

Our response to Sen. Robert Dole's anti-Unification Church forum on Capitol Hill

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From a report to church members on the activities of the week of February 15, 1976, during which Sen. Robert Dole of Kansas provided a forum on Capitol Hill for opponents of the Unification Church to air their accusations for the benefit of the media and invited representatives from federal agencies.



Sen. Robert Dole

The event was one of the gravest injustices ever perpetrated against a religion in the history of our country.

Rabbi Maurice Davis has been trying to mobilize people opposed to the Unification Church and to give the impression that there is going to be a major investigation of our church by the government. Kansas Senator Robert Dole sponsored a meeting on Capitol Hill to give opponents of the church a forum to air their accusations -- often outright lies -- before the media and representatives from many important government agencies. The Unification Church was denied a voice at this meeting, which was set up to resemble a government hearing but wasn't in any way either official or actually a hearing.

The "Day of Affirmation and Protest," as they called it, was scheduled for Wednesday, February 18. We had meetings all day long on Sunday, February 15, to try to formulate our strategy to respond to this crisis. Finally late Sunday night we decided upon our plan.

First, we would create a telegram in support of the church and seek signatures of support from at least 200 parents who encouraged their children's involvement in our movement. Second, we would mobilize support among the religious community by a second telegram protesting that we couldn't even speak out in our own defense at the meeting, and solicit at least 40 signatures from clergymen of other denominations. This was not asking for direct support for the Unification Church, but a recognition that if our rights are threatened, their rights are also threatened.

The third point in our strategy was to bring some parents to Washington with us. The only way to effectively respond to this terrible outcry against us is to produce some who will speak out in our defense. If a negative parent says, "My children are in the church and I'm horrified," it's not enough for the church to say, "Well, you don't need to be horrified; actually it's quite wonderful." Some other parent has to get up and say, "My children are also in the church, and I'm so grateful they are."

Early Monday morning we went down to Washington and we began working. We bombarded the media both in Washington and in Senator Dole's home state of Kansas with statements about how unfair this entire thing was. I know that Sen. Dole is not an evil man, and when he agreed to sponsor the meeting I'm sure he didn't realize the extent to which he was being used by opponents of the church.

We found out that Sen. Dole had invited representatives from all the federal agencies to attend the meeting -- the Federal Trade Commission, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the Labor Department, the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Internal Revenue Service, and even the Post Office! The motive behind all of this, of course, was to say that we're not a religion, that we have nothing to do with God, that there's no religious faith here, that it's just a political business. And then people get frightened, I would, too, if it were true.

We're not afraid of a real investigation, conducted by the government, in which everybody could present his evidence. In that setting people could say whatever they wanted to, and we could respond, and the truth would come out. But this was not an investigation or a hearing; this was just a media showcase. Just imagine: here would be Sen. Dole and all the important agency representatives, appearing to the television cameras as if they were all attacking and investigating the Unification Church, and the witnesses that were going to stand up and speak were not even under oath and therefore not subject to penalties for perjury. They could get up and say whatever they wanted to, and the TV cameras would cover it all, and it would come across to America as truth. And we were absolutely forbidden to say anything at all. In fact, until the very last minute it was clear we weren't even going to get in to observe the meeting as admission was by invitation only, and they were giving tickets only to people sympathetic to their point of view. I couldn't believe it was really happening here in America!

That evening things were looking rather bleak. Our goal, remember, was to have 200 signatures from parents, 40 from ministers, and to take 30 parents with us to the meeting. At dinner time we were feeling

really serious, because it seemed like we hadn't made much headway. We had tried to go to the federal agencies but they hadn't been responsive, those that were open. (February 16 was a holiday.) They said, "If Sen. Dole invites us, of course we'll go, and then we'll just be noncommittal."

I said, "But don't you realize that even by attending you're adding dignity and credibility to something which is so outrageous?"

They said, "Well, it may be outrageous, but that's Sen. Dole's responsibility, not ours." If a U.S. Senator invites them to a meeting, they feel it's their responsibility to attend.



Mark Goodman tells parents about his kidnapping experience and rescue. Mr. Salonen is in the background

We were just sitting there at dinner, trying to somehow swallow our food, when the first call came in from headquarters in New York to report that already 51 ministers and 178 parents had signed the telegrams! We were electrified to hear that news, and knew that within a short period of time we would easily pass the 200 goal. Soon we had to have four people manning the phones to take the calls and write down the names just as fast as they could be reported.

