

Church And Politics



Sister Frances

"Senior Citizens Air Woes"

"Local Seniors Protest Plan to Scrap Office for Aging"

"Old Power Movement Flexes Muscle"

Headlines such as these have been occurring more and more frequently in our papers over the past few years. Our contemporary way of life — while a blessing in many ways — has created some new and unexpected hardships for the elderly. These budding problems have forced the elderly to come together as a special interest group vying to be heard along with others in the day to day struggles of our nation. More often than not, this struggle brings the elderly into the political arena where many important decisions affecting them are made.

The most recent and pointed example of this is the President's request that Social Security increases be limited to 5 per cent a year. With inflation running around 15 per cent this puts an

obvious burden on those already struggling just to make ends meet. The proposed tax on oil compounds the problem even more in that heating costs are expected to rise somewhere in the vicinity of 20 per cent as a result of this tax. Some may argue that the Social Security system is already costing us too much and that cuts have to be made. It is hard to justify, however, laying this burden on our senior citizens, many of whom are living on fixed incomes and are being squeezed by the relentless crush of rising prices for food, housing, and other basic necessities. It seems more fair that these monies should come from sources other than the wage earner alone. The present system depends on a regressive payroll tax that falls most heavily on low and moderate income workers. This inequity could be corrected in two ways: by a higher wage base coupled with a lower tax rate, and by supplements from general tax revenues.

The first suggestion is already being considered in the form of a bill sponsored by Rep. James Burke (D-Mass.). In it he calls for a FICA withholding rate of 3.9 per cent (compared to the present 5.85 per cent) up to \$25 thousand. This would spread the burden more equitably and would put some \$20 billion back into the hands of workers with incomes below. Any deficit could easily be made up from general revenues by closing a few of the tax loopholes enjoyed by corporations and wealthy Americans.

Political decisions affecting the lives of the elderly also happen closer to home. Housing, mobility, and health care are very much affected by state and local government. Rent controls, the cost and availability of mass transit, and the level of health care are just some of these "closer to home" considerations. Revenue sharing monies are perhaps the most pointed example of how local governments are often unconcerned about the lives of the elderly. One of the priority uses of this money was to be for programs for the "poor and aged" (from the Revenue Sharing Guidelines). Check and see how much, if any, of your county's money was spent for these purposes. Was any of it used to help fill the vacuum created by the SSI program when many emergency services previously provided for the aged were cut out? Was there any creative attempt to use this money to help the elderly meet some of their needs?

The elderly, themselves, have already begun to become more politically aware; it remains for all of us to become more sensitive to these critical choices and demand that government make it possible for senior citizens to live in dignity and comfort.

CWU ASSEMBLY SET FOR FEB. 7

Children in-Need of Help is the topic for the 15th annual legislative assembly of Church Women United, scheduled for Friday morning, Feb. 7, at Asbury United Methodist Church, 1050 East Ave. The Rochester Community Players will dramatize the subject of child abuse in a play entitled "The Inner Tiger." Family Court Judge Elizabeth Pine and two social service workers, Helen Kristal and Gloria Golisano, will lead discussions. The meeting will begin at 9:30 a.m. and run through lunch time. Nursery care is offered and beverages will be provided. The fee is \$1.

"It is not recognition by another that constitutes this right (to life). This right is antecedent to its recognition; it demands recognition and it is strictly unjust to refuse it."

"The right to life remains complete in an old person, even one greatly weakened; it is not lost by one who is incurably ill. The right to life is no less to be respected in the small infant just born than in the mature person. In reality, respect for human life is called for from the time the process of generation begins; from the time the ovum is fertilized a life is begun which is neither that of the father nor the mother. It is rather the life of a new human being with his own growth. It could never be made human if it were not human already."

There are "considerable cases (when) denying an abortion endangers important values to which it is normal to attach great value, and which may sometimes even seem to have priority. We do not deny these very great difficulties. It may be a serious question of health, sometimes of life or death of the mother; it may be the burden represented by an additional child especially if there are good reasons to fear that the child will be abnormal or retarded; it may be (social) honor or dishonor, a loss of social standing and so forth. We proclaim only that none of these reasons can ever objectively confer the right to dispose of another's life."

"The movement for the emancipation of women, in so far as it seeks essentially to free them from all unjust discrimination, is on perfectly sound ground. But one cannot change nature. Nor can one exempt women, any more than men, from what nature demands of them."

Yes, I pity the advanced intellectuals who have missed reading this document. For it refers to them now and then. The argument of pluralism is used. Why force people to follow an opinion which is not theirs, especially in a country where they are the majority? It is true that it is not the task of the law to choose between points of view or to impose one rather than another. But the life of a child takes precedence over all opinions. One cannot invoke the freedom of thought to destroy this life."

There is more, much more, but my space is limited. Thank God my support isn't. But being in the minority of Catholics isn't too uncomfortable. After all, look who's in my corner.

OAR Names Head

Auburn — Sally King, West Lake Road, Auburn was elected chairperson of the state wide steering committee of the OAR (Offender Aid Restoration) program at a meeting of representatives in Syracuse in January.

Mrs. King, a member of the Sacred Heart Human Development Committee, became interested in the area of criminal justice and rehabilitation during the diocesan human development training program at Sacred Heart which explored the needs of the offender locally as one of its research target areas.

The primary objectives of the state committee are to help formation of OAR chapters throughout the state, with the exception of New York City which has its own organization. The state office will help with fund raising efforts for local chapters, provide consultation, handle paper work, increase communication between chapters, and mount publicity efforts.

OAR is composed of volunteers from the community who visit inmates. On an inmate's release, the OAR volunteer also provides support during the period of readjustment to community life.

Life, Liberty and Law



Nancy Murphy

It seems that about 70 per cent of the Catholics in America are willing to support abortion on demand even though they claim to be against it personally. At any rate that's what Time magazine tells us. Not exactly surprising news. It's precisely the same response the majority of northerners gave to slavery a century ago. Too bad, though, in a way.

It's a fair bet that these reformed Catholics will view euthanasia and genetic engineering in a similar light, and I'll wager too that they embrace the "prevention of birth defects," UNICEF, gay lib, ERA, sterilization of the poor for the poor, situation ethics, the non-dangers of marijuana (25 million Americans have tried it), and state-regulated values such as HEW family planning. The Madison Avenue mentality reaps its benefits. It's cheaper economically and spiritually to destroy useless lives than to aid, support or listen to them.

Too bad, because I wonder how few of our advanced intellectuals have read the Declaration on Procured Abortion issued last Nov. 18 in Rome, and how many missed the excitement of studying that publication. Unfortunately, the circulation is somewhat less than that of Time magazine. The declaration is short (in paperback form it would be fewer than ten pages; in a tabloid-sized newspaper with photos, fewer than three). It's cogent. It's ecumenical. It traces the holy fight against man's arbitrary destruction of man from the days of the Didache, which explicitly denounces abortion by name, through centuries of Christian scholars and documents to the present.

Let me share it with you in part.

"A century after (the rejection of abortion by the Renaissance Pope Sixtus V) Innocent XI rejected the propositions of certain lax canonists who sought to excuse an abortion procured before the moment accepted by some as the moment of spiritual animation of the new being."

Further, it belongs to the (civil) law to specify and organize external behaviour. There is precisely a certain number of rights which society is not in a position to grant, since these rights precede society, but society has the function to preserve and to enforce them. These are the greater part of those which are today called 'human rights' and which our age boasts of having formulated."

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