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86-74

Roberts Reports
Office Burglary

By Dan Martin

MARIETTA, Ga. (BP)--The offices of Lee Roberts, chairman of the 1986 Southern Baptist Convention Committee on Boards, Commissions and Standing Committees, reportedly were burglarized during the weekend according to Cobb County (Ga.) Police.

Roberts, president of Roberts Mortgage and Investment Corp., told Baptist Press the only thing disturbed in his offices was his file on the work of the Committee on Boards, which nominates persons to serve on the 24 national entities of the SBC.

"My only conclusion is that somebody wanted to look in that file," Roberts said. "Everything was neat and in order except for that one file. It included all of the background information on the nominees and correspondence with committee members and agency executives."

Roberts added money and checks were on his desk but were not disturbed.

"That file had not been out of the file drawer in my desk for three or four weeks. It was on the corner of my desk and obviously had been gone through," Roberts said.

"I do not want to think the worst, but I have to face the obvious. Obviously, somebody was in my office; obviously, the file was taken out of my desk and gone through. Beyond that, I don't know what kind of conclusion to draw about this," Roberts said.

Roberts said there was no sign of forced entry. He explained he occupies the second floor of a three-story office building and that the ground floor is vacant. An outside ground floor door was unlocked and access to Roberts' office apparently was gained by an interior stairwell.

"The door to the stairwell has a thumb lock on the outside. The lock is on the other side and it is locked on our side. Somebody jammed a core from a roll of paper towels or toilet paper in the door to keep it open so they could get back outside," he said.

Capt. Ed McPherson, head of the Cobb County Police Department's Crimes Against Property Section, said the case is not being actively investigated "because it has no solvability factor. It is in the hold file and if anything else comes up on it, we will look at it."

McPherson said the fact the case is not being investigated "does not mean there wasn't a burglary. This is similar to dozens of cases we receive each day. According to this report, nothing was missing. All I can say is that a burglary was reported to us."

Roberts told Baptist Press the burglary may be part of a series of harassing letters and telephone calls since the Committee on Boards report was released in late April, and since a news report concerning his appearance at a fundamental-conservative rally in Nashville, Tenn.

The report on the rally quoted Roberts making comments about potential candidates for the presidency of the SBC.

The news story said: "At the rally, Roberts said Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., would be there (at the annual meeting of the SBC) as candidate to support 'truth, sound doctrine, what Southern Baptists believe in.' And he said while the other candidate, perhaps Winfred Moore, pastor of First Baptist Church of Amarillo, Texas, may or may not "believe in truth," the important factor to consider is the group of persons to whom the president will turn for advice."

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**SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES**
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Roberts told Baptist Press many of the letters and telephone calls have criticized him for saying Moore does not believe in truth.

"I did not say Winfred Moore does not believe in truth. It is impossible for me to know what somebody believes in, but I did not say he does not believe in truth," Roberts added.

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West Virginia Representative
Says Committee 'Ignored' Duo

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press
5/16/86

PARKERSBURG, W.Va. (BP)—West Virginia's representatives on the Southern Baptist Convention Committee on Boards were ignored when four prospective SBC trustee nominations from the state were overturned by the committee, one of those representatives has charged.

The 54-member Committee on Boards is responsible for nominating trustees to serve the 24 national entities of the denomination. The committee met in mid-March and acted on 230 openings. The first day of the meeting was a "workshop session" in which nominees for the positions were presented by representatives from their states. The second day was reserved for voting on the committee's final nominations.

However, four West Virginia nominees were among persons challenged and replaced in the closing hours of the committee's meetings, and therein lies the problem, said Fred Morgan, committee member from Parkersburg, W.Va.

Morgan and fellow West Virginian Ron Dillon had nominated the four nominees who were challenged, along with nine other nominees who were approved by the committee. Morgan is a member of Fairlawn Baptist Church in Parkersburg. At the time of the meeting, Dillon was pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Parkersburg. He since has accepted a pastorate out of state.

Morgan and Dillon were "ignored completely" prior to the actual challenges, although both were available and prepared to discuss their nominees and possible replacements, he told Jack C. Walls, editor of the West Virginia Southern Baptist, newsjournal of the West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptists.