Our members had gone out all day, all over the country, talking to ministers and collecting signatures. Two people in Indianapolis got 15 ministers to sign in just one day by going from church to church.

In the end when we finally sent the telegram it contained signatures from more than 800 parents in support of their children's involvement in our church. And more than 200 ministers signed the other telegram. The two telegrams were delivered to Sen. Dole early Tuesday morning; copies were circulated to every senator and congressman and were also released to the press. For

the first time there was a sense that we were on the offensive, and people were shocked.

We heard that when Sen. Dole saw the telegrams he said, "I don't believe those telegrams," just like that. You can perhaps get a feel for the climate we were confronting. But we decided to make one last try to see him. Our two members from Kansas who were kidnapped and deprogrammed but, returned to the church called Sen. Dole's office and pleaded to see him. They were told, again, that the senator was "Very busy," but they said, "You don't understand; this is extremely important.

We're asking as his constituents from Kansas to see our senator." Finally his office relented and let them come. A church leader, Dr. William Bergman, accompanied them. The purpose of the visit was to make one last desperate appeal that I be allowed to meet with Sen. Dole, just one final appeal before this disaster would take place.

The first thing they did was to show him the petition with 800 signatures of parents who support their children's involvement in the church. They said later he just slapped it down on the table and said, "I don't want to see it."

When I heard this I felt it wasn't that he didn't believe it, but rather that he was suddenly realizing he had gotten in way over his head.

He never intended to be in the middle of something like this; as a politician it's the very last place he wants to be. So he was really upset.

The two girls told him all about their kidnapping and deprogramming experiences, and even showed him the article in which the Communist newspaper *Isvestia* is quoted as coming out in support of the anti-Moon groups in Paris. "Can't you see what's happening?" they asked. "Can't you see the real motivation behind the attack on the church, and how people are being manipulated?"

"Won't you please talk to President Salonen?" The senator said no, he absolutely would not talk to me. As the girls came out of the office they saw their parents waiting to see Sen. Dole, and they immediately ran over to them and hugged them, just a natural feeling on their part, in spite of everything that had happened. It just shows the wonderful power of the bond of family love. This is an important lesson we are learning: If parents are really close with their children, they don't even listen to the junk from Rabbi Davis or the media.

That night we were expecting the arrival of our positive parents, and I wondered how I could possibly bring them up to date on everything that had happened, to help them understand. I thought we were really taking a chance, to bring these wonderful innocent positive parents to Washington and put them through this meat grinder of a meeting. I knew they would hear things even I had never heard before. I didn't even know what my own reaction was going to be, and I wondered how they would feel about us by the same time the next day.

Tuesday evening things were in a big flurry. The phone was ringing constantly. The newspapers wanted to know if we were going to demonstrate, if we were going to attack Sen. Dole's office -- what action we were going to take. They were looking for a fight.

They want somebody to make a fight because that's what they want to cover.

About this time I got a call from the woman in charge of our registration table at the Sheraton Park, to say she and the girls had recognized some women as parents of our members and had given them information packets but had gotten a strange and rather unfriendly response. They discovered that we had accidentally -- or providentially -- picked the same hotel that Rabbi Davis had put all of his people in, and so all the parents, positive and negative, were on a collision course in the same hotel! There were many encounters in this two-day period where different parents would see each other and argue back and forth and, instead of weakening our wonderful positive parents, I think it really gave them strength.

It was so obvious that the positive parents were standing there with their children, while the negative parents were standing there alone. The positive parents were happy with their families: the negative parents were angry and upset. The point was that it's their decision to make. If they can just accept and support their son's or daughter's involvement in our church, then we can all be connected and be happy together. But if they attack the church, then they are separating themselves from their children and letting themselves be driven out by all this negative information.

That evening I talked to the positive parents who had arrived. They were all really precious people. When I looked at them I almost cried to think that they had come without fully understanding what was wrong -- I could see it in their faces -- but because they felt their children were being unrighteously attacked and they wanted to do something to help. Even though they didn't feel prepared at all -- they didn't know what to say and they couldn't discuss specific issues -- they came because they wanted to stand up for their children.

