

# REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

APRIL 1951

## PRESENT STATUS OF PENDING BILLS OF INTEREST TO CHURCHMEN

Amidst the great excitement prevailing throughout the country over the Government's foreign policy, as occasioned by the President's action in reference to the Far Eastern Commander, Douglas MacArthur, the Congress has been somewhat interrupted in respect to action on pending bills.

As of this writing the draft bill under consideration in the House has undergone prolonged debate with the result that the Barden substitute, eliminating Universal Military Training for the present, has been defeated. The Vinson Amendment has been adopted, and other amendments have been approved. It is somewhat uncertain as to the final outcome, though it appears almost sure that some kind of bill similar to the one already adopted by the Senate favoring UMT will be the subject of conference with a Senate-House committee, with the prospect that the bill agreed upon will be passed. Church leaders, as a rule, have remained steadfast in their opposition to the adoption of UMT. Most denominational bodies all along have passed resolutions in opposition. If our church people expect to be effective in preventing this vast assumption of powers by the military affecting education, religion and social life in general, especially our liberties, they will need to communicate with their Senators and Representatives in Congress against the proposed UMT Commission which is to recommend a law.

The India Emergency Assistance Act (H.R. 3017), which authorizes the appropriation of 140 million dollars of new funds and the transfer of fifty million dollars already appropriated to ECA for the purpose of furnishing two million tons of food grains to India as a grant, has never been approved by the House Rules Committee. Various religious bodies of the country have strongly urged this grant. Aside from whatever political influences such a grant might have on India, in promoting cooperation with the United States and support of the United Nations, it is felt by church leaders that on the basis of India's dire need this would be a Christian act. With millions on the verge of starvation in India, they contend that this land of plenty should endeavor to do what it can to relieve such suffering. If anything is to come of the proposal, it will doubtless be due to an outright expression from individuals and groups to members of the House Rules Committee, in a plea that the bill be allowed to come before the House, where its merits may be fully discussed and the people may have a chance to make up their minds and communicate their wishes to their representatives.

The widespread interest in the investigations into gambling and other forms of vice and crimes conducted by Senator Estes Kefauver (Baptist) is most enheartening. Whatever the concern for the clarification of the Government's foreign policy with its assurances of selecting the right path on which to travel toward world order, the conviction grows that there is great need for a moral clean-up in our own country. The revelations made by the Kefauver Committee have been startling. Other revelations showing graft in high places have aroused the country. This awakening of the conscience of the people, accompanied as it is by the Southern Baptist Evangelistic Crusade, together with similar efforts made by our Baptist people generally and by others, would seem to indicate the coming of a more wholesome life for the American people. It occurs to this office that citizens owe it to their representatives in Government to let them know in pronounced terms that they wish public morality to be scrupulously observed,

also for the people through all the means at their command to try to establish in their own localities strict moral observance. There is much in the contention that if bribe takers are to be condemned, bribe makers are likewise to be prosecuted. If the political leaders are not up to par, the sober truth is the people are not, for political leaders rise no higher than the people who elect them.

#### SHALL CHRISTIANS SUPPORT THE CHRISTIAN AMENDMENT TO THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION?

A Christian Amendment Resolution (S.J. Res. 29) was introduced in the Senate by Ralph F. Flanders of Vermont, followed by an identical bill (H.J. Res. 156) in the House. This amendment specifies that "this Nation devoutly recognizes the authority and law of Jesus Christ, Saviour and Ruler of nations, through Whom are bestowed the blessings of Almighty God."

Immediately the Jews, numbering many millions in the Nation, raised strenuous objections. Other groups called attention to the language of the First Amendment which specifies that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion". The Resolutions are the outgrowth of a lobbying effort put forth by the Christian Amendment Party. The good people composing this zealous party have contributed large sums of money for the creation of literature propagandizing their movement. They have worked diligently to enlist the interest of this office. We have never seen fit to endorse the movement, because we think it is contrary to the First Amendment. We cannot imagine that it is possible to Christianize this Nation by means of legal enactment and use of police force. We should deplore the effect upon national unity that serious consideration of such bills might produce. Repeated efforts have been made along this line in the past, only to fail, because a full examination of the proposal will reveal that it does not comport with the American principle of separation of church and state. It will be noted, therefore, that this Amendment seeks to undo what the founders of this Republic, considering well in the First Amendment, provided Congress must never do -- "make any law respecting the establishment of religion". The proposed amendment, though a pious gesture, is a mistaken one in our judgment, for while all Christians are earnestly concerned to make the Nation Christian, we can only agree to do so through spiritual means.

#### HOW DOES THIS SOUND IN A SPEECH BY THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY GENERAL?

At the annual National Catholic Educational Convention recently held in Cleveland, Ohio, United States Attorney General J. Howard McGrath told the Catholic educators:

"An amendment which was intended to prevent the creation of an established church, and a phrase in a letter of Thomas Jefferson have been distorted to create, in words of Mr. Justice Black, in the famous McCollum case, a 'wall between church and state which must be kept high and impregnable.'

"It may be that in some respects Mr. Justice Frankfurter's quip that in relation with church and state 'good fences make good neighbors' is true, but not all. If anything, the state and the church must not have any fence between them."

