Pro-life group sues IRS

by Arthur J. Brew

Napa, CA — A California non-profit, pro-life legal defense organization has filed suit against the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) which, for more than five years, has refused to grant it the same tax-exempt status enjoyed by countless pro-abortion groups throughout the country.

The Life Legal Defense Foundation (LLDF) has represented thousands of pro-lifers since 1989 with 800 *pro bono* attorneys and just one paid employee. Its mission is to protect helpless and innocent human beings of any age, particularly the unborn, through education on the absolute and inherent dignity of the human person and the sanctity of human life, and through provision of legal services and support to pro-life activists.

LLDF is unique among pro-life legal defense groups in that its primary purpose is to provide legal assistance to every pro-life activist who needs it, no matter how insignificant the case may seem to higher courts, or even to pro-life leaders. It operates on the maxim: "no case is too small."

Last month, the Foundation filed a petition for a declaratory judgment asserting that the IRS was wrong in declining to recognize it as a tax-exempt organization. An organization may be a non-profit group, like LLDF, but that does not mean it is tax-exempt. Income tax still has to be paid on net income. Tax exemption means that income tax does not have to be paid on net income. It also means that donors can declare any contribution as a charitable donation, that is, a deduction for them.

An IRS representative admitted in a telephone call that there was 'difficulty' with the LLDF application because of a split of opinion in the national IRS office 'basically along the same lines as the abortion controversy in general'. This means that U.S. Government pro-aborts are denying a tax-exempt status to a pro-life group which fulfills all the requirements for tax exemption.

IRS is the same agency which has granted tax-exempt status to the National Organization of Women Legal Defense and Education Fund; the Committee for the Support of Roe v. Wade; the American Civil Liberties Union; the Feminist Majority Foundation; Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund; and the National Right to Work Legal Defense and Education Fund.

The LLDF which depends entirely on goodwill donations currently has about 100 cases pending throughout California.

"We've all heard the slogans and formulas of 'pro-choice' proponents," an LLDF board member said recently. "They shy away from the actual nature of abortion and focus instead on such vague ideas as undefined personal freedom. They attack the bearers of the pro-life message on an *ad hominem* basis, portraying them as busybodies and religious fanatics. Above all, they consistently characterize opposition to legalized abortion as an attempt by some to impose a 'personal morality' on others. And they repeat this characterization until many people, even those who know in their hearts that abortion is an unmitigated horror, come to accept the notion that somehow, because it is only a personal horror, it is nobody's business but the aborting mother's.

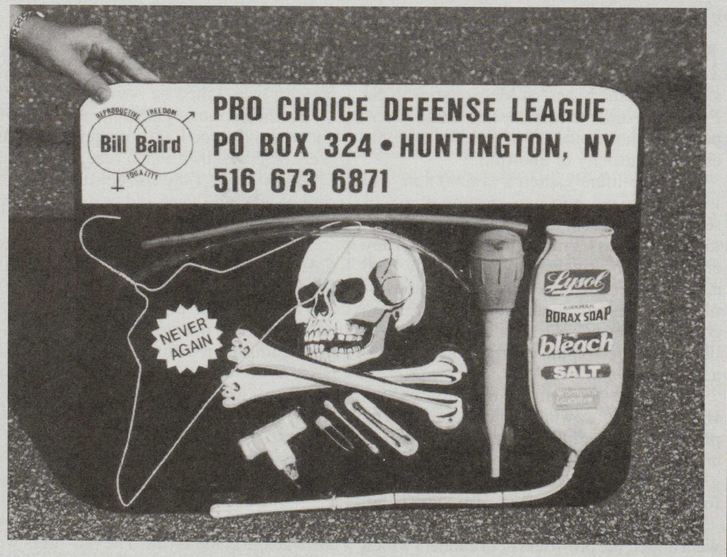
"Even people who remain actively pro-life sometimes fall into the trap of considering abortion only as a moral issue, and of opposing it only to raise the moral standards of our society. But because abortion is an attack on human life, and not just a personal sin, it is more than a moral issue, it is an issue of simple justice.

