

REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

BAPTIST JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS



The American Baptist Convention
The Southern Baptist Convention
The National Baptist Convention of America
The National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.
The North American Baptist General Conference
The Baptist General Conference of America



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INFORMATION AVAILABLE

The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs is a significant and integral part of the Baptist denominational life of America. Although at the present time it is a comparatively small agency it is increasingly being recognized as the Baptist vehicle to give expression to religious liberty problems.

Two pamphlets are available to explain the work of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. One has to do with the constitution of the Committee, the cooperating Baptist bodies, and a statement of the scope and authority of the Washington office. The other is entitled "A Program of Action in the Nation's Capital" and it answers many questions that people ask about the work of the Committee. Both of these pamphlets are available in reasonable quantities for distribution in discussion groups and to others interested.

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PUBLIC AFFAIRS REPORT

An excellent presentation of the work of the Baptist Public Affairs Committee is found in the Book of Reports for the Southern Baptist Convention which met in Houston, Texas, May 20-23. We reproduce this report here.

"During the past year Baptists have made new advances in their current grasp and application of the principle of religious liberty. While the cause of liberty is so close to the hub of the Baptist movement that no one agency can carry the responsibility for it nor claim credit for its prospering, yet the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs continues as the main planning and coordinating agency for this concern. This Committee is composed of the Committees on Public Affairs appointed by each of the following cooperating conventions:

American Baptist Convention, Southern Baptist Convention, National Baptist Convention, U. S. A., Inc., National Baptist Convention of America, North American Baptist General Conference, and Baptist General Conference of America.

"C. Emanuel Carlson is the executive director of the Joint Committee which has its offices in the Baptist Building in Washington, D.C. W. Barry Garrett is the associate director in charge of information services.

"New advances have been made in at least five directions during the year.

"1. A paper on "The Biblical Basis of Religious Liberty," prepared under the auspices of the Joint Committee, has been circulated and discussed in several different conferences as an exploratory effort in this field. A lively interest has been expressed everywhere in this attempt to clarify and to state in modern terms the Biblical insights which constitute the spiritual basis of our Baptist commitment to liberty. New papers and additional discussions are now being prepared by a special committee consisting of Clifton J. Allen, chairman (S.B.C. Sunday School Board), Benjamin P. Browne (A.B.C. Board of Education and Publication), Stewart A. Newman (Southeastern Seminary), Carl H. Morgan (Eastern Seminary).

"As these studies progress they will facilitate effective preaching and teaching on the subject of religious liberty. Clear statements regarding the spiritual principles which are involved will also contribute toward clarity in the practical applications of our concern, and will enable us to make our commitments at the spiritual level and not merely as political tradition or expediency.

"2. Baptists are united in support of the principle of religious liberty and separation of church and state but they are not always of

one mind on the application of the principle in specific situations. This difference of opinion manifests itself especially in dealing with the subject of the use of public funds.

"In an effort to clarify the issues involved and to reach a consensus, the Joint Committee arranged a conference in Washington in October, 1957, to deal with the subject of the use of public funds and related questions. To this conference were invited the Baptist editors, state convention secretaries or representatives, chairmen or representatives of religious liberty committees or public affairs committees of state conventions, and the members of the Joint Committee on Public Affairs. In two days of round-table and group discussion, these Baptist leaders attempted to clarify the meaning of religious liberty in terms of Baptist policy and practice regarding the use of public funds. Various viewpoints as to what practices constitute the coercion of conscience by means of taxation were presented and discussed. The conference was evaluated as a most helpful experience, and the Joint Committee was urged to arrange for a continuation session. Plans are being developed to continue the work in September.

"3. New and significant arrangements have been made for the dissemination of news regarding current happenings and developments. W. Barry Garrett, so long appreciated as editor of the Baptist Beacon of Arizona, accepted the invitation to become associate director in charge of information services. He has moved to Washington and assumed his new duties January 1, 1958. This expansion of the Committee's personnel and facilities, together with new cooperative arrangements established with Baptist Press, promise to go far toward helping our people to keep informed and interested in the public policies that bear on our Baptist insights.

