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Bill introduced to outlaw
abortion clinic blockades

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
2/5/93

WASHINGTON (BP)--Pro-choice members of Congress, acting three weeks after an unfavorable Supreme Court ruling, introduced legislation making the blockading of an abortion clinic entrance a federal offense.

Rep. Charles Schumer, D.-N.Y., and Rep. Connie Morella, R.-Md., introduced the Freedom of Access to Reproductive Services Act Feb. 3. The bill is H.R. 796 in the House of Representatives. Sen. Edward Kennedy, D.-Mass, has indicated he will introduce similar legislation, but no companion bill yet has been offered in the Senate.

Although such legislation has been introduced in the past without serious congressional consideration, the 1993 version may receive more attention because of the Supreme Court's recent decision in Bray v. Alexandria Women's Health Clinic. In a 6-3 opinion, the court ruled a 120-year-old federal law cannot be used to protect abortion clinics or women seeking abortions against blockades by such pro-life activist organizations as Operation Rescue.

After the Jan. 13 announcement of the decision, abortion advocacy groups such as Planned Parenthood and the National Organization for Women urged Congress to pass legislation superseding Bray and making such protests illegal on the federal level.

Schumer's bill will enable clinics and women to obtain federal injunctions and will enable women to sue for damages. First-time offenders under the law could be imprisoned up to one year, while a second conviction can result in a three-year sentence. The bill does not prohibit picketing and other forms of legal protest, an aide to Morella said.

Blockading abortion clinics is "an attempt of the radical right to impose their beliefs on American women by any means possible," Schumer said in a written statement. "Today the right to choose is threatened once again -- not by the courts, not by an unfriendly administration -- but by terrorists."

It is a "disgrace to compare a 60-year-old grandmother with a Scofield Bible in one arm and knitting needles under another" to the terrorists who blew up the Pan Am flight over Lockerbie, Scotland, said Pat Mahoney, director of the Christian Defense Coalition and a spokesman for Operation Rescue.

Operation Rescue has a commitment to nonviolence and has not had an act of violence despite 62,000 arrests in the last five years, he said.

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The bill discriminates against pro-lifers to the exclusion of other groups practicing civil disobedience, such as homosexual, environmental and anti-nuclear activists, Mahoney said.

The Bray decision not only pleased Operation Rescue-type activists but other pro-life organizations as well.

The case had wide-ranging implications. Abortion advocates had argued women seeking abortions should be considered a class worthy of civil rights protection. Operation Rescue and other pro-lifers argued the blockades did not form sex discrimination because the targets of such protests are all people who participate in the abortion process. They said state and local trespass laws are sufficient to use against people in clinic blockades.

"Whatever one thinks of abortion," Associate Justice Antonin Scalia wrote in the court's opinion, "it cannot be denied that there are common and respectable reasons for opposing it, other than hatred of or condescension toward (or indeed any view at all concerning) women as a class -- as is evident from the fact that men and women are on both sides of the issue, just as men and women are on both sides of petitioners' unlawful demonstrations."

The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission joined in a friend-of-the-court brief by the National Right to Life Committee arguing the federal law in question should not be used to protect the rights of women seeking abortions.

The decision was "a refreshing judicial victory for the pro-life movement in an era where there may be relatively few victories in the legislative or executive branches," said Michael Whitehead, the CLC's general counsel.

"The Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871 has been a bludgeon in the hands of pro-choice leaders who could find a pro-choice federal judge willing to interfere with the rights of pro-life protesters, using an ancient civil rights statute."

In recent years, the 1871 law, which was passed to protect blacks from harassment by KKK members, had been used by federal courts to issue injunctions against and fine members of Operation Rescue and similar groups.

In the central ruling overturning the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, Scalia was joined by Chief Justice William Rehnquist, Byron White, Anthony Kennedy, David Souter and Clarence Thomas. Dissenting were Harry Blackmun, John Paul Stevens and Sandra Day O'Connor.

When the ruling was announced, Mahoney called it a victory not only for him and the other five defendants but for Operation Rescue, free speech and unborn children.

