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Government Crackdown
On Porn Intensifies

By David Wilkinson

WASHINGTON (BP)—Recent developments in the nation's capital have added muscle to the crackdown on America's burgeoning pornography industry.

Attorney General Edwin Meese announced Oct. 22 a series of proposals aimed at beefing up the Justice Department's anti-pornography efforts. Plans include a special task force, an obscenity prosecution center and a variety of legislative proposals.

A few days earlier, the U.S. Senate unanimously approved legislation closing loopholes in federal laws against child pornography. The bill, along with companion legislation in the Senate, had been supported by staff members of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

Meese announced the Justice Department's prosecution center will train prosecutors, provide expert witnesses and draft model anti-pornography legislation. The center will be augmented by a task force of U.S. lawyers to help prosecute what Meese called "organized criminal enterprises" now controlling the \$8 billion pornography industry.

Meese also proposed laws to:

- Ban anyone under age 21 from performing in sexually-explicit films.
- Ban obscene cable TV programs.
- Seize sales proceeds from pornographic activities.
- End "dial-a-porn" telephone messages.

The proposals incorporated many of the recommendations made in August by the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography.

In addition to specific legislative actions, Larry Braidfoot of the Christian Life Commission said the obscenity prosecution center could become a key weapon in the battle against pornography. The center, he said, "can provide important help for those government entities which occasionally find themselves facing a battery of well-paid attorneys who work almost exclusively in defending persons and corporations accused of violating obscenity laws."

Braidfoot, who coordinates the agency's work on pornography issues, said obscenity prosecutions often are hampered by the mismatch of seasoned defense attorneys working against local or state attorneys with little experience in obscenity cases.

Meese's proposals came on the heels of congressional action outlawing the advertising of child pornography and solicitation of children for sexual purposes. While production and distribution of child pornography is illegal, loopholes in federal laws have allowed for open advertising of such materials.

The bill also makes it a crime to transport a child across state lines for sexual activity, whether for private or commercial use.

The legislation was introduced by Sen. William Roth, R-Del., after a year-long investigation by the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, which Roth chairs.

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Roth said the subcommittee's research and the work of the attorney general's pornography commission "have established beyond any doubt that pedophiles--emotionally disturbed individuals who are sexually attracted to children--make extensive use of child pornography to stimulate and justify their ugly behavior."

Subcommittee spokesman Fred McCaffrey said the legislation "gives law enforcement authorities the opportunity to nab these people before they do psychological and physical harm through child pornography or child prostitution."

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Annuity Board, Equitable
Reach Building Agreement

By Tom Miller

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DALLAS (BP)—The Southern Baptist Annuity Board has reached an agreement with Equitable Real Estate, a subsidiary of the Equitable Life Assurance Society, to lease a new office building constructed to the Baptist agency's specifications in Dallas.

The board will move to the office just north of the city's central business district in late 1988, Annuity Board president Darold H. Morgan announced.

Morgan said the contract includes a long-term lease with an option to buy. Trustees approved a plan to negotiate a long-term lease last April after a two-year study concluded leasing would be preferable to purchasing or constructing a building.

The Annuity Board acquired the property, which includes a two-story office building to be razed, and transferred ownership to the Equitable as a part of the development project, Morgan said.

Construction plans are in early stages and site work will begin in the spring. The lease will be an effective \$14 per square foot with the possibility of additional savings prior to occupancy.

The board made a substantial profit on the sale of its office at 511 North Akard in Dallas which it has occupied for 27 years, Morgan said. The present Baptist office was sold to Lincoln Properties Inc. in 1984. A lease arrangement allows the board to remain in the building through 1988.

"In keeping with the fiduciary responsibilities of the board," Morgan said, "we decided the best plan would be to enter an agreement to lease a building that a developer would construct to our specifications."

Among the benefits of relocation to a new building, Morgan noted on-site parking for employees, the latest engineering for energy efficiency and convenience to freeways and public transportation.

The board initially will occupy about 110,000 square feet. The six-floor facility will contain 180,000 square feet. Morgan said the additional area was specified to provide room for expansion as the board provides additional services to the growing number of Southern Baptist churches. "We expect one day the Annuity Board will be the building's sole tenant," he said.

The board provides retirement and insurance plans for ministers and paid workers in Southern Baptist churches and related agencies.

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Muslims Targeting Europe;
Baptists Showing Renewal

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
10/28/86

BRUSSELS, Belgium (BP)—Followers of Islam believe Western Europe is fertile ground.

"Several Muslim groups have declared Western Europe as their main mission field," said William Wagner, a missionary who, as evangelism and church growth consultant of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, works with Southern Baptist missionaries in Europe in evangelism and missions planning.

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"There are more nominal Christians becoming Muslims than Muslims becoming Christians," Wagner noted in a telephone interview. The Muslim focus on Western Europe comes at a time when Wagner senses revival is coming to Baptists and other evangelicals.

England is the top priority of Muslim activists, and much of their activity is centered in London, Wagner said. Throughout Europe, however, many mosques are being constructed and abandoned Christian churches have been purchased and converted into Muslim houses of worship.

Saudi Arabia actively has supported mission work in Europe, Wagner noted. Most of the proselytizing is by Sunni Muslim groups based in Saudi Arabia and several other countries.

But he knows of no reliable estimates of how many Muslim missionaries are in Europe or how much has been spent on behalf of their work. Estimates of overall Muslim strength in Western Europe range from 5.5 million to 11 million adherents, he said.

