

Editorials

Up the Hatch!

The diocesan Human Life Commission has taken on an extremely difficult and grave task in trying to get the public behind the Hatch Human Life Amendment which would curb the number of abortions in the United States.

Just trying to reach effectively the public on any issue is a job. In the case of the Hatch Amendment it is a Homeric undertaking.

Why? First, getting any amendment to the Constitution passed is difficult; our founding fathers meant it that way. First two thirds of the Congress must approve and then three quarters of the states must pass it.

The Hatch Amendment, it must be admitted, makes the job even harder. Many Americans support abortion; others do not recognize the gravity of the situation. To complicate the matter further, many anti-abortionists see Hatch as a sellout in that it doesn't seek to ban abortion outright. These people feel that there can be no compromise with morality.

The proponents of Hatch, however, and these include on the national scene the bishops of the United States and locally Bishop Matthew H. Clark, feel that the bill for the first time since the infamous Supreme Court decision of 1973 offers the opportunity to recapture some sense of sanity by sidestepping that ruling.

Hatch would allow the Congress and/or the states to put restrictions on abortions. Granted, it is no panacea and not even its sponsor, Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah, would claim it to be. But it is a way to reduce the carnage and seems to have at least the ghost of a chance of passage — if all pro-lifers would get behind it. That is the goal of our Human Life Commission.

The commission has scheduled a series of informational meetings on Hatch throughout the diocese. The Courier-Journal has been and will continue to run the schedule weekly. Actually, "meeting" is a bland word to describe the sessions — they are of a life-and-death nature.

Think of it! At the very moment you are reading this there are thousands of unborn human beings facing death through abortion. In the future, Hatch, if passed, will rescue some of these persons.

Last week, Respect Life Sunday, many pastors devoted homilies or at least mentioned the importance of passage of the Hatch Amendment. Some suggested specific follow-throughs; others failed to supply this necessary ingredient to any exhortation. Pastors must continue to guide their flocks on this issue either by sponsoring an informational meeting or by directing their parishioners to such gatherings elsewhere. They should either list the schedule in their parish bulletins or refer people to the weekly account in their diocesan newspaper.

And once-a-year mention is not much more than lip service. The bill will be coming to a head in the Congress this year, possibly this Spring. We all must mobilize behind our Human Life Commission's leadership. Lives depend on it!

United Way

If it is all that it seems, the new option system of donating unveiled by the United Way should erase many of the worries now nettling many potential contributors.

Basically, the new system provides four options. The first is not new: contributions go into the general fund with the money allocated among the 160 member agencies, according to need.

The second option provides for donation to the general fund but United Way will guarantee that if there is an agency the contributor does not wish to support, that agency will not receive any portion of the donor's gift.

The third option allows contributors to designate a donation to a particular agency or agencies.

The fourth will allow contributors to designate their gifts to any local health or social service agency, recognized as such by the Internal Revenue Service and the state.

Many will be vitally concerned that the United Way will make unquestionably sure that the negative designation will be effective in reality, that it is not just a ploy to placate dissidents. Many good people simply cannot sleep comfortably if they have any question that their donations may be used to abort another human being.

It is incumbent on the United Way to satisfy the community conscience on such points.

On the other side of the coin, good citizens must be aware that the new system may hurt many worthwhile but less visible agencies — in the inner city, for example. Already faced with reduced income because of Reaganomics, many agencies will be depending more than ever on United Way support. If the new system is approved by the United Way directors, contributors should be granted the means to exercise more than just one option. For example, the donor should be able to pick an agency of his choice but at the same time contribute to the general fund and use the negative designation as well.

If this will be in fact made possible by United Way then it is up to the individual contributors to be good citizens and donate to the general fund so that lesser known public service agencies do not go down the drain.

and Opinions

Can't Support Bishops

Editor:

After much thought, I have decided that I cannot support the bishops in their drive to get the Hatch Amendment approved.

I believe choosing an abortion is most difficult, but that it should be an option for women who are pregnant against their wills, i.e. for rape and incest victims and women who are ill and cannot risk full-term pregnancy.

I also do not want to see a return to back-alley abortions which went on before Roe vs. Wade.

Stephenie McCormick
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Work Openly For Peace

Editor:

Re: the article on Seneca Army Depot of 1-3-82.

Jesus spent part of his life as a controversial figure in the public arena. The forces with which he came into contact — government, economics, institutional religion, nationalism and social unrest — are the same that exist today. Jesus' politics in the face of the conflicts that grew out of these forces were: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you and pray for those who maltreat you." He chose to let his life hang (literally) on this non-violent teaching. He lived his whole life in an occupied country.

When he became too much of a threat to the established disorder, he was executed.

At his trial, Jesus was charged with subversion and being an agitator — "He stirs up the people with his teaching throughout the whole of Judea." (Luke 23:5, 14) After he had been misrepresented as being dangerous, the crowd chose to have Barabas, who was guilty of real violence, released.

Before he died, Jesus warned his followers, "... men of all nations will hate you for your allegiance to me." Would that more Germans had understood that warning before Hitler's rise. Today we should be careful about labeling people who believe in and work for non-violent change as "crackpot," "enemy of liberty," "Judas" (communist implied), or stupid since the alternative is still Barabas.

