



# BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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81-16

Sunday School Board Trustees  
Pass Telecommunications Plans

By Linda Lawson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Baptist Sunday School Board trustees pushed a Southern Baptist television network and a telecommunications system to churches one step closer to reality in their semiannual meeting and applauded board president Grady Cothen's commitment to supporting local churches through telecommunications efforts.

Following Cothen's presentation outlining the joint venture with the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, trustee Gene Williams of Richmond, Va., said, "I like the statement of commitment to the support of the local church. The so-called electronic church has not been supportive of the local church."

The project was approved earlier by Radio and Television Commission trustees and by the board's plans and policies and executive committees. The proposal also requires approval of the SBC Executive Committee which meets in Nashville Feb. 16-18.

In other action trustees unanimously reaffirmed the Baptist Faith and Message statement in an official response to the doctrinal integrity resolution passed at the 1980 Southern Baptist Convention in St. Louis. The response notes that since July 1969 the board has instructed employees to see that programs and tasks assigned to them are carried out in a manner consistent with the Baptist Faith and Message.

The response notes that, as has been the policy since March 1970, "All Sunday School Board employees who make decisions or write in the area of doctrine, biblical study, theological or editorial matters must sign the Baptist Faith and Message statement upon employment."

It concludes: "We reaffirm our commitment to the total authority and reliability of Holy Scripture. We pledge again to Southern Baptists that we shall do everything possible to offer our churches and people the best biblical materials available."

Trustees also approved an increase in the church literature prices which will result in approximately a 9.4 percent rise in cost for a church's quarterly literature order.

The proposed television network for public broadcasting, the telecommunications system to churches, associations and state conventions and the recently created SBC Video Network for producing video tapes for churches "offer to us unlimited possibilities for communicating the gospel and strengthening the churches in the future," Cothen told trustees.

Under the terms of the joint project a subsidiary corporation, the American Christian Television System (ACTS), has been formed and has applied for licenses to establish a television network of approximately 115 low-powered stations. The stations could then be hooked into cable systems and gain a potential nationwide viewing audience of 163 million.

The Radio and Television Commission will produce the network programming and the board has agreed to provide security for a line of credit up to \$10 million to secure station licenses. None of the \$10 million is expected to be spent and Cothen said, "We consider this a relatively low risk."

Since the applications were filed earlier this month, the Federal Communications Commission has indicated it will grant licenses for 15 stations and make individual decisions on the other 100 requests.

In return for securing the line of credit, the commission will provide the board up to one hour per day on the network for broadcasting "At Home with the Bible" and other programs which may include a Bible teaching program for children.

As the network is developed, the commission has agreed to cooperate with the board in establishing for the denomination a telecommunications system, possibly using some of the same hardware and a satellite transponder.

Once in place, any church with a satellite receiving dish could receive telecommunications via the system. Cothen said he hopes that within five years 10,000 Southern Baptist churches will be a part of the system.

He said the system would transmit programs to support local church ministries, such as help for Sunday School teachers in preparing their lesson for the next Sunday. However, he emphasized, "I don't want anything to subvert the Bible teaching in your church. I want to help your people teach better."

Cothen envisions other SBC agencies producing programs to help Southern Baptists understand more about the denomination's home and foreign missions efforts and noted the system also could be used to promote the Cooperative Program.

"Telecommunications programming is expensive," Cothen warned. "It will require space, people, equipment and the wisest efforts we can give to use it for winning the lost and developing the saved."

Replying to a question, Cothen explained two black pastors and the president of the Mexican Baptist Bible Institute in San Antonio, Texas, were named to the subsidiary corporation both to fulfill ethnic representation requirements of the FCC and as "an open, blunt statement that we intend to do minority broadcasting, but we need minority help to do any kind of broadcasting." He emphasized all three are active Southern Baptists.

Trustees approved new products including:

--Laotian and Vietnamese 14-session Bible study units for release in October 1981; a new line of materials for use with preschoolers to begin publication in October 1982; a quarterly leaflet in Spanish for visitors in adult and youth Sunday School classes, El Interprete Especial, to be introduced in October 1981.

