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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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February 21, 1984

84-28

Draper, Executive Committee
Oppose Ambassador To Vatican

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--At the urging of Southern Baptist Convention President James T. Draper Jr., members of the SBC Executive Committee unanimously adopted a resolution opposing establishment of diplomatic relations with the Vatican.

The resolution, drafted Feb. 20, on the eve of the resumption of hearings on the confirmation of presidential envoy William Wilson as ambassador to the Holy See, was transmitted to key members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee by telegram.

Draper, pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, told members of the Executive Committee: "I have spoken very plainly against establishment of diplomatic relations with the Vatican. I feel it is one of the most important issues we are facing.

"Many groups do not see the importance, particularly independent groups...but they have no sense of history. Baptists, and particularly Southern Baptists, have always been at the forefront in this issue of separation of church and state."

Draper commented he is "not against the Pope. I like Pope John Paul II. I am not against Catholics. But the truth is that an ambassador to the Vatican is an ambassador to the Roman Catholic Church."

He commented that in times past there has been a political entity, but added "that was 100 years ago when the papal state was 17,000 square miles and had three million inhabitants. There is no state today." He added: "When Mr. Wilson referred to the Pope as the Holy Father, that didn't seem like a political relationship to me."

Draper testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Feb. 2, and he told the Executive Committee that staffers of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington, "had prepared my testimony. I deviated from that somewhat, but not much. They did a wonderful job and helped me verbalize some things."

Draper also praised Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., and Mark Hatfield, R-Ore., both Southern Baptists, for their "strong help."

One of the reasons he cited for asking the Executive Committee to adopt a resolution is the "Southern Baptist Convention has not dealt with the establishment of an ambassador to the Vatican since 1969. We need to go on record opposing the establishment of diplomatic relations and expressing our concern. We have to update and undergird our opposition to this."

The resolution, as adopted by the committee, notes Baptists have historically been for the separation of church and state, and says the action "establishes a dangerous precedent of entanglement of church and state."

Noting the SBC includes 36,000-plus churches with 14 million members, the resolution "respectfully requests the careful consideration by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee of the sincere, heartfelt opposition of Southern Baptists to the appointment and confirmation of any person as ambassador to the Holy See."

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The resolution follows a telegram sent to key members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee by Draper, Harold C. Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee, and Dewey Presley of Dallas, chairman of the Executive Committee, expressing opposition to the confirmation of an ambassador to the Vatican.

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Draper Seeks Common
Ground For Baptists

By Dan Martin

Baptist Press
2/21/84

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention President James T. Draper Jr., continued to seek "common ground" for the denomination, pointing to efforts for missions and evangelism and against hunger, pornography and abortion as areas of agreement.

Draper, pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, continued to emphasize the theme of common ground as he addressed the February session of the SBC Executive Committee. It is a theme he has frequently repeated in the past year.

"There are many things we can join hands on as we work together. We are going to have to turn from magnifying those things that we differ on and turn to those things we can join our hands and hearts on," he said.

First mentioning evangelism and missions as unifying factors, Draper turned his attention to "the very creative things that are being done to reach the world for Jesus Christ." He mentioned efforts to work and minister in the United Nations, where there are "35,000 diplomats from 160 nations."

Currently the Home Mission Board and the Baptist Convention of New York sponsor a mission to the United Nations, and the Christian Life Commission addresses issues of concern in the international body.

Draper admitted some Southern Baptists are not big supporters of the UN, and said "I'm not very excited about it myself most of the time, but they are there."

He urged his co-religionists to "pray for peace. We can debate nuclear arms or the freeze, but we all ought to be praying for peace."

The second term president of the nation's largest non-Catholic denomination also urged the denomination to be "concerned about hunger," and said: "I believe we need to speak out positively about the evils and tragedy of abortion. We have let the independent groups take the flag from us on this."

