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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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February 22, 1984

84-29

Joint Committee
Defunding Fails

By Dan Martin

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--A request to totally withdraw funding from the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs has been rejected by the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee during its February meeting.

The Executive Committee voted without opposition to "decline to withdraw the financial support of the Southern Baptist Convention to the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, as requested by the Alabama Baptist State Convention."

The matter came to the Executive Committee after the Alabama convention, during its annual meeting Nov. 15, passed a resolution to "respectfully ask the Southern Baptist Convention to withdraw totally" support from the Washington-based BJCPA.

Following a hearing on the matter, the administrative and convention arrangements subcommittee of the Executive Committee recommended to the entire committee the request to defund be declined.

The action also noted defunding "would be in conflict with previous actions of the SBC."

The defunding effort erupted during the annual meeting of the Alabama convention when messengers adopted a resolution criticizing the BJCPA and its executive director, James M. Dunn, for participation in People for the American Way, a first amendment rights coalition founded in 1980.

The resolution charged PAW "founders and supporters espouse philosophies which are contrary to Biblical principles of decency and morality...." One of the founders of PAW is television producer Norman Lear. Others include the late Ruth Carter Stapleton, Theodore Hesburgh, president of Notre Dame University and John Buchanan, a Southern Baptist and former congressman from Birmingham, Ala.

The debate in Alabama put two members of the Executive Committee on different sides of the issue and saw a member of the SBC Public Affairs Committee--which relates to the BJCPA--apparently urge defunding of the organization of which he is a board member.

Jimmy Jackson, pastor of Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville, Ala., urged passage of the resolution, commenting in the floor debate: "This is not the first bad decision by this individual (Dunn)." Dotson Nelson, pastor emeritus of Mountainbrook Baptist Church in Birmingham, referred to the effort as politically motivated and called it "guilt by association. I wonder how Jesus would have acted?"

Also at the state meeting, Albert Lee Smith, currently a candidate for the Republican nomination for U.S. Senator, criticized Dunn for his membership on the advisory board of PAW, primarily complaining about Lear's involvement with the organization.

Smith, who defeated Buchanan for his U.S. House seat in 1980, before being defeated in his first reelection campaign, was elected to the SBC Public Affairs Committee in 1983. The Public Affairs Committee serves as the channel through which the SBC funds the work of the BJCPA. By virtue of his membership on the PAC, Smith is a trustee of the Joint Committee.

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Alabama observers saw Smith's participation in the debate as calling for the defunding of the committee he serves as a trustee.

While the PAW connection was discussed during the meeting of the subcommittee, the action drew little discussion when it came to the floor of the Executive Committee.

After the Executive Committee meeting, committee member Robert Goode, pastor of Florida Street Baptist Church in Greensboro, N.C., requested information from the subcommittee on "why they came to the decision" to decline defunding.

Frank Ingraham, a Nashville, Tenn., attorney, said the subcommittee had heard from both Dunn and Earl Potts, interim executive secretary in Alabama, as well as from others in "establishing some facts which were very helpful" in coming to the decision.

"The facts are no Cooperative Program money has ever been expended for the People for the American Way," Ingraham said. "Second, (Dunn)...is no longer serving on the advisory board of People for the American Way, nor is there any membership in PAW.

"Third, we recognize there is a difference between the Joint Committee cooperating with a number of organizations and participating in making policy in an organization."

Ingraham also noted the SBC "sets the participation in the Cooperative Program, and not the Executive Committee."

Another member, William H. Ricketts, pastor of Prince Avenue Baptist Church, Watkinsville, Ga., told the committee Dunn declined to serve another term on the PAW board because of his sensitivities to the concerns of Southern Baptists.

Ed Drake, an attorney from Dallas, did not speak to Dunn's involvement with PAW, but commented instead on the BJCPA publication, Report from the Capitol, criticizing in particular Dunn's editorial comments in the monthly newsmagazine.

"I do not question Dr. Dunn's intellectual capacity but I think his editorial comments are frequently wrong. I get many publications...I glance at, but I read the Report from the Capitol because I want to know what the other side is doing," Drake said.

He said he believes the publication often takes positions "not representative of Southern Baptists and often just marginally representative."

Drake said "perhaps withdrawing financial support is too harsh a remedy." He added he believes the BJCPA "ought to exercise greater discretion," in an election year, particularly "when they are more liberally-oriented than I am."

