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84-37

Old Driver, New Relief Truck
Back On The Road In Zimbabwe

By Rodney D. Bell

SESSAMI, Zimbabwe (BP)--Kilian Sibanda is back on the road in a new 10-ton truck, delivering cornmeal weekly to stave off starvation among 30,000 Tonga people in Zimbabwe's drought-stricken Gokwe area.

Five anti-government dissidents temporarily sidelined the African Baptist layman last May when they attacked and burned one of the two 10-ton relief trucks operated by the Baptist Mission of Zimbabwe. They also stole \$1,400 from Kilian, roughed him up and threatened his life. But they failed to frighten him away from his task.

The two trucks now make twice-weekly trips, carrying about 40 tons of cornmeal, some for sale at cost and some for free distribution in the first phase of Southern Baptists' massive "People Who Care" project in Zimbabwe.

The poverty-stricken Tonga residents of Nenyunga and Simchembu take particular pride in the new truck. They raised \$108.45 from their meager resources to help replace it and to show their appreciation for the relief effort.

The original truck cost \$35,000, but the new one cost only \$30,000.

To save Southern Baptist hunger and relief funds, workers repaired and repainted the bed of the old truck and fitted it onto a new cab, which came into the country duty-free under a new agreement with Zimbabwe's Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rural Development.

The agreement allows free entry of equipment, materials and supplies for the proposed four-year project which the mission and Louisiana Baptists are conducting to help restore the drought area. The project includes development of medical and community health clinics, grain-grinding mills and storage facilities, agricultural development, evangelism and church development, well digging, dams, road repair and cooperative stores operated by the Tonga.

The relief trucks now are marked with a "Baptist People Who Care" logo, which workers hope will help protect them from attack.

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(Rodney D. Bell, a Southern Baptist journeyman, is mass media assistant at the Baptist Communications Center, Harare, Zimbabwe.)

(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Baptists Continue Efforts
To Oppose Vatican Funding

By Larry Chesser

Baptist Press
3/7/84

WASHINGTON (BP)--Baptists and other U.S. religious groups continued strong opposition to efforts to send an ambassador to the Vatican as a Senate appropriations panel considered a request to reallocate funds for a full U.S. diplomatic mission to the Holy See.

Three Southern Baptist witnesses, including Baptist General Association of Virginia President William L. Lumpkin, joined other religious representatives in urging the Senate Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State and the Judiciary to deny the State Department request. The request had been approved earlier by committee chairman Paul Laxalt, R-Nev., but this hearing and one in late March were scheduled to take a second look at it at the request of Sen. Mark O. Hatfield, R-Ore., and Sen. Lowell P. Weicker, R-Conn.

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The hearing occurred as Senate leaders sought a time agreement to bring the nomination of William A. Wilson as Vatican ambassador to the floor for a confirmation vote.

Despite acknowledged opposition to the Vatican mission by Hatfield, Weicker and other members of Laxalt's panel, chances the funding committee might reject the reprogramming would be sharply diminished if the Senate confirms Wilson, according to a Senate source.

Lumpkin, pastor of Freemason Street Baptist Church, Norfolk, Va., was joined at the hearing by Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs General Counsel John W. Baker and Americans United for Separation of Church and State Executive Director Robert L. Maddox, a Southern Baptist minister.

Lumpkin said Baptist opposition to diplomatic relations with the Holy See "rests solidly on constitutional grounds."

"The Holy See is a religious entity which, for political reasons, claims the Vatican City is a state," Lumpkin said, charging formal recognition of the Holy See by the U.S. would constitute an establishment of religion and entangle the government in the internal affairs of the Catholic Church.

In his testimony, Baker emphasized the move "could seriously jeopardize the missionary programs of religious organizations" by fostering the impression church workers serve the foreign policy interests of the U.S. government.

"Many church leaders are sincerely troubled by suggestions from the State Department that they feel much of the value of a mission to the Holy See would lie in its effectiveness as a 'listening post,'" Baker said.

