



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

REPORT from the CAPITAL

Volume 50, Number 18

September 19, 1995

NEWSMAKERS

Veteran broadcaster Bill Moyers, who is a Baptist, was awarded the first Religious Liberty Award by the American Jewish Committee. The AJC honored Moyers Sept. 11 during the group's annual governing board meeting at its national headquarters in New York.

Geoffrey Garin of Peter D. Hart Research Associates said that a recent nationwide poll indicates Americans oppose nearly every provision in the Christian Coalition's "Contract with the American Family." The survey results, released Sept. 6 at the National Press Building, contradict Christian Coalition claims that 60 to 90 percent of Americans support the contract's provisions. The survey indicates that none of the 10 measures reaches the 60 percent support level. "The Christian Coalition is out of the mainstream of American public opinion, both in its priorities and its policy proposals," said Garin, who conducted the poll for People For the American Way.

Elliot Minchberg, executive vice president and legal director of People For the American Way, said, "This hasn't been a good year for the freedom to learn in our public schools. Indeed, public education in America is under a sustained political attack that is unprecedented in our history." He offered that assessment after PFAW released its 13th annual survey of censorship in the public schools. The report listed 458 challenges during the 1994-95 school year.

Kenny Byrd, Willie Seals and Mike Spence have begun internships with the Baptist Joint Committee. Byrd will help with congressional news coverage and production of *REPORT from the CAPITAL*. Seals and Spence will provide administrative support. Δ

Senate panel begins religious liberty hearings

Public schools must not favor or discriminate against any religion, witnesses told the Senate Judiciary Committee during a Sept. 12 hearing on religious liberty.

Five witnesses, including one Baptist pastor, testified at the first in a series of Senate hearings to help set the stage for consideration of a religious equality amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

James Forbes, senior minister at New York City's Riverside Church, said, "The law of our land provides many rights to truly voluntary religious expression in public schools and other public places."

Witnesses and senators gave mixed reviews to recently distributed Department of Education guidelines that outline what religious expression is permissible under current law.

Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, and panel chairman, said the guidelines probably won't have much impact because they contain no "enforcement mechanism." He quickly added that the guidelines represent an important first step, indicating this issue concerns Americans.

Three witnesses described personal experiences with what they termed religious discrimination.

Lisa Herdahl recounted her family's struggle to bar public school-sponsored prayer in a small Mississippi town. Herdahl filed suit when Pontotoc County school officials would not stop broadcasting prayers over the intercom and providing religious instruction in the classroom, she said.

"I am a Christian, and I am raising

my children as Christians," she said. "I believe that it is my job as a parent, and not the job of the public schools, to teach my children about religion and prayer."

Her children have been ridiculed and harassed. She has received a death threat in the mail, and the family has received bomb threats.

Ronald Rosenberger detailed what he labeled an encounter with "religious apartheid at the University of Virginia."

Rosenberger sued the university after being denied student activi-

"It is my job as a parent, and not the job of the public schools, to teach my children about religion and prayer."

— LISA HERDAHL

ty funds to publish a Christian magazine. He said that the university's distribution of funds to other student groups resulted in viewpoint discrimination against Christianity. The high court, in a 5-4 ruling in June, agreed.

Ralph Jennings, general manager of an educational radio station at Fordham University in New York City, told senators the station was denied a federal grant because it broadcasts a Sunday morning Catholic Mass. The station broadcasts music 95 hours per week and news and information 30 hours per week, he said.

Sen. Joseph Biden, D-Del., responded that senators have contacted the Commerce Department about Fordham, and he said department officials "may see the light" on this issue.

America is one of the most religious places on earth, Biden said, adding that religion has thrived in this country because "we have gone to great lengths to keep government out of its way." Δ



Values linked to policies, Clinton tells church leaders

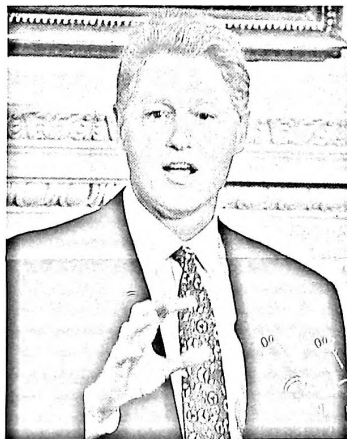
Values and public policy go hand-in-hand, President Clinton told religious leaders at a Sept. 8 prayer breakfast.

Hosting the third such breakfast in three years, Clinton reminded the leaders of his administration's efforts to protect the religious expression of students and to promote character education in public schools.

Students should be taught, Clinton said, "to be honest and trustworthy, reliable, to have respect for themselves, for others, for property, and for our natural environment, to be good citizens, ... to treat one another with civility and tolerance and to exercise personal responsibility."

