

"NOW's" Day Of Outrage More Of A Whine

By WILLIAM H. MARSHNER

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Members of the National Organization for Women (NOW), the Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, and the so-called Catholics for a Free Choice staged a three-hour protest march in front of the residence of the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Jean Jadot, on Sunday, May 11th — Mother's Day.

The purpose of the march was to celebrate a mother's legal right to kill her unborn children and to attack the Roman Catholic Church

for its alleged role in seeking to restrict this "right."

Billed as a "National Day of Outrage," the march had been planned since October of last year, according to NOW spokesperson Jeanne Clark. Ms. Clark strongly denied that the march had been organized as a response to the recent pastoral letter of San Diego's Bishop Maher. "No, Maher was reacting to us," she said. Ms. Clark served as Eastern regional mobilization coordinator for the march.

In other words, the "Day of Outrage" was designed as NOW's answer to the Jan. 22nd March for Life, which has been successfully held by right-to-life groups for the last two years. In light of that comparison, the May 11th protest appears to have been a dismal failure indeed. The D.C. metropolitan police official crowd estimate placed the number of marchers at between 600 and 800. The march organizers themselves claimed only about 2,000. By

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contrast, the 1975 March for Life drew close to 40,000 people.

Perhaps more people are attracted by red roses than by bloody coat hangers. For, with astonishingly poor taste, the "Day of Outrage" organizers chose the bloody coat hanger as the symbol for their march. Large, white buttons had been manufactured bearing this device in black, dripping red at one end. Most of the marchers wore this button along with others such as "BEAT THE FETUS FETISHISTS." In another maladroit move, the organizers had encouraged people to wear black shirts (supposedly in mourning for women killed by quack abortionists), despite the Fascist connotations.

Mourning for women "martyred" by quacks was supposed to be a major theme of this demonstration, but it disappeared in the marcher's predominant attitude of spiteful hilarity. "Two-four-six-eight, separate the Church and State!" "Eight-six-four-two, the Pope can't tell us what to do!" squealed the overwhelmingly female crowd in a tone of distinctly adolescent defiance like parochial schoolgirls who have ganged up to break the no smoking rule in chapel. These and other chants were kept going by cheerleaders (no less), middle-aged women doing rock'em, sock'em routines they must have learned at high school pep rallies. Most of the marchers appeared to be in their late 20s or early 30s. Only a handful were Black. There were very few men.

The homemade signs stressed two themes consistently: sex and the un-American nature of the Roman Catholic Church. Often the two themes were combined in the form of indecent suggestions about the Holy Father. Sometimes the message was purely nativist, as in the sign which said, "The Papacy is in contempt of the Supreme Court."

Early in April, a counterdemonstration had been planned by Catholic lay people loyal to the Church from several Eastern States. This was to be a show of loyalty to the hierarchy and appreciation for the pro-life stand of the clergy. The plan was cancelled abruptly, however, when the organizers were informed by Fr. Richard Pates, an aide to the Apostolic Delegate, that Archbishop Jadot was firmly opposed to any counteraction. The Archbishop made no comment on the "Day of Outrage" and granted no interviews either to the protestors or to the media.

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