

(BP)**- - BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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March 7, 1979

3 Southern Baptist Leaders
Meet With China Ambassador

79-38

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Three Southern Baptist leaders met March 6 with the People's Republic of China's new ambassador to the United States to express Southern Baptist interest in sharing the gospel to all people, including those in mainland China.

Meeting with Ambassador Chai Tse Min at the Chinese embassy in Washington, D. C., were Jimmy R. Allen of San Antonio, Texas, Southern Baptist Convention president; Porter W. Routh of Nashville, Tenn., executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee; and Baker J. Cauthen of Richmond, Va., executive director of the SBC Foreign Mission Board.

The meeting was a "tap on the door" to Christian witnessing that had been closed since the communists took over the country, said Cauthen. "We don't know what will come out of it but we do right to tap on the door."

He said they were courteously received in a typical oriental manner, and at the end of the hour-long meeting, Allen led the group in prayer that "in God's own way, good might come to all people from the relationships which are developing between the United States and China."

The Southern Baptist leaders and the ambassador and his interpreter discussed who Southern Baptists are and what they do in the United States and throughout the world. The Baptist leaders expressed their interest in sharing the gospel to all people and voiced concern over spiritual ministries to the American Christians whose jobs will be taking them to China to live or to visit.

Also, they pointed out that churches in America are a great reservoir of love and good will for people in China as shown through missions and mission work in the past. They mentioned wherever work is opened or reopened, it is done as Christian work, not as government policy. Cauthen himself was a missionary in China from 1939 to 1945 when he became the Foreign Mission Board's secretary for the Orient.

Ambassador Chai told the Baptist delegation that the Chinese government permits freedom of religious belief but also permits opposition to it. The government does not encourage people toward religious faith as it is committed to Marxism.

As the Baptists left, they gave the ambassador a copy of Good News for Modern Man (the Today's English version of the Bible) and a letter calling attention to "three matters of much significance to millions of American Christians." The letter expressed concern for the reopening of Christian churches in China and requested permission for Christians to worship publicly. It also asked for the privilege of importing, printing and distributing Bibles and Christian hymnbooks, and for missionaries to travel, reside and witness in China.

Arrangements for the meeting had been in progress since before Vice Premier Teng Hsiao-P'ing's visit to the United States in January. Just prior to the meeting at the embassy, the three Southern Baptists went to the U. S. State Department for a briefing and were given biographical information on the ambassador, a career diplomat.

WrapupAgency Warns of Danger In
Constitutional Convention

WASHINGTON (BP)--A Washington-based Baptist group warned that a possible constitutional convention called to force the federal government to balance the budget should "preserve intact the entire Bill of Rights."

Members of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, meeting in semiannual session, also adopted guidelines regulating the use of the name of the agency, instructed its staff to seek a site in the District of Columbia or Maryland for its upcoming Religious Liberty Conference, heard progress reports on SALT II and Israel's anti-bribery law, and honored long-time member Porter W. Routh.

The Baptist Joint Committee is composed of official representatives from eight U. S. Baptist bodies and the Baptist Federation of Canada and deals with a variety of public affairs issues which affect the life of the churches and their agencies and institutions.

In expressing its warning on the potential dangers of a constitutional convention, the Baptist Joint Committee expressed its preference for the "traditional method" of amending the Constitution, by which Congress first adopts an amendment and then submits it to state legislatures, three-fourths of which must then ratify it before the amendment is incorporated into the constitution.

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Constitutional scholars are divided on the question of whether such a convention could be forced to limit its agenda to that single matter or whether delegates could choose to amend the original Constitution at will.

The statement adopted by the Baptist Joint Committee reaffirmed "the historic commitment of Baptists to absolute religious liberty and its constitutional corollary, the separation of church and state."

In another action, the committee voted to allow its executive director to authorize the use of the agency's name after consulting with its elected chairman. On issues to which the full committee has not spoken, permission for using the name must be secured from representatives of the various supporting denominations.

The action resulted from the use of the agency's name as co-sponsor, along with numerous other religious groups, of a recently-published pamphlet promoting the United Nations-sponsored "Year of the Child."

