



- - BAPTIST PRESS

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87-131

Committee Didn't Discuss
Public Affairs Funds

By Toby Druin

HOUSTON (BP)--Discretionary use of funds budgeted for the Public Affairs Committee was implicit in the Southern Baptist Convention's approval of the committee's being able to act as a separate entity, a member of the SBC Executive Committee says.

But Paul Pressler, a Houston appeals court judge who was one of nine Executive Committee members who studied the convention's relationship with the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and recommended changes in Bylaw 18 regarding that relationship, said use of the funds never was discussed, per se, by the fact finding committee during its deliberations.

The bylaw change expanded and reconstituted the SBC Public Affairs Committee. It also said the PAC would "function as a separate committee from the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs serving the Southern Baptist Convention." The action encouraged the PAC "to coordinate its work through the BJCPA and to take action on motions and resolutions of the Southern Baptist Convention upon which the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs cannot agree and/or does not support."

During the first meeting of the reconstituted Public Affairs Committee in Nashville Aug. 20-21, a dispute arose over how much say-so the PAC has over the \$448,400 designated for "Public Affairs" in the 1987-88 Cooperative Program allocation budget approved by the SBC in its annual meeting in June. The PAC requested a written clarification from the Executive Committee.

The 1987 Book of Reports and convention Bulletin which presented the SBC Executive Committee's budget recommendation to the messengers at the annual meeting, specified only "Public Affairs," not "Public Affairs Committee" or "Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs," as the recipient of the money.

Heretofore, the funds for public affairs have flowed through the Public Affairs Committee to the BJCPA, a coalition of nine Baptist bodies, because the SBC cannot directly allocate funds to an agency for which it does not elect trustees or directors. The SBC elects 18 members -- its Public Affairs Committee -- of the 54-member BJCPA board.

During the August meeting of the PAC, the chairman of the fact-finding committee, Gary F. Young, told the PAC that the fact-finding committee did not recommend or intend to recommend that funding go to the PAC and that such action would ruin the "jointness" of the BJCPA. Young, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Phoenix, has rotated off the Executive Committee.

Pressler, however, told the Baptist Standard, newsjournal of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, in a telephone interview, that determination of use of the funds was implicit in the change in the bylaw giving the committee the ability to act separately from the BJCPA.

"How in the world do you have an agency that is told to operate as a separate agency with funds directed to go to it by the SBC without allowing them some use of the funds?" he asked.

Asked if he felt messengers to the June convention felt they were giving the PAC discretion to use the money as they saw fit, Pressler said, "I think that anybody who studies the situation should have been aware of it. I cannot say what anybody else was aware of."

The facts were, he said, that the convention changed the bylaw to allow the PAC to act as a separate entity "and you cannot operate as an entity without funding."

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"It's certainly what I understood would happen because there was no mention of the Baptist Joint Committee receiving funds," Pressler said.

"If you are planning to meet, you have to have money," he said. "If you are sending out a letter, you have to have money."

However, Pressler said the discretionary use of the funds never was discussed, per se, by the fact-finding committee, although he felt it was a "self-evident thing" and "absolutely implicit, because it would be a non-sequitor to create an entity that functions as a separate entity and then not give them any funds with which to operate."

Contacted by the Standard, other members of the fact-finding committee who would comment said the matter of use of the funds never was discussed in their deliberations.

James Yates, pastor of First Baptist Church of Yazoo City, Miss., and vice chairman of the fact-finding committee, said, "I never heard that (use of the funds) brought up. We did encourage the PAC to speak on those issues the Baptist Joint Committee didn't want to deal with, but to my recollection the money matter was never discussed."

Carolyn Miller, a layperson from Birmingham, Ala., said her interpretation of the bylaw change was to give the Public Affairs committee "wider" responsibility to "cover the whole gamut of public affairs." But she said she did not think the process of the funds going to the Joint Committee through the Public Affairs Committee had been changed.

Frank Ingraham, a Nashville attorney, declined comment until he has been able to check his notes on the various meetings the fact-finding committee conducted but said he did not feel the discretion granted to the PAC to act separately included use of the money.

Frank Lady, of Jonesboro, Ark., who is also an attorney, also declined specific comment, but said he felt the SBC constitution and business and financial plan would be the governing factors in settling the differences.

Darrell Robinson, pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala., said he did not recall the use of the funds being discussed in any of the panel's meetings.