"There was a total disregard by the committee of the knowledge of Ron Dillon, who has been a leading pastor in West Virginia for 12 years, and my knowledge of West Virginia Baptists in my 18 years as a layman," he added, noting responses of the duo seemed to have no credibility.

That point has been disputed by the committee's chairman, Lee Roberts of Marietta, Ga., who noted the four votes 47-7. "No credibility would be an improper choice of words," Roberts said. "The vote itself makes it obvious that seven individuals wanted Mr. Morgan's nominees to prevail and 47 individuals wanted opponents of his nominees to prevail.

"I personally was on the losing side of a vote, but I don't consider my credibility to have been damaged," he added. "On that particular vote, the majority didn't agree with me, but I am bound to abide by majority rule and have done so."

Asked by Baptist Press if he felt the challenges to the West Virginia nominees were valid, Morgan said: "In my opinion, they were not, definitely. I know two of the individuals very well. One I have known personally for 18 years, and the other for about the same time."

The basis of the four challenges, which he characterized as a "blanket charge" against the West Virginians, was that they "were charged as being pro-abortionists and not believing in the inerrancy of the Scriptures." One person also was challenged concerning his views on the ordination of women, he said.

This assertion is "groundless and without the first drop of merit," Roberts countered. "Inerrancy, pro-life and the ordination of women were not in any way criteria.... All the committee did along these lines was to state openly where it was believed that nominees stood on the issues. From that point forward it was simply a matter of individual members voting their convictions. To try to claim that it was a criteria is a fabrication of the truth, and everyone on the committee knows that.

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"There were several instances where several committee members voted in support of nominees who do not believe in inerrancy, who support pro-choice and believe in ordination of women."

The challenges were made during the second day of the two-day committee meeting, after the nominees had been proposed by the representatives from their states on the first day. "Mr. Roberts challenged those (nominees) himself. They did not come from the floor," Morgan said.

This action came after Roberts informed the committee he had been on the telephone talking to someone about the committee's work until 4 that morning, Morgan added.

Roberts agreed he had been up until the early hours of the morning. He noted the committee did not adjourn until about 11 p.m., that he then had a late meal with Danny Waters, his fellow representative from Georgia, and that he then made a call to verify information concerning a nominee about whom he had prior knowledge. "I made a phone call to follow up to see if what I remembered was true. It was. Then I stayed up to review the proceedings," he explained.

Concerning Morgan's assertion that Roberts made all the challenges and offered all the substitutes, Roberts said: "That is an incorrect position.... I stood before the committee and very precisely and very clearly told them that I was going to fulfill my moral responsibility by advising them of the positions on certain issues that certain nominees had taken.

"I was very clear to tell them I was not suggesting any change be made and if the committee wanted to keep the nominations that had already been made, they should feel free to do so. And if, likewise, they wanted to substitute nominations, they should feel free to do so.... I did not make any substitute nominations. Those came from other people on the committee."

Morgan noted his description of how Roberts handled the meeting—surfacing the challenges and presenting the names of alternate nominees—contrasts with Roberts' statements at the time he released the committee's nominations.

Noting he became involved in SBC affairs only about a year ago, Roberts said earlier: "I do not know the players on both sides and the argument which has gone on. I admit I am naive, and not knowing allowed me to sit there and be quiet and let the committee make its decisions."

After Morgan made his charges, Roberts said: "I can only say that I was neutral in that I simply pointed out various things to committee members to consider when casting their vote. I was redundant by stating over and over that I am simply putting the issues before you for you to vote in the way that you feel you should vote. I did not vote on all matters, and...on those matters where I did vote, my vote only represented one-54th of the total vote. It would have been impossible for me to control 54 Southern Baptists."

Morgan has "very mixed feelings," he told Baptist Press. "We were allowed to be heard.... We were allowed to speak on behalf of the nominees who were challenged; so that was fair. I am convinced there were a lot of factors of which we were not aware."

After the challenges, several committee members "expressed their condolences" to the West Virginians, "but for reasons of their own, they supported the challenges," he said.

