



Who will defend Michael?



Seven-year old Michael Policastro is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Policastro of Murrysville, Pennsylvania. Michael was born on February 15, 1969 with Down's Syndrome.

Michael is truly an exceptional child with an exceptional family and an exceptional educational background.

Thomas and Patricia Policastro are officers of the U.S. Coalition for Life and outspoken advocates in the defense of the retarded and handicapped child and his family.

Michael's brother John Philippe and sister Mary Alice are mini-reflections of their parents love and concern for all children — born and unborn — and most especially for little Michael.

Michael received his pre-school education and training from St. Peter's Development Center in Monroeville and is currently enrolled at the Clelian Heights School for Exceptional Children in Greensburg.



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U.S. COALITION FOR LIFE

SPECIAL REPORT ON THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION MARCH OF DIMES



PREFACE

A professional fund raiser once observed enviously that **BASIL O'CONNOR** — Franklin D. Roosevelt's law partner and the first president of the **National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis** which was incorporated in 1938 to lead, direct and unify the fight against polio — “had an unbeatable combination. *He had the kid in the wheelchair, the heart-throb without which you can't raise a sou in this country. He had the sponsorship of Franklin D. Roosevelt. He had the disease that everyone was afraid of.*”¹

One might also add the National Foundation had a snappy “memory-arresting” slogan coined by the Late Eddie Cantor at the NF strategy meeting in Hollywood. “We could ask the people to send their dimes directly to the president at the White House,” said Cantor. “Think what a thrill the people would get . . . and we could call it the **March of Dimes!**”²

And the dimes added up quickly — from \$1.8 million in 1938 to almost \$67 million in 1955. Amidst a virtual financial wasteland for medical researchers, O'Connor's organization would provide a lucrative financial oasis for the handful of scientists selected by the NF's influential Advisory Committees. In return the Foundation accepted the mantle of scientific respectability and prestige, essential ingredients for a successful fund raising campaign and effective alliance between the contributing public, volunteers, and the medical and scientific community.

The Salk Controversy

On April 12, 1955 — the tenth anniversary of Roosevelt's death — and the seventeenth anniversary of the founding of the National Foundation — America

greeted with traditional fanfare, the news that the Salk vaccine — developed with funds wholly supplied by the March of Dimes — was pronounced **safe, potent** and **effective** against the child-crippler — **POLIO**.

Truly a major chapter in the history of medicine in America had been written, yet only a handful of medical professionals and laymen would appreciate its significance and impact on the future of medicine in the United States. One of those rare individuals was Dr. Herbert Ratner, who was Director of Public Health of Oak Park, Illinois and a vocal critic of the Salk vaccine.

The following excerpts were taken from an interview conducted by Donald McDonald, Dean-elect of the College of Journalism of Marquette University, with Dr. Ratner for the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions — the Fund for the Republic, Inc., which authorized a study of the American Character, in 1960. This ageless treatise on medicine received national acclaim at the time of its publication and was subsequently published in **Child & Family** quarterly some twelve years later. In the fourth and concluding installment of the McDonald interview on the traditional and contemporary state of the healing arts, Dr. Ratner warns of what can happen to the physician's professional freedom when “national health agencies prescribe directly to the public via the mass media, and utilize fear and impending drug shortages to motivate public action,”³ as reflected in the Salk vaccine campaign.

According to Dr. Ratner, the American Medical Association's initial caution on the safety and/or effectiveness of the Salk polio vaccine and its unwillingness to approve of the drug for mass inoculation before reviewing the Francis Report, containing the results and data of the Salk filled trials, was the correct approach.

The Abortion Controversy

“But the National Foundation, through a tremendous public relations effort, ultimately isolated the AMA and the physicians of America, picturing them to the public as a group so concerned with preserving their vested interests that they were willing to let children go without this vaccine and become paralyzed.”⁴ The AMA along with the U.S. Public Health Service and other influential lay groups finally capitulated to the National Foundation was decidedly a political rather than medical act.

“... the American physician was converted into a technician, a pharmacist's mate... there were physicians who suffered from this, physicians who refused to use a vaccine they had doubts about, doubts, incidentally, that were later confirmed — and who refused to be pressured... by newspaper headlines or mass communication slogans.”

