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87-76

Committee Recommends
SBC Stay With BJCPA

By Dan Martin

NASHVILLE (BP)—The Southern Baptist Convention will continue to be a member of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs if a recommendation of a special fact-finding committee is accepted in June.

A nine-member study committee has recommended that the 14.6-million-member SBC "continue to relate to the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs," a religious liberty-separation of church and state watchdog organization of nine Baptist groups in the United States and Canada.

The study committee, chaired by Gary F. Young of Phoenix, Ariz., has been studying the issue of Southern Baptist participation in the Baptist Joint Committee since September of 1986, when it was appointed to look into the relationship between the two groups.

During the 1986 annual meeting of the SBC in Atlanta, a retired Mobile, Ala., layman, M.G. (Dan) Daniels, made a motion to "remove the SBC from participation in the BJCPA and establish an exclusive Southern Baptist presence in Washington for the purpose of more truly reflecting our views."

Daniel's motion was the latest in a series of attacks on SBC participation in the BJCPA. The Baptist Joint Committee and its executive director, James M. Dunn, have been under increasing fire from more conservative Southern Baptists, generally over questions of style and the organization's perceived unresponsiveness to the SBC, particularly the BJCPA's opposition to the school prayer amendment.

Daniels' 1986 motion was referred to the Executive Committee for further study, with instruction that a report be made during the 1987 annual meeting in St. Louis.

The recommendation will be presented to a meeting of the SBC Executive Committee June 15 in advance of the 1987 annual meeting. If the 70-member committee accepts the recommendation, it will be presented to messengers at the annual meeting June 16, who then must vote to accept or reject the recommendation.

Young told Baptist Press the key to the recommendation is acceptance of a proposal to change SBC Bylaw 18, which governs the work and membership of SBC standing committees. The SBC relates to the BJCPA through the Public Affairs Committee, an 18-member standing committee.

In February, the special study committee recommended revision of Bylaw 18 in regard to the Public Affairs Committee. The revision was adopted by the Executive Committee and will be recommended to messengers at the annual meeting.

"The bottom line of our recommendation is that we will stay with the Baptist Joint Committee, but that our relationship with them will be changed because we are changing the makeup and constituency of the Public Affairs Committee," Young told Baptist Press.

A revision of Bylaw 18 was necessitated when the Baptist Joint Committee reorganized in October, creating a 54-member board and increasing SBC membership from 15 to 18.

Under the old bylaw, the Public Affairs Committee was made up of 15 members, of whom nine served by virtue of office as executives of SBC agencies, leaving only five slots to be filled by at-large members. The SBC president also was a voting member. Until recently, the PAC did not conduct separate meetings, and primarily served as the conduit through which the SBC funded and provided members for the BJCPA.

Under the revision, five agency executives will serve as board members -- the chief executives of the Executive Committee, the Home Mission Board, the Foreign Mission Board, the Baptist Sunday School Board and the Annuity Board. The president of the SBC also will be a voting member and the remaining 12 seats will be at-large representatives.

The executive of the SBC Christian Life Commission -- who had a seat under the old bylaw -- would become a non-voting ex-officio member under the revision.

Young said "the matter is now in the hands of the messengers to the convention as to the kind of representatives we will have," and noted the 1987 Committee on Boards has nominated people who will serve on the Public Affairs Committee, if the bylaw revision is adopted.

Another change in the bylaw is that it "encourages the Public Affairs Committee to coordinate its work through the BJCPA," but also specifies the group can "take action on motions and resolutions of the SBC upon which the BJCPA cannot agree and/or does not support."

In addition to recommending the relationship between the BJCPA and the SBC be retained through the revised Public Affairs Committee, the fact finding committee also included a recommendation that it "encourages the trustees of the SBC Christian Life Commission to continue the consideration of opening an office in Washington to deal with those appropriate moral and social concerns within its program statement and consistent with motions and resolutions adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention."

Young said: "We don't have the authority to tell the Christian Life Commission trustees what they should do, and that responsibility was not assigned to us. However, our findings indicated there is a need for a voice in Washington on moral and social concerns and that is why we offered them the encouragement."

"The Baptist Joint Committee deals primarily with religious liberty and separation of church and state matters, and I felt we could not deal with the matter referred to us for study without dealing with who would speak on these moral and social issues."

Young told Baptist Press the committee met eight times, including sessions with the staff of the Baptist Joint Committee and other organizational leaders who relate to the BJCPA, and an open hearing in which 22 persons testified for and against the Baptist Joint Committee.

In addition, Young said, he "received and processed about 250 pieces of correspondence, some 100 press clippings and hundreds of pages of documents. When I turn my materials over to the SBC Historical Commission, I will have the equivalent of five large notebooks full of data."

