U.S. Faces Long Debate on Birth Control Funds

LEWIS NEARY

(The issue of birth control and public policy is a burning question throughout the nation. In an effort to determine the dimensions of the problem, NCWC News Service sought information from sources in the 50 state capitals and Washington, D.C. Facts thus obtained are presented here in the last of three articles.)

By RUSSELL SHAW
(N.C.W.C. News Service)

What lies ahead for the nation on the controversial issue of birth control, and public policy?

Precise answers are impossible. But a nationwide NCWC News Service survey points to this conclusion, at least: that the problem is going to assume even greater prominence in the months and years ahead.

MANY FACTORS influence this judgment, but two appear to have commanding weight: on the domestic front, the problem of public welfare, and on the international scene, the problem of overpopulation.

It was the welfare problem that motivated Arnold Maremont, former chairman of the Illinois Public Aid Commission, in his illustrated battle a year ago for a wide-ranging IPAC program of birth control services to public aid recipients.

In pushing his plan, Maremont cited figures showing that over a six-month period 78% of the babies born at Cook County (Chicago) Hospital to mothers receiving public aid-dependent children funds were illegitimate.

The link between illegitimacy and soaring welfare costs was plain. Illinois welfare rolls had risen from $238 million in 1954-57 to $623 million in 1962-63, Maremont claimed, that over 17 years his plan would save the state $47 million in welfare payments for the births — or non-births — of one year alone.

The problem, together with the suggestion that tax-paid birth control is its solution, is scarcely exclusive with Illinois. During the last session of the West Virginia legislature, a bill was introduced providing for sterilization of all indigent persons living on welfare; it died in committee. In Delaware, a state senator suggested at welfare budget hearings that the state might cut off aid to unwed mothers with more than two children who refused to undergo sterilization; the proposal was not taken up.

IN NEW YORK, the State Board of Social Welfare, acting on instructions from the legislature's Joint Welfare Committee, has appointed a subcommittee to look into means of resolving differences on the question of supplying birth control services. The state presently has a program of giving birth control information to welfare recipients upon a doctor's prescription.

The issue has been raised in Ohio, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Iowa — for example in California, South Carolina, North Carolina, Nevada, Colorado and Wisconsin.

These developments have prompted sharp exchanges between advocates and opponents of tax-paid birth control.

In California, State Sen. Alvin Weingand introduced a resolution during the 1963 legislative session providing for distribution of birth control devices through the Department of Health.

The proposal died in committee, but not before it had been criticized by Bishop Alden J. Bell of Sacramento and others. Father William J. Kenneally, C.M., president of St. John's Seminary in Camarillo, Calif., raised one of the fundamental objections to such proposals when he said they invade an area "which is strictly personal and over which the state has no more right to legislate than it does to make laws determining when husband and wife may have relations."

When, last May, plans were announced in Florence County, S.C., for a public program of distributing birth control information and amoviant pills to the indigent "so that unwanted children will not be born into a world that has nothing to offer," Bishop Francis P. Reh of Charleston called this "anti-Christian and negative approach to the medical and family problems of economically depressed people."

THE BATTLE continues elsewhere. Says an observer in a northern industrial state: "The issue of a public birth control program is certainly a topic of continuing conversation among officials responsible for public welfare, as well as some organizations. We anticipate that this will increase because the financial burden on welfare is forcing the individual administrators to grasp at any straw which looks like a means of reducing the financial burden."

From Pennsylvania comes the report of "persistent talk . . . of the need to set up family planning clinics for persons on public assistance."

The executive director of the Des Moines, Iowa, Planned Parenthood center recently laid it on the line in these words:

"Every person in Iowa who is a recipient of any kind of welfare, whether it be medical or financial help, is entitled to receive birth control of their choice if they want it. Just because Roman Catholics think rhythm methods are religiously wrong for Catholics is no reason for them to block the use for a non-Catholic."

PUBLIC OPINION on birth control and public policy is not unanimous, nor is it even altogether polarized between Catholic opposition on the one hand and non-Catholic support on the other.

In some instances Negro spokesmen have criticized proposals for tax-paid birth control programs on the ground that measures to limit Negro births to be "controlled" are in fact Negro births.

And a source in one southern state reports: "The general public believes birth control a fine thing for India but not for the United States, particularly if tax funds are involved."

But the same observer adds: "there is fairly widely-distributed indignation that unwed mothers with several children receive welfare assistance."

Much resentment seems centered on the notion that welfare recipients are somehow living high at public expense. But this explanation ignores the plain fact of misery among the indigent, and fails to explain how high living is possible on a welfare pittance.

