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July 1, 1982

82-95

Draper Follows Through On 'Open Letter' Pledge

By Dan Martin

EULESS, Texas (BP) -- Southern Baptist Convention President Jimmy Draper met Thursday (July 1) with denominational vice presidents, following through on a pledge he made in "An Open Letter to Southern Baptists," circulated earlier in the week.

In the letter, sent to the editors of the 34 state Baptist newspapers and to Baptist Press, Draper said he will meet with the two vice presidents "several times during the year to pray together and to discuss plans. I value the suggestions and guidance of these two co-workers."

Draper, pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, a suburb of Dallas/Fort Worth, was elected president of the 13.8 million member denomination in the recently completed annual meeting in New Orleans. John Sullivan, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, La., was elected first vice president, and Gene Garrison, pastor of First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City, was selected as second vice president.

Sullivan was nominated for president, but was eliminated on the first ballot. Draper went on to defeat Duke K. McCall, chancellor of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., on the second ballot. Sullivan went on to win first vice president on a second ballot.

Sullivan and Garrison are seen as "moderates" in the denomination, while Draper has been identified as part of the "inerrancy" camp.

In his letter, Draper expressed "gratitude for the high privilege of representing" Southern Baptists, and said he "did not accept the position lightly, but seriously and prayerfully."

"I realize these are days of great stress for the entire Christian community and especially for our Southern Baptist Convention. I understand the tremendous pressures we're facing," he wrote, noting both his father and grandfather were Southern Baptist ministers. "Because of this background, I have a grasp of where we have been and where we must go."

"Our major challenge now is to join hands and hearts to complete Bold Mission thrust. To that end, I pledge myself this year as ... president."

Draper's letter did not mention criticism that immediate past president Bailey E. Smith, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, Okla., did not consult with his vice presidents and did not take into consideration their suggestions on key appointments, but did say that he values the "suggestions and guidance" of the two officers.

SBC bylaws require the president to appoint the members of the committee on committees and the resolutions committee, "in consultation with" the vice presidents. Efforts to change the process in recent years have failed.

Mentioning the appointments he will make for the 1983 convention, Draper wrote: "Pray also for the appointments which I must make. The individuals selected must have impeccable credentials both as Christians and as Southern Baptists."

Smith, who released his appointments in advance of the 1981 meeting in Los Angeles and was faced with a storm of criticism, refused to release the names of persons he appointed to the two committees this year.

Draper, in his letter, however, pledged that his appointments "will be released well in advance of the convention in Pittsburgh."

"I pray that these actions -- consultation with the vice presidents and early release of the appointees -- will help to build confidence and trust among us all so that we can convene in Pittsburgh next year with a renewed vision of reaching our world for our Lord Jesus Christ," Draper wrote.

He concluded: "Because reckless accusations and slanderous charges have no place among Christians, I am determined not to dissipate my energies in responding to such behavior. I urge each of you to join me in prayer that we will turn our energies instead against Satan and the forces of evil. Truly we are in a spiritual warfare, and we must put on the whole armor of God in order to claim the victory that Christ has already won for us. May God lead us as we continue to be an even greater army for Him in these days."

Of the July 1 meeting, Draper said the session "was so helpful we are going to do this often. In fact, I want us to meet every other month or so. I feel they are going to be an invaluable help to me and a help to the whole work of the convention."

The Texas pastor said the three discussed "a lot of different things that relate to the convention" including "some mechanical things" like presiding, order of business, facilitating discussions, resolutions.

Also, he said, "we have discussed the fact that I will be making some appointments in the next few months. We talked about the kind of people we want to serve on those committees. We have not discussed names."

He added the officers "are very much in agreement...the persons should be people with solid biblical views and with solid Southern Baptist involvement."

Draper added "we have been getting to know each other better. It has been a very fruitful time." He commented not much time had been spent discussing theology. "We are all conservative. There has not really been much need to discuss any details of that."

Sullivan characterized the meeting as "excellent. I appreciate Jimmy's openness."

He said Draper "is going to appoint people to committees who are solidly supportive of the denomination and who represent the best in theology, which I think is conservative theology. I know this is the president's decision, but he has assured of us of our input and that is all he can do."

