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C-N

May 23, 1984

84-77

Resolutions Committee Plans For Heavy Work

By Dan Martin

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—The 1984 Southern Baptist Convention Resolutions Committee is making plans to deal with potential resolutions which will range from the ordinary to the highly controversial and emotional.

For the second year, the 10-member body met in Nashville, Tenn., in late May to be briefed and to organize their efforts to handle another heavy year of work.

In briefing them, SBC President James T. Draper Jr. commented they probably will be expected to handle "some extremely controversial and emotional resolutions," which probably will include statements on the ordination of women, the school prayer issue, homosexuality, abortion, pornography, along with routine statements thanking the host city and committee.

He noted he is pleased the body now holds the May planning meeting, and said recent years have produced record numbers of resolutions.

"It is not fair to lock 10 people in a room and then throw 47 resolutions at them," he said. He added he hopes the resolutions committee "will not be bombarded by 40 or 50 resolutions during the three-day annual SBC in Kansas City, Mo., June 12-14.

The president, pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, also told them the May meeting is strictly for organization and planning, because their real work will not start until after the convention begins June 12.

Draper outlined the procedure he will follow in the introduction of resolutions; a process he initiated during the 1983 annual meeting in Pittsburgh in an effort to speed up the process.

"The procedure is not as complicated as it sounds," he said.

Draper urged persons who wish to introduce resolutions to present them as early as possible during the Tuesday morning session at a special desk set up adjacent to the platform in the meeting hall. The desk will be manned by representatives of the Resolutions Committee as well as one of the two SBC parliamentarians.

He specifically asked that all proposed resolutions be presented at the desk before 10:30 a.m., so they can be introduced in the morning session, allowing the resolutions committee to begin deliberations immediately following the presidential address.

Also, he said, even if proposed resolutions were sent to the committee prior to its May meeting—and about 15 were—elected messengers must present them at the Tuesday session in order for them to be considered. Resolutions submitted early will not be automatically entered, but must be introduced at the Tuesday session.

The parliamentarian will rule on whether the proposals are resolutions or motions, Draper said, explaining a "resolution expresses an opinion and a motion calls for action."

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After the resolutions are presented at the desk, Draper said, they will be read into the minutes—only the topic of the resolution and the name of the messenger submitting it—by one of the officers of the convention.

Harold C. Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee, also briefed the committee, telling them they have a "tremendously important task," and urging them to "select the right words" for the resolutions they present. "The words you use are as vital as anything you can imagine," he said.

Bennett also told them they must "report out everything" submitted to them, under convention rules. "You do not have to make a recommendation, but you have to report on everything," Bennett said.

He added the resolutions they prepare and present "have an impact which will continue after the convention...on both the SBC and other groups as well."

Reginald McDonough, associate executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee, who provides staff assistance to the committee, warned the committee they will be "torn between their responsibility to the convention and their own feelings on issues which tug at the heart."

He also told them they will be under "extreme time pressure" to get their job done.

Draper told the committee he has "no desire to try to dictate to nor will I attempt to manipulate this committee. The resolutions process, as well as the content, is in your hands. You are at liberty to do whatever you wish to do."

He added the committee "is a cross section of the convention. Each of you is from a different state. Each of you has different expertise. Every one of you is very important."

Draper told them their "personal convictions are very important," but urged them to do their work in such a way as to "decide what is best for the convention. I do not mean you must compromise your convictions, but I do mean that through study and discussion you come to conclusions which are best for the convention."

The committee will have another preliminary meeting during which they will discuss substantive issues dealing with proposed resolutions. They will, however, do their main work beginning Tuesday afternoon.

Committee chairman is Bailey E. Stone, pastor of First Baptist Church of Odessa, Texas. The committee includes three members of the Executive Committee, Otis Testerman, pastor of Bookcliff Baptist Church, Grand Junction, Colo.; Darrell Robinson, pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, Ala., and Frank Ingraham, a Nashville attorney.

