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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

**NATIONAL OFFICE**

SBC Executive Committee  
460 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219  
(615) 244-2355

W. C. Fields, Director  
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor  
Norman Jameson, Feature Editor

**BUREAUS**

**ATLANTA** Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041

**DALLAS** Richard T. McCartney, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Tex. 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1998

**MEMPHIS** Roy Jennings, Chief, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, Telephone (901) 272-2461

**NASHVILLE** (Baptist Sunday School Board) L. Bracey Campbell III, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2798

**RICHMOND** Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151

**WASHINGTON** Stan L. Haste, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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79-151

Attitudes Toward  
Homosexuals Debated

By Linda Lawson

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Differing opinions on Christian attitudes toward homosexuals surfaced here during the Sunday morning worship service and a Saturday night question-and-answer session at a conference for single adults.

The speakers at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center agreed that homosexuality is a sin but differed in specifying appropriate attitudes and actions Christians should take regarding homosexuality.

The Sunday morning controversy arose during a program featuring entertainer Tom Lester who criticized ministers who refused to take a public stand with Anita Bryant in her 1978 battle against homosexual rights.

"They (ministers) wouldn't stand beside her because they knew what would happen," said Lester. "They would have to face the flak and they wouldn't be accepted by the intellectual community, the socially elite and they might not be popular."

Before beginning his sermon, Doug Watterson, preacher for the conference and pastor of First Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tenn., asked for a personal privilege to respond to Lester's comments.

"In defense of a vast number of Baptist preachers, the reason they did not stand up with Anita Bryant was not because they believed in homosexuality and not because they don't think it's a sin but because across the years in their dealings with homosexuals they have met hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of homosexuals who didn't choose to be homosexuals," said Watterson.

"In agony and pain, trying to deal with the reality in their lives, I discovered something about homosexuals--that there is a sense in which they're like alcoholics. They can be delivered from the practice of their sin but they're never delivered from the tendency."

Watterson said he doesn't understand what causes homosexuality and he abhors the homosexual lifestyle. But he urged people not to lose sight of the fact "that homosexuals are people for whom Christ died."

"I see a tragic, broken group of people who desperately need love and redemption but who need affirmation as people for whom Christ died. And that's why a vast number of us could not get on the bandwagon with Anita Bryant."

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Earlier, during a Saturday night speak out session in which conference participants submitted questions to a panel of resource persons, panelist Jim Pickett said he believes a homosexual can become a Christian and can experience healing. Pickett is a manufacturer's representative for a needlecraft company and a member of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn.

Another panelist, Floyd Craig, said that while a homosexual may become a Christian he may not be accepted by other Christians, even fellow church members.

"We may have a lot more work to do on our own attitudes," said Craig, citizen's advocate for the governor of North Carolina and former public relations director for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

Clark Hensley, executive director of the Mississippi Christian Action Commission, said, "We ought to make a distinction between a practicing homosexual and a person with homosexual tendencies who doesn't practice them."

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Senate Passes New, More  
Liberal Refugee Law

By Carol Franklin

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WASHINGTON (BP)--By a vote of 85-0, the U.S. Senate passed the Refugee Act of 1979 bringing immigration law into line with "our national commitment to human rights and humanitarian concerns," according to the bill's sponsor, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy.

"We have a proud record of accomplishment in offering a helping hand to refugees..., " the Democrat from Massachusetts noted. "But today we are considering legislation that will help us to do this job better--to resettle refugees more humanely, with greater planning, and at reduced costs."

A bill similar to that accepted by the Senate is being considered by the House Judiciary Committee. It is expected to move fairly rapidly to full House action.

Kennedy called existing immigration law "inadequate, discriminatory and totally out of touch with today's needs."

The measure, as passed by the Senate, would redefine refugees to eliminate the geographical and ideological restrictions presently in force. Current law was designed "to deal with people fleeing Communist regimes in Eastern Europe or repressive governments in the Middle East," said Dick Clark, U.S. coordinator for refugee affairs. The new definition would include "displaced persons," political prisoners, and those fearful of returning to their homeland because of fear of persecution.

Refugees would also be granted permanent resident status as are other immigrants, enabling them to find jobs more easily.

Sen. Walter (Dee) Huddleston, D-Ky., pointed out that opening up the definition of refugees might have negative results. "Are we helping solve the problem or are we creating more refugees?" he asked.

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Kennedy responded that "this change in the legal definition of a refugee will not mean that an unlimited number of refugees can or will be admitted to the United States."

The new law, Kennedy said, will establish a ceiling of 50,000 refugees annually with emergency situations subject to congressional review. Present law allows 17,400 annually under "normal flow" conditions with a virtually unlimited number allowed in under the emergency parole authority of the Immigration and Nationality Act. Since 1956 the U.S. has accepted an average of 44,000 refugees annually under the parole authority.

The Senate accepted a Huddleston amendment which would limit the 50,000 ceiling to three years after which Congress would re-evaluate the quota. "This amendment acknowledges the controversial nature of this provision," Huddleston said.

The bill would also guarantee federal support of the refugee resettlement process, thereby taking much of the burden off of local and state governments. Benefits for all refugees entering the United States would include cash and medical benefits for two years, with a longer period for other programs that "help the refugees normalize their lives in their adopted communities," Kennedy said.

Kennedy cited other nations which have accepted large numbers of refugees. "We sometimes hear the complaint that the United States is accepting more refugees than anyone else--and why should we do more for refugees when other countries are not," he said. "The plain fact is that other countries are acting in support of refugees. And while the United States, as a large country, accepts a large number of refugees, in per capita terms we accept less than several countries."