Maddox declared the Holy See is a "religious entity" and to grant diplomatic recognition "is openly to prefer one religion over another." The Americans United leader further charged the proposed move would lead to "political division along religious lines."

"We run the risk of unnecessarily awakening the ghosts of religious bigotry from a past that has long been laid to rest," he said.

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1985 SBC Convention Housing
List To Be Released Soon

Baptist Press
3/7/84

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The hotel reservation business for the 1985 meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas will get serious 15 months before the session opens.

On March 14 the Southern Baptist Convention Housing Bureau will release the names of the hotels which will be handled through the established reservation procedure.

That list will include 4,000 rooms--20 percent of the available rooms in Dallas.

"That leaves another 16,000 rooms in the city, and individuals and groups can make reservations directly with those hotels for those spaces anytime they wish," said Tim Hedquist, director of financial planning for the SBC Executive Committee and the man responsible for convention arrangements.

"Groups who want to stay together might do better in the hotels which will not be in our 4,000 room pool since all housing requests through us will be handled on an individual basis and there is no guarantee people will be assigned to the same hotel even if they request it."

The 4,000 rooms, many within walking distance of the meeting site, can be requested by acquiring a housing form in September and sending it to the SBC Housing Bureau after Oct. 1. Any request postmarked prior to Oct. 1 will not be accepted.

Hedquist said the 15-month lead time was not unusual. "We always release the names of the hotels we will keep as soon as the convention host city completes its work," he explained.

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Anyone wanting a list of the served hotels may write: "Housing Information, 460 James Robertson Parkway, Nashville, Tenn. 37219" or call 615-244-2355, after the list is released.

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Gambling Advertising Bill
Draws Baptist Opposition

By David Wilkinson

Baptist Press
3/7/84

WASHINGTON (BP)--Sen. Paul Laxalt, R.-Nev., has introduced legislation in the U.S. Senate which would allow interstate advertising of state-operated lotteries and casino gambling.

The proposed legislation drew immediate criticism from a Southern Baptist ethicist who has led recent opposition to legalized gambling.

Larry Braidfoot, director of Christian citizenship development for the Christian Life Commission, said Laxalt's bill would "declare open season for the gambling industry's marketing specialists."

Laxalt, who in the 1970s was part owner of a family-owned casino in Carson City, Nev., is chairman of a Senate subcommittee which has held hearings on the bill. According to a Laxalt aide, the purpose of the bill (S. 1876) is "to clarify some constitutional problems" in current legislation.

But an aide to Sen. Chic Hecht, R.-Nev., the only other sponsor of the bill, told Braidfoot the intent is "to allow casino advertising." The spokesman explained casinos now "can advertise the hotels, the entertainment but not the gaming."

The bill would modify the meaning of several sections of Title XVIII, United States Code, which deals with lotteries. It would incorporate the phrase, "concerning a lottery, gift enterprise, or similar scheme."

"In the intentions of Senators Laxalt and Hecht," said Braidfoot, "the term 'similar scheme' includes casino gambling."

Although related primarily to casino gambling, the proposed legislation "would appear in effect to allow interstate advertising of all gambling sponsored by a state," Braidfoot pointed out. The bill also deletes a provision allowing gambling across state lines only if the adjacent state has legalized gambling.

If the changes are approved, "citizens of a state where casino gambling is illegal would be subjected to a barrage of casino advertising," Braidfoot predicted. "State-operated lotteries would spend millions of dollars for advertising in states where such lotteries are illegal."

Braidfoot questioned Laxalt's sponsorship of such "divergent" legislation as the "pro-gambling" bill and the Family Protection Act, which has been hailed as "pro-family" by its supporters. An assistant to Laxalt claimed, however, the two pieces of legislation are not in conflict since both seek to limit the role of federal government, while broadening the powers of state government.

While governor of Nevada in the 1960s, Laxalt actively supported legislation which allowed corporations to enter casino ownership. Though he also was credited for working to rid the state's casino industry of the influence of organized crime, Laxalt was critical of Justice Department probes of casino owners.