He predicted more deliberate and successful efforts to teach such values in public schools. Dropout rates are down and student performance is up in schools with comprehensive character education, he said.

"That's because you basically can't live without values," he said. "You've got to have some. It's just a question of what they are."



"You basically can't live without values. You've got to have some. It's just a question of what they are."

— PRESIDENT CLINTON

Values are reflected in public policy choices, such as decisions made in pursuing a balanced federal budget, Clinton said.

Americans have a "common interest" in balancing the budget, he said. The key question is how to balance the budget, "because it's not just a matter of debits and credits, it's also a matter of values and responsibilities."

Clinton said values will be reflected in budget choices made in areas such as programs for children, veterans, the elderly, the poor and the homeless and in education and health care.

He warned against being "penny-wise and pound-foolish" in making budget decisions.

"If we don't balance the budget, we're going to hurt America's future. If we do it in the wrong way, we're going to hurt America's future." Δ

Do American evangelicals support coalition's politics?

The Christian Coalition emerged from the 1994 elections with enhanced political clout. Fresh evidence of that influence, particularly within the Republican Party, was apparent as GOP presidential candidates addressed the coalition's "Road to Victory" gathering Sept. 8-9.

More disputed than the coalition's perceived influence, though, is the degree to which the Pat Robertson-founded organization actually reflects American evangelicals.

Like other religious groups, evangelicals are not of one voice when it comes to the politics of the Christian Coalition and the religious right.

While its moral values emphasis has struck a chord with many conservative Christians, National Association of Evangelicals official Richard Cizik says many evangelicals have concerns about the coalition's methodology and its claim to speak for evangelicals.

"The Christian Coalition is on shaky turf when it attempts to speak for evangelicals on issues on which there is no moral consensus," Cizik said, citing the coalition's focus on economic, trade and foreign policy issues.

In May a group of evangelicals led by American Baptist sociologist Tony Campolo and *Sojourners* magazine editor Jim Wallis, noted that the Christian

Coalition had received a lot of media attention but suggested that it does not speak for half of the nation's 60 million evangelicals. Other voices need to be heard, they argued.

Another evangelical leader sounding a similar message is author/professor Tom Sine, who contends that the growing influence of the religious right could lead to a more polarized future. Sine makes that case in his new book *Cease Fire: Searching for Sanity in America's Culture Wars*.

At a Sept. 6 news conference, Sine said the religious and secular right coalition has the upper hand in the nation's culture wars and predicted the movement will continue to gain strength in the 1996 elections.

"What I think we're moving into is replacing the social engineering of the liberal left with the moral engineering of the religious right," he said.

The greatest casualty of that development, he predicted, "will be the loss of the Judeo-Christian commitment to the common good."

That commitment, he said, will be replaced by "Darwinian survival-of-the-fittest economics where everyone pursues their own self interest."

Sine said he is frustrated by the polarization in church and society.

"To be a mainline Protestant in many churches, you have to be a liberal Democrat," he said, "and you cannot be considered a born-again Christian, an evangelical in America, if you are not a right-wing Republican."

That is not true among evangelicals worldwide, he said. He also noted that evangelicals elsewhere are at the forefront of those advocating increased funding to help those in need.

"Only in America are conservative Christians lobbying for cutbacks" in programs that help the needy.

The polarization between liberal left and the religious right hinders progress in addressing violence and other issues, Wallis said.

He said the right's concern about cultural violence in television and movies and the left's concern about structural and systemic injustice are real and both must be dealt with.

"We're serving up moral pollution to our kids on the streets," he said. "It's not that they haven't gotten our values, but that they have gotten our values, and that's the problem." Δ

Pew, Pulpit & the Law

Q: What is the status of the Church Retirement Benefits Simplification Act of 1995 (H.R.528/S.881)?

A: Just sitting, but it needs to move. This important bill is co-sponsored in the Senate by David Pryor, D-Ark., and Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, and in the House by Benjamin Cardin, D-Md., and Clay Shaw Jr., R-Fla. It will provide simplified rules for church pension plan administration and assure that ministers who are self-employed outside their denomination would be covered by their denominational pension plans. Also, the bill will make clear that the portion of annuity income for retirees designated as housing allowance will be excluded from self-employment taxes (SECA). Present IRS audit guidelines indicate that the amount of retirement income allocated to housing allowance is subject to SECA. This needs to be changed. (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

Another wake-up call

crusade' (kroo-sad'), n. [From Sp. *crusada*, with ending fr. F. *croisade*, fr. a verb signifying to mark with the cross, fr. L. *crux* cross.]
1. [often cap.] Any of the seven (some reckon nine) military expeditions undertaken by Christian powers, in the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries, to recover the Holy Land from the Moslems. 2. Any hostile expedition under papal sanction. 3. Any remedial enterprise undertaken with zeal and enthusiasm.



