



BAPTIST PRESS

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Committee To Study Canadian SBC Membership Starts Work

By Dan Martin

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The pluses and minuses of making the Southern Baptist Convention a binational body were discussed during the first meeting of the SBC Canada Study Committee.

The 21-member committee was authorized by messengers to the 1983 SBC in Pittsburgh to consider changing the SBC Constitution to allow seating of messengers from SBC-type churches in Canada. Most of those involved are churches affiliated with the Northwest Baptist Convention.

Currently, Article II of the constitution limits membership in the SBC to Baptists in the United States and its territories.

Fred Roach, a Dallas homebuilder and chairman, told members: "Some of us had known very little about the issue (before appointment to the committee). We have different degrees of expertise, but we will all become experts on Canada in the next six months."

Harold C. Bennett, executive secretary of the SBC Executive Committee, and one of those designated by the SBC to appoint the committee, told committee members: "This is one of the most important assignments given to any committee in many years. You can set the direction of the SBC for years to come...the makeup of the whole SBC."

Following the meeting, Roach told Baptist Press the key issue is not whether Southern Baptists will be involved in the evangelization of Canada, but how.

"Seating of messengers is not the key issue. The key issue is how are we going to do our job effectively, to accomplish the most. We want to help Canadians establish the means to evangelize that part of the world. The question is the methods and the means to do that, and to whom are we going to give the assignment."

Roach also pledged that the committee will come to a decision on the matter, and will not defer it for further study. "We are going to act...study this thing through to completion. I believe Southern Baptists are asking for a definitive statement (from the committee)."

During the meeting, members heard presentations from the SBC Historical Commission, Foreign Mission Board, Home Mission Board, Baptist Sunday School Board and the Northwest Baptist Convention.

Cecil Sims, executive director of the Northwest convention, and William G. Tanner, president of the Home Mission Board, favor seating of the Canadian churches; R. Keith Parks, president of the Foreign Mission Board, warned of dangers in such action, and Grady C. Cothen, president of the Sunday School Board, suggested an "intermediate step" before recognition.

Ronald Tonks of the Historical Commission told members "formal contacts" with Canadian churches began back in the 1950s. In 1954, the SBC took action to allow the Home Mission Board to work with churches in Canada which were aligned with the Northwest convention.

The 1983 motion is not the first attempt to include Canadian churches in the SBC. Other tries were made in 1959 and 1962, and in 1976, a motion to add Canada was referred to the FMB for study. The study authorized the HMB and BSSB to give assistance and resources to churches affiliated with state conventions.

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Currently, there are about 65 churches and missions with 4,300 members in Canada relating to the Northwest Baptist Convention, primarily in the four western provinces: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. There are "a few" other congregations in other areas of Canada, statistics indicate.

Sims noted he is an "obvious friend" of the effort and said he believes Southern Baptists "will more readily understand going into Canada than in refusing to go. That is more in line with what we preach...."

"For 30 years, Canadian Southern Baptists have been 'knocking on our door,'" Sims said. "In that time the percentage of evangelicals in Canada has diminished tragically. A positive recommendation concerning this amendment could be a very meaningful step as we look to the next 100 years."

Allen Schmidt, coordinator of Canadian work in the Northwest Convention, told committee members: "The last thing we want to do is create problems for Southern Baptists, unless God is saying that we must think through what we are doing (in regard to Canada)."

Parks, on record opposing the proposed inclusion, told committee members there is "no question about the urgency, the need or the spiritual vacuum" in Canada today. "The question is not whether Southern Baptists will participate in the evangelization of Canada, but how."

The former foreign missionary confessed to "having an intensity" of feeling about the issue, particularly because he thinks it could threaten the worldwide missionary enterprise of Southern Baptists, currently in 101 nations around the world.

He suggested working with Canadian churches in an effort for them to create their own national convention. "I am convinced that a Canadian Baptist Convention would go better in Canada than would one imported from the USA," he said.

