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November 21, 1978

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Government Intrusions
Hit By Catholic Bishops

By Carol Franklin

WASHINGTON, D. C. (BP)--Participants in the fall meeting of the National Conference of Catholic bishops spoke out against government intrusion into church affairs with one, Cardinal John Krol, asserting that some regulatory agencies commit "acts of subversion."

The discussion of church-state issues, one of a number of items on the agenda, began calmly enough with presentation of papers on the theological and legal aspects of the subject. Emotions rose quickly, however.

"The rights of privacy, personhood and religion are starting to be violated on a grand scale in our country," the Philadelphia prelate charged. "I submit that there may be acts of subversion by the agencies . . . There are terror tactics...I suggest that we can no longer theorize, but on every level must defend the right of religious freedom which is being subverted by government agencies."

The Pennsylvania Catholic Conference presented a report which outlined several cases of governmental intrusion. Among those cited were the Department of Commerce's regulation requiring religious schools, seminaries, and charitable agencies to file an information form because they are "businesses," the National Labor Relations Board's claim to jurisdiction over Catholic schools, and numerous other cases.

Cardinal Terence Cooke of New York proposed a monitoring process of government attempts to regulate church activities. It would involve an interfaith effort with cooperation from universities, especially law schools.

The bishops group also considered the Middle East situation, the role of women in ministry, the plight of the handicapped in society and pro-life activities.

They adopted a statement on the Middle East which calls for a comprehensive settlement that would preserve Israeli sovereignty behind secure borders while also providing a homeland for the Palestinians.

The ordination of women was not on the agenda but the issue was raised by a group of younger bishops. Some felt that they needed to respond to the concerns of women who desire ordination. Archbishop William Borders of Baltimore said, "We do need to respond. . . . We are talking about women who are interested in serving Christ."

Archbishop John Quinn of San Francisco, president of the bishops organization, said at a press conference after the meeting, "I don't think there will be any discussion at that level." He said he assumed that any discussion "would be . . . within the framework of trying to elicit a better acceptance of the teaching of the church."

The bishops voted to call on local parishes to work on programs to help the physically and mentally handicapped. They also adopted a budget which cut back on funds for anti-abortion activities. Cardinal Cooke explained the cut was part of an overall economy effort, rather than a lessening of the bishops' commitment to pro-life activities. Some bishops are known to be worried, however, that the church's attempts to affect legislation may jeopardize its tax-exempt status.

Board Member Visits China,
Hopes to See Mother Again

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--A member of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has left on a 21-day visit to mainland China which she hopes will result in a reunion with her mother, whom she hasn't seen in 30 years.

Cherry (Mrs. Y. K.) Chang, of Los Angeles, a native of mainland China, hopes authorities will allow her to go to Soochow, where her 88-year-old mother lives. Mr. and Mrs. Chang were students at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, when Communists took over the mainland.

"I will not be allowed to preach (in mainland China), "said Mrs. Chang, a Southern Baptist home missionary, "but I can show my Christian witness through my smile and my good health."

Mrs. Chang also plans to visit several East and Southeast Asian countries where Southern Baptists have mission work.

"I go to encourage the missionaries and speak to the nationals. I have a unique position because I, myself, am a national and yet I also represent the board," she said. "I hope to help bring about better understanding between the nationals and missionaries."

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Catholics Show Majority
In 96th Congress

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WASHINGTON (BP)--Roman Catholic representation in the 96th Congress will continue to be higher than any other religious group, with 129, according to a census compiled by "Christianity Today," an evangelical magazine.

United Methodists come next with 75 in both houses of Congress, a slight drop from the recently ended Congress. They are followed by Episcopalians, 70; Presbyterians, 60; Baptists, 57; and Jews, 30, with no attempt made to distinguish between the various varieties of these groups.

Other groups showing fairly significant numbers included Lutherans, 19; United Church of Christ, 16; Unitarian, 12; and Mormons, 10.

The Senate will have a record number of seven Jewish members among the 30 in Congress. In 1972, Congress had two Jewish senators and 12 Jewish representatives.

William H. Gray III, pastor of the Bright Hope Baptist Church in Philadelphia, will join four other ordained clergymen in the House of Representatives. John Buchanan, R.-Ala., is a Southern Baptist. Delegate Walter Fauntroy, D.-D. C., is a Progressive National Baptist pastor. Robert Drinan, D-Mass., is a Catholic priest, and Robert W. Edgar, D-Penn., is a United Methodist.

John Danforth, R-Mo., is the only ordained senator. Gary Hart, D-Colo., holds a degree from Yale Divinity School but lists no specific religious preference.

The census shows that religious-affiliation listings showed no major shifts. Episcopalians, Lutherans, and Baptists showed modest increases; United Methodists and the United Church of Christ had the biggest losses. Presbyterians held their own.

Fifteen denominations were represented by fewer than five members of Congress.

