



REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

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NewsMakers

◆ **John J. Hamre**, the second-highest ranking Pentagon civilian, asked to deliver a sermon at the main chapel of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Former West Point Chaplain **E. Robert Greehan** criticized Hamre, saying "you have a government official who, by virtue of his position, has demanded to have a pulpit in a church." Hamre, deputy defense secretary and a devout Lutheran, said there is no church-state conflict because the service is not mandatory.

◆ **Carole Shields**, president of People For the American Way, criticized Christian Coalition founder **Pat Robertson** for showing a "display of religious intolerance and distortion." Her group quoted Robertson as saying that to see Americans become followers of Islam "is nothing short of insanity. ... The Islamic people, the Arabs, were the ones who captured Africans, put them in slavery, and sent them to America as slaves. Why would people in America want to embrace the religion of the slavers?"

◆ **Columnist E. J. Dionne** addressed the Call to Renewal, a group of progressive evangelicals. He promoted experimental partnerships between churches and government in addressing poverty. He warned, however, that some lawmakers are actually "using churches to dismantle government." Δ

House subcommittee approves Istook religion amendment

For the first time since the Bill of Rights, a U.S. House of Representatives panel has approved a constitutional amendment addressing religious liberty.

The House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on the Constitution approved a revised version of the Religious Freedom Amendment on a party-line vote. The panel's eight Republicans voted for the measure and four Democrats voted against it.

The proposal offered by Reps. Ernest Istook, R-Okla., and Sanford Bishop, D-Ga., would for the first time insert a reference to "God" into the Constitution and would allow for some forms of government-endorsed religious speech and school-sponsored prayer.

It would also open the door for vouchers and other government benefits for religious groups that would otherwise be barred by the Establishment Clause. Subcommittee Chairman Charles Canady, R-Fla., said the equal access to benefits for religious groups is "at the heart of what we're trying to do."

Canady recently predicted Istook's proposal would ultimately fail in the House, even though it may clear committees. The Judiciary Committee is expected to take up the measure early next year.

Istook said the vote marked a step toward restoring protection for American values and beliefs. "We wish it did not require a constitutional amendment but

un-elected judges have changed it for us, distorting our First Amendment religious liberties," he said.

The Istook proposal passed the committee after six amendments offered by Democrats failed and after a substitute



The amendment would end church-state separation.

— Rep. Robert Scott
D-Virginia

proposal offered by Rep. Asa Hutchinson, R-Ark., passed. The revised measure would bar government from establishing any "official religion." (Amendment text on Page 2.)

J. Brent Walker, general counsel of

the Baptist Joint Committee, said the addition of "official religion" to the Istook amendment makes the proposal worse. Walker said the new language "gives the false impression that as long as no official religion is established, there is no problem. There's a slew of things government can do short of official recognition that will destroy the rights of conscience."

Subcommittee lawmakers debated the proposal for over three hours.

Rep. Robert Scott, D-Va., said the amendment would "end church-state separation." He said, "I am a supporter of school prayer, but no one should be forced to, against their will, submit to the religious beliefs of others simply because they attend a public school, visit a courthouse or work in a government agency."

"What happens when the Catholics must compete with the Baptists for limited school funding? ... How much better off will the churches be when they become dependent on government funding?" he asked. Δ

Religious Freedom Amendment H.J. Res. 78

"To secure the people's right to acknowledge God according to the dictates of conscience: Neither the United States nor any state shall establish any official religion, but the people's right to pray and to recognize their religious beliefs, heritage, or traditions on public property, including schools, shall not be infringed. Neither the United States nor any state shall require any person to join in prayer or other religious activity, prescribe school prayers, discriminate against religion, or deny equal access to a benefit on account of religion."

Call to Renewal discusses church-state relationship

Speakers at a gathering of progressive evangelicals promoted education vouchers and urged churches to take advantage of the charitable choice provision in the new welfare law.

Jim Wallis, organizer of Call to Renewal, said that the "role of churches in social policy is changing dramatically. We need to be ready to step up to the plate."

The evangelical group was formed in 1996 to counter the Christian right. The group discussed the changing relationship between church and state and the role of churches in shaping social policy.

"Who, but the church, is better equipped to offer the social and moral leadership now needed in the nation?" Wallis said at the Oct. 16-17 conference.

