



**BAPTIST PRESS**  
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

**NATIONAL OFFICE**  
SBC Executive Committee  
901 Commerce #750  
Nashville, Tennessee 37203  
(615) 244-2355  
Wilmer C. Fields, Director  
Dan Martin, News Editor  
Craig Bird, Feature Editor

**BUREAUS**

**ATLANTA** Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W. Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041  
**DALLAS** Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201-3355, Telephone (214) 720-0550  
**NASHVILLE** (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300  
**RICHMOND** (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151  
**WASHINGTON** Stan L. Haste, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

January 24, 1986

86-8

State Court Suit  
Filed Against SBC

By Dan Martin

ATLANTA (BP)---A lawsuit has been filed in Superior Court of Fulton County, Ga., against the Southern Baptist Convention and its Executive Committee by five Southern Baptist laypersons from five states.

The suit, filed Jan. 23 by the Atlanta lawfirm of Bondurant, Mixson and Elmore on behalf of plaintiffs from Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, Kentucky and Texas, is identical to one filed Dec. 5 in Federal District Court for the Northern District of Georgia by Robert S. and Julia Crowder of Birmingham, Ala., and Henry C. Cooper of Windsor, Mo.

Attorney Jane Vehko told Baptist Press the new suit "is a parallel action in state court. Both suits seek exactly the same relief."

Bondurant, Mixson and Elmore represent the Crowders and Cooper in the federal suit as well as the plaintiffs in the new suit in Fulton County Superior Court.

Both suits center on the election of the SBC Committee on Boards, Commissions and Standing Committees at the 1985 annual meeting of the SBC in Dallas. Both seek to have that election declared invalid, to have the courts interpret convention bylaws and to "enjoin the defendants from further violations" of the bylaws.

Plaintiffs in the new suit are Katherine F. White, of Atlanta, a member of Second Ponce de Leon Baptist Church; Lucy Azlin, of Alexandria, La., a member of Emmanuel Baptist Church; Betty Ann L. Upshaw of Winston-Salem, N.C., a member of Knollwood Baptist Church; Terry Black of Louisville, Ky., a member of Buechel Park Baptist Church, and Jim B. Black of Lewisville, Texas, a member of First Baptist Church.

All five were messengers to the 1985 annual meeting of the SBC.

Vehko said: "The defendants (the SBC and Executive Committee) have announced their intention to try to have the federal suit dismissed, contending the federal court does not have jurisdiction. While we definitely feel the federal court does have jurisdiction, we have taken the precaution of filing suit in state court here.

"We have taken this action because of the importance of this matter and also because we are trying to have it heard before the June meeting (the 1986 annual meeting of the SBC, scheduled June 10-12 in Atlanta)."

The SBC is to file its answer to the federal lawsuit in Atlanta Monday (Jan. 27). Representing the SBC are James P. Guenther of Guenther and Jordan, Nashville, Tenn., and former U.S. Attorney General Griffin Bell of King and Spalding, Atlanta.

"We will seek to have the case dismissed on the basis the First Amendment to the Constitution prevents the court from addressing this case," Guenther said. "Also, in the federal courts, the plaintiffs must show that they have suffered \$10,000 in damages, and we do not believe they can do this."

In the Georgia suit, the plaintiffs allege their action "involves civil rights and property rights. As duly certified and registered messengers...and as members of Baptist churches cooperating with the convention, each of the plaintiffs has an interest in ensuring that the business of the convention is conducted in accordance with the mutually agreed upon rules and procedures set forth in the convention's constitution and bylaws...."  
---more---

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL  
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES  
Historical Commission, SBC  
Nashville, Tennessee

It goes on to claim the "defendants have violated the rights of plaintiffs as messengers to the convention and as members of Baptist churches cooperating with the convention by failing to observe the convention's bylaws...."

Both suits spring from actions at the SBC June 12, during which the Committee on Committees nominated the 52-member Committee on Boards, Commissions and Standing Committees.

An effort was made by James H. Slatton, pastor of River Road Baptist Church of Richmond, Va., to introduce a substitute slate of nominees. SBC President Charles F. Stanley of Atlanta, ruled the report could not be amended by an alternate slate, but only one-by-one.

Messengers rejected Stanley's interpretation, but before action could be taken, the meeting adjourned. However, during the evening session, Stanley, on the advice of parliamentarian Wayne Allen of Memphis, Tenn., ruled the report could not be amended at all. He then called for a vote and messengers by ballot vote elected the slate of nominees presented by the Committee on Committees.

The Georgia lawsuit maintains Stanley's "erroneous" rulings "violated the integrity of the bylaws...were in excess of his authority as the presiding officer at the Dallas convention and deprived the plaintiffs and other messengers...of the protection of fair and unbiased procedures which is guaranteed by the bylaws of the Southern Baptist Convention."