Muslim missionaries have a firm sense of being "chosen and called out," Wagner said, "although their system is quite different" than Southern Baptists' approach, which involves both volunteers and lay people working abroad but is built around a core of career missionaries.

"Their mission force is more of a volunteer force, tent-maker types who go to a given country with a purpose of doing mission work but earning their own salaries," he explained.

These are fruitful times for Muslims, Baptists and other evangelicals in Western Europe, Wagner added: "There is a definite spiritual void in Europe at this point. People who have not found the answers they're looking for in secularism and materialism ... are turning to any religion that seems to have a means of filling the void."

Unfortunately, some of Western Europe's Christian communions have drifted toward "a questioning theology instead of a theology that gives answers," he said. "Basic doctrines of the Christian church and the authority of the Bible came into question." Various Roman Catholic and Protestant churches are "no longer able to give definite answers to the questions of modern man."

These churches have been losing as many as 1.8 million people a year in Europe, reported David Barrett, Anglican researcher now based at the Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, Va.

Church attendance likewise has dwindled. In Brussels, for example, worship services draw only 22 percent of the populace, Wagner said. Across Western Europe, churchgoers number about 30 percent of the population.

"Muslims have a very strong belief in the absolute authority and divinity of their book, the Koran," Wagner continued. "And quite often in their missionary endeavors they point to questioning Christian theologians and say, 'They don't believe even their own book. How is it possible, then, that the Bible could be true?'"

Baptists and other Christians with more resolute outlooks--those who ceaselessly say, "Let's find out what the Bible has to say to us"--have a unique opportunity not only to counter Muslim activists but also to evangelize them, Wagner insisted.

In many Islamic countries, Christian evangelism is outlawed and converts to Christianity often face harsh persecution and threats of death or bodily injury, he said. But in Western Europe, the law provides basic protections to all.

Wagner is excited by the spiritual renewal he senses in his travels, "a new desire and new zeal to move forward. In almost all of the countries, people are asking, 'How do we start new churches?'"

Many of the dozen-plus Baptist unions in Western Europe face financial problems. But each of these unions is relatively small and much of their problem "is being able to raise enough money to pay for everything they want to do," Wagner said. Most of the unions have ambitious programs in evangelism, missions and theological education.

At the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, a new institute for evangelism, church growth and missions is being created. "Ruschlikon has been a leader in theological education among Baptists in Europe since its inception in 1949," Wagner said. "The fact that it will be stressing outreach probably will influence all of the European seminaries along this line."

Swedish Baptists launched a similar institute this fall at their seminary near Stockholm.

MasterLife also has contributed to enthusiasm for outreach, Wagner added. The discipleship training materials now are in 10 languages spoken in Europe. More than 1,000 church leaders have taken a MasterLife workshop since the first one was offered in 1982, and more than 3,500 church members have participated in the overall discipleship course.

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Student Pastorates Rewarding,
But Difficult To Obtain

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—Preachers who attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary 30 years ago remember student pastorates as an integral part of their seminary training.

Young preachers at seminary today realize the same need for experience but often have difficulty getting it.

The laws of supply and demand have changed the means of practical ministerial training. "There are more students looking than there are churches available," says Allen Reasons, associate director of church/minister relations for the Fort Worth, Texas, seminary. "In the past year, we had 62 requests for pastors and 250 students on file looking for pastorates."

Ed Seale, director of church/minister relations, cites two causes for the shift: On the demand side, many rural churches around Fort Worth have either merged with larger churches, ceased to function or called bivocational pastors. On the supply side, Southwestern's enrollment has more than doubled in the past 30 years. There are many more students seeking to serve churches in a fixed geographical area.

But the student pastorate itself has not changed, Reasons says. "Churches are still looking for the same thing—someone to go out and care."

David Wheeler is pastor of Corinth Baptist Church in Bonham, Texas. He searched two years before finding this pastorate. "I never thought I'd drive two and a half hours away," he admits.

Like most student pastors, Wheeler travels to his church field on the weekends only. He spends Saturday and Sunday afternoon visiting.

The country setting has been an education for Wheeler, who has always lived in cities. "People there like a different style of preaching," he says. "They like you to hammer something home to them. It's a whole different ballgame than preaching in town."

"It can be frustrating because there's not a lot of movement" in the services, Wheeler says. "But when there is a decision, it is really sincere. When ol' Joe gets saved, the whole community rejoices."

Stan Albright admits he had an easier time finding student pastorates but also knows the difficulties they can bring. Albright, now in his last semester of classes, is full-time pastor of Rolling Hills Baptist Church in Weatherford, Texas.

Before that he served a small country church in Fairview, Texas. "If you're willing to relocate, the opportunities (for pastorates) greatly multiply," he says.

While at Fairview, Albright and his family lived on the field. He drove in for classes every day and worked the early morning shift at United Parcel Service.

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Such a load is not uncommon for students with a desire to exercise their callings while studying. "I was willing to do it (be a pastor) wherever I could," Albright says.

Seale's concern for helping students get practical experience led him to start the "Adopt an Associate" program at Southwestern.

Through this new program, Seale and Reasons help students find positions as associates in churches of all sizes. The church is required to pay a minimal salary and must assign the associate specific duties.

The church gains additional staff, and the student gets needed experience.

But for those who find God's will in serving a small country church, things really are much the same as 30 years ago. Wheeler recalls walking into the parsonage on one of their first weeks at Bonham and finding a 3 lb. catfish swimming in the bathtub.

"Debbie came screaming out of the bathroom," he says.

But they passed the initiation. The next week the bathtub held a 20 lb. watermelon.



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