Some Call to Renewal leaders are promoting a top legislative initiative of the Christian Coalition and other religious right advocates — vouchers for tuition at private and parochial schools.

Ron Sider, president of Evangelicals for Social Action, led a breakout discussion to discuss the topic and said he is not in favor of a universal voucher system, but is ready to test a voucher program.

Sider said the experiment should give extra money to accommodate poor and handicapped children. He also said any experiment should assess how it affects the poor and racial minorities. "If it failed on those two counts, I would lead the fight against vouchers," Sider said.

Another Call to Renewal leader disagrees with Sider about vouchers. Tony Campolo, professor of sociology at Eastern College in St. Davids, Pa., said vouchers do not resolve the issue of how public schools are kept from becoming the dumping ground of kids who are not wanted by private schools.

Campolo also said, "there would be nothing to keep extremist groups from starting their own schools and nurturing extremist values in children while the taxpayers foot the bill."

In another breakout session, Call to Renewal members were told to take advantage of a new welfare provision called charitable choice, which allows churches to use government money through contracts and vouchers.

Stanley Carlson-Thies, a senior fellow at the Center for Public Justice, distributed "A Guide to Charitable Choice,"

which prints questions and answers about the new welfare provision.

Carlson-Thies said when states contract with a faith-based provider, the funds may not be used for sectarian worship, instruction or proselytization.

However, he said there is no such restriction when the money comes to the faith-based group in the form of a voucher. Carlson-Thies said under vouchers welfare recipients are allowed to "get a full-blooded religious experience."

In coordination with the Call to Renewal meeting, a diverse group called the Christian Roundtable also met to discuss solutions to poverty. The group agreed to create a national Internet database focusing on successful church-based efforts around the country. They also agreed to send letters to governors, to facilitate the implementation of the charitable choice provision.

Senate committee asked to protect religion at work

Workers should not have to choose between their religion and their work, witnesses said at a hearing on a bill that would require greater accommodation for the religious observance of workers.

The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee heard testimony Oct. 21 on the Workplace Religious Freedom Act, which would require employers to "reasonably accommodate" workers' religious observance.

The bill's supporters say courts have watered down federal legislation enacted to prevent religious discrimination. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act required employers to accommodate religious observances unless doing so would result in "undue burden or hardship."

Religious liberty advocates say the Supreme Court has required employers to make no more than token attempts at accommodation. As a result, some workers have lost their jobs for refusing to work on holidays or wearing required religious clothing, they said.

"It's incredible to believe in 1997 that we're talking about this," said Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., who introduced the bill along with Sen. Dan Coats, R-Ind. "We have long understood our nation's connection to this fundamental value."

Committee chairman Jim Jeffords, R-Vt., promised to move the bill "expeditiously" through the committee.

Reflections

James M. Dunn

Executive Director



"Voted that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof: Voted that the earth is given to the Saints; Voted that we are the saints."

— 1640 town records of Milford, Conn.

There's a rosy glow about Thanksgiving. It's our principal civil religious holiday/holy day. In Sunday Schools and elementary schools everywhere, children are this very day being taught that the Pilgrims who arrived on the Mayflower looked to the New World as a place of refuge with freedom to worship as they pleased. Sadly, the kids seldom learn how quickly the Pilgrims and the Puritans who followed them to New England demanded that everyone else also worship as they, the righteous rulers, pleased.

Cocky Calvinism, then and now, is often in error but never in doubt. Perhaps the tendency to think of themselves as better than others was indissolubly linked to the theological conviction that they were "elected" by God not only to eternal salvation but also to temporal rule.

In any case, Puritan Governor John Winthrop opposed the principles of democracy and resented those who did not agree with his autocratic style. John Cotton, the "teacher" in First Church, Boston, with Winthrop jointly controlled the beliefs and behaviors of the entire colony. Mr. Cotton, a charismatic preacher who "laid 'em in the sweet peas," also put 'em to sleep. One observer at an afternoon worship five hours long saw "as many sleepers as wakers."

Roger Williams opposed Winthrop and Cotton for using civil government to enforce religious beliefs. Williams was staunchly against control by the established church. So Winthrop accused Williams of writing letters that were "full of anti-Christian pollution." (Sounds familiar doesn't it? If one doesn't agree with religio-political extremists today, he is a "bigot.")