This was real support, in the purest sense. They were happy with their children's involvement in the church and they wanted to do something to support them. While all this was going on, a second drama was also brewing. Just after we received the call saying that all the parents, positive and negative, were staying at the same hotel, we received another call from a courageous brother saying that he and a very brave sister had escaped from the deprogramming center in Ohio, which had been left lightly guarded when many of the deprogrammers went to Washington for the anti-Unification Church meeting. God used that as an opportunity to free a very important person, important because she's a symbol of our freedom and our rights and our cause, Wendy Helander. This was her second kidnapping, and they had been trying without success to deprogram her for three months.

I want you to know and to feel and to realize how God is working to protect all of our members and how, if we just persevere in faith, even through the longest ordeal, we can never really be taken away from the church. Those people who did leave as a result of deprogramming already had some problem in heart. You must examine yourself, and if you find areas in your faith which need to be strengthened, you must pray desperately every single day to understand and to have a strong connection with God. If you're here

for only a superficial reason, then you can be taken away for some superficial reason, but if your feet are rooted in our faith, then nothing can ever take you away, even if you were taken physically for one or two years or more. If your faith was strong, God could sustain you, and in the end you'd have a wonderful story to tell.

Many people often ask why we don't infiltrate Ted Patrick's deprogramming movement. There are several reasons and I don't want to go into all of them, but as much as anything it's because in a way we are infiltrating each time they kidnap one of our members. They're getting a real wild card when they kidnap one of us. They never know if this is the one out of two that's going to return to the church very quickly, or if this is someone with whom they might succeed. Rather than for us to try to become one of them and use dubious means and pretend to be deprogrammed, our members who have actually been kidnapped very often feel the inspiration how they can help someone to escape.

Richard was kidnapped at the end of January, and he felt that God could use him to bring out either people or information, if he could just gain their trust. He was successful, and was assigned to help deprogram Wendy, and eventually he became one of her guards, which was when he was able to help her escape.

Meanwhile we had tried almost everything to find and free Wendy. We had private investigators spending thousands of dollars, and lawyers filing countless court suits; none of these things worked. But without our even having to plan it, because her faith was strong and because someone else put himself in the position to be used by God, God could take care of her and bring the result. This was wonderful news and I felt that it was in part the justification for this terrible week that we were enduring.

And so Wednesday morning dawned and we began our activities. I went to the hotel to talk to the positive parents, and their number kept increasing and increasing. In the end 61 parents gathered in order to support us.

At our briefing we talked about many different things. Two people gave their testimonies and talked about what they had gone through as a result of being kidnapped away from the church and being deprogrammed. Lynda McKenzie described our International Family Association, and Dr. Bergman talked a bit about life in a typical center, and we just tried to give the parents a rich experience.

We decided not to picket the meeting, not to demonstrate or otherwise become undignified in anyway, but rather to attend quietly and either stand or sit in the back, not participating but maintaining a silent vigil of protest. Originally the meeting had been open only to those holding tickets, but under pressure on Tuesday it was finally changed to an open meeting -- first come, first served -- which was definitely not their original intention.

All our church members and their parents wore a red carnation above a Unification Church card, so it was very clear who we were. When I walked in with several other people, we were the first Unification Church members to be recognized as such in the room. It was the most amazing feeling. We walked into the room and stood in the back just opposite from where Sen. Dole would be sitting. I wanted to look proud and calm, although I felt hurt and angry that this could even be happening in America, because it was really nothing but a media circus. I haven't seen that many cameras since Watergate. As we walked in, it was like the whole room did an about-face. Everybody turned around. They started pointing and nudging each other and then people came and took pictures. And we just stood there. A few reporters came up and said taunting things.

The meeting finally gathered together, and some of our parents were able to get in but many others stood the entire 2½ hours out in the hall in sweltering heat. In the beginning I was worried what effect the meeting might have on our parents, because they started out by reading some of the strongest things that Rev. Moon has ever said, lifting them completely out of context and trying to make it appear that our church's main purpose is a military takeover of the world. They never mentioned Rev. Moon's inspirational messages, his general plans or his basic instructions to us. Instead, they wove together a series of these things, taken out of context, and they made it sound really terrible.