Others are David Simpson, editor of the Indiana Baptist, newsjournal of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana; Ruel May, an oral surgeon from Jackson, Miss; Ed Packwood, a retired businessman from Shawnee, Okla.; Carl F.H. Henry a theologian from Arlington, Va.; George Schroeder, an ophthalmologist from Little Rock, Ark., and Cristobal Dona, a pastor from San Jose, Calif.

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FMB-N

13 Rejoin Overseas Force;
Board Appoints 29 Others

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—Thirteen former missionaries with a total of 164 years missionary experience rejoined the Southern Baptist overseas mission force in May.

It was believed to be the largest number ever reappointed at a single meeting of the Foreign Mission Board and brought to 27 the total reappointed this year.

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With 29 new missionaries appointed at the same meeting, total missionaries named this year climbed to 110. With these additions, the total missionary force reached a record 3,404 on May 23. It will drop slightly May 31 as nine missionary resignations become effective.

Charles Bryan, senior vice president for overseas operations, called the reappointees a "significant group." He noted six field evangelists in the group will help meet the board's priority overseas personnel need.

The reappointees have an average of 12 years overseas experience, with one couple, Harold and Alice Hurst, of Missouri and Florida, being 25-year mission veterans. The Hursts, who worked 22 years in Honduras and three years in Panama, will do general evangelism work in Mexico.

Since 1977 Hurst has been on the board's staff, first as an assistant to the medical consultant and later as consultant for resource development.

Like most others in the reappointment group, the Hursts already are fluent in the language, understand the culture and can arrive on the field ready to start work almost immediately.

Others reappointed are Walter and Billie Allen of Texas, for Uganda; Harry and Donna Harper of Ohio, Columbia; Rue and Gwen Scott of Oklahoma, Malawi; Bobby Adams of Oklahoma, Argentina; and Gene and Janice Smith of Texas, Sierra Leone. Lester and Fonda Boyd of North Carolina and West Virginia were re-employed as missionary associates for Surinam.

Reappointees, while still only a small percent of the total mission force, have been increasing in recent years as the board has sought to improve communication with those who for a variety of reasons have had to resign and return to the United States. Twenty-four persons were reappointed in 1983 and a similar number in 1982.

Last year the board lost slightly more than three percent of its missionaries through death or resignation, its lowest loss rate since 1966. But medical consultant Franklin Fowler said it is too early to say whether the lower rate is a trend. In 1982 losses had reached a high of 5.4 percent.

More than 40 percent of those who resigned last year had been on the field less than five years. To help minister to such persons' needs, the board now is doing on-the-field evaluations and also plans to hold debriefing sessions for returning first-term missionaries at the new Cauthen Missionary Learning Center near Richmond.

During the meeting the board played host to a representative of Soviet Baptists and also voted to establish work on the Indian Ocean islands of Madagascar and Reunion.

Michael Zhidkov, director of education for the Evangelical Christian Union and one of the pastors of Moscow Baptist Church, was part of a four-man Soviet Baptist delegation which has visited Southern Baptist institutions in recent weeks. Accompanied by John David Hopper, Southern Baptist fraternal representative to eastern Europe, Zhidkov met with board members and staff and spoke briefly at the board meeting.

Noting Soviet Baptists are observing the centennial of an established Baptist union in their country, he said that many Soviet people are showing responsiveness to the gospel today. More than 10,000 were baptized last year, he reported.

New churches are being built and congregations started, Zhidkov said. "We are looking forward that hundreds and hundreds of thousands of our people will find Christ as a personal savior," he said.

The board's action on Madagascar and Reunion is only the first step toward starting work on these islands. Madagascar, the world's fourth largest island, lies off the east coast of Africa and already has a Baptist convention with which Southern Baptists hope to work. Reunion, an overseas department of France, is a small island east of Madagascar. It is near Mauritius, where Southern Baptists already have missionaries.

Until personnel are assigned, neither island will be added to the list of 103 countries and territories where Southern Baptists have missionaries.

