



## - - BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE  
SBC Executive Committee  
901 Commerce #75  
Nashville, Tennessee 37203  
(615) 244-2333  
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. Hasty, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

October 7, 1988

88-161

Three pastors freed  
in abortion protest

By Mark Wingfield

ATLANTA (BP)--Three Georgia Baptist pastors arrested in abortion clinic protests Oct. 4 were out of jail on bond Oct. 6, while one remained behind bars under the alias of "Baby John Doe."

Pastor James Wood of Mount Vernon Baptist Church in Atlanta was the first to be released. Wood, a trustee of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, was released Oct. 5, less than 24 hours after he was arrested for blocking the entrance to an abortion clinic.

L.R. Holleman, pastor of Caleb Road Baptist Church in Lithonia, Ga., and Dwain Mercer of Briarwood Baptist Church in Norcross, Ga., were released about noon Oct. 6. The two pastors, along with Tim Hutchinson, one of Mercer's deacons, spent two days in jail.

David Lively, pastor of Northbrook Baptist Mission in Suwanee, Ga., planned to remain in jail over the weekend under the alias of "Baby John Doe." Lively refused to give his real name to symbolize the plight of unborn children who are the victims of abortion, according to those arrested with him.

The four ministers are part of Operation Rescue, a group of evangelical Christians that have periodically blocked entrances to Atlanta's abortion clinics since July 19. The non-violent protesters call themselves "rescuers" because they attempt to save unborn babies by physically blockading abortion clinics.

At least two other Baptist laypeople were arrested Oct. 4. Lee Ann Warner of Christ Community Church in Clarkston, Ga., and Allen Duyn of First Baptist Church in Nokomis, Fla., were arrested in separate incidents.

Warner told friends she intended to stay in jail through the weekend to share her faith with other inmates. Duyn's status was not known.

With these six arrests, an estimated 25 Southern Baptists have been jailed for participation in Operation Rescue. All those arrested in earlier protests have been released from jail on bond.

In all, more than 1,000 people from across America have been arrested in the Atlanta protests. At least two other Southern Baptists from the Atlanta area were prepared to risk arrest at abortion clinics, while several others said they were contemplating that step.

The latest arrests created the most emotional day of protests in 11 weeks. Atlanta police used "get-tough" tactics that brought dozens of complaints from citizens and prompted potential legal action.

Lawyers for Operation Rescue accused Maj. Kenneth Burnette, a Southern Baptist deacon, of kicking a protester in the head during the Oct. 4 arrests. At a news conference Oct. 6, attorney Bob Fierer distributed videotapes of the incident to the media.

"We are concerned over the conduct of the City of Atlanta," Fierer said. "We believe somebody is going to be seriously injured if police continue to escalate use of force."

The identity and condition of the man allegedly kicked were not known, due to massive backups in the processing of those arrested. At least 340 anti-abortion protesters were jailed Oct. 4.

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Fierer also said Doyle Clark, a United Brethren minister from Hudson, Ind., suffered a dislocated jaw and bleeding from the ears as a result of police treatment.

During the Oct. 4 arrests at three Atlanta abortion clinics, police used "come-along" holds, "finger-benders" and a pressure point technique of applying thumbs and forefingers in the soft spot behind the jaw, just below the ear.

Both Mercer and Hutchinson of Briarwood Baptist Church said police handled them roughly. Mercer said he was picked up by his belt and later dropped on the pavement, although he was not injured.

Hutchinson said he was first carried and then made to walk by the pressure point technique. "I was picked up by thumbs under my ears," he explained. "They used more force than was necessary."

Hutchinson said the right side of his face was numb for about 20 minutes after the arrest.

Both Mercer and Hutchinson said police never read them their rights, did not allow them telephone access and prevented them from seeing their lawyer. Neither man was released from jail until almost 24 hours after bond had been posted for them, they said.

A trial date of Oct. 18 has been set for those arrested Oct. 4.

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Countering New Age Movement  
requires facts, sound doctrine

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press  
10/7/88

NASHVILLE (BP)--Christians must be informed about the burgeoning New Age Movement and have a sound knowledge of biblical doctrine to avoid the perversion of their own faith, John P. Newport says.