How does this sound concerning the American distinctive system of separation of church and state as embodied in the First Amendment and interpreted by the United States Supreme Court? Is it a bit shocking to hear the chief law enforcement head of the United States Government set forth the distinct Roman Catholic view of church-state relations? Is the President of the United States, who appoints the members of

the cabinet, unmoved by such an utterance from one of his chief cabinet members? Has the public no right to raise these questions when the Government of the United States in one of its departments is so pronouncedly working in conflict with the other departments of the Government as in the case of the Justice Department and the United States Supreme Court?

\* \* \*

#### NEW MEXICO PAROCHIAL-PUBLIC SCHOOL ISSUE

From the beginning the Baptist Joint Committee has followed with concern the legal proceedings in New Mexico which have been directed toward securing relief from the domination of public schools by Roman Catholics. Without reviewing the developments from month to month, we quote from the CHURCH AND STATE NEWSLETTER of April 1951.

#### "NEW MEXICO OFFICIALS MAKE 'PEACE' GESTURE

"A recent New Mexico State Board of Education ruling directed against the wearing of religious garb by public school teachers, and discouraging public use of 'property owned by religious groups', was a direct result of the appeal filed by the plaintiffs in the Dixon Case for an extension and clarification of the original court decision. By this stratagem, the pro-Catholic church officials hope to mollify the opposition without actually abandoning their malpractices. By the use of such phrases as 'insofar as possible' to modify the effect of their ruling, however, they have provided themselves with convenient loopholes."

The situation in New Mexico is still considerably muddled and whereas the Washington state legislature and others have recently declined to vote extension of public transportation to parochial school pupils the effort is being made in New Mexico to fasten this burden upon the taxpayers.

\* \* \*

#### COMMENDING THE WASHINGTON RELIGIOUS REVIEW

Many letters have come to this office requesting an opinion as to the merits of the WASHINGTON RELIGIOUS REVIEW, a weekly newsletter edited and published by Larston D. Farrar, Washington, D. C. Our reply to all such inquiries is that this is a responsible, carefully prepared church news service of unusual quality. Its chief value in our judgment consists in its accurate research into questions of interest to the church rather than in its attempt to give religious events from day to day. Due to the energy and capability of the editor to make investigation of subjects of current concern a contribution is made to understanding that is obtainable from few other sources. Naturally it covers all religious groups, and endeavors to do so correctly and justly.

\* \* \*

#### IMPORTANT BOOKS CITED

Christianity on the Frontier. By John A. Mackay, Macmillan. \$2.50.  
The Church and Contemporary Change. By G. Bromley Oxnam. Macmillan. \$2.50.

These two books, by vice-presidents of FOAU, contain discussions of vital importance to religious liberty. Mackay, the Presbyterian, and Oxnam, the Methodist, stand squarely with the Baptists in a demand for separation of church and state, with religious liberty for all.

4.  
The Liberation of Life. By J. M. Dawson. The Broadman Press. Nashville. \$1.25.

"I picked up the new book, The Liberation of Life, and read it through before laying it down. My reaction is that translations of it should be made into Spanish, Portuguese, French, German, Turkish, Mandarin and Japanese languages. It is marked by comprehensive understanding and would perform a great service toward meeting needs which are most urgent in our world today." - J. H. Avery, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Panama City, Florida.

Valiant Pilgrim, The Story of John Bunyan and Puritan England. By Vera Brittain. Macmillan. \$4.00.

Evangelical believers, as well as Baptists, will be interested in this authentic, readable story of John Bunyan and Puritan England. Contributing to the values in the vivid biography are fifty illustrations and an extended bibliography. In the long annals of religious liberty few men ever suffered more for its achievement than the tinker of Bedford. His conversion, his preaching, his imprisonment, his books have left us an imperishable heritage with which all of us should become fully familiar.

One Woman's Fight, The Story of the Famous McCollum Case and its Aftermath - A Human Document of a Courageous Woman. By Vashti Crowwell McCollum. Doubleday. \$3.00.

It will be noted that a reputable publisher has put out this book. In the interest of truth it was overdue. Here one may learn the facts about "that awful McCollum woman", how it all began, the steps she took to carry out her profound conviction of right, the court processes, and those who participated in the effort to have the important question of church instruction in collaboration with the public schools clarified by the United States Supreme Court. Also may be learned the activities of the press, the nature of partisan propaganda incited, the readjustment of the churches to the final court decision, and something of the continuing fight.

#### DEFERMENT OF LAY WORKERS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, SACRED MUSIC AND ON MISSION FIELDS

According to General Herschey the definition of "regular ministers", unordained, as contained in the Selective Service Act, exempts those lay workers who are dedicated persons, giving their full time to a religious vocation, such as religious education, sacred music and mission service, and drawing their support from a religious organization. It does not exempt them from registration. Local draft boards will need to have some official certification from denominations making their status clear, and each person involved should be provided with such.

#### SOUTHERN BAPTIST EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE EMPLOYEES WILL NOT ENTER SOCIAL SECURITY

Employees of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention will not enter the United States plan for social security. The decision was reached recently when a formal poll of the ten employees revealed a unanimous opinion that they should not participate. The vote was taken following through on the action of the Executive Committee in December declaring that the terms of social security participation as defined in U. S. Government Bill 6,000 "did not seem to be in violation of the cherished principle of separation of church and state."

American Baptist Convention boards, we are informed, have accepted the Government plan. Many Baptist institutions have done so. It is not likely that Baptists will achieve uniformity in respect to it.