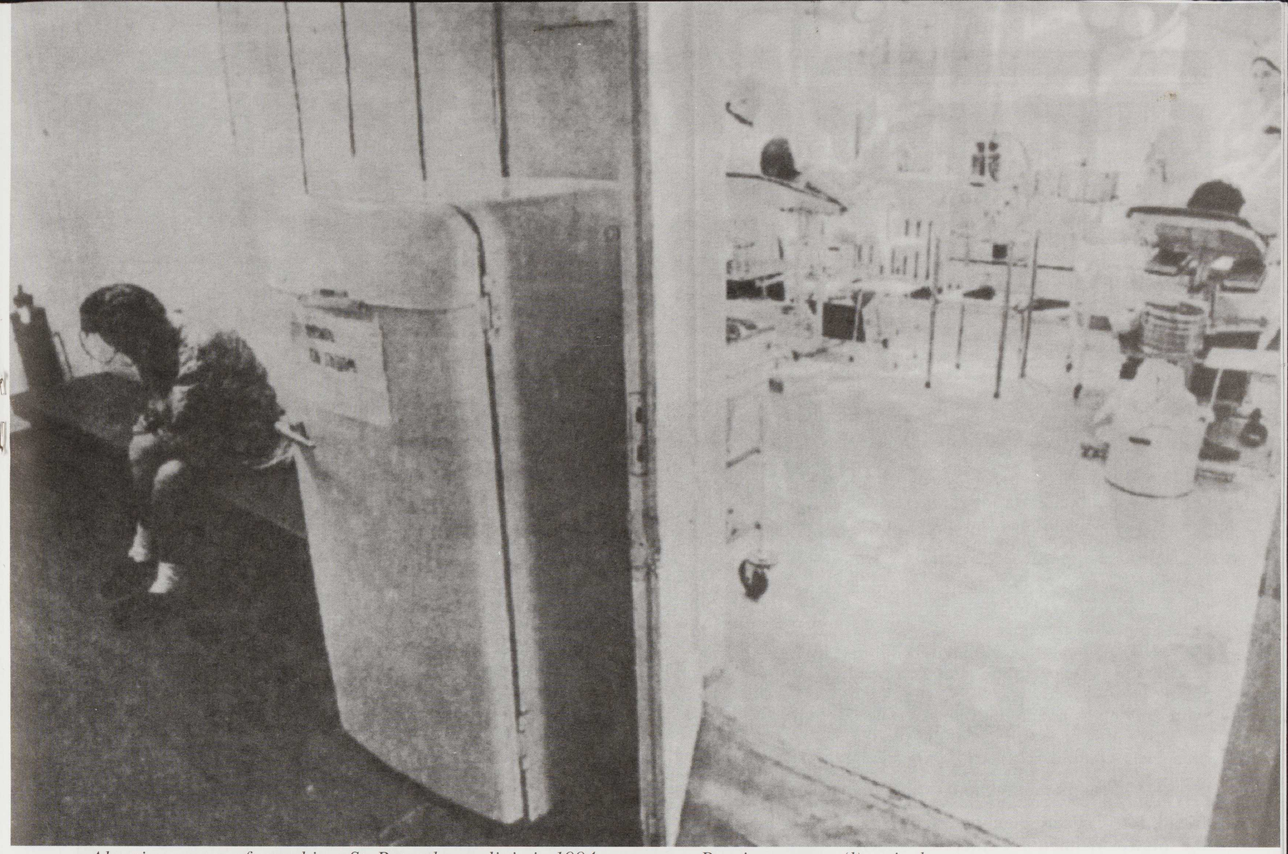
"If the pro-life movement could simply frame the public debate in these terms, the battle would be half won." ■

For additional information contact:
The Life Legal Defense Foundation,
PO Box 2105
Napa, CA 94558
(707) 224-6675

Lost Sign?

Does anyone know who owns this sign? Found outside a dumpster in New York City, the sign depicts how women, unaided by contract-killers, murdered their own children.





Abortions are performed in a St. Petersburg clinic in 1994 as a young Russian woman (l) waits her turn.

Silent Scream shown in Russian abortuaries

Moscow, RUSSIA — Progress has been slow in Russia. Progress for the pro-life movement. While a member of the old Soviet Union, Russia had the highest abortion rate in the world. It still does. It is not uncommon to meet women who have had eight or ten abortions in their lifetimes.

Depending on the "needs" of the State, the old Soviet Union either encouraged or discouraged abortions. There was nothing in between.

But these days, women who come to state Clinic No. 193 for an abortion may be offered something extra — anti-abortion talks and graphic films such as "The Silent Scream."

"We'll work with those who want to help us," clinic director Irina Tsvetkova says of her decision to let Association Life, the Russian affiliate of the International Right to Life Federation, counsel in the clinic. "We're not very experienced at this."

Tsvetkova also dispenses contraceptives and family-planning advice — which anti-abortion forces generally oppose.

"We have had an abortion culture, and it is changing only slowly. In the Soviet Union it was the only method of family planning," says Yelena Ballayeva, coordinator of the Open Dialogue on Reproductive Rights.

By the most conservative estimates, Russia had 3 million to 4 million abortions last year — more than double the number of births. The rate is roughly four times higher than in the United States, and the average Russian woman, it is guessed, has three to eight abortions.

Meanwhile, a small but vocal contingent of anti-abortion activists, many backed by Western religious groups, are increasingly active. They have the support of the Russian Orthodox Church, and, free of the political baggage they carry in the United States, have broad access to schools, clinics and medical institutes.

The new debate over abortion plays on deep fears in Russia since the loss of the Cold War that its soul is sick and even its physical survival is at risk.

"I am thinking of course of the future of the country," the clinic director, Tsvetkova, answers when asked why the anti-abortion message appeals to her.

Russia's birth rate and life expectancy have plummeted, and nationalists say abortion is a crime against the nation. Vitaly Savitsky, a parliament member who is drafting a bill aimed at sharply restricting abortion and encouraging birth, says Russia is otherwise "doomed to extinction."

This reasoning raises the chilling specter of the old Soviet Union's "supply and demand" view of human fertility.

But abortion itself is becoming more expensive and difficult to obtain, Ballayeva says.

The crumbling of the Soviet health-care system means many women must go to private or regional clinics that set their own rates for a procedure that used to be free. In addition, a medical-insurance law passed last year disqualified from state coverage abortions performed beyond five weeks. ■