Newport, vice president for academic affairs and professor of philosophy of religion at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, presented a paper Oct. 3 on the New Age Movement to professional and management employees of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Newport prepared the paper at the request of James D. Williams, executive vice president of the board. Williams said the purpose of the paper and dialogue session was to provide employees information to enable the board to better help churches counter the New Age Movement and educate members about biblical truth.

Newport described the New Age Movement as a loosely structured group of organizations seeking through spiritual, social and political means to transform society into a so-called "New Age" characterized by harmony and progress.

"We should note that the New Age has infiltrated many Christian institutions and seduced some Christians," Newport wrote. "Ignorance of sound doctrine leaves churches fiercely ill-equipped to resist deception."

He said the movement has become firmly entrenched in American culture in the areas of "health, psychology, science, politics and spirituality. It also is penetrating the areas of art, education and business. ... The occult side of the movement enters into our culture by more openly appropriating exotic spiritual beliefs and utilizing practices such as mediumship, divination, astrology and the miraculous in general.

"The counter-culture has sheared its long hair, picked up its briefcase and moved into the cultural mainstream," Newport charged. For example, he said 25 percent of the 80,000 residents of Boulder, Colo., have undergone some form of New Age training.

The New Age Movement includes positive emphases on cooperation, protecting the environment, creativity, peace with justice and self-image, Newport said. Christians must deal with these issues from a biblical perspective, he said.

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However, he warned, the New Age Movement also "dissolves moral distinctions" and fails to recognize human limitations, seeing each person as God.

"Once you have deified yourself, which is what New Age is all about, there is no higher moral absolute," he said.

Countering New Age ideas requires a strong emphasis on proper biblical interpretation, Newport said.

"To discern counterfeit use of the Bible, Christians must be thoroughly acquainted with the Word of God and principles to be used in interpreting it correctly," he said. "For Christians who are uninformed, unusual interpretations may come to them as biblical truth."

Also, he said Christians should not conclude that every person who uses words or phrases similar to those of the New Age Movement is part of it.

"We should not attribute guilt by semantic association," said Newport. "Rather we should develop a positive Christian agenda to counter the claims and plans of the New Age Movement."

He also urged Christians to differentiate between the liberation of the New Age Movement and redemption in Christ. "Our hope is found in grounding our trust in the God who opened the way for our restored relationship and true freedom through Christ."

In addition, he said Christians should be prophetic about their faith, be informed about the beliefs and lifestyle of the New Age Movement and carefully evaluate New Age materials promoted for devotional use or study in Sunday school.

Some people seeking fulfillment in New Age ideas apparently "have been disappointed in the churches as a source of meaning and value for their existence," said Newport.

"Christians are partially responsible for the rise of the New Age Movement," he said. "Where Christians retreat, groups such as the New Age Movement advance."

He urged Sunday School Board officials to develop materials to educate Southern Baptists about the New Age Movement and how it is affecting churches.

Workers in Sunday school, church training and student ministry should be especially aware of the dangers of the movement, he said. He urged research on New Age thinking, development of bibliographies and defining and evaluating New Age terminology.

Warning that "New Age thinking threatens to become the American consensus," Newport concluded, "Once again we must share the glories and fruits of the biblical worldview and seek with God's help to incarnate it in our lives and institutions."

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(Copies of the Newport paper will be mailed to state Baptist newspapers by SSB bureau of Baptist Press.)

Olympic star Carl Lewis  
'hid' in missionary home

By Lounette Templeton and Erich Bridges

Baptist Press  
10/7/88

SEOUL, South Korea (BP)--It was one of the best-kept secrets of the Olympics, thanks to several missionary kids.

U.S. track superstar Carl Lewis and his teammate, runner Joe DeLoach, stayed in a Southern Baptist missionary home while competing at the Olympic Games in Seoul.