We know there will be clever, "sane," patriotic, well respected, "high echelon" people who openly or tacitly give approval to violence. They are gathering crowds of others to go along with our country's present policy of first strike, "winnable," "limited" nuclear war. The Church, on the other hand, should be about preaching peace and explaining non-violence in practical terms though it seems an absurdity and folly to some. The Church in Rochester might offer concrete support to any employee of the Seneca Army Depot who felt called in conscience to leave a job. "It is unthinkable that no other work can be found for hundreds of thousands of workers than the production of instruments of death." — Pope Paul VI

The Seneca Army Depot must be described as a death

camp in our midst. In some mysterious way, I believe that it is already undone, that we will repent of the many holocausts stored there. Christians believe that when he gave his life, Jesus released into the world a force greater than any force of arms. Let us affirm our faith in that Spirit and tap that force, praying and working openly for peace.

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House of Hospitality
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Readers Need Address

Editor:

The Courier-Journal articles about Covenant House were interesting and informative. However, the paper should have provided the following address to readers who would like to help support Father Ritter's work:

Covenant House
P.O. Box 731
Times Square Station
340 West 42nd Street
New York, N.Y. 10108

Teresa Vallone
1 School Street
Livonia, N.Y. 14487

Author Mailer Not at Fault

Editor:

Writer Norman Mailer says he is partly responsible for the death of Richard Adan, the victim of Mailer's protege, Jack Abbott. Mailer, in his introduction to Abbott's book on prison life, "In the Belly of the Beast," called for Abbott's parole, stressing Abbott's needs to develop his literary ability outside prison. Abbott was paroled and, shortly

thereafter, fatally stabbed Adan.

Just before his execution in 1979, John Spenkelink, another persistent felony offender, told his minister, "Man is what he chooses to be; he chooses that for himself." The individual must take full responsibility for his actions.

Abbott killed Adan. His death shouldn't be blamed on Mailer (who probably over-estimates his influence on a parole board), or on a prison system which, according to Abbott's lawyer, made "scrambled eggs" out of his client's soul (although prisons can sap the moral fiber out of inmates), or on the parole board (that has no divine power to predict a released prisoner's future behavior).

However, Mailer made some irresponsible comments during Abbott's trial: "Culture is worth a little risk. A major sentence would destroy him. Adan has already been destroyed. At least let Abbott become a writer."

Whatever one's opinion of Abbott's book (I think it has its merits but don't think it's any literary masterpiece), the seriousness of his offense and his past history, not his literary abilities, should be considered in passing sentence. As one reader recently wondered in a letter to the New York Post: "Can you imagine a society where a book on painting or future possibility of such is more important than a human life?"

Abbott's conviction means his return to "the belly of the beast." In past letters to the Courier-Journal, I've written about the loneliness, violence and dehumanizing conditions that exist at Attica, which is symbolic of most maximum security prisons. Yet spiritual awakenings, which come from within the soul, can and do occur behind prison walls.

I hope that Adan's sur-

vivors learn that it's easier to love than to hate.

I hope that Abbott receives a stiff sentence but hope that he won't be mistreated and that, with Mailer's friendship, he can still develop his writings.

And I hope that Mailer will become a more responsible writer as a result of this tragedy.

Joel Freedman
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Enthusiasm Diminishing?

Editor:

February is Boy Scout Anniversary Month, and a significant one at that — 1982 marks the 75th anniversary of the beginning of scouting worldwide. This seems like an appropriate time to reflect on this vital program in today's troubled world and the apathy of our Church leaders toward scouting.

It wasn't always that way, you know. Until recently, more Cub Packs, Scout Troops and Explorer Posts were under Catholic auspices than any other single

sponsoring organization. The Catholic Committee on Scouting was the first religious relationships committee and the Ad Altare Dei the first religious medal scouts could earn.

Other denominations have now adapted our success story and have surpassed us in using the scouting program as part of their youth ministries. Boys of every faith can earn a religious emblem under the guidance of a scouting relationships committee appointed by their denomination. The Mormons now sponsor the greatest number of units. They, the Lutherans and the Methodists have even published books for clergy and governing bodies on incorporating scouting into their youth ministries.

Under Bishop Kearney, the Rochester diocese was a leader in promoting scouting in the Church. Today, we are also in the forefront of the Church's loss of units. How then can scouts practice the 12th Scout Law (a scout is reverent) in the Catholic tradition?

Duane A. Pancoast
Chairman, Catholic
Committee on Scouting
Finger Lakes Council
Geneva, N.Y.

Guidelines

The Courier-Journal welcomes your opinions. Letters must bear the writer's signature, full address and telephone number. They should be sent to Opinion, Courier-Journal, 114 S. Union S., Rochester, N.Y. 14607.

Opinions should be brief, typed, double-spaced, no longer than 1 1/2 pages.

We routinely condense letters, edit offensive words and libelous statements, and reserve the right to reject letters. Generally speaking, however, only limited grammatical corrections will be made and the letters will reflect the writer's own style.

Because submitted opinions exceed the space for letters, we publish only original letters addressed to us. We will not use poetry, open letters, or copies of letters sent elsewhere. To ensure diversity, we limit each writer to one letter per month.