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EDITOR'S NOTE: This story is based on interviews with black Baptists who live in South Africa's riot-torn black townships. Names have been changed or omitted or interviews combined to protect individuals.

Apartheid Protest Breeds
Intolerance In Reverse

By Robert O'Brien

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (BP)--Quietly huddled in their small house, Nehemiah and his family listened in the darkness as radical blacks, angry over South Africa's apartheid system, vented their hostilities on them.

"We will burn! We will burn!" they chanted defiantly outside the home as the stench of broken sewers and uncollected garbage mingled with their bitter rage in the black township on the city's outskirts.

Nehemiah's family lived out a scene which repeats itself from seething ethnic township to seething ethnic township in South Africa. As riots rage and heavily armed South African police and military enter the fray, public services and orderly life have broken down in the townships, while in cities such as Johannesburg life goes on pretty much as usual.

Tolerance over individual choice of how to combat apartheid also has taken a beating, according to black Baptist leaders in several affected townships. Black radicals, committed to violent protest, believe anyone who isn't for their methods is against them and often persecute those who don't cooperate. Christians and others who protest apartheid non-violently draw the wrath of other blacks bent on violent destruction of apartheid or just plain violence.

"Black Christians are scared," explained one black Baptist. "We don't know where to stand as Christians because Christians take widely different views of how church should confront state and how to interpret the Bible." Said Nehemiah, a black Baptist pastor who refused to discontinue services or allow use of church property for political rallies: "We live in a hell-on-earth situation which doesn't permit neutrality of different methods."

"Refusal brings threats to burn your home, destroy your church, kill you," Nehemiah said. "That forces many blacks to join protests. Agreement with demands violates the law and brings the wrath of police. But we must stand firm, not just because of the law but because we believe the word of God is more powerful than violence and that the way to peace doesn't come through murder and destruction by people of any race."

Nehemiah will never forget the night he and his family faced death, a danger that never really goes away. "I vowed I would die rather than give in to the mob," Nehemiah recalled. "I was convinced we would die that night. But we took our stand, prepared to accept God's will."

Vividly aware of each other's fear, they prayed for protection and then began to sing biblical choruses as the mob's fury grew. Gradually, their fear decreased, and they seemed to move from a hurricane of emotion into a peace that defied explanation. Then hope entered the hurricane's eye. An inner voice seemed to say, "I will protect you." Miraculously, the angry mob dissipated, leaving them alone, at least for awhile.

As calm came, it also eased Nehemiah's memory of another black mob burning a black girl (denounced as a collaborator) to death. No one knew that for sure. Something as simple as buying groceries from a white store or helping families of black policemen whom radicals burned out has brought such denunciations. "Many of our brothers use the situation to destroy people's lives, as one faction fights another," one black Baptist said. "It's taken the place of our cultural practice of witchcraft and public denunciation of witches."

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
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Nehemiah will never forget standing by, helpless and horrified, as the girl died, praying God would spare her. The mob, knocking her down every time she got up, threatened to burn out and kill anyone who tried to help. "By their logic, the radicals think we're weak," Nehemiah said. "They can't understand non-violence because their bitterness runs deep. They've waited so long for justice I can understand why talk of peace angers them."

Nehemiah and others understand the pain brought on by apartheid and don't feel they have the only valid approach to protest. They're thankful the Baptist Union of Southern Africa strongly urged the government to abolish apartheid and give equal rights and representation to all races. "We also hate apartheid," one said. "Even though we disagree with our brothers' methods, we love them and hope others will have patience as they deal with their grief."

Black Baptist observers say many other factors besides anger at apartheid are at work; that it's more than just a civil rights movement and defies the world's simplistic solutions.

For example, longtime observers say many protesters have become part of a Communist effort to use anti-apartheid sentiment to overthrow South Africa. Some minimize that threat, but observers see in South Africa the same earmarks--methods, slogans, arms--present when such neighbors as Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia fell to Marxist revolution.

