

MORAL DEMOCRACY

Bulletin of the Moral Democracy Movement

UNITED FOR FREEDOM, TOLERANCE, AND DIVERSITY IN MORAL, RELIGIOUS AND INTELLECTUAL LIFE. PUBLISHED BY THE CENTER FOR MORAL DEMOCRACY 2 WEST 64TH ST., N.Y. 10023 (212) 874-5210 EDWARD L. ERICSON, DIRECTOR

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KKK: A RESURGENT DANGER

The Ku Klux Klan, long considered a fading remnant of rural primitivism, is enjoying a renaissance in the current atmosphere of reaction and anti-humanism. Georgia legislator Julian Bond declared that, although the most persistent blitz of cross-burnings, threatening letters and shotgun attacks has taken place in two Georgia counties, there is now emerging a widespread pattern of intimidation, terror and racist propaganda.

"We have received calls and complaints about similar incidents in South Carolina, Alabama, and Louisiana," Mr. Bond was quoted as saying in a *New York Times* story of August 20. The same article quotes Christopher Coats, ACLU attorney in a Texas case involving the deaths of three black youths while in legal custody, as saying recent actions of the Supreme Court encourage local law officers and judges to disregard constitutional rights.

Georgia Rep. Tyron Brooks adds that Reagan's views on a reduced Federal role encourage lawlessness: "Some people across this state feel they can violate the rights of blacks and Jews and nothing will happen."

Earlier this year a newly ordained Methodist minister in a West Virginia town received Klan death threats, including a knife thrust through his desk chair. He and his wife were transferred out of state for their safety.

Klanwatch, a group monitoring KKK activities, has reported not only traditional Klan violence and intimidation, but the establishment in Texas and elsewhere of para-military training camps to prepare for the "race war" that some Klan units and associated American Nazi troopers are predicting. □



PILPEL SPEAKS FOR ABORTION RIGHTS

"It is those who oppose abortion who are un-American, who are totalitarian in every sense of the word. It is we who are struggling to maintain this freedom of abortional choice who are really trying to maintain this country as the land of the free.

"The job of those who are clearly in the majority should be to make it clear to our legislators that the minority has a clear constitutional right not to have abortions if they are against abortions, but that the majority likewise has the right to act in accordance with its conscience." So said Harriet Pilpel, nationally prominent advocate of women's rights and constitutional freedoms and member of the New York law firm, Greenbaum, Wolff & Ernst, in an August 23 WQXR radio address to a New York City area audience.

Noting that the so-called "Moral Majority" and other anti-abortion groups reflect the views of only a minority of Americans, shown by current public opinion polls, Mrs. Pilpel called on the majority of Protestants, Jews, and a near-majority of Catholics who support freedom of choice, to join with humanists, the "whipping boys" of the religious right, to defeat efforts to outlaw abortion.

"Since the opponents of abortion failed to kill off constitutional rights by passing laws that were declared unconstitutional, they have now turned their attention to other approaches. They have succeeded in obtaining a United States Supreme Court decision that Medicaid, although available for all other medically necessary procedures, may be denied for abortion, a decision that effectively prevents freedom of abortional choice only by poor women. Well-to-do women can as always find psychiatrists who will declare that abortion is necessary to their survival, or they can afford to go to the other two-thirds of the world where abortion is easily available." Mrs. Pilpel noted that two-thirds of the nations of the world, including Catholic as well as non-Catholic countries, provide easy access to abortion.

"At the present time abortion opponents are attempting to unite behind a 'human life' constitutional amendment. What it comes down to is that the amendment would say that a fertilized egg of only a few hours standing is a 'person' entitled to constitutional rights. Totally apart from the abortion issue, such an amendment or law would throw our entire legal system and our entire body of law into chaos.