Keeping up a drumfire for relaxation of restrictive laws or enactment of public birth control programs are the organized birth control advocates as such groups as Planned Parenthood.

In a southeastern state "the Planned Parenthood League has agitated with increasing vigor for passage of legislation legalizing a tax-paid birth control program." In a neighboring state Planned Parenthood "has kept up a strong public campaign."

Elsewhere, daily newspapers have featured series of articles stressing the dimensions of the welfare problem and the potential contribution to be made by a tax-paid birth control program.

A recent conference held in Warrenton, Va., under sponsorship of the Virginia Academy of Science and George Washington University came up with a recommendation for "wide distribution of methods of birth control, including effective contraceptive devices, to those who request such help, at low or no cost, provided at public health clinics and health centers."

The issue of the federal government's involvement in birth control — through support of research and through the foreign aid program — was discussed in the second article in this series.

Supporters of an activist government policy in this area point to estimates of population growth such as that of the National Academy of Sciences, which foresees a global population of 25 billion by the year 2070.

They insist that large-scale expenditures of government funds for contraceptive purposes are essential to cope with the problem. Catholic spokesmen have stressed Catholic opposition to the use of tax money for artificial birth control. It remains to be seen whether some compromise is possible, limiting government support to basic research and perhaps to some universally acceptable technique of family planning.

In such circumstances, the potential for civic discord along these lines is obvious. One of Illinois birth control plan it was said: "It is a controversial program, which generally speaking has the approval of Protestants and Jews, and the opposition of Catholics." The same pattern of religious diversion can be traced in many other places.

Perhaps this only serves to bear out Father John Courtney Murray's observation that "our pluralist society has received its structure through wars and . . . the wars are still going on beneath a fragile surface of more or less forced urbanity."

If so, it is difficult to disagree with Father Murray's further comment that "perhaps the supreme issue of birth control and public policy has yet to appear. . . ."

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By MOST REV. FULTON J. SHEEN

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Rich people may find it hard to enter heaven. So said the Lord of heaven and earth. Therefore they must make a greater effort than the poor in spirit, who are already like balloons without ballast, all set for flight.

Those who are blessed with the world's goods de leave some of their money to so-called "charity," such as adding another million to an institution that already has millions. However, once in a while, in the constants may well ponder the words Our Lord will say on the Day of Judgment: "I was hungry and you gave Me to eat." He will not say: "I had ten dormitories and you gave Me the eleventh." He will say: "I was thirsty and you gave Me to drink." not: "I had a 20 million-dollar endowment and you made it eight million." He will say: "I was naked and you clothed Me." not: "I had seven million dollars invested in Wall Street, the interest of which helps My missionaries, and you made it eight million." Note that what He considered as done to Himself were those things done when He was destitute and living in the poor. Giving more riches to the wealthy may merit reward, but this is less certain than when giving to those who have nowhere to lay their heads.

When the time comes to make your will, or if you want to take out an annuity because you need the income to live on, here are some points to remember:

1. Leave the money or take out the annuity so that it serves the Impoverished Christ in Asia, Africa and Latin America.
2. Arrange for its distribution to the hungry Christ by leaving it to his Vicar on earth, Pope Paul VI.

Be certain that none of it is invested again, but that it is given immediately to those who need it.

These three conditions are fulfilled by taking out an annuity or making your will in favor of the Holy Father for the propagation of the Faith among the poor of the world. For further details, write to me (including the date of your birth when requesting the pamphlet on annuities). Pray for me and the Missions!

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Reform of Church Begins In Ways of Worship

(The author of the following article, the first of a series on the sweeping liturgical reforms provided for by the ecumenical council, serves as one of the council's official advisers on liturgical matters. A priest of the Detroit archdiocese and a professor of canon law at the Catholic University of America, Washington, he is the immediate past president of the North American Liturgical Conference.)

By FATHER FREDERICK R. McMANUS
(N.C.W.C. News Service)

By common consent, the Second Vatican Council's first document, the reconstitution on worship or liturgy, Pope Paul VI and the world's Catholic bishops made concrete Pope John's goal in summoning the Council — to renew the Church, to bring the Church's ways up to date.

The liturgical constitution will go into effect for the whole Church on the first Sunday of Lent, next Feb. 16; the waiting period is to enable clergy and faithful to become acquainted with the Council's statement. The importance of reading and studying the document in the interval is obvious. In it the Council's motives and plans are made perfectly clear.

