

Forum

Churches Thumb Down Draft

By Beth Spring
Religion Today

Washington — Just as arch-rivals Bella Abzug and Phyllis Schlafly are finding themselves in agreement against President Carter's proposed registration of women for possible military conscription, firm opposition is evident among a wide spectrum of religious bodies as well.

Numerous church organizations have expressed opposition to registration and conscription for men, too.

A sampling of opinion from various sectors:

•The 46 Roman Catholic bishops of the U.S. Catholic Conference's Administrative Board oppose "any rein-

stitution of military conscription except in the case of a national defense emergency."

While expressing "no objection in principle" to the registration of men, the board did specifically oppose the registration and conscription of women.

The statement reaffirmed the Catholic view of conscientious objection as "a valid moral position" and also urged that the position of selective conscientious objector (based on just versus unjust wars) be accorded "secure legal status." Under current law, selective objectors are not exempt from military service.

•Orthodox Jewish

spokesmen believe "the forced conscription of women would constitute for many segments of our society a fundamental and profound upheaval..."

In a letter published in The New York Times, the presidents of the Rabbinical Council of America and the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America also explained that "the Jewish religion has always been concerned to protect the woman's role in the family."

"To enforce military participation of Jewish women would create an unprecedented predicament, namely, a clash between the tenets of one's faith and the law of the land."

•The United Methodist

Church is maintaining its traditional opposition to a peacetime draft, and in addition, a national agency of the church has petitioned the denomination to send four messengers to President Carter urging him not to go through with draft registration.

The petition said the message should criticize Carter's announcement, saying it "has already increased the war hysteria in our own nation and generated greater tension among the Middle East nations."

The proposed message would conclude by saying "we pray that God will give you wisdom and courage to take the necessary action for peace on Earth — now."

Supreme Court Needs Review

Several times in recent months, this column has commented on the actions, procedures and character of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Now, without being an alarmist, I would like to suggest the possibility that a series of developments raises the possibility, not the inevitability of a real constitutional review of the functions of the nation's highest court.

The root of the problem is not a single decision, but a convergence of changes which are altering the nation's perception of the role which the court exercises in government.

These developments can be summarized under three headings.

•The complexity of social policies decided by the court and the direct impact of these rulings on many individuals focuses public attention on its role in actually creating law.

•A more highly educated citizenry and an increasingly pervasive news network provide greater awareness of and sensitivity to the actions of the court. The impact of the book, "The Brethren,"

makes it likely that the actions of the Justices will no longer enjoy the privacy of the past.

•The number of "single issue" crusades has given rise to blocs of fiercely dedicated people who are unwilling simply to accept rulings which conflict with deeply held convictions.

On this third point, pro-life advocates are a prominent example, but there are many others: "feminists" and "anti-feminists," minorities and civil rights groups, tax-reformers, businessmen frustrated with government regulations, and many others.

Traditionally, our system of government has depended on the acceptance of existing law by the vast majority of American citizens. Most people voluntarily pay most of their taxes. If a massive refusal took place, there wouldn't be much the government could do about it. Italy has lived with such a situation for a long time.

And most of us looked on the Supreme Court with the simplistic view of a grade school civics class. It was the

institution, protected from obvious political pressure, which simply tested laws and conflicts to see that the provisions of the Constitution prevailed.

For a long time that view has not been realistic. Court decisions have established much new law which has little relationship to the mandates of the Constitution.

Probably this is inevitable. A number of Justices have spoken and written candidly about their reliance on personal convictions, as well as legal precedents, in formulating their opinions.

Only now, however, is the public becoming more aware of this reality. And that's where the problem lies.

It's one thing to have "non-political" Justices interpreting the Constitution which we accept as fundamental to our nation. It's something else when the public realizes that this small group of men appointed, serving for life, making decisions subject to no political review, are making new law — which is the function of federal and state legislatures.

These legislatures are subject to voter review; the Justices are not.

