

# Balance Improves In National Right To Life Committee

(Special to The Wanderer)

WASHINGTON — The second annual convention of the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC), held at the Shoreham Hotel, June 7th through 9th, produced a slight but possibly crucial shift in the balance between hard-line and not-so-hard-line forces within this sprawling and at times chaotic organization. The shift was in favor of the hard-liners.

The difference of opinion between the two sides concerns the language which, they say, ought to be used in a constitutional amendment to outlaw abortion.

Led by groups like Long Island Right to Life, Life Lobby, the U.S. Coalition for Life, and the Human Life Amendment Group, the hard-liners have two basic demands. First, they insist that any acceptable amend-

ment must be worded so as to eliminate early-stage abortions such as those caused by IUDs and Morning-after Pills (whose main effect is to prevent the implantation of the fertilized ovum in the uterine wall). To accomplish this, the use of the word "fertilization" in the amendment itself is advocated. Secondly, the hard-liners insist that there be no "exception clause" in the amendment, such as would allow an abortion allegedly necessary to save the life of the mother. The progress of medical science, they say, has made such an exception quite unnecessary.

The not-so-hard-liners, on the other hand, led by Marjory Mecklenburg of Minnesota Citizens for Life, Judy Fink of Pennsylvanians for Human Life, Dr. James Diamond and others, take the position that a maternal-life exception clause is absolutely necessary if the amendment is to have a chance of passage, politically speaking.

They also tend to advocate contraception as the "alternative" to abortion, and hence they tend to resist or reject evidence that the IUD is abortifacient. Many openly prefer that constitutional protection for the unborn should begin only after implantation has taken place, although this issue is often confused with the quite separate difficulty that, prior to implantation, the fetus is not medically known to exist, since pregnancy cannot be diagnosed. Hence, the not-so-hard-liners tend to prefer amending language that would outlaw only later-stage or surgical abortions.

Needless to say, the convention endorsed no amendment against abortion.

Prior to the June 7th convention, Mrs. Mecklenburg, already chairman of the board of NRLC, was the odds-on

(Continued on page 8)

"TO RE-ESTABLISH  
ALL THINGS IN CHRIST"

(Ephesians 1:10)

# The Wanderer

VOLUME 107, NO. 25

St. Paul, Minn.

JUNE 20, 1974

PRICE 25 cents

# Balance Improves In National Right To Life Committee

(Continued from page 1)

favorite to replace retiring (and more hard-line) President Edward J. Golden. Golden is planning to run for Congress from New York. Also prior to the convention, it seemed to be a foregone conclusion that the NRLC would definitively endorse a proposed constitutional amendment drafted by the NRLC's legal advisory committee and already published in the NRLC's monthly newspaper. Neither expectation was fulfilled, however. The 51-member board of directors, which is the sole policymaking body in the organization, reversed its previous, tentative approval of the draft amendment because of widespread opposition to its maternal-life exception clause. At the same time, Mrs. Mecklenburg lost her presidential bid to Dr. Kenneth D. Vanderhoef of Seattle.

Dr. Vanderhoef is perhaps best known for his outstandingly successful organization of pro-life forces in Washington State during an abortion referendum held there in 1971. The anti-abortion forces came surprisingly close to victory in that uphill contest.

According to RNS, other steps taken by the board at this convention included the following:

— A motion that all pro-life people "withdraw support and participation in the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)" because of its recent affiliation with the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights.

— A proposal for a boycott of products made by Upjohn Co., Kalamazoo, Mich., because of the company's continued production of drugs which induce abortion.

— A declaration expressing grave concern that the National March of Dimes Foundation is "now involved in eliminative medicine." The board expressed a desire to meet with March of Dimes officials.

For the thousand-plus anti-abortion activists who attended the Washington convention, but who are not members of the board, the weekend was devoted to hearing speeches, attending workshops, making acquaintances, and exchanging information. Major speakers included Sen. Dewey F. Bartlett (R., Okla.); Skylab astronaut Dr. Joseph Kerwin; the Rev. Robert Holbrook, president of Baptists for Life; Richard E. Murray, legislative director of COPE, the political action arm of

the AFL-CIO; and Fr. Charles Carroll, Episcopal priest from the Diocese of California.

The twenty workshops covered topics such as "Pro-Life Public Relations and Advertising," "Grass Roots Fund Raising for Right-to-Life," "Family Policies and Population Issues," "Medical Aspects of Abortion," "The Church and State Issue — How To Combat this Pro-Abortion Claim," "Abortion as a Peace Issue," "Pro-Life Feminists," and "Pro-Life Political Effectiveness." Another workshop, devoted to "The Court, State Legislatures and a Federal Human Life Amendment," drew fire from many participants because of the lack of time for feedback and serious discussion of differences over amending language.

Aside from the basic conflict between hard- and soft-liners (yet in several ways related to it) was another tension among the NRLC conventioners. This concerned conflicting judgments over how effective the organization's Washington office had been. As managed by the executive director, Ray L. White (newly appointed), and his assistant, Rev. Warren A. Schaller, the Washington office has come in for hardhitting criticism from other pro-life organizations active on the Capitol Hill front. Especially critical has been the U.S. Coalition for Life, directed by Mrs. Randy Engel, but perhaps equally strong complaints of ineffectiveness have come from John Short and Bill Devlin of Life Lobby and from Richard Gallagher of the Human Life Amendment Group. According to these critics, the NRLC played virtually no role at all in securing such important advances as the Helms amendment to the Foreign Aid bill, the Buckley amendment to the Social Security Act, the amendments to the Legal Services Corporation bills, the Froehlich amendment to the Community Services Act, etc. If such slack performance continues, these critics predict, massive numbers of pro-life activists across the Country will simply abandon the NRLC and seek a new national coalition. Much comment along this line was occasioned by Executive Director Ray White's admission that as of June 7th he had not even read the Hogan-Helms, Buckley, or Roncallo-Rice amendments.