

## WOMEN

# Congress makes abortion deal

By Mary Eisner Eccles  
Congressional Quarterly

**W**ASHINGTON—A bitter five-month struggle over the use of federal funds for abortion ended Dec. 7 when the House and Senate finally agreed on a compromise position.

The agreement enabled final passage of \$60.2 billion of fiscal 1978 appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health, Education and Welfare and related agencies. It came just in time to avert cuts in the mid-December paychecks of some 240,000 employees in the affected agencies.

The breakthrough came when the House voted 181-167 to partially loosen restrictions on payment of Medicaid money for abortions for low-income women in cases of rape, incest and severe physical illness.

The Senate, despite its long-standing preference for a more lenient policy, quickly approved the new wording by voice vote the same day.

Some attributed the abortion agreement as much to members' weariness, frustration and the desire to adjourn as to the actual wording of the final provision.

## Provisions.

In their long search for compromise language on abortion, members of both houses agonized over practically every word and punctuation mark. While the House adamantly resisted major changes in an anti-abortion provision enacted in 1976, which permitted federal funding of abortions only in cases of danger to the life of the mother, the Senate wanted to make exceptions for women with other medical reasons for seeking abortions, as well as for victims of rape or incest.

Briefly, the final provisions:

- Prohibited the use of any funds in the bill to pay for abortions unless continued pregnancy would endanger the mother's life or, in the opinion of two doctors, cause the woman to suffer "severe and long-lasting physical health damage."

- Permitted funds for "medical procedures" to treat victims of rape or incest if the offenses have been promptly reported to police or to a public health agency.

- Permitted payments for birth control drugs or devices and for operations to terminate tubal pregnancies.

Though nearly all expressed some disappointment with the result, leading participants on both sides of the abortion issue acknowledged that much still depends on HEW's interpretation of the law.

"It's restrictive," Henry J. Hyde (R-IL), chief sponsor of the original House abortion amendment, said of the final version. "If honestly administered, it will cut down on elective abortions."

Advocates of a less restrictive provision, however, sought to clarify the compromise language differently. Prior to Senate approval Dec. 7, Edward W. Brooke (R-Mass) and Warren G. Magnuson (D-Wash) stressed permissive interpretations of both the rape/incest and health damage exceptions—which had posed major sticking points all along in the House.

When pressed on most of the same issues during House debate, supporters of the compromise tended to offer narrower explanations. Minority Whip Robert H. Michel (R-IL), for example, suggested a 30-day period for reporting and treating instances of rape or incest, limited the health exception to "a condition that was pre-existing at the time of pregnancy," and declined to include abortion within the scope of "medical procedures" permitted under either the rape/incest or health damage exceptions.

## Concern over regulations.

Groups favoring maximum choice over abortion decisions were most concerned about the kind of regulations HEW would write.

According to Ellen Leitzer of the American Civil Liberties Union, the existence of contradictory statements from the two



Although right-to-life groups had reservations about the deal, they still considered it a two-thirds victory and vowed they would be back next year to win it all.

houses gave HEW Secretary Joseph A. Califano Jr., an outspoken opponent of abortion, an excuse to ignore much of the legislative history if he chose.

Beyond that, explained Leitzer, an attorney involved in a legal challenge to the fiscal 1977 anti-abortion provision, all of the debate on the new language—by spelling out each excepted circumstance—could produce a narrower court interpretation as well.

Pro-choice groups generally denounced the provision, claiming that all the compromising had been done by their side. "We've been losing sight of just how narrow this really is," said Carolyn Bode of the Women's Lobby, objecting to the ways Congress had chosen to qualify the exceptions for rape, incest and ill health.

The 20,000-member National Abor-

tion Rights Action League (NARAL) attacked the wording as "inhumane and quite possibly unconstitutional."

"It's not fair to ask a woman on Medicaid to understand all of the ramifications of this legislation," a NARAL spokesman added. She said she doubted many would promptly report rape or incest or would find two doctors to certify that their health was poor enough.

Still, opponents tended to see some improvement over the fiscal 1977 law. "At least it goes beyond the restrictive language of last year," said Marilyn D. Clancy, legislative chair of the National Women's Political Caucus.

"But it's really a poor way to legislate," added Clancy, who unsuccessfully challenged Hyde for Congress in 1976. "One of the main reasons we got a compromise

at all was the pressure to adjourn and their [the members'] desire to just get it over with."

Right-to-life groups also had reservations about the final provision. "It's maybe a two-thirds victory for us," said William Cox, executive director of the National Committee for a Human Life Amendment.

Hyde and his pro-life supporters vowed to continue to press for more restrictive language next year, on the Labor-HEW appropriations bill or other legislative vehicles. "The most important aspect of this entire thing is that the pro-life movement established itself as a major political force in this Congress," said Cox. "We'll come back much wiser and better prepared to get a narrower provision next year."

