

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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DO YOU WANT THE REPORT?

The "Report from the Capital" was begun by J. M. Dawson in 1946, when he became executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. C. Emanuel Carlson, the present executive director, has continued the publication since assuming his position in 1954. With the addition of the "information service" of the Committee the new associate director, W. Barry Garrett, will share an increasing responsibility for the "Report."

The "Report" has not proposed to give all of the news in the nation's capital in relation to religious liberty, nor has it sought to circulate among the entire Baptist constituency. However, it has been an interpretative and analytical organ giving facts and views on current proposed legislation and trends. The scope of the coverage of the "Report" is now under study and its coverage may be broadened in the future.

Until now the "Report" has been mailed free to editors, executives and institutions, but others who wanted it have been asked to subscribe for \$1.00 per year. With the rising interest in the work of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, many others may want to receive it. Your subscription will be welcomed.

SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING

The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs had its semi-annual meeting in Washington, April 22-23. Eldon W. Koch, pastor of the Berwyn Baptist Church, College Park, Maryland, is the chairman. Several matters

of both world and national interest were discussed and definite action was taken on some of them.

STUDIES FOR TOURISTS

The sub-committee on world issues recommended and the Joint Committee authorized that the executive director prepare a booklet on church-state relations in the Latin American countries. It was pointed out that in 1960 the Baptist World Congress would meet in Rio de Janeiro, and that it would be helpful if Baptists who plan to travel in Latin American countries could have access to information about church-state relations in the countries they plan to visit.

The proposed booklet is to cover the provisions for religious liberty, the ecclesiastical organizations, social pressures, cultural traditions or institutional patterns, and is to publicize the progress and the opportunities confronting South American Baptists. The booklet will be prepared in close harmony with the mission boards doing missionary work in South America.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AND EDUCATION

The Committee took note of the various proposals for Federal aid to education and raised several questions concerning the scholarship programs proposed in Congress. Here are some of the questions discussed:

How much does the program limit the scope of the applicant's curriculum? Will scholarships be awarded to the individuals directly or will they be awarded through the schools?

Will the government's understandable desire to get its money's worth tend to result in more controls? Will the program accelerate the process of secularization? How will the Clark-Morse proposals to aid private schools affect religious liberty? How will it affect the welfare of public education? What will be the consequences of the new passion for scientific and technical courses? Which schools are really "public" schools?

Although the Committee did not seek to answer the above questions, it did act to call these issues to the attention of the Baptist people with the request that they study them. The Committee also emphasized the need for wholeness in education, a total program of training for the total man, making it clear that "we are not anti-science."

RELIGION AND THE CENSUS

At its meeting in October, 1957, the Committee passed a resolution expressing disapproval of the question, "What is your religion?", in the 1960 Census. In view of opposition from many directions, the Bureau subsequently announced that it had withdrawn its proposal to include the question in the 1960 Census, but that it had not closed the door for consideration in a future census.

In the meantime the Bureau of the Census had conducted spot surveys and issued a report in which the question of religion was included on a voluntary basis.

These sample surveys have demonstrated that many people claim a religious affiliation which they do not practice. The estimate made for Methodists almost doubled their known and participating membership. The Baptist estimates were five million above the church records, and the Roman Catholic estimates were nine million above their own baptismal and parish records.

The Joint Committee looked upon these results as confirming its earlier position that religious statistics produced by census takers would be meaningless. Answers to the question, "What is your religion?", have no value in understanding people's actual relationships to the churches.

The Committee recognized that the practice of using the religious question in monthly reports and in periodic surveys "keeps the

door open to its possible use on the national level in some future census." Therefore it voted to commend the Bureau of the Census for ruling the religious question out of the 1960 census, and requested the Bureau "not only to continue this policy on a national level, but also to apply it in periodic surveys and reports."

