

Hibernians to exclude pro-choice members

By Barbara Ann Homick
Freelance writer

The Ancient Order of Hibernians' recent decision to disqualify from membership any man who publicly favors abortion may force other Catholic organizations to take a public stand against abortion, AOH members predict.

The AOH resolution, adopted unanimously on July 19 by more than 500 delegates at the organization's 85th national convention in Arlington, Va., states that "any member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians who publicly takes a pro-abortion position should be refused renewal of his membership ... (and) any applicant to the Ancient Order of Hibernians who publicly takes a pro-abortion position should be refused membership in the Order."

The AOH is one of the first Catholic organizations to impose such a condition on membership. According to newly elected AOH National Secretary Thomas McNabb of Auburn, the resolution is primarily aimed at politicians or individuals in the public eye.

The Hibernians will not only deny membership to those who are pro-choice, but they will avoid inviting anyone with pro-choice views to speak at AOH events, said Edward Wallace of Clayton, N.Y., newly elected AOH vice president.

Kevin Coggins, vice president of the New York state AOH, said it is only natural that the largest and oldest Irish-Catholic organization in the United States should take a strong pro-life stance.

"Our main thrust is Catholicism. It is part of our religion to support life," Coggins said.

George Clough of St. Louis, who was elected national AOH president in July,



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer
Thomas D. McNabb, national secretary of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, was AOH national president from 1978-80.

expressed a similar sentiment. "To be a member you have to be a practicing Catholic, and someone pro-choice isn't a practicing Catholic," he said.

Wallace noted that Pope John Paul II has encouraged Catholic organizations to take public stands against abortion. "A resolution of this magnitude was bound to be passed sooner or later," Wallace said.

He pointed out that the resolution comes at a time when more individuals and organizations are speaking out against abortion. "We are hearing more and more about this type of public resolution, and the Catholic clergy are coming out with stronger statements, too," Wallace said.

Now the Hibernians are looking forward to passage of a resolution similar to their own by the national Knights of Columbus — possibly at the K of C convention August 7-9.

"We have been working hand-in-hand with the Knights of Columbus toward this goal," said Wallace, who is also deputy grand knight of the Clayton K of C Council

350.

Although the Knights passed a resolution a few months ago designating the organization as pro-life, they currently do not limit membership to those who espouse pro-life views.

And a local spokesman for the K of C said he does not believe his group is ready to pass such a similar resolution.

Walter DeRouen, grand knight of the Knights of Columbus Rochester Council # 178, said he does not think that a resolution similar to that passed by the AOH will ever be accepted within the K of C.

"I cannot foresee that the Knights of Columbus will deny or expel anyone for their viewpoint," DeRouen said.

Although the K of C has an active pro-life committee, DeRouen said the Knights are not involved in telling people what to do. He said the Supreme Council is concerned about the legal implications involved in telling a person what he should do or believe.

"It all boils down to the legal question," DeRouen said.

Despite its unanimous approval by dele-

gates at last month's AOH convention, the Hibernians' resolution may not be accepted by all members. Charles Welsh of Centerreach, N.Y., New York state chairman of the AOH pro-life committee, admitted that some Hibernians may object to the resolution, but that on the whole it is being applauded.

Although he was pleased by the resolution's passage, Wallace said he does not want to see the AOH branded as a one-issue organization. He noted that Hibernians take stands on various issues based on the tenets of the Catholic Church, and that abortion is a key issue facing the church today.

According to Welsh, the sole criterion upon which the organization bases its acceptance of members is whether the potential members are practicing Catholics. If a man is remarried without an annulment, has not made his Easter Duty or does not go to church, he does not qualify for membership, the pro-life chairman said.

"Any man can have his own opinion," Welsh said, "he just can't belong to the

Continued on page 10

Diocesan office hires director to lead planned-giving effort

ROCHESTER — Mark Seeberg, director of development for the Diocese of Rochester, has announced the appointment of Mary Consler as the diocesan director of special gifts.

As the director of special gifts — a newly created position — Consler will develop and launch a planned giving program for the diocese. The program will encourage individuals to give large donations to the diocese through such means as trusts.

Consler will also assist with implementing a major gift program. This program will seek contributions of money or property from individuals in the community. To assist with this program, she will be developing a network of volunteers to contact individuals "with the interest and the ability to give more," she explained.

In addition, Consler will help to initiate special gift and recognition opportunities for the annual Thanks Giving Appeal.

A graduate of St. Thomas More School

and Our Lady of Mercy High School, Consler has served as director of planned giving and leadership giving for the United Way of Rochester, Inc., for the past three-and-a-half years. Prior to her work with the United Way, she was the director of major gifts and planned giving for the University of Rochester.

Consler is a graduate of Marymount College in Tarrytown, N.Y., and holds a paralegal certificate in estate, tax and probate law from Adelphi University in Garden City, N.Y.

Active in the Rochester community, Consler is also chairperson of the Nazareth College Planned Giving Advisory Committee, a member of the strategic directions committee of Our Lady of Mercy High School, and a member of the finance committee of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Brighton.

— Lee Strong

Commission delays draft of plan

ROCHESTER — The Commission on Reorganization of Catholic Schools has delayed submitting its grade-reconfiguration plan for Southeast Quadrant schools. The plan originally had been scheduled for release last week.

John Crowe, vice chairman of the commission, said his group has a draft plan ready for the southeast, but that the commission had not finished putting together all of its members' comments. The plan will be ready by the end of August, he said.

He noted that recommendations on grade reconfiguration for the Southwest Quadrant will be out before the end of September.

Earlier this year, the commission withdrew its original recommendations on configuration for both quadrants due to heavy opposition from parents and school

leaders. After obtaining the approval of Bishop Matthew H. Clark, the reconfiguration plans will be implemented in 1991-92.

Finance and governance structures for each of Monroe County's quadrants are already in place. Currently, all four quadrants are being governed by boards consisting of principal, pastor and catechetical representatives drawn from each parish in the respective quadrants. Each quadrant board is overseeing budgets comprised of the collective expenses of schools in its quadrant.

So far, only the Northeast Quadrant has completely reconfigured its schools. Five schools closed between 1989 and 1990, and a new junior high is scheduled to open on the grounds of Bishop Kearney High School this fall.

— Rob Cullivan

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