"I'm not sure who Mr. Morgan is referring to," Roberts responded. "I can only state that I was late to a Baptist Press interview because of a long line of committee members wanting to express their frustrations with Mr. Morgan and to apologize to me for his antagonism towards me." He said other members also had approached him about Morgan's "constant complaining."

Morgan was the sole dissenter in the adoption of a statement Roberts said was intended to "express to the SBC at large that we were unified in our support of our nominees." The statement said committee members had sought guidance of the Holy Spirit, approved "all of the actions of the committee" and pledged themselves to be unified, seek harmony and unity and "mutually support one another in each and every one of our final nominations." It also said they urge SBC messengers "to harmoniously and in unity support each and every final nomination."

"It was a matter of personal principle," Morgan said of his decision not to approve the statement. "My options would have been closed had I voted for the statement. It would have indicated my support for all the nominees, and I could not give that support. I could not challenge any of the nominees at the convention if I feel so led."

Roberts said Morgan joined in a unanimous vote the first day of the meeting that "clearly stated a majority vote of the committee will result in our final nominations and that we would all agree to the six-point resolution as a show of unanimity." He added Morgan objected, not when this first vote was taken, but "after four of his nominees were defeated by a 47-7 vote."

"I believe that Mr. Morgan's integrity will leave his course of action to be what he agreed to when he agreed to abide by majority rule," Roberts said.

Morgan said he has not decided if he will challenge any of the new West Virginia nominees, adding, "I am very much in prayer, but I am not sure."

Dillon declined to comment on the issue. "I don't feel I should talk about it. The committee did agree communication should come from the chairman," he said. "Fred and I are good friends. I know he did what he thought he should do."

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Dunaway To Present Challenge
To Executive Committee Nominee

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press
5/16/86

CORBIN, Ky. (BP)—A past chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee has announced he will challenge the nomination of David Gray of Radcliff, Ky., to the Executive Committee.

Gray has been nominated to the post by the 1986 SBC Committee on Boards, which nominates people to fill vacancies on all national Southern Baptist entities. Messengers to the SBC annual meeting will vote on Gray and the other nominees when they convene in Atlanta June 10.

John Dunaway, pastor of First Baptist Church of Corbin, Ky., and chairman of the Executive Committee in 1982-83, told Baptist Press he will nominate Eugene Siler Jr. of Williamsburg, Ky., in the place of Gray.

Dunaway offered two reasons for his proposal.

"First, after observing the Committee on Boards' total recommendations for Kentucky, I question how much consideration was given to knowledge of Baptist life and the involvement of the person in the larger realm of Baptist service," he said. "The Executive Committee, because of its unique function in both the funding of our agencies and institutions and the operation of the convention, needs Baptist laypeople who have a strong involvement in and understanding of Baptist work.

"I doubt seriously that in the limited time Mr. Gray has been a Southern Baptist, and the even more limited time in a larger area of Baptist service, he meets this need of service."

Gray is a member of Stithton Baptist Church in Radcliff. He grew up in Pennsylvania and spent 24 years in the U.S. Army. A graduate of the U.S. Military Academy and Georgetown University Law School, he now is in a private law practice and has been a colonel in the Army and an assistant U.S. attorney.

"I have been a member of Baptist churches since I was saved as a six-year-old in 1941, and I have been a Southern Baptist for 10 years," Gray said. "I have not been active in convention politics, but I have been active in my own church. I sing in the choir and teach an adult couples' Sunday school class. I have been a lay preacher, a deacon in several churches and a Sunday school teacher all over the world, every place I've been."

Gray was a member of the 1984 SBC Committee on Boards. The 1986 annual meeting will be his first to attend.

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"I think I am doing what the Lord has called me to do," Gray said, "working here in my own church."

Allen F. Harrod, pastor of First Baptist Church of Bellevue, Ky., and one of the state's representatives on the Committee on Boards, defended the selection of Gray.

"It is true David Gray has been a Southern Baptist for only 10 years, but he's been a tremendously active Southern Baptist," Harrod said. He noted Gray was raised in Pennsylvania and was in the Army for 24 years and consequently did not have the opportunity to attend a Southern Baptist church.