Also, disinvestment campaigns abroad, designed to force an end to apartheid, involve an emotional issue which creates debate. The observers say disinvestment has succeeded in pressuring South Africa but also has damaged companies to the point they have laid off blacks. They say if it lasts too long it will have a severe impact on all racial groups in South Africa and the region's black countries. Those countries, economically dependent on South Africa, largely continue to trade with it while others disinvest.

Another factor involves tribalism and political fragmentation into language and tribal groups. A good bit of the killing in South Africa boils down to black killing black in tribal-political strife, a phenomenon of black African culture reminiscent of American Indian tribal warfare. Many don't believe it, and some blacks deny it, but it's a fact as dehumanizing as any other prejudice. Blacks kill each other by the thousands in black-run regimes of neighboring countries for tribal-political reasons--a form of genocide the world doesn't understand.

These factors and many other complexities cause many observers, including many blacks, to emphasize the need for a viable mix of the expertise and balancing influences of various races in which one doesn't dominate the other. They've seen the disintegration in other African countries which ignored that mix after revolution and doubt that fragmented black factions could drop differences and form a cooperative coalition if they alone ruled the country.

In fact, many blacks harbor so much anger they want apartheid in reverse and rule by blacks at the expense of millions of whites, Indians (Asians) and "coloreds" (persons of mixed race) in South Africa. Black Baptist leaders and others say that mustn't happen because the whole economic and political stability of southern Africa's countries depends on a strong South Africa, which shores up the entire region's economy.

The black leaders don't believe facing up to unpleasant or unpopular truths should be used either to stereotype them as "black on the outside but white on the inside" ("Uncle Toms" or "Oreos") or to excuse white brutality or apartheid. "Apartheid has dehumanized all races, including whites," one black leader said. "Our country has reaped violence by creating barriers. It helped create the latest violence last year when 'coloreds' and Indians were given a minor voice in government--but not blacks." "Coloreds" and Indians, on the other hand, protest their minor role and represent another complex factor in the whole complex situation.

Baptists across the racial spectrum say they detest the thinking of many white Afrikaaners who put apartheid and its 361 laws on the books beginning in 1948. But they understand Afrikaaners' fear of extermination by surrounding black states. "They're a minority which has lived in South Africa longer than whites have in America," one black Baptist said. "It was a different situation when America's majority whites granted civil rights to minority blacks."

Black Baptist leaders say they pray other blacks will learn by their own treatment not to seek revenge but to work for justice for all races. They also hope the world will try to understand their dilemma and avoid simplistic solutions for a complex situation.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is based on interviews with Baptists in South Africa. South Africans' names have been changed or omitted to protect individuals.

MasterLife Turns Despair
Into Hope In South Africa

By Robert O'Brien

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (BP)—Black Baptists who tread the line between life and death each day in South Africa's seething townships say what they've learned through the MasterLife discipleship training plan has turned despair into hope.

"If principles of MasterLife would saturate South Africa, we would have revival rather than revolution," said a black Baptist pastor in a riot-torn township.

MasterLife, a Southern Baptist program designed to bring people closer to Christian principles of living and relating to God, has spread among pastors and laymen in the multiracial Baptist Union of Southern Africa and the black Baptist Convention of Southern Africa.

"I would have left the ministry if I hadn't had MasterLife," said Nehemiah, a veteran of 14 years as a pastor. "I wasn't enjoying my ministry any more, and I had lost hope for the future. All my previous training was impractical for the situation we face here."

Nehemiah lives daily in an environment where black activists threaten the homes and lives of those who don't follow their approach to protesting apartheid, especially Christians who choose the non-violent approach. They also face tensions of the normal dangers of living where riots take lives and destroy property.

Believing in non-violent protest, Nehemiah recently drew the wrath of black activists when he refused to discontinue services or allow use of church property for political rallies. His church members, who had taken MasterLife training, backed him and continued to attend, despite threats of death and burning of homes and church.

"Before they grew spiritually through MasterLife," Nehemiah said, "their fear would have overruled. But they were spiritually prepared to stand up for their principles. So far, prayer has kept our lives safe and our church from burning."

Most South African blacks reject Christianity because they think it's a white man's religion and because many whites have distorted it to support the apartheid system of racial separation, according to black Baptist leaders. That means, they say, that residents of black townships are largely anti-Christian. Even many black Baptist church members don't have a close relationship to Jesus Christ.

