

# Capitol Letters

Two urgent concerns:

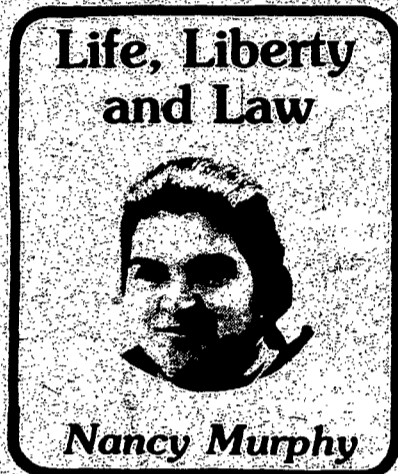
The Joint Conference Committee has passed the Labor and HEW Appropriations Bill without the Bartlett Amendment. This amendment would have prohibited the use of tax money for payment of abortions except to save the mother's life. Senator Bartlett will continue to work for his amendment, but he needs additional help. We must let our own senators and congressman know our feelings.

Congressmen and senators admit that mail runs heavily against vice-presidential nominee Nelson Rockefeller on many grounds. If you do not want Rockefeller a heartbeat away from the presidency, please continue to let President Gerald Ford, your senators and congressman know your opposition.

We are grateful to you for taking precious time from your busy holiday schedules to express your opinions on both issues. We urge you to persist.

President Gerald Ford, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20510. Senators James Buckley and Jacob Javits, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510. Area Congressmen: The Honorable Frank Horton [34th District], Barber Conable [35th], James F. Hastings [39th], William Walsh [33rd], Howard Robison [37th] U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515.

(Compiled by Jeanne D. Sweeney, American Citizens Concerned for Life)



[The first in a four part series]

If we were to judge him by today's plastic standards of physical beauty it would be difficult to imagine a homelier man. A head broad at the forehead, wide set eyes wide open have prominent cheekbones, a flattened nose and narrow chin. His hair, heavy and close, fit him like a built-in night cap. The hint of a mustache, mouth turned down, it is not in the least surprising that this man remained a bachelor until into his fourth decade.

He was an American slave, a noncitizen whose entire name apparently for over half his life was one word, Sam. A Black of African descent, not recognized as a legal human, and unwanted in a white Anglo-Saxon political/social order, his entire functional adult life was controlled by doctors, attorneys and jurists. And somewhere along the line someone with an ear for phonetics dubbed him Dred Scott.

I am certain that the majority of Americans is familiar with the radiments of the shameful Supreme Court decision which bears his name. And I am just as certain that those same Americans are totally unaware of the numerous parallels between the circumstances surrounding that decision and the circumstances surrounding the equally shameful Roe vs. Wade Abortion decision of the Supreme Court one hundred and sixteen years later. The similarities are too involved and too frightening for simple enumeration; they are too numerous and too important to be contained in a single column. Therefore I propose to pursue in this and subsequent columns the fascinating parallels between a nation deeply divided by the slavery controversy in the mid nineteenth century, and that same nation a few generations later in the twentieth century, torn again by powerful forces which would arbitrarily destroy entire classes or groups of existing human life for convenience and profit and an elusive thing called life style.

Slave births were not always recorded with accuracy, but it seems that Dred Scott was born around the turn of the nineteenth century. Some reports place the date at 1790 others as late as 1810, but as he was not a legal

human citizen at birth, much less before birth, it made little difference to the authorities. Slaves existed for the convenience of those who wanted and could afford to own them, although of course in the view of the pro-slavery forces, slavery existed for the benefit of the Blacks. Apparently a shiftless sort, ignorant, unreliable and illiterate, Dred Scott had little comprehension of the significance of his own existence. In all probability he never understood the flows and restraints of the game in which, though he was the central figure, he never achieved a level above that of a manipulated pawn. Surely he did not foresee the tangled complexities, the inevitable philosophical conflicts and the eventual violent and bloody war between the states precipitated by the Supreme Court decision of 1857, the Dred Scott decision.

He could not then know, nor could those who fought the battle on higher intellectual plains realize the extremes to which a wounded nation would stumble in her frantic efforts to justify the life and death control of a whole class of innocent human beings. Even after the passage of two Constitutional Amendments to nullify the Dred Scott decision — the thirteenth amendment, 1865 freed the slaves, and the fourteenth in 1868 made the Blacks American citizens — even then we continued to hate, control and crucify the Blacks.