The committee also voted to ask the staff to seek an alternate site for its fall Religious Liberty Conference. The conference, scheduled for Oct. 1-3 to deal with human rights questions, was to be held at a hotel across the Potomac River from Washington in Arlington, Va. Several American Baptist members objected to the site, pointing out that Virginia has yet to adopt the Equal Rights Amendment.

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In his remarks, Routh said the Washington agency "has served as a bridge of understanding" between Baptist groups and thanked fellow committee members "for letting me be your friend and for being my friends."

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Radio-TV Commission
Promises Full Disclosure

Baptist Press
3/7/79

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission will make full disclosure of information to its trustees and the public of its business in the future, said Frederick W. Isaacs, chairman-elect of the commission and chairman of a committee to seek a successor to commission President Paul M. Stevens.

"That's the only way we can operate in today's society and it's the only way we can operate with our stockholders--13 million Southern Baptists," said Isaacs, who will head the effort to name the first new chief executive the Radio and Television Commission has had since 1953 when Stevens assumed the helm of the then tiny agency. Today, the commission lays claim to being the world's largest producer of religious programming for radio and television.

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In early February, Stevens, 63, announced he would take early retirement, effective Oct. 31. Stevens was relieved immediately of executive responsibility, which the trustees turned over to Harold E. Martin, the agency's executive vice president, but he will retain the title of president until Oct. 31.

The decision by Stevens followed several closed-door sessions of the agency's trustees and trustee executive committee. The result has sparked a series of stories in Baptist publications and the secular press about what that decision really means.

Isaacs said he believes Stevens took the option to retire early rather than face a vote of the trustees on whether to retain him as president. Stevens said he did so to protect the commission from controversy and "had a legitimate reason to do so because of back pain."

"The trustees have tried to avoid turning this thing into a witch hunt or dealing in personalities," continued Isaacs, a layman from Cosby, Tenn.

Isaacs said the decision involved a move on the part of the trustees to assume their responsibility as directors of the agency because there were "grave misgivings about management policy, disclosure of information and stewardship of resources."

"If previous boards of trustees had assumed their responsibility over the years, this probably would have never happened," he said.

Stevens, who expressed puzzlement at the turn of events but did note a trend on the part of trustees of denominational agencies to assume greater responsibility, has strongly defended his administration. Previous boards "have been supportive and depended on me" and "have been proud of my work," declared Stevens, who said he made it known two years ago he hoped to retire early and asked for a presidential search committee.

"I've put together a staff without equal in the field of religious broadcasting," he said in an interview with the Dallas Times Herald. "I've led in the building of a plant which is without equal in the world. I've been able to secure the cooperation of the radio and television industry in a spectacular way. We're audited regularly. There has never been one criticism of our management techniques before."

"I was pastor of a country church in Oklahoma when the commission tapped me and asked me to become its leader," he told Baptist Press. "It had three employees and a budget of \$212,000. I did not graduate from Harvard Business School or Wharton Business School and no one ever expected the commission to grow to the size it has attained. I used every ounce of skill and ability that God gave me to bring it to the point where it is."

He says there is "no truth" in the charge that he hasn't been open with trustees and declared that he has "been true to his call of God and to the denomination." He did indicate that there are times he should have remained closer to the trustees.

John Roberts, a commission trustee and executive committee member and editor of South Carolina's Baptist Courier, said the commission had "three main grievances" with Stevens' running of the commission besides questionable management and stewardship of resources.

They are "time and money spent on productions unrelated to the commission's task, a special annuity for 16 staff members, and dissatisfaction about some of the commission's 32 programs, particularly television programs, which some trustees feel are so general and non-sectarian that their Christian message is watered down."

On the first point, Isaacs citing one among several examples, said the commission questioned the expenditure of some \$30,000 to film the Fort Worth Symphony. Stevens defended the move as a goodwill gesture because the commission pays no taxes for police and fire protection. He also noted that "Fort Worth businessmen raised \$1 million to give to the commission over a 16-week period during our fund-raising campaign." He said the film focused on the work of the director, a Christian, rather than the symphony itself.