"It's kind of a farce that he (Dunaway) would say this man isn't qualified," Harrod added, noting Gray's "very active involvement these past 10 years."

Dunaway presented his second objection to Gray's nomination in the form of a question: "How much consideration did the Committee on Boards give to the entire state in its selection of membership on not only the Executive Committee, but all of the boards?"

With the exception of one renomination to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, "no other person who has been nominated lives east of Louisville, where half of Kentucky Baptists live," Dunaway said.

"I wonder if the committee gave any consideration to the fact that until recently Mr. Gray had practiced law in the same U.S. attorney's office as the present Kentucky layman on the Executive Committee (Alan Sears of Louisville), who is also being renominated to a second term," he added.

Harrod responded by noting only seven nominations were open to Kentuckians, and two of those—local trustees for Southern Baptist Theological Seminary—had to be from Louisville. One nomination is yet to be made.

"We made four appointments," Harrod said. "One is from Frankfort, which is headed toward eastern Kentucky; one is from Radcliff, about 50 miles from Louisville; and two were from the western part of the state.

"He (Dunaway) has served two terms on the Executive Committee," Harrod continued. "He knows there's no way we can include every region with a limited number of nominations."

Dunaway "did not recommend one person to us, and neither did his associational missionary when we contacted him," Harrod said. "If he would have, we would have considered them. We were open to any recommendations we got; we prayed over them. We did not get one recommendation from eastern Kentucky."

Siler, whom Dunaway said he plans to nominate, is a member of First Baptist Church of Williamsburg. He is a U.S. district judge in the Eastern Kentucky District. He was appointed a U.S. attorney by the Nixon administration and was named a federal judge by the Ford administration.

"Judge Siler answers the first question which I raised," Dunaway noted. "He is from an outstanding Baptist background in that both his father and grandfather have served as the president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention." Siler also is trustee chairman of Cumberland College, a Kentucky Baptist school, and a deacon in his church, he added.

"The second question raised, the need for a wider representation, is met in Judge Siler, who would come from east of Louisville, where half of our state and half of our Baptists are located," he said.

"I do not know Mr. Gray, so the challenge is not personal, but out of my experience in Baptist life and as a past chairman of the Executive Committee," Dunaway insisted.

Committee Decries
Political Excesses

By Dan Martin

ATLANTA (BP)—The current level of political activity in the Southern Baptist Convention "creates distrust and diminishes our ability to do missions and evangelism," the SBC Peace Committee said in a statement on politics in the 14.4-million-member denomination.

The statement was adopted by the 22-member committee during its seventh meeting, held in mid-May in Atlanta.

The committee reported it investigated charges of voting and registration irregularities at the annual meetings, and, while it found isolated incidents, discovered "no documented evidence of organized misuse of the ballot by any political group."

The statement is a partner to one adopted in February dealing with theological diversity in the seminaries and the convention at large. Both statements are preliminary findings based on investigations during the year the committee has been at work.

Both statements, however, are expected to be part of the report the committee will make during the annual meeting of the SBC, scheduled June 10-12 in the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta.

"The political activities statement did not come easily," said Charles Fuller, chairman of the group which was named during the 1985 annual meeting of the SBC and charged with seeking the sources of the controversy in the SBC and devising ways to solve them.

"The issues have been very, very acute and extremely serious," said Fuller. "Some of our difficulty came in knowing how to articulate them with the strength we felt was needed. We wanted to address the violations or abuses and at the same time be fair and equitable."

The statement was drafted by the Political Activities Subcommittee, chaired by Charles Pickering, an attorney from Laurel, Miss., and vice chairman of the Peace Committee. Members are Jodi Chapman of Wichita Falls, Texas; Ed Young of Houston; Herschell Hobbs of Oklahoma City; and Cecil Sherman of Fort Worth, Texas. All but Sherman attended the May meeting.

The draft followed two days of meetings of the subcommittee, during which members met with spokesmen of political organizations on both sides of the denomination, representatives of news media, both denominational and autonomous independent publications and elected officers.

Fuller said the statement is "a rejection of extremism. Out of the investigation of these past few months wherein we focussed our attention on political activity, we found we need to reject political excesses—which are always there—but at the same time we must reject the excesses of exaggeration."

