

# PRO-LIFE REPORTER

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## Bishop McHugh and the March of Dimes Go On Trial!

### Newark Press Conference

On Wednesday, January 25, the Archdiocese of Newark — no stranger to ecclesiastical controversy — was the scene of a national press conference calling for an in-depth investigation of the antilife associations of Bishop James T. McHugh, Auxiliary Bishop of Newark.

The press conference, held at the Hilton Gateway, was jointly sponsored by the National Coalition of Clergy and Laity and the United States Coalition for Life and was well attended by the secular media and wire services and the Catholic press, a number of whom remained behind for additional information after the formal press statements were made.

Mary Kay Smith, President of the NCCL opened the conference with the announcement that the NCCL and USCL had issued a joint appeal to Cardinal Bernardin Gantin, Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, to conduct an investigation of Bishop McHugh's continued presence on the March of Dimes Bioethics Advisory Committee, which constitutes a growing scandal to Catholics in general and the prolife community in particular. The joint appeal not only calls for his removal from the March of Dimes national committee but the issuance of a public retraction of McHugh's support of the March of Dimes and the removal of McHugh's public and confidential statements and memos which continue to be used by the March of Dimes to fend off pro-life criticism and to garner Catholic support. "These pro-MOD statements were made during the 1970's when Bishop, then Monsignor, McHugh was Family Life Director and later Pro-Life Director for the U.S. Catholic Conference and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington, D.C.," she said.

Mrs. Smith noted that almost every prolife group in the nation has boycotted the March of Dimes for over a decade and a half and has soundly condemned its promotion and funding of "search and destroy" tactics which combine non-therapeutic prenatal diagnosis of non-treatable disorders with the selective abortion of affected children.

"In sharp contrast to prolife opposition to the March of Dimes," Mrs. Smith explained, "Bishop McHugh has consistently beat the drums for the pro-choice organization and has earned the label of 'neutralizer' in prolife circles."

Mrs. Smith expressed confidence that the documented charges against Bishop McHugh and the March of Dimes would be given a full airing by the Congregation for Bishops.

The NCCL President then introduced to the press corps the conference's three keynote speakers including Randy Engel, Director of the U.S. Coalition for Life; Suzanne Rini, author of *Beyond Abortion, A Chronicle of Fetal Experimentation*, and Professor William Marra of Fordham University and Chairman of NCCL's Advisory Committee.

### MOD Hazardous to Health

Mrs. Engel led off the assault on the March of Dimes with a general warning that many so-called "health" agencies are extremely "unhealthy" for children — born and unborn — since the main criteria for their success is "money collected to support inflated salaries and not for medical services rendered."

The USCL Director's opening statement was interrupted by members of the press corps and television staff reporters who demanded to know the exact nature of the charges against the March of Dimes and the role of Bishop McHugh in the March of Dimes controversy. One of the reporters expressed surprise that someone was attacking an organization which was "blue-chip" and "as American as apple pie."

Laying her formal statement aside, Mrs. Engel launched into a straight-forward litany of March of Dimes abuses including —

• **The March of Dimes funding of experimental research used to develop first and second trimester techniques of prenatal diagnosis such as fetoscopy and chorion villus sampling (CVS).**

Mrs. Engel explained that all such research was initially carried out on "TBA," that is, to be aborted pregnant patients, and that these techniques frequently were the cause of death of the unborn child rather than the subsequent abortion procedure.

"Further," she said, "such MOD-funded research was carried out while the ban on fetal experimentation was in effect because the National Institute of Health prohibition did not extend to private foundation grants."

• **"Secondly," Mrs. Engel stated, "the March of Dimes has and continues to fund and promote policies and programs related to non-therapeutic prenatal diagnosis in the first and second trimester or pregnancy for non-treatable disorders."**

At least seven times during her statement Mrs. Engel noted the differences between the licit use of amniocentesis during the third trimester of pregnancy for therapeutic purposes and the illicit use of amniocentesis and other techniques of prenatal diagnosis during the first and second trimester of pregnancy where the sole purpose of the test was to discover the presence of an affected child early enough for an abortion to take place.