The special non-participatory annuity for the 16 staff persons involves a fund, over and above a regular retirement program, which alone would provide certain top-level people retirement income of 50 percent of their salaries, Isaacs said.

Roberts added, "Trustees had stipulated that any such funds were for retirement only and not for anyone who resigned or left the commission for any cause. The board found that four staff members who resigned and left Baptist work nevertheless had been given the funds accrued to their accounts.

"Fifty percent of retirement for a person who enters young and participates 30 years or more is not unusual and is recommended by the (Southern Baptist) Annuity Board," Roberts said, "but the program in question is in addition to other annuity benefits and at least two employees who began after age 50 were placed in the program."

Stevens said money was given to two of the four staff members "by pre-arrangement and in writing which was part of the record before they came." As for the other two, he said, "I did what I thought was right at the time, against my better judgment, without checking with the trustees. It was a mistake. I regret it. But it didn't involve a lot of money."

On the third point, Isaacs said, trustees, although they approved of many commission programs, felt others were too watered down.

Stevens, who claims that the trustees wanted him out because of his programming philosophy, said the trustees want more of the Christian Broadcasting Network type of approach "of preachers preaching to preachers and preachers preaching to Christians." He said he operated under denominational guidelines set years ago of not buying time, appealing for money or proselyting on the air to produce quality programming aimed at the "non-interested non-religious audience," rather than the interested religious or interested non-religious audiences. "This has to be done with subtlety and quality," he said. "The name of the commission has always stood for quality programming."

Isaacs countered that it is not a matter of high quality programming vs. low quality programming. "There has been no ultimatum to do a low quality job," he said. "Commission programming doesn't have to be completely evangelistic or completely subtle. There are certain markets for subtlety and certain markets for the evangelical approach. I am wondering if we have not extricated ourselves from mainline Southern Baptist denominational needs and have been trying to be a public relations firm instead of putting the message out and being evangelical in approach," Isaacs said.

Much discussion has centered around Stevens' retirement package.

Stevens' salary in 1979 is \$45,234. He also drives a commission-owned automobile, Isaacs said, and has the use of a commissioned-owned house, now appraised at more than \$185,000, with all taxes, utilities and maintenance paid, for the life of him and his wife. The house's original purchase price was \$42,500 in 1963.

Additionally, previous commission trustees voted to set up a non-participatory annuity, over and above the regular retirement program, which would pay Stevens 60 percent of his final salary, or \$27,000 per year, on retirement at age 65. Currently, the commission is funding that program with about \$31,000 a year, said Ray Scroggins, commission chairman. Stevens would have lost the \$27,000 portion of his annual retirement benefits if trustees had voted him out, Isaacs added.

The commission also pays about \$3,500 per year into the regular retirement program, funded jointly by the commission and Stevens, which would produce another \$13,000 per year at age 65, for a total of \$40,000, not including Social Security and other benefits.

"The trustees have no quarrel with Dr. Stevens having a good retirement program," Isaacs said, "but we find a program like this difficult to explain to grassroots Baptists and we've had some problems with the way the commission has maintained its annuity records."

A special trustee committee is studying the retirement program and will report to the trustees. The next regular meeting of the commission trustees is in October.

Stevens has defended his retirement benefits, noting that they are "no surprise to anyone" but that their scope "disturbed some of (the trustees). None of them have that kind of program in their churches." He said he had been considering returning to the pastorate in the 1960s when the annuity programs were approved and "never dreamed I'd see a dime of that money."

Stevens said he has "averaged about \$20,000 a year in salary" during his 26 years at the commission and was making "only \$15,000 per year on January 1, 1966," about the time the special retirement was put into effect. He said inflation rates and the fact that the commission fell behind in annuity contributions created the retirement difficulty.

Elaborating on the trustees' decision, Isaacs said of Stevens and his relation to previous boards of trustees: "The man was left alone by the trustees to the point that he, probably like many others have had to do, did things himself in order to get them done. He got so self-sustained that he didn't check with the trustees. It might have been a necessity for awhile but it got out of hand.

"We don't want to destroy the credibility of a man who has done so much good for Southern Baptists over the years," Isaacs declared. "I wish none of this had happened."