They say MasterLife, which more than 1,000 South African Baptists of all races have taken in the past three years, will become a key to personal and church growth and reconciliation between the races. Already, according to Nehemiah and Southern Baptist missionary Carroll Shaw, it has begun to attract interest outside Baptist circles.

"MasterLife is revolutionary because it puts people in communication with God. Blacks in the townships don't have that," said Nehemiah, who has progressed through the MasterLife I and II, Survival Kit and Master Builder sections of the discipleship plan. "It brings people close together and makes a church come alive.

"I'm making our church a training church, using MasterLife and other materials, so people won't grow cold and open to satanic attack in this violent situation," he added. "And I'm using it to help other blacks cope with life. Life would be unhappy here without being close to God."

Shaw, MasterLife coordinator for eastern and southern Africa, says MasterLife and its accompanying Survival Kit will be translated from English into at least six other languages of the Southern Africa region next year if budget is available. Eventually, Southern Baptist missionaries throughout Africa hope to translate it into 26 languages.

"If I had only one week to live, I would now use that time to provide discipleship training to someone else to pass on what I've learned through MasterLife," Nehemiah said. "Before, I wouldn't have said that. MasterLife made that change. It's gold to me."

Hendricks Says Trends
Create Schizophrenia

By Jim Newton

ATLANTA (BP)--Opposing trends in religion and society are creating a kind of schizophrenia among conservative Christians living in a modern world, seminary professor William Hendricks told staff members of the SBC Home Mission Board.

The split-personality problem comes when Christians work and live in a scientific, technological society which stresses that truth is constantly being revealed, with new discoveries yet to come in the future, said Hendricks, professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

Yet when these same Christians go to church, they are told that religious truth revealed in God and Jesus Christ is best discovered in the past through the Bible, he added.

While the rest of society is looking to the future, Christians are looking to the past, and the tension caused by these conflicts is pulling some Christians apart, Hendricks said.

When a person is facing the trauma of a disease like cancer or AIDS, he or she goes to a doctor wanting to know what latest scientific discovery might help, Hendricks observed. But when the same person faces a moral or spiritual problem, he or she goes to church looking to some word from the past to provide guidance and security, he added.

"Nostalgia has become big business, and the pastor who can interpret the past with real authority is in good stead," Hendricks said. The pastor who does the best job of interpreting the past revelation through the Bible with authority often provides a sense of security for persons who are afraid of the future, he explained.

During an all-day seminar on trends in theology and missions for Home Mission Board staff members, Hendricks traced various periods of theology through history.

"Before 1800, western tradition said truth was in the past to be interpreted," Hendricks said. "But after 1800, western tradition shifted to the concept that truth was to be discovered in the future through science."

During his four-hour lecture series to HMB staff members, Hendricks also summarized trends in theology today, what is new in biblical and theological studies, and the development of specialized theologies in recent years.

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Canada Seminary Seeks Leader;
Foreign Board To Help Buy Land

Baptist Press
11/7/85

CALGARY, Canada (BP)--The trustees of a new seminary for Canadian Southern Baptists are seeking a president for their institution while taking other steps toward opening the school.

A contract has been signed to buy about 150 acres near Calgary for the seminary campus, with major funding of \$130,000 coming from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. Site preparation is scheduled to begin next year and building construction in 1987.

Initial operating funds for the seminary will come from student tuition and fees, Canadian Southern Baptist denominational gifts, contributions from the Foreign Mission Board and a fund-raising campaign among supporters of Canadian Southern Baptist work.

The Canadian Convention of Southern Baptists voted in May to establish a seminary, with classes scheduled to begin in the fall of 1987. Plans for the seminary have been progressing on schedule, according to trustee committee reports, but final plans await the election of a president.

The trustees hope to elect a president before the Canadian convention meets next spring in Victoria, British Columbia.