“... Reputations were in jeopardy, and there was concern over the liability for vaccine-induced cases.” And, contrary to public relations jargon the vaccine was **not** “one of the simplest biological preparations to make” but rather it was later recognized by the PHS and the courts to be “one of the most complex biological preparations ever to be made.”⁵

Dr. Ratner was careful to point out that the central issue of the controversy was **NOT** the Salk vaccine *per se* nor the personal integrity of Dr. Salk but rather the dangers posed to American medicine by the growing concentration of scientific power in the hands of the few, and the **uncontrolled growth and influence of voluntary health agencies and drug houses**. He notes that Americans as a whole show none of the wholesome wariness towards governmental (and voluntary) health agencies that they might show, for the Pentagon, let's say, and have difficulty conceiving that such important national agencies might be **wrong about health**.⁶

Vaccine Politics

It is a matter of public record that during the scientific fervor over the safety and effectiveness of the Salk formalin-killed vaccine as opposed to the live Sabin vaccine (note: between 1953-1961 the NF supported the Sabin studies with grants of \$1.19 million), the powerful National Foundation ran roughshod over its critics including their own researchers such as Dr. Albert Sabin and concerned public health officials such as Dr. Ratner.

One can glean some insight into the intensity of the intrigue by pro-National Foundation and pro-Salk biographer Richard Carter's rather startling admission that “During the difficult years of 1963 and 1954, when meaningful national trials of the Salk vaccine depended on public confidence in the merits of the undertaking, the National Foundation found it necessary to establish a kind of intelligence network to keep itself posted on Sabin's negative utterances at Medical meetings and press conferences.”⁷

History would eventually exonerate the Sabins and the Ratners of the day against the accusations, and the threats, and public relations barbs of the National Foundation. The Salk vaccine is no longer in use having given way to the Sabin vaccine some years ago.^{8*}

Today, the National Foundation-March of Dimes finds itself embroiled in still another controversy — this time — the debate centers upon the National Foundation's promotion of amniocentesis and intrauterine diagnosis combined with selective related abortion-oriented research and service programs. Yet the Salk experience and the current abortion controversy are not without similarities.

1. **The heavy handedness of the Foundation** towards its Pro-Life critics as exhibited by the Voss memo on **PRO-LIFE AGITATION** —
2. **its insistence that charges made against the NF-MOD are totally without sustance** and are “irresponsible” —
3. **its clever playoff of its Catholic antagonists against the Catholic hierarchy** —
4. and perhaps most importantly — **the repeated refusal of Foundation officials** to face up to its responsibilities and obligations and the challenges posed by medical technical advances — which threaten to subvert the traditional role of the physicians and allied health professionals as healers and teachers, and turn doctors into mere technicians of the State — devoid of personal responsibility and of *caritas*, of love and “anything less than love in the medical act is pretty inhuman.”⁹ **All give witness** to the proposition that the time honored lessons to be learned from the Salk debacle have not been learned at all — neither by the National Foundation, nor the medical profession nor government health officials nor the American public. Yet learn we must — If not by our own seeking then by history's imposition of eternal truths — as was the case in Nazi Germany.

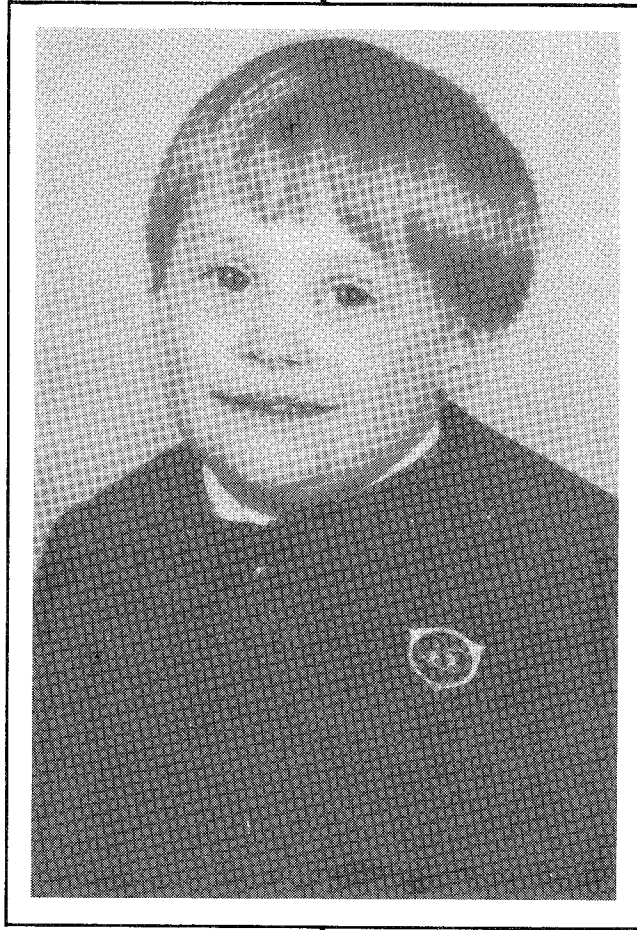
* According to a Scripps-Howard / Washington, D.C. news story released on September 24, 1976 in the **Pittsburgh Press**, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare will convene a new national conference on vaccines, which will consider — among other things — the use of the Salk vaccine in the United States.