POSTAL RATES AND LIBERTY

The sub-committee on domestic issues reported to the full Committee on religious liberty problems involved in the Postal Rate legislation before Congress. Although the Senate and the House have passed bills with differences between them, both houses provide for a classification of non-profit and religious publications that were to get a special second class rate of one half that of regular second class mail.

The Post Office Department has sought for several years to secure legislation that would eliminate the annual losses of the Department by its below cost subsidy to certain types of mail and that would state clearly a postal policy of the United States government. Part of this is accomplished in the current legislation that is now in the conference committee between the Senate and the House.

It was pointed out in the discussion that the Post Office as such does not have an income, but that all revenues are deposited in the United States Treasury, and the difference between income and operating costs of the Department is made up by appropriations from the Congress. Thus any mail service that does not pay its own way is to that extent subsidized by the United States government.

The religious liberty problem in the postal rates arises at the point where religious publications get a special subsidy not available to the general press. Questions were raised by members of the Committee at this point. "Is this different in principle from subsidies for religious schools?" Queries were also raised in this connection about exemption from taxation of church property, and rental allowance for pastors and other religious workers.

The Committee asked that these problems be highlighted through the Baptist press, and directed the problem to the Religious Liberty Conference to be held in Washington, September 16-18.

RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS ON PUBLIC PROPERTY

There is increasing agitation in the nation over the use of religious symbols, creches, religious plays, recognition of saints by public institutions and on public property. There was no unanimity of opinion on these specific matters in the Committee, although general principles were agreed upon. It was felt that the major religious celebrations such as Christmas, Hanukkah, Passover and Easter should be adequately treated in the public schools as a part of the total education that ought to be given to all citizens. The caution was expressed, however, that religion should not be reduced to cultural equality with other categories of knowledge and custom.

The discussion also took note of the recent use of a St. Christopher medal in the second stage of the Vanguard rocket that launched a United State's satellite and of the recent sponsorship of St. Maurice as the patron saint of infantry at Fort Benning, Ga. It was voted to request the Army and Navy to state their principles of policy which are involved in their use of religious symbols.

EXPRESSION OF APPRECIATION

Edward B. Willingham, former pastor of the National Baptist Memorial Church, Washington, D.C., served as chairman of the Baptist Joint Committee for several years. He is now general secretary of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Societies. Last October he resigned as chairman so a person closer to the Washington office could be elected. In appreciation of his service with the Committee the following resolution was adopted.

"In consenting to the retirement of Dr. Edward B. Willingham as chairman of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs because of his expressed inability to accept reelection, the Committee records its sincere regret and its reluctant recognition of the inevitability of his retirement occasioned by his removal to New York and his new executive responsibility for the foreign mission service of the American Baptist Convention.

"The Committee likewise records its appreciation of his seven years of tactful, constructive, and inspiring leadership as its chairman, and its abiding gratitude for the notable service he has rendered to the cause of religious liberty, and to the fruitful

discussion of the many aspects of church and state relationships which the Committee has had to consider and act upon during the years of his chairmanship. His cooperative spirit, wise counsel, sound judgment, and stimulating direction, have contributed to a committee unity and a loyalty to the historic principles of Baptists that have been of immense value to the work of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs."

This concludes the report of the April meeting of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. The remaining matters in this "Report from the Capital" are other items that are of current interest to Baptists.

GOVERNMENT LOANS FOR HOSPITALS

Capitol Hill is working toward legislation providing for loans to non-profit hospitals. Many Baptists and other groups have opposed grants from the government under the provisions of the Hill-Burton Act for sectarian hospitals. Some have desired legislation whereby such institutions could obtain government-secured, long-term loans with interest charges sufficient so there will be no participation by the tax-payer.

The Senate has passed the Fulbright Bill (S. 3497), which is entitled, "An act to expand the public facility loan program of the Community Facilities Administration of the Housing and Home Finance Agency, and for other purposes." The proponents of the bill urged it as an anti-recession measure as well as a measure to implement the policy of the United States government "to provide the services and facilities essential to the health and welfare of the people of the United States." The bill provides for loan assistance in the construction of essential public works or facilities by states, municipalities, or other political subdivisions of states where such credit is not otherwise available on equally favorable terms or conditions.

