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NATIONAL OFFICE  
SBC Executive Committee  
901 Commerce #75  
Nashville, Tennessee 37203  
(615) 244-2351

**BUREAUS**

**ATLANTA** Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522  
**DALLAS** Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas, 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5100  
**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** Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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90-135

NOTE TO EDITORS: Because of lack of press representation, Baptist Press will be unable to report on the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs meeting. BJCPA actions that relate to this PAC story are covered in an (ABP) story written by Dan Martin.

PAC opposes BJCPA  
bylaw change

N-39c

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Southern Baptist Convention Public Affairs Committee voted to oppose a proposed bylaw change which would reduce SBC representation on the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs from 18 to 11 members and provide for representation from the Religious Liberty Council, a coalition of Southern Baptists representing some state conventions and churches, and the Southern Baptist Alliance.

This action is similar to action taken by the SBC Executive Committee in its Sept. 17-19 meeting.

PAC members were encouraged by its chairman, Albert Lee Smith Jr., an insurance executive from Birmingham, Ala., to "please vote against this motion and do some personal lobbying of other members of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs ... "

The PAC held its semi-annual meeting in Washington Sept. 30-Oct. 1, in conjunction with the annual meeting of the BJCPA.

PAC members, who also represent the Southern Baptist Convention on the BJCPA, had received an Aug. 22 memorandum from BJCPA Executive Director James M. Dunn informing them of the proposed bylaw change to be considered in the annual meeting Oct. 1.

Discussion on how the bylaw change was developed focused on the involvement the PAC members who also serve on the BJCPA executive committee. PAC members questioned Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee; Lloyd Elder, president of the Baptist Sunday School Board; Landrum P. Leavell III, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary; and Robert Showers, an attorney from Washington, regarding their role in developing the recommendation to change the bylaws.

Leavell, who as BJCPA vice chairman worked with other BJCPA officers in considering a bylaw change, indicated that he had received materials introducing the suggested changes and had voted to have them presented to the full BJCPA for consideration. Other Southern Baptist members on the BJCPA executive committee stated that they were not involved.

After discussing the issue for almost an hour, a motion was made by Norris W. Sydnor Jr., pastor of Riverside Baptist Church from Fort Washington, Md., that "the PAC go on record as simply disapproving the proposed changes in the membership criteria as set out in Article II of the BJCPA bylaws." The motion passed.

PAC members who serve on the BJCPA executive committee were asked to "forcefully" present the expressed concerns of the PAC in the meeting of the executive committee.

In its meeting the following day, the BJCPA voted to approve the bylaw change but delayed its implementation until March 1991.

Two other actions regarding relationships of the PAC were taken.

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-- Adopted a motion authorizing a liaison committee to work with the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission on religious liberty issues of mutual concern. Messengers to the 1990 Southern Baptist Convention voted to revise the program statement of the CLC to include religious liberty issues.

-- Tabled a motion that the PAC "present a recommendation to the Southern Baptist Convention that the duties of the PAC be transferred to the Christian Life Commission" until the April 18-19, 1991 meeting.

Thomas E. Pratt was elected vice chairman and appointed by the chairman to serve as editor of the PAC's quarterly newsletter.

Twelve appointments were made to PAC offices and committees by the chairman. No SBC agency executive was appointed, although seven are elected to the PAC by the Southern Baptist Convention, one as an at-large member.

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Land urges war for  
sanctity of human life

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N-CO  
(CLC)

WASHINGTON (BP)--Christians should actively participate in a cultural war "to the death" over the sanctity of life issue, said Richard D. Land during an address at the Concerned Women for America convention on Sept. 30.

CWA is a pro-family organization that describes itself as the country's largest, nonpartisan, politically active women's group. It has 700,000 members. The meeting was the first of five held in different cities on consecutive weekends. The series of meetings constitute CWA's annual national convention.

Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, described sanctity of human life as an issue that encompasses more than abortion.

"Abortion, as awful as it is, is the thin end of the wedge . . . the camel's nose under the tent," he said. "We need to understand that what we are in the process of fighting is a cultural war over the definition of the nature and value of human life and whether human life is indeed distinct from other life. We are in a war, literally, to the death."

He said the conflict is a battle of ideas with far-reaching consequences. The biblical view is that human life is sacred, human life begins at conception, and the right to life is a sacred right, he said.

"God always, both before the Fall and after the Fall, from Genesis to Revelation, deals with human beings differently than he deals with all other life," Land said.

The idea that human beings are no different than other animals has a consequence," he said. "What it boils down to is if we do not put this evil genie back in the bottle we are going to end up not only with the wholesale slaughter of unborn children, we are going to deal with the termination of children who don't have a high predictability of productivity and success after birth, and for those in the nursing home and those in the intensive care unit to have the quality-of-life ethic applied to them, which means, 'Are you healthy enough, are you normal enough to justify your continued existence? If not, we're going to pull the plug.'"

If this quality-of-life standard is not reversed, dire consequences will occur in the near future, Land said. He pointed to the increasing percentage of elderly persons in the United States population, a development partly due to the legality of abortion and the resultant decrease in population growth among the young.