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Taylor Leaves RTVC,
To Teach At Southern

By Dan Martin

Baptist Press
9/1/87

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Bob Taylor, senior vice president of programming services, has resigned from the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, the third senior official to leave the agency this summer.

Taylor, 53, who left the RTVC July 31 without another job, has since contracted to teach two courses at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in a cooperative effort between the seminary and the commission, similar to an arrangement between the RTVC and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's School of Christian Communication.

Taylor also will work with the seminary to produce programming for the Faith Channel, an interdenominational network to begin broadcasting Sept. 1, on the Storer cable system in Louisville, Ky. The Faith Channel is a cooperative effort between Kentuckiana Interfaith, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Louisville and ACTS/Southern Seminary.

The former RTVC official told Baptist Press he also "is seeking long-term employment possibilities" in the area.

Taylor joined two other senior vice president who left the RTVC this summer: Jim Edwards, senior vice president of financial services and -- for a time -- chief operating officer, left in June to become academic vice president of Union University in Jackson, Tenn. Bill Nichols, senior vice president of affiliate relations, left in July to join a San Antonio, Texas, advertising agency which will attempt to sell time on the ACTS network.

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Two other key managers also have left: John Cobb Smith, director of TV operations, and Mike Mooney, director of engineering services, both left to join the Automotive Satellite Television Network in Allen, Texas.

Taylor's duties at the RTVC have been assigned to Bob Thornton, production director, and Larry Johnson, who succeeded Mooney as director of engineering.

RTVC Executive Vice President Richard T. McCartney told Baptist Press: "It is always difficult to compensate for the loss of long-term staff members. Fortunately, the RTVC is blessed with many talented people who are able to step in and shoulder added responsibilities.

"As a result, we have elected not to fill the vacated vice presidential positions immediately. The major work of getting the ACTS network started and the tremendous engineering, production and programming load that involved is now over. Daily operation of the network and a reduced level of new production should enable us to operate at a reduced staffing level."

McCartney added the departure of the senior officials will result in "an annual reduction of more than \$250,000 in our personnel budget."

He added the seven major departments -- production, support services, engineering, finance, development, affiliate relations and radio -- will relate to McCartney during the interim.

"The staff has just completed work on an operating budget for 1987-88 which will be reviewed by trustees when they meet Sept. 14-15, which will allow for a slightly increased TV production schedule while operating within available resources," he said, adding the budget is expected to again be around \$9 million.

McCartney said the commission currently has slightly more than 100 employees on the payroll, including some part-time workers. "No further reductions in staff are anticipated in the next year's budget," he said.

Taylor declined to discuss his reasons for leaving the Fort Worth, Texas-based agency, but other sources said Taylor was increasingly frustrated with the management of the RTVC and its television network. Other sources said Taylor wished to return to his hometown of Louisville, where he was station manager of WHAS-TV before joining the RTVC in 1978.

He also declined to comment when asked about the reports. He told Baptist Press, "There were family pulls back to the Louisville area, but they were not the most compelling reasons for my leaving Fort Worth or returning to Louisville."

He also acknowledged he had left the RTVC without other employment, only accepting a part-time, nine-month appointment as an adjunct professor at Southern Seminary in late August, nearly a month after leaving the RTVC.

Of his leaving, Taylor told Baptist Press: "I felt that with the limitations of the funding there, that the RTVC operation for the foreseeable future would be little more than a holding action. That left little challenge for a person like me who is interested in television production. I still want to be used in spreading the gospel through the medium of television."

Currently, only two shows are being produced on a regular basis by the RTVC for inclusion on ACTS, Cope, a call-in psychological help show, and Life Today, a talk show starring Jimmy R. Allen, RTVC president.

When Baptist Press asked Taylor about reports he was increasingly frustrated during the past several years over lack of funds and the management of the agency and ACTS, which was launched in the summer of 1984 and has had financial ups and downs, Taylor responded, "I have decided that the best thing I can say is 'no comment'."

Court's Textbook Ruling Reversal
No Surprise To Mobile Baptists

By Mark Baggett

MOBILE, Ala. (BP)--Mobile Baptists on both sides of the dispute say they are not surprised at the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals' reversal of an order banning textbooks in the Mobile school system.

Federal District Judge Brevard Hand had banned 44 books in an order last year, claiming the books promoted the "godless religion of secular humanism" and censored the role of religion in American history.

