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RB

Government, Baptists Agree On
Indonesian Hospital Relocation

By William McElrath

BUKITTINGGI, Indonesia (BP)-- Immanuel Hospital, Bukittinggi, Indonesia, will be rebuilt at a new location on the island of Sumatra, according to a formal agreement signed in the Indonesian Ministry of Internal Affairs at Jakarta, Indonesia, Dec 23.

The Baptist hospital, which opened six years ago in West Sumatra, will relocate at a new site on the edge of Tanjungkarang in southern Sumatra.

The relocation became necessary when Moslem leaders pressured the Indonesian government to eliminate the Christian influence in Bukittinggi, a strong Moslem community.

Baptists tried for 14 years to begin Immanuel Hospital, finally opening without publicity Dec. 1, 1975. Since its opening, there has been little or no overt opposition, but controversy about the hospital has continued from time to time at the national level, and increased Moslem pressure on the government in recent years forced the move.

Signing the relocation agreement for Baptists was Wim H. Theorupun, general chairman of the Union of Indonesian Baptist Churches. Southern Baptist missionaries John Ingouf, interim chairman of the Indonesian Baptist Mission, and Clarence Griffith, plus seven other Indonesian Baptist leaders also attended the ceremony.

An active Baptist layman, Theorupun is a high official in the Indonesian Ministry of Justice. In a brief speech at the signing ceremony he said, "We Baptists are agreeing to this move because we believe it to be the will of God. Listen to what God's Word says about obedience to the government."

Theorupun then read Romans 13:1-7 from the Indonesian Bible to the two cabinet ministers, two provincial governors and others.

Baptists agreed in writing that Immanuel Hospital in Bukittinggi will become a public hospital during a transition period extending to March 31, 1983. Construction of the new hospital in southern Sumatra is scheduled to begin after Indonesian national elections on May 5, 1982.

In return for the hospital building, land and residences for doctors and other medical personnel in Bukittinggi, Baptists received a title deed to three hectares of land (about 7.5 acres) on the outskirts of Tanjungkarang. Baptists have been doing evangelism and church planting in and near this city since 1969.

As further government compensation, Baptists also received a check to cover costs of new buildings. Further funds are to be provided later to replace equipment.

Baptists faced strong opposition in their efforts to begin Immanuel Hospital in Bukittinggi.

A clinic was opened in the 1960s but permits to buy land to build and to practice medicine were repeatedly delayed. West Sumatra is a strongly Moslem area and some leaders opposed any kind of Christian institution there.

Less than a year after the hospital opened--in October 1976--someone tried to blow it up with 34 sticks of TNT. But the homemade bomb misfired. When the bombing attempt became known, a backlash effect caused many Indonesians, including Moslems to support the hospital's ministries.

Controversy about the hospital has made evangelistic efforts in Bukittinggi low key and limited in response.

In earlier negotiations about moving the hospital, the Indonesian government offered several rural sites in southern Sumatra. At first this seemed promising because of strong Baptist work among homesteaders who have migrated from the overcrowded island of Java. But then it became apparent that operating a 50-bed hospital would not be feasible at the places indicated.

With the new location near Tanjungkarang, the hospital should profit from both rural and urban contacts. Most buses from homesteading tracts come to a terminal near the new site, which should make it easy for patients to get to the hospital. Nearness to the city should facilitate transportation, communication and supplies.

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(McElrath is missionary press representative in Indonesia)

Map mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

Volunteer Showing
Slight Improvement

CO

Baptist Press
1/6/82

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (BP)--Roy Church, Southern Baptist extended service volunteer stricken by a paralysis-causing illness Dec. 12 in Quito, Ecuador, is showing slight improvement.

Church, paralyzed from the neck down, has regained some movement in his right hand, his wife, Ruth, said. He has been a patient since Dec. 16 at North Carolina Baptist Hospital in Winston-Salem.

Though recovery from the illness, Guillian-Barre Syndrome, is slow, Church is optimistic he will overcome the paralysis. Despite occasional breathing problems, he has remained in good spirits, his wife says.

"Performing miracles is routine with God," Church told Bryan Brasington, Foreign Mission Board director for western South America. "I just believe everything is going to work out all right."

He has whirlpool therapy daily and constantly attempts to move and activate his muscles, Mrs. Church said. Church credits the prayers of friends with aiding him in his recovery.

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New Brazilian Law Eases
Missionary Visa Rules

By Erich Bridges

RB

BRASILIA, Brazil (BP)--A new immigration law in Brazil restores the privilege of foreign missionaries to obtain permanent visas.

Formally adopted in December, the law deals with all foreigners in Brazil, including immigrants, refugees and "irregulars" (illegal aliens). Under its terms entering missionaries can obtain a one-year renewable visa. After two years missionaries will be eligible for permanent visas.

The previous "foreigners law," passed in 1980, restricted all new missionaries to temporary visas, renewable every two years. No Southern Baptist missionaries entering Brazil have been granted permanent visas since mid-1979.

Missionary Raymond Kolb, Brasilia-based associate to Thurmon Bryant, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board director for eastern South America, expressed cautious satisfaction with the new law. "I'm encouraged that this has been passed," Kolb said. "At least we have something more definite now. It's not that hazy thing we were working under before."

As field associate to Bryant, Kolb helps entering missionaries obtain visas and other documentation.

