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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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**New Israeli Law May Mean
Trouble For Christians**

JERUSALEM (BP)-- The Israeli Parliament has passed a new law that could be "misused in restricting religious liberty in Israel," according to the United Christian Council (UCC).

The law, making it a criminal offense to offer material inducements for conversion to another religious belief, is based on the "myth" that Christians bribe people to join their religious community, said Southern Baptist representative Robert L. Lindsey.

Southern Baptists serving in Israel have representatives on the United Christian Council which registered official protest of the law. In addition, Southern Baptist representatives met with the director of the Ministry of Religion. Lindsey reported that meeting was good, although "strong words" were exchanged.

"The offering of material inducements for conversion is totally unethical and has never been a part of our missionary effort," said J. D. Hughey, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's administrator for that area. "The only danger is that false accusations may be made."

The chairman of the United Christian Council, Naem Ateek of the Evangelical Episcopal Church, said he knows of no Christian group in the country that engages in such practices.

In Israel, changing one's religious beliefs means moving from the community and breaking many relationships. "The theory is that nobody would change unless there were advantages in doing so," Hughey said.

Southern Baptist representatives and other evangelical groups encourage new Christians to stay within their own community.

Lindsey said wording of the law is quite vague. Punishment for one offering "unfair" inducements can be as much as five years in prison plus a fine of 50,000 pounds. The one taking the bribe faces up to three years imprisonment and a smaller fine.

Considering the ambiguity of the law one UCC member protested that an "innocent act of charity" given to a person interested in learning about another faith could be considered "unfair inducement." Baptist representatives were also concerned about the possible harassment of persons who had already become Christians.

One parliament member who pushed for passage of the bill assured Christians that it applied equally to Jews seeking to convert Christians to Judaism. According to Israeli figures, about 500 Christians convert to Judaism annually, primarily for purposes of marriage.

Lindsey said the secular Jewish community was also unhappy with the law. The head of the Israeli Secularist League denounced the law as a "charter for persecution of Christians."

However, the most objectional wording of the bill was in the introduction which was not made a part of the official Knesset (parliament) record. This section accused Christian missionaries in Israel of offering "huge sums of money" to "ensnare the souls" of the poor.

The bill was originally intended to stop all missionary activity, but was changed in the interest of religious liberty. It was introduced by Rabbi Yehudah Meir Abramowitz of the ultra orthodox Agudat Israel Party.

High Court to Rule On
FCC Ban of Obscene Words

By Stan Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U. S. Supreme Court will decide whether seven four-letter words are indecent and can be banned from the airwaves by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

The federal agency charged with regulating the broadcast media asked the justices to overrule a lower court decision denying them the right to forbid the broadcasting of the seven words, all of which describe sexual and excretory organs and activities. A section of the federal communications act forbids "obscene, indecent or profane language."

The FCC action was aimed at radio station WBAI of New York City for airing a 12-minute segment of an album by comedian George Carlin which consisted almost entirely of the repeated use of the seven words. The complaint was lodged by a father who had heard the program while driving in his car with his 12-year-old son.

At the heart of the FCC's position is the view that broadcasting is basically different from other communications media. Among broadcasting's distinguishing characteristics, FCC attorneys argued, are children's "easy access" to and "unsupervised use" of radios. The FCC is also concerned about the location of radios in the home, "a place where an individual's privacy interest is entitled to particular deference."

Finally, the FCC attorneys maintain that the agency action banning the obscene words "was justified by its statutory obligation to promote the larger and more effective use of radio in the public interest."

Attorneys for the radio station, on the other hand, argued that the FCC order was "overbroad" and "vague" and violated the no-censorship requirement of another section of the law.

That was the view of the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, which ruled last March that the order amounted to "censorship, regardless of what the commission chooses to call it."

In other actions, the high court declined to review the conviction of a Webb County, Texas man convicted of sexually molesting a six-year-old girl in 1974 and it refused to review challenges to California's ban on nude dancers performing closer than six feet from customers at establishments with state liquor licenses.

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Wayland Group
Wins Contest

PLAINVIEW, Tex. (BP)--Spirit of America, a 13-member ensemble from Wayland Baptist College, was picked as one of eight winners in the national Bob Hope Search for the Top in Collegiate Talent competition held at Central Missouri State University in Kansas City.

Spirit of America is directed by Robert Bicknell. The students will film a one-hour special with Bob Hope in Los Angeles, which will be aired over national television at a later date.

The Wayland group, from a school of 1,200, competed with major universities and colleges from across the nation in three regional competitions before winning it all from 30 finalists performing in Kansas City.

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Board Okays First Overseas
Mission Corps Volunteers

RICHMOND (BP)--The first three Mission Service Corps volunteers to serve overseas have been approved by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hill, now doing music promotion on a contract basis in North Carolina churches, will work in Bangkok, Thailand, in music promotion. Jean Poe, a widow from Salisbury, N. C., will go to Honduras as a secretary-bookkeeper for the mission organization in Tegucigalpa. Both the Hills and Mrs. Poe expect to leave late in February for a year's service overseas.

