



BAPTIST PRESS

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Hispanic-Anglo Relations Improvement Discussed

DALLAS (BP)--Means to bring about improved Hispanic-Anglo relations, particularly within Southern Baptist life, have been explored in a meeting of denominational human relations leaders.

The meeting, sponsored by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, was aimed specifically at helping the moral concerns agency of the 13.6 million-member denomination develop ways to help Southern Baptists deal with these cross-cultural relationships.

The meeting was held in the context of the rapid growth of Hispanic population within the United States. Hispanics currently are the fastest growing minority group, and are expected to become the nation's largest minority within the next few years.

The concerns to bring about effective relationships were heightened by the influx of more than 100,000 Cuban Spanish-speaking refugees last year.

"For the Christian Life Commission the big human relations concern has always been improving relationships between blacks and whites," Foy Valentine, executive director of the Nashville, Tenn.-based commission, said.

"In the 1980s, without diminishing our commitment to work on improving black-white relationships, the Christian Life Commission is compelled to seek to find the mind of Christ and do the will of God in relating to Hispanics," Valentine said.

Participants in the consultation included both Hispanic and Anglo leaders from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, the Baptist General Convention of Texas and the Rio Grande Valley Association in Texas as well as concerned laymen.

After several participants commented most relationship problems occur at a local rather than denominational level, participants called on the Christian Life Commission to aim direct helps at local levels.

Included in the recommendations were a call for the CLC to help sensitize Anglo leaders about Hispanics, particularly in areas of culture, identity, special sensitivities and distinctive contributions.

"There was an urgent plea to help Southern Baptists learn about Hispanic facts, figures, personalities and history," Valentine said.

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Other recommendations call for the development of dialogue between Anglos and Hispanics in a Christian environment and the need for programs of cultural exchange.

Oscar Romo, director of the Home Mission Board's language missions division, said Southern Baptists need far more long range planning related to Hispanics.

The leaders called for development of filmstrips, audio tapes, television video cassettes and curriculum and promotional materials which are sensitive to the needs and potentials of Hispanics.

The group also called for the Christian Life Commission to provide materials in areas of Christian social concerns and social action for Hispanic encampments, youth congresses, retreats and conventions and to work in the political arena to provide help with Hispanics' struggle for justice.

"The group agreed it is imperative to maintain a biblical, distinctively Christian and identifiably Baptist orientation which deals with Hispanic concerns not just from the standpoint of sociology or anthropology," Valentine stressed.

Bob Smith, director of missions for the Rio Grande Valley Association in Texas, said, "The brother-sister relationship in Christ is the best approach for dealing with the Hispanic challenge and opportunity of the 1980s."

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New Congress To Face
Church-State Issues

By Larry Chesser

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WASHINGTON (BP)--Prayer in public schools and tuition tax credits head the list of church-state issues likely to be legislative objectives of the conservative-flavored 97th Congress which convened Jan. 5.

It is unlikely the new Congress, with a Republican-controlled Senate and a much more conservative orientation, will match the separationist record of the 96th Congress on church-state issues.

Since both the Republican platform and President-elect Reagan support prayer in public schools and tuition tax credits, the question is not whether these issues will surface, but when, and in what form. Such issues may be temporarily pushed aside until the new president and Congress have had a chance to tackle larger issues such as the ailing economy.

Proponents of school prayer and tuition tax credits mustered a flurry of activity during the last Congress, but failed to change current laws and court decisions which support the constitutional requirement of church-state separation.

The prayer in school issue created quite a stir when the Helms amendment to S. 450 failed to die as quietly as expected in the House Judiciary Committee after Senate passage in April 1979. The amended bill, which would have denied federal courts jurisdiction in school prayer cases, died only after efforts by religious fundamentalists and political conservatives in the House produced more than 170 of the required 218 signatures on a discharge petition to bring the bill to the floor and after a series of subcommittee hearings.

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Proponents of prayer in schools have made no secret to their plans to push the issue in the 97th Congress.

The Senate soundly rejected an effort by tuition tax credit proponents to extend basic educational opportunity grants to qualifying private elementary and secondary school students. Sen. Ernest F. Hollings, D-S.C., led the challenge against the amendment to a bill extending the Higher Education Act of 1965, calling the rider "foot-in-the-door legislation" which would "establish a precedent for comprehensive federal assistance to private education."

Like the prayer in school issue, chances for tuition tax credit legislation have been enhanced with the new Congress and administration.

On another key church-state matter, the 96th Congress backed away from lobby disclosure legislation requiring religious groups to keep records and report to government on their advocacy efforts. Although the language of the lobby disclosure bill was changed in both House and Senate committees to exempt religious groups from the reporting requirements, the bill died before coming up for a vote.

After intelligence committees in both the House and Senate held extensive hearings on a new intelligence charter, proponents gave up and settled for a limited bill dealing with congressional oversight of the intelligence community. The issue of intelligence agency use of clergy, which was partially addressed in the proposed charter, was left unsettled.

