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85-95

Proposed Hunger Relief Act
May Lack Bipartisan Support

By Kathy Palen

WASHINGTON (BP)—While Republicans and Democrats alike joined hands to support the recent Hands Across America effort to draw national attention to the problem of domestic hunger, such bipartisan support may not be in store for hunger-related legislation now before the U.S. House of Representatives.

During introductory statements at a joint hearing of several House subcommittees, spokesmen for Democrats and Republicans squared off over the proposed Hunger Relief Act of 1986.

Rep. Leon E. Panetta, D-Calif., said the bill, which he—along with more than 50 of his colleagues—sponsored, is an attempt "to make a meaningful contribution to eliminate hunger and malnutrition in our country."

The bill, H.R. 4990, would provide for a 12-point program of improvements to federal nutrition programs, including the food stamp program, child nutrition programs, prenatal and postnatal nutrition programs, elderly nutrition programs and nutrition education and monitoring.

"Hands Across America shows we are a compassionate society that is unwilling to tolerate hunger," Panetta said. "One event can focus on the promise of America to end hunger. But it takes a solid program and commitment enacted at the national level to deliver on that promise.

"Hopefully we can combine the spirit of Hands Across America and action on the Hunger Relief Act into ending this national shame of hunger once and for all."

Rep. Bill Emerson, R-Mo., however, argued the Hunger Relief Act would result in federal spending that would far exceed limits set in the House's recent budget resolution. After saying he believes "the Congress should learn to live within the limits set," Emerson added he was "confident that we will hear from many of the witnesses that we must support H.R. 4990, that we must spend over the limits provided."

Panetta agreed the improvements recommended by the bill are not without cost. But failure to enact such legislation, he added, would be too expensive for the nation to afford.

"If we fail to provide adequate nutrition, the cost to society and to governments at all levels is far greater than the small efforts we try to implement here."

Panetta was joined by Rep. Mickey Leland, D-Texas, in arguing the issue is not whether domestic hunger exists, but what Congress is willing to do about it.

"In recent weeks, the American people have been exposed to a renewed debate on the reality and extent of hunger in this country," Leland said. "While some may trivialize the extent, a multitude of local, state and national studies, as well as testimony received by the Select Committee on Hunger, clearly illustrate that we have a definitive hunger problem, which requires a definitive response."

Emerson contended, however, the federal government should not totally be responsible for care of the nation's needy.

"Federal programs have had a positive impact on the poor, but no matter how carefully these programs are crafted, they cannot possibly respond to all the needs of poor families and individuals," Emerson said. "Such a responsibility must be—and has been—shared with state, local and private sector organizations aimed at helping the needy."

Asian Baptists Meet Again
To Plan Foreign Missions

By Erich Bridges

SEOUL, South Korea (BP)—Asian Baptist leaders have met for the second time in six months to discuss possible joint efforts in sending Asian missionaries abroad.

The meeting, held June 17-19 in Seoul, South Korea, reunited Korean Baptists with representatives from Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan and Singapore who attended a similar gathering in Hong Kong last December. Baptist leaders from Indonesia and Thailand joined them, but representatives from the Philippines, who attended the December meeting, did not come to Seoul.

The Asian leaders reported most have sponsored some overseas mission workers, but only Japanese and Koreans have sent missionaries to work among other language groups at this point.

They continued their discussion on potential joint strategies for the future and heard presentations by Southern Baptist missionaries on the history of Southern Baptist missions overseas, the theology of missions and the basics necessary for organizing a mission effort.

"When we first decided to send a missionary a few years ago, we thought the only thing we had to do was select the person, get him to his country and send him a living stipend each month," said Han Ki Man, Korean chairman of the Asian group and pastor of Yoido Baptist Church in Seoul, which has helped support several Korean Baptist foreign missionaries. Han admitted it "never occurred" to him a missionary needs provision for children's education, possible sickness in the family, fellowship and growth opportunities on the field and expenses related to the work. "We have learned many things since this began," he said.

The foreign missions discussion began last summer at a global evangelization consultation at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center. The Asians met there with Baptists from 15 other nations in Europe, Africa and Latin America who have sent or plan to send missionaries abroad. Participants in the consultation, proposed by Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks, have now divided into five regional working committees, like the Asian group.