"This decision is a great victory for justice, a great setback for the child-killing industry," Randall Terry, founder of Operation Rescue, said the day of the decision. "And we will continue to be their worst nightmare. ..."

Mahoney said he doubts the bill will pass. If it does, "Operation Rescue members will continue to save children in spite of personal costs or sacrifice," he said.

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Changes in journeyman program
to restore original identity

By Mary E. Speidel

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's journeyman program will undergo changes designed to restore the identity of the original program begun in 1964.

Board administrators approved the revisions Feb. 2 after hearing recommendations from a task force appointed last October to study the program. The original journeyman program was developed to allow recent college graduates to serve for two years alongside career missionaries. In 1989 the journeyman experience was made a part of a newly created International Service Corps, formed to send non-career personnel overseas for four months to two years. Under that umbrella, it became known as the journeyman "option" of the service corps.

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Elements of the original journeymen program were used as a model for the International Service Corps program, created to provide a more uniform approach to the sending of non-career personnel. Participants in the journeymen option went through the same application and screening process as other service corps volunteers but attended a separate 16-day orientation.

With the latest changes, the journeyman option will be restored to a distinct program of its own, according to Wendy Norvelle, director of the board's International Service Department.

The board will require applicants to attend a more rigorous four- to five-week training session similar to training in the original program, Norvelle said. Participants must successfully complete training before being commissioned as journeymen, also a part of the original program.

Requirements for the revised journeyman program are:

- Single (never married) college graduate under age 30.
- Southern Baptist at least two years.
- U.S. citizen or permanent resident.
- Commitment to serve two years.

Those stipulations reflect several changes, Norvelle said. One is that the applicants be never-married singles only. The original program was created for single college graduates but later evolved to include married couples. The journeyman option program also was open to married applicants.

The move to limit the program to singles is mainly for training purposes. The revised program's more intensive training "lends itself more readily to singles," Norvelle said. Training focuses on group experiences and doesn't allow much time for couples to be together, she said. Married couples interested in overseas service may still apply for the International Service Corps. Divorced applicants -- who are single or remarried -- also will continue to be considered for the service corps.

Another change is that journeymen will be required to be Southern Baptist at least two years, also a new requirement for all International Service Corps volunteers, Norvelle said. The current requirement is that a participant in any service corps program -- including the journeyman option -- be a Southern Baptist at least one year.

These changes were proposed after the board's task force on journeymen surveyed a sampling of Southern Baptists familiar with the journeyman experience, Norvelle said. Respondents included missionary supervisors of journeymen, former journeymen and board administrators.

"Overwhelmingly, they (respondents) wanted to retain that journeyman identity and camaraderie" from the original program, said Norvelle, a task force member and former journeyman to Zimbabwe.

The three-year-old journeymen option had drawn criticism from some Southern Baptists who felt it weakened the original program. Among the strongest critics were some former journeymen, said Harlan Spurgeon, the board's vice president for mission personnel. "They felt a sense of loss, that the program would no longer be as distinctive as it once was. And they mourned that loss," Spurgeon said.

Spurgeon said he sees the evaluation and resulting changes as "a healthy process." He expects the changes to "restore some of the original luster to the journeyman program -- which has always been a good program -- and make it even more appealing to young people."

Under the revised program, the first screening conference for applicants will be held in the fall of 1993, Norvelle said. The first of two annual journeymen training sessions will be held in January 1994. The second is projected for mid-June or mid-July, she said. Screening conferences will be held six times a year in conjunction with regular International Service Corps conferences. The International Service Department will continue to handle the screening, selection and job assignments of journeymen applicants.

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Journeymen will receive the same financial package as International Service Corps workers, which includes a stipend and paid housing, transportation on the field and travel expenses to and from the field. Under the current program, all service corps applicants are asked if they can provide some of their support, but that is not a requirement to serve. However, in the revised program journeymen will not be asked to furnish part of their support since most are young college graduates just getting started in the work force.

