

Associated Baptist Press

Editor: Greg Warner
Associate Editor: Bob Allen
Phone: (904) 262-6626
Fax: (904) 262-7745

September 8, 1994

In this issue:

- U.N. population conference embroiled in abortion dispute
- Fired seminary president named among 20 most influential Texans
- Missionary resigns FMB post in protest
- SBC study committee seeks delay in Florida home missions proposal
- Eleven HMB directors voice dissent over evangelical-Catholic accord

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee

U.N. population conference embroiled in abortion dispute

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Abortion politics dominated the first days of the United Nations conference on population and development in Cairo as delegates struggled to produce a 20-year, voluntary plan to reduce population growth.

Speakers at the Sept. 5-13 international conference explored multiple problems created by the population explosion, as well as empowering women in making family planning decisions.

The non-binding plan for curbing population growth was stalled by Vatican opposition. The Vatican, as well as Muslims and some evangelical Christians, opposed the plan because of concern it would promote abortion.

Among those voicing objections was the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

James Smith, CLC director of governmental relations, said at an Aug. 23 press conference that the media has given significant coverage of the Vatican and Muslim objections to the plan while largely ignoring evangelicals' concerns.

Smith said the CLC's concerns about the action plan to be presented in Cairo are broad: abortion, viewing children as a threat, procreation and choice within marriage, sexual morality and marriage, adolescents, the family, male responsibility, poverty and population and the role of religion.

"The Draft Programme seeks to promote the very policies of 'safe sex' and distribution of condoms to minors which have led to skyrocketing teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease rates in America," Smith said.

He said that the Clinton administration is leading the "charge for 'safe sex' agenda" but that Southern Baptists' national "True Love Waits" campaign has proven there's a better way. The program, begun by the SBC, has been endorsed by 27 other denominations and organizations and encourages sexual abstinence until marriage.

Smith added that "while Southern Baptists and others believe 'True Love Waits,' the Clinton administration believes true love wears a condom."

Smith said the document needs to focus more on development issues rather than just population growth, emphasizing that human beings are the most precious resources some nations have.

In Cairo, Vice President Al Gore responded to critics by saying that the administration does not advocate abortion rights as international policy

A Baptist medical ethics specialist and former Southern Baptist seminary professor said Baptists have a four-fold interest in the conference.

Paul Simmons, who teaches medical ethics and comparative Christian ethics at the University of Louisville, said Baptists are interested in freedoms, children, the welfare of the earth and how religion relates to politics.

Unfortunately, not every pregnancy is a happy event, and some women regardless of their religious background will choose to terminate their pregnancies, said Simmons.

"We must accept the reality of abortion" and then do everything possible to find better ways to prevent and deal with unwanted pregnancies, he said. He offered four ways of curtailing the problem: education, development of better contraceptives, economic development and a moral atmosphere of acceptance and support.

"That doesn't mean that we advance abortion," he said, "But (that we) accept it as one of the difficult realities of family life."

Simmons said the world's foremost problem right now is overpopulation.

"We face no problem that cannot be traced to too many people being on the earth," Simmons said, citing widespread violence, ecological disasters and food shortage as examples.

The world faces a desperate situation that requires creative and very progressive means to combat it, he said.

Simmons said he does not advocate abortion in the way that China has used it for population control, but he said China represents the "future facing the world unless we do things to prevent that type of population explosion."

The tragedy of the conference is the Vatican's heavy-handed approach that has "contributed to the human miseries involved in overpopulation," Simmons said. "The church must take account of its own involvement in creating and contributing to (such) human miseries."

Simmons outspoken views on abortion caused friction with conservative trustees at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, leading to his early retirement from the Louisville, Ky., school in 1993.

-30-

Fired seminary president named among 20 most influential Texans

By Ken Camp

DALLAS (ABP) -- A Baptist preacher named among the 20 most influential people in Texas shares a tiny office in temporary quarters after being locked out of his last office by the governing board of his previous employer.

Russell Dilday, fired last March as president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, was listed by Texas Monthly as one of the "Texas Twenty."