The chairman said the committee was aware of many accusations of voting and registration irregularities, made by both sides. "Most of the committee entered into the investigative part of our work wanting to discover how accurate the allegations are.

"Most of us expected we were going to have some verification. We did find some evidence, but it is evidence of isolated and not highly organized irregularities. I know we have some problems, but as for attributing these things to being part of a high political organization, we did not find that. We had hearsay, we had opinion, but as far as any hard evidence, it was not forthcoming," he said.

Fuller said the subcommittee met with Lee Porter of Nashville, Tenn., SBC registration secretary, and Tim Hedquist, also of Nashville, convention manager, to discuss past irregularities and the voting and registration process.

"There are some facts on the record—dating back several years—of looseness of the (registration) process and of some voting irregularity," Fuller said. "But I think we found that in the past several years there has been repeated and continual improvement in the process of registration and voting. I would presume we will continue in that direction."

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Fuller said prior to the 1979 convention the SBC "enjoyed for years a sort of openness and casualty in voting and registration. But we have come to a new day and a time in which the whole approach has had to be tightened up a great deal."

Fuller said the committee was told messengers to the 1986 convention will be informed the bylaws specifically prohibit "proxy" voting, whereby one person votes another person's ballot.

"That will be greatly stressed," Fuller added. "In past years proxy voting, although not appropriate, was not considered to be a drastic violation, such as when a husband or wife voted each other's ballots. Now, each messenger will be told the packet of ballots is his or hers and should be used only by the person to whom it is issued. If someone uses any one else's ballots, that person is in fact violating the bylaws."

Fuller said Porter and Hedquist have been asked to prepare a report for the Peace Committee on registration and voting, which will include information on the processes and on past abuses.

In addition to dealing with voting, the statement also speaks of the "new level" of political activity which has developed since the late 1970s as "some inerrantists put together an effective political effort" which has been countered by "some moderates."

The report says "a measure of political activity is inevitable," but points out the SBC has never encountered the current level of politics. "The convention has never made a determination of what political activity is inappropriate and what measure must be retained consistent with our Baptist heritage, organization and structure."

It notes political excess has been charged against each side, but adds the preliminary investigation reveals "in many instances the charges are exaggerated."

The report includes five preliminary "findings" and five recommendations, which have been forwarded to the committee drafting the report the committee will make to the SBC.

The findings note some spokesmen for both sides have used "intemperate, inflammatory and unguarded language," and spokesmen, as well as the "autonomous independent journals on both sides," have labelled and attributed improper motives to people with whom they disagree.

The statement discusses the necessity of the distribution of news in a democratic society, but says there have been "instances when news releases have been altered, distorting the intent of the article and oftentimes creating confusion."

It says in some "denominational papers and in some autonomous independent journals, there has been prejudice against the conservative political activists, and in some autonomous independent journals there has been prejudice against the moderate side."

Fuller said the entire committee adopted the report of the political activities subcommittee, as well as the five recommendations. The recommendations were given to the drafting subcommittee, headed by Harmon Born of Atlanta. Fuller added the recommendations "may or may not be" included in the final report of the committee to the convention.

The recommendations, as adopted by the committee are:

(1) That the convention respectfully beseech all Southern Baptists to make 1986-87 a "Year of Intercession," with periods of suggested prayer and fasting, prayer rallies and similar emphases for reconciliation and restoration in SBC life.

(2) That the convention respectfully request there be a one-year moratorium on theological/political position meetings and a deceleration, if not a dismantling, of the political power structures, allowing the Peace Committee and SBC agency leadership to work without distraction for the year 1986-87.

(3) That the convention deplore the use of the type of intemperate, inflammatory and unguarded language used by some spokesmen on both sides of the political spectrum.

(4) We urge Baptist Press, the state Baptist papers and the autonomous independent journals to lean over backwards to be fair and accurate in reporting events in the convention and refrain from labelling and attributing improper motives.

(5) That the convention respectfully request the newly elected president of the SBC to balance his appointments so that they are representative of the entire convention.