Using abortion as an illustration of magnifying the differences, Draper noted the denomination "has tended to emphasize the exceptions--rape, incest, deformity. But less than five percent of the abortions are for these causes. Ninety-five percent of the abortions are for convenience or birth control. I think Southern Baptists ought to say that is wrong."

He urged continuing efforts against pornography and gambling, issues on which he said Baptists can agree.

Draper said he is continuing to "try to find something of a common ground that we have. If we don't have that common ground, then we will disintegrate. There are some things that we can agree on."

He added, however, there is a "real division theologically in our convention, but we can deal with it. We have the machinery to deal with it. I have never called for anybody to be dismissed or to be fired. I don't think that is the way to do it. But if we pretend we have no differences, we stick our heads in the sand."

He noted he has heard from a "leader of the opposition" who said he felt disenfranchised in denominational affairs. "Many of us feel disenfranchised. It is a dangerous situation when people on both ends of the spectrum feel disenfranchised."

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"We must face the issues that are before us, but there are more things that keep us together than separate us," he added.

Draper also noted Southern Baptists "must not continue to deal with the integrity and motives of those with whom we differ. There is an historic Baptist principle--which we seem to have forgotten--that says we can respect honest differences."

He told members of the Executive Committee he believes "in the basic integrity of every man and woman who leads the institutions and agencies of this convention. Some I disagree with, but that does not mean that I question their integrity or commitment to Christ."

H encouraged an honest dealing with unifying factors and areas of disagreement, noting there is "much misunderstanding and suspicion," in the denomination.

However, he emphasized, there are points of common ground, which can help Southern Baptists make the final 15 years of the 20th century the "greatest years in the history of the Christian movement. We have the resources and the training to do the job."

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Fellowship Of Baptist Men
Sets Agenda For Action

By Mike Davis

Baptist Press
2/21/84

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--The General Council of the Fellowship of Baptist Men has been urged to "let's get out and do something after the meeting is over."

C.E. Price, council president and second vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention, after hearing council workgroups report on the fellowship's organization and structure; mechanism of enrollment, process of leadership discovery and communication of program; suggestions for types of fellowships, and developing resources for volunteers and personal evangelism, stressed the machinery is in place to involve more men in missions and he is eager to see some action.

Price also reported on meetings between Fellowship of Baptist Men leaders and Foreign Mission Board personnel in Richmond, Va., and with Home Mission Board representatives in Atlanta which focused on ways the Fellowship of Baptist Men can assist the mission boards.

The laymen abroad program and evangelism partnerships were identified as two methods used by the Foreign Mission Board where Baptist men can get directly involved.

The need for more volunteers, assistance in funding for volunteers and employment needs for bi-vocational pastors were among opportunities discussed at the Home Mission Board.

Nathan Porter, national consultant for domestic hunger and disaster relief at the Home Mission Board, and a guest at the council meeting in Brotherhood Commission in February, challenged the members to lead men to get involved in services to poor people.

He said it is a good thing help construct church buildings, but poor people oft n have a greater need for help with repairs on their homes. In addition to offering legal services to churches and denominational organizations, he urged Baptist attorneys to help underprivileg d people who often have pressing legal needs, particularly in family and civil matters.

Porter added in poverty areas of the United States few children have ever seen a dentist and out-of-work people need educational training in "re-tooling" them for today's job market.

Bill Rhodes, an attorney from Atlanta, and first vice president of the council, reported on the successful organization of a Fellowship of Baptist lawyers from Georgia and told how they plan to get involved in mission activities.

James H. Smith, president of the Brotherhood Commission, stressed one of the primary functions of the Fellowship of Baptist Men is coordination of efforts of Baptist men to get an interrelatedness of all vocations and mission activities.

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The objective of the Fellowship of Baptist Men, which is a part of the Brotherhood Commission, is to promote witnessing and mission involvement among Southern Baptist men, helping churches involve more men in witnessing in missions, working with Southern Baptist Convention agencies and state and associational organizations in involving more men in witnessing and missions, to encourage greater financial support in witnessing and missions by men through the Cooperative Program and other Southern Baptist channels.