Members of that "first annual dream team of 20 intriguing Texans who stand head and shoulders above the rest" were billed as "Big Shots" on the cover of the magazine's September issue.

Dallas attorney Ralph Pulley, chairman of the seminary trustee board that fired Dilday, said the magazine article was "a nice honor" and that he was "pleased for Dr. Dilday."

"He certainly has had an impact on Texas and will continue to have," Pulley said, but added he personally did not have "any conclusion" as to whether Dilday is one of the state's 20 most influential people or whether his firing increased his influence.

Pulley declined any further comment on Dilday, saying he had moved "beyond that" and was focused on the new administration at Southwestern.

Along with real estate developer Ross Perot Jr., Baptist layman and chicken magnate Bo Pilgrim, state Lt.

Gov. Bob Bullock, television producer Aaron Spelling and Hakeem Olajuwon of the Houston Rockets, Dilday was listed among "impossible to ignore" Texas luminaries who are "the state's dominant forces."

Dilday, now special assistant to the president at Baylor University in Waco and distinguished professor of homiletics at the fledgling George W. Truett Theological Seminary, has trouble seeing himself in that company.

However, he said he has come to realize that "what happened at Southwestern Seminary has had wide-ranging impact outside the seminary's immediate orbit and even outside Baptist life."

He pointed to the affirmation he received from colleagues at Texas Christian University who acknowledged "the importance of the authentic Baptist witness to the general religious world, particularly as a voice for religious liberty and freedom of conscience."

He also reluctantly noted a friend who said her irreligious father was touched by the Christian way Dilday responded to his abrupt dismissal.

"I hope through this I have been a witness," he said.

Texas Monthly's Jan Jarboe wrote, "The firing of Russell Dilday may prove to be a turning point in the continuing war between fundamentalist and so-called moderate Baptists.

"Dilday is so prominent and his firing was so shocking that he has emerged as the potential leader of a moderate counterattack."

While eschewing the "moderate" label and pointing out that he never has been part of any organized political group within the convention, Dilday said he realizes his early outspoken opposition to the "takeover" of the Southern Baptist Convention led to his firing at Southwestern.

The presidential election of Jim Henry over Fred Wolfe at the SBC in Orlando, Fla., -- termed by Dilday as "the first defeat of the fundamentalist power structure" -- was in part a reaction to the events at Southwestern, he said.

Wolfe, pastor of Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, Ala., had been endorsed by the recent past presidents of the SBC. Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church in Orlando, was endorsed by Dilday and was seen as the choice of a younger, less strident group of conservatives within the convention.

But Dilday said the change had more to do with style than substance, and he predicted no significant difference in committee appointments made by Henry.

"If it should develop into any sort of radical shift, no doubt the hardliners would do what they needed to bring things back under their control," he said.

But for now, Dilday said he wants to "put behind" the conflicts of the past and "look for new initiatives" and opportunities for service such as his new role at Truett.

"My calling is to work in the training of men and women for ministry. That hasn't changed," he said.

Each Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, Dilday teaches preaching to 37 students and leadership skills to 35, and he meets with other students in small "covenant groups" for prayer and spiritual formation.

Dilday shares a modest office in Truett's temporary home at Waco's First Baptist Church with Ruth Ann Foster, assistant professor of Christian scripture.

While Truett's 50-person student body seems tiny compared to the more than 3,000 enrolled at Southwestern, Dilday said he is enjoying one-to-one contact with students.

"It is not a position of great influence within the denomination, but it is an opportunity to touch the future," he said.

Dilday said he holds no illusions that he personally is one of Texas' most influential people, but he said the Texas Monthly article accurately reflects in importance that Baptists have in the life of the state.

Perhaps, he said, the article will help to "correct some of the caricatures that have emerged from the conflict" within Baptist ranks.

"I'm working on the fruits of the Spirit right now -- love, joy, peace, gentleness and so forth. As I've studied, I've been amazed at how many times the Bible speaks of the gentleness of God," he said.