"Because the Right to Life groups have not been able to get the necessary two-thirds vote of Congress to propose a constitutional amendment, they have resorted to two other approaches. One of these is an attempt to get two-thirds of the states to request Congress to call a constitutional convention on abortion, which Congress would have to do if two-thirds of the states did pass such resolutions. This constitutional convention method of amending the Constitution has never been used, and it would be highly dangerous to use it,

(Cont'd on p. 2)

Humanism: No Defense Needed

Phyllis Schlafly has attacked humanism as a dogma, which she claims without foundation has captured the public school. Mrs. Schlafly asserted that two widely read humanist statements, the Humanist Manifesto of 1933 and Humanist Manifesto II, issued in 1973, were "creeds" in the same sense as the Apostle's Creed. Mrs. Schlafly is apparently unaware (or unwilling to acknowledge) that a humanist creed would be self-contradictory, since an essential point of humanist philosophy is the belief that existing knowledge and wisdom are always incomplete and subject to correction, as the Humanist affirmations in question state explicitly.

Mrs. Schlafly, of course, wishes to represent humanism as a dogmatic anti-Christian creed because she finds herself in opposition to positions taken by many humanists on abortion, birth control, and sexual morality.

The controversial article on sexuality in Humanist Manifesto II reads as follows: "In the area of sexuality, we believe that intolerant attitudes, often cultivated by orthodox religions and puritanical cultures, unduly repress sexual conduct. The right to birth control, abortion, and divorce should be recognized. While we do not approve of exploitive, denigrating forms of sexual expression, neither do we wish to prohibit, by law or social sanction, sexual behavior between consenting adults. The many varieties of sexual exploration should not in themselves be considered evil.

"Without countenancing mindless permissiveness or unbridled promiscuity, a civilized society should be a tolerant one. Short of harming others or compelling them to do likewise, individuals should be permitted to express their sexual proclivities and pursue their life-styles as they desire.

"We wish to cultivate the development of a responsible attitude toward sexuality, in which human beings are not exploited as sexual objects and in which intimacy, sensitivity, respect, and honesty in interpersonal relations are encouraged. Moral education for children and adults is an important way of developing awareness for sexual maturity." This is the statement on sexuality in its entirety that Mrs. Schlafly and other Rightists find so offensive and which sparked such condemnation by the Religious Right. □

EDITORIAL: A CHALLENGE FROM STRENGTH

The Moral Majority and other forces of the religious "New Right" are giving morality a bad name. We made that point in our first issue of *Moral Democracy*. The historic religious pluralism and social diversity of American democracy is being assaulted on every front by these aspiring "Christian Ayatollahs."

We repeat our purpose as a movement to defend moral freedom. Our conviction that the extremists of the Religious Right are distorting and destroying the genuine ethics of American society reinforces our determination to challenge the New Right on its own chosen ground: the moral issues.

The social morality of a free, pluralistic democracy must be based on tolerance, mutual respect, and a generous appreciation for the rich diversity of the American people. We expressed this faith in our first issue and we say it again.

We are not trying to become another Moral Majority, even on the opposite side of the issues. We are not out to raise millions of dollars or to recruit millions of members. Moral Democracy means diversity. It means hundreds, thousands of independent, diverse, grassroots organizations, churches, civic groups, labor unions, each working to preserve freedom by defeating the new authoritarianism. Our function as a Center for Moral Democracy is simply to help inform, coordinate, and reinforce this broadly based effort.

Christians, Jews, humanists, Republicans, Democrats, independents, must have a part in this movement. It is our freedom at stake. We support coalition-building. Many excellent organizations already exist, from Planned Parenthood and Freedom of Choice organizations to Norman Lear's People for the American Way, Rabbi Sherwin Wine's Voice of Reason, George McGovern's Common Sense, and such faithful old guardians of liberty and decency as the A. C. L. U., the Anti-Defamation League, Americans United for Church and State, the National Coalition Against Censorship, and the stalwart civil rights and women's rights groups.