Under the current International Service Corps program, personnel may renew two-year commitments for an additional year while remaining on the mission field. But with the new approach, journeymen will not be allowed to do so unless they first return home, Norvelle said. They then could renew for another year of service -- even in the same assignment -- through the International Service Corps. This change would not affect journeymen currently on the mission field.

Both journeymen and service corps work may be applied to the two-year experience requirement for career missionaries appointed by the board if the experience is related to the career assignment. The original journeyman program was created for single college graduates under age 27 who did not feel called to be career missionaries.

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Civil War re-enactments offer
students historical ministry

By Susan Simko

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--As the Sunday morning sun peeked through the trees surrounding the Confederate camp at Shiloh, Private Michael Bell, chaplain's assistant, passed out hymnals to the weary troops. The chaplain stepped forward to deliver his sermon.

"If you've never accepted Christ as your Savior, come to the front," the chaplain said. Seven men elbowed their way through the crowd. Private Bell drew one of the soldiers aside. After the two talked, the man bowed his head and quietly prayed to accept Christ.

But the year was not 1862, it was 1987, and Bell was not really a Confederate private. He was a Civil War re-enactor. The conversion, however, was real.

Bell, who is a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, spends several weekends ministering to Civil War re-enactors.

During a re-enactment, the battles, the uniforms, the camps and the chapel services are all re-created. And during a re-enactment, people give their lives to Christ, just like they did during the war, Bell said.

"The greatest revival went over the entire Confederate Army during the War Between the States," Bell said. "More than 150,000 Confederate soldiers came to know Christ."

Southwestern history professor Leon McBeth said Christianity exploded among the Confederate troops.

"When they were not actually on the march or in battle, prayer meetings and evangelistic services were their favorite activities," McBeth said.

Today, more than 130 years later, people from across the United States and even some foreign countries flock to the re-enactments to relive the Civil War. Christians like Bell make sure they hear the gospel while they are there.

While in college, Bell served as an enlisted man in the 11th Virginia Company G, which means he carried his gun shoulder to shoulder with men in his unit when the chaplains -- to remain historically accurate -- had to stay behind with the medical core.

"One on one, I had a foot in the door with people in our unit that our chaplains didn't always have," Bell said.

"They would come by late at night wanting to talk and the chaplains would go with them inside the tent and pray. They personally sought out the chaplain, just like they did it then," Bell said.

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Southwestern student James Early, who is also a re-enactor, said marathon stretches of idle time between battles could give ripe opportunities for witnessing.

"There are times when you march for 10 to 15 hours and sit for eight hours," he said. The re-enactors fill that time by gathering around camp fires, swapping stories and building friendships.

"I think it would be a great opportunity to witness," he said, adding there wasn't a chaplain in his unit in Austin, Texas.

In addition to lifestyle evangelism, Bell has used reprinted Confederate gospel tracts to initiate conversations with re-enactors.

"Soldiers don't turn these down because they are historical artifacts and soldiers had them back then," Bell said. "If they really want to know the full history of the Confederate Army, they've got to deal with this. They've got to deal with the gospel."

Today, the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board distributes replicas of the tracts at cost. The re-enactor chaplains and chaplains' assistants in Virginia distribute more than 40 different kinds of gospel tracts. Spectators, too, snap up the tracts in their quest for historical memorabilia.

For Bell, the experience of Civil War re-enacting has strengthened his resolve to witness.

"It encourages acting in spite of your fears. You hear so much about Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson and Jeb Stewart ... they were courageous men, but that doesn't mean they weren't afraid," Bell said. "I enjoy being around lost people because they are constantly challenging me. They are wanting and needing the Lord, whether they admit it or not."

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

Award-winning youth minister
advocates balanced program

By Chip Alford

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HENDERSONVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--When it comes to building a healthy youth ministry program, Debbie Harned takes her doctor's advice.

"Doctors are always telling us we need to eat well-balanced meals to be healthy. The same principle applies with youth work. You have to have a well-balanced program to have a healthy ministry.

"Bible study, discipleship, missions, music -- all of those are important," said Harned, minister of youth and activities at Bluegrass Baptist Church in Hendersonville, Tenn.