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Missionaries Again Spared Harm
But Not Beirut's Recent Trauma

By Bill Webb

Baptist Press
2/21/84

NICOSIA, Cyprus (BP)--For a split-second, the buzzing of a plane overhead took missionary evacuee Linda Sacco back to Beirut.

"I wonder who they are going to hit?" she asked herself before realizing she was 125 ocean miles away in the peaceful little port city of Larnaca, Cyprus.

Meriam Fox, Southern Baptist volunteer from Dayton, Ohio, stood smiling on a dock in Larnaca as she greeted missionaries arriving from Lebanon. She and her husband had evacuated five days earlier, but she still jumped when she heard an unexpected noise down the dock.

Although they had again been spared physical harm, their senses were reminding them Southern Baptist missionary and volunteer families in Lebanon didn't escape Beirut's most recent trauma.

Just 10 days earlier, Mrs. Fox had been frightened as refugees attempted to break down her door and take over the apartment she and her husband occupied in west Beirut.

Steve Fox, a pastor, was at University Baptist Church witnessing to three men when his wife heard pounding at the door of their apartment. Through the peephole she could see a hallway full of people.

Quickly barricading the door with an iron bar, she tried unsuccessfully to phone her husband and their landlord. Finally she began throwing pieces of antique pottery down to the street from her third-floor balcony, frantically trying to get someone's attention.

Her landlord came running and dispersed the would-be intruders, but not before they had kicked in a door panel.

"I kept telling myself I wasn't scared, but I couldn't sleep the first night I was here," she admitted in Larnaca. "I finally came to grips with the fact I was scared."

The Foxes were among six adults and five children from the Southern Baptist mission in Lebanon evacuated to Larnaca aboard the United States transport ships Manitowoc and Trenton. Another missionary couple, Ed and Anne Nicholas, from Centerville, Mich., and Fort Worth, Texas, followed five days later on a commercial ferry boat.

Fourteen Southern Baptist missionaries and four missionary kids remain in Lebanon.

Missionaries said the mood was different this time in the city where merchants are known for reopening their shops the day after heavy fighting. This time, the streets of west Beirut filled with armed men--some wearing scarves across their faces--and many residents chose the refuge of basements.

Militiamen commandeered bulldozers, trucks and other vehicles as they swept through west Beirut Feb. 6. Someone stole a van from Beirut Baptist School but later returned it to missionary principal Jim Ragland, of Wetumka, Okla. H credited the intervention of influential friends of the prominent school.

Reports circulated of families ordered at gunpoint to vacate their homes or to empty their wallets. First-term missionary Russell Futrell, from Pineville, La., said: "You could feel the tension in the air."

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A frightened Moslem mother of two phoned Mrs. Sacco shortly before the Sacco family left west Beirut in the American Embassy-sponsored evacuation Feb. 10.

The young woman told her missionary friend about a nagging nightmare she first had a year earlier: "I dreamed you were leaving. I tried to go with you but they wouldn't let me."

Mrs. Sacco, a missionary mother of five from McAlester, Okla., said she "really hated to leave because I knew some people felt like this was the end for them. It's encouraging to the other people, I think, when they see that foreigners are still there."

The Foxes agree. They packed their bags on short notice between drop-in guests on evacuation day. She served coffee but didn't tell visitors they were preparing to leave.

"Everyone kept saying, 'If the Americans leave, what will happen to us?'" she explained. Though difficult, they felt friends would be less likely to panic if they left without notice.

But almost until their departure the Foxes continued to provide food and blankets for members of their congregation and other refugees.

The Nicholases evacuated from Monsouriyeh, where the Arab Baptist seminary, publication center and broadcasting ministries are based on the east side. They and five other missionary couples in the area have lived with daily shelling for months.