"People say Paul Stevens is synonymous with the commission," Stevens said. "It wasn't my goal for that to happen. It's grossly unfair to say I thought the commission belonged to me. I took risks for innovative ideas which boards of trustees approved, but I didn't foresee all the pitfalls. Even major networks stub their toes, so why expect perfection of me?"

"We should remember Paul Stevens not for the mistakes he made," said Roberts, "but for the good he has done."

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79-38A

Colleges Must Help Recover Real Meaning of Christianity

ATLANTA--"The basic proclamation" of the church-related college must be aimed at helping recover the real meaning of Christianity in a secularized society, Arthur L. Walker Jr. told a recent meeting of the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools.

Walker, executive director-treasurer of the Southern Baptist Education Commission, suggested four approaches church-related colleges should take in expressing "confidence in the sacred" as they confront a society in which respect for the Christian world view has eroded.

First, he said, "examination of the body of basic human knowledge must be in light of the Christian world view and the Christian view of man...The study of all subjects is influenced by the instructor and if a subject is examined in the light of a Christian view, the study must be directed by one who holds such a view," declared Walker, who spent 23 years as a professor and administrator in Baptist higher education before joining the commission.

Church related colleges must, in the second place, he continued, have a concern for values in enhancing the sacred aspects of life.

"Our headlong rush (as a society) into pluralism has included the acceptance of everyone's value system," he said. "But if we are to hold an egalitarian view of values it means that Christian values are respectable too."

Noting the glut of options which society faces, Walker conceded that other choices must be possible, but declared, "I demand the right that in this condition...there must be a place for a lifestyle which considers Christian values.

"Polarization of ideologies is not wrong in itself," he added. "Particularly is this true in regard to values. If we leave the field uncontested the result is obvious."

Speaking out of a background of years in student-oriented administrative experience, Walker made a third plea that church-related colleges provide a caring environment for students who face tremendous pressures from peers and society and who struggle for identity.

"No truth is more basic to the Christian gospel than God's concern for the individual," Walker emphasized. "President Carter's emphasis on human rights for all persons in all countries is an admirable concern. This is equally true for campuses. The caring must be as valid a consideration as the fiscal, academic, and effectual. The student is still our main reason for being."

But, he noted, "We do not have to provide the place for all the activities seemingly demanded by all the pressures our students face."

Fourth, he declared, "I believe that if we are to successfully face the desacralized society we must view the church as a significant aspect of today's society."

Noting that some of his listeners might consider that controversial, he nevertheless declared, "It is apparent that the reciprocal support of the local church, the church organization and the church-related college is a necessity.

"The church," he said, "needs that environment in which its youth and leaders can be trained and made aware of the significant role of the church. In fact, the time may soon come upon us when the leaders of the church who do not have a church-related college background will have even greater deficiencies to overcome.

"Grady Cothen (president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board) has reported a conversation with a leading philosopher who said that there are only two leading graduate programs in philosophy where God is taken seriously," Walker said.

Noting that technical training for a vocation is not adequate for education, Walker called for broader involvements which help students sharpen ability "to develop attitudes and knowing how to know."

"Our ties with the church teach by implication," he said. "Our ties with the church at the same time provide parameters which can guide philosophies. Our ties with the church provide the opportunity to speak to and guide the church."

"Far more important than the financial contributions (from the church) are the other values which accrue to the college and the church by close ties," he said. "Little can be gained in most instances by severing the ties. Much can be lost both to the church and to the college (by doing so)."

"Among the things to be lost is the opportunity to teach the importance of the church in today's world."

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The Baptist Joint Committee honored Routh with a plaque citing his length of service as the longest of any member of the 40-year-old agency. Routh, attending his last meeting before retiring this summer from his post as executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee, served on the Baptist Joint Committee for 27 years.

In his remarks, Routh said the Washington agency "has served as a bridge of understanding" between Baptist groups and thanked fellow committee members "for letting me be your friend and for being my friends."

Committee members also heard reports on several current church-state issues, including lobby disclosure legislation, tuition tax credit bills, Internal Revenue Service proposed procedures on the racial composition of religious schools, legal suits pitting the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission against several Baptist institutions, and a progress report on the status of the threatened Baptist church in Ankara, Turkey.