The Asians held the first regional group meeting after the consultation. In Hong Kong, they elected Han Ki Man chairman, pledged to work for support from their national conventions and agreed to submit proposals for cross-cultural mission projects when they met again.

In the months following, Han traveled to each of the nations represented at the Hong Kong gathering, plus Indonesia and Thailand. He met with Asian Baptist leaders and Southern Baptist missionaries, seeking their reactions to the mission effort and urging involvement.

Two possible approaches to foreign missions emerged during dialogue sessions in Seoul. Some leaders continue to support the idea of joint mission projects or a unified missionary agency sponsored by all the Asian Baptists represented. Others believe mission efforts or agencies should be centered in the individual conventions, with possible joint cooperation in missionary training or a regional training center.

The leaders didn't reach a consensus on which approach to pursue, but they agreed to take two actions:

—Establish a missions information center, possibly in Hong Kong, which will collect and distribute data on mission fields and opportunities from East and Southeast Asia; and

—Form a small committee to review, research and make recommendations to the full group on possible joint mission projects.

A dramatic moment during the Seoul meeting came when the Thai representative, Pastor Sunthorn, called on his Asian colleagues to send missionaries to Thailand. He said white missionaries from the United States and elsewhere face an uphill battle in enlarging the tiny Christian population in predominantly Buddhist Thailand. No matter how good a job they do, he explained, Thais often view them as representatives of an imported, Western faith.

"But if you, brethren, come witnessing for Christ, they cannot say to you that Christianity is a Western religion," he told the Asians.

Elder Issues Plea
For Talking, Trust

By Linda Lawson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--A plea to Southern Baptists to stop labeling one another, to talk to each other instead of about each other and to learn to trust each other again was sounded by the president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Speaking in a chapel service to employees where 10 new trustees were welcomed during two days of orientation, Lloyd Elder reported his perceptions of the status of the Southern Baptist Convention after the annual meeting in Atlanta June 10-12.

"I believe there is a great call across the convention for us to stop labeling one another and go back to that more realistic time when we called each other brothers and sisters in the family," said Elder.

He commended the presiding of President Charles Stanley and the five parliamentarians, noting their job was made more difficult by an increasingly low trust level which Baptists have for each other.

"Some things were challenged as parliamentary procedure, as points of order, that should not have been challenged," said Elder. "We will not change things by rewriting the bylaws or following strictly the order of process. We will change things when we get the trust level back up where it belongs in the family."

On both sides of the current controversy in the convention are people who are "good and godly people. We do not have to try to discredit them. Instead, we must try to tell the truth and do right, as my mother taught me. We need to trust our brothers and sisters across the convention as the Holy Spirit guides their lives and the Bible falls open on their spirits. We have every reason to trust our people and not to label them," Elder continued.

He said he was discouraged by the thousands of messengers who left the hall in Atlanta after voting for second vice president and just as the report of the Sunday School Board was beginning.

"For the first eight to 10 minutes of our report I could hardly hear myself. We were excited about our report. It is a Bible report. It has to do with the Kingdom work," he said. "Let us do everything we can as a part of this Sunday School Board and let us do everything we can as Southern Baptists to depoliticize our convention sessions and put the focus on the work of the kingdom of God."

"We are a missionary, evangelistic convention. The reports are not just 'space fillers.' They are the heart of who we are and why we have voluntarily decided to cooperate together," he said.

Elder supported the messenger vote to refer to the SBC Executive Committee a motion on withdrawal from the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. The motion also recommended establishment of an exclusively Southern Baptist presence in Washington. Elder is a member of the Southern Baptist Public Affairs Committee and, therefore, is on the board of the joint committee.

"For five decades the Baptist Joint Committee has held tight and strong to the separation of church and state and religious liberty. I take great pride in that," said Elder. At the same time, he said the time to study the motion in the Executive Committee is an opportunity "to listen to our constituency and see what ought to be done to make it more effective."

He affirmed the report of the SBC Peace Committee, including the request to represent conservative viewpoints in publications.

"I not only concur with that, but we're going to reject a two-party system and continue ministering to the total constituency of Southern Baptists," said Elder. "We have been and we will continue to give attention to what is considered the conservative viewpoint. It would be very unreasonable for us not to.