In an Aug. 26, 1987, decision, a three-judge panel of the Atlanta federal appeals court ordered Hand to dismiss the lawsuit, saying Hand's ruling turned government neutrality under the First Amendment "into an affirmative obligation to speak about religion."

Despite the national media attention the case received, Baptist laypeople and pastors in Mobile found the court of appeals decision predictable.

Sue Webster, a member of Cottage Hill Baptist Church and one of the more than 600 plaintiffs who sought the original ban, said she was not surprised.

"We had anticipated to lose at this level, given the reputation of this court and their attitude toward Judge Hand," Webster said. "One of the things we have butted our heads against has been the powerful influence of the American Civil Liberties Union and the People for the American Way on textbook committees.

"When the ACLU is deciding for the states what belongs in public school textbooks, it is time for the people of the state to stand up against biased education," she said.

Although she had not seen the court's opinion, Webster said she expects the plaintiffs to appeal, saying she would be shocked "if we were denied due process."

Bill Whitfield, pastor of Cypress Shores Baptist Church in Mobile, also expected the latest ruling.

"There was too much media propaganda in line with the humanist position," said Whitfield, a member of the textbook committee for Mobile County schools. "The media has been negative toward Judge Hand's decision, making him look like a book burner.

"As a Christian citizen, I don't see how any fair-minded person could read these books and not see the emphasis given to humanism and the extensive censorship of Christianity in our histories."

The state board of education, which was the original defendant in the suit, was joined by 12 Mobile families as intervenors, defending the board's right to choose the state's textbooks.

Malcolm and Corinne Howell, members of Hillcrest Baptist Church and intervenors in the case, believed the plaintiffs should have addressed the textbook issue in the proper forum -- the state's textbook committee -- instead of in the courts.

"The case has a positive side," said Corinne Howell, who teaches third grade in the public school system. "It has made publishers more sensitive to see that the culture and heritage of this country are brought to the forefront in textbooks."

She noted that in the months following Judge Hand's order, "students realized how quickly the judge's decision could affect them."

The Howells' pastor, George Mason, also was "pleased" with the appeals court's ruling "because it puts the onus of responsibility where it ought to be -- on the state board and not in the courts."

But Mason thinks the ruling will mean little if the appeals court merely was confirming the quality of the textbooks.

"Both sides agree the textbooks were weak," he said. "Plaintiffs simply failed to make a strong enough case between the so-called movement of secular humanism and the lack of emphasis in textbooks on traditional religious values.

"Simply because a number of humanists exist and simply because the textbooks express some of their values doesn't necessarily mean that the books are participants in a conspiracy to undermine the values of the plaintiffs," Mason said.

Webster and her group's aim has been to get textbook publishers to acknowledge the weaknesses of their products: "One of the joys of this case is to hear that textbook publishers and textbook committees are holding themselves more accountable and are reading the texts more thoroughly and accurately.

"We want quality education for children, and quality education means truth. In this case, truth has been distorted, and our children have been denied the truth of our heritage.

"I am afraid this ruling will roll this back."

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CORRECTIONS: Two items in the Aug. 28 issue of Baptist Press need to be corrected.

(1) The last paragraph of the story titled "Texas CLC Opposes Bork Endorsement" should read as follows:

"Because of the grave implications of the Public Affairs Committee's endorsement, we call upon the SBC Executive Committee to review these and other actions by the Public Affairs Committee which may violate traditional Baptist polity and the bylaws which govern the committee's program assignment and operation," the statement concludes.

(2) The headline of the final story should read:

Bork: Court's Religion Rulings
Have Been 'Rigidly Secularist'

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Retirees Prefab Homes
For Tornado Victims

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
9/1/87

DALLAS (BP)--About 50 Texas Baptist retired couples are laying the groundwork for a massive rebuilding project in Saragosa, the western Texas town destroyed by a tornado May 22.

Texas Baptist Men Retiree Builders have set up a prefabricating operation at a local cotton gin. On Aug. 25-26, they were producing one truss for a house every 10 minutes.

The prefabricated building components will be used by volunteers in an around-the-clock building effort on Labor Day weekend, Sept. 4-7. About 450 volunteers are expected to participate in the construction project, said to Bob Dixon, executive director of Texas Baptist Men.

One house already has been completed by Texas Baptists from Waco, Texas, and another four currently are being built by volunteers from First Baptist Church of Pecos, Texas, Mennonite volunteer builders from Kansas and individual Texas Baptists from around the state.