It also claims the report of the Committee on Committees "was not lawfully adopted" and therefore members of the 1986 Committee on Boards "are without authority to serve."

The suit also maintains the "plaintiffs have exhausted all available remedies" within the SBC, and that "no other entity or tribunal within the Southern Baptist Convention...has the authority under the convention's constitution and bylaws to resolve the procedural issues raised by plaintiffs and to provide redress for or correction of the...violations of the convention's bylaws."

The suit claims "there is a substantial likelihood that Dr. Stanley, as the president and presiding officer...and defendants will violate the plaintiffs' rights and those of other messengers...by making similar rulings in violation of the bylaws at future conventions, including the next annual convention which is scheduled to convene in Atlanta, Georgia, within Fulton County, on June 10, 1986."

It adds: "Since the meeting in Dallas, Dr. Stanley has reaffirmed his view that the above erroneous rulings and his interpretation of the convention bylaws. In its September vote of approval the (SBC) Executive Committee evidenced its unwillingness to overturn these rulings."

It says "there is every likelihood that Dr. Stanley and the defendants will violate the rights of the plaintiffs...by continued enforcement of erroneous interpretations of the convention bylaws, thus further depriving the plaintiffs...of their right...to amend the report of the Committee on Committees, their right to vote on all propositions, decisions and choices properly before the convention and their right to ensure that convention funds and assets are managed by properly elected officials."

Plaintiffs Terry and Jim B. Black are brothers and the sons of a retired Baptist minister. Terry Black is an attorney and Jim Black is a manufacturer's representative.

Jim Black, 49, told the Baptist Standard, newsjournal of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, he is "just a member" of First Baptist Church of Lewisville, where he has been a member "14 or 15 years." He stressed he is involved in the lawsuit "strictly as an individual thing" which has "nothing to do" with his church or pastor. He became involved, he said, through talking with other people who attended the convention.

He said the 1985 annual meeting was the first SBC he had ever attended. He told another reporter he was "offended by the parliamentary procedures" of Stanley and entered the lawsuit with a goal of "ensuring that Robert's Rules of Order are followed in Atlanta and that what happened in Dallas doesn't happen again."

Baptist Press attempted to contact the other four plaintiffs but was unable to do so.

Vero Beach Layman Joins  
Federal Suit Against SBC

By Greg Warner

VERO BEACH, Fla. (BP)—A Vero Beach man has joined three other Southern Baptists in a federal lawsuit against the Southern Baptist Convention and its Executive Committee.

H. Allan McCartney, a retired Marine and deacon in First Baptist Church, Vero Beach, has filed a motion in the U.S. District Court in Atlanta to add his name as a plaintiff in a suit filed Dec. 5 by laypersons Robert S. and Julia Crowder of Birmingham, Ala., and Henry C. Cooper, of Windsor, Mo.

McCartney said he contacted Crowder and offered to become a plaintiff. With McCartney's approval, Crowder's attorney, Emmet J. Bondurant, filed the necessary court action, and early in January, McCartney was notified the court had accepted the motion.

"I'm not trying to stir up trouble," McCartney told the Florida Baptist Witness, the newsjournal of the Florida Baptist Convention. "I got involved for the simple reason that slowly I had seen things happen (in the convention) that disturb me.

"My rights were violated in Dallas," he said, referring to the 1985 annual meeting of the 14.4-million member denomination in Dallas.

"I don't care who wins the fight within the denomination," McCartney said, "but I believe there is an obligation to play the game fairly. Unless we challenge (the alleged abuse of power), it becomes a precedent, and then we have no ground rules."

McCartney said one objective of the lawsuit is to ensure that future meetings of the SBC employ "an impartial parliamentarian who knows what he is doing."

Twenty-two churches of Santa Rosa Baptist Association in the Florida panhandle voted Jan. 6 to send a letter to Crowder asking the Alabama layman to withdraw his suit because, they said, it violated scriptural injunctions against taking fellow Christians to court. Crowder said that action was, to his knowledge, the first by a Baptist association.

McCartney said his interpretation of Scripture allowed for such a lawsuit when all of the means of resolving a conflict have been exhausted. "I know earnest and sincere appeals were made to seek recourse," he said. "But it takes two people to waltz," he added, claiming neither Stanley nor others involved in the suit have made any effort to resolve the dispute.

A vote of the SBC Executive Committee to uphold the controversial rulings "tipped the scales," McCartney said, leading Crowder and the others to file their complaint. "There are a lot of things we ought not do, but this is an imperfect world," he said.

"I don't think Christians ought to file suits or stand outside doors (to the SBC convention hall) passing out ballots.

"I'm not fighting Santa Rosa association or Charles Stanley," he said, "I just want to see the improprieties corrected." The issue is not going to be dropped," McCartney said. "If it is dropped in federal court, there are other avenues of appeal."

