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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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**New Lobby Disclosure Bills
To Be Debated In Congress**

By Carol Franklin

WASHINGTON (BP)--For the third time in the last three Congresses, a House subcommittee is attempting to write a lobby disclosure bill which will satisfy the "right of the public to know" and also to protect the constitutional rights of freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and the right of the people to petition the government.

The House of Representatives passed lobby disclosure legislation in both the 94th and 95th Congresses. The Senate has not followed its lead.

At least four measures on the subject have been introduced in the House in the new Congress. So far, no Senate bills on lobby disclosure have been introduced.

Reps. George Danielson, D-Cal., and Peter Rodino, D-N.J., introduced H. R. 81, the same bill reported out of the Judiciary Committee last year and considered by the House. Rodino is chairman of the Judiciary Committee. Danielson is chairman of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Administrative Law and Government Relations which is considering lobby disclosure legislation now.

Reps. Tom Railsback, R-Ill., and Robert W. Kastenmeier, D-Wis., introduced H. R. 1979, which is identical to the bill passed by the house last year.

These two bills are considered the front runners for house consideration by congressional observers.

The Railsback-Kastenmeier bill would require reporting of so-called "grassroots lobbying" efforts, the names of major contributors to lobbying organizations, and the lobbying efforts of the chief executive officer of an organization required to register under the provisions of the bill.

The Danielson-Rodino bill does not have these provisions. The grassroots and major contributor reporting requirements were considered highly controversial during last year's consideration of the subject.

Religious organizations objected strenuously to the inclusion of churches in the provisions of the measures introduced last year. James E. Wood Jr., executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, said, "The prophetic role of religion in the life of the nation and the mission of the church to speak out on public affairs (is) integral to the First Amendment's guarantee of 'the free exercise of religion.'"

Wood urged both House and Senate committees considering lobby disclosure legislation last year to exclude churches from the provisions of any such measure.

Rep. Don Edwards, D-Cal., objected that the case had not been made for the need for lobby disclosure legislation. "If there are real dangers to the republic from lobbying, let them be described in detail and then draw the law very narrowly," he suggested. Edwards favors disclosure only of gifts from lobbyists to legislators.

Danielson said that he hoped this year's hearings on lobby disclosure would be brief so that a bill could be sent to the Senate early enough to achieve final passage in this Congress.

Radio-TV Commission
Honors Porter Routh

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Porter W. Routh, executive secretary-treasurer of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, was honored by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission during the 10th Annual Abe Lincoln Awards for his support of the commission's ministry.

Routh, who will retire from the Executive Committee July 31, received an Award of Appreciation for his 28 years of "perceptive leadership in the Southern Baptist Convention."

The awards banquet, which annually recognizes broadcasters nationwide for their commitments to excellence in programming, was held in Fort Worth's Tarrant County Convention Center.

"Everything the Radio and Television Commission has done has been made possible, in part, by the assistance and support of this Christian giant," said commission president, Paul M. Stevens, who will retire himself, Oct. 31.

"Without his support, the commission could not have become the world's largest producer of religious programs, and through our ministry thousands of persons have come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior," Stevens said.

Routh, who assumed the Executive Committee post in 1951, was the first layman to hold that position.

Prior to that he was involved in denominational work for more than 15 years, including periods as editor of the "Baptist Messenger" in Oklahoma and secretary of the department of surveys, statistics and information for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville, Tenn.

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Southern Baptist, Jewish
Dialogue at Golden Gate

By Mark Smith

Baptist Press
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MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--In what was called a "pioneering effort" at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Southern Baptist and Jewish leaders from northern California met for an afternoon of dialogue, agreeing they hope Israel will do away with an anti-missionary law and adopt policies guaranteeing individual religious freedom.

Jimmy R. Allen, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, and Rabbi James Rudin, assistant national director of interreligious affairs of the American Jewish Committee, joined the Californians.

During the dialogue, attended by nearly 40 persons, Allen reported on his recent meetings with Israeli officials, including Prime Minister Menachem Begin, in which he told them that the "anti-missionary law" adopted in 1977 should be updated.

Rabbi Rudin agreed that the measure was a "bad law" and confirmed that it has been opposed by his committee. "Jews who have been victims of intolerance should be the first to see the benefits of religious freedom," Rudin said.

Allen said that had it not been for the American Jewish Committee already speaking out against the law, his efforts in Israel would have produced nothing.

He explained that the "anti-missionary law," which prohibits bribing a person to change his religion, was "based on an old myth" in which a Roman Catholic organization helped relocate Israelis who did not want to stay in their country. He called the myth false but said many people in Israel still believe it.

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Allen said he pointed out to the officials that the myth could not even be considered an issue in Israel anymore, because improved economic conditions and less immigration have reduced the number of people wanting to leave the country.

He reported that he was assured by Israeli Justice Minister Schmuel Tamir that a new law will be adopted by the Knesset, the parliament, and will contain provisions for religious freedom.

