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June 14, 1990

90-81

12 of 14 resolutions
die for lack of quorum

By Linda Lawson

*N. 20
'90 Conv.*

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--In an unprecedented development at a Southern Baptist Convention meeting, twelve of 14 resolutions proposed by the Resolutions Committee could not be considered by messengers due to lack of a quorum Thursday morning.

Messengers adopted two resolutions Wednesday on possession of child pornography and environmental stewardship.

With an estimated 38,456 messengers registered, SBC registration secretary Lee Porter said 9,614 were needed for a quorum which, according to SBC bylaws, is 25 percent of registered messengers.

Dwight Reigherd, chairman of the Committee on Order of Business, estimated that between four and five thousand messengers were present 9 a.m. when the miscellaneous business was scheduled. At 10:45, when attendance had not increased, officers agreed a quorum would not be reached and announced no business could be done.

John Sullivan, a convention parliamentarian and executive director of the Florida Baptist Convention, told messengers, "It is my conviction if our churches and institutions send us to the convention to do business, we should be as interested in doing business today as any other day of the convention meeting."

Mark Corts, chairman of the 10-member Resolutions Committee and pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, N.C., said he "will explore if there is any way to get mileage out of these" 12 resolutions proposed by the committee but never considered.

"I would like to seek some way to get distribution for these resolutions as an expression of the committee," said Corts.

He added that he considers the committee report an expression of messenger concerns because those proposed by the committee were drafted by drawing from the record 87 submitted by messengers.

"We felt the messengers would respond favorably to our report," said Corts. "We gave careful, timely consideration" to the concerns of messengers."

Because the SBC Executive Committee is designated to act on behalf of the Southern Baptist Convention between sessions, some questioned privately whether the Executive Committee could consider the resolutions at its September meeting.

Chief parliamentarian Barry McCarty told Baptist Press consideration by the Executive Committee would require a referral by the convention, a business action that could not be taken without a quorum.

"All business left over falls to the ground," said McCarty.

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Of the two resolutions adopted without debate, one on possession of child pornography urges Southern Baptists in 28 states and the District of Columbia which do not have laws prohibiting private possession of child pornography to work for the enactment of legislation.

The resolution also asks the Christian Life Commission and other appropriate entities to call on the U.S. Congress "to amend federal child pornography statutes applying to federal land and facilities."

The second resolution adopted by messengers, on environmental stewardship, notes that while Christians are "forbidden to worship the creation," they are "called to be faithful stewards of that which is entrusted to us."

Southern Baptist people, churches and other groups are "encouraged to make an environmentally responsible ethic a part of our lifestyle and evangelistic witness."

Among the 12 resolutions unable to be considered by messengers were calls for government action on tax relief and equity for families, standards to prevent funding of so-called obscene and offensive art through the National Endowment on the Arts, restrictions on alcohol advertising and free exercise of religion.

The resolution on tax relief for families urges President George Bush to veto child care legislation passed by the House and Senate and schedule for conference committee "because it does not meet standards set forth in the 1988 resolution on child care reaffirmed in this resolution."

The 1988 resolution drafted jointly by officials of the SBC Christian Life Commission and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and adopted overwhelmingly by messengers expressed support for local and state rather than federal government regulation of institutional child care and urged Congress to explore options such as tax incentives "instead of proposing a new federal system with a regulatory role for the federal government." The 1988 resolution also called for any federal program of child care to "include adequate safeguards to maintain the separation of church and state."

On government support of obscene and offensive art, the Resolutions Committee proposed asking Congress and the President to "set standards which prevent funding of highly offensive, morally repugnant and sacrilegious 'art,' or, if such is not done, cease funding the National Endowment for the Arts."

The resolution on sensible advertising restrictions on alcoholic beverages proposed by the committee, notes that most Americans will see more than 100,000 television commercials for beer before they are old enough to buy alcohol.

It urges messengers to support "sensible advertising and family education legislation which would require rotating health messages in alcoholic beverage advertisements."

The committee-proposed resolution on endangerment of religious liberties criticizes a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision restricting an Indian man from smoking peyote as part of his religious worship practices.

While the committee emphasized it does not "condone the use of illegal drugs," it questioned the court reasoning in the case and warned the ruling could be used to restrict other kinds of religious practices. The resolution urges the Christian Life Commission, the Public Affairs Committee and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs to work for legislation "to restore the full First Amendment religious liberty protection endangered by this ruling."