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Alaska Baptists Elect
Woman 1st Vice President

KENAI, Alaska (BP)--Alaska Southern Baptists elected a woman as first vice president, voted a record budget and heard reports of statistical gains during the annual meeting of the Alaska Baptist Convention.

After electing William B. Lyons, pastor of New Hope Baptist Church, Anchorage, as president, "messengers" to the convention named Louise Yarbrough, director of religious education, Grandview Baptist Church, Anchorage, as first vice president, and Maurice Murdock, a layman from Soldotna's First Baptist Church, as second vice president.

The convention approved a budget of \$878,644 for 1979, with \$106,271 of that amount ticketed for worldwide mission needs of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Reports to the convention indicated a Sunday School enrollment increase of 39 percent in Alaska Baptist churches and a baptism increase of 17 percent.

The convention will hold its next annual meeting August 14-15, 1979, at First Baptist Church, Fairbanks.

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Utah-Idaho Baptists
Emphasize Bold Missions

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah (BP)--Southern Baptists from Utah and Idaho, gathering for the 14th annual meeting of the Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Convention, voted to accent evangelism and stewardship in 1979 and elected an Idaho pastor as president.

In other action, the convention approved \$712,907 total budget, of which \$194,699 is expected from Cooperative Program contributions by 69 churches in the two-state convention. Twenty percent of the latter amount will go to the Southern Baptist Convention's national Cooperative Program budget for world missions.

The convention's 1979 calendar includes extensive lay witness training, Scripture distribution and a simultaneous crusade, April 14-22, with assistance from the Home Mission Board's evangelism section.

Utah-Idaho Baptists will also engage in a "Great Challenge Stewardship Campaign" in an effort to strengthen the SBC's Bold Mission Thrust plan to proclaim the message of Christ to the entire world in this century.

Elected "messengers" to the convention named George Eichler, pastor of Upper Valley Baptist Chapel, St. Anthony, Idaho, as president, and accepted the appointment of Willis and Rebecca Blair as catalytic missionaries to begin new work.

Blair, pastor of First Baptist Church, Burley, Idaho, for the past eight years, will begin work in Meridian, Idaho, under sponsorship of First Baptist Church, Boise, west of Meridian. Salary will be paid entirely through a New Work Reserve fund established through the Utah-Idaho convention's state missions offerings since 1975.

The 1979 convention will be held Nov. 13-14, at First Southern Baptist Church, Pocatello, Idaho.

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New England Baptists
Revise Long-Range Goals

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DANBURY, Conn. (BP)--Southern Baptists in New England elected a new president, installed a new executive director and voted to revise long-range plans during the annual meeting of the Baptist General Association of New England.

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The body, which covers the six New England states, also voted a total budget of \$859,000, of which \$115,944 is expected in Cooperative Program contributions from some 80 churches and missions in Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire. The balance of the budget comes from contributions from the Southern Baptist Convention's Home Mission Board and other sources.

Twenty percent of the New England Cooperative Program goal will go to world missions through the SBC's national Cooperative Program.

Elected "messengers" to the New England meeting named Marion Hayes, pastor of Providence (R.I.) Baptist Church, as president, and installed James Currin, 50, an Indiana pastor and former Indiana state Sunday school and missions director, as executive director, effective Dec. 1.

Currin will succeed Elmer Sizemore, who resigned in Sept., 1977, to begin a multi-ethnic church in Manhattan. Robert Brindle, director of missions for the Upper New England Baptist Association, has served as interim executive director.

In 1976, the New England body set long-range goals, including 1981 as a target date for attaining status as a state convention in the Southern Baptist Convention framework. However, the 1978 meeting voted to revise the long-range objectives and set a new target date, probably within the next five years.

The Baptist General Association reached a major goal when it occupied new offices last year--P. O. Box 313, 5 Oak Ave., Northboro, Mass. 01532. It's churches are officially affiliated with the Maryland Baptist Convention and it has voted a sister-state relationship with Virginia Baptists.

The 1979 annual meeting will be Nov. 2-3, Screven Memorial Baptist, Portsmouth, N. H.

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Church One Step Ahead
Of Christmas Shoppers

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OPELIKA, Ala. (BP)--Just before Thanksgiving, First Baptist Church, Opelika, Ala., moved its worship services to a vacant building across the street while its auditorium was being renovated.

At the first service in the building, which formerly housed a large department store, Pastor Robert T. Baggott Jr. pointed out the appropriateness of the location.

"Some of you," he kidded the congregation, "have been worshipping here during the Christmas season for years!"

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Dallas First Baptist
Tops \$5 Million Budget

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11/21/78

DALLAS (BP)--Members of First Baptist Church, Dallas, recently pledged \$5,116,138 on "Victory Sunday," exceeding their proposed budget by \$125,000.

The church, which has more than 20,000 members, had 7,294 pledgers.

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NOV. 22 1978

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