The Executive Committee also considered a resolution from the board of deacons at Southside Baptist Church in Birmingham, where Smith is a member and a deacon. That resolution asked the Executive Committee to study to see if Cooperative Program "funds are being misused" by Dunn's involvement with PAW.

It also asked for Dunn either to "remove himself from all association" with PAW, or to resign his BJCPA post.

When Dunn did decline a second term on the PAW advisory board, Smith was asked if the action were satisfactory. He replied he believes the only way to solve the problem is for Dunn to resign as executive director of BJCPA.

The recommendation adopted by the Executive Committee does not refer directly to the Southside deacons' resolution.

The action will be forwarded to the executive board of the Alabama convention, according to Harold C. Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the Executive Committee.

Senate Committee Approves
Vatican Ambassador Nominee

By Larry Chesser

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Senate Foreign Relations Committee has voted to favorably report the nomination of William A. Wilson as ambassador to the Vatican.

The 9-1 vote by the panel cleared the way for a confirmation vote by the full Senate.

Despite the committee's strong vote in favor of the Wilson nomination, a Baptist church-state spokesman warned the issue is far from settled.

"The struggle against placing an ambassador at the Holy See has only begun," declared James M. Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. "The vote in the Foreign Relations Committee did not come as a surprise and constitutes the opening skirmish rather than the main battle."

In addition to the full Senate vote on the nomination, appropriations committees on both sides of Capitol Hill are yet to decide on interim funding for the new Vatican embassy for the remainder of fiscal 1984.

S n. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., the lone member of the Foreign Relations Committee to vote against the nomination, cited his long-held opposition to such a move. Despite his high regard for Wilson as a "treasured friend," Helms said "I just cannot bring myself to vote for any ambassador to the Holy See."

Before announcing his intention to vote against reporting the nomination to the floor, Helms read a resolution opposing the move adopted Feb. 20 by the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee. The North Carolina senator cited the resolution at the request of SBC President James T. Draper Jr.

The resolution warned the action "establishes a dangerous precedent of entanglement of church and state and threatens divisiveness among religious groups," and urged the Foreign Relations Committee to carefully consider "the sincere, heartfelt opposition of Southern Baptists to appointment and confirmation of any person as ambassador to the Holy See."

Joining committee chairman Charles Percy, R-Ill., in voting to send the nomination to the floor were Republicans Howard H. Baker Jr. of Tennessee, Richard G. Lugar of Indiana, Charles McC. Mathias of Maryland, Rudy Boschwitz of Minnesota, Nancy L. Kassebaum of Kansas, and Paula Hawkins of Florida and Democrats Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island and Joseph R. Biden of Delaware.

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Dissident Presbyterians
Lose Church Property

By Stan Haste

Baptist Press
2/22/84

WASHINGTON (BP)--A congregation of dissident Presbyterians in Baltimore, Md., lost a final appeal to regain control of its church property when the U.S. Supreme Court declined Feb. 21 to review its complaint against the local presbytery.

Babcock Memorial Presbyterian Church, which withdrew from the United Presbyterian Church in 1981 in a dispute over church doctrine, had sought through the courts to regain the property seized by the parent denomination after the 228-6 vote severing the denominational relationship.

After the congregational vote, the Presbytery of Baltimore took control of the premises by sending security guards to deny access to the dissidents and by changing locks on the doors to the church's two buildings. The dissidents then took the presbytery to court.

A trial court in Baltimore agreed with the congregation it still owned the property but two Maryland appeals panels ruled for the denomination.

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During the legal proceedings, evidence was presented the congregation also had voted to convey all its property to a newly formed church, Merritt Boulevard Presbyterian Church. The new congregation was formed by one of the dissident leaders, an attorney, his wife and another couple. The attorney helped argue the congregation's case in court.

In the lower appeals, the denomination--now the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. following last year's merger of the two main branches of Presbyterianism--argued successfully all local church property is "held in trust" for the denomination.

A clause clarifying the denomination's claim on local property was added to the United Presbyterian constitution in 1981 after a Supreme Court ruling that even hierarchical denominations must make explicit claims on local church property or risk losing it to dissidents such as those at Babcock.

Most church property disputes in U.S. legal history have involved Presbyterian congregations because of the "connectional" nature of the denomination's church polity.