The bill passed by the Senate included the following amendment: "The foregoing declaration of policy and findings apply equally in the case of non-profit hospitals, and it is likewise the purpose of this title to authorize the extension of credit to assist in the provision of those facilities."

The rate of interest on loans as provided by this bill is in the neighborhood of 3½ per cent. It is claimed that this rate of

interest will take care of all costs to the government in providing such loans, and it means that any agency, institution, state or municipality that receives such a loan is not being subsidized by the Federal government. At least that was the intention and declaration of those who advocated passage of the bill.

This legislation is now being considered by the House of Representatives and hearings are being held by the Banking and Currency Committee of the House, of which Rep. Brent Spence (D., Ky.) is chairman. Spence had previously introduced H.R. 11474, which was identical with S. 3497. If the House makes any changes in the bill as passed by the Senate, it will then go to a conference committee between the two houses where the differences will be ironed out before it is presented to both houses for final approval.

CATHOLIC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

With noticeable regularity the Catholic publications are discussing the possibility of and the problems involved in a Catholic candidate for the presidency of the United States. Frequent discussions of the possibility are even seen in the public press. Here are samples of headlines frequently appearing in Catholic papers: "Religion of Catholic Is No Disqualification to Hold Public Office," "Questioning Candidates on Religion should be Barred," "Minister Suggests Catholic Might Be Better President," "The Al Smith Story," "Cardinal Stritch Answers Catholic President Query," "A Good Catholic Is a Good Citizen," "If U. S. Turned Catholic What Would Happen?", "Catholicism Termed Asset to Presidential Aspirant."

The Denver Catholic Register (Apr. 10, 1958) published an article which may be considered a fair sample of the discussions in the Catholic press. This article was headlined, "Bigots Are Still Active -- Religion vs. Civil Office." Following are three paragraphs with which the article started.

A CATHOLIC STATEMENT

"It is insulting and unjust for bigots to resurrect old bugaboos about a Catholic being elected President of the U. S. Nonetheless it makes catching news stories. And the same would be true if newspapers devoted columns to exploiting whether a Protestant, Jew, Mason, or agnostic, could make a good Presi-

dent. But such queries are shrewdly ignored.

"That Catholics have served ably in city, state, and federal positions seems to matter little. It is mainly when the possibility of a Catholic becoming President looms that fantastic assertions are made. Consequently some persons who never even thought of the idea previously may wonder about a Catholic's fitness for the Presidency.

"Though it is distasteful to have to answer prejudice charges, it is better to reply than by silence leave the impression that one's religion disqualifies him for the high office. Increased prominence will be given to this topic in the months to come."

POSSIBLE CATHOLIC CANDIDATES

The two most mentioned candidates that qualify in this category are Sen. John F. Kennedy (D., Mass.) and American Red Cross President Alfred M. Gruenther (Republican).

Many political analysts are saying that the day has arrived when it is now possible for a Catholic to be elected president of the United States. They say that the conditions that led to the defeat of Al Smith in 1928 no longer hold true. Smith was running against Coolidge prosperity, was an advocate of repeal of the 18th Amendment, faced a divided South and had to contend with the extremism of the Ku Klux Klan.

The new conditions that are pointed out by the analysts are the industrialization of the South, the diminishing of anti-Catholic sentiment in the nation, a steadily growing Catholic population, no prohibition issue, and religious influence is much less for a high national post than for local offices.

On the other hand civil liberties will be an issue in the 1960 election, and the economic conflict between the South and the New England states must be taken into consideration.

If a Catholic does become a presidential nominee for either or both of the political parties, the American public will have to evaluate the problem of how they will vote. In view of the fact that the Constitution of the United States specifically says that "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States," voters will have to weigh values carefully.