"At the Sunday School Board we will continue not labeling brothers and sisters as liberals or moderates or conservatives or fundamentalists. We are biblical conservatives. We have intended to be. That is our activity; that is our commitment," he said.

"Our commitment is to stay founded on Holy Scripture, and so we'll not always have the equal pleasure or applause of our Baptist constituency. "But if we try to stay with the Bible, Baptists will stay with us."

He also expressed support for the Peace Committee request that Baptists dismantle political machinery and partisan meetings.

"At the Sunday School Board we have said we will not be a part of those meetings, not because we don't have a right to," said Elder. "But we want to make a disciplined effort to do our program of work and, therefore, contribute to the unity of the convention rather than to controversy."

Finally, Elder urged adoption on the denominational level of a congregational model that emphasizes drawing all the people together under the lordship of Christ rather than emphasizing issues that polarize them.

"What we need is not the rhetoric of love but deeds of love," said Elder. "No element in the convention has a corner on the kingdom of God. We can rise up to statesmanship when, in the midst of this family, we reach out and touch the lives, believe in the integrity and respect the identity of all of our brothers and sisters.

"The congregational model would focus on the mission of the people of God to serve the total constituency, to accept only the biblical foundation for our work, but on that foundation to understand the liberty and responsibility of each believer who is part of the family," he said.

Emphasizing unity in Christ also would help to challenge a growing perception that Southern Baptists do not care about other people, that they only care about themselves and their battles. "We have to bear witness to the saving power of Jesus Christ when the perception is that we don't care about other people," said Elder.

"If they do not know Christ, they're lost. If they're inactive in a local church, they need to become discipled and grow in Jesus Christ. If they're out of sort with their family, they need to be reconciled. If they're having difficulty making decisions in life, they need the light of Holy Scripture."

"We know that we have the gospel story to tell that will change lives. We do know that. That is our message of hope."

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Best View Of SBC
Was In Illinois

By Jim Lowry

Baptist Press
6/27/86

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Almost 60,000 persons might convincingly argue the best seat in the house for the Southern Baptist Convention was not in one of the four giant halls at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta.

Instead, BTN (Baptist Telecommunication Network) took the very best seats to Anna, Ill.; Post Falls, Idaho; and Aguadilla, Puerto Rico.

About 300 persons called or wrote notes to BTN personnel to express appreciation for the gavel-to-gavel coverage of the 129th Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta. This was the second consecutive year for the expanded coverage.

BTN officials estimate 60 percent of the viewers were in homes and 40 percent in churches or associations. BTN has 800 subscribers, representing 8,000 churches with access to programs.

Additionally, six cable systems carried all or part of the Southern Baptist Convention. These were in Louisville, Ky.; Atlanta; El Dorado, Okla.; Lebanon, Tenn.; Murray, Ky.; and Alachua, Fla.

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Other locations where groups were watching include Ridgecrest (N.C.) and Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Centers, Jenness Park (Calif.) Conference Center, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif., and the Kentucky and Maryland state Baptist convention offices. CBS News even called to say staffers were watching to get a news story.

According to estimates of BTN officials, there is little room for doubt more people saw the Southern Baptist Convention on television than participated at the convention halls in Atlanta.

For the most part, viewers in churches and homes didn't have to get up and compete for the better seats--except for the viewers in Idaho. They got up at 5 a.m. each morning to see the convention from start to finish.

Next year's Southern Baptist Convention in St. Louis, also will be carried from beginning to end, unscrambled, to allow Baptists throughout the United States to be a part of the annual sessions, said Joe Denney, director of the telecommunications department, at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, which operates BTN.

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Pilots Killed In Crash
Members Of Resort Church

Baptist Press
6/27/86

ATLANTA (BP)--Nearly a thousand people overflowed Grand Canyon Baptist Church for a memorial service honoring the two pilots killed in a airplane and helicopter in the resort area.

Church members Jim Ingraham and Bruce Grubb flew the plane which was carrying 20 sightseers when it collided with a five-passenger helicopter, killing 25.

Pastor Ronnie Nation said the two active members did not usually fly together. But a supervisor had seen them that morning, noted their seemingly close friendship, and decided to assign them to the same plane.