Courts have acknowledged consistently more purely hierarchical church bodies, such as the Roman Catholic and Episcopal churches, retain absolute control of local property when disputes arise.

On the other end of the ecclesiastical spectrum, courts have shied away from ruling in cases involving congregational-type churches, such as Baptist churches. Even when organized into denominations, local Baptist congregations own their own property and, except in rare instances, retain it when leaving their denominational bodies.

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1,000 New Works
Aim Of Revivals

By Patti Stephenson

Baptist Press
2/22/84

ATLANTA (BP)--Starting 1,000 new Southern Baptist missions in America's unchurched communities is the ambitious goal of 3,000 Mission Revivals, a project spearheaded by the church extension, language missions and mass evangelism staffs of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Designed as a follow-up to Pentecost Sunday, last year's effort to garner commitments from 3,000 churches to begin new works, 3,000 Mission Revivals "has the potential of being one of the most productive evangelistic campaigns ever conducted" by Southern Baptists, believes Richard Harris, HMB mass evangelism director.

Jack Redford, HMB church extension director, expressed hope the 1300 churches which pledged to begin a new work on Pentecost Sunday will launch a mission by conducting a revival this year, if they have not already done so. HMB leaders also expect churches in older state conventions linked to newer conventions to participate by holding revivals in areas pinpointed as having an inadequate evangelical witness.

Language groups, particularly American Indian, Chinese, Hispanics, Korean and the deaf, are also targeted for mission revivals, according to Fermin Whittaker, HMB director of ethnic church growth. If the project "catches on at the grassroots level, it can be very successful in starting new ethnic churches," Whittaker said. Last year 457 new language works began, many as a result of revivals, he noted.

Revivals have long been a favored tool of Southern Baptists in penetrating pioneer areas and reaching untouched segments of the population, Harris said. "We've used this approach for years, but never on such a large, coordinated scale."

As a church-starting method, a revival is a "very visible event which provides a central rallying point for Christians of a given community to come together for worship," Harris observed. "It also provides the fellowship and sense of purpose which is essential for beginning any new church."

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Three Thousand Mission Revivals "is patterned after the biblical model of carrying the gospel to areas where it has not yet taken root," he added. "Any community--urban, rural, suburban--where a church is needed is a potential site for a mission revival."

Volunteer teams of pastors and laity are being recruited by associational and state leaders to hold the revivals, Harris explained. Douglas Beggs, director of Baptist Men for the Brotherhood Commission, described such lay-led revivals as an effective means of starting churches in areas "that might not have the resources to bring in a professional revival team."

In addition to revival leaders, ~~volunteer teams~~ ^{BIBLICAL COMMISSION} are needed to conduct surveys, visitation and Vacation Bible schools or to perform concerts in targeted communities.

Don Mabry, state missions director for Louisiana, reported good reception to the project by Louisiana Baptists to hold mission revivals at 300 sites this year, including 148 adopted by churches on Pentecost Sunday and another 152 places where churches are needed. More than 100 Louisiana volunteers have signed up to lead revivals without honoraria, Mabry said.

Churches interested in participating in 3,000 Mission Revivals should first look for needs in their own community, Redford advised. Follow-up to revival is crucial in planting a new church and the closer proximity it has to a supportive church, the better its chances of surviving and growing, he explained.

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**Continuing Education Director
Named At Southern Seminary**

Baptist Press
2/22/84

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Ross Brummett has been named director of continuing education at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky. He replaces Dan Francis who resigned earlier to accept the pastorate at Central Baptist Church, Winchester, Ky.

Brummett, a native of Barton, Ark., holds the BA degree from Ouachita Baptist University, Arkadelphia, Ark., and the M.Div. degree from Southern Seminary.

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**With A Little Help From Above,
Missionary Gets Rapid Response**

Baptist Press
2/22/84

KITWE, Zambia (BP)--Ed Miller had never dreamed his preaching could be so powerful. As he offered the invitation in a rural Zambian church, everyone stood and rushed to the front.

But Miller, a Southern Baptist missionary in Kitwe, Zambia, quickly realized his preaching had nothing to do with their response. A snake had fallen from the grass roof into the middle of the congregation.

After the snake was killed and peace restored, Miller continued his invitation. This time, nine adults came forward to make professions of faith in Christ.

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