Abortion, a topic frequently addressed through resolutions in recent years, was the subject of two resolutions proposed by the committee.

One, on sanctity of human life, again opposes abortion except to save the life of the mother and expressed opposition to two issues not previously dealt with in resolutions, abortion drugs and technologies and research on uses of fetal tissue.

A second abortion-related resolution urged SBC agencies not to patronize businesses that contribute money to pro-abortion organizations.

Homosexuality, addressed in SBC resolutions adopted in 1980, 1985 and 1988, was also proposed this year to express opposition to efforts "to gain civil rights protection status for homosexuals on the basis of sexual preference."

Two resolutions proposed by the committee addressed the needs of smaller churches.

One called for continued efforts by SBC entities in meeting the needs of smaller churches while a second asked the SBC Annuity Board to seek ways to provide improved insurance services to employees of smaller churches.

A resolution on health care needs of people who are not insurable or who cannot afford medical insurance was proposed by the committee along with the traditional resolution of appreciation to the host city and people involved in arranging the annual convention meeting.

In addition to affirming the work of his committee, Corts expressed appreciation for the counsel of officials from the Christian Life Commission and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

"They found basic areas of agreement without conflict on the issues we dealt with," said Corts.

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Messengers handle
5-plus motions

By Kathy Palen

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Baptist Press
6/14/90

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Messengers to the 1990 Southern Baptist Convention dealt with more than 35 motions during the annual three-day meeting in New Orleans.

The motion receiving the most visible response from messengers called for the removal of a Southern Baptist Theological Seminary trustee. A large number of messengers gave a lengthy standing ovation to a motion by W. Lamar Wadsworth of Baltimore, Md., that Jerry Johnson be removed immediately as a trustee of that institution.

Johnson, pastor of Central Baptist Church in Aurora, Colo., wrote a 16-page article critical of Southern Seminary President Roy Honeycutt and five professors. Johnson has refused to resign his trustee post.

Wadsworth's original motion was ruled out of order because, according to the convention's legal counsel, it would be impossible to provide Johnson with the fundamental protections of a notice and a hearing during the SBC annual meeting.

But following that ruling, Wadsworth was given the opportunity to introduce a second motion, referring the proposed action to Southern Seminary's board of trustees. Messengers approved that second motion by a show of hands.

The lack of a quorum on Thursday prohibited the convention from conducting business and thus from acting on a number of motions.

One of those motions, introduced by David Martin of Cary, N.C., called for the convention to sever all financial support to the Washington-based as soon as legally possible. Martin made the motion following convention action to add religious liberty to the program assignment of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission and to cut the SBC contribution to the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs by 87 percent.

Other motions left pending:

-- Addressed the issue of racism and proposed specific SBC actions in response to it.

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- Asked for support for churches that are involved in Christian day school ministry.
- Proposed the SBC Public Affairs Committee be instructed not to endorse political candidates.
- Sought greater recognition of and participation by smaller churches during the convention's annual meetings.
- Recommended the appointment of a woman to the Committee on Order of Business and of a disabled person to the local arrangements committee for future SBC annual meetings.
- Called for the removal or covering of all advertisements for alcohol and tobacco products in meeting halls for future SBC annual meetings, as well as ground-floor seating for people over 60 years of age.

Messengers referred to the SBC Executive Committee three motions focusing on a controversy surrounding the chairman of the SBC Committee on Nominations.

Chairman Roland Lopez is pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in McAllen, Texas, which no longer is considered a "cooperating" Southern Baptist church because of its failure to make contributions to the SBC Cooperative Program.

In response to questions about Lopez's service as chairman, SBC President Jerry Vines ruled Lopez could serve because his church was a "cooperating church" at the time of his election as chairman.

In slightly different ways, each of the three motions would amend the SBC constitution or bylaws to prevent a member of a non-cooperating church from serving in such an office.