We do not propose to compete with these many effective organizations. We exist to serve as a link and coalition-builder among them and many individual Americans. We plan in the coming year to bring together as many of these alliances as possible, and many involved churches and other religious bodies, to forge a powerful coalition for freedom. Abortion rights, ERA, academic freedom and freedom from censorship and book burning, church-state separation, interfaith tolerance and liberty of conscience, security from KKK terror — all these require the building of a powerful movement of coalitions and groups. We urge you and your church or community to join with us.

E.L.E.

THEIR CHALLENGE, IN A NUTSHELL

"Prolifers are in the position today to orchestrate the terms and timing of the submission of a Human Life Amendment (we) can have our amendment approved by the Congress and submitted to and ratified by the 38 states in 12 months."

*From Page 1, National
Right to Life News
Vol. 7, No. 16*

COALITIONS FOLLOW COMMITMENT

Commitment is not enough, not even for the most dedicated pursuers of justice. With a coalition, the new truism is that the total is stronger and more effective than the sum of its parts.

A coalition is an alliance of individuals and/or organizations working together to gain specified goals or mutual advantages. The major reasons for forming a coalition are to maximize an organization's power through joint action; to eliminate duplication or inconsistency of efforts; to pool talent and resources; to gain and demonstrate widespread public support, and to gain maximum publicity.

For a "how to" organizational packet by Betty L. Olive, write to *Center for Moral Democracy, 2 West 64th Street, New York, N.Y. 10023.*

STEERING COMMITTEE: *Edward L. Ericson, Donald A. Field, Hans Gerngross, Matthews A. Griffith, John Z. Katz, William A. Kulok, Walter Lawton, Stanley Marder, Betty L. Olive, Bruce Southworth, Arnold Sylvester.*

(Cont'd from p.1 Col. 3)

because as has been said over and over again, it would put the entire Constitution up for grabs. In other words, we would play Russian roulette with the basic document by which we have lived for nearly 200 years."

Noting a second approach to the effort to outlaw abortion, Mrs. Pilpel observed, "Some proponents of the anti-abortion amendment got impatient with their slow pace of accomplishment, so they have proposed that Congress pass a 'human life statute' which would basically make a fetus a person from the moment of conception. This statute would require only a majority vote, whereas an amendment requires a two-thirds vote in Congress before submission to the states for ratification."

Arguing that an anti-abortion law or amendment would not effectively prohibit abortions, but only make them dangerous to the lives of the women involved, Mrs. Pilpel declared, "Since the abortion decision in 1973, there have been studies which indicate that only 25% or 30% of abortions being done would not have been done, if abortion had been illegal."

Commenting that the Religious New Right has made humanism its target, contending that humanism opposes religion, Mrs. Pilpel countered that humanism stands for religious freedom and tolerance.

"... the United States is where it is today because those who believe in secular humanism believe that abortion is a matter of conscience to be decided by the woman in cooperation with her physician in the light of all relevant factors. The opponents of secular humanism believe that no freedom of choice should be allowed, but that their view that abortion is murder, a view shared by only a minority of Americans, should be imposed by the government on everyone else."

The Ethical Radio Platform featuring Mrs. Pilpel was sponsored by the New York Society for Ethical Culture, of which she is a member. □

DOGFOOD TYPE WELFARE?

"It is time for our welfare program to be examined and much of it done away with. People will not starve to death, although their standard of living may not be sustained. We have two dogs at home. The fellow who gave them to us told me what kind of meat they had to have, but when he left, I bought a big bag of brown nuggets. Sure enough, at first they would not eat them, but four days later they did. They did not eat luxuriously, but they did eat."

—Jerry Falwell

Asimov, Sagan Oppose Creationism

Isaac Asimov and Carl Sagan, two of America's best-known exponents of science and evolutionary theory, chose recent national conventions where they were honored guests to denounce the pseudo-science of anti-evolutionists, particularly their efforts to censor public school science textbooks and require "equal time" for the Fundamentalist doctrine of creation.