Allen drew applause from both panels when he stated that he hopes the new law will allow the people of Israel to "hold a faith, share a faith or change a faith."

Rabbi Rudin claimed that the efforts to get Israel to change the anti-missionary law were "Jewish and Baptist politics at its best."

Another matter of concern, primarily to the Jews, centered around proselytizing.

Rabbi Rudin explained that Jews have no quarrel with "witnessing" one's religion, because, "That's what we are here for--to do God's work on earth." But, he said, anything like "mission to the Jews" or "take a Jew to lunch" programs are ... "unacceptable to us."

Rudin told of an on-going feud that his committee is having with the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church because of the "denomination's policy of witnessing to Jews," and providing special materials aimed only at converting Jews. "We reject this kind of proselytizing," Rudin stated.

Allen, who said he does not adhere to such proselytizing, either, did say, however, that Southern Baptists believe it is "essential to share with others, to witness their faith, that God revealed Himself in the Messiah."

He told the Jews, "All we will say to people is 'I believe this is the truth,' and then respect the right of one's conscience to accept or reject his belief."

The term "mission" was another area of misunderstanding discussed by the two groups.

William L. Hendricks, professor of systematic theology and philosophy of religion at Golden Gate Seminary, explained that "Baptists tend to think of verbalizing their beliefs, or even some sort of a structure, when they talk of mission."

"Jews, on the other hand," he said, "tend to think of mission or witnessing as being demonstrated in their whole lifestyle rather than trying to convince others of their religion through words."

Rudin's strongest remark of the day was in regard to human rights, in which he claimed that Southern Baptists and other evangelicals, although aggressive in their assistance to people in poverty-stricken areas, are not as politically active in the world as Jews.

He called on Baptists to use their size and strength to join the campaign against oppression of Jews and all people.

"A denomination the size of the Southern Baptist Convention can have a tremendous influence on world governments," Rudin said. "Governments are extremely sensitive to what the rest of the world thinks or says about them."

"We can be the life insurance policies of both Jews and Christians who are in oppressive countries by going into those nations to visit our people, attend their church meetings, write letters to them, answer their letters, speak their names frequently in public," he declared.

"If these government officials are aware that we know our people in their nation, they will think before acting against them."

Some lighter moments of the congenial afternoon came when Rudin stated that Jews and Baptists need to revise their stereotypes. "I grew up in Virginia," he said, "and I know that all Southern Baptists are not rednecks and all Jews are not pawnbrokers or rag pickers."

Allen later commented that Jews and Southern Baptists should get together more often "because we enjoy fighting so much."



Missionaries Bundle Clothes
While Awaiting Indonesia Visa

By Maxine Stewart

BANGKOK, Thailand (BP)--When Eddie and Judy Neese were appointed as Southern Baptist missionaries to help start churches in Indonesia, they never dreamed socks, sweaters and disposable diapers would become part of their daily routine. But they've learned that adaptability is a key word in a missionary's vocabulary.

Everything had gone smoothly--their appointment process, orientation and preparation to go overseas--everything but visas for Indonesia.

All primed to begin their missionary careers, they couldn't bear the idea of just waiting for their visas. They learned that missionaries frequently fill temporary positions while waiting for visas to their assigned country. Told of a need for missionaries to work with Indochinese refugees in Thailand, they decided to help out until their visas were approved.

In September 1978 Eddie, Judy and their three children arrived in Thailand for an indefinite stay. There they bundle warm clothes for Vietnamese refugees, approved for resettlement in a third country, who have come to one of the two refugee centers in Bangkok to wait for departure.

Each bundle contains a cap, disposable diapers and bootee socks for each baby; a sweater for each family member; socks, underwear and sometimes a shirt, trousers, blouse and skirt.

Clothes bundling is a family project for the Neeses. They all help pack bundles laid out in their living room. They usually prepare and distribute 30 to 50 bundles a day, but once the number reached 126.

Each bundle contains a packet of Christian literature, including a copy of the New Testament book of Mark in Vietnamese, and a note explaining that money to buy the clothes came from Christian friends in Baptist churches in the United States and Thailand.

The Neeses also are using songs to help the refugees learn English and about Jesus.

But even in a temporary position things don't always go smoothly. The climate, the culture, the job--everything was different from what they had prepared for.

They live in a compound with several close Thai neighbors, and after a misunderstanding last November with some of them, the Neeses' morale hit a low point. They discussed packing up and leaving.

"God broke our hearts," Neese says. "Then he used that experience to fill us with his love. We learned human love is not adequate. We were able to go to our neighbors and talk with them about the problem.

"God dealt with them and with us. It turned out to be a beautiful experience and we had been used as God's vessel. We can thank him and praise him for bringing us here at this time."

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Note to Editors: Neese is a native of Linden, Texas. Mrs. Neese, the former Judith Pullis, is from Manderson and Thermopolis, Wyoming.

(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond Bureau of Baptist Press.