Plans to build a book store at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, also were approved. When completed, the building will be sold at cost to the seminary.

Allen Urges Improvement  
In Television Programs

WASHINGTON (BP)--Citing television's heavy shaping influence in society, Southern Baptist broadcast executive Jimmy Allen told the nation's religious broadcasters that television ministry in today's world is difficult but essential.

During a panel presentation at the National Religious Broadcasters joint convention with the National Association of Evangelicals, Allen declared that the broadcast media "is fashioning the mindset of society."

Allen, president of the SBC Radio and Television Commission, said, "The x-rated world in which we live is much like the x-rated world into which Jesus came," and that the difference is in the "degree of intensity in x-ratedness."

Television's contribution to the "intensified x-ratedness," Allen said, comes not only from explicit immorality in programming, but also from "frivolous treatment" of important life situations.

Calling censorship unacceptable, Allen called for increased efforts to produce greater network and cable industry accountability as well as improved and creative alternative programming from religious broadcasters.

Allen described the problems encountered by the SBC Christian Life Commission in its efforts to influence network programming such as ABC's "Soap." Viewer education and viewer protest "has to be done," he said, but warned that it must be done "with great care and wisdom."

The cable television industry, which carries a large amount of religious programming, must be called to a "new accountability," Allen said. Unlike the networks which are regulated by the Federal Communications Commission, the cable industry is controlled by local governments.

"The whole bottom line," Allen concluded, "is a call for a spiritual awakening that will equip us to claim this x-rated world for Christ."

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'New Right' Leaders Express  
Disappointment With Reagan

By Stan Haste

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WASHINGTON (BP)--Evidence is mounting that key leaders in the New Right are already becoming disenchanted with the administration of newly-inaugurated President Ronald Reagan.

Expressions of concern, even anger, surfaced at a seminar in Washington for pastors and other clergy sponsored by Edward E. McAteer's The Roundtable and in articles in the current issue of the New Right's flagship publication, Conservative Digest.

McAteer, a Southern Baptist layman from Memphis, Tenn., featured more than 20 speakers from several denominations at the Jan. 27 seminar, many of whom declared that Reagan's overwhelming victory last Nov. 4 was an act of God.

Following the procession of religious speakers, however, several New Right strategists warned that the new administration is already going astray, particularly with regard to high-level appointments and the total absence of New Right input during the recently-concluded presidential transition period.

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The harshest criticism came from Howard Phillips, national director of the Conservative Caucus, who attacked a string of Reagan cabinet appointments.

Although he said Reagan "will be the best president in my 39 years on this earth," Phillips criticized the appointment of Alexander Haig as secretary of state, saying he has surrounded himself with "proteges of Henry Kissinger," secretary of state during the administrations of Richard M. Nixon and Gerald R. Ford. Kissinger has been a constant target of the New Right largely because of his policy of detente with the Soviet Union.

Phillips also attacked new Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and his top deputy Frank Carlucci, specifically for opposing quick approval and funding of the proposed B-1 bomber. Also scored were the appointments of Donald Regan as treasury secretary, whom Phillips accused of supporting Jimmy Carter in 1976; Samuel Pierce as head of housing and urban development, described as a "Rockefeller Republican;" and Terrel Bell as secretary of education, whose naming was a "slap in the face" to conservatives.

Phillips said he advocated a "confrontation presidency" for Reagan, adding, "You either have the Washington establishment with you or you have the country with you."

Richard A. Viguerie, the direct mail wizard whose computer funding lists have raised millions of dollars for conservative candidates and causes in recent years, told about 300 participants at the seminar that Reagan owes his election to "the hard-core conservative movement" which supported the former California governor long before most Republicans believed him to be a viable presidential possibility.

Nevertheless, said Viguerie, the party's right wing has yet to be rewarded for its long efforts on Reagan's behalf. "I knew conservatives would get the short end of the stick," he declared, "I just didn't know the stick would be this short."

Paul Weyrich, director of the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress, warned participants that despite the dramatic gains registered by conservative candidates in November, "All we have done with this election is to earn the right to fight."

