Hemlock's Humphry Hedges Horribly

by Carol Petrone

Forest Grove, OR—Derek Humphry, founder of the National Hemlock Society, based in Eugene, Oregon, spoke at Pacific University in Forest Grove on April 27.

After the introduction, he began angrily to demand to know who had designed the poster announcing his appearance. The poster, featuring a nude in a fetal position, with the heading, "Assisted Suicide?" gave the wrong impression of his mission, Humphry complained. Euthanasia, he explained, is only for the terminally physically ill adult, not for the mentally depressed or unhappy.

Using themes familiar in the abortion debate, Humphry said, "laws must be changed" because euthanasia is "about individual freedom of choice—to control one's destiny at life's end." It is, he said, "the ultimate civil liberty."

Humphry said that at present Hemlock is working on drafting "thoughtful" laws and finding "willing" physicians.

Stating he did not want to "impose his views on anyone," Humphry said that doctors must be allowed to "give death at rational request."

He bemoaned the present situation in which "human taboos and laws" are keeping euthanasia from those who want it. Humphry said that secrecy breeds abuses and therefore euthanasia must be "safe and legal."

Humphry said that Jack Kevorkian could well be considered a "back alley" practitioner but did not condemn the "medicide" by the Detroit former-pathologist.

"Kevorkian," he said, "has now proved his point that desperate people want euthanasia."

Regrettably, he added, there had been a "backlash" against Kevorkian.

Humphry was exasperated by what he called, "the religious right." He claimed, "The Roman Catholics, the evangelicals, and the fundamentalists spent millions to defeat us." This was a reference to the defeat of two state measures that would have legalized physician assisted suicide in California and Washington.

Humphry, however, was not clear in his qualifiers for assisted death. When saying that only adults would qualify, he added that laws dealing with minors are much too difficult "at this time." Similarly, he said that non-conscious patients such as those in a permanent vegetative state would not qualify "at present." The depressed or mentally ill "might qualify later," he said.

During the question and answer portion, Humphry was asked by one woman about the possibility that euthanasia might follow the same track as abortion. The woman stated that 20 years ago, abortion was sold as being available only for "hard cases and to avoid back-alley butchery." Now, she explained, there are fetal tissue transplants, D&X abortions which extract brain tissue from living babies, abortion without informed consent and for minors without the knowledge or consent of the parents. She also pointed to the proposed FOCA legislation which would eliminate all abortion restrictions and not allow conscience exemptions for religious hospitals.

Humphry could not answer. He mumbled that he "didn't want to get into abortion right now," an odd remark since he had brought up abortion in his speech.

Finally he muttered that he might have to agree that euthanasia presented the "same slippery slope" as abortion, but he called for a "step by step" approach. ■

NOW must pay legal bills

Bankruptcy possible over soured lawsuit

The Broward County chapter of the National Organization for Women is threatened with bankruptcy after being ordered to pay attorney's fees to its arch-enemy, the anti-abortion Moral Majority.

NOW and two abortion mills owe $22,138 in legal fees for frivolously suing the Moral Majority, founded by televangelist Jerry Falwell, a Broward judge ruled.

"This could put us out of business. I hate helping them. The only thing worse is if I had to write the check out to Falwell himself," said Jamie Bloodworth, president of the Broward NOW.

"It's a tough world," said Jeffrey O'Keefe, the Moral Majority's Broward attorney. "They had money to vigorously pursue this against my client for three years, when there was no evidence we were involved."

The ruling comes in a 1989 lawsuit charging the Moral Majority and others had violated the constitutional rights of women by encouraging demonstrators to block two Broward abortion clinics.

Broward Circuit Judge Arthur Birkin decided that the Moral Majority had no role in the demonstrations. Last month, Birkin ruled the group should be reimbursed for its legal defense.

If the abortion mills do not pay their share, the Moral Majority can come after NOW for the entire amount.

Bloodworth said the national organization has told the local chapter to "find the money. They have their own problems," Bloodworth said.

The lawsuit stems from a series of anti-abortion demonstrations held every Saturday in 1989.

Protesters repeatedly tried to block the doors of the Women's Clinic in Oakland Park and Graber Gynecological Affiliates, a Pompano Beach clinic owned by state Rep. Ben Graber, D-Coral Springs, a physician.

Broward NOW and the clinics sued and won an injunction preventing the doors from being blocked. The suit continues against a handful of anti-abortion protesters, although the Moral Majority has been dropped as a defendant.

The 750-member NOW chapter normally spends about $1,000 a month for an office, phones, newsletters and other political work.