Nation said 50 percent of the people attending the funeral came from the church and the canyon area. Others came from across the nation, he said, and many came in remembrance of the other crash victims who also were remembered at the service.

Nation said the accident provided the church opportunities to minister to the victim's families, but church members were grieving as well.

Ingraham was survived by his wife, Judy, whom he had met when they were summer missionaries.

Nation said both pilots were involved in resort ministries sponsored by the church and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. The Ingrahams had entertained several of the summer missionaries at their home the evening before the crash.

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New Orleans Seminary
Elects Duo To Faculty

Baptist Press
6/27/86

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Trustees of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary have elected two new faculty members.

Robert Rex Mathis of Santa Fe, N.M., was named assistant professor of religious education. Jerry E. Oswald of Silverhill, Ala., was elected associate professor of preaching. Both appointments are effective July 1.

Mathis, 38, has been minister of education and administration at First Baptist Church of Santa Fe since 1981. A native of Harrison, Ark, Mathis holds degrees from Wayland Baptist University, Texas A&M University, the University of Texas at El Paso and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Oswald, 48, has been director of missions for Baldwin Baptist Association in Silverhill. A native of Starkville, Miss., Oswald holds degrees from Mississippi State University and New Orleans Seminary.

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Education Department Continues
Efforts To Bypass Court Ruling

By Kathy Palen

WASHINGTON (BP)—The U.S. Department of Education has told local school districts they may park vans or other mobile classrooms on parochial school property without violating a year-old Supreme Court ruling against sending public schoolteachers into parochial schools to provide specialized instruction.

Although a year has passed since that decision in *Aguilar v. Felton*, many local educational agencies still are grappling with how to provide Chapter 1 services to parochial school students without violating the high court's ruling.

Chapter 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 provides federal funds for public and private schools for compensatory educational services for economically and educationally disadvantaged children.

During the past year, some state and local educational agencies received court-approved delays in implementing the Supreme Court's restriction against public schoolteachers' offering instruction in church-related schools. Education Department officials, however, are warning those agencies such delays most likely will not be granted for the upcoming school year.

As a result, the Education Department recently released additional written guidance for local school systems in the form of a set of questions and answers.

The federal agency stated mobile classroom units, such as vans, that are to be used in providing Chapter 1 services to parochial school students may be parked on public property near the private school. The department went on to state those units, under certain circumstances, also may be placed on private school property.

The Education Department said such units must be distinguishable from the private school facilities, identified as the local educational agency's property and free of religious symbols. A unit and the property upon which it is located also must not be used for religious purposes or for the private school's education program.

Examples of acceptable private school property listed by the Education Department include portions of a school playground or parking lot not immediately adjacent to the school but with direct access to a public street.

After announcement of the *Felton* ruling last summer, Secretary of Education William Bennett, vowing to "nullify the damage done," began a battle to find ways around the Supreme Court's decision. He and other members of his staff have attacked the ruling since that time.

In another effort to bypass the decision, Bennett last fall introduced a proposed educational voucher plan that would allow parents whose children qualify for Chapter 1 services to obtain vouchers that in turn could be "spent" for those services at the school—public or private—of the parents' choosing.

Although Bennett predicted the voucher plan would be in place by July 1, it appears the proposed legislation is on hold for the time being.

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Southern Baptist Teacher
Wins High Court Verdict

By Stan Hasteley

Baptist Press
6/27/86

WASHINGTON (BP)—A Southern Baptist schoolteacher who lost her job at a private Christian academy may challenge the dismissal in a state civil rights panel without violating the school's First Amendment rights, the Supreme Court held June 27.

In a unanimous decision written by Justice William H. Rehnquist, the high court rejected a claim by Dayton (Ohio) Christian Schools that proceedings by the Ohio Civil Rights Commission relating to the firing of Linda Hoskinson amounted to an unconstitutional establishment of religion and violated the schools' right to free exercise of religion.

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Hoskinson, a member of Far Hills Baptist Church in Dayton, taught in one of the schools operated by Dayton Christian Schools during the 1978-79 school year. She had subscribed to the schools' statement of faith which, aside from numerous doctrinal requirements, was interpreted by school officials to include the doctrine of the "biblical chain of command." This doctrine held in part that because the New Testament forbids Christians from taking one another before secular courts, teachers were required to take grievances only to their immediate supervisors. They were further required to acquiesce in the final authority of the schools' board of trustees and not to initiate legal proceedings against the schools.