Mrs. Engel quoted extensively from the Vatican's document, issued in 1987 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith titled *Instruction on Respect for Human Life in Its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation* which states in part that, "... any directive or programs of the civil and health authorities or of scientific organizations which in any way were to favor a link between prenatal diagnosis and abortion ... is to be condemned as a violation of the unborn child's right to life and as an abuse of the prior rights and duties of the spouses."

Mrs. Engel explained that both in its lobbying program on Capital Hill and in its public promotion of non-therapeutic prenatal diagnosis, the March of Dimes had singled out special groups of preborn children such as those affected by Down Syndrome and Tay Sachs disease, for a non-survivors policy and as a means of reducing public expenditures on the handicapped or mentally retarded.

• **"Thirdly," Mrs. Engel said "the March of Dimes was guilty of funding live non-therapeutic fetal experimentation and then attempting to cover up the fact with public relation doubletalk."**

When the Associated Press reporter asked Mrs. Engel to be more specific, Mrs. Engel gave a blow by blow description of the Adam grant funded by the March of Dimes and the National Institute of Health. According to the USCL director, the Adam case was well documented many years ago in a report issued by the USCL in 1976 titled *Who Will Defend Michael? — A Study of MOD Policies and Programs*.

After a brief explanation of hysterotomy and prostaglandin abortion techniques which deliver a live child, Mrs. Engel gave the grizzly details of Dr. Adam's experimentation on live aborted babies whose heads were "isolated" — that is severed, and then mounted on laboratory equipment designed to monitor fetal brain metabolism.

Asked if Bishop McHugh knew about the Adam grant and what was his response to such experimentation, Mrs. Engel replied that that was something the press corps should discuss with the bishop himself.

"Lastly," Mrs. Engel charged that, "the March of Dimes was involved in the promotion of abortion and other anti-life activities by its support of school based clinics designed to dispense birth control to minors and make abortion referrals." She cited two specific studies including an American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology *Report on Adolescent Health Problems* and a special report called *Inventing the Future* which the March of Dimes has promoted and/or funded in recent years.

Included in her charges against the March of Dimes was a statement from the January 5, 1989 issue of *The Pittsburgh Press* in which MOD National Science Information officer Richard Leavitt, is quoted as saying that March of Dimes grantees use the products of abortion and "we believe that the study of human fetal development requires the study of fetuses. And that means in some cases, aborted fetuses. And that is ethical as long as the abortion itself is not encouraged in any way." The response of Richard Leavitt, Mrs. Engel, explained, "Must be read in proper context, that is within the context of the previous paragraph of the article on the use of live aborted fetuses by Dr. Adam."

With regard to the role of Bishop McHugh in the March of Dimes controversy, Mrs. Engel concluded that he was "an agent of disinformation," "a neutralizer of prolife opposition," "a defamer of the Catholic conscience" and "a procurer of Catholic respectability for an anti-life organization which does not even admit to or respect the right to life of the unborn child."

Mrs. Engel said she would welcome an open and public debate on the issues of the March of Dimes and chided Bishop McHugh "for hiding behind ecclesiastical robes instead of coming out into the public arena and fighting like a man."

### MOD and Fetal Experimentation

Journalist Suzanne Rini, author of the prolife best seller, *Beyond Abortion — A Chronicle of Fetal Experimentation* in her statement on the March of Dimes identified the organization as being "a negative eugenic force that seeks to posit in this society the anti-democratic and completely inegalitarian principle that anyone who is defective should not be born," and charged that "the euphemistic propaganda of the March of Dimes is aimed at desensitizing Americans toward those with a wide range of incurable illnesses."

Mrs. Rini explained that the strength of her arguments against the March of Dimes were based on the fact that the statements she was about to make were quotes from well-favored and well-financed March of Dimes grantees and not from prolife critics.

Mrs. Rini cited the public testimony of long-time MOD grantee Dr. Aubrey Milunsky who testified before the National Commission on the Protection of Human Subjects of the NIH that,

"the birth of 7,667 chromosomally defective offspring in one year could ultimately cost society in excess of \$2 billion dollars — about thirty-two times the cost of prevention through prenatal diagnosis and therapeutic abortion. . . . in twenty years of present costs . . . this will have grown to about forty billion dollars. Amniocentesis and eugenic abortion for the 7,667 chromosomally defective offspring born to the 400,000 mothers over 35 in the U.S. would come to \$63.3 million."

