



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 113<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

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Vol. 160

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, APRIL 29, 2014

No. 62

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WATCHMAN NEE AND WITNESS LEE  
**HON. JOSEPH R. PITTS**  
OF PENNSYLVANIA  
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, a little over four years ago my esteemed colleague from New Jersey, the honorable CHRIS SMITH, rose in this chamber to bring due attention to one of the great Christians of the twentieth century—the noted Chinese teacher and church-planter, Watchman Nee. Today, I rise to complete the circle on this compelling story by honoring Watchman Nee's closest co-worker, Witness Lee. Together they labored tirelessly in China from 1932 until the conquest of mainland China by the Communist Red Army under Mao Tse Tung in 1949. Today, the story of Watchman Nee is somewhat well known, given his numerous writings that have become Christian classics, such as *The Normal Christian Life* and *Sit, Walk, Stand*. Capping his inspirational biography was his martyrdom in a Chinese labor farm in 1972.

Witness Lee's story is less known in the West but is in no way less significant. Although Nee was the clear leader when they labored together in China, it was left to Witness Lee, to preserve and continue their work outside of China and to spread it far beyond the Chinese-speaking world. When it became apparent in 1949 that the Communists would prevail in China, Watchman Nee insisted that Witness Lee emigrate to carry on their work in Taiwan and throughout the Far East. Lee agreed. Subsequent developments not only validated Nee's insight

(he was imprisoned shortly thereafter, and the churches raised up under his and Lee's ministry were forced underground), but also confirmed that their message and ministry had the potential to reach far beyond China.

Almost immediately Lee's ministry began to have a profound impact in Taiwan. Tens of thousands turned to Jesus Christ for their salvation and began congregating in simple, New Testament churches, as their Chinese brethren had done in China during the previous two decades. Today, there are more than 200 such local churches in Taiwan with more than 200,000 believers. It is a similar story in the Far East and Australasia, with churches established in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, Korea, New Zealand and Australia.

Witness Lee did not confine his work to Asia. In 1962 he came to North America and began to minister from Los Angeles, where he established Living Stream Ministry, the publisher of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee in English and over fifty other languages. Witness Lee's speaking and writing continued to emphasize "Christ as life" and God's desire to "build His church" on the basis of the oneness of God's people, rather than on any ethnic or cultural differences. This was the same message that he had learned from his spiritual mentor, Watchman Nee. Since the early 1960s the

spread of the local churches under Lee's ministry throughout North and South America, Europe, and Africa has been remarkable. There are more than 4,000 churches and 400,000 believers meeting on every inhabited continent, including 200 churches and several thousand believers in Russia and the Russian-speaking world.

Inside mainland China the number of "hidden" believers following the ministry of Nee and Lee has continued to grow despite the Chinese government's often extreme measures to suppress and openly persecute them. Historically, members of the churches in China who appreciate the ministry of Nee and Lee have been among the most harshly persecuted. Thousands have been imprisoned, countless beaten, and many even martyred. It is estimated today that there may be two million believers and thousands of local churches in China that draw their spiritual nourishment and supply from the ministry of Nee and Lee.

Recently, reports have reached the West that Christian believers in two provinces have been imprisoned merely for possessing copies of the Recovery Version, a study Bible published by Living Stream Ministry and Taiwan Gospel Book Room, the publishing entity Lee established in Taiwan. Today Watchman Nee is still labeled as a "dangerous counter-revolutionary," and Witness Lee is officially branded as a "cult leader." The writings of both men are banned in China. It is tragic that Watchman Nee died in a Chinese prison farm, totally unaware of how profoundly his life and ministry would impact the entire world. It is a similar tragedy that Witness Lee died in 1997 with such a blatant, gross distortion hanging over his name and his ministry in his homeland.

It is ironic that at a time when China is taking such a prominent role on the world stage in so

many areas of society, it is missing an obvious opportunity to further improve its reputation within the international community. Rather than slander the names of two faithful men of God, China should take national pride that two of its own, neither of whom were political in either their message or their leadership of the flock, have had extraordinary impact far beyond the Chinese-speaking world.

Mr. Speaker, I call upon the Chinese government today to release all those being held simply because of their faith in Christ and to abandon this national campaign to discredit and distort the record of two brave followers of the One who came with the message of salvation, forgiveness and peace, and instead, to celebrate with us the contributions of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee to believers the world over.