After Hoskinson informed her principal in January 1979 she was pregnant, she was informed her teaching contract would not be renewed for the following year because of the schools' religiously held belief mothers should stay home with their pre-school age children. Instead of appealing internally, however, Hoskinson contacted an attorney who threatened to take the schools to court for violating Ohio's sex discrimination law.

When the schools' board of trustees fired Hoskinson for taking her complaint to the attorney rather than seeking to resolve the matter within the school structure, the teacher filed a complaint with the Ohio Civil Rights Commission. The schools then countered by filing suit in a federal district court challenging the panel's jurisdiction on church-state grounds and asking the court to enjoin the commission from proceeding to deal with Hoskinson's complaint.

But the district court refused to issue the injunction, clearing the way for proceedings to continue within the state civil rights panel. On appeal, however, the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals reversed, agreeing with Dayton Christian Schools that the religion clauses of the First Amendment forbade the commission from taking up the matter.

Rehnquist's opinion, consistent with his view that federal courts should abstain from intervention in disputes involving state law except in unusual circumstances, sent the case back to the district court with instructions not to decide the dispute. On this technical point, the chief justice-designate wrote only for himself and four colleagues to form a five-justice majority. The other four disagreed, arguing the schools should have access to a federal court to make their constitutional claims.

But all nine justices agreed with the basic thrust of Rehnquist's decision that the civil rights commission has the authority under Ohio law to consider Hoskinson's complaint. "We have no doubt that the elimination of prohibited sex discrimination is a sufficiently important state interest to bring the present case within the ambit of the cited authorities," Rehnquist wrote.

Despite Dayton Christian Schools' claim any proceeding would violate the First Amendment, Rehnquist countered, "Even religious schools cannot claim to be wholly free from some state regulation."

He concluded, "We therefore think that however (Dayton Christian Schools') constitutional claim should be decided on the merits, the commission violates no constitutional rights by merely investigating the circumstances of Hoskinson's discharge in this case, if only to ascertain whether the ascribed religious-based reason was in fact the reason for the discharge."

Because the case hinged on the procedural question of whether the civil rights panel had jurisdiction, Rehnquist offered no opinion on the possible outcome of the dispute were it to come before the high court again.

But three years ago, in the celebrated case of Bob Jones University v. U.S., the court ruled 8-1 the federal government's objective of eradicating race discrimination was sufficiently compelling for the Internal Revenue Service to strip the fundamentalist institution of its federal tax exemption for requiring all entering students to agree not to date or marry persons of another race.

In that case, it was Rehnquist alone who dissented, agreeing instead with Bob Jones University's claim its free exercise of religion superceded the claimed governmental interest.

In the Hoskinson sex discrimination dispute, the Ohio Civil Rights Commission presumably will issue a ruling once its investigation is complete. At that point, Dayton Christian Schools could file a new lawsuit, this time in a state court. Any decision by that tribunal would be subject to appeal by the losing party in higher state courts, including the Ohio Supreme Court. Were the losing party to challenge that ruling, the case then would come back to the nation's high court to be decided on its merits.

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Duo Meets In World War II;
Still Friends 40 Years Later

By Breena Kent

Baptist Press
6/27/86

NEW ORLEANS (BP)—At the end of World War II, during the occupation of Korea, a chaplain and a sergeant met. Still friends 41 years later, John Olen Strange and George W. Harrison both teach Old Testament and Hebrew at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

They met in Korea in 1945. Since that time, their paths have crossed time and again. Strange was a regimental Protestant chaplain in the Army, and Harrison was first sergeant of a company Strange often visited to hold services. Harrison remembers, "My duty was to make enough noise for everyone to know that the service was about to begin."

In 1946, however, they parted company, each thinking they would never see each other again.

Strange moved to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., where he obtained his bachelor of divinity degree in 1949 and doctor of theology degree in Old Testament in 1954.

Harrison, who was nine years younger than Strange, began his college studies in engineering. A year later, Harrison "surrendered to the call of ministry," and transferred to Georgetown College, where he received his bachelor of arts degree in 1949, the same year Strange received his B.D. degree from Southern Seminary.