"Life is very uncertain. Every time you go out you pray," Nicholas explained while raxing in Larnaca. Travel routes to the city are based on radio reports or firsthand accounts from friends about where shells have been falling most recently.

Lebanese Army artillery installations nearby not only do a lot of firing but draw considerable response from anti-government positions in the Shouf Mountains, he said.

"The last few months it seems like the people have been in such dispair," a weary Anne Nicholas observed. "They think they've got some good news and everything's going to work out. The next day it's all denied or somebody says, 'No, we're not going to do this under any circumstances.'"

The Nicholases finally decided to come out of Lebanon, they said, because various pressures had left them tired. "One of the reasons we feel tired is the constant living with hurting people--so much hurt, so much despair that it's hard not to let it drag you down," she said. "We're hurting, too."

"It's gotten very hard for me to know what to say to people," she admitted. "There's a sharing of feeling just that you are all there together and you're worshipping together and you still believe and you still love the Lord. But you share discouragement, too."

Futrell, former missionary journeyman to Lebanon, spent just six weeks there before evacuating to Cyprus. He believes the night he and veteran missionary Nancie Wingo, from Santa Anna, Texas, were trapped in his west Beirut apartment building by fighting and a shoot-on-sight curfew gave him an insight into the possibilities for peace in Lebanon.

The missionaries spent the evening in a neighbor's first-floor apartment watching a "Dukes of Hazzard" rerun on Lebanese television. "Shiites, Sunnis (both Moslem groups), Druse and Christians--groups fighting each other in Lebanon--were all there in harmony," he said.

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Beirut MKs Smelled Shells,
Felt Dust From Explosion

By Bill Webb

Baptist Press
2/21/84

NICOSIA, Cyprus (BP)--Paul and Julie Sacco and fellow missionary kid Ashleigh Dunn have smelled the acrid odor of exploding shells and felt the dust from an exploding building powder their faces.

They are teen-age veterans of the madness of Beirut.

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As students at the American Community School in west Beirut, they experienced the current history that students in other countries only study. U.S. Marines, who guard American Embassy temporary offices at the nearby British Embassy, inspected their school sand bags every morning. Their school is adjacent to the prominent American University of Beirut.

The two Sacco children, both 15, and Ashleigh, 13, rode to school together on Monday, Feb. 6, and it started like a normal day. The Saccos, the children of Mack and Linda Sacco, from Gilroy, Calif., and McAlester, Okla., live in west Beirut. Ashleigh, the daughter of Pete and Pat Dunn, from Mobile, Ala., lives in Monsouriyeh on the east side but had stayed over with the Saccos the night before.

By 1:30 p.m., reports reached the school that Marines in the area were under sniper fire. Students who lived at the university were sent home. The three MKs and a handful of others were to stay at the school with a teacher, David Swenson, and his wife, Joyce, both Baptists.

When fighting heated up later and a shoot-on-sight curfew was imposed on the city, the three had no choice but to spend the night on the ground floor of the school's administration and apartment building. At first they watched television and played card games.

As the shelling got nearer, they moved into a concrete hallway for safer shelter. The impact of falling shells--most evidently meant for the Marines--knocked loose ceiling tiles, shattered windows and rattled light fixtures all around them.

The closest direct hit was the one that destroyed an apartment down the hall and sent a billow of dust toward them. The next morning they ventured outside to find that the library, school basement, a fifth-floor apartment and the school courtyard also took hits.

Ashleigh, one of five MKs who have evacuated Beirut, admitted she was scared "once or twice" during the night. She and her mother will live in a quiet apartment in Nicosia, Cyprus, until the current school semester concludes.

Julie, the Saccos' Korean-born adopted daughter, said the hits were scary but she had felt more frightened last August when shells were bearing down on the Sacco home like giant footsteps. Back then, she said, she thought she might die.

Mack Sacco picked up the children the next morning. As they returned to the Sacco home, they passed armed militiamen who had poured into the city. Ashleigh said they saw youngsters who appeared to be about 12 carrying mortar guns bigger than they were.