Committee members also spent several hours grappling with recent government rulings affecting church schools and possible federal intervention into the life of religious cults.

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Radio-TV Commission
Promises Full Disclosure

Baptist Press
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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission will make full disclosure of information to its trustees and the public of its business in the future, said Frederick W. Isaacs, chairman-elect of the commission and chairman of a committee to seek a successor to commission President Paul M. Stevens.

"That's the only way we can operate in today's society and it's the only way we can operate with our stockholders--13 million Southern Baptists," said Isaacs, who will head the effort to name the first new chief executive the Radio and Television Commission has had since 1953 when Stevens assumed the helm of the then tiny agency. Today, the commission lays claim to being the world's largest producer of religious programming for radio and television.

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In early February, Stevens, 63, announced he would take early retirement, effective Oct. 31. Stevens was relieved immediately of executive responsibility, which the trustees turned over to Harold E. Martin, the agency's executive vice president, but he will retain the title of president until Oct. 31.

The decision by Stevens followed several closed-door sessions of the agency's trustees and trustee executive committee. The result has sparked a series of stories in Baptist publications and the secular press about what that decision really means.

Isaacs said he believes Stevens took the option to retire early rather than face a vote of the trustees on whether to retain him as president. Stevens said he did so to protect the commission from controversy and "had a legitimate reason to do so because of back pain."

"The trustees have tried to avoid turning this thing into a witch hunt or dealing in personalities," continued Isaacs, a layman from Cosby, Tenn.

Isaacs said the decision involved a move on the part of the trustees to assume their responsibility as directors of the agency because there were "grave misgivings about management policy, disclosure of information and stewardship of resources."

"If previous boards of trustees had assumed their responsibility over the years, this probably would have never happened," he said.

Stevens, who expressed puzzlement at the turn of events but did note a trend on the part of trustees of denominational agencies to assume greater responsibility, has strongly defended his administration. Previous boards "have been supportive and depended on me" and "have been proud of my work," declared Stevens, who said he made it known two years ago he hoped to retire early and asked for a presidential search committee.

"I've put together a staff without equal in the field of religious broadcasting," he said in an interview with the Dallas Times Herald. "I've led in the building of a plant which is without equal in the world. I've been able to secure the cooperation of the radio and television industry in a spectacular way. We're audited regularly. There has never been one criticism of our management techniques before."

"I was pastor of a country church in Oklahoma when the commission tapped me and asked me to become its leader," he told Baptist Press. "It had three employees and a budget of \$212,000. I did not graduate from Harvard Business School or Wharton Business School and no one ever expected the commission to grow to the size it has attained. I used every ounce of skill and ability that God gave me to bring it to the point where it is."

He says there is "no truth" in the charge that he hasn't been open with trustees and declared that he has "been true to his call of God and to the denomination." He did indicate that there are times he should have remained closer to the trustees.

John Roberts, a commission trustee and executive committee member and editor of South Carolina's Baptist Courier, said the commission had "three main grievances" with Stevens' running of the commission besides questionable management and stewardship of resources.

They are "time and money spent on productions unrelated to the commission's task, a special annuity for 16 staff members, and dissatisfaction about some of the commission's 32 programs, particularly television programs, which some trustees feel are so general and non-sectarian that their Christian message is watered down."

On the first point, Isaacs citing one among several examples, said the commission questioned the expenditure of some \$30,000 to film the Fort Worth Symphony. Stevens defended the move as a goodwill gesture because the commission pays no taxes for police and fire protection. He also noted that "Fort Worth businessmen raised \$1 million to give to the commission over a 16-week period during our fund-raising campaign." He said the film focused on the work of the director, a Christian, rather than the symphony itself.

The special non-participatory annuity for the 16 staff persons involves a fund, over and above a regular retirement program, which alone would provide certain top-level people retirement income of 50 percent of their salaries, Isaacs said.

Roberts added, "Trustees had stipulated that any such funds were for retirement only and not for anyone who resigned or left the commission for any cause. The board found that four staff members who resigned and left Baptist work nevertheless had been given the funds accrued to their accounts.

