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Pro-School Prayer Forces
Refute Mainline Leaders

By Larry Chesser

WASHINGTON (BP)--Texas evangelist James Robison, who appeared uninvited before a House subcommittee considering the school prayer issue, said testimony the previous day by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs did not represent Southern Baptists.

Robison was just one proponent of pending legislation that would deny federal courts jurisdiction in school prayer cases who attempted to refute or discredit the previous day's testimony before the House Subcommittee on Courts, Civil Liberties and the Administration of Justice, which is considering the issue.

The day before, a panel representing the Baptist Joint Committee had highlighted historic and recent Baptist support for the 1962 and 1963 Supreme Court decisions which forbid state-sponsored prayer and Bible reading in public schools. That panel included Grady Cothen, president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Robison said he was "appalled" by that position and said "the Southern Baptists who stood and made their statement here do not represent Southern Baptists."

Robison was allowed to speak, though that is irregular for uninvited participants, when William Bright, president of Campus Crusade for Christ referred one of his questions to Robison to answer.

Subcommittee Chairman Robert W. Kastenmeier, D-Wis., questioned Robison and Bright on reports that the Southern Baptist Convention in June overwhelmingly adopted a resolution opposing efforts to circumvent the Supreme Court decisions on prayer in schools and defeated a substitute resolution calling for support of the Helms Amendment.

Robison replied that the 14,000 messengers at the convention did not represent 13 million Southern Baptists.

In another reference to previous testimony, Robert P. Dugan Jr., director of public affairs for the National Association of Evangelicals, said he could not believe it when "I heard some religious leaders say 'voluntary prayer is alive and well in public schools.'"

In his testimony, Bright charged that the Supreme Court decisions on school prayer marked the "darkest hour" in the nation's history. He said a series of "plagues" had been visited upon America since those decisions, including such woes as the assassinations of President Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr., the Vietnam war, an escalating drug culture, an accelerating crime rate, and the breakdown of the family.

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Bright called the school prayer decisions the "most important component" of America's problem.

When asked if returning prayer to public schools would solve the nation's problems, Robison said it was "preposterous" to assume that two-minute prayers in public school would solve our national ills, but he later added, "Had we maintained the proper attitude toward the Lord, these things would not have happened."

In other religious testimony, Rabbi Juda Glasner of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the U.S.A. and Canada, urged the committee to support "voluntary non-denominational prayer," a position in conflict with other American Jewish groups.

In deciding the fate of the Helms Amendment, passed by the Senate last April as a rider to S.450, Kastenmeyer's panel must deal with the questions of what constitutes voluntary prayer and whether Congress has the power to deny the Supreme Court and other federal courts jurisdiction in the matter.

Rep. Philip M. Crane, R-Ill., who is pushing S.450 in the House, and Charles E. Rice of the University of Notre Dame law school, challenged the opinion of the Justice Department the previous day that such a move by Congress is unconstitutional.

Some observers, including Crane, feel there isn't sufficient time remaining in this legislative year to process S.450 through the subcommittee, the full judiciary committee and the House. They say the hearings are only being held to take the pressure off congressmen who are being urged to sign a discharge petition initiated by Crane to bring the matter directly to the House floor for an up-or-down vote.

"These hearings might have actually had a legislative purpose if they had been held six months ago," Crane said. "Instead, they appear to be a thinly veiled attempt to let the proponents of S.450 blow off steam."

Kastenmeyer plans to hold two more days of hearings in August.

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Fire Damages
Dallas Baptist

Baptist Press
8/1/80

DALLAS (BP)--Fire in the A. Webb Roberts Science Center at Dallas Baptist College July 31 caused an estimated \$30,000 damage.

A campus security officer discovered the one-alarm fire at 6:35 a.m. Five fire trucks responded to the call and had the blaze under control by 7:30 a.m.

The apparent cause of the fire was a "spontaneous ignition of one of the many chemicals stored in the unair-conditioned storage room" of the science department, according to Captain Jerry Foster, investigator of the Dallas Fire Department.

Foster reported that the flames were contained to the second floor storage room, classroom and lab, although approximately 60 percent of the building that houses both the science and music departments suffered water and smoke damage.

Clayton E. Day, special assistant to the president, said "plans are already underway to make the necessary adjustments for the fall schedule and the school does not foresee any interruptions."

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Missionary Tax Exemption
Caught Up in Larger Debate

By Stan Hastey

WASHINGTON (BP)--Aides to the two most powerful members of the Senate Finance Committee are optimistic that H.R. 1319, the bill to restore the \$20,000 foreign income exclusion for missionaries and other charitable workers overseas, will pass Congress this year.

But neither they nor the leading lobbyist pushing for passage of the measure would flatly predict passage as legislators recessed for the Democratic National Convention.

Chances for final approval of the largely non-controversial bill hinge in part on passage of a tax cut measure, according to most observers. If Congress balks at approving the tax cut now sought by most Republican members and key Democrats, including Senate Finance Committee Chairman Russell B. Long, D-La., H.R. 1319 and other lesser tax bills will be brought to the floor on their own strengths.

The \$20,000 exclusion, eliminated by the Foreign Earned Income Act of 1978, would cost U.S.-based missionary boards and societies and other charitable organizations millions of dollars in income taxes on salaries beginning with taxable year 1979. The Internal Revenue Service recently approved a four-month extension to Oct. 15 of the due date for 1979 taxes for such citizens, many of whom pay income taxes to the countries where they work.

