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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
Wilmer C. Fields, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Craig Bird, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Stan L. Hasteley, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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Kansas-Nebraska Resolution
Puzzles, Disturbs James Dunn

By Craig Bird

WASHINGTON, D.C. (BP)--James Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, has responded to a critical resolution by the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists in a lengthy letter to the editor of the convention's newspaper.

"It is entirely unacceptable to be forced to engage in a defensive debate AFTER the public hanging," Dunn said, noting he was not contacted by the resolutions committee either to check the facts, allow a response or "at least warning the Christian brother who has offended you."

"The sudden appearance of similar resolutions across the Southern Baptist Convention with identical phrases and flaws of factual error suggest a smear campaign aimed at me and the Baptist Joint Committee," Dunn added. "No other (state) convention has taken this collection of accusations being circulated by some unidentified source and made of them a resolution."

Dunn said the "campaign" seems to rest largely "on an emotional reaction to my strong words about the tactics and motives of those pushing 'voluntary' prayer with an amendment to the Bill of Rights that neither uses the word 'voluntary' nor sets forth the idea of voluntariness and on my guilt by association with someone (Norman Lear) with whom I disagree on several things while agreeing passionately with him on religious liberty as essential to the American way."

In his five point answer, Dunn said the phrase "ultra-conservative crazies" the resolution objected to, "refers not to Southern Baptists, the school prayer resolution or even any current event but to a group of Texas political operators who in 1962 were active for the Texas legislature."

He conceded the "so-called 'voluntary' prayer amendment" and support by the SBC resolution (at the SBC meeting in New Orleans last June) "pose serious problems."

The SBC resolution says, "this proposed amendment does not constitute a call for government-written prayer" Dunn pointed out, but the White House briefing paper prepared by the Justice Department and printed on White House letterhead says, "If groups of people are to be permitted to pray, someone must have the power to determine the content of such prayers."

The paper also "answers firmly, 'Yes'" the question: Will state governments or local school boards be free to compose their own prayers, Dunn said. "Most Baptists would hardly consider this arrangement voluntary."

He also noted Baptist state conventions in Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia "have passed strong statements this month opposing the prayer amendment."

As for his membership on the board of directors of People for the American Way, Dunn listed financial and membership statistics to show that Norman Lear does not dominate the group and points out former President Gerald Ford, newscaster Walter Cronkite and Lady Bird Johnson, widow of former President Lyndon Johnson, were co-chairpersons for the group's "I Love Liberty" activities this year.

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Also, an examination of the organization's published literature "would not lead one person to conclude it has the negative impact described in the resolution--yet I doubt that many have examined the materials or investigated," Dunn said.

Finally, Dunn explained his public statements have "faithfully stated the position" set forth last spring by the board members of the Baptist Joint Committee (15 elected by the Southern Baptist Convention) against the amendment that would allow state-written prayers.

"One resolution by one meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, incidentally opposite the position of three previous conventions, does not immediately and automatically supercede the established, ordered ways of doing Baptist business," he said.

Dunn stated clearly that, "individual messengers to the Kansas-Nebraska convention are not to blame (for the factual errors or the smear campaign). A great many of the pastors, I know, respect and believe to be honorable. That makes this situation all the more tragic--that someone could mislead them into a conspiratorial war of words.

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Florida Baptists
Continue Towards 50-50

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TAMPA, Fla. (BP)--Florida Baptists continued to be the boldest givers to Bold Mission Thrust, the Southern Baptist Convention effort to present the message of Jesus Christ to the entire world by the year 2000.

The more than 1,700 messengers to the 121st annual meeting of the Florida Baptist State Convention upped the percentage of budget collections to be sent to the national and worldwide mission and educational programs of the SBC to 48 percent--highest of the 34 state conventions of the Southern Baptist Convention.

In 1980 Florida Baptists adopted a five-year plan to move to a 50-50 division of the basic budget between the national SBC and Florida mission and educational programs. The one percent increase this year keeps the convention on schedule to reach the goal.

In 1981 the convention voted to change the financial year from October-September to January-December. Therefore, two budgets had to be adopted this time--a basic budget of \$3,427,336.50 for October-December 1982 and a record-basic budget of \$14,556,660 for 1983 (January-December). The 48 percent share for the national SBC will apply to both basic budgets.

The business session produced no surprises and very little discussion or debate.

One of the most far-reaching actions was to establish clearly the autonomy of the nominating committee in nominating its own state board of mission members. The associations are still permitted to suggest nominees but "the nominating committee will not be bound to accept the suggested nominees from an association."

