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79-133

Wood Urges Cancellation Of New 'Cult' Hearings

WASHINGTON (BP)--Warning that an unofficial congressional committee looking into allegations of mind control by certain religious sects "may be opening the door to unfortunate religious witch hunts," a Baptist leader urged panel members to cancel plans for a second round of hearings.

James E. Wood Jr., executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, wrote committee members that because Baptists were themselves persecuted both in Europe and the United States during their early history, "we view with some alarm the hearings on the so-called 'cults' in which you plan to participate in the near future."

The ad-hoc committee, composed of two U.S. senators and four members of the House of Representatives, held a one-day hearing earlier this year at which both proponents and opponents of government action on the sects were heard. Among the witnesses were several parents of "deprogrammed" young people who urged that government take action to prevent what they called "mind coercion."

Wood's letter noted that last March the Baptist Joint Committee, in an official statement, "expressed its continuing concern that the guarantees of the First Amendment be fully applicable to all religious groups in America without political advantage or disadvantage."

Declaring that the word "cults" is itself a "pejorative" word "which we believe has no place in American law," Wood denounced any law "which is designed or used to harass, limit, or prohibit any religious belief or which permits the use of physical or psychological coercion to cause a religious belief to be recanted."

He went on to warn the panel that "government is not competent to judge which religious groups are true and which are false, any more than it can measure the adequacy or the acceptability of religious belief. Certainly government should not use the prestige of a congressional hearing to encourage distraught parents to violate the religious liberty of their offspring."

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James Ryan Joins
Seminary Extension

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8/7/79

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--James Louis Ryan has been elected associate director of extension center education with the Southern Baptist Seminary Extension Department.

Ryan, pastor of Levy Baptist Church, North Little Rock, Ark., will start about Sept. 1, succeeding Bob Johnson, who joined the faculty of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

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Ryan, 42, was director of the Boyce Bible School at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1974-77. He earned a doctorate in education from Southern and has also earned bachelor of divinity and master of religious education degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University.

His responsibilities with Seminary Extension, an educational arm of Southern Baptists' six seminaries, will involve work with associational directors of missions and others interested in establishing local ministry training centers. More than 8,000 students were enrolled in more than 350 such centers last year.

Seminary Extension provides theological education primarily for pastors who are unable to attend seminaries. Local individuals, most of them pastors with graduate degrees from Southern Baptist seminaries, teach pre-college and college-level theological courses in these centers.

A native of Little Rock, Ark., Ryan is married to the former Judy Fisher of Jefferson City, Mo. They have two sons.

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Mission Church Future
Left on Soggy Ground

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press
8/7/79

BEULAH, N.D. (BP)--Torrential downpours and an unkept promise have soaked a North Dakota church building to the foundation and left its immediate future on soggy ground.

Beulah Baptist Chapel began to take shape in late June when a Builders for Christ team from Texas came to town, said pastor Ron Moore.

The builders floored the auditorium and installed two-thirds of the roof trusses. They worked so fast trussmakers couldn't keep up, and church members finished mounting the trusses and decked the roof after the building team left.

They were to be followed in the third week of July by a 16-man carpenter crew on a mission trip from another church, he said.

But the second group of helpers told Moore "just a few days" before they were to arrive that they would not have the manpower originally promised. "All the supplies they were to use--insulation, sheet rock, roofing materials--had already been delivered," he said.

The group conducted Vacation Bible Schools in two nearby towns and sent five men, some women and a few teenagers to work on the church building for a few hours on two afternoons. "They accomplished very little," Moore said.

"Since then, we've had one downpour after another," he explained. "We've got plastic over the supplies, but the wind drives the rain in anyway."

Additionally, the building itself has been damaged because members--none of them carpenters--all have jobs and can only work in the evenings, weather permitting. Thus, only about one-fourth of the building has been roofed.

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"The floor is buckling, but we're trying to put the shingles up as fast as possible," he said.

Completion of the building is vital, Moore explained, because present facilities are inhibiting growth.

"We're meeting in the basement of a private home, and there's absolutely no more room," he said. "Already, 50 to 70 people are crowding in there.

"If the building is not ready by winter, which begins about Oct. 1, we'll have to wait until spring to finish," he added. "But if we have the building ready, we could run almost 100 persons in attendance almost immediately."

Moore said the chapel is the hub of the only Southern Baptist effort in an area larger than the state of Connecticut. Beulah is projected to grow from 2,000 persons now to 4,500 persons by next summer when construction gets underway for two coal-fueled power plants.

"This chapel could be the base of our efforts," he said, "but that won't happen until the building is finished."

Incidents such as this, where volunteer groups fail to follow up on promised support, are rare, said Bill Wilson of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, but the problems they create are monumental.

"This church is in a difficult situation," he said. "If help isn't forthcoming, it will be in real trouble."

Persons or groups who can help the chapel are urged to call Moore at (701) 873-2132 or contact Wilson at (404) 873-4041.

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Parks Elected Foreign
Mission Board Director

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8/7/79

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--R. Keith Parks, a 25-year veteran of the Foreign Mission Board and a former missionary to Indonesia, was unanimously elected executive director of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in a tearful, emotion-filled special session of the board Aug. 7.