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The trustees also have adopted a statement of philosophy, which reads in part: "This institution shall be committed to achieving excellence in education, while maintaining a proper balance of zeal with knowledge, prayer with action and dependency on God with the development of skills. To accomplish these objectives it is necessary that our seminary personnel be absolutely committed to the authority of God's word in faith and practice and by their example and exhortation should lead students to like commitment."

The statement pledges seminary leaders and students to active involvement in the "ministry and mission of local churches and expressing Christ in every relationship of life and ministry."

The 80 Southern Baptist congregations in western Canada see the new seminary as an important step in the evangelization of the nation, according to Southern Baptist representative James Teel, a member of the search committee. "The desire of the trustees...and the Southern Baptist people in Canada is that the seminary be a place where students study the Bible and learn to start churches, to reach out to people where they hurt and to have a burning desire to share Jesus Christ and know how to do it," he said.

Teel and his wife, Georgie, formerly were Southern Baptist missionaries in the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Argentina. They moved to Canada last year after the Foreign Mission Board assigned Teel to work with Canadian Baptists.

Messengers to the 1984 Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Kansas City voted to increase assistance to Canadian Southern Baptists. A convention planning committee was created to coordinate the work in Canada of the Southern Baptist Home and Foreign Mission Boards, Sunday School Board and Radio and Television Commission.

Canadian Baptists asked the Foreign Mission Board to devote its principal efforts in Canada to assistance in theological education and student work. A second couple, David and Barbara Wyman, formerly Southern Baptist representatives in Mexico, were assigned this year to work with Canadian Baptist churches in the area of religious education.

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CLARIFICATION—In the Baptist Press story, "Professor Says SBC Calendar Supports Abortion Protests," mailed 11/6/85 includes, in the 18th paragraph, the claim is made that "what the commission is planning to do largely consists of wider distribution of the materials they already have produced ...that present abortion as a difficult moral choice..."

That is not correct, according a Christian Life Commission spokesman who said, "existing materials will be expanded significantly during the next year. New resources already in production include a 'Sanctity of Human Life' bulletin insert, artwork and resource flier, two pamphlets, a guest editorial for Baptist state papers and a series of articles in LIGHT, the agency's publication on Christian ethics. The CLC staff also will meet with state Christian Life Commission organizations to plan cooperative efforts on education and action related to abortion."

Thanks, Baptist Press

Wideman Elected Head
Of New England Baptists

Baptist Press
11/7/85

PORTSMOUTH, N.H. (BP)—James E. Wideman, pastor of Screven Baptist Church in Portsmouth, N.H., the first Southern Baptist church in New England and the host church for the annual meeting of the Baptist Convention of New England, was elected convention president.

Jack Schneider, pastor of Fellowship Baptist Church, Columbia, Conn., was elected first vice-president and David Waugh, pastor of Woodstock Baptist Church in Woodstock, Vt., was chosen second vice-president.

The non-controversial convention attracted 231 messengers and visitors from the six states which make up the convention. Resolutions included support and prayer for the Southern Baptist Peace Committee and support for Good News America, a Southern Baptist plan for simultaneous revivals across the United States during 1986.

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A budget of \$1,659,266 was approved for the coming year with \$402,000 expected to be contributed by local churches affiliated with the Baptist Convention of New England. The bulk of the remaining money will come from the Home Mission Board and the Sunday School Board.

The convention will send 20 percent of its undesignated receipts to the worldwide mission and education programs of the Southern Baptist Convention through the Cooperative Program, the same percentage as last year's budget.

The next meeting of the Baptist Convention of New England will be Nov. 7-8, 1986, at Pleasant Valley Baptist Church in Groton, Conn.

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Blind Ministerial Student
Has His Day At High Court

By Stan Hastey

Baptist Press
11/7/85

WASHINGTON (BP)—A blind man seeking state and federal vocational rehabilitation funds to further his studies for the ministry had his day before the U.S. Supreme Court Nov. 6, arguing through his attorney that the state of Washington's denial of assistance violated his free exercise of religion.

The state, on the other hand, presented arguments that granting the aid would do violence to the First Amendment's ban on an establishment of religion.

Larry Witters, a student at the nondenominational Inland Empire School of the Bible, in Seattle, lost an earlier appeal to the Washington Supreme Court, which ruled last year granting the funds would have the primary effect of advancing religion.