Then they began their accusations. But they had a problem: their egos got in the way, so that different people wanted to make different points, and it was hard for them to really zero in on any one or several of their outrageous claims. In many of the things different people said I could see that there are many ways that our church must always strive to improve our communication, many times that children haven't communicated with parents. We must definitely reform, and we are responsible for that. If our members who go fundraising are deceptive and say things that are untrue, they're doing our church a tremendous disservice. The most successful fundraisers never do that, never. So some things definitely need to be reformed, no question about it.

But those were not the things that interested anybody. The things that were most terrible were those that were completely wrong, like Rabbi Davis comparing us to the Nazi youth movement. That was when I

most resented not being permitted to stand up and defend ourselves. By all rights, in a democracy we should have been able to stand up right after that and say, "That's absolutely not true.

We don't hate people on the outside. We don't have an absolutely unlimited source of money," etc. But we weren't permitted to say anything at all.

At one point they were trying to criticize Unification Thought, saying how we alienate people from the standard methods of education, and that we think democratic education is no good. They said, "Now listen to this: 'The purpose of education is to make man's mind a reflection of God, and therefore to please God.'" That was their criticism! Our side of the room just burst into applause, because it was the purest thing that had been said during the whole meeting.

Just as we predicted, they had no real questions for the federal agencies. But the meeting went on and on. We endured throughout the entire time, and many parents whispered to me as we were standing there, "I'm proud that I could stand up for this cause. I'm really proud to be here."

At the end of the meeting Sen. Dole said, "I understand there are some members of the Unification Church in the back." At that point some of our parents yelled out, "And their parents," and he was surprised. He asked, "How many parents are there?"

And many, many hands went up. The voice came again, "And many more outside standing in the hall!" People spun around in their seats, surprised to think that any parents would come and support this movement.

Text of telegram from parents to Sen. Dole:

"We are parents of young men and women who are members of the Unification Church: we are writing to express our support of their commitment. Anti-church groups at your meeting on Wednesday do not represent our views nor in our opinion the view of most parents of church members. You have not only lent the dignity of Congress to this apparent effort to stifle religious freedom, but your repeated refusal to meet representatives of the Church is unfair to our children, whose reputations are at stake. We must protest this injustice in the name of God." (Followed by the names of 800 parents)

Text of telegram from ministers to Sen. Dole:

"Our forefathers came to this country in order to obtain religious freedom. As clergymen of different faiths, we firmly support the right of anyone to practice the religion of his choice. We are shocked and dismayed at the one-sided meeting you have arranged between opponents of one religious group, the Unification Church, and several government agencies. The closed format of the meeting, including your failure to provide an opportunity for the group to offer any defense of itself, is a threat to all religions. It can only serve to be a trial by media under the blanket of Congressional prestige. We urge you to reconsider the dangerous significance and precedent of your actions." (Followed by names of more than 200 ministers)

It made a very important point, that we weren't standing there alone; we were starting there with our families. Our families were brought together, not divided, by Rev. Moon. Our families were happy. I think it was at that moment that Sen. Dole first suspected that our telegram with 800 signatures might have credibility.

We felt at that point that our strategy had been successful. We had 800 names instead of 200, 200 ministers instead of 40, and 61 parents instead of 30. Then we went one step further: we thought to really demonstrate the Principle we would give a banquet that evening, not just to lift up all the positive parents who had been through such a difficult day, but for all the negative parents as well.

I was amazed at how much stamina our positive parents had. I could really see that when we have these parents strongly mobilized, that will be the way to end the persecution. For example, Rabbi Davis is exciting people in the Jewish community, trying to imply that we're anti-Semitic and getting people angry at us. Joe Stein's parents were there in support of the church, and after the meeting one Jewish parent grabbed them and said, "Is your son going to say Kaddish for you?" Kaddish is a prayer glorifying God, and it's very important in the Jewish tradition that the son come and say Kaddish at the time of his father's death. Of course if the son leaves the faith, one of the things they worry about is that no one will say Kaddish for them. This is a very threatening thing to a Jewish family. But Mrs. Stein just looked up and said, "Are you going to know if your son says Kaddish for you?"

Mr. Stein added, "Kaddish is said to God, not to the dead body, whether you say it in the Jewish way or the Christian way" -- and then Mrs. Stein piped in, "It's still Kaddish!"