Besieged by fans, reporters and other athletes, Lewis and his platoon of security guards had no intention of rooming at the Olympic athletes' village or a high-profile hotel. His business manager arranged secret lodging for Lewis and DeLoach at the Southern Baptist mission compound in the Yun Hi Dong area of Seoul through contacts with missionary O.K. Bozeman.

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Lay Witnesses for Christ, a sports ministry group with numerous Baptist members, suggested the mission location as a base for the Lewis entourage.

Lewis and DeLoach were under 24-hour guard in the mission home, which was temporarily vacant because a missionary family was on furlough in the United States. But heavy security didn't keep their next-door neighbor, 14-year-old Shannon Autry, from baking and delivering cookies to the two athletes. Shannon is the daughter of missionaries Joe and Kathleen Autry of Dallas, and Vancouver, Wash., respectively.

Shannon, her 10-year-old brother, Aeran, and other missionary kids were excited about the famous visitors, but managed to keep the secret. They also realized the importance of keeping out of the way of the busy athletes and their security guards.

But on days when Lewis or DeLoach were to compete in Olympic events, the kids left signs at the athletes' door saying, "We're praying for you" in big purple letters matching the color of Lewis' warm-up suit. For DeLoach they wrote "Go for the gold!" in colors matching the suit he wore as he jogged around the walled compound.

Both Lewis and DeLoach brought home the gold. Lewis won the long jump and was awarded the 100-meter gold medal when Canadian runner Ben Johnson was found to have used steroids. DeLoach edged Lewis for the 200-meter gold. The missionary kids, meanwhile, brought home autographed pictures of both track stars.

"Carl met the kids and they all enjoyed talking to him," Bozeman said. "He's a fine guy. He gets bad press sometimes, but the press doesn't know everything about him. He loves the Lord."

During the Olympics, Lewis, an evangelical Christian, spoke of his faith at a large rally sponsored by the lay group at Seoul's Full Gospel Central Church, the world's largest Christian congregation.

Despite widespread speculation about the Olympic pair's whereabouts, apparently only a few Americans living near the mission compound learned of their presence. The wall around the compound helped, and the two came and went in an unmarked car with tinted windows. But the missionary kids deserve part of the credit.

"Wouldn't a kid love to tell that Carl Lewis was next door?" said a missionary. "They really did a good job."

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Mission reaches out  
to Fort Worth Arabs

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press  
10/7/88

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Raouf Ghattas' calling is clear -- introduce the sons of Ishmael to the Son of God.

As pastor of Arabic Mission of University Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, Ghattas is reminded of his task whenever he enters his office. It's spelled out in two languages on a poster hanging above his desk: "We will not rest until all the Arabs of Fort Worth hear about Jesus."

To reach that ambitious goal, Arabic Mission's activities range from broadcasting Arabic radio programs to offering classes in Arabic language and culture.

As a result of the innovative approach to outreach, the mission has grown in membership from five to 35 in one year and has a baptism rate that surpasses the conversion rate among Arabs in some Middle Eastern countries.

But that growth has not been easy or painless. For Arabs to come to Christ, several obstacles must be overcome. One of the first is their strong connection to Islam.

"When a Moslem is baptized as a Christian, he is signing his death warrant," said the Egyptian-born Ghattas. "At best, he is disowned by his family and treated as if he were dead."

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"Their faith is strong. They are believers, but in the wrong thing. Argument is very dangerous. You never win a Moslem to Christ through argument. You must accept them and love them, not judge them."

Moslems have difficulty breaking out of the Islamic worldview and coming to an intellectual understanding of the gospel until they first make faith commitments to Christ, Ghattas said.

"No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit," he said. "I tell them, 'Just close your eyes and jump. Take that last step of faith. Then once you accept Christ, let him speak to your heart and bring you understanding.'"

The aspect of the Christian faith that is most attractive to Moslems is the promise of inner peace and a personal relationship with God, he said.

"The father/son relationship -- the personal, intimate relationship -- is very appealing to the Moslem," Ghattas said. "I ask Moslems, 'Do you have peace in your heart?' If they answer honestly, they have to say that they do not."

