

JUN 26 1995

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL COMMITTEE

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee



REPORT from the CAPITAL

Volume 50, Number 12

June 13, 1995

NEWSMAKERS

Aids and F. Wright-Riggins, executive director of American Baptist National Ministries and a member of the Baptist Joint Committee board, recently was awarded the doctor of humane letters degree by Benedict College, an American Baptist-related school in Columbia, S.C. Wright-Riggins was cited as "a sensitive and reasoned voice to this nation's social and spiritual landscape."

Lou Sheldon, chairman of the Traditional Values Coalition, broke ranks with a political coalition of religious conservatives and went public with a version of a proposed constitutional amendment to lower the wall of separation between church and state. The move came under immediate criticism by members of the loosely knit group who said Sheldon violated the agreement not to go public until a consensus had been reached. Sheldon said that "we were getting beat up so bad by the left, being accused of wanting a theocracy," that he had to respond.

Sharon Glazener and **Kerry McDuffie** are serving as interns at the Baptist Joint Committee. Glazener is a political science major at Longwood College, Farmville, Va. McDuffie is working on a master's degree in public administration at Appalachian State University in Boone, N.C. He is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., said he had never heard of the Christian Coalition when it unveiled its "Contract with the American Family." Goodling, chairman of the House Economic and Educational Opportunities Committee, said, "Who is this group? I guess I'm illiterate. I've been working so hard." Several of the contract items, such as vouchers for religious schools, are under Goodling's jurisdiction. **A**

House panel explores amending Bill of Rights

America's next civil war may be engaged if lawmakers amend the U.S. Constitution to empower local communities to vote on whether to allow public school prayer, according to a New York congressman.

Rep. Jose Serrano, D-N.Y., made the comment during a June 8 hearing on "Religious Liberty and the Bill of Rights" held by the House Subcommit-

tee on the Constitution. This was the first of several hearings the panel scheduled to explore the issue of religious freedom. The hearings are expected to set the stage for Congress to debate a "Religious Equality Amendment."

Rep. Ernest J. Istook, R-Okla., who is working on language for a constitutional amendment, testified that "nobody is proposing that we return to a practice of compulsory prayer." He said that he does not favor compelling religious expression, but permitting it by letting people decide for themselves.

"This is a community decision," Istook said.

"It's also the next civil war," said Serrano, who said that majoritarian rule does not protect religious minorities.

Istook countered that strife is caused by the suppression of those who want to exercise their rights.

"Since the school prayer decisions began in the 1960s, a steady and increasing squeeze is being applied to religious expression, so gradually that

it is not always obvious, but it is certainly insidious, and is a threat to our religious liberties," Istook said. "Our explicit First Amendment guarantees ... have been subordinated to a new concept — one not found in our Constitution.

"We are being told that freedom of religion takes a back seat and must be restricted whenever anybody com-

plains that it makes them uncomfortable."

A Baptist church-state specialist disagreed. **Derek H. Davis**, director of the J.M. Dawson Institute of Church-State

Studies at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, told the panel an amendment would "represent radical surgery" from which the nation would never recover. He said the proposal could lead to government funding of religion.

"It is incredible to me that in the United States of America, where religion is alive and robust, we may be on the verge of adopting funding practices that have for centuries characterized Europe, where religion is essentially moribund," Davis said.

The proposed amendment would return America to "ancient and medieval thinking where religion and government were merged and thought to be indistinguishable in their goals.

"True religion, genuine faith is defamed, desecrated and trivialized. This is the lesson of history, yet we are on the verge of repeating the same error." **A**



An amendment would represent radical surgery from which the nation would never recover.

— **Derek H. Davis**
Baylor University

Russian lawmakers bar 'harmful' religious groups

Russian lawmakers have approved a measure that would amend Russia's religious freedom law by barring religious groups deemed harmful to the safety of Russians.

The measure, approved 264-0 with two abstentions, must leap two more legislative hurdles before it reaches President Boris Yeltsin.

Groups that would be barred include those that violate public safety, preach violence and hatred, use unlawful means of coercion, harm the health of Russians and prevent children from getting basic education.

The amendment comes amid dissension about the many religious groups that have become active in Russia since the religious freedom law was passed five years ago.

"The Parliament is under a lot of pressure — from the Orthodox Church as well as national leaders — to limit non-traditional confessions and curtail missionary work."

Vladimir Ryakhovsky
President, Christian Legal Center,
Moscow

Better treatment of religion in textbooks cited by group

Public school history textbooks have expanded and improved their treatment of religion in the past decade, according to a new report by the American Textbook Council.

