

March For Life

A Massive Success

By WILLIAM H. MARSHNER

WASHINGTON, D.C. — More of everything — more people, more roses, more eminent speakers — marked the second “March for Life,” Jan. 22nd, 1975, as a massive success. On the western steps of the U.S. Capitol, it was part politics, part revival, and part hootenanny, as an estimated 30,000 to 50,000 people sang, clapped, and shouted this single message: “Give Life a Chance.”

According to Nellie J. Gray, chairwoman of the fifteen-member March Committee, more than 603 buses had been registered officially — 100 from Long Island, 86 from New Jersey, 14 from Connecticut, etc. State delegations were introduced also from Kansas, Iowa, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, Colorado, Arizona, Washington, Georgia, Florida, Virginia, Delaware, Maryland, Nebraska, California, and West Virginia. One group, with a bright yellow banner, arrived from Hawaii.

Those who arrived before noon scattered to lobby in various congressional offices, leaving roses as a sign of pro-life concern. The bulk of the crowd began pouring out of the buses around 1 p.m. when the rally program was scheduled to begin. Nellie Gray was mistress of ceremonies. Archbishop William W. Baum of Washington, D.C., gave the opening prayer after leading a contingent to the Capitol from St. Matthew's Cathedral, across town, where a Eucharistic vigil was in progress for those who could not attend the March itself.

The invocation was followed by remarks on the theme of mourning for the dead, delivered by four Black Baptist ministers. The Rev.

J. Thomas Jennings of the Tenth Street Baptist Church referred to the policy of Pharaoh and Herod, lamenting that “Evil kings no longer have to order the slaughter of little children; the mothers have taken up killing their own babies.”

PRIVACY AND SHAME

Pro-life senators and representatives were introduced next, led by Sen. Jesse Helms (R., N.C.), who on Friday, Jan. 17th, became the first U.S. senator to introduce a human life amendment in this session of Congress (listed now as S.J. Res. 6). Sen. Helms left-handedly complimented the Supreme Court for picking out “privacy” as the justification for legalized abortion. “We instinctively seek to find privacy,” Helms said, “for our most shameful and despicable acts.”

Next to speak was newly-elected Sen. Richard Stone (D., Fla.). “The one thing we have in common is a birthday,” he said; “I think we have a right to one.” Stone called for a speedy passage of pro-life legislation “By next year's bicentennial.”

The third senator, enthusiastically received, was James L. Buckley of New York who announced that he would reintroduce his own human life amendment tomorrow, Jan. 23rd. “If America is to be the Land of the free, American children must be free to be born,” he declared in a sentence picked up by most of the news media. “If America is to be the home of the brave, America must have the courage to embrace and not destroy life.”

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Cong. Robert Bauman (R., Md.) brought the vast audience to a peak of excitement by denouncing his "nervous brethren" in the House and Senate, whose inaction had allowed American children to be victimized by the "merciless ethics of the anthills and of Auschwitz." Above all, he cried, "I could not vote for Nelson Rockefeller" — and the crowd roared with wrath at the first mention of the hated name.

Freshman Rep. James L. Oberstar (D., Minn.) spoke next, praising the March as "a mission of mercy, a crusade for decency, with no motive but love of humanity."

Cong. David Treen (R., La.) pledged "I am with you all the way" in seeking to overthrow the effects of the "Day of Infamy," two years ago.

Sen. Dewey Bartlett (R., Okla.) thanked the grass-roots leaders for the support they had given him in his efforts to choke off HEW funding of abortion. He announced that this legislation, too, would be reintroduced tomorrow. "Last year 34,000 abortions were paid for by your tax dollars, and there will be 740 more before this day is over."

Next came a string of Ohio congressmen introduced by Dr. John C. Willke of Cincinnati. Reps. Donald Clancy (R.), James Stanton (D.), Ralph Regula (R.), and, a little later, Delbert Latta (R.) made brief statements in support of the pro-life cause.