Anne Hutchinson, who had followed John Cotton to the colonies from

Lincolnshire was willing to sacrifice everything for freedom except her beliefs. Winthrop saw that she did.

In that context yet another cantankerous Baptist appears. One Hanserd Knollys was arrested for nonconformity first in Boston, Lincolnshire, England, later in Boston, Massachusetts. And it's a good thing.

A good thing, if for no other reason than that Muriel James, a descendant of Knollys, has written a wonderful account of the life and times of this early Baptist hero. Dr. James is an internationally known conference speaker and author/co-author of seventeen books. Her *Born to Win* has been translated into seventeen languages.

We are indebted to her for using a warmly written tale of her own ancestor to refresh our memories about the birthing of Baptists in England and in this country. Knollys's story is a powerful parable for our times. The same arrogant certainties about religion infect the righteous right today.

We are also in debt to Charles Deweese and Providence House Publisher, for another of several books for real Baptists. (*Religious Liberty on Trial: Hanserd Knollys - Early Baptist Hero*, Muriel James, Providence House Publishers, 1997, 224 pp., \$16.95).

There's a strange proclivity on the part of the pious to be so all-fired certain that they alone are God's elect that they can, with the town council of Milford, Conn., vote that "we are the saints."

Coming across the dark and deep north Atlantic to worship God as they saw fit they could promptly deny others that same right.

Thanks to Muriel James for cross-writing, outside her field as a world authority on transactional analysis, to offer a powerful testimony of faith. Thanks, Muriel, for a reminder that Baptists who deserve the name are willing to suffer for religious freedom and not just their own but that of others also. Δ

Quoting

My Son, these maxims make a ru
An lump them ay thegither:
The Rigid Righteous is a fool
The Rigid Wise anither;

— Robert Burns
in

*Address to the Unco Guid
or the Rigidly Righteous
Solomon (Eccles. vii. 16)*

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REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

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Book Review

Seducing the Samaritan: How Government Contracts Are Reshaping Social Services

Joe Loconte. *Pioneer Institute for Public Policy Research, 1997, 129 pp. Cost: \$15*



Joe Loconte paints a distressing picture of the current relationship between government and private social service providers (everything from shelters to drug-addiction programs). In *Seducing the Samaritan*, he details the results of a study conducted in Massachusetts of about 15 private agencies. He came to two conclusions: Non-profit organizations are too dependent on the government's "purse," and the government's "pen" has resulted in overregulation that inhibits efficient administration of services.

The first three chapters deal with how government has overstepped its bounds in the way it regulates and finances all private agencies. The fourth chapter, the main issue here, focuses on government funding of religious organizations. Essentially, the author believes that government should take a hands-off approach to what religious social service providers decide to do. He contends that the current regulations inhibit the full effectiveness of religiously based organizations because they "weaken the spiritual mission of groups under contract." Loconte is concerned with government policies that force agencies to separate their religious activities from their social service delivery — whether by preventing publicly funded workers from leading Bible studies or by obliging them to adopt secular assumptions and solutions

to social problems.

The author's solutions, outlined in the final chapter, belie a proper understanding of the separation of church and state. Though Loconte argues that all non-profits should wean themselves from the public purse, he still supports charitable choice, whereby a religious organization may receive federal funding to provide services in any manner it chooses as long as it has a "public secular purpose." The organization would not have to separate its activities into religious and secular components, essentially allowing public funding of potentially mandatory prayer meetings and such. In addition, the author endorses the use of vouchers to "privatize" social service funding — as if doing indirectly what he criticizes doing directly solves the issue of dependence on public funds. He also proposes a charitable tax credit and "tapping faith communities" (i.e., grant diversions to congregations or churches serving as caseworkers) in order to take further advantage of what the religiously oriented agency has to offer. These solutions would effectively create an alliance between the church and the state in the delivery of care and services.

Loconte wants to have his cake and eat it, too. He favors limited public funding, but only if unencumbered by regulations meant to reduce potential church-state problems. He has either forgotten or chosen to ignore why it is so important to oppose such funding of religious organizations: It's simply wrong to take tax dollars to advance someone's religion.

— **Ginger Elliott**
BJC Intern
Summer 1997

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