## RELIGION

# God is on the side of the poor.

**By Juli Loesch**  
Delegates at the Third Inter-American Conference of Major Religious Superiors, representing 300,000 Catholic religious order members in the Western Hemisphere, met during the last week of November in Montreal to proclaim, "God is on the side of the poor."

The gathering of sisters, nuns, priests and brothers from Latin America, Canada and the U.S. marked a significant shift in religious life on the two continents toward a bold commitment to justice and liberation. Groups participating were the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, representing 165,000 religious sisters and nuns in the U.S.; the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, representing priests and brothers in the religious orders (Franciscans, Jesuits, etc.); the Confederacion Latino-Americana de Religiosos; and the Conference Religieuse Canadienne.

The meeting emphasized the solidarity between the North American leadership and the "liberation theologians" of Latin America, many of whom derive their economic and social analysis from Marx and other sources long considered incompatible with the Catholic church.

Dominican Father Jean-Marie Roger Tillard, Canadian spiritual writer, called on the religious of Latin America to "energetically challenge their North American brothers and sisters who are

sometimes so proud of a secularization which has often been nothing but a facile acceptance of a comfortable, mediocre lifestyle."

Throughout history the work of the religious orders has evolved to serve the needs of the church—and of society at large. According to Sister Joan Chittister, past president of the LCWR, for a long time the focus was to "defend the faith" from a society perceived as hostile, or to "preach the faith" to a society perceived as faithless. That the religious orders now see justice for the poor and oppressed as their primary work and goal marks, says Chittister, "a turning point which will have a tremendous impact on the immediate future of the religious in the three cultures."

In Argentina, Nicaragua, Chile and other Latin American countries, the rift between the Catholic church and the ruling cliques has become so pronounced that thousands of church workers associated with Maryknoll, the Franciscan order, and other religious societies have been imprisoned, expelled or assassinated by government-sponsored terrorist squads. Catholic teachers associated with the poor are kept under surveillance; Catholic radio programs and newspapers have been closed down for "subversion" (which usually means voicing the concerns of the unemployed, the hungry, the Indians and campesinos).

The religious in North America face another challenge: not repression, but marginalization. In the U.S. Catholic sisters and priests have long been involved in traditional social service institutions: they run thousands of schools, hospitals, orphanages, homes for the aged, and so on. The Canadian delegation cautioned their American religious colleagues to foresee what would happen if all these works were taken over by the government by a wide development of the welfare state—as has been done in Canada in the last 20 years. In this case religious life would be "marginalized" unless it were ready to transform itself through a radical new view of its mission.

According to Sister Mary Daniel Turner, conference coordinator, the week-long discussion of this "radical new view" brought "deep interaction between men and women, North and South, dreamers and pragmatists."

Canadian and Latin American speakers called for a unified program to challenge "the social, economic, and political factors which undergird poverty," while the American delegates pledged to mobilize their hundreds of thousands of constituents toward a more "prophetic" critical view of the structures of injustice in the U.S.

Juli Loesch is a member of PAX, a Christian center for non-violence in Erie, Pa.



## LABOR

# A well orchestrated convention

By Sam Kushner

**L**OS ANGELES—There were no dissidents on the floor of the 12th Biennial Convention of the AFL-CIO. It was a "well orchestrated" meeting, in the words of one delegate. Those who had differences kept them to themselves or just talked about them in the corridors.

Those who looked for winds—or even slight breezes—of change in the hierarchy of the AFL-CIO, from which most of the 277 convention delegates came, had cause to be bitterly disappointed. The apparent unanimity behind AFL-CIO President George Meany lasted throughout the three and a half day convention.

One seventh of the convention time, an entire morning session, was devoted to attacks on the Soviet Union. Vladimir Bukovsky, a Soviet dissident touring the country as an AFL-CIO guest, made a major address.

He was followed by AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Lane Kirkland, Meany's likely successor, who described how the federation had put the Soviets on the spot by inviting prominent dissidents to address the convention. None were given visas by the Soviet authorities.

(By comparison, discussion of repression in South Africa was relegated to an amendment to an omnibus resolution on world affairs, considered in the closing hours of the convention. South African unions had three fraternal delegates at the meeting.)

While the convention was generous in the time allotted to Soviet dissidence, it was stingy with other things, even the reelection of Meany and Kirkland. The election took about a half hour, most of which was devoted to flowery speeches in praise of the 83-year-old Meany.

The president was voted a \$20,000 annual salary (to \$110,000) and Kirkland had his salary upped to \$90,000 (from \$60,000). Meanwhile, dues were raised for the federation's 13.7 million members, who will have to pay 15 cents per capita as compared to 13 cents now.

The increase was necessary, officials said, to compensate for an expected loss of \$500,000 in the last six months of this year and because the federation has lost half a million members since its last meeting.