Both she and Julie were in shock, Ashleigh said, and didn't venture out of the house until time to evacuate three days later. With the "green line" separating the city closed, Ashleigh couldn't get back to her parents.

The lack of continuity for schoolchildren in Beirut these days is a concern for Lebanese and foreigners alike. It and the danger factor heavily weighted the decision by the Saccos and the Dunns to evacuate.

Ashleigh frequently couldn't get home to Monsouriyeh and stayed over with Julie.

When she did make the trip of a few miles, there were other worries. "I was coming home one day with a driver and we heard (a shell) go off in the distance," she recalled. "I turned around and the building next to us was hit."

"When we're all home together, we're pretty much at ease even though there are shells falling around," Mrs. Dunn said. "But when someone is out on the road somewhere or hasn't come home from school, that's when you get anxious. "We were hoping to make it through this school year but it looked like Beirut was just impossible," Mrs. Dunn said. She enrolled Ashleigh in the Cyprus branch of the American School in Switzerland two days after they arrived in Nicosia. Pete Dunn will continue his broadcasting work in Lebanon.

The Saccos spent the night in Larnaca, Cyprus, following their evacuation but left early Feb. 12 for McAlester, Okla., to get their children in school there for the remainder of the semester.

Being a parent in a place like Lebanon can be a challenge.

Both families start the day by trying light switches to see if there is electricity--some days it may be on only four hours, other days not at all. Radios are turned on to get up-to-date reports of shelling and fighting. Then they plan their route to school.

"One of the main jobs I do is try to keep it as normal as it would be in the States," said Mrs. Sacco. Four-year-old Aaron, who never has cared much for Beirut's "booming," sat on her lap in the Larnaca airport as she talked.

Standing next to her, Annika, 6, adjusted her U.S.S. Manitowoc flight cap, a souvenir from the evacuation. Annika can ignore even the worst shelling, according to her sister, Julie.

The Saccos departed their west Beirut home with just six pieces of luggage.

"This is the third time we've had to leave knowing we may never see anything again," Mrs. Sacco said. "You have to learn to detach yourself from material things in the house."

Mack Sacco left behind some "friends" that he hopes to see again--his sheet music, books, the family piano and, of course, his banjo.

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Missionary To Japan
Named Witness Editor

Baptist Press
2/21/84

PORTLAND, Ore. (BP)--James L. Watters, 52, a Southern Baptist missionary to Japan for 20 years, has been elected editor of the Northwest Baptist Witness, newsjournal of the Northwest Baptist Convention.

Watters succeeds Herbert V. Hollinger, who resigned in August, 1983, to assume the editorship of the California Southern Baptist.

Watters currently is chaplain of the Kobe Friendship House in Kobe, Japan, and is director of the Literature Evangelism Project of the Japan Baptist Mission. He is a native of Ada, Okla., and a graduate of East Central State College in Ada, as well as Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary.

Prior to becoming a foreign missionary, he was pastor of churches in Vannoss, Okla., and Gridley and Manteca, Calif.

Watters, who has been one of the press representatives of the Japan Baptist Mission, told members of the Northwest convention executive board: "I want to function like a switchboard operator, who enables effective communication between God and his people, between the denomination and its supporters and between Baptist people and their leaders."

He said he will be a "friendly critic as well as loyal supporter of the local church and the denomination, to stress evangelism as the all-consuming, harmonizing task of God's people."

Watters told Northwest leaders the Foreign Mission Board is anxious there be an orderly departure from their work in Japan. "The board will grant me a leave of absence if necessary but Darleene (his wife) is committed there until June 30."

The Northwest board agreed to allow him to assume the editorship of the 15,000 circulation semi-monthly in July. Carol Rathbun, who was associate editor to Hollinger, will continue as interim editor, with assistance from retired editor C.E. Boyle.

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