

The Question of Safety

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The first article in this series (Jan. 26, 1968, Courier-Journal, p. 8) pointed out the legal rights of the unborn. The question of the safety of the operation to produce an abortion is equally important.

The 1968 New York bill, as pre-filed, requires only that the hospital have an operating certificate from New York State. Approval by a National Accrediting Board (which most large reputable hospitals have) is not necessary. The physician performing the abortion need not be a specialist. He is only required to have a license to practice medicine in New York State. The abuses and therefore the resulting medical complications possible under these conditions are enormous.

One of the most respected textbooks used in teaching medical students is Williams "Obstetrics," published in 1966 by N. J. Eastman, M.D. and L. M. Hellman, M.D. Dr. Hellman, who is a specialist in the field of obstetrics and gynecology.

On therapeutic abortions they write: "Vaginal therapeutic abortion is fraught with several hazards, including danger of perforating the uterus, hemorrhage, retention of placental fragments, and infection."

Even in normal, healthy women, the mortality and morbidity rates and the operation are considerable. The likelihood of these complications increases sharply after the twelfth week of pregnancy, and perhaps several weeks earlier in primigravidae (first pregnancies); for this reason the procedure should never be done vaginally when the duration of pregnancy has exceeded that limit. If interruption of more advanced pregnancy is urgent, abdominal hysterectomy (incision of the uterus) are the procedures of choice."

They quote, "In 23,666 therapeutic abortions performed in Denmark, the mortality rate was 0.7 per 1,000 operations, while serious but nonfatal sequelae (complications) ensued in 3.2 per cent. These sequelae included 82 cases of perforation of the uterus and 122 cases of infection."

"In addition, 113 cases of nonfatal but serious complications followed 5,320 abdominal hysterectomies, or 2.1 per cent. According to the eminent Japanese demographer, Yoshi'o Koya, not less than 47 per cent of women in Japan experience post-abortorial complications following induced interruption of pregnancy in this country."

Why should there be so many complications? We must remember that even a diagnostic dilation and curettage (scraping of the lining of the womb) done in a nonpregnant patient has complications. In the average hospital a perforation occurs in about 1 in 500 to 1 in 700 such operations. When you add to this the enlargement and softening of the uterus due to pregnancy, and the increase in its blood supply, the conclusion is inescapable that in opening the neck (or the wall) of a pregnant uterus, and interrupting the circulation of a normally functioning placenta (after-birth), a physician will encounter both hemorrhage and tissue damage.

In a certain percentage of cases the latter will lead to infection. Accidental perforation of the thinned out wall of the uterus can lead to further complications, depending on the amount of bleeding and the extent of damage to other organs such as the urinary bladder and the intestines.

In spite of the above statistics, Dr. Alan F. Guttmacher, President of Planned Parenthood-World Population of New York calls legal abortion "marginally safe."

In testimony before a committee of the New York State Assembly in early 1967, he cited recent reports of 140,000 consecutive legal abortions in Czechoslovakia and 67,000 in Yugoslavia—without a death.

Even if these exceedingly optimistic figures released by countries behind the Iron Curtain could be believed, it is significant that, according to news media, Dr. Guttmacher did not choose to include any complication rates in his testimony.

(In November, 1967, Dr. Christopher Tietze, Associate Director, biomedical division of the "Diplomation Council," presented a report citing figures showing that deaths do indeed occur from legal abortion in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.)

(Commenting on Dr. Guttmacher's testimony, Patrick F. Scanlon, Managing Editor of the Brooklyn, N.Y. Tablet asked, "Wasn't there an innocent victim involved somehow in each of those 207,000 terminations of pregnancy? Or could it be that the Communists have at last come up with an original invention: murder without fatality? Assuming that none of the expectant mothers died, would not the rate of death have stood at 50%?" Mr. Scanlon has made a point which is too often overlooked.



Cardinal Visits His Flock

Baltimore — (RNS) — Lawrence Cardinal Shehan, Archbishop of Baltimore, chats with school children during a visit to St. Anthony of Padua school. The cardinal and his auxiliaries have launched a series of two-day visits to archdiocesan parishes to meet and talk with priests, nuns, parishioners and school children. The visits will continue indefinitely until every parish has been host to the cardinal or a bishop.

Msgr. Higgins Named to Government Board

Washington — D.C. — (NC) — Msgr. George Higgins, director of the Department of Social Action, United States Catholic Conference, is one of three persons named to a government

fact-finding board recently to help end the six-month nationwide copper strike.