Citing another well known MOD grantee, Dr. Henry Nadler of Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago, Mrs. Rini said that Dr. Nadler was one of the first MOD grantees to receive a grant to "find a safe and simple method of amniocentesis" specifically to detect the presence of cystic fibrosis in the preborn child. According to the Pittsburgh journalist, since there is no known cure for cystic fibrosis prenatally, there was no point in conducting the testing except for the purpose of eugenic abortion of affected children. Mrs. Rini also noted that a year before Dr. Nadler received his MOD grant, the first of many, that he betook himself to an institution for the retarded where he took "skin biopsies from five mongoloid children, eleven children with trisomy-18-syndrome and four children with trisomy D syndrome "in order to study the cellular and genetic composition of the cells as a prelude to the examination of such cells in the amniotic fluid obtained by amniocentesis in research he would be conducting with MOD money.

Mrs. Rini documents the body count of the Nadler experiments as follows: In a study of 155 pregnant women at risk, seven preborn children were found to be afflicted with Down's Syndrome and all were aborted. In another group of 82 women at risk because of maternal age, 2 affected children were found and both were aborted. One baby with Down's was found among another sub-group but was not aborted.

Mrs. Rini goes on to establish similar non-survival rates with other affected pre-born children suspected of carrying various x-linked diseases in other Nadler studies.

Reminding the press corps that "eugenics is the social use of science", Mrs. Rini drew attention to the fact that the promotion of eugenic abortion following prenatal diagnosis was a factor in the decline to truly therapeutic approaches to inherited disorders.

Mrs. Rini concluded her talk with an observation of Bishop McHugh's position as a Catholic priest by stating that "It seems we must now conclude in a possible roster of those who condone or undertake live fetal experimentation and the selective killing of the defective, a Catholic priest, who obviously has, by his own complicity or complacency, challenged his right to be denoted as either."

### Sex Education Issue Also Haunts McHugh

The issue of Bishop McHugh's involvement in sex education was also covered at the Newark press conference.

According to NCCL President Mary Kay Smith, "Bishop McHugh's failure to defend the Magisterium of the Church in the area of Neo-Modernist classroom Sex Education is a matter of public record — one which has caused untold heartache for countless parents and children. Once again we find him in the wrong camp, this time with the March of Dimes."

Dr. William Marra of Fordham University, in his press statement, gave details of Bishop McHugh's involvement in Sex Education from the late 1960s to the present time.

To the obvious delight of the press, Professor Marra minced no words in describing Bishop McHugh's role on a number of antilife organizations such as ASSECT (American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors and Therapists) and McHugh's promotion of SIECUS, a Planned Parenthood front group organized in 1964.

Labeling Bishop McHugh as "a swindler" and "a saboteur," Professor Marra said that "Bishop McHugh joins these things (i.e. antilife organizations), telling us he is going to give them a Catholic presence . . . The man is a disgrace and the fact that he has had such an enormous influence in America in the last fifteen years shows how sick the Catholic Church is in this country."

In his formal text, Professor Marra documented Bishop McHugh's critical role in the introduction of Neo-Modernist classroom sex education into the Catholic classroom and CCD classes.

Dr. Marra concluded his talk with the hope that the Vatican would include in its investigation of Bishop McHugh's antilife associations a thorough examination of his promotion of Neo-Modernist sex education texts including the newest assault on Catholic children by the Benzinger Publishing Company titled — *Family Life Series*, which would be hitting many Catholic schools this Fall.

### Secular Press Covers Press Conference

Following the joint NCCL-USCL press conference, representatives of the March of Dimes national office and the Archdiocese of Newark were contacted by the press corps to respond to the charges made against the March of Dimes and Bishop James McHugh.

According to reporter Al Frank of *The Star Ledger* Marsha Stein speaking from the national headquarters of the MOD in White Plains, N.Y. stated that her organization did not promote non-therapeutic prenatal diagnosis or fund live fetal experimentation, but acknowledged that Bishop McHugh was a member of their Bioethics Advisory Committee.

Reporting for the Bergen County *RECORD*, Staff writer Joseph Kelly quotes Richard Leavitt of the March of Dimes as saying that the MOD did fund the Adam grant for one year but denied that live human fetuses were used in the Adam grant and said that the MOD withdrew its funding because it objected "to the study's methods."

