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Date: May 13, 1971

To : News Media

From: Board of Directors, NCFR

NCFR STATES POSITION ON ABORTION

Due to growing concern over the issue of abortion in this country, the NCFR has prepared a major statement on this controversial topic. Because of the moral and political implications of this growing phenomenon, both within the country and within the organization, a minority report was also prepared. The major position was supported by 70% of the membership, while the dissenting view was held by 26%, with 4% approving neither position. It is hoped that such statements of professional opinion will encourage increased public awareness of the feasibility and necessity for change in the legal and medical aspects of this problem.

MAJOR POSITION

The NCFR is vitally concerned with individual and family mental health. Growing out of this concern is increasing anxiety over the number of unwanted pregnancies which are occurring in this country, and the multitude of problems these pregnancies are creating for individuals and families in America.

First, unwanted pregnancies restrict the right of couples to postpone parenthood, to space their children or to limit the size of their family.

Second, unwanted pregnancies push many couples into marriage and parenthood before they are prepared for or desirous of either.

Third, unwanted pregnancies often create further problems in the relationship between the parents and the child.

Fourth, unwanted children add greatly to the growing problem of over-population.

Fifth, unwanted pregnancies cause needless suffering and death for many women, especially the poor, because they feel forced to seek abortions from medically untrained persons.

QUARTERLIES JOURNAL OF MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY
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THE FAMILY COORDINATOR: JOURNAL OF EDUCATION, COUNSELING, AND SERVICES

Because of these and other related problems created by unwanted pregnancies, the NCFR recommends that increased attention be given to improving and expanding programs in contraceptive education and family planning.

While the National Council supports family planning education as a preventative approach, it also strongly endorses the repeal of all laws which prohibit safe medical abortion in this country. It further recommends that abortion be the legal right of all women and should be a private matter between a woman and her physician.

MINORITY REPORT

Many members of the NCFR, while they are equally concerned with the negative consequences of unwanted pregnancies and equally committed to education and information which is calculated to help people make wiser uses of sex and contraception, nevertheless cannot subscribe to the policy of favoring the repeal of all laws prohibiting abortion. Not all object for the same reasons, but most could subscribe to one or more of the following:

1) They place a high premium on life, the life of the fetus as well as the life of the mother. The effect of uncontrolled social approval of the right of private individuals to end fetal life is to undermine this fundamental social and religious value.

2) They recognize the responsibility of every society to regulate the sexual and reproductive behavior of its members for the common good. They believe that the best social policies are those which balance individual welfare against the welfare of the general community. If, in the past, abortion laws have been subversive of the welfare of individuals, it would be better policy to reformulate the laws rather than revoke them, abnegating social responsibility in this vital area.

3) They have observed that nations which have adopted unrestricted abortion as a policy have often found themselves with as many new problems as they had hoped to solve. A number of Eastern European nations, including Hungary and the Soviet Union are considering a reversal of their liberal abortion policies because the ratio of abortion to live births has risen so precipitously.