Witters first was denied the assistance when the state Commission for the Blind adopted a policy against aid to divinity students based on Washington state's strict constitutional prohibition on appropriating public funds for sectarian use. Washington's constitution, the commission ruled then, "forbids the use of public funds to assist an individual in the pursuit of a career or degree in theology or related areas."

The state policy subsequently was upheld by an administrative review panel, a Spokane County superior court judge and the state supreme court.

Arguing Witters' case at the nation's high court, attorney Michael P. Farris told the justices the state had offered "no justification to single out ministerial students for exclusion" from the vocational rehabilitation assistance. Ministerial students, he added, "do not have to be quarantined" by the state in an effort to avoid establishing religion.

Throughout his half-hour presentation, Farris—lead attorney for Beverly LeHaye's Concerned Women for America Education and Legal Defense Foundation—made the argument that providing state assistance to his client would not differ from longstanding congressional approval of GI educational benefits to students in sectarian colleges and seminaries.

Calling the GI bill a "perfect analogy" to Witters' situation, he said, "It is our position today this case is constitutionally indistinguishable" from the GI program. He argued further, "All blind students, including blind ministerial students, must be treated equally."

Arguing the case for the state, Washington Assistant Attorney General Timothy R. Malone repeatedly cited provisions in the state constitution stricter than the U.S. Constitution's language against an establishment of religion. The state's policy denying funds to ministerial students is "embodied in the state constitution," he contended.

"Mr. Witters wants the state to buy for him a ministerial education," Malone declared.

He added if the state funds were made available to ministerial students, officials of state agencies administering them would necessarily become excessively entangled with religion, including career counseling. Referring to federal and state regulations that follow public funds, Malone concluded: "There is no way to get out of this swamp."

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Several friend-of-the-court briefs have been submitted in the case, some on Witters' side, others in opposition to the state aid. Among these is Americans United for Separation of Church and State, whose attorney argued that the Washington Supreme Court decision upholding denial of the assistance is proper.

On the other side, the evangelical Christian Legal Society has written that denying Witters the assistance is a simple denial of the free exercise of religion.

Two national Jewish organizations have filed on opposite sides. While the American Jewish Committee supports Witters' claims, B'nai B'rith opposes them.

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Northern Plains Baptists
Give Vice-Presidents Power

Baptist Press
11/7/85

BILLINGS, Mont. (BP)—The Northern Plains Baptist Convention approved constitutional changes at its annual meeting in October which added responsibilities to the elected offices of first and second vice-president.

The first vice-president is now a member of the program committee and is chairman of the committee on committees and the second vice-president is chairman of the nominating committee.

Elected to head the three-state (North Dakota, South Dakota and Montana) convention were: Skip Gordon Dean, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Rapid City, S.D., president; Grady Cockerhan, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Great Falls, Mont., first vice-president; and James Eller, pastor of Buelah Baptist Church, Buelah, N.D., second vice-president.

The convention, which attracted 184 voting messengers and visitors, adopted a budget for the coming year of \$1,088,931. Churches affiliated with the Northern Plains Baptist Convention are expected to contribute \$336,659 of that amount with the majority of the rest of the income coming from the Home Mission Board and the Sunday School Board.

The convention will send 13.5 percent of all undesignated receipts to the worldwide mission and educational programs of the Southern Baptist Convention through the Cooperative Program. That is an increase of one-half percent over the current budget.

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Missouri Baptists
Approve Reorganization

By Bob S. Terry

Baptist Press
11/7/85

ST. LOUIS (BP)—Approval of a new organizational structure for the executive board staff and a statewide kickoff for Good News America highlighted the annual meeting of the Missouri Baptist Convention last month in St. Louis.

Messengers also adopted a \$14.25 million budget and approved resolutions pledging support for the SBC Peace Committee and opposing tuition tax credits for parochial schools.

Widely rumored conflict between conservatives and moderates never materialized during the three-day meeting. Instead, the messengers elected a new president from among three candidates on the first ballot and approved 30 of 31 recommendations of its strategic planning committee, including the restructuring of the executive board staff.