Back at the hotel we explained the facts behind some of the more terrible accusations, and we also explained that, as with young people, there are many areas where our young church must reform. That's why we need the experience and guidance of our parents. That's why we need them to get involved in the church, so we don't do the crazy things that sometimes get the centers in trouble. I'm not going to defend those things. They're not defensible. All I will say is that they were never meant out of an ill motive. They

were never meant for any purpose except to do something to help mankind and to help the world and to serve God's will.

Therefore, if we have people with experience we'll use that experience; if we don't, we'll have to do it ourselves in the best way we can. By rejecting us they're partly responsible for some of the crazy things our young people do, because we need the advice and experience of our parents.



Douglas Alexander's parents joined him in Washington, D. C., among the 61 parents and their children brought together that day by a common desire to protest against injustice and restriction of religious freedom

Then we went down to the banquet hall and about six of the negative parents also came, to see their children. We talked with them throughout the evening, and I went and thanked them very much for coming. One father said, "It was difficult," just like that, and I realized that it was. But by the end of the evening I hope they were somewhat reassured. We could never expect that after so much hatred and negativity that just one event could completely change them, but here at least for the evening their families were reunited again. The Korean Folk Ballet gave a wonderful performance, Sunburst's songs were tremendous, and Prof. Boslooper came down from the seminary and gave a wonderful and humorous talk which was especially appropriate for the parents because he described how people thought he was crazy, as a respected doctor of theology, to get mixed up with "that Moon outfit," and when he told them about his actual experiences with our church it reassured them immensely. It was a wonderful evening.

And at the end they said crazy things. I myself thought this was a very black day, and when the newspaper reporters asked if I had any comment I said, "This was a day of disgrace for the U.S. Senate, that they would let so much dignity come to something like this." I wondered how we would ever put together some of the things we lost on this day. But the parents didn't feel that way. They had just had a big fight, they felt some victory, and they felt close to their children. They were saying things like, "What a wonderful day!" When they left they thanked us so much and said, "Don't give up now. Don't throw in the towel. You didn't come this far to turn back now!" There may have been one or two parents that were more shaken, I don't know; I couldn't talk to them all. But almost without exception they were really galvanized by the experience, because their own experience with their sons and daughters in the church was so completely different from what was being said.

A number of the parents said, "How many of those parents ever went to a three-day workshop? If they had spent just a little time with the church they would never say those things." But we realize we still have a great amount of work to do. The point that definitely has to come out is the reason that we exist as a church. We don't exist in order to oppose Rabbi Davis, or to debate whether or not we kidnap people or brainwash people. We exist in order to establish a certain relationship between man and God, and to create families in order to restore the world. Even in the face of the heaviest persecution we have to make sure that people understand our positive values, and that the image of our church grows as a church that prays, a church that receives direct revelation from God, and a church that understands spiritual phenomena.

We have to use our left hand to push the persecution out of the way, but with our right hand we have to make sure that people understand our purpose. We have to talk about our life of prayer, and how our lives

have been completely transformed and saved, to put an end to some of the tremendous falsehoods. Maybe we should have more public prayer meetings, or even pray all the time on the streets, or open every press conference with prayer. Under all circumstances we have to especially emphasize that point.

Also, we must do something positive which makes the image of our church recognized by the American people for what it really is. This is why the Bicentennial God Bless America Festival June 1st at Yankee Stadium will be so important. Nobody else is doing anything to help people give thanks for God's blessing on America. If our movement continues to expand, criticism is inevitable, but it will die down because sensible people will begin to see what is behind our movement.

When we bring the central issue of God's mission for America to the American people, they will be divided into two camps: those who can understand God's purpose and can accept our church and work with us, and those who cannot. The camp that cannot live up to America's mission is the same camp persecuting us now, and they will clearly diminish as God continues to bless America and as we go on to fulfill our role.

As we prepare for the big Yankee Stadium bicentennial celebration, the uproar against us may multiply, but in the end there will be a huge conclusion that when America needed someone to lead her back to a commitment in the world, and to make her understand her spiritual foundation, one person stood up to do something about it, Reverend Moon.

The greater the price, the more glorious the victory. The fact that we can accomplish in the face of so much opposition will make people understand that such a result can come only because God's power is working through this movement.