According to Kolb and Bryant, the restrictions of the 1980 law reflected government concern over the political activities of some religious groups. In recent years several foreign religious workers have been accused of political subversion. A Roman Catholic priest from Italy, charged with being a communist agent, was deported in 1981.

Though Southern Baptist missionaries maintain a strictly nonpolitical stance, they fell under the regulations applied to all "international organizations," including missionary agencies, in the 1980 law.

New missionary families, Kolb said, have had to leave furniture and other possessions in the United States, and live with a question mark about how long they would be permitted to stay. Currently 29 Southern Baptist missionaries hold temporary visas.

In addition to visa limitations, federal authorities also closed certain areas, primarily the wilderness regions of Amazonas, Para and the northern territories, to new missionary residents.

"It is for security reasons," Kolb said. "(The government) just didn't care to have foreigners in such a vast area, which is almost impossible to police."

At year's end, however, a new missionary couple's visa application for residence in Manaus, Amazonas' capital, had been accepted for consideration. Kolb was optimistic about its chances for approval. "It's a test case, but I feel reasonably confident about it," he said.

Veteran missionaries already holding permanent visas have not been affected by visa or location restrictions.

More than 300 Southern Baptist missionaries work in Brazil, almost 10 percent of the Foreign Mission Board's total missionary force and the largest number of Southern Baptist missionaries working in a single country.

Southern Baptist Lauds
'Creationism' Decision

By Betty Kennedy and Robert Dilday

CO

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--A federal judge's decision declaring Arkansas' creation science law unconstitutional pleases a Southern Baptist minister who took part in challenging the law.

Nathan Porter, one of 23 plaintiffs in the lawsuit against Act 590, said Judge William Overton's decision--announced Jan. 5--addressed the major issue in the case.

"Evolution is not the issue," Porter said. "It is whether religion will be taught in the public school. It has been the issue from the beginning and that is why I became involved. The basic question is the separation of church and state."

Porter, from Arkadelphia, said he joined the other plaintiffs, who included 11 other clergymen and the American Civil Liberties Union, as an individual, a parent and a Southern Baptist committed to religious liberty. "In no way do I speak for Southern Baptists; however, I do believe I have represented the historic Baptist position."

In a 38-page ruling released Jan. 5, Judge Overton said Arkansas Bill 590 which forced schools teaching the theory of evolution also to teach the story of creation was an unconstitutional violation of religious freedom.

Overton, who presided over a much publicized nine-day trial, called the law "purely an effort to introduce the biblical account of creation into the public school curriculum."

The ruling cited subpoenaed correspondence circulated among creation science proponents to show that the laws' supporters were "aware that Act 590 is a religious crusade coupled with a desire to conceal that intention."

Testimony, Overton wrote, not so much attempted to establish creation science as science but to discredit evolution. Defendants claimed that evolution is a religion. Assuming that, for the sake of argument, the ruling said the remedy would be to stop that teaching, not to establish another religion in opposition to it.

In the lawsuit, the ACLU attacked Act 590 as an attempt to establish religion, and claimed it violated a constitutionally protected right of academic freedom and was unconstitutionally vague.

Overton did not rule on the second and third points, but issued his ruling only on the religion issue.

Arkansas became the first state in the United States to legislate the teaching of creation-science when its legislature in March passed Act 590 requiring "instruction in both scientific models of evolution science and creation science, if public schools chose to teach either."

The law defines creation science as, among other things, scientific evidence for a sudden and "relatively recent" inception of the earth and life; separate ancestry for man and apes, and an explanation of the earth's geology which includes the occurrence of a worldwide flood.

The law prohibits "religious instruction or references to religious writing" in a teacher's treatment of creation science, but declares a legislative purpose of "preventing establishment of theologically liberal, humanist, nontheist or atheist religion."

The bill stirred controversy from the day it appeared on the floor of the Senate. It passed the Arkansas House and Senate by wide margins amid cheers from legislators. It was signed into law by Gov. Frank White, who later admitted he hadn't read it.

The ACLU filed the suit in May on behalf of the 23 plaintiffs.

Although the trial was not a replay of the historic Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925, it was filled with testimony as both sides called theologians, clergy, scientists and educators to testify.

One defense witness was Dallas Theological Seminary professor Norman Geisler, who made headlines when he testified he believes in UFOs and claimed they are "Satanic manifestations in the world for the purpose of deception."

Another defense witness, Larry Parker, a specialist in devising public school curricula, said he believes the public should have what they want in public schools and cited polls which indicate a majority of the American public thinks creation science should be taught if evolution is presented.

In his opinion, Judge Overton strongly disagreed with Parker. He wrote:

"The application in content of First Amendment principles are not determined by public opinion polls or by a majority vote. Whether the proponents of Act 590 constitute the majority or the minority is quite irrelevant under the constitutional system of government. No group, no matter how large or small, may use the organs of government, of which the public schools are the most conspicuous and influential, to foist its religious belief on others."

While Arkansas was the first state to enact the creation science model into law, such actions are pending in some 30 states. Louisiana has since passed a statute requiring "equal time" for scientific creationism, and the Mississippi State Senate voted overwhelmingly Jan. 5 to provide for the teaching of scientific creationism in Mississippi public schools.

The ACLU has challenged the Louisiana law.

Arkansas Attorney Gen. Steve Clark said he will decide soon whether to appeal Overton's ruling to the Eighth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in St. Louis.