Action approving the volunteers came at the January meeting in which the board also emphasized a continuing need for career missionaries--particularly general evangelists--and set up a standing subcommittee of its overseas council to deal specifically with volunteer lay involvement overseas.

The board's department of missionary personnel, making its annual report, noted that the record 279 new missionaries approved in 1977 brought the total Southern Baptist missionary force to 2,776 at year's end. This resulted in a net gain of 61 over the 2,715 at the start of the year after subtraction of losses caused by completion of assignments, resignations, retirements, and the death of one missionary, G. Harold Clark of Malaysia.

Melvin Torstrick, associate secretary for missionary personnel, said that only 34 were appointed for general evangelism. He said this is "not so good," considering that 258 of the 1,330 requests for new personnel in 1977 were for this type of missionary and board members were urged to pray particularly for this need for more general evangelists.

In 1978 the personnel department is seeking applicants to fill 1,406 requests for personnel needed on the 90 Southern Baptist mission fields, with 282 of these being for general evangelists. Such evangelists, often referred to as field evangelists, are "preacher" missionaries who work with pastors overseas, train church leaders, start mission points and churches, and help established churches grow.

The board also moved ahead with plans to involve more lay volunteers. It accepted a report by a board study group establishing the basic boundaries for utilizing more such volunteers, looking to a total of 10,000 by the year 2000.

The five-member committee, headed by Ira Q. Craft, outlined a worldwide program that would include all Southern Baptists. It said one of the "most persistent needs" is adequate communication of programs, requests and opportunities. The report indicated that requests for volunteers could be initiated from the mission fields as well as from countries where Southern Baptists do not have missionaries.

The committee urged the addition of more personnel to assist the administrative staff of the board's laymen overseas office and suggested that lay persons could be added to "have available the viewpoints, concerns, and attitudes of lay persons in the administrative process."

In the past year 2,407 volunteers spent periods ranging from two weeks to a year assisting in Southern Baptist missions work. This is an increase from 1,340 in 1976 and 1,180 in 1975, according to James W. Cecil, furloughing missionary now working as associate consultant for laymen overseas.

The 1977 volunteers included 815 in construction teams, 550 in lay evangelism, 415 choir members, 197 medical personnel, 180 in youth groups, 160 workers for vacation Bible schools, and 85 for various special emphases, Cecil said.

In addition, the board now is preparing to send a steadily increasing number of Mission Service Corps volunteers abroad. The new service corps, approved at the 1977 Southern Baptist Convention, hopes to utilize 5,000 volunteers both in the United States and overseas by 1982.

Lewis I. Myers, associate to the director of the overseas division and the board's Mission Service Corps coordinator, said the first three such Foreign Mission Board volunteers already have financial support. The Hills' support will come from interested persons in North Carolina and Mrs. Poe will provide her own support.

Hill is the son of Southern Baptist missionaries Mr. and Mrs. Ronald C. Hill, stationed in Thailand. He grew up in that country. His wife, the former Ellen Linder, is from Lexington, N. C., where they now live.

Mrs. Poe is the widow of Edward C. Poe. She was born in Providence, Ky., and has worked as a secretary, librarian and bookkeeper. She now serves as church pianist for First Baptist Church, Salisbury, N. C.

The board approved a resolution expressing gratitude for the life and influence of W. L. Howse Jr., who died Dec. 27. After his retirement from 17 years' service with the Baptist Sunday School Board, Howse spent six years assisting the Foreign Mission Board in long-range planning overseas and as a consultant in the mission support division.

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Church Plans 50,000 Members
Through Its 'House Ministry'

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TULSA, Okla. (BP)--Members of Tulsa's Eastwood Baptist Church have adopted a "House Ministry" concept they expect will increase their membership to 50,000 in 10 years.

But instead of bringing prospects to the church, Eastwood's 25 busses will be used to take teachers to surrounding areas to lead worship and Bible study in the homes of members.

"This will involve our deacons in an intensive training program," explained Tom Elliff, Eastwood's pastor. "Each will have responsibility for four or five house ministries and they will, in a sense, become the pastor of those groups. The people would worship together at the church only once a week--and that not necessarily on Sunday. If this program goes the way we think it will, there will not be enough room to get them all together at one time."

Eastwood's membership, identified by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board as one of the convention's fastest growing, went from 1,640 in 1972 to 3,346 in 1976. They have burgeoning ministries among migrants, personal counseling, crisis closet, legal aid, ex-offenders, deaf and a mobile television unit.

To buy enough land on which to build a facility large enough to accommodate these ministries, would have cost \$750,000. An effort was made to raise that amount. Elliff said, "Our people made unbelievable sacrifices, but we couldn't reach the amount we needed, so we gave that money back to every member who would accept it. The ministers and deacons decided this was God's way of telling us he didn't intend our spending that kind of money on buildings, so we decided to go another way."

The "other way" involves the church renting most of adjacent Lindbergh Elementary School on Sundays, and leasing or buying space in shopping centers within a mile radius of the church.

"I'm aware other churches, of our own denomination and others, consider this aggressive approach as competition," Elliff said, "but that makes about as much sense as two ants being in competition over which can eat the most of a dead elephant. There's more of Tulsa than any of us is going to get. And beyond that, we're looking at the world."

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