



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Alvin C. Shackelford, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Marv Knox, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 720-0550
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Stan L. Hasteley, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

September 16, 1988

88-149

Southern Baptist agency drops
surgeon general's AIDS report

By Marv Knox

N-CO

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has stopped distributing the "Surgeon General's Report on AIDS."

The ethics agency voted to pull the AIDS report during its annual meeting Sept. 13-14 in Nashville.

Commissioners also dropped a pamphlet that favors abolition of capital punishment and heard a warning against the way the CLC uses the terms "hunger," "peace," "race relations" and "poverty."

The AIDS report, prepared by U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, had been reprinted and distributed by the CLC in a 28-page booklet.

A CLC-drafted foreword to the booklet says: "Warning! This pamphlet contains explicit language related to physical anatomy and human reproduction and should be used by responsible adults. The CLC has reprinted this report as a service to concerned Christians, not as a guide to Christian morality."

The motion to stop distribution was adopted by the full board without discussion. But Alma Ruth Morgan, a homemaker from Bartlesville, Okla., and the commissioner who made the motion, told Baptist Press the document is not strong enough.

Koop, a conservative Presbyterian, spoke at the CLC annual seminar in March 1987. In that meeting, he noted his report already had drawn criticism from other conservative Christians, particularly because it called for stepped-up sex education in schools.

But he insisted sex education for young people and AIDS education for the general public is vital: "We must be very clear about this disease in at least two respects. It is spreading among more Americans, and it is killing more Americans as it spreads."

"Our bottom line is there's better material," Morgan said of the decision to drop the report. "We're not knocking Koop. We're going for total abstinence; no pamphlet printed or mailed by the Christian Life Commission should promote anything except sex within marriage."

The Koop report fails because it does not mention morals or a sense of right and wrong and does not define what a sex partner is, she added.

"Also, there is no mention of condom-failure rate," Morgan said. "They are saying now it could be as high as 30 percent to 50 percent in homosexual activity."

Commissioners believe the surgeon general's report "contains assumptions about sexual morality" and does not reflect "CLC standards concerning heterosexuality and sex within marriage," said Richard Land, newly elected CLC executive director.

Commissioners also were influenced by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's decision not to distribute the report, Land said.

The commissioners instructed the staff "to give information about AIDS included in the surgeon general's report without compromising our position about moral sex being between a man and a woman within marriage," he added.

During the 1987 meeting, Koop challenged the CLC to "write the definitive sex education curriculum." He said: "No one is better equipped to be in the vanguard of this important initiative than you are. Do it according to your standards. ... It will compete for the minds of your children, and someday you will be able to say, 'We achieved this health goal for our people, and we did it without abandoning our tradition or our beliefs.'"

The capital punishment pamphlet, part of the CLC's "Issues and Answers" series, likewise was pulled from circulation without debate by the full board.

The promotion committee, which has oversight of pamphlet production, proposed that the capital punishment piece be dropped because it urges Southern Baptists to work for the abolition of the death penalty.

"I sympathize with the commissioners' concern," Land told Baptist Press. "Like many Southern Baptists, I was offended by the statement that we should work for the abolition of capital punishment. I don't believe that; I don't believe a majority of Southern Baptists believe that."

Some issues raised by the pamphlet "need to be said ... and would be included in a new pamphlet," Land noted, citing the document's contention that the death penalty has been applied inequitably and that Christians should work to eliminate such injustices.

"But to extrapolate that Southern Baptists should fight to abolish capital punishment is not justifiable -- neither by New Testament nor Southern Baptist standards," he said.

"Support for capital punishment as a legitimate option of civil magistrates is not to be equated with unqualified support for capital punishment as it has been applied in our culture," he noted, adding Christians can support the statute while striving to eliminate inconsistencies in its application.

Commissioner Curtis W. Caine Sr., a medical doctor from Jackson, Miss., had a different inconsistency in mind when he warned his colleagues about the use of "traditional words used to deal with programs of this commission."

Speaking of "race relations," Caine said: "We have to be very careful that we do not get caught in the trap that is closing in around us about apartheid in South Africa, which doesn't exist anymore and was beneficial when it did, because it meant separate development.

"We have to be very careful that we don't be caught up in the endorsement of -- quote, 'the reverend,' unquote -- Martin Luther King." He called the martyred civil rights leader a fraud.

Caine also cautioned against use of the term "world hunger," saying, "Starvation has been used since time immemorial to control people." He cited communist regimes in the Soviet Union and Ethiopia as examples and claimed, "The first communist cell in the U.S. was the U.S. Department of Agriculture."

Of "peace," he said: "If you look in the English/communist dictionary, you see 'peace' means anything that promotes communism. ... Using 'world peace' may be endorsing one world government, ... one world educational system, ... one world money and ... one world atheist religious system."