Noting that anti-evolutionists in many states are actively promoting legislation to require the teaching of Biblical creationism, disguised as "scientific" creationism, Asimov argued that the switching of labels can *not* hide the design to present Fundamentalist religious dogma as science.

"I would have no problem defending the freedom of expression of the individual scientist or teacher of science who rejects evolution and accepts creationism. If he has come to those conclusions as a result of scientific discipline and observation, let him be free to express them. But there is great danger to the freedom of science, and to the exercise of academic freedom generally, in a return to laws that limit the teaching of evolution, or that require equal time to be given to particular religious doctrines of creation specified by law."

Asimov's remarks were delivered in an address keynoting the National Assembly of the American Ethical Union at Fairleigh Dickinson University, Madison, New Jersey, June 23. The theme of the week-long conference was "Meeting the Challenge of the Religious New Right." The Fundamentalist attack on the teaching of science and text-book censorship was a major concern.

Speaking across the continent in San Diego weeks earlier, Carl Sagan, science writer and star of the recent "Cosmos" television series, addressed delegates of the American Humanist Association on "Cosmic Evolution vs. the Creationist Myth." Sagan received the association's Humanist of the Year award for his scientific teaching and defense of intellectual values.

"Creationists do not want the other view," Sagan told his Humanist audience, "the view that, for some reason I don't understand, they credited you people for. When I first read their stuff, I didn't know who the secular humanists were." Religious New Right spokesmen have

argued that evolution is a "doctrine" of the "religion of secular humanism," in order to justify the demand for "equal time" for the Fundamentalist doctrine of special creation in the teaching of public school science.

Sagan pointed out that every culture has a "creation myth" and expressed a concern shared by other scientists that many people misunderstand what the word "theory" represents in science. "Because it is not written in stone, it is no less a well-developed way of knowing," the *Humanist* magazine quoted him as saying. □

Rightists Demand Shift in Policy

The political right is unhappy with "Reagonomics" as a national priority, preferring Presidential emphasis on abortion and prayer in schools. "Now (that the tax bill has passed) it is imperative that top priority be given to the moral issues facing our nation," Edward McAteer, Religious Roundtable president, is quoted as declaring in a Sept. 6 *New York Times* article. Speaking to a Dallas anti-abortion rally, he stressed the need to "protect pre-born human lives."

Echoing that sentiment is evangelist Rev. James Robinson, quoted in the same article as saying that it's time for the President to "take a little heat" regarding "moral issues." With similar views expressed by Paul Weyrich, of the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress; Connaught Marshner, of the National Pro-Family Coalition; Peter Gemma, of the National Pro-Life Political Action Committee, and by Rev. Jerry Falwell, of the Moral Majority, there is little doubt that both the White House and the Congress are feeling the pressure.

So far Reagan has managed to sidestep most of the pressure, but conservative unhappiness over the Judge Sandra Day O'Connor nomination to the Supreme Court may force his hand. What the *Times* calls "a well-placed Administration source" suggests that Reagan's response may well be support of the proposed compromise constitutional amendment which permits states to ban abortions without prohibiting them outright.

With the danger both so real and so imminent, it's never been more important for pro-choice advocates to make their voices heard. *A flood of letters to U. S. Senators and Representatives could make a real difference.* □

Planned Parenthood's Welcome New Direction

Relying heavily on a newly aggressive, hard-hitting style of advertising, Planned Parenthood has relinquished its low profile in an all-out effort to protect legalized abortion. With a current budget of \$3.7 million allocated for legislative and public education programs, Planned Parenthood acknowledges that "maybe we've sat back too long," according to a *Wall Street Journal* article of Sept. 2.

That's good news for supporters of both the right to choose and the 65-year old organization. The substantial and frightening inroads on individual rights by anti-abortion forces require vigorous new strategies. The Planned Parenthood program of grassroots education in key areas, establishment of a lobbying office in Washington, and litigation to defend the right to abortion and contraceptives provide a solid base for a new response.