He noted that Australia and France have taken large numbers of "boat people" from Indochina and the largest group has been accepted by China. He also cited Tanzania which has taken 200,000 refugees from other African nations despite the fact that it is one of the 25 poorest countries in the world.

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Senate Vote Kills IRS  
Church Schools Rule

By Carol Franklin

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WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Senate turned back an attempt to give the Internal Revenue Service the go-ahead on stripping tax exemption from private schools which do not meet certain standards of minority enrollment.

The Senate also added, in effect, a one year moratorium on any new IRS activity concerning the tax-exempt status of private schools.

The action, combined with similar action in the House of Representatives in July, means that the IRS proposed revenue procedure on private schools is dead at least through 1980.

Sen. Jacob Javits, R-N.Y., was defeated by a 54 to 31 vote in an attempt to remove from the Treasury-Postal Service Appropriation Bill a section forbidding the IRS to use any funds under the measure to carry out a proposed revenue procedure first announced last August. That procedure would deny tax-exempt status to private schools which have very low minority enrollment and have not shown affirmative action in recruiting such students.

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Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., succeeded in attaching the moratorium amendment which the House of Representatives had earlier approved. His amendment would prohibit the IRS from using funds under the bill for any regulations which would cause the loss of tax exemption to private, religious, or church-operated schools unless in effect before August 22, 1978. The vote was 47-43.

The IRS issued the proposed revenue procedure on August 22, 1978, designed to deny tax-exempt status to private schools which do not meet a quota of minority students. The proposal was greeted by a storm of protest from private educators. After hearings in December, the IRS issued a revised version in February. This also failed to please private school operators. Hearings were then held in the Congress.

Javits charged that the civil rights of many citizens would be "materially affected" if the IRS is prevented from denying tax exemption to schools which fail to meet standards of minority enrollment.

Sen. Bill Bradley, D-N.J., said that it was "an open secret following Brown v. Board of Education (the 1954 Supreme Court decision which called for integration of public schools) that many of these schools we are discussing today were set up to avoid desegregation."

He added: "Taxpayers should not have to support segregation by the tax exemption of schools. And private religious schools are no different from other tax entities in the eyes of the law."

Helms, who led the opposition to Javits as well as offering his own amendment to enlarge the ban on IRS activity, said that private schools in North Carolina had been set up to avoid the violence and drugs in public schools and to give a "better education" to students. "The establishment of these schools had nothing to do with race," Helms asserted. "This is IRS tyranny. They are making law by regulations."

Sen. Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., joined Helms and called the IRS proposal "vague, ill-defined, a monstrous burden on private schools." He also noted that the revenue procedure would create First Amendment problems of entanglement of church and state as well as imposing affirmative action plans on private schools.

Helms, a Southern Baptist, read a portion of the resolution passed by the Southern Baptist Convention in Houston last June on the IRS proposal. It said: "We reaffirm our historic position in support of the separation of church and state, the right of the church alone to define its own religious mission, and the right of a church to establish schools as a part of that mission, . . . And we request that the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, while being sensitive to our position on racism, work vigorously . . . to oppose specifically the Internal Revenue Service's proposed intrusions into church owned and operated schools." (The SBC has also affirmed its opposition to racism.)

After disposing of the Javits amendment, Helms introduced language that is more general in its effect. Sen. Howard M. Metzenbaum, D-Ohio, objected to the amendment on the grounds that it would make possible evasion of tax responsibility by private schools. "We will be creating a category of schools that may do whatever they want with funds and continue to have tax-exempt status. They could lobby or enrich individuals. It is iniquitous to allow such activities. These schools should be Christian in every sense of the word and also abide by the Constitution."

Helms responded that the amendment would not grant a permanent tax exemption but would impose a one year moratorium on the IRS so that Congress could act. "You don't need to worry about these Christian schools either," Helms said. "They have no ulterior motives. They are not going to do anything un-American. They do not lobby. This is a lot of obfuscation about discrimination."

The amended Treasury-Postal Service Appropriation Bill passed the Senate by a final vote of 88-2. The House has already passed it so the measure now goes to conference to work out differences between the two versions.

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Religious Leaders Urge  
Senate to Ratify SALT

By Carol Franklin

Baptist Press  
9/7/79

WASHINGTON (BP)--Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish leaders testified in favor of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Claire Randall, general secretary of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, told the committee that the governing board of the NCC had voted unanimously in favor of the ratification of SALT earlier this year.

"The ratification of the treaty by two nations with such opposing views gives evidence to all the world that differences between nations can be dealt with by peaceful means...", she said. "The only rewards of an arms race with no limitations are widespread moral devastation, cynicism, hopelessness, and possibly even the end of civilization."

Speaking for the U.S. Catholic Conference, Cardinal John Krol, Archbishop of Philadelphia, said, "No question of foreign affairs surpasses the arms race in terms of moral complexity and moral content. Along with the correlative issue of world poverty, the arms race forms the heart of the moral agenda of foreign policy...Our purpose...is to speak on moral-religious grounds in support of arms control designed to be a step toward real measures of disarmament. It would radically distort our intention and purpose if our support of SALT II were in any way coupled with plans for new military expenditures."

A Jewish spokesman, Albert Vorspan, vice president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, supported ratification of SALT with the comment, "We see in the SALT process the most realistic chance for checking an insane, wasteful and potentially catastrophic nuclear arms race...The UAHC would like to see the treaty passed in its present form with no amendments or actions which would result in the need for renegotiation."

Coretta Scott King, widow of Martin Luther King Jr., also testified. She told the committee that SALT is a personal issue for the people of the world who are hungry and jobless while "global military expenditures now exceed \$400 billion a year."

The Southern Baptist Convention overwhelmingly passed a resolution urging Senate ratification of the treaty during its annual meeting in Houston in June.

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