Interest in the gambling industry also appears to have accompanied Laxalt in his role as general chairman of the Republican National Committee. Laxalt, who managed the Reagan election campaigns in 1976 and 1980, was the President's personal choice for the position.

Day-to-day operation of the RNC is in the hands of Laxalt protege Frank J. Fahrenkopf Jr., an attorney from Reno, Nev., who also serves as president of the National Association of Gaming Attorneys.

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Fahrenkopp has been critical of the opposition of religious groups to legalize gambling. In a speech last fall at the Fifth Annual Gaming Conference in Atlantic City, N.J., he described some of Braidfoot's concerns about the expansion of legalized gambling as "moralizing rhetoric" and "narrow and autocratic charges."

Despite such counter-charges, Braidfoot has called for opposition to Laxalt's bill. "If Baptists and other concerned citizens still need evidence about the seriousness of the political influence and intentions of the gambling industry," he said, "S. 1876 should help clarify the threat."

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Overseas Baptists Report
146,149 Baptisms In 1983

By Bill Webb

Baptist Press
3/7/84

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Overseas churches related to Southern Baptist mission work baptized a record 146,149 believers and increased to 1.7 million members in 1983.

They worked in the midst of wars, economic crises, droughts, floods and broadening Islamic influence to baptize one person for every 11 members, according to Charles W. Bryan, Foreign Mission Board senior vice president for overseas operations. The United States ratio is one baptism for every 36 Southern Baptist members.

Churches of the Brazilian Baptist Convention, with well over a half million members, accounted for 30 percent of the baptisms--44,648. Nigerian Baptists reported 16,193; South Korea, 12,023 (one for every 4.6 members); Tanzania, 7,827 (one per 4.9 members), and Mexico, 5,390.

"We had some concern that the rate of increase (3.77 percent) was not as great as the year before (nearly 11 percent), but we feel we're on the edge of a great thrust forward," Bryan said.

His optimism is fueled by reports that the number of overseas churches increased from 12,170 to 13,586 and mission points from 14,997 to 16,995 during the past year.

The 13 percent jump in the number of mission points--1,998 new ones--is one of the most significant developments during 1983 because it suggests a future acceleration in both the number of churches and members, Bryan explained.

Field evangelism and church growth consultants point out church growth is directly related to the number of preaching points, he said.

"I think we need to emphasize this is not all our initiative," Bryan added. "We are responding to felt needs on the part of national leaders and conventions. We cannot do it--the Lord never intended for us to do it--on our own. It's a partnering. Enriching the partnership is the challenge before us."

National Baptists showed a strong commitment to provide well-trained national leadership for those churches. Enrollment in resident theological seminaries and institutes shot up 18 percent in 1983 to 7,284. Some 7,171 others studied at 306 seminary extension centers while another 1,181 took additional theological courses.

Despite inflation and devaluation of national currencies, overseas Baptists boosted their giving to the equivalent of \$72.5 million, better than 10 percent ahead of 1982 gifts of \$65.8 million.

The ranks of overseas Southern Baptist missionaries swelled to 3,346 with the appointment of 357 during 1983. The number of countries in which they work grew from 96 to 102. (A 103rd country, Sierra Leone, has been added in 1984.) Missionaries entered five new areas last year--the Netherlands Antilles Islands, Fiji Islands, Swaziland, Mali and Nepal--and reentered Angola and St. Lucia. Because no new missionaries had been assigned to Jamaica recently, it was dropped from the list.

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Southern Baptist volunteers participating in overseas ministries during the year totaled 4,735, a drop from the record 5,749 in 1982. The record year reflected heavy involvement by Texas Baptists in Brazil as Brazilian Baptists celebrated their centennial.

Radio and television broadcasts during 1983 presented the gospel to an estimated 115 million people, many in countries or locales which have no missionaries or well-developed Baptist work.