FOOTNOTES

1. Richard Carter **Breakthrough-The Saga on Jonas Salk** — (Trident Press, N.Y.) 1966 p. 17
2. *Ibid* p. 17
3. Interview on Medicine — Part IV — **Child and Family** Vol. II No. 4 1972 — III. p. 365
4. *Ibid* p. 364
5. *Ibid* p. 365
6. *Ibid* p. 365
7. Carter, R. p. 144
8. For a detailed debate on the medi-politico aspects of the vaccine see “The Present Status of Polio Vaccines”, **Illinois Medical Journal**, Vol. 118, No. 2, August, 1960.
9. Ratner Interview — pt. IV p. 371

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INTRODUCTION

On March 16, 1976, George P. Voss, vice-president for public relations — NF-MOD, issued a lengthy memorandum from the National Foundation Headquarters in New York to all NF-MOD chapter executives and field staff re: **PRO-LIFE PROBELM** subtitled “**Pro-Life Agitation.**” We reprint here the cover sheet and complete text of the Voss memorandum, with a description of the accompanying attachments.

COVER LETTER

“Enclosed find material that may be of help should a chapter encounter Pro-Life resistance.

Although a number of you have not had any problem, we suggest you file this material against the possible day.”

THE VOSS MEMORANDUM — PRO-LIFE AGITATION

The Pro-Life agitation against the March of Dimes has caused a number of our chapters to ask, “How Do You Handle It?”

Because the agitation is often based on different premises in different cities we have attempted to indicate the types of different responses.

At the onset, we should all understand that the more zealous pro-lifers will remain unconvinced that the Foundation is not promoting abortion. This being the case, our efforts should be directed to that majority of our citizens and their leaders who will give fair hearing to the evidence that March of Dimes programs are dedicated to protection of the fetus and improvement of the outcome of pregnancy.

With many Walkathons coming up this Spring, we anticipate that pro-lifers will attempt to persuade Catholic parishes and schools to boycott this important event. If a boycott or other obstructive steps are taken in your area, you should make sure that pastors and principals are aware of the Church’s policy concerning the March of Dimes.

The Church’s policy, first issued in 1973 and reaffirmed this year, was stated by Cardinal Cody of Chicago on behalf of the National Council of Catholic Bishops. Very simply it is this; no Catholic need contribute time or money to our work, but any Catholic who wishes to may do so in good conscience. A pastor or principal can verify the position by calling Msgr. James McHugh, Director of the Bishops Pro-Life Committee in Washington, D.C., phone (202) 659-6673.

In Michigan the pro-life group circularized the pastors and principals suggesting the March of Dimes be boycotted. Our people reacted promptly and effectively by circularizing the same group with a letter from the State Campaign Chairman (enclosure #1)¹ and the Detroit Chapter sent its own letter from the Chairman (enclosure #2)² with a copy of a letter from the Family Life Bureau in Detroit (enclosure #3)³.

Aside from potential boycotts, we must deal with misinformation directed by pro-lifers at the populace in general. One such piece is their statement that we can’t

be neutral on abortion since we fund people who are pro-abortion. Enclosed you will find our response (enclosure #4)⁴ to be used with clubs, organizations, civil leaderships in whatever community this assertion is made.

Then, too, a favorite line in pro-lifer publications is the one in which they assert that we’re all right in the way we promote the care of newborns, but that we “abandon the defective unborn.” The implication is that the National Foundation doesn’t really do anything for the unborn. In another enclosure (enclosure #5)⁵ accompanying this memo you will find a piece that outlines exactly our concern for the unborn and what we are attempting to do for them.

As to the question of amniocentesis, **now** known among certain pro-life critics as our “search and destroy missions:”, you all have the results of a survey we did last year on the outcome of amniocentesis. They were impressive and definitely bore out our contention that the technique is most often a life saving one. Use the survey — not necessarily to try to convince a pro-lifer (he won’t be), but with the general public. Use the film, “Now That April’s Here,” with clubs and organizations. And after you screen it for them, quote Dr. Sydney Gellis of the department of pediatrics, Lufts School of Medicine in Boston. “As more and more of these metabolic abnormalities turn up, there will be increasing numbers for which there is a specific therapy,” Dr. Gellis says. “Increasingly we shall be looking upon amniocentesis as a technique to support and improve the state of the fetus. Just as it is becoming routine to get a sample of blood from a baby during a mother’s labor, so will amniocentesis be used more and more as a means of determining metabolic errors and correcting them during the critical period of rapid growth of the fetus inside the mother.”