Msgr. Higgins, George W. Taylor, industry professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Finance and Commerce, and George Reddy, former White House press secretary, were appointed by Labor Secretary Willard Wirtz and Commerce Secretary Alexander Trowbridge.

Msgr. Higgins is a specialist in labor-management relations. Reddy has worked often on labor disputes for President Lyndon B. Johnson, and Taylor is one of the country's top labor mediators.

The six-month-old strike is being run by a coalition of 26 unions, led by the United Steel workers. The striking unions want a single contract covering all workers at each company. Previously agreements have been made separately for different parts of the processing—fabricating, refining, smelting and mining. The unions hold that this policy allowed the industry

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ACROSS

1. Fish
2. Hammer head part
3. Hubbell, Erskine, Furillo, etc.
4. Brought as by dragging
5. Assumed name
6. Brazilian drink
7. Soft mineral
8. Showy flowers
9. Girl's name
10. Keep
11. War god: Norse
12. Correct
13. Fall
14. Prosecuted judicially
15. Mechanical catch
16. Page
17. Fifty
18. Not difficult
19. Girls' name
20. Cavalry sword
21. Way
22. Lends amid water
23. Metal loops
24. Erase

DOWN

1. Geol. epoch
2. Seed
3. Printing writing: 3 wds.
4. Large worm
5. Aspect
6. Compass point: comp.
7. Other
8. Close to
9. Feline
10. Underworld
11. Scotch alder
12. Help
13. Phone book abbrev. violation
14. Ostrich-like bird
15. Golf term
16. Female deer
17. Way-side hotel
18. Fisher's
19. Feline equipment
20. Fondle
21. "Kapital"
22. Parts as in a play
23. Equal
24. Footless
25. Real
26. Capable
27. Appear
28. Age: abbr.
29. Little girl

Priests Seeking Voice In Selecting Bishops

Courier News Summary

The interest of priests in the selection of bishops becomes evident and more audible in one after another way. The latest high-ranking prelates have signified approval of this trend.

In the Archdiocese of New York, in Green Bay, St. Louis and Tampa and in Montreal, diocesan clergy have asked to be consulted. Nuns and laymen also should voice their opinions, some petitions state.

In two dioceses, Wilmington, Del., and Manchester, N.H., the priests' views have even been solicited by their superiors.

Lawrence Cardinal Shehan of Baltimore, who must recommend candidates for the Wilmington see, asked the 200 diocesan clergy individually for their choices and reasons. Nuns and laymen are free to speak up, a diocesan spokesman said.

Bishop Ernest J. Primeau of Manchester made a similar request in a letter to each of his 285 priests. He asked particularly for candidates who have shown a sensitivity to the spirit of Vatican II, and spoke of the grave responsibility he faces in sending his personal recommendations to Rome.

More than 500 New York priests addressed an appeal directly to Pope Paul VI, asking a part in the selection of a suc-

cessor to Francis Cardinal Spellman, who died in December. A diocesan spokesman said there was no official position for or against this move.

Archbishop John F. Dearden of Detroit, and William E. Cousins of Milwaukee responded sympathetically to a petition from the Priests' Association of Green Bay, Wis. They said that the U.S. bishops had proposed procedural changes that would give the priests a role in selecting candidates. Meanwhile, they said, consultations could proceed informally in the diocese, which has been without a bishop since December.

Twenty-seven priests of the Tampa Bay area signed a letter to the Pope suggesting that "the priests, nuns and respected lay leaders" of the St. Augustine Diocese be consulted about a successor to Archbishop Joseph P. Hurley, who died in October.

A similar request submitted to the American bishops by a St. Louis group was countered by another group's letter supporting the status quo.

The Tampa petition said the priests felt free to ask for "some direct consultation" on the choice of a bishop "because we see this as a growing practice in the American Church, a logical implementation of the principles of renewal from Vatican II."

7,207 Foreign Students In U.S. Catholic Colleges

Washington, D.C. — (NC) — There are 7,207 foreign students currently enrolled in U.S. Catholic colleges, according to a survey made by the Foreign Visitors Office of the United States Catholic Conference.

The number represents 7.18 per cent of the total number of foreign nationals studying at U.S. institutions of higher learning.

The figure shows an increase of 1,218 over last year's report, which noted 5,989 foreign students in Catholic colleges, but is still less than the record 7,882 reported in 1964 in a survey made by the National Catholic Educational Association.

The total 100,282 foreign students in U.S. institutions of higher learning represents more than 25 per cent of the 341,600

students currently enrolled throughout the world in a country other than their own.

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