The nine-member committee, in addition, commissioned papers on the history and work of the Baptist Joint Committee, major issues in religious liberty and church state affairs and an integrated review of correspondence. The group also sent a questionnaire to 1,728 leaders in government and the Southern Baptist Convention concerning the work and image of the Baptist Joint Committee. Of those, he added, 635 were returned and correlated.

In reaching its conclusions, the committee issued a series of findings, which include:

-- There is strength in numbers and diversity, and the estimated 27 million Baptists who are members of the nine Baptist bodies making up the BJCPA "represent a greater potential influence" in Washington than do 14.6 million Southern Baptists.

-- There are a number of Baptist groups who do not participate in the BJCPA, and encouraged the Public Affairs Committee "to work through appropriate channels within the BJCPA to pursue the most effective participation of other Baptist bodies."

-- The BJCPA "has assisted Southern Baptists in some ways" such as supporting passage of the Equal Access legislation, protecting foreign mission interests, working on tax reform and minister's retirement programs and "providing information, education, research, counsel and advocacy to Southern Baptists on an individual, church, association, state and national level."

-- There are some things which have "created concern" among some Southern Baptists, including conducting conferences which are perceived to lack balance, making statements which are understood as personal attacks against individuals, making statements of personal opinion which have been interpreted as being the position of the BJCPA, and Executive Director Dunn's association with People for the American Way.

— There is need for the BJCPA to seek increased financial support from some member bodies.

— There is need for churches, associations and state conventions to inform Southern Baptists about religious liberty issues through the Baptist Joint Committee.

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Pressler Will Oppose
BJC Defunding Efforts

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Paul Pressler has promised to oppose any effort to defund the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs if messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention approve a proposed change in SBC bylaws at the annual meeting of the convention June 16-18.

The Houston appeals court judge, who has been a leader in the effort to turn the SBC in a more conservative direction, made the remarks to a group of pastors and laypeople in Richmond May 12. The Texan said he was in Virginia for the graduation of his daughter from Randolph Macon Women's College in Lynchburg and was making appearances at several meetings around the state.

Pressler, who has at times been a vocal critic of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and its executive director, James M. Dunn, was a member of a special nine-person study committee appointed by the SBC Executive Committee in September 1986 to study the relationship between the SBC and the BJCPA.

For several years, the BJCPA has been under fire by conservative Southern Baptists who have differed on religious liberty and church-state issues, particularly school prayer. A motion at the 1986 annual meeting of the SBC to withdraw Southern Baptist support from the agency led to the naming of the special committee, chaired by Gary F. Young, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Phoenix, Ariz.

The study committee proposed a change in Bylaw 18, which governs the SBC's Public Affairs Committee, which relates to the BJCPA, and is recommending the SBC continue to be a member of the nine-body religious liberty and separation of church and state watchdog organization.

Pressler said the proposed bylaw change "will allow Southern Baptists to express themselves more directly in the affairs of the Baptist Joint Committee. I have pledged myself, and I would urge your support, to adopt this bylaw amendment at the convention."

"I also pledge, if the bylaw is adopted, to do everything I can to keep a motion from being made to defund the Baptist Joint Committee. And if, unfortunately, there is a motion to defund the Baptist Joint Committee -- if the bylaw is passed -- I will do everything I can to defeat the motion," he added.

The Texas jurist told Baptist Press he "is delighted that nine of us from diverse perspectives could work together harmoniously to obtain a report that could be agreed on by everybody. I complement the chairman (Young) and every member of the committee for the spirit of cooperation that allowed this to occur."

Pressler said: "There have been grave concerns voiced by many Southern Baptists about certain matters related to the Baptist Joint Committee. These have been referred to in our report. On the other hand, the report indicates there are valid functions which a properly-run Baptist Joint Committee can fulfill. This report, in its entirety, will give Southern Baptists more say in the operations of the BJCPA, and that will make it more responsive to the desires of Southern Baptists."

He added there are several significant items in the report, including the encouragement of other member bodies to make more substantial contributions and the encouragement of the BJCPA to reach out to as many Baptist bodies as possible to "broaden the base" of the organization.

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In addition to Young and Pressler, members of the special study committee include Jayes Yates, pastor of First Baptist Church of Yazoo City, Miss.; Carolyn Miller, a schoolteacher from Huntsville, Ala.; Frank Ingraham, a Nashville attorney; Frank Lady, a Jonesboro, Ark., attorney, and Darrell W. Robinson, pastor of Dauphine Way Baptist Church of Mobile, Ala.