"There is going to be tremendous demographic pressure to ration health care to the elderly, to withhold treatment from those who are no longer productive and working and who are too weak to defend themselves from the younger in the uncivilized, barbaric jungle of the 21st century in the United States," he said.

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Christians have "the right, the responsibility and the obligation" to speak boldly on this issue. "And if we won't stand in the gap, who will? If we won't stand in the gap on this issue, on what issue will we? And if we won't stand in the gap now, when will we stand?" Land said.

Sanctity of life is also a personal issue for him, Land said. He said that he responded to God's call on his life to the gospel ministry at age 17 during a Sunday evening service in a Southern Baptist church in Houston. After the service, his mother shared with him the events surrounding his birth, something she had not done previously. She explained she had suffered two miscarriages and was in extremely poor health when she became pregnant with him. In addition, she was taking medication that often caused severe deformity in unborn children. The doctor suggested an abortion.

His mother went home and prayed Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 1, promising to give her baby back to God. She developed toxemia. Again, the physician advised her to have an abortion. She refused and held on to her commitment to God. She concluded by telling her son, "So, I am not surprised at the decision you made tonight."

"I feel a personal obligation to speak for those who are not fortunate enough to have a Christian mother like mine, for those who can't speak for themselves, but if they could they would say, 'I want to live,'" Land said. "We must speak for them."

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WMU reorganizes to lead SBC  
through 'new era in missions'

By Susan Todd

N-10  
(WMU)

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union has reorganized to lead the organization through "a whole new era of missions involvement," according to one of the national executives.

The reorganization targets the entire church, Baptist associations and age-level WMU organizations as major focus areas for the decade of the '90s.

"These are new days, and we need to seek innovative ways for keeping the global mandate alive in the hearts of every Southern Baptist," said Dellanna O'Brien, national WMU executive director. "We hope we will better be able to do this through reorganization and new focus."

Woman's Missionary Union has identified three strategic directions for this decade. The first strategy calls for WMU to be a missions force in the church, association and the Southern Baptist Convention.

"The reorganization fits in beautifully with the first of our strategic directions," O'Brien said. "We believe this new focus will help us to strengthen WMU in the church by developing approaches for involving the total church in missions and to strengthen WMU in the association."

"In addition to undergirding our first direction, reorganization will also help us in the other two directions -- to equip state WMU leadership to be mission strategists and to maintain an effective base of operation."

Under the reorganization, three new sections in the missions program system will replace the current publications section and interpretation section. The missions program system is the WMU division charged with the responsibility for field services, publications, programming and language work.

The new sections are the age-level involvement section, the churchwide involvement section and the associational relations unit.

Bobbie Sorrill, associate executive director of the missions program system, directs the work of the system in addition to overseeing the work of the associational relations unit.

"We are interested in associational WMU leadership seeing themselves as the group who can do more than anyone else to raise the missions consciousness of the churches," Sorrill said. "We want them to see themselves in a way they haven't seen themselves before."

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"They can help churches see that missions involvement doesn't have to be just through WMU age-level organizations but it can be done in new ways. The missions vision is the main thing."

The main objectives of the associational focus will be strategy planning, missions growth, equipping leadership and creating a missions vision, Sorrill said.

"We're on the brink of a whole new era of missions involvement and the WMU associational leadership can be the movers and shakers."

Lynn Yarbrough will oversee the churchwide involvement section, which will provide field servicing and magazine and product production for churchwide audiences. The staff also will target special groups such as black and language churches, families, seminary students, ministers' wives, church staff members and women's ministries programs.

"We are excited about the opportunity to work with WMU and other church leaders to involve every Southern Baptist in missions," Yarbrough said.

"We will do this through multiple avenues for short-term activities of ministry and witness, intercessory prayer and mission study. We will provide information, incentive and training for volunteers in missions," she said.

The churchwide section also will launch new approaches to missions education for unreached audiences, she said, "including using creative publishing efforts."

"We will also seek to involve people in missions through missions awareness tours and special conferences for spiritual enrichment and equipping for service."

Betty Merrell will direct the work of the age-level involvement Section, which will include field servicing and magazine and product production for WMU age-level organizations. The age-level missions organizations are Baptist Women, women ages 35 and older; Baptist Young Women, women ages 18-34; Acteens, girls in grades 7-12; Girls in Action, girls in grades 1-6; and Mission Friends, preschool boys and girls.

"We see the age-level organizations as the crux of everything that we do in missions in the church because there has to be a strong core of persons committed to the ongoing watchcare and growth of our organizations," Merrell said.

"Our objectives are toward growth, both in quantity and quality," she said. "We can't attract people into the organizations if we are not meeting the needs of the church and individuals' needs. So that's our goal -- to reach out to women and girls and preschoolers to help them be involved in missions through age-level organizations.

"It is only through ongoing, steady, persistent, consistent missions education in our churches that we will grow up leaders and missionaries for tomorrow's church," Merrell said.

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Biblical message holds key  
to commentary scholarship

By Jim Lowry

N-553

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WACO, Texas (BP)--Depending on the situation or even the time of day, Robert Sloan is a New Testament scholar, father of seven children, Little League baseball coach, school board member and/or interim pastor.