He warned that the New Right must be prepared to do battle inside the Reagan White House, accusing one of the president's "operatives" of saying that "Moral Majority types" should be rewarded with symbols rather than action. Alluding to last year's political battles, Weyrich added, "We didn't get out there in the year of our Lord 1980 for symbolism."

He said the Reagan insider had described the White House strategy as being one of keeping "Moral Majority types" so close to the president "that they can't move their arms."

Terry Dolan, chairman of the National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC), a group which set out to defeat a "hit list" of liberal U.S. senators and representatives in 1980, said he too fears that Reagan has surrounded himself with people who do not share the new president's vision of America.

McAteer, who moderated the five-hour meeting but was not a major speaker, expressed his disappointment thus far with the new administration in a lengthy interview in the January 1981 issue of Conservative Digest, the widely circulated monthly published by Viguerie.

Asked if Reagan had followed through on a promise made during his first press conference after Election Day that he would not separate himself from New Right conservatives, McAteer said, "I see no evidence whatsoever that the people who really made the big difference in his being elected are really being considered in his appointments and decisions."

McAteer said that as of Jan. 8 he did not know of a single New Right proponent, of either secular or religious background, who had been appointed to the Reagan administration. He said further that his personal letters to Reagan during the transition period had gone unanswered and that phone calls from himself and other New Right leaders had likewise been ignored.

Another worry voiced by McAteer and others is that Reagan will heed the counsel of some of his economic advisors to concentrate initially on economic issues, particularly inflation, while putting volatile social matters "on the back burner." Among the latter are abortion, school prayer, tuition tax credits, busing and homosexuality.

McAteer said he is "180 degrees positioned against" putting economic concerns at the top of the list. "I personally believe that our economic woes, our military woes and our political woes are not really our woes," he explained. "They are a result of our problem. Our problem is a moral, spiritual problem."

The debate over priorities will undoubtedly intensify in the weeks and months ahead. One of Reagan's toughest chores may be to determine whether most voters cast their presidential ballots for him in the hope he could straighten out the economy or with the expectation that he would usher in a social revolution.

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No Clues in Murder  
Of Mrs. Ray Robbins

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NEW ORLEANS, La. (BP)--New Orleans police have no clues in the murder of Ethyl Louise Robbins, found dead Jan. 27 in her home on the campus of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Mrs. Robbins, 68, was the wife of seminary professor Ray Robbins, a teacher at the seminary for 30 years. Robbins arrived home about 11 p.m. after teaching a Bible session in Baton Rouge and found his wife dead in a downstairs bathroom.

Mrs. Robbins suffered a fractured skull and fractured ribs after being beaten with a blunt instrument. Police said there were no signs of forced entry and that the house was not ransacked, though money had been taken from her purse. No murder weapon has been located.

Several hours before she was found, Mrs. Robbins told a neighbor she heard a prowler outside her house. The neighbor later called campus security officers who investigated the area, but found no sign of a prowler.

"We're all heartbroken and in a state of shock," said seminary president Landrum Leavell. "This senseless, brutal act defies explanation."

Though the New Orleans police department is doing a thorough job of investigation and appears to have taken a personal interest in the case, there are no clues, Leavell said. "The unanswered questions baffle us and are beyond us," he said. "But we are facing this as Christians and through the tears, there is great hope. We are confident in the grace of God that he will supply our needs."

Bruce Worrell, campus security director, has an eight-man force with shifts on duty around the clock to patrol the 75-acre campus compound, which includes faculty and student housing and the administration buildings.

Leavell said the campus bookstore has been broken into twice in the past six weeks, but those were the only two serious incidents of that nature in his six years at the campus. He said campus security receives "a lot of calls about prowlers or suspected prowlers," and they are all investigated, but they generally prove to be a passing student or neighbors.

Mrs. Robbins, who was known for her openness to strangers, is survived by her husband Ray, professor of Greek and New Testament and author of the 1981 SBC January Bible Study on Philippians; daughter Dixie Schrier from Opelika, Ala.; three sons, Cecil, from Oakland, Calif., Ray Frank II, from Talladega, Ala., and John, from New York City. She is to be interred at Lakewood Memorial Park, Jackson, Miss., her hometown.

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