Fifty-three physicians, 10 dentists and 71 missionary nurses worked alongside 4,777 nationals in ministering to 144,469 inpatients and nearly 1.3 million outpatients in hospitals and clinics around the world.

Missionaries helped personally in many disaster and relief situations, administering \$587,858 in general relief funds and more than \$6.6 million in hunger funds.

"The ability to administer these quantities of funds responsibly and in ways that would contribute to the advance of the gospel represents one of the highlights of 1983," Bryan said.

Missionaries and overseas Baptists helped nearly 337,000 people in community centers and 2,427 residents of children's homes.

Ninety missionaries and 745 overseas Baptists produced five million periodicals (under 486 titles), almost 2.9 million books (831 titles) and more than 9.8 million tracts (359 titles) for training and evangelistic uses.

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Sisson Named
To WMU Post

Baptist Press
3/7/84

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Carol Sisson of Birmingham, Ala., has been named public information specialist for Woman's Missionary Union, SBC. WMU has approximately 1.2 million members.

She succeeds Beth Wildes, who was promoted to public information director.

Sisson began work at WMU in 1981 as public information secretary, and later became public information assistant.

She is a 1981 graduate of the University of Alabama, where she received a bachelor's degree in journalism.

She is a member of Clearview Baptist Church in Birmingham, Baptist Public Relations Association, International Association of Business Communicators and Christian Business Women's Club.

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Olympic Archery Hopefuls
Train At Baptist College

Baptist Press
3/7/84

PHOENIX, Ariz. (BP)--Eighteen archers from around the country are practicing on the campus of Grand Canyon College in preparation for the Olympic tryouts.

Since Grand Canyon's facilities for archery consist of nine bales of straw and 56 generic paper plate targets, there must be a real good reason for selecting the Baptist college as a training site. There is. Their coach lives across the street.

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Al Henderson, the coach for America's 1976 Olympic archery team is training several Olympic hopefuls this year, including two members from the 1980 Olympic team: Judi Adams and Scott Kertson. A member of the Archery Hall of Fame, Henderson is perhaps best known for his four-member Olympic team that won a seventh place, a fourth and both gold medals in the 1976 Olympic games held in Montreal.

Henderson first approached the administration of Grand Canyon prior to the 1980 Olympics when he was again training Olympic hopefuls and was in need of a place for "long-range practice." He had been holding his practices in his back yard.

He was "a little nervous," he said the first time he went to see the college's president, Bill Williams. "But Dr. Williams greeted me like an old friend," Henderson said, and he was given administrative approval for holding Olympic training practices on Grand Canyon's grounds.

For circumstances which Henderson says he cannot remember, he and his students never did hold practice at Grand Canyon in 1980, but this year again he approached Williams for approval, and since early February, has been training his students on campus.

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Prayer Amendment Backers
Propose New Wording

By Larry Chesser

Baptist Press
3/7/84

WASHINGTON (BP)--Two days into the Senate's school prayer debate, backers of the move to return state-sponsored religious exercises to public schools have proposed new language in an attempt to attract enough support to pass a constitutional amendment by the required two-thirds vote.

Senate majority leader Howard H. Baker Jr., R.-Tenn., who is leading the Senate effort to pass a school prayer amendment, announced the proposed wording March 6, but warned it may not be the final wording voted on by the Senate. Baker later indicated he did not have the votes to pass the measure at that point, but said "it was close."

The new wording states: "Nothing in this Constitution shall be construed to prohibit individual, group vocal or silent prayer in public schools or other public institutions. No person shall be required by the United States or by any state to participate in prayer. Neither the United States nor any State shall compose or mandate the words of any prayer to be said in public schools.

"The authorization by the United States or any State of equal access to the use of public facilities by voluntary religious groups shall not constitute an establishment of religion."

This language differs from President Reagan's pending proposal (S.J. Res. 73) by adding the words "or silent prayer" and "or mandate" in the first paragraph and by adding a second paragraph on equal access.

The White House has approved the new wording, according to a Baker aide.