## Not everyone was pleased.

Not all delegates were pleased with the proceedings, despite the lack of protest from the convention floor. In several interviews with *IN THESE TIMES*, delegates spoke of their disagreements with Meany.

One of the most outspoken was District 51 Steelworkers union director Jim Balanoff, whose 110,000-member district is larger than some of the international unions represented at the convention. Balanoff, a leader of Steelworkers Fight Back, succeeded Ed Sadowski as the district director for the Chicago-Gary area. The 55-year-old maverick was so disgusted with the proceedings that he left after the second day. "I have work to do back home," he said.

"I am really disappointed in this convention," he told in *THESE TIMES*. "There are no people here from the local unions. The convention is made up, in the main, of officers of internationals. I am the exception to the rule. I don't see too much being done... They could have sent us the minutes in the mail."

Speaking of Meany's raise, he said, "That's ridiculous. Labor already has a bad image. This furthers it. I don't see the rhyme or reason for it. He sure doesn't need it."

## Black sheep Winpisinger.

The black sheep of the convention was William Winpisinger, president of the million-member International Association of Machinists. He talked volubly to the media about Meany's bad "image" and the need to replace him at the head of the federation.

Some thought he would be punished



Photos by Bob Gumpert

## Foreign policy concerns dominated the AFL-CIO convention and although there was private grumbling about George Meany, no one spoke up on the floor.



Above, William Winpisinger being congratulated on his election to the AFL-CIO's Executive Council. Below, a delegate in a common position at the convention.

for his outspokenness by not being elected to the 33-member Executive Council, but he was elected. He was also one of about 40 delegates who sat in their seats when Meany was "unanimously" re-elected.

On the federation's foreign policy positions, Winpisinger said, "I don't see a great deal of change. That is one thing I disagree with [Meany] a little bit, but I am not going to start a war over it." He did tell of meeting the head of the French Metal Workers union, a Communist, in New York and shaking hands with him. "My hand hasn't rotted off yet," he said, pointing out that his union had "some community of interest" with the French union. Contact with communists is frowned upon by Meany.

Charles Hayes, vice president of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters union and a leading official of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, noted that there were probably less than 20 black delegates at the convention. He believes that there should be at least 80, which would be

comparable to the black membership in the federation, estimated at 10-12 percent.

"We are really underrepresented here. That has been a problem of long standing and still is. We in the CBTU are seeking to get more blacks at the policy-making level. The CBTU has not been as effective as it should be, but we will be."

"I would have liked to see more time at the convention devoted to domestic policies," he added. "Here we have the whole economic situation. What are we going to do about it?... The Carter administration's program is inadequate. But just to talk about it is not enough. I don't think we have enough of a program to guarantee that the government is going to guarantee a decent way of life for people who are now out of work and are being written off as far as our economy in America is concerned."

## Politics is evidence.

Politics was very much on the minds of many delegates. Meany resented the fact that President Carter had turned down

an invitation to address the convention. When Carter sought permission to speak to the assembled delegates by phone, reliable sources report that he got no positive response from Meany. AFL-CIO spokesmen, however, denied that any such exchange took place.

(After the convention, Carter invited Meany to visit the White House and personally receive presidential congratulations on his reelection.)

The White House was also concerned that a possible competitor to Carter, California Gov. Jerry Brown, was well received by convention delegates. Delivering a speech tailored to win over his audience, Brown got standing ovations before and after he spoke.

Citing the defeat of common site picketing legislation earlier this year, building trades leaders and others, including Meany, served notice on Democratic members of Congress that they can no longer expect labor support if they fail to go down the line with the AFL-CIO program.

Winpisinger, however, voiced concern that the federation's all-out advocacy of self interest legislation would buttress the image of labor as grasping and selfish.

There was not a single controversial debate on the convention floor. Most resolutions were adopted unanimously.

Vernon Jordon dropped the only controversial paragraph of his prepared speech when he delivered it. A fight on the issues affecting black people, he said in his prepared text, "are preconditions for an alliance of mutual cooperation not seen since the early '60s."

Jordon did emphasize, however, that passage and implementation of the Humphrey-Hawkins bill, which got considerable mention at the convention, would still leave black unemployment at 15 percent in 1983.

One of the more dramatic moments of the convention was the appearance of top Israeli and Egyptian labor officials with their arms joined. Both spoke briefly amid cheers from the delegates.

The overwhelming emphasis was on foreign policy at the convention; but in his short acceptance speech Meany did single out a few domestic matters as priorities for the next two years. Included were labor law reform, which received strong emphasis during the proceedings, the boycott of the J.P. Stevens Company, and legislation to protect domestic jobs from foreign competition.

Sam Kushner is a reporter for KPFK radio in Los Angeles and the author of *Long Road to Delano*.