Another major obstacle, Ghattas added, is nationalistic pride. However, that hurdle has been overcome at the mission, where at least seven nationalities are represented and the congregation is roughly half-Anglo and half-Arab.

"I speak of Arabic as a language group, not as a race of people," he said. "I tell the people I am a Christian first. Everything else really doesn't matter. It is a gift of God that he has allowed me to be able to forget the pride of being Egyptian."

The non-Arabic people at the mission come for a variety of reasons, Ghattas said. Some are married to Arabs. Others plan to work in the Middle East and want to learn about the culture. Still others -- like Ghattas himself -- hope to become missionaries in the Middle East.

Ghattas came to be a full-time mission pastor and full-time student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth after a successful career as a nuclear physicist. During his time working at the Commanche Peak nuclear power facility in nearby Glen Rose, Texas, he came into contact with students from Southwestern Seminary.

Ghattas realized his need for training, and soon he enrolled as a seminary student. Currently, he is completing his studies in preparation for anticipated service as a Southern Baptist missionary in the Middle East.

"My heart is in the mission field," he said. "My dream is to reach out to the poor of the Middle East."

But for now, Ghattas is busy trying to accomplish another goal: reaching the Arabic-speaking people of Fort Worth.

"It is not a task for overnight," he said. "But even if it takes us a lifetime, we will not rest until all the Arabs of Fort Worth hear about Jesus."

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Southwestern students  
experience hunger

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press  
10/7/88

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Students at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary got a taste of world hunger during a special observance on the seminary campus Oct. 5.

World Hunger Day was designed to prepare students, faculty and staff for the Southern Baptist Convention's 10th annual observance of "World Hunger Sunday" Oct. 9.

"Our goal was to raise the awareness level of the seminary family on the needs of hungry people throughout the world," said Raymond Higgins, an instructor in Christian ethics at Southwestern. "I think we accomplished that."

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The observance included a chapel service featuring The Company, a drama group of seminary students, when performed "The Least of These," a play focusing on the problem of hunger.

Students also were offered a world hunger meal, prepared and served by volunteers from the Texas Baptist Disaster Relief Unit. Three different types of meals were served. One included only rice, another rice and beans, and a third, rice, meat and vegetables.

"When people got in line, they saw some people getting more and others getting less than them," said Higgins. "It was just an awareness exercise to let us experience one day what most of the world eats each day."

Disaster Relief Unit director John LaNoue said volunteers served about 500 students. They served the different meals randomly for about the first hour.

"But so many that got only rice came back and asked 'Can, I have something else?'" LaNoue said. "So, finally my cooks gave in and started serving the (meat and vegetables) to everybody.

"It's a whole lot like the world around us, we ignore hunger until it comes to our doorstep and says, 'Hey, can you feed me, I'm hungry.' Then we get concerned."

The meal was served from the Disaster Relief Unit's 18-wheel tractor trailer truck, which is capable of feeding up to 10,000 meals a day. The same truck traveled to Mexico in late September to assist victims of Hurricane Gilbert. LaNoue said relief volunteers served about 5,500 meals a day to hurricane victims.

Higgins said Southern Baptists have responded well to the world hunger issue, pointing out the convention has channeled almost \$64 million toward the fight against world hunger during the past 10 years. However, in 1987, Higgins said, Southern Baptists gave only 61 cents per person to world hunger.

"We can do more," he said. "If we gave a dime a day per person, that would end up being \$36.50 a year per person. That would make quite a difference in our contribution to world hunger."

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Budget, staff still  
problems for BJC/PAC

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press  
10/7/88

WASHINGTON (BP)--Money and management again plagued relations between the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and its Southern Baptist delegation during the committee's annual meeting Oct. 3-4.

The Baptist Joint Committee, a Washington-based religious liberty agency, is comprised of nine Baptist denominations in the United States and Canada. The Southern Baptist Convention is represented by its 18-member Public Affairs Committee.

SBC conservatives have faulted the BJC for several years, saying it is too liberal. Most notably, they have criticized it for failing to support school prayer and anti-abortion amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

The tension peaked in October 1987 when PAC members -- thwarted in their attempts to evaluate BJC staff and to gain access to staff correspondence and expense accounts -- recommended the SBC "dissolve its institutional and financial ties" with the BJC.