Six additional homes have been approved for rebuilding by the Red Cross, and 10 more are expected to be certified soon. Materials for most of the rebuilt homes are being purchased with Red Cross funds. Other materials have been donated.

The Texas Baptist disaster relief unit, an 18-wheel tractor trailer rig with mobile field kitchen, is at the building site. Female retirees under the supervision of a Texas Baptist disaster relief team are staffing the field kitchen, which is in operation to feed builders.

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The Texas Baptist Men Aviation Fellowship plans to operate a shuttle service on Labor Day weekend for volunteer workers from the nearby Midland Airport to Saragosa. The Texas Baptist Men Medical Fellowship will staff a first aid station at the building site.

First Baptist Church of Balmorhea, Texas, First Baptist of Pecos and North Temple Baptist Church in Pecos have agreed to house volunteers in their facilities on Labor Day weekend. A section of the nearby cotton gin has been converted into a bunk house for use by some volunteers.

A trailer park has been set up directly across the road from the building site exclusively for Texas Baptist Men Retiree Builders.

"Our only appeal at this time is for prayer," said Dixon. "Pray for the volunteer builders. Pray for their safety and for strength as we seek to show the love of Jesus to the people of Saragosa."

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Care About Friends,
Chester Swor Urges

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
9/1/87

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--An octogenarian celebrating the 60th anniversary of his first Student Conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center urged college students to go back to their campuses "resolved as never before that you are going to care for friends," Christians and non-Christians.

Chester Swor, a well-known speaker and writer from Jackson, Miss., attended his first student conference at Ridgecrest with 95 other participants, only the second year a conference for college students was held.

He urged the 1,600 participants in this year's conference to be "very, very grateful for the Baptist student ministries of our convention. The Baptist Student Union -- very small 60 years ago -- has come to be the greatest denominational outreach to the campus in America."

The challenge and opportunity facing today's college students, said Swor, is "to share Christ with friends who don't know him and to share your continuing spiritual growth with Christian friends of yours who need to grow."

Interspersing his message with real-life experiences of college students he has known through the years, Swor emphasized, "When a Christian begins to care about an unsaved friend, it is amazing what can begin to happen."

To students who do not have a strong attitude of caring about whether friends are Christians, Swor said, "You need to pray that God will do to you whatever needs to be done to give you a caring heart."

With Christian friends, Swor urged students to share personal experiences of faith, insights they have gained from Bible study and evidences of spiritual growth.

"Learn more and more the truth of God's word," said Swor. "Pray, for prayer is power. Prayer brings victory, and prayer changes things."

To be effective at developing friendships and demonstrating Christian caring, Swor said, alertness, a friendly face, intuitive awareness of needs, sympathy and patience are needed. Other needed qualities are love, forgiveness, a sense of humor, tact and a willingness to sacrifice for the sake of friendship, he added.

"The most personal expectation of Jesus Christ for those he came to save is to show our friends that we care for them," said Swor.

Acknowledging that he is 80 years old, Swor was quick to emphasize that he does not feel his age. "How in the world can I 80 be when down in my heart I'm just 21?" he quipped.

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Southwestern Seminary Named One Of Top
Four Schools For Youth Ministers

By Mark Wingfield

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary has been named one of four schools in the United States "where youth ministry counts" according to a national interdenominational publication reviewed by 55,000 youth ministers.

The September issue of Group magazine lists Southwestern among "a small handful of colleges and seminaries" that offer "respectable youth ministry education." This nomination comes in an article titled "Are Christian Colleges Doing Enough to Educate Youth Ministers?"

"Youth ministry is a second-class citizen in Christian colleges and seminaries," the article states. "Only a handful of Christian schools treat youth ministry as a full citizen in the religious-curriculum family."

In preparing the article, author Gregg Piburn surveyed 567 Christian colleges, universities and seminaries "to determine how they deal with youth ministry." Responses came back from only 110 schools, including Southwestern in Fort Worth, Texas.

Of the respondents, 43 said they offered a youth ministry bachelor's degree, 19 offered a master's degree and six offered a doctorate. However, the author said that through follow-up telephone interviews he discovered these schools defined youth education as anything from a degree concentration to "a token appearance in the required courses."

Southwestern offers a master of arts in religious education degree with a youth education concentration and a doctor of education degree with youth education major. Southwestern teaches 18 courses in youth education.