From all indications, the youth at Bluegrass are being well fed. The church averages between 70 to 80 youth in Sunday school each week and 30 to 40 youth attend Wednesday night discipleship and missions classes. They also lead their own worship services once a month, plan their own newsletter (the "Fountain of Youth"), teach their own weekly Bible studies and help organize a variety of outreach projects.

"I think as ministers we are supposed to be equippers," Harned said, explaining her philosophy of youth ministry. "I want to work myself out of a job by equipping the youth, their parents and our youth workers. I don't want to be the focal point, I want them to learn to build their own foundation (in the faith)."

Harned may not be the focal point in her church's youth program, but she was the center of attention in the November/December issue of "Group," a nondenominational magazine for youth ministers, which named her "1992 Youth Leader of the Year" from a nationwide field of more than 60 nominees.

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"Under her forceful, visionary leadership, the youth program at Bluegrass Baptist has developed into a prototype for excellence in youth ministry," Group editor Rick Lawrence wrote about Harned. "Everything about it is strong; youth involvement and leadership, a nurturing and exuberant environment, enthusiastic adult participation, cutting-edge volunteer training, experiential programming that's fun and growth-oriented, a service mind-set and relational ministry."

Harned said she was both shocked and honored to receive the award.

"I'm in a profession where there are tons of rewards (through witnessing changes) in the lives of young people, but very few awards. This was really a surprise."

She earned a bachelor's degree in music from Belmont University in Nashville before going to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1984 to pursue a career in youth ministry. She described her time at the seminary as "an incredibly great experience."

"Dr. (Wes) Black and Dr. (Phil) Briggs (youth ministry professors at Southwestern) have both written me and taken full credit for this award," Harned said, laughing. "But seriously, a large part of the credit does go to them."

"I had been involved in youth ministry about three or four years before I came to Southwestern, but after being at seminary only a few months I began to feel embarrassed about what I had done before in youth ministry."

"It was tremendously helpful for me to understand the big picture of youth ministry -- the curriculum, the church staff, resources, counseling, the biblical basis of it -- all of the elements that go into ministry. That's the kind of awakening I had."

One of Harned's innovative programs is a youth-led worship service once a month. No adults are allowed in the service (except for Harned) and all the counseling is provided by trained young people.

"The youth are very excited about it. We had 10 of them who came for training in how to lead someone to Christ. And many of them who wouldn't feel comfortable sharing their testimony in our regular worship service have been able to do it in these services," she said.

While some of her job involves planning and administration, Harned said the part she enjoys most is spending "one-on-one" time with the youth.

"I enjoy sitting down with the kids and encouraging them about the gifts and abilities God has given them -- just being a cheerleader for them," she said.

Asked if she had any advice for her peers in youth ministry, Harned said: "I guess I would just tell them to hang in there. You can't implement everything in a summer or even in a year. But if you keep building up others, if God does move you somewhere else, you will have left something behind that will be strong enough to stand on its own."

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

Golden Gate president says
God looks beyond talents

Baptist Press
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MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--The most successful person in God's work is not the most talented but the most available and obedient, President William O. Crews told students at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary's opening chapel of the spring semester.

Crews pointed to Moses as an example of how God chooses leaders in his sermon at the Mill Valley campus.

"God seems to have an affinity for choosing people that others would not choose to do great, important things," Crews said. "God comes to people who appear useless and invites them to be leaders."

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When God confronted Moses at the burning bush, he worried about whether people would view him as God's messenger, Crews said. In fact, Moses "filled up two chapters with excuses" of why he couldn't do what God asked of him.

"There comes a time when excuses have to be put aside," Crews said.

"God says the question is not, 'Who are you?' God says the question is 'Who am I?'

"You read the Old Testament and the New Testament and discover the characters don't seem to have much," Crews said. "But God uses what they have to accomplish his purpose.

"The result of obedience to God is power," Crews said. "God doesn't need what you have, but he does need you. If you will let him be Lord, he can use whatever you have for his glory."

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