The SBC Executive Committee later declined that request, but currently is studying alternate methods of funding the BJC and the PAC.

The PAC also convened Oct. 3 and 4, meeting both before and after the full BJC meeting. Members mentioned the Executive Committee's pending study, but they did not formally reiterate their request to dissolve ties.

But during the BJC meeting, PAC members disputed the budget, as well as staff policies and actions.

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PAC members focused on several concerns with the \$729,772 proposed budget for 1989-90. That budget calls for an increase in the SBC contribution from \$400,000 in the current 1988-89 budget to \$460,000.

"It is very clear that this asking budget expects the Southern Baptist Convention to increase its contribution by \$60,000, when total contributions of the other bodies are less than \$60,000," said Tom Pratt, Southern Baptist pastor from Brighton, Colo. Anticipated contributions of the other member denominations totals \$59,010.

BJC Executive Director James M. Dunn noted several denominations give more per capita to the agency than does the SBC. He also said Southern Baptists "do less than their fair share" of contributing funds that go beyond the local church. Pratt took exception to that remark, noting, "Southern Baptists should not be penalized for being generous beyond their local churches."

PAC members also disputed the BJC's request for \$60,000 more from the SBC, when that convention's proposed operating budget is expected to show zero growth. "This is the asking budget; this is the goal," Dunn said.

PAC members criticized the BJC budget's line item for contributions from other sources, noting it has grown from \$34,000 in 1987-88 to \$110,000 in 1989-90.

Dunn declined to list these contributors from other sources. He described the status of budget proceedings from SBC state conventions that have indicated intent to support the BJC directly. But he said he has not secured disclosure permission from churches contributing directly to the BJC and added he did not feel at liberty to disclose anonymous donors.

PAC Chairman Sam Currin, a state judge from Raleigh, N.C., said the BJC should know about anonymous donors, "even if this body has to go into executive session."

"We have a responsibility for accountability to the Southern Baptist Convention," added Norris Sydnor, a Southern Baptist pastor from Mitchellville, Md.

C.J. Malloy Jr., general secretary of the Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc. in Washington, defended the BJC: "We get accurate reports, fine audits; the monies are being transferred in the way they should be. We have confidence in the staff."

The BJC approved the budget proposal on an uncounted show-of-hands vote, with only some of the Southern Baptist delegation dissenting.

The BJC also approved a motion offered by Lloyd Elder, president of the SBC Sunday School Board in Nashville, that Dunn "disclose, so far as is possible," the details of projected contributions.

In their meeting following the full BJC meeting, PAC members voted 10-1 to record their disagreement with the BJC's 1989-90 budget request, citing lack of financial accountability and the lack of accountability of the BJC staff to Southern Baptists through the PAC.

The dispute over BJC staff resurfaced even before the PAC/BJC meetings officially began. The PAC's staff evaluation committee attended the BJC's staff evaluation committee meeting Oct. 2. But only PAC Chairman Currin, a member of the BJC evaluation committee, was allowed to remain for the evaluation of professional staff.

The next day, at the PAC's pre-BJC meeting, Elder moved to "disband the (PAC) staff evaluation committee and our members participate with the BJC in their newly established staff evaluation procedures." The motion failed 4-7.

Later, the full BJC received its staff evaluation report, which noted, "The executive director works hard, acquired competent staff, has good supervision and significantly affects church/state matters as the BJC has directed."

Currin spoke against the report. He noted the evaluation was done a full year after the PAC first sought to examine staff members and the evaluation process only took a little more than two hours, instead of a more thorough examination, which "should have been two days."

"It did not begin to scratch the surface of some of our concerns," he said. "This is certainly not the kind of evaluation the PAC had in mind when we requested a separate evaluation."

But William Cober, associate general secretary for national ministries of the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A., countered, "This was as thorough an evaluation as a board can expect unless it is considering removing someone from office."

The SBC's Elder added: "I can assure you this staff is evaluated on a 12-month basis. It (the evaluation) is just formulated once a year."