JAMES M. DUNN
Executive Director

bers out of thousands who did not take reconstructionism and religious extremists seriously.

In 1995, Sept. 11, accepting the well-deserved Religious Liberty Award of the prestigious American Jewish Committee, he did it again.

Moyers warned of a crusade mentality. "Militant rhetoric, with all the earmarks of the crusades launched 10 centuries ago in Europe," infuses again the spirit of religion with toxic zeal.

Hear his alarm.

"In their passion, God rode at the head of their warring columns and Jesus — the teacher, Jesus who had talked of loving one's neighbor and forgiving one's enemy, who had looked with compassion on the wounded and sick; the shepherd Jesus who had gathered to him the outcast and stranger, the despised and forsaken; the healing Jesus who had welcomed into his embrace the frightened prostitute, forlorn leper, and hungry beggar; who called even the tax collector to fellowship — this same Jesus was now yoked to the cause of politics and conquest of flashing shield and slashing sword."

Do you think that's nearly a thousand years ago and can't happen here? Moyers repeats the disturbing words of Republican Sen. Arlen Specter.

He describes "a continuum from Pat Buchanan's 'holy war,' to Pat

Bill Moyers has done it again.

Over and over he has given America wake-up calls.

In 1980, he reported on a gathering of extremists in Dallas. In 1987, his "God and Politics" series scared the bejee-

Robertson saying there's no separation of church and state, to Ralph Reed saying pro-choice candidates can't be on the Republican ticket, to Randall Terry saying 'let a wave of hatred wash over you,' to the guy at Robertson's law school who says murdering an abortion doctor is justifiable homicide, to the guys who are pulling the triggers."

Specter's wisdom should have been heard at the Christian Coalition rally in Washington this month. It was not.

Rather, as the prophet Moyers notes, the Christian Coalition's "Ralph Reed was saying that Christians 'have got to . . . take back this country one precinct at a time.' The same Ralph Reed who has talked of putting his opponents in 'body bags.'"

But Moyers affirmed an alternative, the American experiment. Moyers is not a word mincer:

"So what Robertson, Reed and Gingrich find as a stumbling block — the constitutional separation of church and state — I see as a touchstone of freedom. Over time and not without struggle, that idea has made of America, 'a haven for the cause of conscience.' It finally checked what Thomas Jefferson called 'the loathsome combination of church and state' which had been enforced in the old and new world alike by 'weapons of wrath and blood,' as human beings were put on the rack or in the stocks and their bodies tormented for failing the salute of orthodoxy. It put an end to the subpoena of conscience by magistrates who ordered citizens to support churches they did not attend and recite creeds they did not believe in."

Jonathan Swift got it right describing the crusade mentality:

But mark me well; Religion is my name;

An angel once; but now a fury grown,

Too often talked of, but too little known.

Bill Moyers got it right too. A

GUEST VIEWS

LISA HERDAHL

I have come to Washington today at the request of the Committee to speak to you firsthand about the religious harassment that families like mine, who live in communities where they are in the religious minority, suffer when the separation of church and state is breached. For two years, my family has been harassed and stigmatized because we live in a community in which our religious beliefs and practices differ from those of the majority of people in our community and because of what happens in our public school.

I learned that vocal prayers were broadcast over the school intercom and recited in classrooms during the school day, and that students at the school attended religious Bible instruction as part of the school curriculum.

Because I requested that my children not participate in the religious instruction at the school, my children have been ridiculed and harassed by teach-

ers and classmates, and falsely called "devil worshipers" and "atheists." For example, as my son David was leaving his elementary classroom before one Bible class, one of his classmates also asked to leave the classroom. His teacher said words to the effect that: David doesn't believe in God. People who believe in God go to Bible class — those who don't, don't go to Bible class.

I had many conversations with school officials to request that the school stop the Bible classes and prayers. I went to the assistant principal. I went to the principal. I went to the superintendent of schools. I was told that this was just the way things were done in Pontotoc. I even went to the Pontotoc School Board last September.

In order to protect my children, I had no choice but to file a lawsuit in federal court to stop the school's unconstitutional practices. As a result, the harassment of my family got even worse. Signs appeared all over town in support of the school's practices. I have been called an atheist and worse names. I personally have received a

death threat in the mail, and my family has received bomb threats. For several months, I was afraid even to start my car in the morning, and my husband did our shopping so that I wouldn't have to go into the stores.

My family believes deeply in God, and our religious faith is important to us. But because our religious beliefs are different from those of others in our community, and because of the organized religious practices in our public school, we have been harassed and stigmatized. It has been difficult for my family, but we have drawn even closer together, and my children are learning an important lesson about standing up for what they believe in and about real religious liberty. Δ

Lisa Herdahl of Ecru, Miss., is the mother of six children who filed suit against the Pontotoc County school district over its practice that permits prayers to be recited in the classroom and broadcast over the school intercom.

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