Parks said inclusion of Canada will create other problems: "I can guarantee you that we will not be dealing with just Canada, but with scores of other areas of the world."

He pointed particularly to English speaking churches around the world, such as the congregations of the European Baptist Federation (English-speaking). "I believe we would be a chaotic body with members from all over the world. Instead of the organization we now are, we would become a fellowship like the Baptist World Alliance," Parks said.

Tanner said: "How do we not go into Canada? I do not believe we cannot go into Canada. This is a very emotional issue with me. There is no way I can reconcile not going into Canada if we are serious about reaching the world for Jesus Christ. To me, taking hands off would be a great step backward."

Cothen, who will retire as president of the BSSB Jan. 31, 1984, complimented the committee for its approach and efforts: "We have not had the kind of work done on this issue you are doing now. Perhaps we could not have done it before. What we have had before was a short-term peace versus a long term solution."

He commented many Canadians "want an aggressive, effective evangelism...an aggressive, effective denomination, different from a 'hands-off' group." Cothen added most of the groups with whom the Sunday School Board, Foreign Mission Board and Home Mission Board "tend to become somewhat like are...Baptistification."

"Baptistification," he added, "will be either a great problem or a great blessing...."

Cothen encouraged the committee to "take the long view," and said he has a "desire that they find an intermediate step between sudden withdrawal or a sudden opening of the door," either of which could be "shattering" to some aspects of Southern Baptist life.

"Stay with the study," he said. "Find some way that will not let us take the worst of both possible paths."

The committee will meet again Dec. 2 in Dallas, Roach said.

Senate Approves Holiday
For Martin Luther King Jr.

By Stan Hasteley

WASHINGTON (BP)--Martin Luther King Jr., the black Baptist preacher whose nonviolent civil disobedience during the 1950s and 1960s ushered in a revolution in American race relations, was honored with a federal holiday when the U.S. Senate voted overwhelming to set aside the third Monday in January in his memory.

King, assassinated in 1968 at age 39, thus becomes only the second American, along with George Washington, to be so honored. The holiday, one of 10 annually, will first be observed in 1986.

The House of Representatives passed the bill, 338-90, in August.

Senate passage of the measure, on a 78-22 vote, came after days of bitter debate against the proposal, spearheaded by Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N. C., the only Southern Baptist to oppose it. Helms accused King of having ties with the U.S. Communist Party and of being influenced by Marxism.

The North Carolina conservative failed also in an effort to have a federal court unseal documents obtained by the F.B.I. in six years of wiretapping King's telephone, documents which by agreement with King's family are not to be released until 50 years after his death.

Three other Baptists besides Helms voted against the proposal. They were Charles E. Grassley, R-Iowa, an American Baptist; Jennings Randolph, D-W. Va., a Seventh Day Baptist; and Gordon J. Humphrey, R-N. H., an Independent Baptist.

Asked during his October 19 news conference about the Helms legal effort, President Reagan said he did not question the North Carolina legislator's sincerity. Regarding the charge that King was influenced by communists, Reagan replied, "We'll know in about 35 years, won't we?" He added, however, that he will sign the measure.

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., who helped lead the floor fight for passage of the bill, declared in a closing statement that "Presidents and Congresses will come and go, but Martin Luther King and his dream will go on forever, so long as there is an America."

Majority leader Howard Baker, R-Tenn., who shepherded the King bill to passage, told colleagues during the final moments of the debate that the King holiday will honor not only the slain civil rights leader but all black Americans. "We owe this special recognition to black Americans who have suffered so much, contributed so much and with whom we all can celebrate the continuing redemption of America's first and foremost promise of liberty and justice for all," Baker said.

Two other Republican senators, Robert Dole of Kansas and Charles Mathias of Maryland, spoke of King's role as minister and healer of racial wounds.