Chances for a legislated ban on the use of clergy in the 97th Congress are uncertain, but the new Republican leadership in the Senate and the Republican platform both appear to lean more in the direction of unleashing the intelligence community rather than restricting it.

Also on the church-state front, Congress passed legislation which preserves the right of denominational workers and missionaries to participate in denominational retirement plans.

An amendment pushed by Sen. Herman E. Talmadge, D-Ga., to legislation amending the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA), clarifies the definition of a church employee. Without the "church plan" amendment, virtually all denominational workers outside local church ministries would have been excluded from denominational retirement plans by 1983.

In other legislation of interest to Baptists, the 96th Congress:

--Passed a bill during the lame duck session restoring an income tax exclusion for missionaries and other charitable workers overseas. The tax exclusion is expected to save the Southern Baptist Convention's Foreign Mission Board \$1 million annually. Estimates of savings for all charitable organizations range as high as \$25 million annually.

--Passed President Carter's military draft registration proposal (after deleting registration of women), despite a seven-day filibuster by Sen. Mark O. Hatfield, R-Ore., on legislation funding the process.

--Passed a bill protecting the civil rights of institutionalized persons by granting to the U.S. Attorney General specific statutory authority to bring or intervene in suits against a state after determining that there is a "pattern or practice" of depriving institutionalized persons of rights guaranteed by law or the constitution.

--Passed the Refugee Act of 1980, tripling the number of refugee annual admissions to the U.S.

--Passed a supplemental appropriation for the food stamp program just in time to meet the cutoff deadline announced by the Department of Agriculture for suspension of the program if funds had not been approved.

--Failed to complete action on the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1980 when Senate sponsors came up short of the 60 votes needed to invoke cloture on a filibuster during the lame duck session. The measure, which was overwhelmingly approved in the House, was described by Senate proponents as "the most important civil rights bill of the past decade."

--Passed numerous anti-abortion amendments to appropriations measures.

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Inauguration Day
Prayer Called For

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Thousands of "Baptist Hour" listeners are being asked to join in a national prayer effort on Inauguration Day.

Jimmy R. Allen, president of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission which produces and distributes the radio program to nearly 500 stations, said leaders of the nationwide effort hope to have one million prayer groups across the country on Jan. 20.

"It is crucial that we call our people to prayer. Not only because the Bible commands us but because the times demand it," Allen said.

"It is my hope that the thousands of people who listen to the 'Baptist Hour' will join millions of others all over the nation in intercession on this Inauguration Day."

The one million prayer meetings will be held in office buildings, schools, shopping centers and homes, Allen said, adding: "These prayers can affect the destiny of the country as much as the inauguration of the president."

Allen is a member of the National Advisory Committee for Inauguration Prayer Day. The committee is an outgrowth of the Prayer Committee of the American Festival of Evangelism, a follow-up of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism.

Other members of the committee include Leighton Ford, an associate of evangelist Billy Graham; E.V. Hill, pastor of Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Los Angeles; Pat Robertson, president of Christian Broadcasting Network; Bailey Smith, president of the Southern Baptist Convention; and Thomas Zimmerman, general superintendent of the General Council of the Assemblies of God.

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Planters Hope Border Church
Indicative of Future Wave

THAP PRIK, Thailand (BP)--Less than one kilometer from the Thai-Cambodian border a small group meets weekly, representing what church planters in Thailand hope will be a wave of the future.

Thap Prik Baptist Church, recently constituted with 18 members, is an example of the type of church that evangelists believe is necessary for rapid growth in Thailand.

The church was started and operates without substantial monetary support from either the organization of Southern Baptist missionaries in Thailand or other sources in the country. Leaders come from within the church and receive training when a missionary or evangelist visits or when they attend a leaders' meeting in the area.

Already the member's house where Thap Prik meets has been enlarged twice to provide space for those who wish to attend services.

The church began four years ago when a Christian who had been involved with another Baptist group moved to the village. He witnessed to his friends and they became believers.

Soon Southern Baptist missionary Doug Ringer and Thai evangelist Udom Phouangchan began visiting the group, teaching and witnessing.

"The group grew not so much because of our work," said Ringer, "but because those who were won witnessed and won others. We made them responsible for the work from the beginning."

Missionary Jack Kinnison, who also helped in the work, said he believes one of the key factors to the growth and strength of the church was that missionary and Thai workers frequently spent nights in the village.

"We talked with many people who normally are out working during the day and we would never have seen them if we had only visited during the day," he explained.

Church members have also started groups in two other places along the border.

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Rural Church Keeps
All in the Family

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Keeping it in the family seems to be the policy of Lloyd Byers, a student at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

When Byers left his pastorate at Beula Baptist Church, Abbeville, S.C., for a year of seminary study, his father-in-law, James R. Alenine, assumed the pulpit. Alenine is now moving to lead another church and son-in-law Byers will resume his ministry after his sabbatical.

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