And of "poverty," he added: "Sometimes Christians who are soft-hearted steal from those who have and give to those who have not. That is not Christian."

Commissioners responded with silence to Caine's discourse. Land later told Baptist Press he believes nobody responded to Caine because commissioners were grieved and embarrassed.

"They were grieved that a commissioner would believe this way and embarrassed that he would say such things," Land said. "It was clear to all commissioners that this is an isolated opinion not shared by anyone on the board."

As proof, he pointed to his 23-2 election the preceding day following his "extremely forthright" statements supporting racial equality. Land added, "We ought to listen to Dr. Caine, to see why he feels that way in order to change his mind."

CLC vote approves
\$1 million budget

By Marv Knox

N-10

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission approved a 1988-89 budget of \$1,017,150 during its annual meeting Sept. 13-14 in Nashville.

The budget, which goes into effect Oct. 1, anticipates \$860,150 from the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program, the unified budget that supports the work of 19 Southern Baptist organizations.

Other anticipated income involves designated gifts, \$10,000; revenue from sale of literature and other products, \$93,000; conference registration fees, \$14,000; and reimbursements for work performed and expenditures, \$40,000.

The CLC expects to spend \$293,950 on its program and promotional efforts. These include production of educational products; promotion of materials; conferences and workshops; six "special initiatives" for promoting and providing materials for the CLC-related emphases on the Southern Baptist Convention calendar; and publication of the CLC magazine, Light.

The budget calls for spending \$564,179 on staff and commissioners' expenses, such as staff salaries and benefits, commission meetings and travel. It calls for \$82,660 in office expenses and \$76,361 in general expenses, which include an audit, reserve funds, moving three new staff members to Nashville and miscellaneous expenses.

The general expense account also includes \$50,904 in debt carried over from the 1987-88 budget.

That debt is "a consequence of an unusual set of factors, including severance packages, decline in material sales and expenses involved in an unusually heavy transition of staff," explained newly elected Executive Director Richard Land. Because those causes are unusual, the CLC does not anticipate the debt will reoccur, he added.

The budget for the year ending Sept. 30 is \$1,040,600.

Looking to the future, commissioners voted to request \$1,103,157.50 from the Cooperative Program for the 1989-90 fiscal year.

Commissioners also focused on several recommendations suggested by the CLC promotion committee. In those actions, they:

-- Authorized the committee to study commission pamphlets, looking at overlap and marketability of its three series and examining the feasibility of some shorter series.

-- Clarified a CLC bylaw on production, suggesting that Land "recommend to the promotion committee the review, revision or replacement of any Christian Life Commission materials."

-- Called for "an increased focus on personal morality," with information on anger, envy, covetousness, gluttony, lust, pride and sloth.

-- Authorized production of new "signed" pamphlets on abortion, the health-care delivery system, alcohol and other drug use, legalism and relativism, ministerial ethics, AIDS and racial equality. A signed pamphlet carries the author's name.

-- Authorized development of resources for four Sundays on the denominational calendar relating to alcohol/drug abuse, the sanctity of human life, world hunger and race relations.

-- Recommended that the board issue a statement, to be written by Land, "expressing our concerns regarding federal legislation on child care."

-- Urged that the CLC "inform Southern Baptists of biblically sound resources in addition to resources of Southern Baptist Convention agencies."

Commissioners also ratified two proposals from their program committee. Those actions:

--more--

-- Gave new CLC Executive Director Richard Land, working with the CLC executive committee, "latitude to cancel or continue the annual seminar and to make any adjustments necessary concerning personnel invited to the seminar."

The commission's annual seminar, held since the early 1960s, focuses on specific ethical issues each year.

-- Authorized conferences on the CLC's six special-emphasis days; AIDS; gambling; youth alcohol use, drug abuse and sexuality; and major moral issues challenging college students.

The same recommendation also authorized the CLC to hold a congressional prayer breakfast in Washington next January and to help Southern Baptists "respond to pornography in general and 'The Last Temptation of Christ' in particular" through local and state meetings.

In other business, commissioners:

-- Delayed a 5 percent cost-of-living salary adjustment for CLC employees "until the (CLC's) finances are out of the red."

-- Agreed to hold a special called board meeting after the first of next year and at that time or next September to vote on "a second regular semi-annual board meeting."

-- Changed two bylaws. One allows the chairman or executive director to call executive committee meetings. The other clarifies the term of service and duties of the chairman.

-- Elected officers: Joe W. Atchison, a director of Baptist associational missions from Rogers, Ark., chairman; C. Nolan Phillips, pastor from Middletown, Ohio, vice chairman; Alma Ruth Morgan, a homemaker from Bartlesville, Okla., recording secretary; and Land, treasurer.

--30--

CLC commissioners close meeting; won't say why

By Dan Martin

N-LO

Baptist Press
9/16/88

NASHVILLE (BP)--Trustees of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission met behind closed doors for more than six hours during their annual meeting Sept. 13-14, but declined to say why.

