



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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80-195

High Court Agrees To Hear Larry Flynt Obscenity Case

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court announced it will decide if Cleveland, Ohio, police officials went too far in targeting Larry Flynt and his *Hustler* magazine for prosecution on charges of violating a state obscenity law.

Three years ago, invoking an Ohio law forbidding pandering of obscene material, Cleveland officials brought Flynt to trial. But the trial court dismissed the charges after holding an evidentiary hearing, agreeing with Flynt that the complaint against him represented selective and discriminatory prosecution. Flynt's claim was based on the fact that *Hustler* was the only magazine targeted.

On appeal, however, a higher state court reversed the trial court, thus reinstating the charges. The Ohio Supreme Court affirmed.

The nation's high court must now decide whether the charges should be dropped or whether Flynt must face trial.

In a written brief filed with the high court, Flynt's attorneys argued that their client's 14th Amendment equal protection rights were violated when he alone was prosecuted. The statement cited by name several other nationally distributed men's magazines with contents similar to *Hustler's*.

Also at stake, according to Flynt's attorneys, is the First Amendment right to "untrammelled expression of thoughts and opinions."

On the other side, the brief for the State of Ohio claims that the Flynt prosecution was designed as a test case with other prosecutions to follow if Flynt is convicted.

The city of Cleveland, the brief continued, has had a "systematic history" of anti-obscenity law enforcement. Its objective, the argument continued, was to test Cleveland's "standards of decency" against *Hustler* in order "to gage the level of sexual explicitness or permissiveness the community feels should be tolerated under the obscenity law."

Flynt's magazine also was chosen, the brief said, because it is "more crass" and has "less saving features" than some other men's magazines.

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Gay Rights Group Wins
Battle With Texas A & M

Baptist Press
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WASHINGTON (BP)--A four-year-old controversy between Texas A&M University and an organization of homosexuals ended when the U.S. Supreme Court let stand a lower ruling that the school unconstitutionally discriminated against the group by denying it official recognition.

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Gay Student Services, an organization of homosexual students, took the university to court after officials denied its request for recognition as an on-campus student group, a status which would permit use of campus facilities for meetings and other activities.

The student group charged in federal district court that its First Amendment right to free association was infringed by the university's rejection of the application.

The university has argued throughout the ensuing legal battle that it enjoys immunity from such suits because it is not a "person" under federal law.

University officials denied the homosexual group's request, according to Texas Attorney General Mark White, because such organizations run counter to the "philosophy and goals" of Texas A&M.

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Foundation Earnings
Up, Double Inflation

Baptist Press
12/9/80

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Income produced by the Southern Baptist Foundation in 1980 increased 27.8 percent over the previous year, more than double the rate of inflation.

Trustees of the Foundation, which manages reserves and endowments of Southern Baptist Convention agencies and institutions, learned at their annual meeting in Nashville that income produced from Foundation assets was a record \$2,216,535, up approximately a half million dollars over 1979.

Foundation assets increased \$3,653,087 from reinvested income and from money turned over to them for management. That 15.6 percent addition marked the single most productive year in Foundation history.

At year end, Foundation assets totaled \$27,014,237, an all-time high. Executive Secretary-Treasurer Hollis Johnson III indicated after the meeting that high interest rates, the increase in assets and active management of short term securities led to the substantial gains.

He says due to capital withdrawals by agencies for specific needs, a similar growth record in 1981 would be difficult to achieve, although investment possibilities will likely be more attractive than in 1980 due to increased economic activity.

Trustees re-elected Nashville businessman William E. Crook as president and recognized administrative assistant Christine M. Bess for 30 years service with the Foundation.

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Scudder Named Midwestern
Emeritus Vice President

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12/9/80

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--C.W. Scudder, vice president for business and development, has been named emeritus vice president by trustees of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Trustees, in a special called meeting, acknowledged Scudder's retirement, and elected Roger W. Hall of Jefferson City, Mo., as his replacement. Hall, 37, will have the title of vice president for business affairs.

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Scudder was given the emeritus title on the recommendation of seminary president Milton Ferguson. He announced his intention to retire during the trustee's annual meeting in April 1980, but was asked to remain until a new vice president could be elected.

Hall's election will allow Scudder to retire from his present position effective Jan. 31, 1981. However, he will continue to serve beyond retirement as a consultant in planning and development.

Hall has been director of business services for the Missouri Baptist Convention since 1975. Previously, he was assistant professor of business and accounting at Southwest Baptist College in Bolivar, and a staff accountant with an accounting firm in Kansas City. He is a certified public accountant and is a graduate of Midwestern Seminary with a master of divinity degree.

Prior to coming to Midwestern in 1975, Scudder had been professor of Christian ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, since 1954.

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Consider Alternative
Christmas Celebration

Baptist Press
12/9/80

FOREST PARK, Ga. (BP)--A group opposed to America's \$12 billion Christmas "celebration" says Christians bankrupt their most sacred celebrations when they participate in the annual American orgy of self-indulgence.

Alternatives, a Georgia-based organization dedicated to promoting alternate celebrations, is trying to "reclaim" spiritual holidays that commercializers have taken over.

As part of its campaign, Alternatives is sponsoring a "Best and Worst" Christmas gift contest. People are invited to send in descriptions of a gift they received last Christmas that was (1) meaningful, humane, personal, considerate of the earth and which reflected the deeper meaning of Christmas; or (2) that was particularly extravagant, tasteless, useless, dangerous or utterly crass.

Last year's winner for best gift was Jimmy Lee Gray, a death row prisoner at the Mississippi State Prison at Parchman, Miss. The gift was a Christmas card made from cardboard and pieces of colored tinfoil, handmade by a nine-year-old Indian child in Lawton, Okla. Runner-up was a woman whose sister gave her life in the form of a kidney transplant.