In all things, however, Sloan claims, "I am Baptist with my head and my heart."

Sloan, 41, is professor of New Testament in Baylor University's department of religion, where he holds the George W. Truett Chair in Evangelism.

He also is a consulting editor for The New American Commentary, a publishing project of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, and will be the author of the volume on Romans for the project.

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The New American Commentary will be a 40-volume set released between 1991 and 1997. A primary goal of the project is to present a scholarly, conservative view of Scripture which affirms the divine inspiration, total truthfulness and complete authority of the Bible, according to David Dockery, general editor.

Academic respect for Baptist scholarship and a dedication to share the message of the gospel are two driving forces for Sloan in his writing and teaching.

"Baptist scholarship has been thought of as something of an oxymoron," Sloan charged. "I don't think that is true.

"Our Baptist theological traditions are credible in terms of historical scholarship, and I want our traditions of Bible and theology to be subjected to honest scrutiny," he said.

"I think our Southern Baptist confessional tradition can be both scholarly and devotional," explained Sloan.

"The challenge is to produce a commentary that is faithful both to the insights of biblical scholarship and to the Bible as the word of God," he added.

Sloan, 41, is a graduate of Baylor University and received the M.Div. degree, magna cum laude, from Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, N.J. After that, he did post-baccalaureate research in church history at the University of Bristol in England. In 1978 he was graduated *insigni cum laude* with the *Doktor der Theologie* from the University of Basel in Switzerland.

He is a member of the exegetical revision team of *The Living Bible* and has had many articles and reviews published, including an article on Paul and the Law in *Novum Testamentum*, a prestigious New Testament journal.

A 20-minute drive away from Baylor University takes Sloan to a large, country farm-house where attention to scheduling becomes vital for all the Sloans, including Charissa, Bryan, Eraina, Michael, Alatheia, Sophia and Paul, who range from three to 16 years old.

Sloan and his wife, Sue, hold an impromptu huddle regarding the evening's responsibilities as soon as he arrives, while a budding young musician practices the piano in the background.

The academic world is somehow relegated to the back seat for the evening while family matters receive priority attention. There will be time later in the evening or tomorrow for attention to focus on New Testament scholarship, commentaries and the classroom.

As Sloan reads manuscripts in his role as a consulting editor of *The New American Commentary*, special attention will be given to theological content, historical and exegetical accuracy and readability.

Over the course of the seven-year project he will read all of the New Testament manuscripts with additional consideration given to application and potential usefulness of the commentary for pastors, students and church leaders.

"Theological exegesis is not philosophical hair-splitting," Sloan said. "I hope we can avoid extremist word and tense study because this is not a theological abstract. We want to produce a holistic commentary that looks for larger points and purpose.

"Of course, we will do grammar and word study, but not as an end in itself," he said. "The goal is to get to the message so that after reading the commentary you won't remember a word study but a sense of the whole.

"We will seek to establish the historical message of the text within the framework of the author's intent and the broader, social and cultural environment.

"The question always with us is how to apply the text. But there is not a final answer," he said. "The message is adapted and applied to our own situations. Therefore, we need a new commentary for our generation that is faithful to the Bible as the word of God.

"We want the commentary to be useful for sermon insights, but not to be a collection of sermon outlines," he said. "So, the structure of the commentary will be dictated by the message of the text.

"As I prepare to write commentary on Romans, I will try to learn everything I can about the society and culture of the time when Romans was written," Sloan said. "I want to understand Paul's message to the household churches in Rome.

"Then, pastors and teachers can teach the message of Romans and all of us can more nearly conform our lives to that message," he added.

The first volume of The New American Commentary, which will be published in June 1991, will be Philippians, Colossians and Philemon, written by Richard E. Melick Jr., professor at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tenn. Sloan's volume on Romans is scheduled for release in 1992.

The commentary will be written and edited according to the doctrinal guidelines of the Baptist Faith and Message statement, and the Chicago Statement on Inerrancy will be the operating definition of biblical inerrancy. The New International Version of the Bible will be the standard translation for The New American Commentary.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by SSB bureau of Baptist Press

Cox to coordinate  
evangelism volunteers

By Sarah Zimmerman

F-HMB

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ATLANTA (BP)--William A. Cox has been named national coordinator of volunteers in evangelism for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Cox retired Aug. 1 after 29 years of service with the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. He will work with the Home Mission Board as a Mission Service Corps volunteer.

Cox said he will serve as the "middle man between churches that want to send volunteers and places that need them." His responsibilities will be strictly with evangelistic efforts such as revivals and door-to-door witnessing, not mission teams doing Vacation Bible School or construction.

One of his primary tasks will be enlisting volunteers for witnessing efforts before the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Atlanta in 1991 and in Indianapolis in 1992.

"We hope to have at least 5,000 volunteers in Atlanta and 2,400 adults in Indianapolis to take religious opinion polls," Cox said. The polls are used to lead to witnessing opportunities with residents.

Cox, a Texas native, is a graduate of East Texas Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth.

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