During April the board provided \$5,000 for relief of cyclone victims on Madagascar. The funds will be administered by missionary Norman Wood on Mauritius.

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Sisk Urges President Reagan
To Listen To Nicaraguan Baptists

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—A Christian Life Commission staff member has appealed to President Reagan to "consider the humble plea" of Nicaraguan Baptist leaders for changes in U.S. policy toward that country.

Ronald D. Sisk, who coordinates the Southern Baptist Convention's agency program of peace with justice, wrote President Reagan in response to the Nicaraguan's recent "pastoral letter" to Baptists around the world.

The letter, signed by Baptist Convention of Nicaragua President Gonzalo Mairena, Executive Secretary Tomas Tellez and Secretary Javier Talavera, criticized U.S. support of rebels fighting the Nicaraguan government.

"It is urgent that we make an all-out effort, now while there is still time, to stop the plans for war and destruction designed against us. We need your help to achieve peace," the leaders wrote to fellow Baptists.

Sisk, writing "as one American Christian," urged Reagan to respond to the pleas "for negotiations rather than armed intervention" in Nicaragua. Reagan administration officials have acknowledged the use of "covert" CIA support for anti-government rebels in Nicaragua, maintaining that such efforts will pressure the Nicaraguan government to halt arms shipments to rebels in El Salvador.

Although the appeal of the Nicaraguan Baptist leaders "is couched in the language of faith," Sisk noted, that their concerns raise "legitimate questions" about U.S. policy.

"In the midst of many voices of counsel about a complex and sensitive political situation in Nicaragua," he added, "my prayer is that you will give serious consideration to the opinions of these Christian brothers and sisters who are intimately acquainted with the hopes and fears of the Nicaraguan people."

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Baptist Agency To Join
Vatican Ambassador Suit

By Larry Chesser

Baptist Press
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WASHINGTON (BP)—The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs announced May 23 it will join a suit challenging the constitutionality of the Reagan administration's establishment of diplomatic ties with the Vatican.

"If we are to be faithful to our 40-year history, we have no option but to join in a suit which seeks to halt President Reagan's appointment of an ambassador to the Roman Catholic Church," Baptist Joint Committee General Counsel John W. Baker said announcing the Washington-D.C.-based agency's intention.

Meanwhile, the Vatican's official representative to the U.S. has disagreed with persistent claims by administration and congressional supporters of the move that the new diplomatic ties would be with Vatican City rather than with the Roman Catholic Church.

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In a speech at Catholic University of America, Apostolic Pro-Nuncio Pio Laghi contradicted arguments repeatedly made by State Department officials and congressional backers to answer charges that the reversal of long-standing U.S. policy violated the First Amendment's ban on an establishment of religion.

"Some mistakenly tried to justify the American government's action by implying that it was entering into a diplomatic relationship not with the Roman Catholic Church as such, the Holy See, but rather with the sovereign Vatican City-State," Laghi said.

Citing a Roman Catholic authority, Laghi asserted papal diplomacy "rests essentially upon the spiritual sovereignty of the Holy See and not upon dominion over a few acres in the heart of Rome."

It is the Pope's "religious authority," Laghi concluded, which gives him diplomatic standing in the world.

"Those who interpret Papal Diplomacy as emanating from the Pope's temporal sovereignty are failing to understand the true nature of the mission of the Holy See."

BJCPA Executive Director James M. Dunn said Laghi's remarks support the contention by Baptists and other religious groups that the administration's action violated the Constitution, despite claims to the contrary.

"The political push for an ambassador with the Roman Catholic Church was riddled with contradictions and misrepresentations," Dunn said.

"For instance, in February, Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth W. Dam insisted that 'we are not establishing relations with the Catholic Church,' while now, Archbishop Laghi rightly acknowledges that it is the 'Roman Catholic Church as such' with whom we have exchanged ambassadors."

Dunn called Laghi's comments "further evidence of the unequal yoking of church and state which we strongly oppose."

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