Suffice it to say that Dred Scott was born in the slave state of Virginia and was the property of Captain Peter Blow. In 1827, the same year it was decided in some federal courts that "color is prima facie evidence of slavery," thereby automatically denying certain human rights to Blacks, Captain Blow moved his family and slaves north to Missouri, which had been admitted to the Union as a slave state, under the Missouri Compromise seven years before. Sold in 1833 to Dr. John Emerson, an assistant surgeon in the U.S. Army, Scott was moved to the free state of Illinois.

Thus by the simple act of crossing the Missouri River west to east like a storm front, an "ordinary piece of merchandise" became a free human being some forty years after his birth. But "free human being" was a relative term in the pluralistic society of nineteenth century America, and after his brief stays in Illinois and later in the free Territory of Northern Louisiana, Dred Scott and his wife Harriet were taken back to the slave state of Missouri.

It was while enroute to St. Louis in 1838 that Harriet gave birth to her first child. Eliza was born aboard the Mississippi River steamboat Gypsy while yet in the free waters of the north. And it was there in Missouri eight years later that Dred Scott was to make the inked mark on his historic Petition for Freedom.

And the die was cast.

## Adoptive Parents Sought by Agency

The New York State Board of Social Welfare is trying to find parents for "several thousand" orphans. The children are either handicapped or beyond the early childhood ages that apparently appeal most to adoptive parents.

"Have a child. It's as beautiful as having a baby," the agency's advertising poster says. "There aren't many rules any more. You just have to be stable, at least 21, and have a steady income."

An information brochure can be obtained by writing to Adoption, Albany, N.Y. 12223.

## Protestants In Pro-Life Move Noted

Arlington, Va. [RNS] — "Anti-Catholicism is the anti-Semitism of the secular liberals who blame the pro-life movement on Roman Catholics," Nick Thimmesch told a "Respect Life" benefit dinner here.

Thimmesch is a syndicated columnist for the Los Angeles Times. He said the charge is unfounded that only Catholics are supporting the pro-life movement, pointing out that seven of nine U.S. senators who co-sponsored Sen. James L. Buckley's pro-life amendment are Protestant.

"Protestants have a right to feel resentment at any characterization of the pro-life movement as a papal plot," he said.

## Practice Faith, Pontiff Exhorts

Vatican City [RNS] — Pope Paul has exhorted Catholics to be "credible" to the world by practicing what they believe and say, by living, consistently, in accord with their professed faith.

To make his point in an address at his mid-weekly general audience, the Pope quoted the words of Mahatma Gandhi: "I like Christ. I dislike Christians because they are so unlike Christ."

"Public opinion wants us to be consistent in word and conduct," said the pontiff. "Are we? It wants us to be honest and unselfish. Are we? It wants us to be simple and sincere. Are we?"

Religious conviction and sentiment "isolated" from observance of the moral law is neither acceptable to God nor credible to our neighbor, the Pope continued.

"Love of God must not be divorced from love of neighbor, especially of the poor, the humble, the suffering — in a word, the man, woman, and child in need of bread and love."

### ADVENT SERVICE

The Fourth Annual Service of Advent Lessons and Carols will be presented at Christ Church Cathedral, East Avenue at Broadway at 4 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 8. The choirs of the Lutheran Church of the Reformation and the Cathedral will sing, and clergy from several denominations will do the readings. An offering will be taken during the service, and a reception will follow in the Guild Room, hosted by the Servetus Club of the Cathedral. Everyone will be welcome.

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## Vatican Deplores France Abortion

Vatican City [RNS] — Vatican Radio has deplored the French National Assembly's approval of an abortion bill as "a new defeat" for the cause of "the defense of human life."

The Assembly, by a vote of 284 to 189 on Nov. 29, gave its backing to a government-sponsored measure legalizing abortion during the first 10 weeks of pregnancy.

Barring unforeseen circumstances, the bill will become law by early December after completion of the formal legislative process.

Proponents of the hotly-contested measure argued that it took account of reality, pointing out that surveys indicated that some 300,000 Frenchwomen have illegal abortions every year.

Vatican Radio, in an editorial comment, said it recognized "the difficulties which the bill claims to obviate."

"But," it remarked, "one can only be deeply saddened by this new defeat which the sacrosanct cause of the defense of human life has suffered. There is no greater injury to a people than to give in on fundamental principles such as respect for man in every stage of his life, be it at nine weeks or ninety years."

Following announcement of the vote in the Assembly, the Grand Rabbi of France, Jacob Kaplan, issued a declaration stating that abortion is a crime under Judaic law.

The French Federation of Protestants has approved the bill on humanistic but not theological grounds.

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