There seems to be something basically wrong with this kind of law-making. And more and more Americans are becoming convinced that there's something wrong with it.

The recent ruling ordering the federal government to pay for all medically necessary abortions is the kind that could provoke a crisis.

Suppose that a massive group of pro-life citizens refused to pay taxes because they would be participating, to some extent, in the destruction of innocent human life?

What would government do about it? Send them all to jail? This kind of law-making requires the citizen participation of the legislative process. If the laws are not sensitive to such convictions, the system can break down.

Eventually we're going to encounter an issue which will force us to review the functions and procedures of the Supreme Court.

Fr. John Reedy



Looking for the Lord

Looking Back . . .

From the pages of the Courier-Journal.

It is remarkable how much non-churchy news was included in editions of 75 years ago. For instance, in the second edition of March in 1905 appeared a story which said: "A series of experiments, conducted by Dr. Philip B. Hawk, demonstrator of physiological chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania, has proved that swimming is the most beneficial exercise. He visited the dressing rooms at the athletic field, and immediately before each athlete left for his exercise, drew blood from him by means of the regularly prepared sterile needle. Then when the athlete returned to the dressing room, after running, jumping, pole-vaulting or engaging in water polo, the needle would again come into play, and a second sample of blood drawn. Analysis of the blood, to discover how far each exercise increased the number of red corpuscles, showed that water polo and other forms of swimming, resulted in the largest increase. The swimming exercises were thus shown to be the most beneficial." This news came from a publication called "World's Work."

In the same edition, under the headline "Pencilings," was this bit of humor: "A woman does a lot of things while a man is figuring out how they should be done."

And, dear reader, if you blush easily, perhaps you should eschew words from an advertisement, 1905 style. "This is the day of the natural waisted woman. The W.B. Erect Form has changed the American figure. It has supplanted discomfort with ease — it has banished the impossible and exaggerated figure produced by the old corset idea. It removes the strain of lacing from the sensitive parts of the body and throws all pressure upon the hips and the strong back muscles, supporting the stomach within the corset and not forcing it below the garment . . . Price range from \$1."

In the year 1980, we'd have trouble accepting such an ad in the Catholic newspaper.

50 years ago this week — "First Anniversary of the Consecration of Bishop O'Hern" was the headline. And under that, the subheads "Falls on March 19, St. Joseph's Feast and Will Be Observed in Fitting Manner in St. Patrick's Cathedral." And still the further subhead "All Priests and Sisters in Diocese Invited to Attend Pontifical Mass." And in the story, as if one were needed after all those headlines, it was mentioned that "the Rev. Charles F. Shay, rector of the Cathedral, had invited all priests and sisters . . . He has received hundreds of favorable responses." We bet he did.

The main headline of that edition was "Unjust Conditions in the North of Ireland Cause Action by Church Officials." The next headline further explained: "Proposed Change in Law Would Permit Protestant Religious Instruction in The Public Schools While Denying It To Catholics — Called An Outrage On Justice and Decency."

Locally, it was written, "Warm Approval Given Almshouse By New Society." The society was the St. Francis Charitable Society and it approved a Board of Supervisors providing for a new almshouse and other matters. "Rev. Francis Burns, professor at St. Bernard's Seminary, read a paper explaining the principal features of the old-age pension bill and widows pension amendment" and the society voted its approval.

Under a New York dateline was the story, "The American priest ousted from the Soviet Union said on return here that 'God certainly is not dead in Russia.'" Father George Bissonette, 38-year-old Assumptionist, on arriving at Idlewild Airport, said that it was difficult to answer questions about religion in Russia because his contacts there were limited. . . . No reason was given for his ouster."

Those were the days of the Cold War 25 years ago and inside stories included "U.S. Priest Jailed by Chinese Reds Writes Mother He Is 'Well Enough.'" The priest was Father Justin Garvey, CP. Another story: "Tito Regime Returns Bishop to Prison." The bishop was Peter Cule of Mostar.