Garrison, who has been actively involved in the moderate camp, said he is "very encouraged" by the meeting, and that he believes "the entire denomination will be represented" in the appointments.

He added efforts are being made to heal the denomination. "We cannot allow these two polarized armed camps to continue quarreling with each other. We have got to bring both camps together. I believe this is in the process of happening. Some say I am naive, but I am telling it as I sense it; I think it is about to happen."

McAteer Had White House
Backing To Seek SBC Act

By Stan Farley

WASHINGTON (BP)--An aide to President Reagan has confirmed that New Right leader Edward E. McAteer received White House encouragement to work for Southern Baptist Convention support of a constitutional amendment on school prayer.

Morton C. Blackwell, special assistant to the president, told Baptist Press that he and McAteer confer regularly and consulted before the New Orleans meeting. During that conversation, Blackwell said, McAteer predicted the SBC would endorse the prayer amendment.

Blackwell, whose primary duty is to line up support for Reagan policies as White House liaison to Christian and other religious groups and to conservative political organizations, told Baptist Press: "I thanked him very cordially."

In an interview immediately following the convention, McAteer told Baptist Press that a White House official, presumably Blackwell, called him two weeks before the New Orleans meeting, asking him if the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs would seek a resolution opposing the amendment and, if it did, to help deliver a resolution of support.

McAteer is founder and president of Religious Roundtable, an organization formed three years ago to work for New Right causes and support the candidacy of Ronald Reagan for president. The Southern Baptist layman, a member of Bellevue Baptist Church Memphis, claims credit for recruiting prominent preachers, including Jerry Falwell, to New Right politics.

During his post-convention interview, McAteer declared of the resolution supporting the prayer amendment, "God intervened here today."

He said the 3-1 vote approving the proposed amendment was due primarily to the oratorical skills of a pair of prominent pastors who urged passage during convention debate. Charles Stanley of First Baptist Church, Atlanta, and Morris Chapman, of First Baptist Church, Wichita Falls, Texas, "carried the day," McAteer said.

In his remarks to messengers, Stanley declared that the Supreme Court decisions of 1962 and 1963 were "only one step in the demoralizing of America." The Atlanta pastor, a member of the national executive board of Moral Majority, said Reagan's prayer amendment represents an effort "to protect our religious freedom" and warned, "If we continue to remain silent we will one day lose our freedom in our church houses as well as the school houses."

Chapman told messengers that since the Supreme Court decisions 20 years ago, atheists, humanists and secularists have opposed prayer in schools. "That's not the company we need to be keeping," he declared. "It is not the company of the committed."

Chapman's remarks in particular were greeted with thunderous applause and shouts of approval. The vote to approve the resolution came within minutes.

Some observers feel Resolution 9, in which messengers to the 1982 meeting declared "our support of the...proposed constitutional amendment," is a reversal of previous SBC action. In 1980, messengers adopted a resolution which pointed out the Supreme Court "has not held that it is illegal for any individual to pray or read his or her Bible in public schools" and recorded "its opposition to attempts, either by law or other means to circumvent the Supreme Court's decisions forbidding government authored or sponsored religious exercises in public schools...."

Reagan, in a background paper released May 6, the day he proposed the amendment, said his action "seeks only a return to the situation before 1962 when voluntary prayer wasn't thought to conflict with the First Amendment."

Although McAteer did not speak during the debate on the prayer resolution, he played a major role in shepherding it through the resolutions committee, frequently advising committee chairman Norris W. Sydnor Jr., a Religious Roundtable leader in Maryland, and monitoring the panel's proceedings throughout the nearly 25 hours of committee deliberations. The vote within

the committee to report out favorably the prayer resolution was 9-1, with only California layman David Maddox opposing it.

Sydnor's dependence on McAteer's advice also was visible during the floor debate on the committee's 24 proposed resolutions, when McAteer repeatedly offered suggestions on the platform to Sydnor and other committee members.

McAteer also said he did not regret the convention's refusal to to along with a separat resolution proposed by the committee to censure Baptist Joint Committee executive director James M. Dunn for criticizing Reagan's proposal.

"I'd like to impact the man for good," McAteer said. "I'm not for overkill." He is eager to give Dunn a new chance, he added, if the Washington leader will "repent."