Currently, about 200 students are enrolled in youth education programs at Southwestern, said Wes Black, assistant professor of youth education. Black and Phil Briggs, professor of youth education, devote their full teaching loads to youth courses.

The Group article quotes William Bell of Dallas Baptist University as saying graduates of Southern Baptist universities do not expect to do youth ministry all their lives. "It's an evolving part of their ministerial careers," he said. "Few feel they'll be in youth ministry long. I know very few 50-year-old youth ministers."

Black disagrees: "I run across a lot of students who do feel a definite lifetime call to youth ministry. They plan to stay in youth ministry and don't plan to use it as a stepping stone."

Southwestern teaches that youth ministry can be a fulfilling lifetime calling, Black said, noting, "We teach that youth ministers are not pastors in waiting."

Black also said Southwestern is not the only Southern Baptist seminary offering youth education courses. However, due to a larger enrollment, Southwestern is able to maintain a wider variety of courses, he said.

The other three top schools for youth education listed by Group are Eastern College, St. Davids, Pa.; Liberty University, Lynchburg, Va.; and Gordon College/Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Wenham, Mass.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary

Campuses Make Commitments
To Evangelism Projects

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
9/1/87

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Through Bible study groups, dialogues, Scripture distribution, visitation and special events, Southern Baptist college students on hundreds of campuses will be actively involved in sharing their Christian faith during the 1987-88 school year.

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A national goal of commitments from 1,000 Baptist campus ministries to conduct evangelistic projects has been set as part of ReachOut 87/88, a year of special emphasis on winning college students to Christ coordinated by the national student ministries department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

While an exact figure is not yet available, the number of commitments is nearing 1,000, said Brad Gray, national student ministries consultant in missions and evangelism.

To prepare for the evangelism projects, students are participating in witness training. More than 1,500 attending the Student Conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center received four hours of witnessing training in special witnessing seminars.

"Today's college students have a keen interest in sharing their faith, but their confidence is not high," said Gray, who coordinated the seminars. "What we are trying to do is help them see they have something to share through their lives and their personal testimonies."

Through the seminar, students learn the importance of cultivating relationships with non-Christians and looking for opportunities through the relationships to be witnesses. They also received help in looking at a variety of evangelism methods and choosing those with which they feel more comfortable, Gray said.

To be effective witnesses, Gray said, students need emotional support, training and viable witnessing opportunities.

"When these three things come together, students witness," said Gray. "Students probably impact more of their peers than any other group of people."

Phil Nelson, director of student ministries at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale and a seminar leader at Ridgecrest, conducted his first campus witnessing seminar in February 1987 with 12 students.

"All 12 came away changed in their personal commitment to evangelism," said Nelson. He has since conducted seminars in three churches in the Carbondale area and has two others scheduled.

On campus, Nelson will lead a seminar over Labor Day weekend as preparation for an interdenominational dialogue on campus later in the month.

"Our students will have been trained in developing meaningful relationships, and through this emphasis a consciousness of Christ will have been raised on campus," said Nelson.

During the school year, a lifestyle evangelism group will meet weekly on campus. Its goal is unapologetically to lead students to make professions of faith in Christ, said Nelson.

Gray said one goal of ReachOut 87/88 is to lay a foundation whereby ongoing programs of evangelism can be developed and expanded on campuses and in churches.

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Coads Plant For Harvest
Of Churches In Mali

By Scott Collins

Baptist Press
9/1/87

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--After a day of ministry in Mali, Africa, Norman Coad goes home and takes a shower. Besides removing the dirt of the famine-stricken land, the shower also washes out the pain and human suffering Coad has seen that day.

Coad's wife, Beverly, handles the pressure differently. "I just weep," she said.

More than half the Coads' 15-year career with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board have been spent in countries suffering from drought -- first in Burkina Faso and now in Mali.

The Coads spent the past year in Fort Worth, Texas, where he is working on a doctor of ministry degree at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. But even in the comfort of their Texas home, the Coads replayed vivid images of death in Africa.

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"Every single day you are faced with death and hunger," she said. "Every old man and old woman are your grandparents, every child is my child. You just can't live in that type of environment without doing something. I could not have stayed there if in some way I couldn't minister to human needs."

So rather than leave Africa, the Coads decided to do something.