From that time on, it was as if Harrison followed Strange's footsteps. Harrison and his wife moved to Southern Seminary, where he received his B.D. degree in 1952.

"I was the last person Strange expected to see entering a seminary class," says Harrison. "I knew him when he was single, slim, and trim and hadn't made a commitment yet to the ministry." recalls Strange.

As a doctoral student in Old Testament, Strange was the grader for one of Harrison's classes. Then in 1953, Strange was invited to teach Old Testament at New Orleans Seminary, and two years later, Harrison returned to Georgetown College to teach.

In 1960, however, Harrison was invited to teach Old Testament at New Orleans Seminary. "And who was there to welcome me to the interview," he says, "but Dr. Strange." Strange had encouraged Leo Eddleman, president of New Orleans Seminary at the time, to consider Harrison as a teacher. Harrison was elected to the position, which he accepted.

The two men took part in each other's life experiences, sharing such memories as the births and adoptions of their children and grandchildren, and life-changing decisions involving careers.

"The fact that he is almost a decade ahead of me," says Harrison, "meant that he had maturity and had gone through a lot of what I had gone through."

"He has helped me a lot with our children through their stages of mediocrity, non-conformity and premature declaration of independence. A decade is a wonderful dimension to see things from; he could see a lot more of the sowing and harvesting with his daughter being 37 and mine 27."

Harrison, who now has been teaching Old Testament and Hebrew at New Orleans Seminary for 26 years, calls a cup of coffee "merely a stage setting" for their talks, through which Harrison has acquired valuable advice for making decisions throughout his life.

"He and I have always been friends," says Strange, who is now retired, but still teaching a partial load at New Orleans Seminary. "We know we can count on each other when we need each other," and they have. As Harrison says, "What began in '45 has continued."

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SBC's Annual Drama Draws
Mixed Reviews From Editors

By Marv Knox

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Southern Baptists' latest dramatic performance—the 129th annual meeting of their convention—drew mixed reviews from Baptist state paper editors who critiqued the event on their pages.

The convention's leading man this year was President Charles Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta, the city which hosted the convention June 10–12. Stanley drew generally high marks for the way he presided over the meeting.

"It must be said that President Charles Stanley presided fairly if perhaps a bit rigidly. With 40,000 in the audience, however, some amount of rigidity is necessary," wrote Don McGregor of Mississippi. Added Missouri's Bob Terry: "Stanley deserves praise for the fair and tolerant presiding he performed during the business sessions.... No one can claim they were mistreated or the rules of the convention were seriously violated."

Terry's comment referred to Stanley's performance at the 1985 convention, which drew some criticism for unfairness and even resulted in a lawsuit. But this year, Stanley "carefully and willingly followed the advice of his parliamentarians and avoided the mistakes of last year," noted Lynn Clayton of Louisiana. "His presiding greatly relieved the turmoil of last year's convention."

However, Stanley did get some poor marks for his soliloquy in the spotlight, the annual president's address. Although he said Stanley had done an "admirable job" of presiding, California's Herb Hollinger noted the Atlantan "used his president's address which came just before the presidential election as a blatant attempt to sway the election.... We felt this was 'politics' at its worst and was neither necessary nor desired."

David Simpson of Indiana praised the address, particularly noting Stanley's exhortation that the convention not change its course spoke to conflicting philosophies within the SBC. Describing the position taken by Stanley's supporters, Simpson said: "The fundamental-conservative's philosophy might be stated: We must contend for the faith, and the first line of defense and offense is the Bible." Conversely, he added, the moderate-conservative group "is not held together by a common view toward the Bible but a common attitude toward cooperation."

In addition to Stanley, editors gave credit for much of the drama's smooth performance to its primary supporting actor, C. Barry McCarty, an ordained Church of Christ minister and certified parliamentarian.

"McCarty gets high marks for running a smooth and fair convention, and Stanley should be commended for hiring him," wrote Bill Webb of Illinois. "It was his (McCarty's) expertise and sound advice that kept the business sessions from erupting into the kind of uproar that characterized some sessions of the 1985 convention," lauded Oklahoma's Dick McCartney.