Other motions referred to the Executive Committee called for:

- Requiring all SBC trustees and commissioners to be at least 30 years of age.
- Studying the terms "cooperating Baptist church" and "in friendly cooperation with" to determine the scope and definition of the word "cooperation" as it relates to the SBC.
- Allowing Baptist state conventions to select their members on the SBC Committee on Nominations and Committee on Committees.
- Engaging an "independent, non-religiously affiliated" accounting firm to collect and supervise the tabulation of ballot votes at future SBC annual meetings.
- Requiring all SBC messengers to be at least 18 years of age.
- Placing all future SBC elections, motions and resolutions on ballots to be sent to participating Southern Baptist churches so elected messengers there could vote.
- Changing the convention's name to the Cooperative Baptist Convention.
- Amending SBC bylaws to provide "fellowship states" with a greater chance of having representation status on SBC committees, boards and institutions.
- Limiting representation from Southern Baptist churches affiliated with other denominations.
- Amending the process for the signing of messengers' letters.

Messengers also referred a number of motions to other SBC agencies. Those motions dealt with:

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-- The possible establishment of an SBC accrediting agency. The motion, which was referred to the Southern Baptist Education Commission, calls for a study of the feasibility of establishing such an accrediting agency for Southern Baptist seminaries and colleges.

-- Instructing the Southern Baptist Annuity Board to determine the best way to "exert positive pressure" on its insurance carrier, Prudential Insurance Co., to remove itself as a corporate sponsor of Planned Parenthood. That motion -- as well as one asking for a study of the possibility of subsidizing the health insurance programs of pastors of small churches -- was referred to the Annuity Board.

-- A request to terminate the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's policy prohibiting financial support from being given to a woman serving as pastor of a local church. The motion was referred to the HMB.

-- A call for no SBC agency or institution to be used for political activity. It was referred to all convention entities.

Four motions were ruled out of order. Those motions called for prohibiting SBC presidential candidates from campaigning; requesting the SBC Executive Committee to provide an explanation of a document concerning budget allocations to support religious liberty; instructing convention officers to identify by name the "inerrant, perfect Bible"; and addressing political ethics and contributions.

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Conservatives dominate
SBC annual meeting

By Roy Jennings

*N.C.O
90 Conv.*

Baptist Press
6/14/90

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--With conservative forces capturing almost all major elective offices, messengers to the 133rd annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention moved their religious liberty function closer within the denominational umbrella, approved a basic operating budget of \$137,332,523 and took positions on child pornography and environmental stewardship.

The convention attracted 38,478 messengers, making it the third-largest in the 145-year history of the body, eclipsed only by 45,519 in Dallas in 1985 and 40,987 in Atlanta in 1986.

However, the messengers left so rapidly after the elections and mission reports that business on the final day was eliminated. Leaders couldn't find the 9,614 messengers, 25 percent of registration, minimum needed to do business.

Left in the wings were 12 proposed resolutions from the Resolutions Committee on such subjects as tax relief and equity for families, opposition to government support of obscene and offensive art, homosexuality and civil rights, sensible advertising restrictions on alcoholic beverages, endangerment of religious liberties, sanctity of human life and suspension of patronage of businesses which support pro-abortion organizations.

Morris Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church of, Wichita Falls, Texas., won the presidency of the 14.9-million-member denomination by defeating Daniel Vestal, pastor of Dunwoody Baptist Church, Atlanta, 21,471 to 15,753.

Joining the conservative standard bearer were Douglas Knapp, retired foreign missionary of Gainesville, Fla., as first vice president, and Fred Lowery, pastor of First Baptist Church, Bossier City, La., second vice president.

Knapp won over Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler of Cincinnati, 16,348 to 10,688, and Lowery over two laymen, garnering 60 percent of the vote on the first ballot. They were Raymond Boswell of Shreveport and Steve Tondera of Huntsville, Ala.

Conservative candidate David Atchison of Nashville unseated Recording Secretary Martin Bradley of Nashville, who had held the post for 12 years.

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However, Lee Porter of Nashville won a 13th term as registration secretary by overwhelming Bob Mowry, a Nashville pastor, 13,242 to 5,048.

In a post election news conference, Chapman said the question of whether the biblical inerrancy issue is settled in the convention depends upon the 42 percent of the messengers who voted against him.

"The large majority of Southern Baptists believe the issue is settled. Whether the issue is settled in its most practical form is largely up to those who have been voting otherwise, who have insisted that we are not a group who have believed in the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible."

Meanwhile, Vestal appealed for moderate and conservative Southern Baptists to schedule a formal dialogue on the future of the denomination.

Upon recommendation of the convention's Executive Committee, the messengers transferred the primary religious liberty function from the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs to the Christian Life Commission, allowing the social action agency to address religious liberty issues as well as Christian social ethics.