During the early Senate debate, a handful of senators spoke on both sides of the issue while Baker and Sen. Lowell P. Weicker, who is leading the opposition, maneuvered to reach an agreement on a time for the final vote.

Weicker, who insisted opponents would not filibuster the measure, initially offered June 1 as a target date. Baker, who said he was thinking more in terms of a week or two, indicated he would consider filing a motion to shut off debate during the second week of the debate if no time agreement is reached.

In the background, there was a flurry of other activity on the school prayer issue, including a speech by President Reagan supporting his amendment, a news conference by representatives of U.S. religious groups opposed to the amendment, an all-night session in the House of Representatives by supporters of the prayer amendment and all-night prayer vigils by religious groups on both sides of the issue.

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As the Senate leadership sought language to satisfy enough senators to pass some version of a prayer amendment, President Reagan made a last-ditch appeal for his own amendment.

In a Columbus, Ohio, speech at the annual meeting of the National Association of Evangelicals, Reagan repeated themes he has used often in recent weeks, including the assertion that the U.S. Supreme Court "expelled" God from public school classrooms in 1962 when it struck down state-written, mandatory prayers.

Referring to the practice of opening daily sessions of Congress and the Supreme Court with prayers and invocations, he struck another familiar cord: "I just have to believe that if members of Congress and Justices can acknowledge the Almighty, our children can, too."

But apparently for the first time in a public speech, Reagan also said he will also support "some form" of legislation to provide "equal access" to school property for student initiated religious groups.

Most U.S. Protestant and Jewish groups were represented in the Capitol Hill news conference by groups opposed to the prayer amendment.

James A. Langley, representing the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, said, "One of the dangers of this Amendment is trivializing prayer."

Langley, executive director of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention, charged the pending amendment fails to "prohibit formulation of prayers by school boards, administrators or teachers--all agents of the state, nor does the Amendment prohibit the use of prayers written by evangelists, cults or proselytizing groups."

Opening Senate debate on the issue, Baker offered his view the First Amendment "makes clear this right to prayer "as part of the guarantee of the free exercise of religion and freedom of speech. But if further constitutional clarification is necessary," he added, "let us clarify."

Sen. Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., one the primary Senate sponsors of the Reagan proposal, called the debate "a momentous occasion" and said the amendment "is of vital importance to the well-being of our nation."

Sen. John C. Danforth, R-Mo., told colleagues the debate on school prayer is "not between the godly and the ungodly," arguing that people have come out of both sides of the issue for "strongly held religious reasons." Danforth, an Episcopal minister, indicated he opposes the prayer amendment, but said the Senate has a choice to make.

"We can choose to do nothing," he said, "to keep the Constitution as it is, to allow personal prayer in public school, but not officially sanctioned group prayer. Or, we can choose to amend the Constitution, we choose to weigh in on the side of those many religious people who favor the sanctioning of group prayer in public schools."

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Baptist Joint Committee
Reaffirms Prayer Stance

By Dan Martin

Baptist Press
3/7/84

WASHINGTON (BP)--Members of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs reaffirmed their opposition to President Reagan's proposed constitutional amendment on school prayer during their annual meeting March 5-6.

The committee defeated 18-2 an effort to put it on record supporting the amendment currently being debated in the U.S. Senate. In so doing, the committee reaffirmed opposition to "any and all proposed constitutional amendments" which would allow "state-mandated prayer and Bible reading in public schools."

The statement opposing the constitutional amendment was adopted unanimously by the committee in 1982.

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The committee also adopted a statement to actively support Equal Access proposals currently pending in Congress. The legislation would require secular and religious non-school-sponsored student groups be granted equal access to any limited open forum created in a public school when the students meet on their own initiative and without any official encouragement or sponsorship for religious discussion and prayer.

The effort to put the BJCPA on record favoring the proposed constitutional amendment was made by two Southern Baptist members attending their first meeting of the committee.