"In our denominational battles, that has often been missing. I hope maybe the article will cause someone to look for evidence of the Spirit's presence in our lives."

-30-

Missionary resigns FMB post in protest

By Karen Owen

OWENSBORO, Ky. (ABP) – A Southern Baptist missionary has resigned from her post in Togo in western Africa because of denominational politics.

"I'm saying I resigned because of ethical and integrity reasons, and also the controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention," Paula Settle said in a telephone interview.

Settle, from Owensboro, Ky., was upset by a decision by the convention in June not to allow denominational agencies, such as the Foreign Mission Board that employs Settle, to accept donations from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. The Fellowship is a group of moderates some see as the beginnings of a rival denomination.

"For me, that was the final blow," said Settle, who is a member of the Fellowship. "To me, you can't tell Baptists you are not going to take their money."

Betty Kay Yamaoka, the mission board's associate area director for West Africa, said, "If she feels the Lord is leading her to resign, I can't help but wish her well as she follows the Lord's leading."

Yamaoka said no other missionaries from West Africa have resigned as a result of the SBC decision. She said she had heard of no others elsewhere who were doing so either. "We have 4,000-plus missionaries out there who are not resigning over this," she said.

Settle, 39, has spent almost eight years in Togo, a long narrow nation near the equator in western Africa with a population about the size of Kentucky's. About 80 percent of Togo's residents farm and live in rural areas.

Settle works mainly with women and children, teaching literacy classes, Bible studies and children's Sunday school classes. She recently led a retreat for Baptist women and started a backyard Bible club at a market.

Settle said she was angered by an SBC decision about taking gifts from the Fellowship because Southern Baptist agencies do accept donations from non-Baptists and even non-Christians.

But the Fellowship dispute is "only like one third of the reason" she resigned, Settle said.

"I just see abuses of policy, abuses of money, mismanagement of money I can't go along with," she said. She also has been troubled by "relationship problems you always have in any job," she said.

"I had threatened to resign in '92," Settle said. "I threatened to take a leave of absence when I was in Owensboro in April."

After the decision about Fellowship donations, she decided she had to act, Settle said. "There are times in our lives we have to stand by our convictions."

Yamaoka said no complaints by Settle had reached her office, but would have been handled by the area director in the mission field.

"Our decisions on how to spend money in the field are normally a group decision," with groups of missionaries deciding -- with approval from the area director -- how to spend the money allocated for that area, Yamaoka said. "Paula has been part of that process."

Settle's resignation will take effect Nov. 1, but she's leaving Togo Sept. 19.

"It's going to be a new experience. I had planned on being here until I retired."

-- Reprinted by permission from the Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer.

SBC study committee seeks delay in Florida home missions proposal

By Bob Allen

LEESBURG, Fla. (ABP) -- A proposal that would take responsibility for missions work in Florida -- and about \$1.3 million annually to pay for it -- away from the Southern Baptist Convention's Home Mission Board may be delayed, at least until it is looked at by a committee already studying the ways in which the various SBC entities relate.

Florida Baptist Convention Executive Director John Sullivan announced Sept. 6 he would ask state leaders to postpone action on the plan, scheduled later in the week, at the request of Mark Brister, who chairs a seven-member committee studying the programs and structure of the SBC. Sullivan said he will meet with the Brister committee Oct. 28.

The proposal, approved Aug. 18 by a state budget and allocation committee, would transfer administration of all home missions work in Florida to the state convention's offices in Jacksonville. Currently the work is administered by the Home Mission Board from offices in Atlanta through joint funding of missionary positions with state conventions under terms of a "cooperative agreement" document outlining responsibilities and limitations of each entity.

To fund the change, the state convention would skim about \$1.3 million -- the amount of money that currently comes from the HMB to fund projects in Florida -- from the \$1.9 million it now sends to the national agency through the Cooperative Program unified budget of both the state and national conventions. The remaining \$600,000, along with proceeds from the annual Annie Armstrong missions offering, would then be forwarded to the national missions agency.

