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Pastors of First Baptist Shelby

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It Finally Received Approval at W-S

By Charles Richardson

A new relationship between the Baptist State Convention and Wake Forest University finally received overwhelming approval of messengers attending the 149th annual meeting of North Carolina Baptist, but it took an 11th hour vote to make the action possible.

A motion by conservative leaders M. O. Owens Jr., pastor at Parkwood in Gastonia, and Robert Tenery, pastor at Burkemont near Morganton, at the Nov. 13 evening session moved the messengers to rescind earlier action.

It also took a suspension of the convention's constitution to make the final vote on the issue legal. Questions emerged whether, according to the convention constitution, that a vote on an issue like the WFU one, was permitted on the first full day.



Feezor

Owens

During the morning session Nov. 13, Forrest C. Feezor of Shelby, former executive secretary of the Texas convention, offered an amendment to the General Board recommendation which would have required the 12 out-of-state trustees to be Baptists of any group.

Rescind Action

With the Owen's amendment, messengers rescinded that action and in its place approved out-of-state WFU trustees being Christian men and women from "any evangelical denomination."

Owens' motion read, "I move that Dr. Feezor's amendment be amended back to the original as presented by the committee with one change. That is, that it shall read one-third (12) members of the (WFU) board of trustees may be men and women of any evangelical denomination and need not be residents of the state of North Carolina." It passed overwhelmingly.

The Nov. 13 session did not end until

10:50 p.m., with the business sessions being extended several times throughout the day.

The original report from the General Board provided for up to 12 trustees of the 36-member board to be Christians of any denomination.

Leaders predicted the change to "evangelical Christians" will be acceptable to WFU trustees who meet Dec. 14.

This was the only change in the original General Board report which was formed after two years of intensive study.

Feezor said that permitting non-Baptists on the WFU board "would be a reversal of Baptist principle and practice." His motion was approved 1,557 to 1,047.

'Matter of Conscience'

Feezor, a member of the Wake Forest Convention Relationship Committee (the Dorman Committee) opposed the original plan "as a matter of conscience."

Permitting non-Baptists on the board, he said "will not contribute anything to Wake Forest University unless it is some money and I believe we are not ready to sell our practice of principle on that basis."

Despite pleas from Campbell, chairman of the Council on Christian Higher Education, Feezor's motion was passed by messengers.

After the passage of Feezor's motion, Henry Crouch, pastor of Providence Church, Charlotte, later offered an amendment which would have restored Wake Forest to full partnership in the convention Cooperative Pro-

CECIL SHERMAN

... influential speech



gram budget. The amendment failed.

Cecil Sherman, pastor of the First Church of Asheville who would later be elected president, told messengers, "We have a near death wish in our attitude toward Wake Forest." Sherman was apparently referring to years of conflict between WFU and the convention which he saw hurting both.

Sherman appealed to messengers to rescind their earlier action on the Feezor amendment and return to the original report of the General Board. General Secretary Cecil A. Ray also spoke in favor of Sherman's motion.

The motion by Sherman failed to receive the necessary two-thirds approval by some 13 votes.

Severance Rejected

Twice during the discussions, messengers turned down an effort to sever



Tenery

Ray

all ties with WFU. Malbert Smith Jr., pastor of the Grey Stone Church, Durham, offered the motion early during the day. Fred Bentley, president of Mars Hill College, moved that the Smith's proposal be tabled. Bentley's motion was sustained.

Later during the discussions, an effort was made to bring a separation motion to the floor again.

Owens, in his comments, to reverse the Feezor motion, said, "What I am about to do may seem a little surprising. I am not in any sense compromising my convictions, but I am convinced that this body tonight ought to do something. Now to leave this place with this matter hanging in the air in such a fashion . . . will hamstring us for an entire year."

Tenery, endorsing Owens' proposal, said, "What we are trying to do is to put together a package again that both sides will live with . . . I came to this convention to support the severance motion that Malbert Smith brought. . . . Obviously this body will not support severance."