"4. There is also a rising tide of interest in religious liberty among our professors in the seminaries and the colleges. Materials have been made available to a representative group of such leaders in the hope that classroom projects, research studies, and publication efforts will develop. Here, as in other aspects of human thought, we must look to the careful student for clarification and penetration.

"5. A new but highly significant project is just getting under way in the matter of clarifying the relationship of our religious

educational efforts as carried on in the churches with the public educational efforts as carried on in our public schools. A special committee of the Joint Committee, consisting of Walter Pope Binns, chairman, Porter Routh, Clarence W. Cranford, Lee Shade, and Mrs. John W. Bradbury, is spearheading the arrangement of a program of studies regarding the treatment of moral and spiritual values in the schools, the place of religious observances in the schools, and the general coordination of concepts and materials in the two educational efforts.

"In addition to carrying forward these broad new developments in Baptist life, the Washington office has continued to give expression to Baptist convictions in contacts with non-Baptist organizations and with government agencies. The monthly reports carried in the Report From The Capital have covered a wide array of topics, but education and public welfare have continued to be the focal points of tension regarding church-state relations.

"The President's withdrawal of the Haitian treaty which lacked a guarantee of religious liberty, the decision in the Census Bureau not to attempt a religious census in 1960, and the Civil Defense Administration's recognition of the ideological independence of the church are some of the encouraging developments of the year for the friends of religious liberty and separation of church and state."

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DEFENDS FLURAL EDUCATION

The nationwide discussion of our educational system is now scheduled for study by most of the high school debate teams during the 1958-59 season. The youthful groups will deal with the question: "What system of education would best serve the interests of the people of the United States?"

The Committee on Discussion and Debate Materials and Interstate Cooperation, of the National University Extension Association, is now assembling materials on this timely issue. Upon invitation of Dr. Bower Aly of the University of Oregon, Dr. C. Emanuel Carlson, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, has submitted a letter for inclusion in the forthcoming "American Education: The Thirty-Second Discussion and Debate Manual." In this letter Dr. Carlson sets forth arguments in favor of the plural

system of education as now established in the United States. He reasons as follows:

"Careful studies of the other systems may show that the distinctive characteristic of American education is its pluralism. No one institution does the total education job, but the family, the state, and the church all share largely in it during childhood and youth.

"In defending this American educational tradition we need to be aware that this system prevents any one institution, family, church, or state, from monopolizing the minds of the students and thereby forming the person to the interests of that one institution. The safeguarding of freedom lies largely in retaining our understanding that institutions are formed by people to serve people. The highest worth lies in the person and not in the institution. When any one institution enslaves the person to its interests, freedom is gone.

"The 'check and balance' system built into our American governmental structure in defense of the freedom of the person serves as a useful analogy in education. The coordinated functioning of three agencies of government, legislature, administration, and judiciary, gives the person recourse to another source of strength when one agency threatens to overreach its proper bounds. So too when any one institution becomes overly concerned with its own viewpoints and interests the student needs access to information and ideas from other sources. The education of free minds requires the interplay of various viewpoints, values, and data.

"Neither tribalism, clericalism, nor statism can produce the free man which can keep our nation strong. Our compulsory school attendance laws are designed to guard the child against the inadequacies of other institutions. However, only if the families and the churches share properly in the educative process will the person also be spared from the inadequacies of a state school program. It is not one or the other, but all three taken together and properly coordinated in the pupil's experience, giving him a family education, a religious education, and a public education.

"None of the three has been perfectly handled anywhere, but comparatively speaking the American results have been good. Our people have been equipped to carry on stable democratic government; we have been open to indus-

trial, economic, and scientific change; we have gained the world's highest percentage of actual religious participation; our moral patterns have been less regimented but have stood favorably in any comparison; and, best of all, we have developed a society made up very largely of free men who have dignity and worth.

"The criticisms of our system of education reflect less of weakness in the past than of change in the present. A more scientific age will call for a more scientific curriculum. An age of automation may call for more preparation for cultural pursuits. But whatever these changes may be, the freedom of the person in his relationships to the institutions needs to be preserved."