The new organization combines departments from several other staff areas to recreate a church services division which includes cooperative program and stewardship promotion, church administration, church minister relations, and annuity and insurance.

The office of evangelism, previously under the state executive director, was placed in the renamed missions/evangelism division. Also the departments of Christian moral concerns and family ministries were eliminated and their work assigned to the church training department.

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The only recommendation turned down by the 1,674 registered messengers was the creation of a executive board position to coordinate the work of the convention's seven related institutions--four colleges, a children's home, a hospital and a home for senior adults. The position was opposed by six of the seven agencies.

The only confrontation came when pro-life advocates challenged the state nomination's committee recommendation of one new member to the state's Christian Life Commission, but that challenge was easily defeated.

The Christian Life Commission had been a target of pre-convention controversy because of study papers about abortion prepared for distribution at the annual meeting. However, commission members decided not to distribute their materials until all the study papers had been completed. The 1986 convention is the new projected date of distribution. The convention did instruct its Christian Life Commission to prepare material which oppose abortion.

Elected president of the Missouri Baptist Convention was Wally Jones, pastor of Fee Fee Baptist Church in St. Louis, since 1959. Jones currently is a member of the SBC Executive Committee and is a trustee of William Jewell College in Liberty. He was chairman of the local arrangements committee for the St. Louis convention and has held numerous leadership posts among Missouri Baptists.

The record \$14.25 million budget is a one percent increase over the 1985 budget goal. A spokesman for the convention said the minimal increase was an attempt to bring budget goals back in line with the giving patterns of Missouri Baptists.

The percentage of funds going to the budget's three major areas--executive board administered programs, state institutions, and Southern Baptists causes--were each reduced less than one quarter of one percent in order to finance the state's Planned Growth in Giving Emphasis for the coming year. Southern Baptist causes will receive 34.75 percent in 1986, down from 35 percent.

Messengers also opposed patronizing businesses which sell pornographic materials.

Climaxing the three-day convention was a statewide Good News America rally. The event drew the largest crowd of the three days, about 2,000 people, and featured the national premiere of the evangelistic media spots prepared for use on television and radio as part of Southern Baptist's nationwide evangelistic campaign scheduled for next spring.

The next meeting of the convention will be Oct. 27-29, 1986, in Kansas City.

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Controversial Bylaw
Revision Is Proposed

By Dan Martin

Baptist Press
11/7/85

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--A proposal to revise a controversial Southern Baptist Convention bylaw will be recommended when the SBC Executive Committee meets Feb. 17-19, 1986.

Bylaw 16 concerns nominations of persons to serve on the SBC Committee on Boards, Commissions and Standing Committees. The committee on boards nominates persons to serve as trustees of the 20 national agencies of the SBC, and has been at the center of the seven-year controversy in the denomination between conservatives and moderates.

The controversy has swirled around the convention presidency. The president appoints the committee on committees, which in turn nominates the committee on boards.

During the 1985 annual meeting, Parliamentarian Wayne Allen, pastor of Briarcrest Baptist Church of Memphis, Tenn., ruled the bylaw says nominations to the committee on boards can come only from the committee on committees, thus eliminating an effort from the floor to nominate an alternate slate for the committee on boards.

Bylaw 16, section 1, says only that the "Committee on Boards...shall be nominated to the convention by the committee on committees," and does not speak to nominations from the floor.

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Following Allen's recommendation, SBC President Charles F. Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta, ruled out of order attempts to amend the committee on committees' report, setting off near pandemonium at the convention.

In the aftermath of the convention, a Birmingham, Ala., layman and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Robert S. Crowder, retained an attorney and announced the possibility they will file suit in civil court because they claim their rights as messengers were violated by the ruling.

The Crowder's attorney, Emmit J. Bondurant of Atlanta, made a 10-minute presentation to the Executive Committee during its September 1985 meeting, claiming the 1986 committee on boards was illegally elected and requesting the Executive Committee to "take prompt and effective action...to remedy the violations...and to assure similar violations of the bylaws are not repeated in the future."