This lengthy document — it runs to more than 16,000 words — is the real beginning of reform within the Church. It affects the single occasion when Catholics come together every week, the Sunday morning Mass. It confronts what has been called the "Sunday morning crisis" — congregations that are unprayerful or indifferent, rites that are routine or unintelligible.

Four hundred years to the day after the 1563 closing of the Council of Trent, Pope Paul and the Fathers of the present Council decreed and issued this great constitution. The historical parallel goes deeper.

On Dec. 4, 1563, the bishops of Trent entrusted to the pope the task of revising the official missal — and thus revising the Mass text and rites.

On Dec. 4, 1963, a similar but much broader revision was initiated, this time with careful directives and explanations of the reasons for the renewal.

The constitution spells out clearly the mind of the Church concerning the renewal of her worship. But the practically minded have an immediate question about the constitution's effects.

HOW SOON can we expect the Mass texts to be in English? How soon can we expect the revision of the sacramental rites?

Part of the answer — the time element — involves risky speculation. A better answer is to describe the Council's legislation on the liturgy under four rough headings:

(1) Doctrinal. Each of the seven chapters of the constitution on worship has an important doctrinal introduction. In the first chapter, for example, there is a fundamental section on the nature of public worship and its significance in the Church's whole life. The Council explains that the liturgy continues Christ's priestly action in all the members of the Church. . . how Christ acts in every liturgical celebration. . . that "the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fount from which all her power flows."

The faithful, says the Council, "must be convinced that the preeminent manifestation of the Church consists in the full active participation of all God's holy people in these liturgical celebrations, especially in the same Eucharist, in a single prayer, at one altar, at which there presides the bishop surrounded by his college of priests and by his ministers."

In similar language the sacraments, the daily prayer or office, and the Church year are explained.

All this, amounting in text to perhaps one-third of the document, should become the ordinary teaching of the Church without delay. There is no "waiting period" until it becomes true or goes into effect. Rather it sums up and crystallizes Catholic doctrine on sacred worship; it should be the starting point for priests and teachers in their explanation of the Church as a worshiping community.

(2) Disciplinary. Under this heading come the norms which will be effective on Feb. 16.

They demand the instruction of the people and their full participation in the liturgy now, irrespective of future changes or the introduction of the vernacular languages into worship; they give directions for revised seminary training, so that both studies and spiritual life will center about the mystery of Christ the Lord celebrated in the liturgy, for the training of priests already in the ministry, for the work of diocesan liturgical commissions.

In some cases, the regulations are specific, insisting for example on the restoration of the ordinaries at all Sunday and holyday Masses when the people are present, commending "preaching at Masses on other days," etc.

While the natural tendency is to look ahead to changes and reforms, the task of liturgical education and liturgical participation is immediate, and much of the constitution from the Council deals with such promotion, because "Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy."

(3) Bishops' Authority. Much has been written about the authority of the groups of bishops in the different countries, regions or territories of the world. The liturgy constitution changes the present rule which until now reserved the regulation of public worship rather strictly to the Holy See.

The most important instance of this affects the use of the mother tongues in the liturgy. Such concessions have been made by the council itself, but only on condition that the bodies of bishops acting collectively, take advantage of the concession for their respective territory. Thus these provisions of the constitution go into effect, not on Feb. 16, but when the bishops take action.

So far as the United States is concerned, a preliminary announcement has already been made.

The American bishops agreed before leaving Rome after the Council session, to adopt and accept the constitution's concessions in the matter of language. A general meeting of the U.S. bishops is expected to take place in the spring when formal approval may be given to official English translations of liturgical texts and, it is hoped, a definite date may be set for the vernacular concessions to become effective.

(4) Revision of Rituals. The final category comprises the Council's mandate directed not to the Church at large but to a commission which will be set up by the Pope to revise the missal, breviary, ritual, etc. The Council has decided the principles and the chief points; the implementation must wait until details are worked out.

Here conjecture is almost useless. It is easy to predict the kinds of changes in the rite of Mass or in the sacramental services; these are clearly indicated in the constitution or in the writings of experts.

What is uncertain is the length of time needed: perhaps only weeks or months for broad changes, certainly several years for the complete revision of the service books of the liturgy.

The whole picture of the Council's liturgical renewal may be quickly summed up. Its doctrine on worship should be studied and preached now. Its discipline takes effect on Feb. 16, above all in the active participation of the people. Two aspects of the constitution must await further action: the use of the vernacular depends on the approval to be given by the body of bishops; the ritual reform depends on precise decisions to be made by authority of the Pope.

In quantity and quality the norms of the constitution on liturgical instruction and activity are even more important than the reforms. They are at the root of all efforts to renew the Church's spirit.

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