

Abortion Looms as Major Political Issue

By RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE

The abortion issue in the U.S. has begun to loom on the political horizon, and if the early state caucuses and primary campaigns are an indication, abortion could be a substantial issue in the 1976 Presidential race.

A News Analysis

So-called "right to life" groups around the country have pledged to besiege every Presidential hopeful with questions on abortion and, surprisingly, a Long Island, N.Y., housewife has emerged as an anti-abortion candidate for President on the Democratic ticket. She is on the primary ballot in 15 states.

Although every Presidential candidate, of both major parties, has gone on record as personally opposing abortion, that is where the similarity ends. And concerning the major aim of anti-abortion advocates — a constitutional amendment to overturn the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court rulings liberalizing abortion — there are varying shades of support and opposition.

Described as the "sleeping issue" of the campaign by Newsweek, abortion has already become a factor in the Iowa Presidential caucuses in late January and in the New Hampshire primary.

Former Georgia governor Jimmy Carter's victory in Iowa was largely attributed to his strong, although ambiguous, anti-abortion stance.

State "right to life" groups in various parts of the country, such as Massachusetts and Georgia, are sending out thousands of newsletters detailing each candidate's position on the abortion question.

Thus far, only two major Presidential aspirants, former California governor Ronald Reagan for the Republicans and Alabama Gov. George Wallace for the Democrats, have endorsed a constitutional amendment outlawing abortion except to save the life of the mother.

Mrs. Ellen McCormack, the wife of a New York City deputy police inspector, is running for the Democratic nomination strictly on a "pro-life, anti-abortion platform." Her campaign, which pointedly seeks a constitutional amendment to protect the unborn, has aroused strong criticism by feminist groups and others who have accused her of being a "tool" of the U.S. Catholic bishops, who are in the forefront of the anti-abortion movement.

The significance of the abortion question was accentuated by the fact that President Ford, prior to his direct involvement in the New Hampshire primary campaign, saw fit to publicly clarify his position on the issue.

While Ford attempted to steer a middle course on abortion — calling for a "states' rights" amendment and declaring that the Supreme Court "went too far" in its 1973 rulings — he received a generally negative reaction.

Among those on the anti-abortion side who reacted was Archbishop Joseph L. Bernardin of Cincinnati, president of the U.S. Catholic bishops' conference, who said the President's comments were "inconsistent and disappointing" and contradicted an earlier position which the archbishop said indicated stronger support for anti-abortion legislation.

On the other hand, the National Women's Political Caucus, which has backed the 1973 Supreme Court rulings, said it was "extremely dismayed" by the President's statement on abortion and described it as "extremely regressive." Sarah Waddington, one of the lawyers who successfully argued the abortion case before the Supreme Court, said Ford had taken a step backward and would revive a situation of abortion abuses.

Much of the current intensive campaigning by anti-abortion advocates can be traced to a November statement by the American Catholic bishops at their annual meeting in Washington, D.C.

During the meeting the bishops released a wide-ranging Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities which urged Catholics and others to become involved in the anti-abortion effort in various ways, including political action, and to work for the restoration of constitutional protection for the unborn.

In a Feb. 15 statement on "political responsibility," the Catholic bishops denied that they sought to form a "religious voting bloc" or instruct persons on how they should vote by endorsing candidates. They also pointed out that the issues on which they have taken a position, including abortion, "are not the concern of Catholics alone" and said that, in every case, "we have joined with others to advocate these concerns."

With respect to the Presidential campaign, the abortion issue is proving to be a volatile one, and "right to life" advocates, whatever their religious persuasion, are becoming increasingly outspoken in their exchanges with candidates.

Carter, who once said he favored a "national statute" restricting abortion, apparently led some Iowa Democrats to believe he favored a human life amendment, which he does not.

Sen. Jackson and Sen. Byrd, both critical of the Supreme Court's rulings and — like President Ford — favoring a states' rights ap-

proach, are opposed to a constitutional amendment.

Two other prominent Democrats, Sen. Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts and Sen. Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota — who are receiving the widest attention in political polls — are not "announced" candidates for the Presidency. Both are on record as being personally opposed to abortion, but neither has endorsed a human life amendment.

Concurrently, the abortion issue is seeping into the Congressional and Senatorial campaigns. Recently, Rep. James L. Oberstar (D-Minn.), a leading pro-life advocate, urged supporters of a human life amendment to elect legislators who will campaign for the amendment in Congress.

"You send us the votes in Washington and we'll pass that constitutional amendment," he told some 500 participants in a fund-raising dinner in Philadelphia, sponsored by Pennsylvanians for Human Life and American Citizens Concerned for Life.

A variety of groups have launched campaigns opposing efforts to secure legislative or constitutional changes in the current status of abortion. These include the National Organization of Women (NOW), the Planned Parenthood Federation, and the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, which involves 23 religious and humanist organizations, including Catholics For a Free Choice.

The women's organization said it would seek to expose "gross violations" of the church-state separation clause of the Constitution in the Catholic bishops' campaign against abortion. NOW claimed Mrs. McCormack is running solely to obtain federal funds to be used for showing anti-abortion commercials on television nationally.