The Executive Committee, however, after a closed door meeting, voted to "affirm" the actions of the convention. The committee, however, left open the possibility of review and revision of the bylaws, particularly Bylaw 16, "for clarity...."

The six-member bylaws workgroup of the SBC Executive Committee conducted two telephone conference calls on the bylaw--Oct. 30 and Nov. 4--during which a revision was adopted. The proposal will be made to the full Executive Committee when it meets in February.

John Sullivan, chairman of the bylaws workgroup, said: "When we left the Executive Committee in September, we said we would work on Bylaw 16. We have been giving it consideration, and decided we would get together and see where we needed to make progress."

Sullivan, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church of Shreveport, La., said the workgroup will recommend the revision--"unless we feel we should make some other change"--to the Executive Committee for action in February, and, if adopted, to the 1986 meeting of the SBC in Atlanta.

The revision, unless it is changed before presentation to the Executive Committee, will retain the provision the committee on committees will nominate a layperson and a denominationally-related person from each of the conventions qualifying for representation. It will add two sentences which will allow nominations from the floor, but will prevent the presentation of alternate slates of nominees.

The additional two sentences say: "Further nominations may be made from the floor. No messenger shall be allowed to nominate more than one person for election to the committee on boards...."

Sullivan said the workgroup was "unanimous" in supporting the revision. Only one member--John Bunn of Sylva, N.C.--was unable to participate.

Sullivan said those participating in the conference calls included David Maddox of Fullerton, Calif., Executive Committee chairman; Darrell Robinson of Mobile, Ala., chairman of the administrative and convention arrangements subcommittee of the Executive Committee, both of whom are ex-officio members of the bylaws workgroup.

Others were James P. Guenther, convention attorney, and workgroup members Francis L. Wilson of Alamogordo, N.M.; Frank Lady of Jonesboro, Ark.; Paul Pressler of Houston and James Yates of Yazoo City, Miss.

Guenther told Baptist Press he "hopes that the bylaw amendment will be introduced to the convention early so that the convention can react to it before this year's committee on committees makes its report. That would give the chair the opportunity of having the benefit of the convention's will on whether to allow nominations from the floor."

Guenther added a bylaw amendment requires a two-thirds majority vote for adoption.

Pressler said the bylaw is "ambiguous and ambiguity needs to be resolved. I think it is in everyone's best interest the bylaw be made clear." The Houston appellate court judge pointed out the "preamble" to the revision--a background statement provided to explain the rationale for such Executive Committee recommendations--is essential to the acceptance of the action.

The background statement comments that during the 1985 annual meeting "it became apparent that the bylaws...could be and were being reasonably interpreted by responsible persons in different ways as to whether the report of the committee on committees could be amended from the floor...."

Pressler said "the background statement is essential...that reasonable interpretations were made by responsible people."

He noted the suggestion to limit the nominations from the floor to one per messenger "was not my idea but I, as well as everyone on the workgroup, unanimously agreed to it."

Sullivan added he, too, supported the recommendation to prohibit nomination of entire slates of alternative candidates: "I just do not think somebody from Virginia knows who ought to be nominated from Louisiana, and that is what happens when slates are allowed."

Stanley was asked to comment on the action. He said:

"The matter is being studied by the Executive Committee. For me to say anything at the present time would be inappropriate. We need to await their decision and give that serious consideration. Whatever the convention votes to do about the Executive Committee recommendation, that is just what we will do.

"I will be delighted to have any guidelines the Executive Committee and the convention wishes to give me. That is the right way, the Christlike way to handle business.

"With the convention having finally agreed to a peace committee and having agreed that they could do their work and all of us try to do the best we can until they can bring a report, I believe everyone should be diligent to keep the peace and harmony while they work.

"It would be tragic for our convention to be embroiled in a lawsuit. Mr. Crowder's action is a direct violation of the Scripture according to I Cor. 6:1-8. I believe it could also have a devastating effect upon our national image as a denomination as we enter into our evangelistic crusades: Good News America, God Loves You."

Crowder, contacted by Baptist Press for his reaction, declined to comment.

Lynn May
Hist. Comm.