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Political Activities
Statement Is Issued

Baptist Press
5/16/86

ATLANTA (BP)--A statement on political activities was adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention's Peace Committee during its May meeting.

The statement:

The Peace Committee finds that the extent of political activity within the Southern Baptist Convention at the present time creates distrust, diminishes our ability to do missions and evangelism, is detrimental to our influence and impedes our ability to serve our Lord.

Political activity within the convention since the late 1970s has reached a new level. Some inerrantists put together an effective political effort. Some moderates have attempted to match the effort of the inerrantists. A measure of political activity is inevitable in an organization which abides by democratic principles and processes.

Since the Southern Baptist Convention has never before been confronted with this degree of political activity, the convention has never made a determination of what political activity is inappropriate and what measure of political activity must be retained consistent with our Baptist heritage, organization and structure.

Regardless of what short term-measures are implemented, Southern Baptists must face this entire issue. The Peace Committee is continuing to receive input in this regard and to deliberate on the final recommendations in this area.

Charges of political excesses have been made against both groups by the opposite side. The Peace Committee has not completed all of its investigations into political activities and although indications are that in many instances the charges are exaggerated, the committee finds that many people on both sides deplore the extent of political activity within the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Peace Committee makes preliminary findings as follows:

(1) Some spokesmen on both sides of the political spectrum have used intemperate, inflammatory and unguarded language, i.e., "going for the jugular," "Holy War," "Independent-fundamentalists," "flaming liberal" and other pejorative terms.

(2) Some spokesmen on both sides of the political spectrum and the autonomous independent journals on both sides of the issue have labelled and attributed improper motives to people with whom they disagree.

(3) Distribution of news is necessary in a democratic society. There have been instances when news releases have been altered, distorting the intent of the article and oftentimes creating confusion. In some denominational papers and in some autonomous independent journals, there has been prejudice against the conservative political activists and in some autonomous independent journals there has been prujudice against the moderate side.

(4) Although we have found indications of isolated voting irregularities at previous conventions, our preliminary finding concerning fraudulent voting has revealed no documented evidence of organized misuse of the ballot by any political group.

(5) The continuation of political activity within the convention at the present level will not serve the process of peace and reconciliation."

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Meeting Featured 'Progress
With Promise,' Fuller Says

ATLANTA (BP)—The seventh meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee was characterized by "progress with promise," according to chairman Charles Fuller.

Fuller, pastor of First Baptist Church of Roanoke, Va., pointed to the adoption of a statement on political activity, as well as a movement toward a report to the SBC annual meeting in June as progress.

"When we came, there was a feeling of heaviness, the heaviness of responsibility and the shortness of time. But as we got into the meeting, there was an almost immediate sense of making progress and moving toward productivity."

Fuller acknowledged there was some "combativeness" by committee members, particularly in the subcommittee meeting in which the political activities statement was adopted.

The statement, Fuller said, which is a companion piece to a statement on theological diversity adopted in February, "reflects the attitudes and disposition of the committee in this meeting very, very well."

In addition to adopting the statement, the committee also heard reports from the five visitation subcommittees which had visited 11 national agencies of the SBC to discuss matters of theological concern.

"The Peace Committee members feel the trustees and administrations have satisfactorily dealt with or are dealing with the matters the subcommittees submitted to them," Fuller said, adding there are several questions remaining concerning four of the 11 agencies, but none in regard to the SBC Home Mission Board, Sunday School Board, Historical Commission, and four theological seminaries, Southwestern, New Orleans, Midwestern and Golden Gate.

"The subcommittee reported there was one question regarding information it needed from the Foreign Mission Board that will be received in June. That was the only item, and it has nothing to do with the foreign missions enterprise and has only to do with information only the Foreign Mission Board has access to," Fuller said.

The chairman said the visitation subcommittee deferred action on the Christian Life Commission because of the announcement a search committee has been appointed to seek a successor to Executive Director Foy Valentine.

"Because of his forthcoming retirement, the committee wanted to leave several items open for discussion until a successor is named. The questions have to do with style and approach and not with materials currently available," he said.