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Ragland In West Beirut
Makes Plans to Leave

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BEIRUT, Lebanon (BP)--Jim Ragland, the only Southern Baptist missionary in West Beirut, plans to join other missionaries in East Beirut the first week of July.

The 57-year-old Oklahoman, who has stayed at Beirut Baptist School since June 4 when Israeli warplanes began bombing the city, is scheduled to fly to the United States July 11 for his son's wedding.

He will leave behind a committee of three Lebanese Baptist church members to oversee the makeshift clinic and shelter until either he returns or one of the Southern Baptist missionaries in East Beirut moves to the school.

Reached by phone June 30, Ragland said there had been no shelling in four days and though things were quiet, there was a lot of tension. Thirty-seven families--about 240 people--are living at the school.

Shortly after fighting began, Ragland turned the 750-student school into a first-aid clinic and refugee center. A Moslem doctor and several nurses are on hand to handle casualties as well as run-of-the-mill illnesses.

Ragland said he had not seen the other missionaries for a week, but he talks to them daily by phone.

Many of the school staff are still coming in regularly, he said, including a cleaning lady who washes his dishes. Neighbors have been really good about bringing in food, he said.

He continued to urge prayer for Lebanon and for the negotiations. "If war comes, nothing will be spared," he said.

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Reagan Vows to Fight
For Tuition Tax Credit

By Stan Hasteay

Baptist Press
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WASHINGTON (BP)--President Reagan vowed here to fight for his tuition tax credit bill and denied that his support for the troubled measure is politically motivated.

Asked during a June 30 news conference if his call for tuition tax credits was issued for political reasons, Reagan replied that in eight years as governor of California and 17 months as president, "I don't practice political ploys to get votes. I do what I think is right."

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Although he did not elaborate on his game plan to pressure Congress for the measure, he insisted anew that the proposal "is simply a recognition of the unfairness" of a system that taxes citizens for the support of public schools even when they send their children to private institutions.

Reagan assailed critics who charged the plan would hurt public schools. "How?" he demanded. "We're not taking anything away from the public school system. What would hurt the public school system is if all of the independent schools closed and those thousands and thousands of youngsters were dumped on the public school system."

The President also denied that tuition tax credits would benefit upper-income families, insisting that a "overwhelming majority" of families whose children attend nonpublic schools, earn less than \$25,000 a year.

At its recent meeting in New Orleans, the Southern Baptist Convention overwhelmingly expressed opposition to the plan, calling on Reagan to reconsider his support of tuition tax credit bills now languishing in Congress.

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Reagan Signs Extension
Of Voting Rights Act

By Larry Chesser

Baptist Press
7/1/82

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Reagan has signed into law a bill extending the Voting Rights Act of 1965 well into the 21st century.

Extension of the act, widely regarded as the most successful civil rights legislation produced by Congress, drew overwhelming bipartisan support despite reservations expressed by the administration and some lawmakers.

The new measure extends for 25 years the enforcement section of the act which requires nine states and portions of 13 others to obtain Justice Department approval before making election law changes. The section was to expire Aug. 6. Beginning in 1984, jurisdictions covered under the section can be relieved of the pre-clearance requirements by proving they had a clean voting rights record for the previous 10 years.

The new bill also clarifies that violations of the act may be proven by demonstrating election law or procedure "results" in voting discrimination. This change to a permanent section of the 1965 law circumvents a 1980 Supreme Court ruling requiring proof of intent to discriminate.

While the administration and some senators charged that a "results" test as opposed to an "intent" test would lead to proportional representation based on race, both Congress and the president settled on the easier standard of proof.

The bill also extends for 10 years the requirement in certain areas of the country providing bilingual election materials and authorizes voter assistance for voters who are blind, disabled or unable to read.

Passage of the measure had been urged by SBC Christian Life Commission Executive Director Foy D. Valentine during House committee proceedings.

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Cothen Recuperates
Following Surgery

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7/1/82

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Grady C. Cothen, president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, underwent successful urological surgery June 29 at Baptist Hospital.

The surgery was not related to the March 1980 stomach surgery for cancer when 75 percent of his stomach was removed. There was no evidence of malignancy found during this surgery and there were no complications, doctors said.

Cothen, 61, expects to be hospitalized for approximately a week and to return to work three weeks later.

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