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MORE ON POSTAL RATES

In the April-May issue of the Report From The Capital attention was called to the new postal rate legislation that has now been enacted into law. It was pointed out that it is the view of the Post Office Department of the United States that any mail service that does not pay its own way is to that extent subsidized by the United States Government. The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs at its April semi-annual meeting raised certain questions concerning special rates for religious publications to receive government subsidies in the form of reduced second class mail rates. Memo, No. 398, a publication of the Washington office of the National Council of Churches, quotes Religious News Service at some length on some of the problems involved in the postal rate legislation.

In the Senate version of the postal rate bill it was proposed that religious and non-profit publications should pay 50 per cent of the second class rate paid by profit-making publications. This was deleted from the bill as finally approved by both houses and signed by the President. The House version, which was adopted, provides for one and one-half cents a pound with a minimum of one-eighth cent per piece.

The RNS story said, "Many Protestant publishers were more concerned with the fact that a straight 50 per cent subsidy would have been written into the law by the Senate Amendment than they were by the financial burden the increase would have imposed. They felt this violated the principle of Church-State separation."

On the other hand, the 50 per cent subsidy for religious groups' publications was written into the third class rates. This is the category that includes many church bulletins and other religious and charitable mailings. The RMS story continued: "Congressional observers pointed out that there will be plenty of time for Congress to revise this formula if the 50 per cent subsidy proves objectionable in principle to church groups."

The reason given for the "plenty of time" is that the increase for third class mail is spread out on a graduated scale over a period of three years. It will be 1960 before the increase in postal rates will affect the church groups involved.

These developments mean that the policy on reduced rates for religious publications remains a live issue and that much discussion will need to take place for a proper solution to be found that will be in harmony with the principles of religious liberty and separation of church and state.

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HILL-BURTON AMENDMENT

Two pieces of legislation are now being pushed in Congress to make possible government loans to non-profit and sectarian hospitals. S. 3497, known as the Fulbright Bill, has been passed by the Senate and it amends the Community Facilities Administration Act to include non-profit hospitals in its provisions. (See the April-May issue of the Report From The Capital for a statement about this bill.)

S. 3497 was referred to the House Banking and Currency Committee of which Rep. Brent Spence (D., Ky.) is chairman. On June 4 the committee reported this bill out for consideration by the House. Although some changes were made in the bill, none were made in the section referring to non-profit hospitals. The bill now goes to the Rules Committee to be placed on the Calendar of the House.

The other bill dealing with hospital loans is an amendment to the Hill-Burton Act. H. R. 12694 was introduced by Rep. John Bell Williams (D., Miss.) and has been reported out of the sub-committee on health and science to be considered by the full House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, of which Rep. Oren Harris (D., Ark.) is chairman. The Committee is scheduled for executive sessions

June 10 and action there on H. R. 12694 is expected momentarily.

H. R. 12694 amends the Hill-Burton Act to make the same money available as a loan on the same terms to sectarian hospitals that has heretofore been available only on a "grant" basis. Many Baptists and other religious groups have refused Hill-Burton grants because they felt that it is a violation of separation of church and state.

Before loans or grants to non-profit hospitals can be approved, the government must be provided with a description of the hospital site, plans and specifications for the proposed buildings, reasonable assurance of adequate financial responsibility, reasonable assurance that laborers in the construction will receive fair wages, and assurance that the hospital shall provide facilities without discrimination on account of race, creed, or color.

If the new proposed legislation is enacted, it will provide for hospital loans for not more than 40 years and at an interest rate based on the following formula: "Each loan shall bear interest at the rate arrived at by adding one-quarter of 1 per centum per annum to the rate which the Secretary of the Treasury determines to be equal to the current average yield on all outstanding marketable obligations of the United States as of the last day of the month preceding the date the application for the loan is approved and by adjusting the result so obtained to the nearest one-eighth of 1 per centum." At the present time this amounts to about two and one-fourth per cent.

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INDEX OF THE "REPORT"

The Report From The Capital has been an information and interpretation publication for several years. Many people have kept a file of the Report, but have had no way of finding quickly what has been said on specific items.

As a service to our readers the office of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs is preparing an Index of the Report From The Capital for the past four years. If you desire a copy, write the word "Index" on a post card, include your name and address, and send it to the Committee. When the Index is completed a copy will be sent to you. Hereafter, an annual Index will be prepared.