Regarding the two seminaries, Southern and Southeastern, Fuller said officials "have replied to our inquiries, as have the officials at the other institutions, but there remain several of their responses which the subcommittees want to continue to pursue and about which they want to continue to dialogue."

Fuller praised the seminaries and agencies for "having been most cooperative. Their reports, in several instances, have been exhaustive. We appreciate that kind of thoroughness, as should all Southern Baptists."

The subcommittee which visited Southern Seminary, however, expressed "regret the seminary released its report to state Baptist newspapers before we made our response to it," Fuller said, explaining the Peace Committee and its subgroups had kept materials and persons discussed confidential. Now, he added, despite the Southern Seminary release, the "committee will continue our approach of confidentiality."

Fuller added that "although there remain several matters the committee wishes to pursue with agency and seminary leadership, we feel we must emphasize that at this stage in our work we generally commend the work of our agencies and seminaries and believe Southern Baptists should affirm them as well as prayerfully support them."

Dunn, Neuhaus Differ On Role
Of Religion In American Life

By Stan Hastey

WASHINGTON (BP)—A pair of theologians—one Baptist, the other Lutheran—offered contrasting assessments of the state of religion in the nation's life during a joint appearance May 16 before the annual meeting of the American Jewish Committee.

Whereas James M. Dunn—executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs—lamented what he described "a willful contempt for the First Amendment" on the part of the Religious Right, Richard John Neuhaus—director of the Rockford Institute on Religion and Society—argued the movement has arisen as a protest to what he called "the naked public square."

The neo-conservative Lutheran theologian, author of a book of that title, said "politically ambitious" evangelicals and fundamentalists, along with Roman Catholic bishops, are protesting "the exclusion of religiously-based moral judgment from public debate and decision making." He added, "While we may disagree with some of their proposals, we should try to understand sympathetically their protest."

But Dunn listed a "bill of particulars" against the Religious Right, including the view of America as a Christian nation, rejection of church-state separation, attacks on secularism, state-sponsored religion in public schools, the exchange of ambassadors with Rome, religious symbols on public property at public expense and scientific creationism. Each of these, he charged, constitutes an example of "merging church and state," a posture he described as "inexcusable."

At the same time, the head of Baptists' Washington-based agency charged with preserving religious freedom and church-state separation said "mixing religion and politics . . . is inevitable." Without naming names, Dunn said that while "politically-engaged evangelists" and evangelicals generally "are not wrongly active" in the public arena, "they are actively wrong."

Recalling what he called "the European model" of church-state union in an earlier age, Dunn said, "We must never forget that we've tried domination by religion and found it wanting. If we cannot learn from history, then we are condemned to remake the same mistakes."

In today's context in America, he said, citizens of all faiths committed to church-state separation must resist "the pushers of public piety," adding, "No political agenda however noble or patriotic can commend the service of organized religion. For the churches and synagogues to enlist in government service is idolatry."

Neuhaus, once considered a political liberal but now generally supportive of much of the agenda of the Religious Right, decried what he called "the myth of value-neutrality," which he described as a view of the world that "invites the dominance of a sterile secularism that is hostile to moral debate and religious belief."

But he acknowledged "the new assertiveness of religion" in public life "is correctly perceived as both threat and promise for religious freedom and for America's continuing experiment in liberal democracy." The problem in public dialogue and debate, he elaborated, "is that this development is seldom viewed as both threat and promise by the same people," adding, "To one community it is almost all threat, to another almost all promise. If we are to avoid a deeper and more dangerous polarization in our society, these communities must be brought into closer conversation."

Underscoring what he called "the great promise of this moment," Neuhaus admonished "secularists" to "stop claiming that politics is a value-free exercise" and "religionists" to "stop acting as though they have a monopoly on moral truth." At the same time, he concluded, "religious freedom and freedom of conscience cannot be secured upon the premise that the American people should become less religious or less religious in public."

For his part, Dunn concluded: "We do prefer a naked public square to one in which we worship at someone else's altar and bow down to someone else's idol. Specific religious traditions will not stand in for public piety. But then neither will diluted religion in general. We do not need a sort of happy face, 'We're number one' orgy of Americanism with God as the national mascot.... That's blasphemous."

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