ORDER, BUT NO JUSTICE

This political segment of the program was concluded by the Hon. Won Pat, delegate from Guam, who likened the judicial tyranny of legalized abortion to the Japanese occupation of his homeland 34 years ago. Chairwoman Nellie Gray then introduced a group of clergymen whom she referred to as the "ecumenical panel." The lead-off speaker was Bishop James Rausch, general secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, who proposed a welfare

state package to alleviate the "causes" of abortion. Bishop Rausch was followed by the Episcopalian Fr. Charles Carroll, who is a specialist on the Nuremberg trials. Fr. Carroll's talk was undoubtedly the intellectual high point of the afternoon, as he attacked frontally the notion that morality is separable from law. "Divorce law from morality," he said, "and you may have law and order but not law and justice . . . divorce medicine from morality, and you will find that neither the doctor nor the patient defines what is good care, but the State . . . ask abortion and sterilization on demand for yourself, and you will find them granted to your fellows on demand of the State." Those who think that Nazi-style abuse "can't happen here," Fr. Carroll said, "should reflect upon the fact that such abuse is here already, wherever man is considered a conglomerate of chemicals and nothing more. It is here wherever people think it more humane to sacrifice the other rather than to sacrifice for the other."

The third member of the ecumenical panel was Rabbi David Novak of Baltimore. He urged Americans not to be like the residents of Shechem in the Bible, who "saw evil, knew about it, but did nothing."

Mrs. Jean Guilfoyle, member of the March Committee for Maryland and chairman of the project to deliver roses to members of Congress as a symbol of the victims of abortion, announced that over 16,500 red roses had been delivered.

Some late-arriving congressmen were introduced next and spoke briefly: Lindy Boggs (D., La.), widow of the powerful Hale Boggs; Larry McDonald (D., Ga.), a physician; and another freshman, Richard Nolan (D., Minn.). Nolan, a liberal, commented that last year's March for Life had been his second protest demonstration in Washington. The first, he said, was in '67 to protest the war in Indochina.

ROCKY'S DUPLICITY

John Short of New York, famous for his legal battles with Nassau County and for his work in Long Island Right to Life, gave a rock 'em, sock 'em introduction to the man who led the New York abortion law repeal fight: State Sen. James Donovan. Short insisted, to repeated roars from the crowd, upon the duplicity of Nelson Rockefeller, of which the latest example to be unearthed is a letter of March 7th, 1972, from Rockefeller's secretary to an organization called "The Ad Hoc Coalition for Medicaid Reimbursements for Elective Abortions." New York State law forbids Medicaid monies to be used for nontherapeutic abortions, but Rockefeller counseled this pressure group simply to drop the word "elective" and define all induced abortions as therapeutic, on the ground that "if an abortion has been performed by a qualified and reputable physician, it is assumed that in his judgment the operation was necessary. . . ." According to Short, this obviously disingenuous use of terms has allowed State welfare officials to defy the clear intent of the legislature; but just as importantly, Rockefeller's semantic juggling must be a clear sign to all right-to-life lawyers that only the toughest, most untwistable language can be employed in a human life amendment. "Many felt that an acceptable human life amendment could be one which in general terms afforded protection to human life," Short said. "The events in New York State, which began on March 7th, 1972, and ended ten days ago, Jan. 12th, 1975, in the direct and deliberate destruction of a seven-month-old, two-pound, four-ounce pre-born child (the Beth Israel case) have convinced all that we must not only enumerate that protection commences when fertilization commences, but that under no circumstances can we have an exception clause."

HITLER WOULD BE PROUD OF YOU

After the remarks of Short and Donovan, Nellie Gray gave directions to begin the March that would form a "Circle of Life" around the mile-long circumference of the Capitol grounds. Marching about five abreast, the head of the Circle rejoined tail before perhaps a good third of the crowd had ever moved. These late-starters were entertained meanwhile by an interesting assortment of folk and soft rock singing groups whose style underscored the predominantly youthful composition of the March.