Finally, have you discussed with your Catholic school system the inclusion of the Nutrition Curriculum Guide in their curricula. It was developed, with a grant from the March of Dimes, by the Catholic University of America. This and other health education materials should provide a **fine method of entry to the school.** (Emphasis added)

Summary of Attachments to Voss Memorandum

1. Letter dated February 11, 1976 **from** William Gallagher, 1976 NF-MOD Michigan Campaign Chairman **to** all Bishops in Michigan Diocese. Mr. Gallagher states that Michigan Citizens for Life charges that the NF-MOD has "sponsored abortion clinics, etc.," and promoted abortion through amniocentesis, are untrue. In contrast, he notes that Msgr. McHugh's investigative findings on behalf of the Bishops' Pro-Life Activities Committee support the March of Dimes program. Mr. Gallagher urges the Michigan Catholic Bishops to offset the MCL campaign by issuing a Diocesan statement on the matter for all parishes.
2. Letter dated February 4, 1976 **from** Richard T. Kelly, Metropolitan Detroit Chapter NF-MOD **to** pastors or principals of parochial schools in Detroit. Mr. Kelly states that John Cardinal Dearden, Archbishop, Diocese of Detroit in a letter of January 30, 1976, assures him that "the action taken by Lifespan in communicating with the parishes of the Archdiocese was done without my knowledge and without my approval. It is clearly not an action that would have been endorsed." Mr. Kelly decries the of Lifespan (MCL) to "cripple" the great works of the MOD by allegedly spreading errors and "irresponsible" charges which misrepresent MOD goals and concerns.
3. Letter dated January 22, 1976 **from** Cornelius J. Van der Poel, S.C. Sp., Director, Family Life Division, Diocese of Detroit **to** Mr. Kelly. Rev. Poel reiterates that Msgr. McHugh — U.S. Catholic Conference Pro-Life Office statement that his (McHugh) investigations assured him that the MOD is not involved in funding "abortion-oriented research projects," and that if abortions were performed after research or after the performance of amniocentesis this was the responsibility of individual physicians. Rev. Poel notes that in his "personal" opinion Msgr. McHugh's original statement of 1973 on the MOD was still valid and that he sincerely hoped the Lifespan action "will not hurt the health and life of many persons who benefit by the research which is made possible through the fundings of the March of Dimes." In a subsequent letter of February 3, 1976, Rev. Poel authorizes the above text to be utilized by Mr. Kelly for the good of the MOD and circulated throughout the parishes of the archdiocese.

4. NF-MOD Statement — **ABOUT GRANTEES WHO MAY BE PRO-ABORTION.** This memo notes that the NF maintains a "neutral" stance with respect to abortion . . . "Legal abortion is outside the Foundation's purview," etc. It concludes, "We observe the laws of the land and under those laws we will not discriminate against one segment (of a pluralistic society) or another because a difference of opinion exists between them."
5. NF-MOD Memo — **HOW THE MARCH OF DIMES PROTECTS THE UNBORN BABY.** A listing of NF-MOD medical service grants for perinatal services and research for fetal diagnosis and treatment.

About This Report

THE VOSS MEMORANDUM is, I believe, an accurate reflection of the National Foundation — March of Dimes public relations back-lash to increasing Pro-Life concerns with specific NF-MOD policies, service and research programs and funding in the United States and abroad.

Since its founding in September 1972, Pro-Life requests to the U.S. Coalition for Life for information on the NF-MOD controversy have out numbered all other requests **combined**. Clearly this investigative report on the NF-MOD is long overdue, and my apologies to those who have been so patient in awaiting its completion.

The bulk of this report covers the NF-MOD policies, programs and research over a nine year period — 1968-1976. Preliminary preparations and interviews for the first section has consumed more than 270 research hours and I expect more than 400 hours will be expended before the final section of this report goes to press.



Part I. of "Who Will Defend Michael?" is designed to give our readers a working frame of reference with regard to past and current Foundation policies, programs and research in the areas of prenatal defects and diagnosis and treatment. Part II will cover specific anti-life programs and research funded by and through the National Foundation and examine the basic moral and philosophical issues which lie at the heart of the March of Dimes controversy.

A special note of appreciation to Father Paul Marx, Director of the Human Life Center, Colledgeville, Minnesota and to all the prolife contributors who made this report possible. And to our Coalition volunteer secretarial staff, Patricia Malay and Barbara Kehew for their invaluable assistance in the preparation of this manuscript.

Also, I would like to thank Andrea Caruso of the Division of Health Information and School Relations of the National Foundation-March of Dimes Headquarters in White Plains, N.Y. for her cooperation in supplying this writer with **Facts** booklets and other literature published by the Foundation which made it possible to gain an overall perspective on the NF-MOD programs, policies and research.

RANDY ENGEL
Editor
The Prolife Reporter

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