The BJC approved its evaluation report 24-8, with only Southern Baptists dissenting.

The specific nature of PAC criticisms of staff activities also surfaced. Particularly noted were staff responses to two civil rights bills.

PAC members criticized the BJC staff for publication of a "fact sheet" and charged the staff helped supporters of the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1988 override President Reagan's veto.

Conservatives have criticized the bill, saying it infringes on the rights of religious institutions. The BJC staff has contended it remained neutral on the override and only provided unbiased information about the legislation.

A PAC-approved resolution calling for corrective amendments in the act and including criticism of the BJC staff was introduced at the BJC meeting, but the BJC adopted instead a resolution similar to one adopted by messengers at the 1988 annual meeting of the SBC.

Another PAC concern involved the Armstrong Amendment to the 1988 District of Columbia Appropriations Bill. The amendment forced the District of Columbia to exempt religious schools and colleges from a D.C. law prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation.

PAC members criticized the BJC staff for remaining neutral on the amendment and for failing to join other conservative Christians in a press conference supporting it. BJC staffers countered they previously had denounced the original D.C. legislation as "bad law." They said they declined to officially get involved with the amendment because it was a local matter, and involved a religious institution that accepts direct government funding.

PAC member Albert Lee Smith, an insurance executive from Birmingham, Ala., proposed a resolution to the BJC expressing dismay at the staff's neutrality and voicing support for the amendment.

PAC member J.T. Williams Jr., a land developer from Tallahassee, Fla., suggested the paragraph critical of the staff be dropped, and the BJC agreed.

Then Robert Tiller, director of government relations for the American Baptist Churches, moved to table the resolution. The motion was tabled on an 18-11 vote.

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PAC asks changes  
in filing policy

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10/7/88

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Public Affairs Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention has voted to ask a change in the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs policy for filing legal briefs.

The change asks the BJC to allow the PAC to approve "any brief filed with any court or agency which purports to represent the Southern Baptist Convention." It also asks the BJC to attach a disclaimer to any BJC brief not approved by the PAC, noting the brief "does not represent the position of the Southern Baptist Convention."

Roy R. Gean Jr., a PAC member from Fort Smith, Ark., said briefs "usually are accumulated over months or even years" and the proposed action should not create a time problem for the BJC.

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J.I. Ginnings, a businessman from Wichita Falls, Texas, noted briefs and other legal actions taken by the BJC are based on stated positions previously taken by the BJC. "I see no reason to do this," he said of the change.

"We do not want to have our position misrepresented in a brief," Currin insisted.

In other actions at the annual meeting the BJC:

-- Re-elected its officers for another one-year term. They are Marvin C. Griffin, National Baptist Convention of America, chairman; Margaret Prine, American Baptist Churches, first vice chairman; Ginnings, second vice chairman; and Warren Magnuson, Baptist General Conference, secretary.

-- Ratified a resolution commending the Soviet Union and its leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, for making "progress toward religious freedom."

And in other business conducted in its own sessions, the PAC:

-- Moved to make its meetings "on the record." Previously, the PAC had operated under "background rules," meaning reporters could disclose the substance of discussion and action but could not quote members by name.

The action was taken "to ensure that all Southern Baptists have accurate and free access to information" and to bring the PAC's policy in line with SBC agencies, said Lloyd Elder, president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, who made the motion.

-- Re-elected Birmingham, Ala., insurance executive Albert Lee Smith as vice chairman and Les Csorba III, an editor from Alexandria, Va., as recording secretary. The PAC chairman is elected by the SBC upon nomination by the SBC Committee on Nominations.

-- Re-elected Tom Pratt, a pastor from Brighton, Colo., as newsletter editor and heard plans to expand coverage and to publish quarterly by 1990.

-- Re-elected Smith chairman of the staff evaluation committee. It also elected Robbie Hughes, a homemaker from Jackson, Miss., chairman of the long-range planning and study committee, succeeding Richard Land, newly elected executive director of the SBC Christian Life Commission.