Mrs. Engel refuted the Leavitt statement however by charging that "the March of Dimes is flat out lying" because, "the grant contract of Dr. Peter Adam indicated not only that live human subjects would be used in the MOD-NIH research project but explicitly details the abortion procedure and how the "isolation" that is the severing of the babies heads, would be accomplished."

"If Bishop McHugh or the March of Dimes have a different version of the Adam grant contract I am sure they will have no problem in showing it to Cardinal Gantin's investigation committee as part of their evidence," Mrs. Engel said in remarks following the press conference.

### McHugh Refuses Comment

Unlike the March of Dimes, Bishop McHugh declined public comment but Michael Hurley, Director of Communications for the Archdiocese of Newark issued a statement on behalf of McHugh saying, "the charges do not merit credibility or response."

Hurley, noting Bishop McHugh's former role as Family Life Director and Pro-life Director for the USCC/NCCB, charges that McHugh's critics were doing "a great disservice to all those defending the unborn," but made no comments on the specific charges leveled against the March of Dimes or on the issue of McHugh's role in promoting Sex Education and SIECUS and ASSECT in Catholic schools.

The press conference received no coverage from the National Catholic News Services and was blocked out in all diocesan papers in New Jersey.

### USCL-NCCL Welcomes Public Airing of Issues

Summarizing the effectiveness of the joint NCCL-USCC Newark press conference, Richard J. Lloyd, Vice-President of the National Coalition of Clergy and Laity which is composed of ten regional coalitions operating in thirty-four states said, "We in the NCCL are deeply gratified that this controversy has been given a public hearing at last."

"We are also appreciative of Mrs. Engel's devastating critique of the March of Dimes anti-life policies, research and medical services programs given to the press corps at the conference.

"If Bishop McHugh acting through the Archdiocese of Newark and the March of Dimes refuse to answer the specific charges leveled against them, Catholics must assume that it is because they do not have the evidence to compete with Mrs. Engel's documentation," the NCCL leader stated.

"On the matter of the identification of the NCCL as an "ultra-conservative" group by the Associated Press which also stated we have "a disproportionately large amount of power within the Vatican because the group adheres strictly to the teachings of the Church in Rome," Mr. Lloyd said, "We certainly thank A.P. for letting people know that we are faithful servants of the Church, but we wonder out loud if such a position marks us as "ultra-conservative" since it is our understanding that following the Magisterium of the Church is the normative behavior for the Faithful and not the exception."

Mr. Lloyd said that his group never claimed to have any "large amount of power" as reported by the Associated Press, but that "he and other NCCL advisors have been to Rome on numerous occasions to promote the agenda of the NCCL which is the full restoration of the Faith in the United States and abroad."

Both the USCL and NCCL expressed confidence in the Vatican's ability to adjudicate the charges brought against Bishop McHugh in relationship to the March of Dimes and other related prolife areas including classroom sex education, "In the meantime, we expect that Archbishop McCarrick, despite the embarrassment he or the diocese may be suffering as a result of the McHugh-March of Dimes scandal, will put the welfare of the Faithful and the Church first and announce his willingness to cooperate with the Holy See in its investigation of the charges brought against Bishop McHugh by the NCCL-USCL," Mr Lloyd concluded.

Randy Engel, Director of the U.S. Coalition for Life said the USCL would be issuing an update on March of Dimes anti-life policies, research and medical programs beginning in the Spring of 1989 in its official publication — *The Prolife Reporter*.

\*For complete texts of the Engel, Rini and Marra press conference statements (1/25/89) contact:

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\*\*USCL, *Backgrounder* on MOD controversy containing key documents and statement on fetal experimentation and prenatal diagnosis and an audio-tape by Randy Engel, updating the March of Dimes charges is available from the USCL office for \$15.00 (incl. postage and handling). Make checks payable to the U.S. Coalition for Life.

\*\*\**Beyond Abortion — A Chronicle of Fetal Experimentation* by Suzanne Rini, contains numerous MOD references and citations. It is available from Magnificat Press, Avon, N.J. Price \$7.95 plus postage and handling.

Additional copies are available for a fee of 3 copies for \$1.00.