

Forum questions evangelists' right to solicit funds



Photo by Robert W. Rizzo

Steve Carter waits to be called on to speak against evangelists soliciting funds on television.

By Elisa Hutchins
Staff Writer

Viewers tuned into the Christian Broadcast Network Thursday night may have heard impassioned pleas from evangelists to send in money, but some students at the Texas A&M Debate Forum would rather do away with media evangelists' rights to solicit funds on the air.

Two forum members each gave a seven-minute speech for or against the issue of "tele-evangelism."

Jay Huckabay, a senior agricultural economics major, argued for the resolution (pro).

Karen Hurwitz, a senior math major, argued against the proposal (con).

After members presented their sides, the forum was open to response from students and a vote was taken to decide the most convincing argument.

Should evangelists like the Rev. Jerry Falwell and Jimmy Swaggert be prohibited from mass-media fundraising? You decide who had the most convincing argument.

PRO:
Huckabay said that if evangelists showed more concern for the min-

istry's followers and spent less time on television begging for money, the members would, in turn, provide the needed resources.

Charitable institutions, such as Praise The Lord ministries (PTL), don't have to make their financial statements public by law. And, Huckabay said, this gives rise to suspicion as to how the millions of dollars in donations are being spent.

He also noted that in 1986, 16.3 million viewers watched the former Assembly of God ministry leader and 1988 presidential candidate Pat Robertson. Viewers sent in more than \$233 million dollars.

Huckabay said the slick-talking leader decides how much and for what the funds will be used and no one knows if they actually are used for that purpose.

Students for the resolution said leaders instill fear in members by telling them that they (the leaders) will die if people don't send money.

Some also said the lavish lives ministry leaders have led, documented by Jim Bakker's \$450 suits and three homes, are proof that money is not being used properly.

CON:

Hurwitz said, "Jerry Falwell has requested outside auditors to inspect church finances and make them public. But that is not the issue."

She said any charitable organization has the right to solicit funds and if religious groups are singled out, their rights are being abridged because current law allows such solicitation.

"If television fundraising is prohibited, ministries will still continue to get large sums of money, but secrecy on fund disbursement will worsen," she said.

Students who agreed with Hurwitz said if the resolution passed, a snowball effect would put fundraising organizations like the Muscular Dystrophy Association and the United Way in danger of being next on the list.

They said the evangelists are exercising their rights to freedom of religion in a democratic society and while some students might not agree with their methods, they are within the law.

The resolution prohibiting evangelists from soliciting funds generated 220 votes of support and 136 votes against.

Geology professor warns A&M audience about 'greenhouse effect'

By Janet Goode
Staff Writer

The "greenhouse effect" and its alarming trend on the Earth's climate may be sudden rather than gradual, raising the Earth's temperature nearly 4 degrees centigrade, a geology professor at Columbia University said Thursday night in Rudder Tower.

The greenhouse effect is caused by atmospheric changes due to the release of carbon dioxide from our industrialized society, Dr. Wallace Broecker told nearly 200 Texas A&M students and faculty.

The reason CO₂ is changing the climate is because it is a one-way filter, he said. It can absorb some of the infrared light that is leaving the earth, but it can't intercept some of the incoming sunlight, he said.

"Therefore, it is like a greenhouse—it is like putting a blanket around the earth, causing the earth's temperature to rise," he said.

Broecker said that raising the earth's temperature in this manner wouldn't disrupt life on the planet if done gradually. But, he said, all the effects that would go along with a

drastic change is what people are concerned about.

Carbon dioxide is a primary nutrient in plants, Broecker said.

"In a century we will have doubled the CO₂ content of the atmosphere," he said. "If you double the CO₂ content in the air it is certainly going to change the plant quality."

Broecker said most of what scientists can do to predict what will happen has been done since the models being used don't have the capability to adapt for dynamic Earth changes.

"There are still many major uncertainties," he said. "We don't know, for example, how much the ice caps will melt or what this would do to the wildlife."

"Therefore, it has been documented that if you gradually change the greenhouse capacity of the atmosphere, the change in the climate on earth will follow gradually."

"But the Earth's climate doesn't operate as simple as the models dictate."

Broecker takes his evidence that the change in climate will be sudden from studying the Earth's systems and their past responses. He points to the way the Earth responded to

the glacial transition by a sudden, total reorganization, when the glaciers melted. Broecker also said this is related to the atmospheric change.

"One can link the salt flow through the ocean and the water vapor flow through the atmosphere to how our earth's system can respond in ways we would never have dreamed of," he said.