-- Elected Norris Sydnor, a pastor from Mitchellville, Md., to a new at-large position on the PAC executive committee, joining the three officers and two committee chairmen.

-- Approved a proposed 1989-90 budget of \$75,500, including \$48,000 for the newsletter; \$17,500 for meetings, conferences and exhibits; and \$10,000 for publication of pamphlets.

-- Ratified April 21-22, 1989, as the dates for the PAC Religious Liberty Conference in Atlanta.

-- Set the next PAC meeting for April 20-21 in Atlanta, to be held in conjunction with the conference.

-- Recommended that the BJC chairman name the PAC officers to fill Southern Baptist posts on the BJC executive committee.

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Alamo foundation loses  
sales tax battle with state

By Stan Hastey

Baptist Press  
10/7/88

WASHINGTON (BP)--A controversial Arkansas religious foundation lost its final effort to avoid paying sales taxes on goods and services provided its own members when the U.S. Supreme Court declined Oct. 2 to review state court decisions against it.

The Tony and Susan Alamo Foundation, chartered in California but headquartered in Dyer, Ark., failed to convince the justices to review decisions of a county chancery court and the Arkansas Supreme Court that the group owes back sales taxes for food, clothing and auto repairs for foundation "associates."

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These consist of some 300 employees of the foundation who, although receiving no salary, are given shelter, food, clothing and other necessary benefits. Most are convicted criminals or former alcoholics or drug abusers. Besides working for a half-dozen foundation businesses located in Alma, Ark., the associates spend their time studying the Bible and engaging in personal witnessing.

Alamo Foundation attorney Roy Gean Jr. of Fort Smith, Ark., argued in papers filed with the nation's high court that application of the state sales tax law to the associates violated the religious rights of the foundation.

Gean, a member of the Southern Baptist Convention's Public Affairs Committee, wrote that the First Amendment protects the foundation's free exercise of religion and guarantees the government will not interfere with its internal affairs.

The foundation's businesses -- two service stations, an auto repair shop, a clothing store, a grocery store and a restaurant -- are "extensions of the foundation's ministries" and provide the associates "an avenue for rehabilitation and a forum for the dissemination of their religious beliefs," Gean argued.

But a brief filed for the state maintained "the overriding governmental interest is the integrity of the Arkansas sales tax system."

The Supreme Court apparently agreed with the state by denying Gean's petition to schedule the case for argument. In order for a case to be heard by the high court, at least four of the nine justices must agree it merits review. (88-117, Alamo Foundation v. Ragland)

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Southwest Baptist University  
elects Hewlett new president

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BOLIVAR, Mo. (BP)--Edwin Hewlett Jr., a businessman from Picayune, Miss., was elected president of Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo., during an Oct. 3-4 meeting of trustees.

Hewlett, a native of the St. Louis area, succeeds Charles P. Chaney, who resigned June 30, 1986, to devote full time to the SBC Redford School of Theology. Chaney since has left the school to join the staff of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

The election ended 27 months during which the school operated without a president.

Chancellor James E. Sells announced the election. At the Missouri Baptist Convention-related school, the chancellor is chief executive officer and the president is responsible for daily operations, "much as a vice president would be" at other schools, Sells said.

Hewlett, whose father was pastor of Southwest Baptist Church in the St. Louis area for nearly 35 years, is a graduate of Mississippi College in Clinton, where he received bachelors and masters degrees and Florida State University in Tallahassee, where he received a doctor of philosophy degree in higher education.

He taught high school for a year and was instructor in English and dean of men at Mississippi College for eight years. For two years he was assistant to the executive secretary of the Florida Junior College Conference and then associate executive secretary of the Florida Community College Activities Association.

Since 1976, Hewlett has been involved in private business, first as vice president of a Louisiana steel company and then as president of his own firm in Picayune, Miss. Since 1981, he primarily has worked in investments.

Sells told the Word and Way, newsjournal of the Missouri Baptist Convention, Hewlett was selected after the presidential search committee spent eight months working through 60 resumes and interviewing 10 candidates.

Hewlett's wife, Marguerite, is a high school teacher. They have three children.

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