

# ABORTION A SIGNIFICANT HEALTH PROBLEM

"The health consequences of NOT performing requested abortions under favorable medical circumstances are so great that we must consider abortion a significant public health problem," declared the president of the American Public Health Association at the week-end conference held at Chicago's Drake Hotel, Feb. 14-15-16 on the subject of Abortion Laws - Modification Or Repeal?

DR. Lester Breslow, president of the A. P. H. A. and professor of Health Services Administration at the University of California's School of Public Health, Los Angeles, in presenting his "Case for Repeal" said that a reasonable health policy should include considering abortion a valid means of ending unwanted pregnancy.

The eminent public health official warned: "Only if the decision is freed of legal encumbrances -- liberating both patient and physician to exercise their combined best judgment, based on health interest alone -- can we expect to combat criminal abortion and its appalling ramifications."

Dr. Breslow further asserted "Abortion should, of course, be voluntary. No person need take advantage of it. But to those women and their physician who decide it is best, we must not close the door to health." He concluded "The issue is not a moral or theological one. It is one of health. The health of American women and their families is despoiled by anti-abortion laws."

Another exponent of abortion law repeal, Dr. Irvin M. Cushner, a professor at John Hopkins University School of Medicine, said "The best abortion law is no

law but (abortion) with medical control." He described efforts to rewrite Maryland's old abortion law which, he said, "was not consonant with contemporary medical practice and, in fact, encouraged illegal abortions."

What the state of Maryland did - in May, 1968 - was remove the regulation of abortion from the state's criminal code and place it under the Medical Practices Act in the form of various additions and amendments.

Representatives from other states -- physicians, clergymen, legislators -- reported present activities in their states related to abortion law reform and those which have modified old laws told of results to date.

Colorado state representative Richard Lamm of Denver, sponsor of Colorado's Abortion Law Reform Bill, said that, despite misgivings in some quarters, "We have not become the obstetrical Las Vegas." Representative Lamm declared that, to the contrary, 19 out of 20 women who apply are being turned down in Colorado. Other legislators present took note of representative Lamm's observation that he and other legislators who pushed hardest for abortion law reform received a greater number of votes at the last election than they had before passage of the bill.

Alice Key, acting director of the Nevada Committee for the Rights of Women, who attended the "First National Conference on Abortion Laws" reports that from the tenor of the Conference from its start and the enthusiastic reception accorded the Hon. Percy E. Sutton, President of the Borough of Manhattan, it was obvious the great

tan, and his address on "The Policies Of Repeal" delivered at the Conference Banquet it was obvious the great majority of those attending the conference favored repeal rather than modification of abortion statutes. It came as no surprise that the end consensus resulted in a unanimous resolution urging "the repeal of all laws and state groups that oppose relating to abortions performed by licensed physicians."

Following adoption of Resolution, the 350 delegates representing 30 states, im-

mediately formed a national organization for abortion law repeal. To be called the National Association for Repeal of Abortion Laws, the group will attempt to unify local and state groups that oppose abortion laws.

Objectives include recruitment of members and formation of citizens' committees in all 50 states, development and distribution of mass educational materials, and fund-raising efforts to provide mutual assistance. Goal for the initial annual budget was affixed at one million dollars, a sum

described by one of the conference leaders, a nationally known philanthropist with an outstanding fund-raising record as "paltry but beginning."

Preamble to the conference's adopted Resolution states that "to compel a woman to bear a child against her will violates her basic human right" and with that principle in mind took these positions:

"1. That the decision for or against abortion should be without legal encumbrances so that women and physicians may be able to ex-

ercise their best judgments.


"2. That all abortions should be voluntary.

"3. That abortion by licensed physicians be subject only to the general laws regulating medical licensure and practice."

Conference Chairman was Chicago women doctor Dr. Donny Myers, a mother of five. The Rev. Canon Don P. Shaw, Executive Director, Episcopal Diocese of Chicago and Chairman of the Illinois Citizens for Medical Control of Abortion served as Chairman of the conference's Program Committee.

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