The religious coalition is seeking to raise some \$300,000 to counteract what it labels as a Catholic-led drive to change U.S. abortion laws. It has charged that the Catholic bishops, in particular, are attempting to impose their religious views on everyone.

Although "right-to-life" advocates have gotten the jump on those who support freedom of choice in abortion, the political campaign is just getting started. And the majority of Presidential aspirants — who see abortion as an unexpected and dangerous obstacle — will not oppose efforts to make the issue disappear.

At the same time, the abortion question is not likely to go away, given the already evident enthusiasm and zeal of anti-abortion advocates. And before the primary campaigns wind to a halt this summer, the abortion dilemma may have played a much more significant role than was ever expected.

Family Rosary for Peace ... No. 9,504 and Counting

The Family Rosary for Peace, a nightly radio program originating in the Parish Center Chapel of St. Francis of Assisi Church, Rochester, celebrated its 26th anniversary on Thursday, March 4.

The half-hour program of prayers

and news, 7-7:30, has been on the air every weeknight since March 4, 1950 and its anniversary broadcast was the 9504th consecutive broadcast. On most nights, the recitation of the Rosary is followed by a newscast of religious news bulletins but on Friday evening, the Rosary is preceded by Mass. This is

a very popular feature, especially with the sick and shut-ins.

Beginning with one station, WSAY in Rochester, the program is now carried by a network of stations. In addition to WSAY, it is carried live nightly by WRLX, Auburn; WCLH-FM, Corning, and WNIA, serving Buffalo and the Niagara Frontier. In addition, a number of cable television companies carry it on their systems. The area covered by the network reaches from Buffalo to Syracuse, and from Lake Ontario into Pennsylvania.

The potential audience numbers over three million people. Msgr. Joseph A. Cirincione, director of the program, says there is no way of determining the actual audience. A daily influx of mail, however, seems to indicate it is considerable.

The program began while Bishop James E. Kearney was bishop of Rochester. It has carried on under his successors, Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen and Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, who gives a monthly talk from his residence over the network.

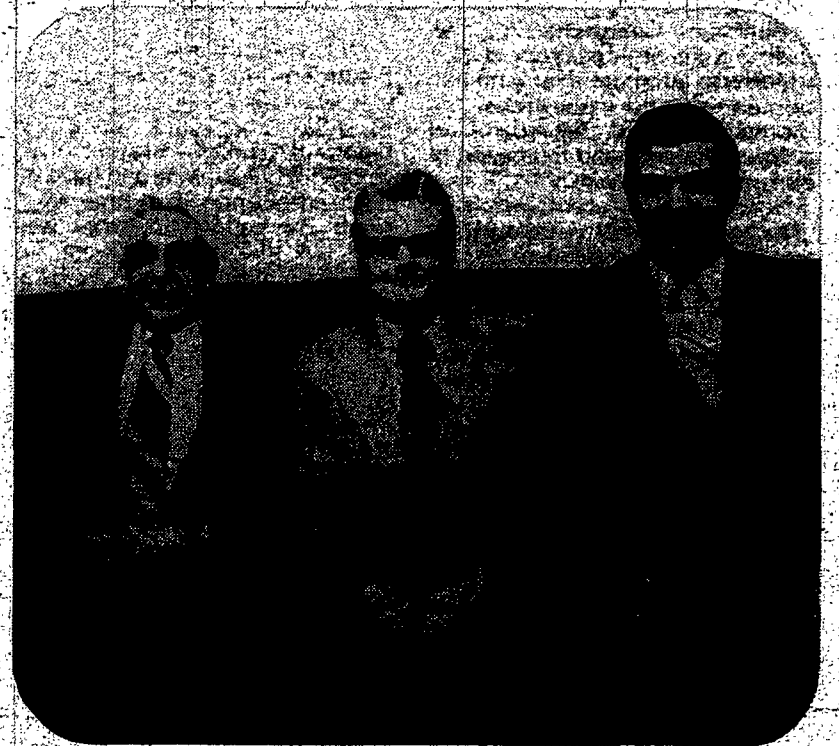
Committee Named For St. Anthony Day

Richard Conley was named chairman of the 64th annual St. Anthony Day Celebration scheduled Saturday, June 12, in a joint effort with the bicentennial celebration.

The following officers also were elected: vice-chairmen, Charles Angelone, Michael DePalma Sr., parade marshal and fund drive chairman, Lou Christopher, corresponding secretary, Nick Montulli, treasurer, Joseph Tribotte,

publicity and recording secretary, Scott Vittore.

The celebration will open with religious ceremonies at Holy Cross Church, 4492 Lake Ave., at 11 a.m. The annual parade will start at 6:45 p.m. from Charlotte High School area to Ontario Beach Park. The program will conclude with a huge fireworks display fired over Ontario Beach Park at 9:45 p.m. More than 20,000 persons viewed the event last year. Rain date for parade and fireworks will be on Sunday, June 13.



Holy Name Society

The Postal Service Holy Name Society will hold its annual Mass at Our Lady of Victory Church, followed by breakfast at the Top of the Plaza, Sunday, April 4. Bishop Dennis W. Hickey will be the featured speaker. Pictured are Anthony Porcelli (left) the new president; William Finn, postmaster, and Anthony Povich, outgoing president.