Parks will become executive director-elect on Sept. 3 and assume the full responsibility Jan. 1, 1980, after the retirement of Baker James Cauthen, executive director for the past 26 years.

Parks, unanimous choice of a 15-member search committee, will move up from the post he has held for four years as director of the board's mission support division. The board voted Parks an annual salary of \$45,000, including a housing allowance.

M. Hunter Riggins Jr., chairman of the search committee, presented Parks's name to the board during an executive session the preceding night. The next morning, in open session after a period of questions and answers, the 80-member board stood to vote its unanimous support for Parks's election.

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In an especially moving moment, Parks read I Kings 3: 7-9, a part of Solomon's prayer after his coronation as king in which he asked God to give his servant "an understanding (or hearing) heart." "That would be our prayer, for the wisdom of God in this responsibility," Parks said.

All four of the Parks's children were present. The two elder sons, Randall and Kent, already are preachers and the daughter, Eloise, cried as she told those present that she feels God is leading her to a career in missions.

Tearfully she added, "And I look forward to the day when my father can appoint me."

The Parks' third son, Stanley, a high school junior, also told how he has a personal sense of God's leading him to be a preacher.

Riggins, of Poquoson, Va., said Parks was the committee's unanimous and first choice to become the board's ninth chief executive, from among the almost 100 names considered. He praised the work of the committee, and said it was "utterly dependent upon the Lord."

In response to questions from board members, Parks said two words are paramount in his missions philosophy: Jesus and church.

He quoted John 1:14, "The word became flesh and dwelt among us" to point up his basic belief in a need for the gospel to be "incarnated" in persons who will go and live among the people of other lands, the concept of career missions that has been central in the board's philosophy.

When asked about his thoughts on new approaches in light of governments and movements opposed to Southern Baptist traditional concept of missions, Parks said he's a team leader. "I will be seeking input from the board, from the staff, and from the mission field," he said. "I think one of my strengths is my ability to recognize good ideas...I am convinced God is in this...and he can tell how we need to change to do what he has called us to do."

Parks said he is convinced that as Southern Baptists "we have not yet dipped into our resources in terms of being God's people" and that "God will open up things that we do not dare imagine at this point."

Parks, 51, brings a background of 14 years' missionary experience, seven years' work as an area secretary, and four years as one of the board's three division directors.

His election marked the third time the board has asked him to fill key positions in its administrative staff. In June 1968, after he and his wife had spent 14 years as missionaries in Indonesia, he was elected secretary for Southeast Asia.

He administered the work of missionaries in eight countries or territories for seven years before his election in August 1975 as director of the mission support division.

Under Parks's direction, the work of this division has been organized into four major departments--missionary personnel, communications, furlough ministries, and denominational coordination. Parks also gives general supervision to news and information services and to the board's international writers and editors.

Born Oct. 23, 1927, near Memphis, Texas, Parks grew up in Texas and Arkansas. At the age of six he became ill with inflammatory rheumatism and his parents were told he could not live past 13. But his mother prayed, dedicating her son to God, and young Keith lived. "I knew nothing of this until I had entered religious service," Parks wrote in 1954 as he and his wife, the former Helen Jean Bond of Abilene, Texas, were appointed missionaries to Indonesia.

Parks, who holds bachelor of divinity and doctor of theology degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, taught at the Baptist Theological Seminary of Indonesia in Semarang, Java. He also was acting president during the furloughs of the seminary's regular president and did evangelistic work in the Semarang area.

From January 1964 until July 1965 he was an associate secretary in the board's missionary personnel department, working primarily with missionary candidates from the western United States. Upon return to the field, he was mission treasurer in Djakarta, Java, until elected secretary for Southeast Asia.

The three youngest of the couple's four children were born in Indonesia. The eldest, Randall, is married and working on a doctorate at Southwestern Seminary. He's pastor of the Red Springs (Texas) Baptist Church where his father served in his first pastorate.

Kent graduated in May from Hardin-Simmons University and will enter Southwestern Seminary this fall. Eloise will enroll at Hardin-Simmons this year as a freshman.

In recent years, Parks has represented the Foreign Mission Board on a number of committees to implement Southern Baptists' Bold Mission Thrust goal for sharing the gospel with all people of the world by the end of this century.

He has been a member of the Bold Mission Thrust steering committee and has been on the administrative group to promote missions through the Mission Education Council.

Parks will direct the work of more than 2,900 missionaries in 94 countries and administer an annual budget in excess of \$71 million.

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

Davis Wins Large
Poetry Competition

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WACO, Texas (BP)--William V. Davis, associate professor of English at Baylor University, has won the 1979 Yale Series of Younger Poets competition. The award is presented to one young poet in the United States each year.

Davis's award-winning manuscript, "One Way to Reconstruct the Scene," was selected from among 625 entries. It will be published by Yale University Press next spring, becoming the 75th volume in the Yale Series of Younger Poets. Previous Yale Younger Poets include James Agee, Muriel Rukeyser, Adrienne Rich, John Ashbery, Alan Dugan and the 1978 winner, Leslie Ullman.

The Yale Series of Younger Poets competition is open to any American writer under the age of 40 who has not previously published a volume of poetry.

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