Sam Currin, chairman of the Southern Baptist Public Affairs Committee, moved the "Baptist Joint Committee go on record endorsing the proposed constitutional amendment being presented in the Senate on behalf of the president."

His motion was seconded by Albert Lee Smith, a former one-term congressman from Birmingham, Ala., also elected to the Public Affairs Committee in 1983.

In discussing his motion, Currin, a former aide to U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., said he believes "the overwhelming majority of Americans favor the president's approach to voluntary school prayer." He commented SBC President James T. Draper Jr. "had a strong role in developing the concept" of adding an additional sentence to the proposal prohibiting national or state governments from writing prayers to be used in schoolrooms.

Commenting "I don't see how anybody can be opposed" to the "beautifully phrased" amendment, Currin said the committee's failure to "get behind this thing will be a real slap" at Draper and the Southern Baptist Convention.

On several occasions, Currin remarked "rank and file Southern Baptists are overwhelmingly behind" the amendment, and said BJCPA opposition has been "one of the major stumbling blocks between the committee and the SBC." He added: "It seems to me the Baptist Joint Committee is not representing the majority view (of Southern Baptists) on the prayer amendment."

Both Currin and Smith expressed the belief the amendment will improve the moral climate of the United States and have an influence on problems in the classroom.

Smith, currently seeking the Republican nomination for U.S. Senate in Alabama, said the U.S. Supreme Court decisions "removed the teaching of value systems in the nation" and replaced the Judeo-Christian values with "the religion of humanism."

"We need to restore not state sponsored but voluntary, vocal prayer to the schools to make it possible for our children to have a value system," he said.

Currin added: "The implanting of values in our young people has to come from home, school and church. They are adapted from the Judeo-Christian values. The reason a lot of our young people are on pot and drugs is because they don't know right from wrong."

James M. Dunn, executive director-treasurer of the BJCPA, said while the SBC adopted a resolution supporting the constitutional amendment at the 1982 annual meeting, 11 state conventions subsequently passed resolutions on the issue, and 10 of the 11 were opposed.

He also cited an action taken at the 1983 annual meeting which cited the First Amendment to the Constitution as "adequate and sufficient guarantee" to protect religious liberty.

Donald Brewer, a Southern Baptist attorney from Chicago, opposed the motion, noting most constitutional law authorities "say you don't solve social problems by amending the Constitution. Most constitutional authorities and scholars are opposed to it."

Elizabeth Miller, a representative of the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., questioned who will compose the prayers, an issue she said is left very hazy in the language of the amendment. "We could wind up with a Moonie or a Black Muslim prayer," she said.

Dunn said the amendment "does not satisfy the staff" about who would write a prayer and cited a White House position paper which says if "groups of people are to be permitted to pray, someone must have the power to determine the content of such prayers."

He said the inclusion of an additional sentence prohibiting the national and state governments from writing prayers is not adequate protection, since local school boards or others obviously have to write such prayers.

Charles G. Adams, pastor of Hartford Avenue Baptist Church in Detroit, representing the Progressive National Baptist Convention, also questioned whether Muslims, Jews, Christians or Eastern Meditation religions would impose their prayers.

"Nobody can stop me from praying whenever or wherever I wish," he said. "I think it is interesting the president who wants prayer in the schools is pulling the money out. He is using religious issues for political gain. Those pushing the amendment say Reagan has put prayer back in the schools. Well, no politician took God out of schools and no politician can put him back in."

Dennis Key, a pastor from Cornwells Heights, Pa., representing the North American Baptist Conference, commented on "attempts to reduce prayers to watered down prayers. I am doubtful any meaningful prayer could be said in my community. There would be a lot of pressure to reduce prayers down to nothing."

Donald Graffius, an attorney from New Enterprise, Pa., representing the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, said he had served on a local school board and commented, "Whoever is in the majority could have the privilege of deciding on a prayer which could put the minority person in a humiliating position."

Welton Gaddy, campus minister at Mercer University in Macon, Ga., a Southern Baptist member of the board, said he finds it "theologically abhorrent for a community to decide it can only pray when the government allows it."

