindergarteners or first graders quiet for two minutes. They're going to start pulling each other's hair."

Clare Woodbury felt prayers should last at least two minutes. "I don't think we should make a farce out of this."

Janet Sobel asked for "a dry run at this" to see if adults could be silent for short period.

"Start meditating. I'll tell you when 30 seconds is up," board president Helen Cannon instructed about 80 persons attending the meeting.

Most of them bowed their heads. The only noise was baby crying outside the room.

Afterward Mrs. Cannon commented: "Thirty seconds is long enough to keep your mouth shut, but not too long."

Van Betten added that the baby's crying pointed up problems of keeping children from expressing themselves for more than a few seconds.

He also asked Friedman: "I think you can pray just as well in 30 seconds as you can in one hour, can't you?"

The minister agreed: "The Bible talks about vain speaking. A lot of prayers are just vain speaking."

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America Faces 'Bleak'
Energy Prognosis

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NASHVILLE (BP)--America's energy crisis is even worse than the bleak picture being painted by the Carter administration and many energy experts, a government environmental and energy analyst said here.

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Discussion about the existence of the energy crisis is futile and debate about the severity of the crisis is almost academic, declared Frances Gulick, analyst in environment and natural resources policy for the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress.

"There's no time to lose" Gulick declared in her address at the final session of a consultation on "The Energy Crisis and the Churches," sponsored by the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"The energy crisis is for real and the time is short," Gulick told a group of leaders from the country's largest Protestant denomination. "Your concern and your point of concern should be moved way ahead of Armageddon, way ahead of the year 2000, and focused on a year perhaps only seven years ahead of us, in the middle of the 1980's."

Conservation is not enough, according to Gulick, and within the next seven to 10 years the United States must find a substitute for oil.

Gulick, who has conducted research analysis and program evaluation in U. S. federal, civil and foreign service for 20 years, claimed that the energy problem involves dangerous crises in the industrial, financial and democratic systems.

The entire industrialized world faces a "production capacity crunch" that will be felt by the mid-1980's, she predicted.

The world's demand for oil will soon exceed the capacity to produce the needed oil, she said. She complimented President Carter for "focusing on this point" in his energy proposals.

Gulick also spoke of a crisis in the international financial system, which she described as "the erosion closest at hand and the most dangerous because it threatens not only a loss of energy but it threatens a loss of confidence without which no economic system, no system of investment, can long endure."

Huge capital outlays by countries for imported oil and resulting debts have created this crisis, according to Gulick.

"The volume of payments for imported oil is so gigantic that it has already been distorting, diverting and depleting the stock of capital which is needed to make the transition to fuels other than oil," she said.

Commercial banks, she explained, have reached the point where they are no longer able to finance the short and long-term debts incurred by countries in order to buy oil.

This financial crisis will precipitate a crisis of confidence in the economic system this country is based on, she added.

"We're at a fragile stage far more vulnerable than we were in the 1930's," Gulick said. "And yet we go day by day and say, 'It doesn't really matter.'"

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Wrapup of the Energy Consultation, including suggested church responses, will be sent Wednesday by Baptist Press. (Aug. 24)