When commissioners voted to go into executive session, Vice Chairman Joe Atchison, of Rogers, Ark., made the motion "because of the nature of our discussion dealing with personalities and because of the desire for the board to have freedom of expression."

Although none of those involved would talk about what was discussed, the move to close the meeting came just as the commissioners were to discuss the report of the CLC executive committee, a six-member group which meets "ad interim."

One of the actions taken by the executive committee was negotiation of the resignation and severance pay package for N. Larry Baker, who resigned as executive director-treasurer June 10. The committee has met at least three times since then, June 13, Aug. 11 and Sept. 1.

Commission records show Baker, who had been under fire during the 16 months he headed the agency, received a severance pay package of \$41,835.45 and title to a 1984 Oldsmobile.

The committee also dealt with fiscal operation both before and after Baker left, the interim operation of the agency and the performance of Foy Valentine, who became "development officer" after his March 1987 resignation as executive.

Executive committee members also, according to the minutes, discussed the issue that the CLC will end the fiscal year \$50,000 in the red. Baptist Press was told the shortfall is the result of a combination of overspending, declining income and severance packages, although the question was never discussed in open session.

One commissioner said the commission was "anxious that we not hang this albatross" around the neck of Richard Land, who was elected executive director-treasurer of the agency earlier in the meeting. The commissioner did not specify what the "albatross" was.

--more--

One thing commissioners did discuss during the closed meeting was the calling of a second meeting of the full board of trustees. The action was announced in open session, but the rationale for the meeting -- which will cost \$15,000 to \$20,000 -- was not publicly discussed.

Executive committee minutes indicate that at the Sept. 1 meeting members did not "deem it necessary or advisable" to have more than one board meeting per year, but "in view of current happenings, if the CLC does, in fact, elect a new executive director at its September annual meeting, it may be wise to have another full board meeting some time in the spring."

Secretary Rudolph C. Yakym Jr., a stockbroker from South Bend, Ind., announced trustees had voted to hold a second meeting, but did not comment further.

The sessions were closed for slightly more than four hours during the Sept. 13 plenary session, and for an hour and 50 minutes in the Sept. 14 plenary session.

When the board went into closed session, Chairman Fred Lackey of Athens, Ala., indicated a statement would be released when open session resumed, but when the meeting was opened, Lackey moved into other discussion.

Baptist Press asked Lackey if he would make a statement. He said he would when the meeting was over. However, he surrendered the gavel to new Chairman Atchison and left the meeting about 15 minutes before adjournment.

Lackey, pastor of First Baptist Church of Athens, was contacted as he was leaving the Southern Baptist Convention building. "I'm not going to comment. I have been asked not to comment, and I am just not going to comment," he said.

Atchison, a director of Baptist associational missions, told Baptist Press: "An executive session is privileged communication. There is no comment at this time." He declined to say what the topic of the meeting had been and said he was silent on the advice of the commission's attorney, James P. Guenther of Nashville.

Land, who apparently will inherit whatever problem took the commission into closed meeting for more than six hours, said Guenther "has defined executive session as privileged communication, and privileged communication to me means it is privileged to the members who are on the board."

Guenther told Baptist Press: "I regularly defend the idea that Southern Baptist agencies should do their work in the sunshine, in open sessions. Baptists have a right to know. Candor and openness enhances trust, and everything Baptists do in cooperation with each other is based on trust.

"The Southern Baptist Convention elected the trustees of the CLC and vested in them the authority to manage that agency. The convention expected them to use their best judgment. They have a duty to act in ways which are in the best interests of the commission.

"In this instance, the trustees were faced with matters of great sensitivity. It was their best judgment that they could reach the most prudent decision on these matters, be fair to all concerned and best serve the interests of the commission and the Southern Baptist Convention by meeting in executive session."

In regard to their executive session action calling a second meeting, Land said the matter "just came up" while the board was in executive session and did not take action on the second board meeting in open session "because we didn't want to have the press running in and out."

It wasn't "privileged communication" nor did it relate to "personalities" or matters of "great sensitivity," acknowledged Land, who for 18 months worked in Texas state government, where a "Sunshine Law" specifies only a very narrow range of items may be dealt with in closed meetings.

He said he "just never thought about" the propriety of doing other business in executive session: "That's just where it happened to come up. I asked the commission for a second meeting because we have two staff vacancies and I didn't want to wait until next year for approval (of staff members)."

Both Land and Atchison said they are "satisfied" with the way the commission had transacted business, but declined to comment when asked if the second meeting of the commission will deal with the "matter of great sensitivity" they were discussing.

"It is possible," said Atchison, "but there are other things that will be dealt with."

Land commented, "Out of respect for my fellow commissioners and their understanding of the executive session, I am not going to comment on that aspect of it."