"This may seem like a small matter but in Baptist polity no Baptist body should ever seek to dictate another Baptist body," Edgar Cooper, editor of the Florida Baptist Witness, said. "Associations should never contrive to dictate to a state convention or a church even as a state convention must never try to dictate to the churches or associations. Baptist bodies must remain autonomous if they are to function properly in the framework of Baptist freedom."

The convention also authorized a feasibility study for a proposed south Florida satellite assembly. They also designated \$250,000 for the purpose of a potential site and gave the state board of missions permission to place earnest money on a site, subject to the approval of Florida Baptist state convention.

In connection with the plans to consider building a south Florida Baptist satellite assembly the convention voted to place a debt limit of \$5 million on convention properties and a limit of \$750,000 on an annual amortization schedule for convention properties debt.

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Two pertinent resolutions were passed by the messengers. A resolution for establishing a world hunger committee and a resolution supporting the raising of the legal drinking age in Florida from 19 to 21.

Babb H. Adams, pastor of First Baptist Church, Inzerness, was elected convention president, Frank Thomas, pastor of First Baptist Church, Cocoa, was elected first vice president and William R. Cotton, a layman from Hastings, was selected second vice president.

The 1983 meeting will be Nov. 12-14 at Lakeland.

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Oklahoma Baptists To Study
Christian Moral Concern Agency

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DEL CITY, Okla. (BP)--Oklahoma Baptists elected a new president, increased by one percent the amount of undesignated funds going to Southern Baptist Convention causes and referred a motion to establish an agency on Christian moral concern for study.

Meeting in First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, messengers elected William H. (Bill) Cook, 51, pastor of First Church, Bartlesville. He was nominated by host pastor Bailey Smith, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention. Cook succeeds Altus pastor Keith Wiginton who chose not to allow his nomination for another term.

Messengers approved a record \$15.25 million budget including a challenge section of \$1,674,050. The SBC Cooperative Program is scheduled to receive 46 percent of all undesignated income including the challenge section. The largest appropriation, in excess of \$2 million, will go to Oklahoma Baptist University.

An effort to establish a department of Christian moral concerns was referred by the messengers to the convention's board of directors with instructions to report to the 1983 convention. The move was prompted by the recent vote on para-mutual racetrack gambling which was won by gambling interests and the threat of numerous county option votes on the issue.

Resolutions were approved calling for establishment of a committee on hunger, challenging churches to combat para-mutual gambling and urging individuals and churches to renew their commitment to Bold Mission Thrust.

The hunger resolution took note of efforts of SBC agencies to provide hunger relief and to help make Baptists aware of hunger needs. The incoming convention president was urged to appoint a committee to inform Oklahoma Baptists about the "conditions, reasons and possible solutions to hunger in Oklahoma, the United States and the world."

Hayes Wicker, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Enid, was elected first vice president and Oklahoma City layman Lee Sneed was named second vice president. The 1983 convention will be Nov. 15-17 at Oklahoma City.

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Maryland Ups CP Giving
But Abandons 50-50 Plan

Baptist Press
11/22/82

BALTIMORE, Md. (BP)--The Baptist Convention of Maryland's 50-50 Cooperative Program division plan, adopted last year, was abandoned by messengers to the annual BCM meeting.

Instead of moving toward an even division of Cooperative Program funds between the state convention and the national Southern Baptist Convention by 1987, messengers approved a plan to tie increases in contributions to the state convention income and the inflation rate.

The 50-50 committee recommended that for every one percent increase in convention receipts above the annual rate of inflation, one-half of one percent be forwarded to the worldwide mission and educational work of the Southern Baptist Convention.

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The 1983 budget will be \$2,148,000 with 39.5 percent for SBC work and 60.5 percent for Maryland work. The 1982 budget included a 39-61 split of money sent in by member churches to the Baptist Convention of Maryland.

Four men were nominated for president. A run-off ballot elected Walter D. Agnor, director of missions, Susquehanna Baptist Association. First vice president is Fred Moffatt, pastor of Heritage Baptist Church, Annapolis. Second vice president is Winnie Wooley, a layperson from Belaire Baptist Church, Bowie.

A resolution on prayer in public schools declared opposition to the proposed constitutional prayer amendment and stated "we shall work continually for religious liberty which for some is freedom 'for' religious expression and for others is freedom 'from' religious expression."

Over 650 messengers registered for the 147th annual meeting of the BCM. Tuesday evening they joined visitors and representatives of national SBC agencies for a tribute honoring retiring executive director Roy D. Gresham and to welcome executive director-elect Kim Lyle. Gresham has held the top administrative job with the convention for the past 25 years.

The 1983 annual meeting will be Nov. 14-16 at Colesville Baptist Church in Silver Spring.