John Binder, from Oakbrook Terrace, Ill., and executive secretary of the North American Baptist Conference, said "assumptions" such prayers will be Christian are false assumptions. He added, "Baptists who believe they can go rough shod over everybody else mean they really aren't concerned about religious liberty anymore."

Currin said he does not believe the vote "is reflective of the Southern Baptist position on the prayer amendment. I perceive the rank and file of Southern Baptists support the prayer amendment. It was not supported by the BJCBA."

"I would be less than honest if I did not say I have some concerns about the status of the Baptist Joint Committee. I also have some grave concerns about whether it is the best stewardship of our Cooperative Program money to fund the BJC...."

"I still believe Southern Baptists must have a strong effective lobby in Washington. The question I have is whether the committee is effectively representing Southern Baptists."

As rumors circulate in the denomination that a significant effort will be made to strip the SBC financial contribution from the BJCBA, Currin declined to say whether he will defend the committee as a trustee or join in the effort to strip its funds.

"I don't want to speculate about that," he said.

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High Court Will Rule
On State Sabbath Law

By Stan Hasteby

Baptist Press
3/7/84

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U. S. Supreme Court will decide next term if state legislatures may order employers to give their workers a day off each week for religious observances.

Eight years ago the Connecticut legislature passed a law that "No person who states that a particular day of the week is observed as his Sabbath may be required by his employer to work on such day." Another provision of the 1976 statute decrees refusal to work on one's Sabbath "shall not constitute grounds for...dismissal."

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Donald E. Thornton, a men's and boy's wear department manager for a New England retail chain, requested in 1979 to be excused from work on Sundays in order to worship at his Presbyterian congregation. The company, Caldor, Inc., refused to go along.

Instead, Thornton's employer offered him a similar job at a Massachusetts store. That state still observed a blue law requiring all retail stores be closed on Sundays. Or, the company said, Thornton could remain at its Torrington, Conn. store, but in a position paying nearly three dollars an hour less.

Thornton quit his job and filed a grievance with the state board of mediation. That panel sustained his grievance and ordered Caldor to reinstate him with back pay and benefits. The company then appealed the ruling to a state court which also sided with Thornton.

But the Connecticut Supreme Court, in a unanimous decision last year, reversed the lower court and ruled the law violates the First Amendment to the federal Constitution by establishing religion. Thornton's appeal that the nation's high court review that decision is based on the claim that the Connecticut law protects the free exercise of religion and without violating the establishment clause.

U. S. Solicitor General Rex Lee filed a friend-of-the-court brief in the case supporting Thornton's position, citing a portion of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1972 requiring employers to make "reasonable accommodations" to the religious needs of workers.

Lee praised Connecticut's law, saying it reflects "an admirable tolerance for the diversity of religious practices in this country and a willingness to enable religious believers--particularly those of minority views--to overcome the burdens their religious observances would otherwise place on them in the workplace."

No date for oral arguments in the case will be set until sometime after the high court opens its new term next October (83-1158, Thornton v. Caldor, Inc.).

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Black, White Baptists
Meet In South Carolina

Baptist Press
3/7/84

SPARTANBURG, S.C. (BP)--More than 2,500 Baptists from both black and white churches attended the South Carolina Baptist and Baptist Educational and Missionary Conference on Evangelism.

The meeting, described as the first of its kind involving the two denominations, was sponsored jointly by the South Carolina Baptist Convention and the Baptist Educational and Missionary Convention of South Carolina.

With 1,753 churches and missions, the South Carolina Baptist Convention is the largest religious denomination in the state. The Baptist Educational and Missionary Convention, with some 1,700 churches, represents the state's second largest religious group.

The three-day meeting featured messages, music and training conferences. Some 900 persons attended 15 conferences offered at First Baptist Church, Spartanburg. More than 40 pastors, musicians, denominational leaders and other guests participated on the program.

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NEWS SERVICE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

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