Although assigned to Burkina Faso as music missionaries, the Coads didn't take long to realize music was not the country's major need. People were dying every day from starvation.

He began traveling to the bush around the capital city establishing water resource projects. Soon he was teaching the villagers to dig their own wells.

All this time, Mrs. Coad was teaching music to 75 students, mostly Muslims. Five students accepted Christ and now are church leaders.

When Southern Baptists began work in Mali, the Coads' pioneering spirit seemed perfect. Since their appointment, he had earned a degree in theology from Southwestern, which allowed them to become official church developers.

But again the Coads were overwhelmed with human needs in their new country.

He recalled the teaching of Cal Guy, distinguished professor of missions emeritus at Southwestern. "He said to find out what God is doing and where the Holy Spirit is moving and latch onto it," Coad said. "My job as a servant is to find what the Lord is doing and do it."

The Coads are perhaps best known in Mali for the responsibility they carried in distributing grain that fed 1.3 million people in 1984 and 1985. That grain distribution has given the Baptist mission a good image, Mrs. Coad said.

Mali citizens sometimes refer to the Baptist mission as "Makarikelaw," which means "the people who are so deeply moved by compassion when they see the suffering of others that they do all in their power to try to alleviate it."

The Coads see their work in church development and meeting human needs as the same. "We never separate the gospel from doing good works. Faith and works -- it's so natural," he said.

And that combination of faith and works really does work. In the area where he first began ministering in Burkina Faso, eight churches existed. Today there are more than 40 churches, and 1,000 new converts are baptized annually.

Now that the Coads have returned to Mali, they will begin another innovative ministry in connection with his doctoral project. They will live with Africans for three days a week. She will cook over three rocks. The couple will dress like the Mali people. And when the Muslims answer the 5 a.m. call to prayer, he plans to get a mat and pray to God.

Their goal is to establish house churches in the Africans' own surroundings. The use of house churches is a low-key approach to witnessing, said Betty Kay Abell, the Foreign Mission Board's associate area director for West Africa.

Witnessing through family courtyards and neighborhoods is likely to be more effective than through a church building because Islamic law prohibits members of that religion from attending services in a Christian church.

Although this method would appear to be effective, it is new in Mali and therefore has no record of failure or success, Abell said. So the results will be determined by prayer, Coad said: "'Bless the missionaries' is not enough. We need spiritual warfare."

Before leaving Southwestern, the Coads enlisted 500 prayer warriors. "You don't know their names," Coad said. "They're just people who spend a lot of time at home and in church praying."

Those prayers remind the Coads "that we really are not in control. God is in control."

(Anita Bowden of the SBC Foreign Mission Board also contributed to this article.)

Don't Waste Life,
Singles Warned

By Charles Willis

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--"Single adults who have their lives on hold, waiting for a prince or Princess charming to come over the horizon could waste a life that way," a national student leader told participants in the Student Conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

Carolyn Teague, a consultant in Bible study and discipleship for the national student ministries department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, said singles are "mobile people who could be on mission as no other persons could be."

Singles should be giving first priority to seeking God rather than a spouse, she said, citing mission opportunities where single people can be involved.

"There is the possibility that you could take vacation time to help in ministry needs," she said, "or you might take six months off from your job to work in another country."

She suggested singles contact the Southern Baptist Home and Foreign Mission boards to inquire about short-term mission opportunities or write to the embassies of foreign countries to inquire about the greatest needs in those countries. Information on student ministry needs in the United States is available from the national student ministries staff, she added.

Teague, who is single, said that in one place she lived a dozen single people decided to move to the largest apartment complex in the city to meet post-graduates they might be able to reach for Christ.

"We held parties and went to their parties to meet them," she recalled. "Then we introduced them to Christ through short-term evangelistic Bible studies."

"When the depths of loneliness strike, think of whom you can serve," she also suggested.

Her personal method for overcoming occasional lonely times is to buy flowers, take them to a hospital and ask at the nurses' station who has not had a visitor. Many times, she said, she is directed to a person who is terminally ill.

Students who anticipate a period of living as single adults to "keep your lives active with a strategy and goals," she urged.

She suggested setting learning, health, spiritual, social, vocational and financial goals.

"People tend to like being with other people who know where they are going," she said. "Through involvement in purposeful living, we can widen the breadth of our friendships."

Singles seeking purpose in life should "see the value of the past and the challenge of the future but seize the opportunities of today," she said.