But many non-historical social studies texts and instructional materials for health classes show an indifference to traditional Judeo-Christian ideas of virtue and substitute "new and shapeless moral credos" for those values, the report said.

The council is an independent, non-profit research group that reviews textbooks and other material in history, social studies and the humanities.

U.S. and world history texts most widely used in high schools "cover major events and movements with religious dimensions — including non-Western topics — more thoroughly than they did 10 or 30 years ago."

"Wide impressions that serious omissions of religion occur in U.S. history and world history textbooks on

the market today are out of date. Such lessons exist, expanded in response to complaints from textbook critics and First Amendment groups in the 1980s."

American Textbook Council

High court rejects appeal in campus police dispute

The U.S. Supreme Court refused June 5 to disturb a North Carolina court's finding that delegation of police powers to a Baptist school unconstitutionally entangled church and state.

That entanglement prompted the North Carolina Supreme court to toss out the driving-while-impaired conviction of a Campbell University student who had been arrested by a campus police officer.

Government actions that excessively entangle church and state violate the First Amendment's ban against governmental establishment of religion, according to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The student had argued that a North Carolina law that allowed employees of religious institutions to serve as police officers violated the constitutional separation of church and state. Because the law was subsequently repealed, North Carolina's top court ruled on its constitutionality solely to address the appeal.

In siding with the student, the North Carolina court cited a 1982 Supreme Court ruling that Massachusetts could not delegate to churches the authority to veto liquor license applications for nearby establishments. The clear rule of the high court's 1982 ruling, the North Carolina court said, is that a state may not delegate an important discretionary governmental power to a religious institution. Δ

Church-state rift erupts in National Park Service

Likening environmentalists to evangelicals, the director of the National Park Service calls wilderness "a religious concept" and urges Americans to make unsullied landscapes "part of their religious life."

But Roger Kennedy's critics — which include members of the U.S. Congress — say he is misusing his government post to turn personal religious beliefs into public policy.

Kennedy frequently makes religious

references during promotional speeches for the park service, but it is not just the top boss making such references. Visitors to the nation's parks may hear similar statements from the more than 300 Christian missionaries employed by the parks or their concessioners.

Kennedy's brand of religious environmentalism has drawn criticism from many circles, and the proselytizing efforts of some park employees have even resulted in lawsuits.

"There's a terrible entanglement of church and state going on in our national parks. People don't realize their national parks are being used to promote Christianity."

Annie Laurie Gaylor
Freedom From Religion Foundation

Government funds study of prayer as healing agent

The National Institutes of Health has given \$28,797 for a scientific study on the power of prayer as a healing agent.

Scott R. Walker, professor of psychiatry at the University of New Mexico, is conducting the study. His study will attempt to test the hypothesis that prayers said by concerned but uninvolved believers on behalf of particular individuals can have a significant impact on their recovery from substance abuse. The researchers recruited clients from a metropolitan alcohol and drug treatment facility. And they brought in Protestant, Catholic and Jewish "pray-ers" to pray for half those clients.

Relying on tools such as urine screens and psychological assessments, Walker's team will attempt to determine whether the prayers had a statistically measurable impact on the clients.

Walker noted in his grant application that the study has its limits. If a friend or relative prays for a client in the no-prayers group, it could skew the results. Another problem for the study: What if the answer to prayer is no?

Joseph Conn, a spokesman for Americans United for Separation of Church and State, objects to government funding of religious studies. And he wonders what staffers will do with Walker's results.

"If they find that prayer doesn't work," he said, "are they going to send out an advisory?" Δ

Pew, Pulpit & the Law

Q: Now that a House subcommittee has held a preliminary hearing on "Religious Liberty and the Bill of Rights," are other hearings scheduled?

A: Yes. In addition to the hearing with the panel of professors in Washington June 8, the subcommittee has planned another hearing to receive testimony from groups such as the Baptist Joint Committee on religious liberty in general and the need for a constitutional amendment in particular.

The committee also has set up "field hearings" to invite testimony from concerned citizens outside the beltway. This was the schedule as we presently understand it:

Harrisonburg, Va., June 10

Tampa, Fla., June 26

New York City, July 10

Oklahoma City, July 14

There has been some talk about hearings in Philadelphia and Los Angeles, but they have not been set. (JBW)

REPORT from the CAPITAL

Single Subscription:

☐ One year \$10.00

☐ Two years \$18.00

Student rate

☐ One Year \$ 6.50

☐ Two years \$12.00

Bulk rate (one year)

☐ 100 copies \$250.00

☐ 50 copies \$175.00

☐ 25 copies \$125.00

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Baptist Joint Committee

200 Maryland Ave., N.E.

Washington, D.C. 20002

202-544-4226

REFLECTIONS

Support your local school



JAMES M. DUNN
Executive Director

Cut it out! Scream and shout! Don't put up with it anymore. Tell those who demonize and "dis," who trash and bash the public schools, to stop.