King understood, Dole said, that the nation's "greatest weapons have never been military, but spiritual." While he got church people "out of church pews and onto the streets" to demonstrate against injustice, Dole went on, "first and foremost, Dr. King was a healer."

Mathias said the holiday was being declared in "recognition of (King's) remarkable ministry." He concluded: "We have waited more than a century since the Civil War for this moment of reconciliation."

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CORRECTION--In 18th paragraph of (BP) story "National Cooperative Program Records First \$100 Million Year" mailed 10/17/83, the number 10 state in per capita giving was Alaska, not Alabama.

Thanks,
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California Association
Expels Three Churches

By Herb Hollinger

VALLEJO, Calif. (BP)--Messengers from three churches were refused seating at the annual meeting of the Redwood Empire Baptist Association as a disagreement over ordination of women in this northern California association came to a head.

Seven messengers from the Tiburon Boulevard Baptist Church in Tiburon, 10 from First Baptist, Sonoma, and one from Redwood Baptist Church, Napa, were refused seating at the annual meeting on the recommendation of the association's credentials committee.

Bill Ryan, associational missionary, told the California Southern Baptist the vote was "about 84-54" not to seat the messengers of the three churches because they had ordained women and it "would cause fellowship problems" in the association.

According to Ryan the motion also contained wording which put the three churches in a special watchcare status for a one-year probationary period at which time they would be "restored to the fellowship if they ceased their nonbiblical practice".

Tiburon Baptist Church--attended by many people from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley--has two ordained women deacons, including one serving as chairman of deacons. The Napa church lists an ordained husband and wife as associate pastors, and the Sonoma church ordained a husband and wife who have since gone on to North Dakota as Home Mission Board church planters.

Ryan said in May 1982, the association discussed the ordination of women deacons at the Tiburon church but decided at that semi-annual meeting it would not be a test for fellowship. However, the association went on record then as saying it did not believe in or promote the ordination of women.

"We better come back to the biblical norm of practice," Ryan added. He said this (ordaining women) has never been a practice of Baptists. "I'm against ordination of women."

Steven Groll, pastor of the Sonoma church, said the church has no conviction it has done anything wrong. The church has continued to grow although there are people on both sides of the question even in the church.

Groll said he was never contacted by anyone from the credentials committee that there would be a problem during the annual meeting. However, Groll said he wanted to be supportive, not reactive, "until we see what happens."

The Sonoma church ordained Kathy Bynum Hoppe and her husband, Merlin, in December of 1982. Although the woman said she had no interest in a pastoral ministry and wanted to seek a chaplaincy, the church did ordain her to the gospel ministry. In January, the couple left Sonoma for Bismarck, N.D., where they are church planters under a Home Mission Board program.

Fred Grissom, interim pastor at Tiburon and assistant professor of church history at Golden Gate seminary, said the church voted Sunday night following the association meeting to discontinue giving to the association.

"Our practice was well known in the association," Grissom said. "We thought since the association did not make it a test of fellowship last year there would not be a problem this year."

Grissom acknowledged the association can do whatever it wants in the matter. "We regret the association took the action. We would like to be a part of Redwood Empire but we also recognize the authority of the association to do what it did."

He said the Tiburon church will seek a mission opportunity to use the funds which it no longer will send to the association. Grissom added the two women deacons at the church were "very active, very hard-working servants."

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10/20/83

Page 5

Baptist Press

The Tiburon women deacons are Bonnie Chappel and Lois Elder. Chappel previously was secretary to Harold Graves when he was president of the seminary. Elder is married to a retired professor at the seminary, Lynn Elder, who taught pastoral care.

Efforts to contact Pastor Harrell G. Miller at the Napa church were unsuccessful. However, the church newsletter lists Phil and DeeDee Sary as associate pastors of the church.

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CORRECTION--In Baptist Press mailed 10/19/83, in "Women Deacons Issue Disrupts Association," in 13th and 16th paragraphs please change name to Hugo Lindquist, not Lundquist as sent.

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