The worst gift was submitted by Jim Schneider of Salem, Mass. His daughter received a baby Mork doll which came in an egg, looking like Jesus in a manger, complete with a string to pull to hear a space age Christmas story in song. Runner-up was a man who received a case of champagne upon returning home from five weeks in an alcoholism treatment center.

Southern Baptist A.B. Short, a director of Alternatives, asks people to think "Whose birthday is it anyway?" A publicity picture shows Santa Claus bursting through a mural of the manger scene.

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The group's guidelines for gift giving point out that Christmas is the day of celebration for the birth of Christ. Gifts, then, are really to him and givers should be careful to choose the gifts he wants. "He pointedly insists that in order to gift him, we must find him in the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the imprisoned," Alternatives' guidelines say.

They suggest: giving time for participation on a committee which ministers to "the least of these," such as senior adult lunch program, prison visitation, housing, etc.; giving skills to the same kind of organization; financially supporting the programs of your denomination that minister to "the least of these. For Southern Baptists, the disaster and hunger funds and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions are primary sources of such ministry.

Alternatives stresses the giving of gifts over the "purchase" of gifts. For those gifts that must be purchased, careful thought is urged so that the gift reflects the values the giver wants to share. Does the gift encourage conservation, activity and independence? Does it stimulate spiritual, mental or physical growth?

Oakhurst Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga., last year utilized the Alternatives concept and conducted "The Joys of a Sacrificial Christmas." Members diverted money formerly spent on a normal American Christmas into a mission offering and increased it threefold over the previous year.

Andy Loving, chairman of the church missions committee, said they organized early in October into small groups in cross-stitching, knitting, bread baking, chair caning, photography, etc. The groups encouraged people to learn new skills and make gifts that would be more meaningful and less expensive. More money could then be turned to the Christmas offering.

The craft groups brought increased sense of community by bringing together people from the church who otherwise had no opportunity to really get to know each other. During a special Sunday night in November groups made Advent wreaths. People were purposely assigned to groups across generational and interpersonal lines.

Newsletters, sermons and activities encouraged people to be more intentional about their time around Christmas. Too often, people look forward to the end of the season because the American celebration demands frenzied activity that affords little thought toward the Prince of Peace.

Members set an original missions offering goal of \$5,000, up from the \$1,750 the 200-member church had given the previous year. With an emphasis on a spiritual celebration and giving gifts to "the least of these," the church raised \$6,500. About half went to the Lottie Moon offering, \$1,500 to a community health center and clinic near the church, and about \$1,500 to help resettle a Laotian refugee family.

Alternatives seeks to reclaim all spiritual holidays and offers catalogues, newsletters and checklists for churches and individuals to help them rethink their methods of celebration. They can be reached at Alternatives, P.O. Box 1707, Forest Park, Ga., 30050.

Home Missions Project Gets 60,000 'Captive' Audience

By Tim Nicholas

Memphis, Tenn. (BP)—Frank Groner believes Baptist hospitals are "the best home missions projects we have."

He ought to know. Groner was chief administrator of Baptist Memorial Hospital in Memphis, Tenn., for past 34 years before retiring last April.

He left the presidency of a hospital which grew during his tenure from 500 to 1,914 beds, making it the largest private hospital in the world.

It also has a number of bests and mosts attributed to it. It accepts no federal funds, but has the lowest patient cost of any 1,000 bed hospital in the nation. It handles more non-surgical cases than anywhere in the U.S. (over 6,000 per year—Mayo Clinic does 2,800). It's highest in orthopedic cases and is in the top three to five for open heart surgery.

Of the more than 60,000 admissions expected in 1980, more than 34,000 bed patients will be referred there, making it the largest referral hospital in the country. Memorial Hospital had one of the first coronary care units and the first hospital medical office building was there in 1928.

Those 60,000 patients are the reason Groner believes in the home missions capability of the hospital. He recalls Mark Harris, now deceased, former pastor of Speedway Terrace Baptist Church in Memphis, told him once that half the adults who joined that church had some contact with Baptist Memorial Hospital. "Contact," supposes Groner, "breaks down any resistance to Baptists."

Patient relations have high priorities at the hospital. Every patient is visited by one of 20 hostesses who work out of the religion department. As "professional visitors," they make sure patients have toothpaste and other needs taken care of and suggest counseling if they think it would help. That way, says Groner, "the chaplain comes in as an invited guest instead of just a salesman."

These hostesses also operate the hospital's hotline telephone service passing to the appropriate person any patient's non-medical complaint. And the administrative staff is assigned to sections of the hospital to keep up with things.

Groner attributes "wonderful cooperation in all the conventions" to the "top flight people" who have gotten as trustees. "I believe the hospitals that have related closely to the conventions are the ones that have succeeded," he says.

What makes the hospital specifically Baptist is its "peculiar" relationship to three Baptist state conventions—Mississippi, Tennessee and Arkansas. "We have tremendous responsibility being part of three conventions," Groner says. "It gives us greater flexibility."

When Groner came in 1946 to talk with the trustees about becoming president, he told them he would be making major reorganizational changes and would seek only top staffers. "That was right after the war," he says, "and we had people literally knocking down the doors to get in here. We were able to build a medical staff unsurpassed in the nation." A good retirement program and such benefits as a nursery for registered nurses' children help keep good staff.

Born the son of an attorney called into ministry, Groner grew up with his father serving as executive secretary of the Texas Baptist Convention and then as president of East Texas Baptist College. His father, F. N. Groner, Sr., directed a campaign to start hospitals and was first president of the board of the New Orleans Baptist Hospital.