"Fifty percent of retirement for a person who enters young and participates 30 years or more is not unusual and is recommended by the (Southern Baptist) Annuity Board," Roberts said, "but the program in question is in addition to other annuity benefits and at least two employees who began after age 50 were placed in the program."

Stevens said money was given to two of the four staff members "by pre-arrangement and in writing which was part of the record before they came." As for the other two, he said, "I did what I thought was right at the time, against my better judgment, without checking with the trustees. It was a mistake. I regret it. But it didn't involve a lot of money."

On the third point, Isaacs said, trustees, although they approved of many commission programs, felt others were too watered down.

Stevens, who claims that the trustees wanted him out because of his programming philosophy, said the trustees want more of the Christian Broadcasting Network type of approach "of preachers preaching to preachers and preachers preaching to Christians." He said he operated under denominational guidelines set years ago of not buying time, appealing for money or proselyting on the air to produce quality programming aimed at the "non-interested non-religious audience," rather than the interested religious or interested non-religious audiences. "This has to be done with subtlety and quality," he said. "The name of the commission has always stood for quality programming."

Isaacs countered that it is not a matter of high quality programming vs. low quality programming. "There has been no ultimatum to do a low quality job," he said. "Commission programming doesn't have to be completely evangelistic or completely subtle. There are certain markets for subtlety and certain markets for the evangelical approach. I am wondering if we have not extricated ourselves from mainline Southern Baptist denominational needs and have been trying to be a public relations firm instead of putting the message out and being evangelical in approach," Isaacs said.

Much discussion has centered around Stevens' retirement package.

Stevens' salary in 1979 is \$45,234. He also drives a commission-owned automobile, Isaacs said, and has the use of a commissioned-owned house, now appraised at more than \$185,000, with all taxes, utilities and maintenance paid, for the life of him and his wife. The house's original purchase price was \$42,500 in 1963.

Additionally, previous commission trustees voted to set up a non-participatory annuity, over and above the regular retirement program, which would pay Stevens 60 percent of his final salary, or \$27,000 per year, on retirement at age 65. Currently, the commission is funding that program with about \$31,000 a year, said Ray Scroggins, commission chairman. Stevens would have lost the \$27,000 portion of his annual retirement benefits if trustees had voted him out, Isaacs added.

The commission also pays about \$3,500 per year into the regular retirement program, funded jointly by the commission and Stevens, which would produce another \$13,000 per year at age 65, for a total of \$40,000, not including Social Security and other benefits.

"The trustees have no quarrel with Dr. Stevens having a good retirement program," Isaacs said, "but we find a program like this difficult to explain to grassroots Baptists and we've had some problems with the way the commission has maintained its annuity records."

A special trustee committee is studying the retirement program and will report to the trustees. The next regular meeting of the commission trustees is in October.

Stevens has defended his retirement benefits, noting that they are "no surprise to anyone" but that their scope "disturbed some of (the trustees). None of them have that kind of program in their churches." He said he had been considering returning to the pastorate in the 1960s when the annuity programs were approved and "never dreamed I'd see a dime of that money."

Stevens said he has "averaged about \$20,000 a year in salary" during his 26 years at the commission and was making "only \$15,000 per year on January 1, 1966," about the time the special retirement was put into effect. He said inflation rates and the fact that the commission fell behind in annuity contributions created the retirement difficulty.

Elaborating on the trustees' decision, Isaacs said of Stevens and his relation to previous boards of trustees: "The man was left alone by the trustees to the point that he, probably like many others have had to do, did things himself in order to get them done. He got so self-sustained that he didn't check with the trustees. It might have been a necessity for awhile but it got out of hand.

"We don't want to destroy the credibility of a man who has done so much good for Southern Baptists over the years," Isaacs declared. "I wish none of this had happened."

"People say Paul Stevens is synonymous with the commission," Stevens said. "It wasn't my goal for that to happen. It's grossly unfair to say I thought the commission belonged to me. I took risks for innovative ideas which boards of trustees approved, but I didn't foresee all the pitfalls. Even major networks stub their toes, so why expect perfection of me?"

"We should remember Paul Stevens not for the mistakes he made," said Roberts, "but for the good he has done."

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