NOW members pay $20 to $40 annual fees, with at least half going to the national and state organization. Bloodworth said the group would hold fund raisers in an attempt to "save the organization." ■

Twin Cities: Firebombings and Genocide; New Tactic Tried

Robbinsdale, MN — For the second time in just six months, the Robbinsdale abortuary in the Minneapolis suburb was allegedly hit by a would-be arsonist. However, as with the first attempt, little damage was actually done to the building. There has also been no evidence linking anyone to either attempt. "It's interesting that nothing ever happened," said a local pro-lifer. "If the alleged 'bomber' is as sincere as the pro-abortion people are trying to make the person out to be, the place would've been leveled." Some gasoline was found on the floor after the first incident, and a 20-lb. tank of propane was found outside the free-standing building's main floor after the second incident.

Local pro-lifers say they are certain the "bombing" is a ploy, especially in light of the legal action currently being taken against the local pro-lifers. "The obvious conclusion is that somebody was making a couple of feeble attempts to distract from the whole legal process that's going on around this particular death chamber."

Also in the Twin Cities area, a group called "Peace for the Unborn" has printed and distributed a pamphlet with the title "Black Genocide — The Facts." "Somebody in the area has put together a pamphlet that tells the story of the genocide being perpetrated on blacks by abortion," said one local pro-life activist. Also included in the pamphlet was a section listing local child-killers such as Mildred Hanson and Rmil Valgame, and those otherwise involved in the child-killing business in the area, such as Jeri Rasmussen and June Fahrmann. Home addresses and phone numbers were also included with each name.

Pro-lifers in the area say they hope the pamphlets will prompt some action. "They've been widely distributed across the area," a St. Paul pro-lifer said, "especially in predominately black neighborhoods. Now hopefully some of them will get involved and take action against the attrocities being commited against the African-American race." ■

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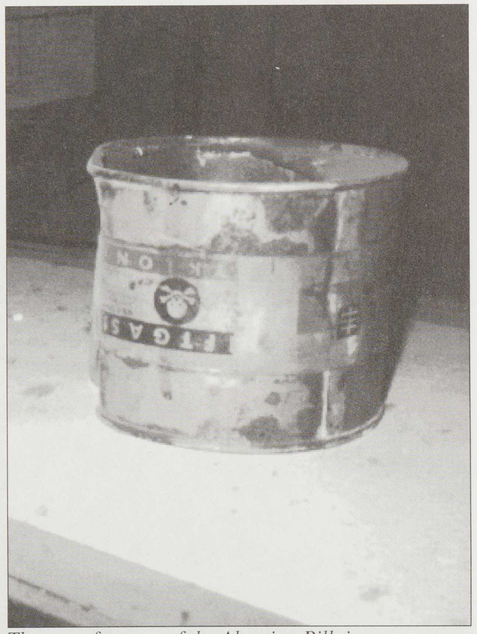
Abortion Pill Licensed for U.S. Trial

Washington, D.C. — On April 21, Roussel-Uclaf, French manufacturer of RU-486, agreed to license the drug to The Population Council, a private group which will seek approval to sell it in the United States. The agreement means the lengthy drug approval process for the abortion pill can get under way.

"With the encouragement of the U.S. government, Roussel-Uclaf has agreed to license RU-486 to the Population Council for distribution in the United States," said FDA spokesman. The agreement was reached during a meeting in Rockville, Md., with FDA Commissioner David Kessler, representatives of Roussel-Uclaf and The Population Council, a private group.

This arrangement allows The Population Council to conduct clinical trials of the drug in the United States and eventually to apply for FDA approval of RU-486. Roussel-Uclaf has refused to be involved in marketing RU-486 in the United States, but apparently believes that its agreement with the Population Council, enabling another company to make the product under the license will deflect pro-life opposition. Roussel-Uclaf is associated with the I.G. Farben company which produced the toxic Zyclon-B gas used to kill Jews and others during the Nazi regime in Germany. In France, the drug was once withdrawn by the drug's maker citing pro-life opposition. But the company returned it to the market two days later on the orders of the French government. RU-486 interferes with a hormone called progesterone which is produced by the ovaries. The hormone is needed for the lining of the uterus, the endometrium, to offer an environment that can sustain the developing baby.

Also known as mifepristone, the drug is a synthetic steroid whose chemical structure resembles progesterone. The drug locks into progesterone receptors in the uterus, making it impossible for a human embryo to grow there and triggers a miscarriage. Studies have shown RU-486 alone causes a miscarriage in at least 80 percent of women, and in up to 96 percent of cases when accompanied by the hormone prostaglandin, which enhances the action by causing the uterus to contract. Some women who take the drug experience fatigue and nausea. Some bleed so much they require transfusions. The drug is effective for killing unborn children up to about seven to nine weeks into a pregnancy. ■



The manufacturer of the Abortion Pill, is a descendant of I.G. Farben, maker of Zyclon-B, which was used to gas jews in Nazi concentration camps.