--30--

Hunger Activists Called  
To Political Involvement

By David Wilkinson

Baptist Press  
1/24/86

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (BP)—Christians who care about the hungry must move beyond charity to political action if their efforts are to have long-term impact, participants at a Southern Baptist conference on hunger were told.

Nancy Amidei and Arthur Simon, experts on hunger and public policy, stressed Christian ministries for the hungry and homeless must be paired with political involvement, particularly at a time when federal aid faces drastic budget cuts.

--more--

Approximately 150 pastors and lay leaders attended the meeting at Charlotte's Providence Baptist Church. The conference was part of a three-day emphasis on hunger and peace with justice sponsored by the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Amidei, former director of the National Food Research and Action Center, and now a commentator on National Public Radio, commended the widespread volunteer involvement in hunger relief projects ranging from soup kitchens and food pantries to shelters for the homeless.

While these programs are necessary, the problem is they respond primarily to emergency needs while failing to address the chronic, long-term causes of poverty and hunger, she said.

"We have been so busy moving canned goods all over town that we don't have any energy left to do something about why people are hungry in the first place," Amidei said. "The truth is that a five-pound block of cheese once a month is no substitute for a job. We have to start thinking in different ways."

Amidei cited results from numerous studies around the country which have provided "voluminous evidence" of rising hunger in America. She pointed out the number of people living in poverty has increased in recent years. In 1984, she said, nearly 34 million people were living below the poverty line of \$8300 per year for a family of three, and another 12 million lived on income only slightly above that line. In the meantime, she added, about \$12 billion in food aid has been eliminated since 1981. "And food aid from the private sector has not picked up the load," she said.

Amidei said the outlook for the poor and hungry has worsened with passage of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act which requires that \$55 billion be trimmed from the 1987 federal budget in the first step toward a balanced budget.

"In this kind of political climate, every person of conscience must find a way to speak up for the hungry, she said. "This year, doing nothing is a political act."

While Simon focused on overseas hunger, particularly in Africa, the founder and director of the Bread for The World citizens' lobby, echoed Amidei's appeal for political advocacy. To help lift Africa out of its famine crisis, "We must begin to build a bridge from emergency aid to sustained development," he said.

Simon identified various contributors to the African crisis: drought, warfare, environmental degradation, population growth, the legacy of colonialism, and "failed policies" within both the African countries themselves and developed nations which have exploited Africa.

In a political atmosphere which "will probably be unfavorable" to increased budget allocations for food aid and development, "citizen action is more important than ever," Simon emphasized. "We must do a better job of influencing public policy decisions."

--30--

Olds, Missionary To  
Students, Dies

Baptist Press  
1/24/86

ATLANTA (BP)--Eddie Olds, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board national consultant for student ministry died of cancer January 23.

Olds, 41, was with the HMB special mission ministries department since 1984. He was earlier in church extension and student ministries for the Iowa Southern Baptist Fellowship.

In his 20-year career with students, the native San Franciscan, also was a summer and a US-2 missionary, campus minister and Baptist Student Union director.

Surviving are his wife, Deborah Carriger Olds, and two children.

--30--

Southwestern Professor  
Among Top Scholars

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--E. Earle Ellis, visiting professor of theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, has been identified as one of five American scholars at the forefront of New Testament studies.

The recognition came in a recent Publishers Weekly article, "The Renaissance of Evangelical Protestantism," written by Leslie Keylock, associate professor at Moody Bible Institute, Chicago.

Keylock surveyed 20 evangelical experts and asked them to name the outstanding scholars in theological and biblical studies. A list of those most-mentioned was compiled from some 540 who were named at least once.

Ellis agrees evangelical scholarship is enjoying a resurgence, attributing it to a return to biblical faith. "It follows a resurgence in evangelical Christianity in general, in evangelism and other areas," he said.

Ellis, who came to Southwestern from New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New Jersey, identified Pauline studies as his area of greatest interest, followed by the gospels, especially Luke.

Ellis has been teaching at Southwestern since September, having spent the past eight years as research professor of New Testament literature at New Brunswick seminary.

"A financial crisis at New Brunswick eliminated my chair and among four offers, I chose Southwestern," Ellis said. "I was given a job proposal which fit my interests and gave me time to continue my writing ministry."

Prior to 1978, he taught at Bethel Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.; Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., and Wheaton College, Wheaton, Ill.

He holds graduate degrees from Wheaton and the University of Edinburgh and has studied at the universities of Tübingen, Göttingen, and Marburg.

**(BP)**

**BAPTIST PRESS**

901 Commerce #750  
Nashville, Tennessee 37203

LYNN MAY                      HO  
- HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
901 COMMERCE  
NASHVILLE, TN 37203

NEWS SERVICE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION