

STATE and NATIONAL

Factional battles for control rock Southern Baptist Convention

Editor's note: This is the first in a three-part series examining the crisis in the Southern Baptist Convention.

By PETER THUESEN
Staff Writer

Ten years ago, Southern Baptist Convention member Paul Pressler explained how fundamentalists planned to seize control of America's largest Protestant denomination.

"We are going for the jugular," said Pressler, a Houston judge and leading fundamentalist operative.

Pressler's words were prophetic. After first winning the SBC presidency in 1979, fundamentalists spent the next decade removing perceived moderates from leadership roles in the 14.8 million-member denomination.

Then at the SBC annual meeting in June of this year, fundamentalist Morris Chapman, 49, pastor of the 7,700-member First Baptist Church in Wichita Falls, Tex., swept the Convention presidency by the widest margin since 1985.

Chapman's victory, hailed by his supporters as a watershed, marked the completion of the fundamentalist takeover.

"I think there was a seismic shift that took place this summer," said Emory University sociologist Nancy Ammerman, whose new book, "Baptist

Battles," analyzes the SBC crisis.

"There is essentially nobody in any (SBC) leadership position anywhere who is politically identified with the moderates," Ammerman said.

Chapman's election, witnessed by over 38,000 delegates at the Louisiana Superdome, is now seen as symbolic of the fundamentalists' unbreakable SBC stronghold.

"The Southern Baptist Convention is the first major denomination to, at least from its leadership, turn back this tide of creeping liberalism," said self-described conservative James Hefley, author of a five-volume history of the SBC controversy.

As fundamentalists celebrate, however, moderates worry that they may never again be allowed full participation in the SBC.

"I still believe in so much of what Southern Baptists do," said the Rev. Daniel Vestal of Atlanta, who lost the presidency to Chapman, 57 percent to 42 percent. "The problem is I've lost faith in the integrity and leadership of the Convention."

As moderates reconsider their place in the denomination, experts are pondering the importance of the SBC controversy.

Former UNC professor Samuel Hill, author of numerous books on American religion, said the fundamentalists' vic-

tory should be attributed to their political prowess rather than to any nationwide increase in conservative sentiment.

"I don't think (Chapman's) election by a wide margin has any particular national significance," said Hill, now a professor of religion at the University of Florida.

Ammerman agreed, noting that the fundamentalists' takeover "represents their finally having consolidated a winning political coalition."

But the Rev. Mitchell Simpson, newly installed pastor of University Baptist Church in Chapel Hill, said the moderates are partly to blame for their own defeat.

"The fundamentalists, although they are despicable to me in their mean-spirited, closed-minded, sexist, racist attitudes, they are not the initial problem," Simpson said.

"The moderates set themselves up for this takeover by being so careful, so cautious, so middle-of-the-road."

Ammerman said the collapse of the moderate coalition was a triumph for the fundamentalist cause.

"This time the fundamentalists have been able to win control of a very large national denomination and, by virtue of that, they have all the denominational machinery that can be used to further the fundamentalist understanding of what it means to be a Christian," she

said.

That newly acquired denominational machinery has already given a major boost to the fundamentalist political agenda.

At the June meeting in New Orleans, fundamentalists received the votes necessary to slash SBC contributions to the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, a Washington-based lobbying organization created in 1936 to support separation of church and state.

Delegates in New Orleans voted instead to increase funding for the SBC's own Christian Life Commission, which has lobbied for such conservative causes as prayer in schools.

In a recent interview, SBC president Morris Chapman called the fundamentalist abandonment of the Baptist Joint Committee "a signal that Southern Baptists want to be certain to emphasize the importance of a greater emphasis on God and country."

"Plurality should not diminish the importance of God in governmental leadership," Chapman said. "The very constitution of our United States has as its foundation God's holy word."

The Baptist Joint Committee, however, was not crippled by the loss of SBC support. With funds from eight other member bodies, the committee's work continues, as attested by committee Executive Director James Dunn, who

spoke in Chapel Hill on Sunday during an installation service for Simpson.

Still, the SBC's de-funding of the Joint Committee demonstrated the strength of fundamentalist resolve and increased moderates' disgust at official SBC support for what Simpson called the "sickening" idea of "church and state together in bed."

Ammerman maintains the fundamentalist takeover of the Southern Baptist Convention has implications far beyond Washington.

Through surveys and other research, she discovered that a majority of Southern Baptists disagree with at least some fundamentalist principles. But that majority may weaken under the new fundamentalist monopoly in the SBC.

"A lot of Southern Baptists who have not necessarily been fundamentalists will be exposed to a fundamentalist way of thinking of things and, in the absence of any argument to the contrary, will essentially become fundamentalists," Ammerman said.

Arguments to the contrary, at least from SBC headquarters, are now virtually nonexistent.

Following Chapman's election as SBC president, the Convention's fundamentalist-controlled Executive Committee acted quickly to seize the helm of the denomination's news organization, Baptist Press.

On July 17 in Nashville, Tenn., the Executive Committee fired moderate Baptist Press director Alvin Shackelford and news editor Dan Martin during a closed-door meeting guarded by armed off-duty police officers.

The Baptist Press shakeup dealt a new blow to moderates' chances at winning the hearts and minds of average SBC members. And it was yet another victory in the fundamentalists' drive to increase their ranks.

But what fundamentalism entails remains a hot topic of debate. Fundamentalists say their insistence on a literal interpretation of the Bible is the primary issue separating them from moderates.

Many moderates, including Vestal, disagree.

"The issue is power and control," Vestal said. "The issue is whether or not we will be able to accept each other and still unify for the cause of Christ."

Even so, Ammerman said the fundamentalists have succeeded in establishing the literal truth of the Bible as the primary litmus test for Southern Baptist orthodoxy.

"The Bible is certainly the point of contention that has been most visible," Ammerman said. "It's the way the fundamentalists have chosen to go on the offensive."

PACs attempt to sway undecided voters with blitz of advertising

From Associated Press reports

WASHINGTON — Special interest groups are going on a pre-election spending spree in an effort to influence the outcome of tight races, such as the Helms-Gantt U.S. Senate contest in North Carolina.

The money comes from such diverse groups as the Realtors political action committee, abortion rights groups, anti-abortion forces and a PAC representing dealers of Japanese-made cars.

With Election Day less than a week away, PACs have reported spending about \$4 million so far in 1990 contests. In 1988, about \$7.2 million in independent expenditures on congressional races was reported.

Spending reports indicate the North Carolina race between GOP Sen. Jesse Helms and Democrat Harvey Gantt is being targeted by a number of groups. Instead of relying solely on direct donations to a candidate, the groups are taking advantage of a campaign law provision that allows unlimited spending on a race provided the effort isn't coordinated with the campaign that ostensibly would benefit.

The National Abortion Rights League, for example, has spent \$200,000 on radio, television and other ads attacking Helms' anti-abortion stance, according to its filings with the Federal Election Commission.

Other major races targeted by NARAL for large independent expenditures include the Iowa Senate race between Democratic Sen. Tom

Harkin and Republican Rep. Tom Tauke, the Florida governor's race and House contests in Oregon and Florida.

NARAL and its Iowa affiliate reported spending more than \$93,000 in September and October to support Harkin, and another \$3,000 to oppose Tauke.

Its federal filings show nearly \$80,000 has been spent to oppose the re-election of Florida Gov. Bob Martinez, a staunch abortion foe. Most of NARAL's spending on that state race does not have to be reported to the FEC.

NARAL's spending in the past two weeks also has included \$25,000 and \$1,800 to oppose the re-election of Republican Reps. Denny Smith of Oregon and Craig James of Florida, respectively.

Anti-abortion groups also have opened their campaign chests.

The National Right to Life PAC has paid for mailings to support eight candidates, including Helms, Smith and James.

Several Right to Life state PACs also mounted modest independent spending campaigns in recent weeks, according to FEC filings.

A handful of conservative groups have spent a combined \$100,000 on independent expenditures in the past four months, led by the Conservative Republican Committee, which reported \$77,500 in independent spending — \$28,000 of that to support Helms.

Price discusses concerns with Young Democrats

By KYLE YORK SPENCER
Staff Writer

Fourth district Rep. David Price, D-Chapel Hill, told students he was encouraged by the energy and enthusiasm on campus as the Nov. 6 election drew near.