James Jones, pastor of Campbellsville (Ky.) Baptist Church, and David Maddox, chairman of the Executive Committee and a real estate developer from Fullerton, Calif., were ex-officio, but voting, members.

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(Contributing to this story were Robert Dilday, associate editor of the Religious Herald, newsjournal of the Baptist General Association of Virginia, and Dan Martin, news editor of Baptist Press.)

Arkansas/Mississippi Tie
For Top Acts Awards

By Orville Scott

Baptist Press
5/15/87

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—ACTS of Little Rock, Ark., and ACTS of Jackson, Miss., tied for top honors in the second annual ACTS Awards each receiving three awards.

ACTS, which celebrated its third anniversary at the awards presentation before 850 people in Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's Truett Auditorium, is beamed via satellite and cable 24 hours a day on 265 stations.

Christian humorist Jerry Clower of Yazoo City, Miss., received the Jimmy R. Allen Award, named for the president of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission which sponsors ACTS (American Christian Television System).

Clower was not able to receive the award in person, but he addressed the audience by videotape, praising ACTS for its quality.

Master of Ceremonies Jess Moody, pastor of First Baptist Church, Van Nuys, Calif., underscored the quality and influence of ACTS when he said, "ACTS is rising and catching a new source of power.

"Great things can be accomplished with volunteer help and very little money," said Moody who recalled that about 25 years ago his wife asked a Southern Baptist leader why Southern Baptists didn't have a national broadcasting network. The man responded that Southern Baptists don't have that kind of talent, said Moody.

"I wish he were here tonight to see what I've seen."

Allen, who led Southern Baptists to found the network three years ago, said the much larger number of entries and their quality is a sign that maturity is coming to ACTS.

"There is also a healthy and growing response from non-Southern Baptists who see the network as vital to the nation," said Allen.

An outstanding achievement award was presented to R. Chip Turner, state ACTS director for Louisiana Baptists, who told the audience, "There is no greater, bolder thrust that we could enter into in this day than ACTS network."

Turner helped organize the ACTS network with 33 channels in Louisiana. He also helped organize the Association of State ACTS Directors and is the group's first president.

The awards and recipients were: Best Promotional Spot, (tie) ACTS of Montgomery, Ala., and WLLBD TV-11, Lebanon, Tenn.; Best Christian Message Spot, Walnut Street Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky.; Best Spot Series, Morning View Baptist Church, Montgomery, Ala.; Best Spot of the Year, ACTS of Little Rock, Ark.;

Best Seasonal Special, ACTS of Jackson, Miss.; Best Musical Program, ACTS of Cleveland, Miss., and Mississippi Baptist Convention Board; Best Community Event Program, ACTS of Jackson, Miss.; Best Human Interest Program, ACTS of Jackson, Miss.; Best Missions/Evangelism, Worship Program, ACTS of Little Rock, Ark.; Best Program of the Year, ACTS of Hattiesburg, Miss.;

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Promotion, ACTS of Springdale, Ark.; Community Service (Cable) Delta ACTS Board, Cleveland, Miss.; Community Service (Broadcast), Channel 11, Lebanon, Tenn.; Affiliate of the Year (Cable) ACTS of Little Rock, Ark.; and Affiliate of the Year (Broadcast), Channel 40, Lubbock, Texas.

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Editor Roberts
Given Doctorate

Baptist Press
5/15/87

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. (BP)—John E. Roberts, editor of the South Carolina Baptist Courier, gave the commencement address at Gardner-Webb College May 16, charging the 358 graduates to make "work, play, hope, and give" the watch words in their lives.

The Baptist college awarded Roberts the doctor of humanities degree for his achievements in Christian journalism. Editor of the Baptist Courier for the past 21 years and dean of the editors of Baptist state papers, Roberts also has honorary doctorates from Furman University and the Baptist College at Charleston, S.C.

He is a Gardner-Webb and Furman graduate and was director of public relations for Gardner-Webb in 1954-60.

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'Religious Liberty In Review'
To Premiere On ACTS Network

Baptist Press
5/15/87

WASHINGTON (BP)—A television program showcasing the issue of religious liberty will premiere nationwide on the American Christian Television System at 8:30 p.m. (Eastern Daylight Time) Thursday, June 4.

Hosted by Richard T. McCartney, executive vice president of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, "Religious Liberty in Review" focuses on the biblical and historical basis for and modern-day implications of religious liberty and church-state separation.

Topics of discussion range from government intrusion into religion to the teaching of religion in public schools to the role of Christians in politics.

The 30-minute program features three Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs executives — James M. Dunn, executive director; Stan Hastey, associate executive director; and Oliver Thomas, general counsel.

An introduction to the talk-show format program is provided by Bill Moyers, nationally known television news correspondent and producer.

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