They may be blissfully unaware of being used by people who

have made "government" a dirty word. But the radical religious right has a well-orchestrated campaign against "government schools" that demeans our basic educational system.

The harsh critics of the common school may not realize that they are playing into the hands of the "Pat Robertsons" of this world who desire to abolish the public schools.

Some parents call forth our deepest concern as they face painful alternatives in a specific situation. Church people have a special responsibility to stand with parents, teachers and children to make public education work.

Thirty years ago my wife, Marilyn, and I became part of a church with a sense of mission for public schools: Cliff Temple Baptist Church, Dallas.

- There was an after-school program for latch-key school kids, a place for them to hang out from the end of school until a parent got home, the gym, study hall and that national church-basement drink, Kool-Aid.

- There was active recruitment among church folks for volunteers to give a few hours a week in a local school, just being a friend, a helper, providing a little individual attention. Marilyn got hooked.

- There was almost intimidative encouragement to join the PTA. After all, Pearl Price, for years president of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, taught the Faithful Class. Who could fail Saint Pearl?

- There was support for the Dallas School Board because we kept electing

leaders from that church: Sarah Haskins, then Mary Rutledge, who led the board, sometimes kicking and screaming into the 1980s. She advanced programs for pregnant teen-agers, Merit Scholars and children with AIDS.

- There were sessions in church training to help parents help children. Parental involvement is essential.

- There were talks, formal and informal, calm and heated, about how to deal with the challenges, but always the presupposition that we had to sustain and strengthen public schools.

- There were citizen task forces to deal with tough challenges, like two on which I served: religion's role in the public schools and welcoming Indochinese refugees.

- There was blatant support for bond issues. Voters of all parties and colors knew we had to pass them.

Don't tell me there's nothing churches can do. The considerable resources of churches and synagogues have not yet been tapped for public education.

Don't wail that the public schools have failed. Most haven't. With over 16,000 local districts across the nation, the majority are fit as a fiddle. After all, we say we like government best that's closest to home.

Buzz (Oliver) Thomas worked with us at the BJC in 1985-1993. He wrote articles for prestigious law school journals, drafted *amicus* briefs for the U.S. Supreme Court and masterminded coalitions like the one that passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. Now he consults professionally with state school boards in several states on the proper role of religion in public schools. He has four degrees and was an adjunct professor at Georgetown Law Center.

But, now he lives down in Maryville, Tenn., with his wife, a public school teacher, and two daughters in public school. Last month he stuck his hometown neck out.

He ran for the school board. Won.

We, like Buzz, can do something positive for public schools that's even better than griping about them.

Why not? Δ

"WHEN YOU PRAY, DON'T BE LIKE THE HYPOCRITES....
THEY LOVE TO SAY THEIR PRAYERS WHERE
EVERYONE CAN SEE THEM, AND THEY HAVE THEIR
REWARD. - BUT WHEN YOU PRAY, GO INTO A
ROOM BY YOURSELF, SHUT THE DOOR, AND PRAY
TO YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN SECRET, AND
YOUR FATHER WHO SEES WHAT IS SECRET
WILL REWARD YOU - - - -"

OH, YEAH? AND WHAT
COUNTER-CULTURE
ANTI-FAMILY SECULAR
HUMANIST SAID THAT?

JUST GUESS....

BEN SARGENT
Cartoonist

Reprinted with permission

REPORT from the CAPITAL

James M. Dunn
Executive Director
Larry Chesser
Editor

Pam Parry
Associate Editor

J. Brent Walker
Book Reviews

REPORT (ISSN-0346-0661) is
published 24 times each year by
the Baptist Joint Committee.

Established in 1936

Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs
200 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002
202-544-4226

Supporting bodies: Alliance of Baptists • American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. • Baptist General Conference • Cooperative Baptist Fellowship • National Baptist Convention of America • National Baptist Convention U.S.A. Inc. • National Missionary Baptist Convention • North American Baptist Conference • Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc. • Religious Liberty Council • Seventh Day Baptist General Conference • Southern Baptist state conventions and churches.

Baptist Joint Committee
200 Maryland Avenue, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002

Non-profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Riverdale, MD
Permit No. 5061

3452
Dr. LYNN E. MAY JR
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
127 NINTH AVE., N
Nashville TN 37234