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California Baptists Oppose
Proposed Tuition Tax Credits

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11/22/82

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (BP)--California Southern Baptists went on record against tuition tax credits for parents who send their children to private schools and called on Christians to be aware of their responsibility toward undocumented aliens and world hunger at their annual state convention.

Messengers to the 42nd annual session of the California Southern Baptist Convention adopted a record budget of \$8,542,701 of which \$4,550,000 is expected to be contributed by member congregations. The remainder will come from national Southern Baptist Convention agencies, primarily the Home Mission Board.

Of the \$4.55 million, 27.75 percent will be sent to the national and worldwide mission and educational programs of the SBC, an increase of one-fourth of one percent from last year.

A resolution concerning the ordination of women was expected to spark active debate but it was withdrawn from the floor. All other resolutions were adopted with little debate. Messengers passed resolutions on strengthening families, television programming and separation of church and state.

The only clash in the business sessions came over a motion to upgrade the convention's state assembly at Jenness Park. Ultimately, messengers adopted the executive board's recommendation to set a state missions offering goal of \$185,000 and then give all money above the goal to Jenness Park.

Messengers also asked the executive board to re-examine the items in the state missions offering to see if they are genuine state mission offerings and allocations. They also approved the hiring of professional fund-raising consultants for a feasibility study on the potential of providing funds for new church sites.

Two California heritage awards were presented for the first time. They went to S.G. Posey, executive secretary emeritus who served from 1950 to 1960 and to Floyd Looney, editor of the California Southern Baptist for 16 one-half years for their part in the making of California Southern Baptist history. The awards will be given yearly.

William Prews, pastor, Magnolia Baptist Church, Riverside, was elected president. The convention will meet next year Nov. 15-17, in Oakland.

Tennessee Votes Protection
For Pastors Dismissed By Churches

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Tennessee Baptists have created a Minister's Emergency Relief Fund for Southern Baptist preachers in the state who have been relieved of their pastorates.

The plan, which was approved at the annual meeting of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, will provide \$100 a week for a maximum of 13 weeks and will continue a minister's retirement program and hospitalization for three months. Tennessee officials think the TBC is the first in the Southern Baptist Convention to establish such a program.

"The convention is moving in the direction it should go in recognizing the vulnerability of the called prophet," Osta Underwood, a member of the TBC executive committee, said. "While the pastor has the faith to rely on His (God's) provision, that does not excuse those of us in the pews from having compassion and feeling a sense of responsibility."

While the emergency relief plan was handled routinely by messengers, the practice of churches designating contributions sent through the Tennessee Baptist Convention for non-Southern Baptist institutions attracted considerable attention.

James Stroud, pastor of the Third Creek Baptist Church in Knoxville, singled out Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis and Luther Rice Seminary in Jacksonville, Fla., when he moved "we instruct our executive secretary-treasurer to return to the sender all mission gifts designated to either Luther Rice Seminary or to Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary and respectfully request that the senders give their money directly to the schools."

Stroud explained he made the motion because "there are people in the convention who believe that neither Luther Rice nor Mid-America seminaries are objects of the convention for which funds should be received. We do not elect their directors."

The situation erupted in the pre-convention executive board meeting and the executive board approved the motion "that the current president of the executive board appoint a committee of five persons to study the Tennessee Baptist Convention's method of receiving, reporting and disbursing all designated gifts from the churches or any other sources and that this committee report any recommendations resulting from its study by the September 1983 meeting of the executive board."

During discussion the convention was informed of the executive board's action and a substitute motion referred Stroud's motion to the executive board.

In another major business matter messengers adopted an \$18 million budget for the coming year. Of that, \$16.8 million is designated for the Cooperative Program with 36 percent (\$6,048,000) going to the work of the Southern Baptist Convention and 64 percent (\$10,752,000) for work in Tennessee. The SBC share is an increase of .25 percent from last year. The remaining \$1.2 million is the challenge budget with the Southern Baptist Convention receiving 36 percent (\$432,000) and the Tennessee Baptist Convention receiving 64 percent (\$768,000).

Fred A. Steelman, pastor of Red Bank Baptist Church, Chattanooga, was elected president.

Messengers overwhelmingly adopted a resolution opposing any attempt toward government-scheduled or government-directed prayer or religious exercises in public schools and affirming the historic Baptist stand on separation of church and state.

The convention also called for the legal drinking age in Tennessee be raised to 21, opposed tuition tax credit proposals which would threaten the First Amendment guarantee that "government will neither attempt to establish a religion nor hinder the free exercise of religion" and opposed efforts to legalize gambling in any form, including race track and paramutual betting.

A total of 1,723 messengers registered for the meeting. The 1983 convention will be Nov. 15-17 at Brainerd Baptist Church in Chattanooga.