The effectiveness of Planned Parenthood has only recently been reaffirmed by its successful lobbying effort to preserve national family planning centers. The congressional vote to separate federal funds for local family planning programs from general health care grants to states protects this service from possible constituent pressure to eliminate it.

William H. Hamilton, director of the new lobbying office in Washington, denies that his office opened in response to right-to-life groups, which he characterizes as "a shrill and overrated minority." Minimizing their impact, Hamilton is quoted as saying that the main reason "is the tightening economy." He concedes, however, that "you could say that they (the anti-abortion groups) created the political climate."

Indeed. In any case, the new drive by Planned Parenthood is welcome, necessary, and encouraging. □

THE PEN IS MIGHTIER THAN THE GUN*

According to recent statistics, in a single year handguns killed:

48 people in Japan
8 in Great Britain
34 in Switzerland
58 in Israel
21 in Sweden
52 in Canada
42 in West Germany
10,728 in the United States

* Courtesy Handgun Control, Inc.
810 18th Street, N. W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

SCHOOL DAZE

Press reports from around the nation indicate widespread efforts to purge schools of books and courses labeled as "humanist." Sex education is the first to go. We are told that the word "evolution" is now being avoided in what one report calls "advanced biology."

Among books banned by this new Inquisition we find Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, a natural choice, since *Brave New World* foresees such intellectual dictatorship as the ideological Right is attempting to impose. Most revealing and ominous of all, the *New York Times* reports that in a Texas school teachers no longer ask students their opinion, because to suggest differing opinions would be to deny moral absolutes.

This insanity is not restricted to an isolated school district. Rightwing pressure groups from coast to coast are opposing courses in values clarification, a method of moral education that develops moral reasoning in children, encouraging students to weigh arguments and consequences.

One might suppose that stimulating moral reflection is desirable, but the ideological Right says no. Values clarification must go because it is ungodly to teach children to think about moral questions. Differences of opinion, according to the New Right, are forbidden, lest we cast doubt on God's absolute law.

What we must confront and defeat is the rise of an ugly, malignant spiritual fascism. The first front is the battle for academic freedom in the public schools. □

FROM CAMPUS TO CONGRESS

When Americans with orientations as divergent as those of A. Bartlett Giamatti, president of Yale University, and Senator Barry Goldwater, Republican of Arizona, join forces in attacks on the Moral Majority, using remarkably similar language to do so, it's news.

Mr. Giamatti, in a recent speech to Yale freshmen, labeled Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority as "angry at change... rigid... absolutist." He said that, "They threaten through political pressure or public denunciation whoever dares to disagree with their authoritarian positions... They would sweep before them anyone who holds a different opinion..."

Sen. Goldwater, in remarks inserted in the *Congressional Record* of Sept. 15, expressed concern with what he calls "the new right," stating that "religious factions are not using their religious clout with wisdom... I'm sick and tired of political preachers... telling me that if I want to be a moral person, I must believe A, B, C and D. Just who do they think they are? And from where do they presume to claim the right to dictate their moral beliefs to me?"

Maintaining the marked similarity of thinking and language, Giamatti added: "Those voices of coercion speak not for liberty but for license, the license to divide in the name of patriotism, the license to deny in the name of Christianity. And they have licensed a new meanness of spirit in our land, a resurgent bigotry."

Goldwater pointed out that, "One of the great strengths of our political system has been our tendency to keep religious issues in the background. By maintaining separation of church and state, the United States has avoided the intolerance which has so divided the rest of the world with religious wars... To retreat from that separation would violate the principles of conservatism and the values upon which the framers built this democratic republic."

With friends like these, maybe all Americans, liberals and conservatives alike, can allow themselves to believe that religious and political freedom will after all survive and, just maybe, flourish. □

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