Sullivan says the change is necessary to keep missions viable in Florida. Two recent events precipitated the proposal, he said: a "unilateral" 6 percent reduction in HMB dollars to the states and the formation of an HMB committee to "investigate" state conventions which accept gifts from churches designated for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, a moderate alternative missions organization whose money SBC agencies are forbidden to accept.

HMB President Larry Lewis objects to the Florida proposal, warning it would harm missions giving. He denied the board acted unilaterally in passing a portion of budget cuts mandated by declining denominational support on to the states. And, he said the HMB study committee was prompted by various state convention actions, like the Florida proposal, which "are radically redefining" the Cooperative Program, the denomination's unified method of budget support since 1925.

Brister, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, La., said he asked Sullivan to "hold off" on bringing the proposal to the State Board of Missions at a Sept. 8-9 meeting and invited both Sullivan and Lewis to meet with the SBC program and structure study committee in October.

Brister said the committee wants to learn more about the "background, reasons and objectives that prompted" the proposal, which is of interest to the committee because it "considers relating in a new way to one of our agencies and represents a paradigm shift in missions giving."

"We are listening to Southern Baptists. We are studying the entire structure. That's why we want to hear from Dr. Sullivan. We will also hear from Dr. Larry Lewis."

"Our committee is looking at the entire structure of the Southern Baptist Convention and all the program

statements, which are in essence the job descriptions of the agencies," Brister said. "We are looking in great hopefulness toward the future of the SBC, to keep our mandate for missions solid."

The committee is "working as fast and as carefully as we can," Brister said. While he does not anticipate the committee will be ready to bring a recommendation at the Sept. 19-21 meeting of the SBC Executive Committee, "we hope to have something for the SBC in Atlanta," he said.

"It is a formidable but not impossible task. There is a lot of material," Brister said.

Sullivan announced he would seek to postpone action on the proposal during the opening session of a state-sponsored Cooperative Program Summit meeting at Lake Yale Baptist Assembly near Leesburg.

Also on the program at the summit meeting was Lewis, who used the occasion to urge Florida Baptists to, "not mess with the Cooperative Program."

-30-

Eleven HMB directors voice dissent over evangelical-Catholic accord

By Bob Allen

WICHITA FALLS, Texas (ABP) -- Eleven directors of the Home Mission Board have signed a "statement of dissent," distancing themselves from a controversial pledge uniting Catholics and evangelicals signed by the board's president last spring.

In August, HMB directors voted 40-28 to endorse both a recent Southern Baptist Convention resolution and a "resolution of intent" passed earlier by the board's executive committee on the document titled, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium."

The motion passed by the directors was substituted for one offered by William Streich, a director from Wichita Falls, Texas, to "renounce" the document, drafted and signed by a coalition of conservative Catholic and evangelical leaders including HMB President Larry Lewis and Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

Streich announced in August he would distribute a statement offering individual board members a chance to protest the document, which critics allege undermines evangelism efforts aimed at Catholics.

The statement, drafted Sept. 7, "formally expresses the desire of individual directors of the Home Mission Board to disassociate themselves" from the August vote and "any tie" to the evangelical-Catholic document. Among criticisms leveled at the document are that it contains "heretical statements" and "claims Roman Catholicism as a legitimate form of discipleship."

While acknowledging they share convictions on pro-life and anti-pornography concerns highlighted in the document, the signers said "by subordinating doctrine to cause, this document leads to unacceptable compromise which has been endorsed by the Home Mission Board."

Streich, a layman and member of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, pointed out that according to an attendance report in minutes, 12 directors abstained from voting on the August motion, meaning only 40 of the 80 members present supported the action which effectively sustained Lewis' decision to endorse the document. "I think that's a real signal about the importance of this issue," he said.

He said he believes more directors declined to sign the statement of dissent because it is a "radical" document. "It's a charge the Home Mission Board has embraced, either directly or indirectly, heresy," he said. "It has embraced false doctrine because it has supported Larry Lewis signing this document. ... Admittedly, that is a strong charge."

END