An off-stage cameo performance by U.S. President Ronald Reagan received negative reviews by several editors. Reagan wrote a letter to the convention which was read by Stanley immediately after Adrian Rogers was announced as the next SBC president. "The White House again this year inappropriately injected itself into an annual SBC meeting...to promote its conservative political agenda, much to the displeasure of many messengers," penned Julian Pentecost of Virginia.

The other major performer who received attention was next year's leading man, Rogers, the new president and pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., who delivered the convention sermon. "We were pleased with the election of Adrian Rogers as SBC president," said California's Hollinger, noting Rogers "closely reflects the thinking of the majority of Southern Baptists." Rogers' convention sermon "contained good advice for all Southern Baptists, as he reminded us that if an adversary is truly a Christian, he is a brother in the Lord with whom we will spend eternity," said Everett Sneed of Arkansas.

Oklahoma's McCartney also found praise for developers of the production's newest "special effects" product: "Credit also should go to the unique microphone control system devised by engineers of the SBC Radio-Television Commission."...

Praise also went to the chorus, the small group that carried a major theme from the 1985 convention into this year's meeting. That, of course, was the 22-member SBC Peace Committee.

Declaring the convention's theme this year to be "lack of trust," Tennessee's Al Shackelford noted, "The most important matter considered at the convention was the report of the Peace Committee—which may be our last hope for unity in this generation."

"The Peace Committee called for restoring trust 'among all Southern Baptists so that we may continue our journey toward reconciliation and peace,'" observed Presnall Wood of Texas. "Such trust will come more from actions than from sermons or speeches."

If Wood's assertion is accurate, and if observations of several of his colleagues are on target, the plot of next year's drama may thicken. The 1986 cast of thousands got mixed reviews.

"The messengers (almost 41,000) are generally to be commended for unusually fine behavior," said Sneed of Arkansas. "Baptists can become vicious and un-Christlike in their efforts to promote a candidate of their choice. The pre-convention activities surely must have been some of the worst we've observed in the past few years....," countered Kansas-Nebraska's John Hopkins.

Virginia's Pentecost reserved words for the choreography of the program. "The erosion of democratic process is due in part to the sheer size of the gathering, but that does not fully explain current practices," he said, citing "denied access to the speaker's rostrum" and "the manner in which resolutions have been handled." Sneed said one-by-one challenges to committee nominations are "unworkable." Fletcher Allen of Maryland-Delaware noted it was unfortunate much of the crowd was not on hand for the final two days of business.

Whatever their views concerning how it flowed, the editors agreed the drama's plot was action-packed, filled with important ramifications for the convention.

Indiana's Simpson declared: "The question confronting the moderate-conservative group is the same one confronting the Southern Baptist Convention. How long can we stay together without a common and concrete commitment to the Bible?"

"Throughout the Atlanta meeting, there was the obvious tension between the political action at work to gain control of the convention and the desire to be Christ-like while implementing the convention's theme of 'Love Never Fails,'" said Gene Puckett of North Carolina. "The (SBC) said clearly that we are a conservative body with every intention of staying that way.... In every way the convention held confidently to a steady course in its more conservative pattern of recent years," added John Roberts of South Carolina.

So what of the outcome? What does this summer's SBC drama hold for the future?

Noting fundamental-conservatives hold the seat of power, Puckett said: "That means the whole scenario has changed and a new era has begun. There is little doubt there will be some casualties ahead.... Time will tell whether actions follow rhetoric. The world is watching...."

"There was absolutely no question that in Atlanta the fundamental-conservatives were firmly in control," wrote Louisiana's Clayton, adding he "sees no possibility of this changing in the immediate future." Florida's Jack Brymer noted: "How long and to what extent the new conservative trend will continue is unpredictable. Southern Baptists need not fear, however, for the newly elected leadership will find men and women of outstanding Christian character and integrity who are serving the denomination admirably."

"If the fundamental-conservatives continue leadership, what will be the outcome?" asked Simpson of Indiana. "They say Cooperative Program, mission gifts and evangelism will increase sharply. That remains to be seen, but fundamental-conservative churches do have the nickels and noses."

Penning a comment expressed by several of his colleagues, Georgia's Jack Harwell wrote: "One of the wisest leaders in our denomination said to me, 'The holy war in the SBC is over. The fundamentalists have won. Their challenge now is to win the peace.' In our judgment, that won't be nearly so easy as winning the war."