And then . . . a photo of Vietnamese in a refugee camp over a story headlined, "U.S. Ship Carried 50,000 Refugees, Mostly Catholics, from North Vietnam." The story explained they were fleeing from Communist domination.

Meanwhile, the Legion of Decency gave an A-1 rating to, "Abbot and Costello Meet the Keystone Cops" and a partly objectionable mark to "Duel in the Sun" and "The Wild One." And a television movie called "The Gay Desperado" was rated A-1. Today, the title alone would get into hot water.

10 years ago — A front page box read, "The Courier-Journal will change its format from the present standard size to tabloid, effective with the April 8 issue." But the lead story was, "Revamped Education Office Announced by Diocese — A newly structured Department of Education with five divisions . . . has been announced by the Pastoral Office. Father Albert J. Shamon and Father Gerald T. O'Connor will direct the new department with the titles of vicar for education and assistant vicar." The other four departments: Religious Education and CCD, General Education; Adult Education, Campus Ministry.

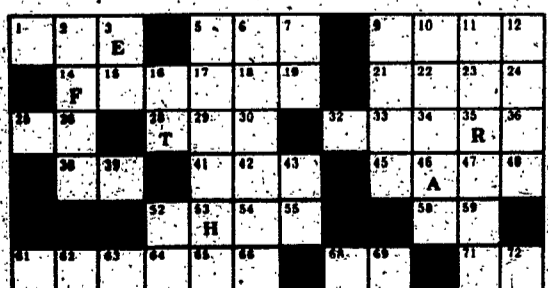
Also on Page 1 was a short: "Bishop Hogan marked his 54th birthday on Wednesday. . . ." Now, let's see, that was March 11 10 years ago which means that yesterday he had his 64th birthday. Happy birthday, Bishop Hogan.

Sunday Scripture Quiz

I. Gospel Reading:

Luke 15:1-3,11-32 — Forgiveness is better than after-giveness.

Below is a key passage from Sunday's Gospel reading. You can determine what this passage is by finding the answers to the questions below the puzzle and then putting the letters in their appropriate box. The first one is done for you.



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|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Forgave prodigal son: | F A T H E R |
| 2. Gift from another: | 14 46 28 53 3 35 |
| 3. Not alive: | 64 7 17 28 19 11 41 |
| 4. Baby cow: | 12 30 54 48 |
| 5. Disappearing being: | 61 15 45 39 |
| 6. To disgrace: | 31 2 62 5 68 |

Based on scripture readings for Sunday, March 16, 1980, C Cycle.

Following are key passages from Sunday's scripture readings. Fill in the missing words.

II. First Reading:

Joshua 5:8,10-12 — Celebrate

Passover, a sign of forgiving love.

Phrase: On that same _____ after _____ on which they ate of the _____ of the _____ the _____ has passed _____ now _____ is ceased. No longer was there manna for the _____ who that year _____ of the _____ of the land of _____ to himself through Christ.

III. Second Reading:

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 — Christ has reconciled us to God.

Phrase: If _____ is in _____ he is a _____ creation. The old _____ is _____ now _____ is new! All this has been done by _____ who has reconciled _____ to himself through Christ.

Answers on Page 10

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|---------------------|------------------|
| 7. Offend neighbor: | 59 22 65 |
| 8. Holds knife: | 9 33 72 34 16 29 |
| 9. To encounter: | 71 24 43 52 |
| 10. Picture show: | 63 38 23 58 36 |
| 11. Heavy weight: | 55 66 47 |
| 12. Have: | 69 6 1 |

Passage I words: Father, shame, dead, ton, meet, inherit, movie, got, calf, sheath, sin, ghost.
Passage II words: Passover, Canaan, manna, produce, ate, day, Israelites, yield, land.
Passage III words: God, all, Christ, order, us, away, new, anyone.