At the same time, the messengers approved a budget which reduced the allocation to the Baptist Joint Committee by \$341,796, or 87 percent, and increased the allocation to the CLC by 40 percent, or \$365,328.

Two efforts by messengers to restore the cut failed.

Historically, the Baptist Joint Committee, a First Amendment/religious liberty organization representing nine Baptist bodies in Washington, has handled religious liberty concerns for Southern Baptists for 53 years.

However, the Joint Committee has been a center of controversy in the convention's 11-year-old political/theological debate on such matters as school prayer and the relationship of religious liberty to moral and social concerns.

In a news conference James Dunn, executive director of the Joint Committee and a Southern Baptist, said he expected interested Southern Baptist individuals, churches and state conventions to more than cover the loss of funding with direct gifts.

Richard Land, executive director of the CLC, said the messengers' action would greatly strengthen Southern Baptists' influence in Washington.

In contrast to other business, messengers approved without debate resolutions urging laws against the possession of child pornography and calling Southern Baptists to environmental stewardship.

The resolution on possession of child pornography urged Southern Baptists in 28 states and the District of Columbia which do not have laws prohibiting private possession of child pornography to work for the enactment of legislation.

The environment resolution encouraged Southern Baptist people, churches and other groups to make an environmentally responsible ethic a part of their lifestyle and evangelistic witness.

Messengers heard reports from 20 of their agencies which evoked responses ranging from questions to challenge and inspiration.

Russell Dilday, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, in Fort Worth, Texas, was asked by a messenger to explain a remark labeling a convention meeting Satanic.

Dilday said he had not referred to the SBC meeting but to methodology used during the past 12 years in the denominational controversy.

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"The comments I made was that the methodology used in the takeover of the convention these past 12 years -- the crass, secular, political methodology -- does have satanic, evil qualities of which I am desperately opposed." He added, "I did indicate that if Satan were interested in destroying the work of an evangelistic body such as this, the outcome we have seen in these 12 years would indeed be the kind of quality we would see in that intervention."

Following the report of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, President Roy Honeycutt of Louisville, Ky., was asked if recent charges against him had been laid to rest by the recently dismantled convention Peace Committee.

Honeycutt said he could not speak for the Peace Committee, a group formed to study theological issues, but his trustees had voted 41-11 four years ago stating there were no charges worthy of faculty dismissal in the Peace Committee's concerns.

Honeycutt also figured in a related motion calling for removal of seminary trustee Jerry Johnson, an Aurora, Colo., pastor, for his 16-page article criticizing the seminary president and five professors concerning their theology.

Messengers referred the issue to the Southern Seminary trustees after convention legal counsel said the convention constitution and bylaws do not provide a procedure for removing a trustee from office.

Presentation of the home mission and foreign mission reports provided messengers challenge and inspiration.

Charles Chaney, vice president of extension at the Home Mission Board in Atlanta, urged messengers to accept a goal of starting four new churches a day.

Chaney said Southern Baptists currently are starting churches at the rate of more than three each day and are ahead of the mission board's goal of having 50,000 churches by the year 2000.

While commissioning 34 new foreign missionaries, Keith Parks, president of the Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, Va., called on Southern Baptists to use their wealth in a more generous way to help spread the gospel around the world.

Pointing to changes in Eastern Europe and Asia as examples of God's timing, Parks said Southern Baptists must do the right thing while God has provided the right time.

In a major address, outgoing President Jerry Vines of Jacksonville, Fla., urged messengers to remain alert to doctrinal error else the denomination "could become a mustard seed monstrosity with bureaucratic branches infested with blasphemous birds."

While denominational loyalty is desirable, it must not supplant loyalty to Christ and the Bible, he said.

In the annual convention sermon, Fred Wolfe, pastor of Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, Ala., called for repentance of pride and a return to prayer essential before God's spirit can bring a modern day awakening.

Wolfe claimed Southern Baptists have trusted in their pride, self-sufficiency and might instead of the power of God's Holy Spirit.

Looking toward the 1991 convention on June 4-6 in Atlanta, messengers chose Thomas D. Elliff, pastor of First Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., and 1990 president of the Southern Baptist Pastors Conference, to preach the convention sermon.

Ronnie W. Floyd, pastor of First Baptist Church, Springdale, Ark., was elected alternate preacher.