According to Southern Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board officials, the cost to the Richmond, Va.-based body alone would approach \$1 million this year.

Jay Morris, a Washington attorney whose firm represents the International Agricultural Development Service and who has led the fight for passage of H.R. 1319, said in an interview that H.R. 1319 will likely come to the Senate floor on its own. He said the odds are "already past even" against passage of the tax cut measure and that the best chance for H.R. 1319 rests "on its own merits."

At the same time, Morris emphasized the unpredictability of a potential tax cut because of the supercharged political atmosphere on Capitol Hill with the fall elections looming ever larger.

He called "very encouraging" inclusion of the overseas charitable worker exclusion on a "must pass" list of pending bills from Senate majority leader Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va. Byrd's role as floor leader will become increasingly vital to passage of any legislation as Congress moves toward adjournment, probably by early October. Morris said it is "extremely unlikely" that Congress would return after the November elections for a special session. A new Congress will be sworn in next January.

Long, whom many congressional observers consider the most powerful single member of the Senate, remains committed to passage of H.R. 1319, according to his legislative aide assigned to the measure. A basic cause of delay, the aide said, has been a standing threat from Republican senators to sabotage any tax bill by attaching to it a tax cut amendment.

Long himself, during a recent trip to Louisiana, gave strong reassurances that he will fight for the bill, either in the larger tax cut bill he is sponsoring or on its own.

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A legislative assistant to Sen. Herman E. Talmadge, D-Ga., the second-ranking Democrat on the Finance Committee, also labeled as "very good" chances for passage in one form or the other.

Talmadge, like Long a Southern Baptist, continues to give the bill "high priority," according to the aide. The veteran Georgia Senator, who faces reelection this year, was chief sponsor of "church plan" amendments to a recently-passed Senate bill which, among other provisions, restores eligibility for participation in denominational annuity plans to employees of church agencies and institutions.

The Finance Committee, which completed hearings on the tax cut bill July 31, is expected to "mark up" the measure when Congress reconvenes August 18 following the recess for the Democratic National Convention. Long's assistant believes the measure should be ready for full Senate action by Labor Day.

If the Senate rejects the tax cut, there would be less than a month for H.R. 1319 to pass on its own.

Because of the short timetable, Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks again has urged concerned Baptists to contact Senator Long to indicate support for H.R. 1319.

Parks also suggested that individual Baptists contact Rep. Al Ullman, D-Ore., chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, asking him to expedite movement of the measure in the House once it passes the Senate. The House version of the bill, passed earlier, does not contain the restoration of the \$20,000 earned income exclusion for missionaries.

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Hawaii Editor
Suffers Stroke

Baptist Press
8/1/80

HONOLULU (BP)--Sue Nishikawa, editor of the Hawaii Baptist newspaper, suffered a stroke while returning home from the Baptist World Congress in Toronto and is recuperating from paralysis on her left side.

According to reports from her niece, Faith McFatrige at the Baptist state convention office, Mrs. Nishikawa is at the Rehabilitation Center of the Pacific for an indefinite period. She has regained some use of her left arm and has limited mobility in a wheelchair.

Mrs. Nishikawa, who suffered the stroke enroute to Vancouver, never lost her ability to speak, though her speech is slow. Doctors at Vancouver determined it would not be harmful for her to continue to Hawaii. Upon her arrival in Honolulu, she checked in immediately at Straub Hospital where she stayed one week.

Mrs. McFatrige said Mrs. Nishikawa is rapidly regaining normal speech and has asked for her papers with plans to produce a September issue of the Hawaii Baptist. There will be no August issue.

A second Hawaii Baptist executive, Edmond Walker, executive director of the convention, had suffered a mild heart attack while in Nashville, Tenn., for the Southern Baptist Executive Committee meeting in February. He underwent subsequent heart bypass surgery in Honolulu and has returned to work full-time.

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Annuity Board Enjoys Gains Despite Slowdown

DALLAS (BP)--After more than six months of "substantial growth and service in 1980," the Southern Baptist Annuity Board is experiencing a "watershed" year according to Darold H. Morgan, board president.

Besides taking crucial steps to meet requirements of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) of 1974 and the increasing regulations of the Internal Revenue Service, Morgan told trustees at their quarterly meeting that it has been a healthy year for the retirement and insurance agency--this in spite of the national economic slowdown.

During Morgan's report, trustees learned that the U.S. Senate had approved a bill containing the Talmadge church plan ERISA amendment.

The Senate legislation represents the most progress so far to overcome what the Annuity Board views as serious deficiencies in ERISA. It must now receive confirmation from the House of Representatives before going to the president for signing.

After Morgan's report, the trustees adopted a motion of appreciation to Morgan, Annuity Board attorneys and the agency's staff for their efforts in getting the legislation approved in the Senate.

Morgan also told trustees about a lease which will result in the board's 511 North Akard home office building being fully occupied for the first time. Under the lease, the Baptist General Convention of Texas will move its offices into the board building Jan. 1, 1981.

In other actions trustees: 1) Approved the convention annuity plan, a master plan to be used by Southern Baptist employers served by the Annuity Board; 2) Authorized the board's staff to expand the data processing and communications systems to meet the increasing needs of Baptist churches and agencies and the growing requirements of federal regulations; 3) Voted to change the mix of the balanced fund investment plan to 60 percent in equities and 40 percent in fixed-type investments. Formerly, the mix was 50 percent in both; 4) Elected Ray Melton of Florida to chair the executive committee of the board of trustees and David Nelson of Kentucky as vice chairman.