"I think this is God's message to us that if we monkey around with climate, funny things can happen," he said.

"That doesn't prove that the Earth is going to reorganize when we add CO₂," he said, "but it says to us, 'Hey, you better be careful. There are things going on that you don't understand.'"

Broecker said the message for the future is that people are tampering with a system—the Earth's climate—by oversimplifying the problem. If the system reorganized and did it over only a few decades, the people of the world wouldn't be prepared.

"We (Americans) need to develop strategies to respond rapidly to things that are going to happen as a result of this (carbon dioxide warming)," he said.

"If we had a couple of centuries, we could cope with it," he said, and jokingly added, "We could move the beaches and ski resorts around."

Animals couldn't be moved around because they would be trapped, he said, threatening the food supply.

"I think these problems are as complicated as developing a star wars strategy or dealing with curing cancer," he said.

"The point is we don't know just what's going to happen, he said. "Should we really just stick our heads in the sand and hope that everything is going to be alright?"

"I think it behooves us (America) as the wealthiest nation in the world to put a little more effort into this problem and try and exert some leadership. If not, we will be conducting the greatest geophysical experiment of all time. It will be one of which we will have no choice but to let it continue."

"For scientists it may be fun to sit back and calculate what's happening. But for people who have to live on this planet, it will mean a lot of trouble."



Photo by Jay Janner

Dr. Wallace Broecker speaks about the "greenhouse effect."

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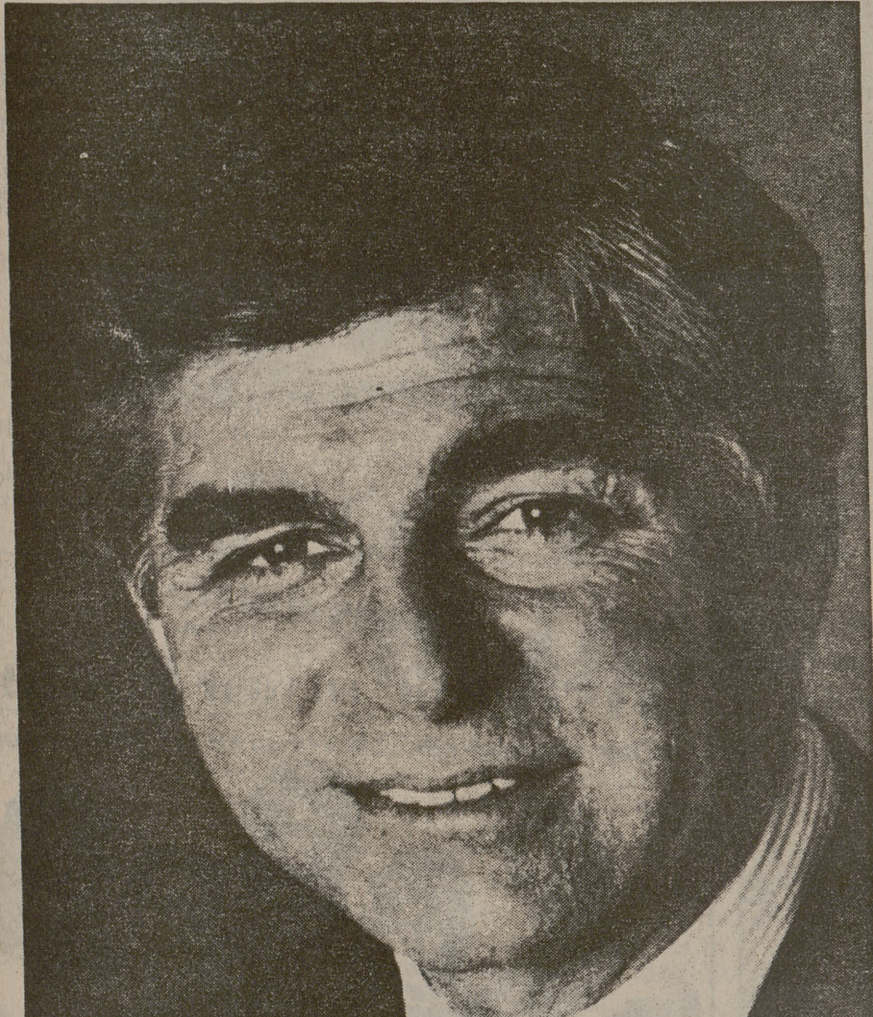
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