Price addressed about 50 students at a meeting of the UNC Young Democrats in the Student Union Tuesday night. The two-term incumbent is running against Republican John Carrington.

"We are in the midst of an historical period in this state," he said. "We can now regain our reputation which has been tarnished by negative politics as a progressive state leading the New South."

Price stressed his concerns about the budget crisis in Washington, America's failing education system and the environment.

"I am concerned about acid rain, hazardous waste and oil spills," Price

said.

Price said he was concerned about the homeless, providing affordable housing and encouraging students to stay in school.

He also addressed concerns about Washington's handling of the savings and loans crisis, a problem that has angered both Republicans and Democrats.

Price, who is a member of the House Banking Committee, said he blamed deregulation and the free rein given to American businesses during the years of Ronald Reagan's presidency. This lack of supervision caused the bankruptcy of numerous private financial institutions and has cost the American government billions of dollars, he said.

"We have revamped the whole regulatory system. But it is terribly difficult and expensive," Price said.

Price, a UNC graduate and professor on leave from Duke University, was

welcomed by William Leuchtenburg, a University history professor.

Leuchtenburg said the eyes of the nation and of the world were on North Carolina's 1990 elections and called Price a caring politician who understands the plight of the less fortunate.

Price said he felt as though he had walked into the last act of a play when he returned to Chapel Hill this week for the last stretch of his campaign. But he added that he had been stuck in Washington dealing with the budget, which he said made this session of Congress the roughest election year session since World War II.

"Why were we engaged in this long drawn-out session? The reason is that this country was under the leadership of two presidents who professed the kind of 'feel-good' politics which said we didn't need to worry and we could have it all. We dug ourselves into an incredible fiscal mess."

Price spoke about why he was running for re-election, and the importance of addressing issues crucial to North Carolinians. He said Carrington has failed to address the essential issues and is running his campaign through television ads.

"Politics can bring out the best in people, and should be something we can be proud of. It should not be about who can be more clever, more nasty in 30-second ads," Price said.

Students who attended Price's speech responded positively to the congressman's words.

Jessica Mollet, president of the Young Democrats, said Price is dealing with issues important to North Carolina's younger generation.

"I think (Price) is a good man. I think he represents the people well," said Laura Hodgson, a part-time UNC student from Chapel Hill, when asked why she supported Price.

Access to Hatteras Island remains limited for tourists

From Associated Press reports

CAPE HATTERAS — Hatteras Island remained off-limits to tourists Tuesday, and that economic concern was uppermost in the minds of residents dealing with shortages of power and fuel in the aftermath of last week's bridge collapse.

"If we don't get some influx of tourist trade in the coming weeks, it could be devastating to many of us," said Frank Folb, owner of a tackle shop in Avon.

Residents are still in the early stages of recovering from Friday's collapse of the Herbert C. Bonner Bridge, the only

road linking Hatteras to the mainland. A 370-foot segment of the bridge toppled into the inlet when it was struck by a storm-loosed dredge.

"It's not every day we have a boat go through our bridge," said Ray Couch of Red Drum Texaco in Buxton. "But we're used to storms, and we have local provisions among the citizenry to take care of such situations. Most of us have our own standby power or candles, kerosene lamps and kerosene heaters."

Some Hatteras Island residents got electricity on alternating six-hour stretches Tuesday, and crews worked

on docks for ferries to cross the Oregon Inlet. Those ferries could be in use within another week, but repairs to open even one lane of the bridge could take up to three months.

In the meantime, filling up cars to make trips to the mainland or around the island is proving tough. Gasoline is in short supply, with many stations limiting gasoline purchases to \$5. An emergency shipment of unleaded regular was due Tuesday, Couch said.

"We're out of plus and super, and we don't expect to have that another week," Couch said.

Food is not among the items in short supply since the bridge collapse, said Food Lion manager Mike Elliott. Four tractor-trailer loads of grocery items have been delivered to Hatteras since Friday.

"We've had ferries set up especially for Food Lion so we can get our groceries down here," Elliott said. "We've had a generator in the store. We've had power since Friday morning."

Generators have been providing electricity to residents of Avon, Buxton and Frisco on a rotating basis — six hours on and six hours off.

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