The demonstrators carried a forest of signs and banners, mostly homemade, and some quite ingenious. A small child was labeled in capital letters, "I am a product of conception." Other signs quoted Karl Barth and

Dietrich Bonhoeffer. One said, "You don't have to be Roman Catholic to love life." Many signs stressed the Nazi theme: "Hey, Supreme Court, Hitler would be proud of you"; and even more sharply: "Hitler killed Jews; Uncle Sam kills babies." "Abortion is Child Abuse" was another common theme, as was the prediction that abortion would lead to euthanasia and thence to extermination of undesirables. The one sign read, "Abortion, Euthanasia, then who? . . . you!" This theme was stressed by every major speaker throughout the day, especially by Sen. Helms who had said, "First the young, then the aged. Then those who cannot adjust to changes in society. Then the political misfits."

When the acres of demonstrators had reassembled on the west side of the Capitol, about 4:30 p.m., a plane flew over to take aerial photographs. Nellie Gray recalled the rally to order and introduced various leaders of right-to-life organizations. Dr. Kenneth Van Derhoef, president of the National Right to Life Committee, denounced recent court decisions in his own State of Washington and called attention to the forthcoming trial of Dr. Kenneth Edelin in Boston.

Randy Engel, director of the U.S. Coalition for Life, spoke next, declaring "We are revolutionaries." Mrs. Engel led a delegation of the U.S.C.L. to the White House on Thursday, Jan. 23rd, for talks with aides to President Ford.

Feminists for Life were represented by Ms. Mary Gregor of New York, who read a letter from Pat Goltz, head of the Feminist organization and a refugee from N.O.W. Ms. Goltz roasted the "rich, male chauvinist industrialist playboys who want to manipulate the bodies of women" for free sex followed by abortion. "We have to stop being nice," Ms. Goltz darkly warned.

Dr. Edward C. Freiling spoke on behalf of Scientists for Life, a scholarly group based in Virginia. He attacked the situation ethic of "kill for kindness" which is not only perverse in itself but rapidly leads to "kill for profit" and to "kill to help the economy." He stressed that the beginning of human life at fertilization is a scientific fact "as incontestable as any fact known to science."

New York's popular congressman Mario Biaggi spoke next, praising the demonstrators as the best he had seen since coming to Congress. But he urged pro-life forces to steer clear of internal divisions and to "concentrate on one bill which we can all agree upon." Finding such a bill

has proved difficult, but the advice to avoid internal divisions was well-received on the platform, where the officers of the March were already saddened by the refusal of Marjory Mecklenburg and her splinter organization, the American Citizens Concerned for Life (ACCL), to support today's events. Mrs. Mecklenburg and company had advised people not to support the roses campaign, which alone generates the money to make the massive march possible. Instead of roses, Mrs. Mecklenburg's break-off group was buying food to give to CARE.

COMING POLITICAL STRATEGY

Bill Devlin, spokesman for the Long Island Coalition for Life and a member of the March Committee, outlined the political strategy for the coming year. This is two-pronged. First part is the "Magic Circle Plan" which would bring pro-life citizen lobbyists from different States on a rotating basis into the Halls of Congress every day that Congress is in session. The other part is a plan to activate pro-life workers in primary elections, "where anti-life politicians are most vulnerable." The lists of registered voters are to be obtained from local election boards (such lists are public property), and canvassing activity is to locate

the pro-life voters for mobilization on election day.

Similar nuts and bolts political advice was given by John Mawn, head of Families for Life. "Purge from Congress," he cried, "every immoral individual who will not protect a baby's right to life. Tell the Bella Abzugs and the Nelson Rockefeller they've had their day."

The final segment of the long day's program was devoted to the theme of "Celebrating Life." The

Rev. Lester Messerschmidt, chairman of Lutherans for Life, gave a parting blessing. Barbara Breuer-Sipple, well-known as a pro-life folk singer, led the demonstrators chorus after chorus. Thousands joined hands and swayed to the rhythm, their placards tossing like a tatterdemalion regatta on a heaving sea. It was a moment of effusion and communion, which seemed to cast a self-generated warmth into the gathering darkness of a cold January.