

Catholic Unit Favors Adoptive Parents Bill

Albany — The state Catholic Committee has taken a strong position in favor of beefing up the protections of the present adoptive law for both adoptive parents and the child.

Under the present law adoption proceedings can take up to a year and a half with the "terrible uncertainty of never being sure," said Charles J. Tobin, committee secretary.

"We are supporting the provisions outlined in the amended bill (A4225B) sponsored by Assemblyman Joseph Pisani (R-New Rochelle) which set reasonable limits to the time in which the natural mother can request retention of her right to rear her own child."

The bill had drawn support from adoptive parents groups and others across the state.

5 Bishops to Consider Statement by NFPC

Tucson, Ariz. — (RNS) — Five Roman Catholic bishops—from New Mexico, Arizona and Texas—have accepted for consideration the statement of the National Federation of Priests' Councils, "Moment of Truth," approved by the national clergy group at its Baltimore meeting recently.

The statement, which includes a request for an immediate end to mandatory celibacy, was presented to the five prelates during a provincial meeting at Picture Rock Retreat House, Tucson, by delegates of the priests' senate from the dioceses represented.

Archbishop James P. Davis of Santa Fe, N.M., leading provincial prelate, was quoted as saying the bishops considered the statement of the NFPC to be "an honest, helpful, constructive statement of the problems which beset priests in the pursuit of their pastoral ministry."

Under the provisions of the bill in private adoptions there is a final, public appearance of the mother, before a judge. This prevents any possibility of coercion against the mother. The bill then provides that the mother may change her mind within 30 days of this, again go before the judge and request her child returned to her care.

In the case of agency adoptions (where the child is placed with an agency rather than directly with adoptive parents) a similar 30-day provision is incorporated. Under this portion of the bill the mother makes her decision and signs a "surrender document" to the adoption agency. She then has 30 days in which to change her mind and request her child returned to her care.

"We like it," Tobin said, "be-

The Southwestern Catholic bishops group became the first episcopal body in the U.S. to accept the NFPC statement for consideration. They indicated the statement will provide valuable input for a Southwest regional meeting of Catholic prelates in Austin, Texas, which will also involve all bishops from Oklahoma and Texas.

Father Frank Bonnike, a Rockford, Ill., priest who is president of the NFPC, was present in Tucson to discuss the federation's statement with the bishops.

Father Bonnike said the bishops accepted the statement "in general" as a working paper for their consideration and for the regional meeting in Texas.

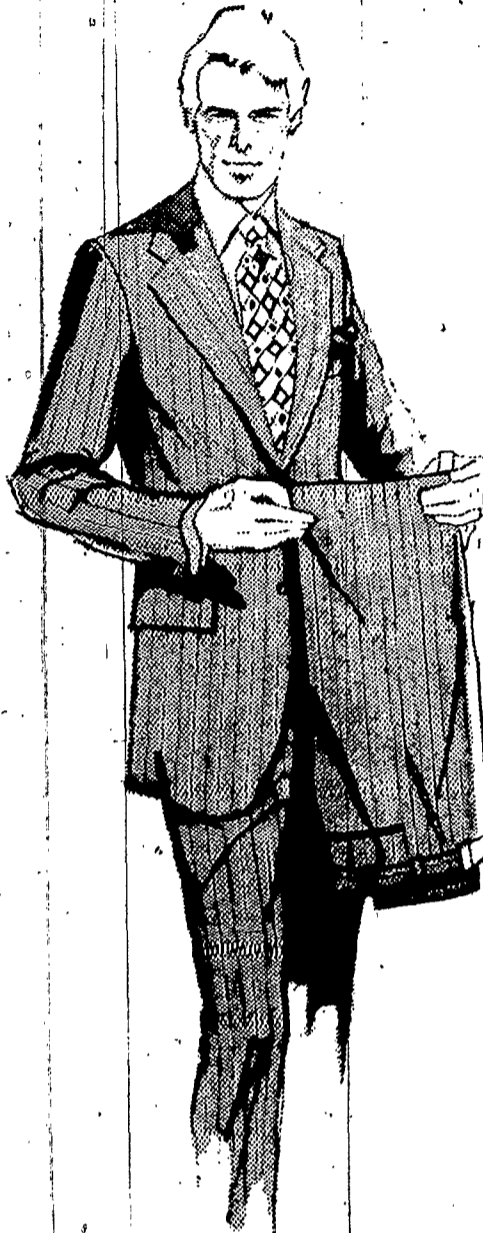
Father Bonnike described the thrust of the NFPC statement as stressing the "priority to priestly commitment," rather than to life styles, which included celibacy.

cause it calls for a final public act of the mother either before a judge (for private placement) or before a representative of an accredited agency (for agency placement). Then there is a 30-day waiting period and after that the surrender is final.

"Thus within 6 weeks to 2 months the legal status of the child can be determined. It would mean for all practical purposes that no child would be in an adoptive home except that he could be kept there without fear.

"Once the adoptive parents cross their threshold with their new child, they would know he would be theirs irrevocably... with all due regard to the law... and the natural mother's rights," Mr. Tobin concluded.

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