

Consistent Life News

An international network for peace, justice and life



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**Amnesty International
Proceeds
With Divisive Abortion Policy
by Dr. Richard Stith**

**Consistent Life table,
organized by Dr. Stith,
at the Amnesty Conference.
Left to Right: Jay Ware of
Democrats for Life; Mike
Garcher, Indiana CL activist;
Mary Kane Derr, prolife feminist
author; Professor Richard Stith.**

Some Midwestern members of Amnesty International USA are concerned about the position AIUSA took last April favoring the decriminalization of abortion. However, the Amnesty Midwest Regional Conference in Chicago, which ended on Sunday, October 29, 2006, refused to reconsider or even to discuss that position — or the draft policies implementing it.

At the international level, Amnesty has drafted but not yet adopted a position endorsing and implementing decriminalization. However, according to conference participant Richard Stith, if events in Chicago are typical, AI adoption of decriminalization as a world-wide goal seems almost inevitable because many objections to such a position among its non-member supporters, its members and even its leaders are not reaching the Amnesty higher-ups who will make the final decision. Stith is a law professor from Indiana who is a member both of AI and of Consistent Life, a group he described as opposing all violence, including war, the death penalty and abortion. The group had a large display of its non-violence literature opposite the AI registration table during most of the conference.

Former AIUSA Board member Angie Hougas and official sponsor Carolyn Coglianesse were among the personally pro-choice conference registrants who supported a resolution asking that Amnesty International remain neutral on universal legalization of abortion as an inviolable human right. Their resolution

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expressed concern that there could be possible losses of membership, and that our death penalty abolition efforts could suffer, as some of our most crucial allies oppose executions as part of a comprehensive position in support of the right to life. In the earlier West Regional Conference, the same resolution had lost by only one vote, with allegations of voting irregularities. In Chicago the neutrality resolution was voted down by a small working group, immediately after it was introduced Saturday afternoon, without substantive debate, and without time for voters to read it through first. Many conference attendees did not know that the resolution would be proposed or that they could vote on it by attending the working group meeting.

Amnesty International Executive Committee has drafted a policy statement on abortion for possible adoption in 2007 and has asked for feedback. The dense, 14-page Explanatory Notes, accompanying the IEC draft policy explain its implications. For example, the policy goal of decriminalization includes both sex-selection abortions and abortions for potential disability status of the fetus. Nevertheless, the questionnaire accompanying the policy does not ask members whether they agree with the decriminalization of such abortions: Those surveyed are asked only whether they prefer decriminalization in all cases, or only decriminalization except for gestational limits. Meeting with AIUSA national executives at the conference, regional Amnesty leaders expressed chagrin that they had not previously been informed of the existence of the survey, though its deadline was December 1.

A two-hour Policy Discussion of Sexual and Reproductive Rights was scheduled for late Saturday, but its accompanying description explained that participants will not be debating the potential policy/policies, but rather will focus on AIs discussion process to date and next steps. Dori Dinsmore, head of the Midwest Regional Office, directed the policy discussion. Although open to comments and objections, she did not distribute or explain in any detail the draft policies in question, but referred listeners to the members-only website where the policies and the survey could be accessed. The

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meeting ended after an hour because participants had no more questions about the process.

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CL is most grateful to Professor Stith for his good work in setting up a CL table at the Amnesty conference and ensuring a consistent life presence there.

Richard Stith is a law professor at Valparaiso University. He holds a J.D. degree and a Ph.D. degree in Ethics. He is on the national Board of University Faculty for Life and the board of Consistent Life. He has been a visiting Professor of Law in India, Chile, China, Mexico and other nations. His writings have been published in many prestigious journals.

PLEASE NOTE: The National Conference of Amnesty International will be March 23 -25 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Any CL sympathizers who would like to help out in our presence there can contact CL Vice-President Rachel MacNair at drmacnair@hotmail.com or phone (816) 753-2057.

Sign our petition to Amnesty International not to take a position on abortion at <http://www.petitionspot.com/petitions/consistentlife>



**Comment
on the November, 2006,
Elections
by Rachel MacNair**

In the United States, the National Right to Life Committee has a concept which it applies to elections called the "prolife increment." This is defined as the percentage of votes that a candidate gets for opposing abortion minus the votes the candidate loses for opposing abortion. It's almost always a positive number, most commonly around 3-4%. In very close races, it can make the difference.

The Wirthlin organization's exit polls for the 2004 U.S. presidential race showed this range in favor of Bush over Kerry - a race in which peace activists had been energized to turn out. Exit polls showed that the anti-abortion vote had also been energized to turn out.

I have been making the case to peace-oriented groups, therefore, that the impact of having candidates and activists take positions defending abortion is negative toward achieving peace movement goals. I suggested that we peace activists are losing a large number of people of tender conscience toward the goals of the peace movement because they see us as inconsistent: we oppose killing children in warfare but not in the abortion clinic. If we oppose violence in some cases and not in others, then the abor-

tion defending position becomes a double tragedy as we lose ground on peace because of it.

Now, with the elections of November, 2006, the Democrats have taken over the House and Senate. I don't think this is as good for anti-war goals as many elated friends of mine do, since so many of the Democrats voted for the most recent war. But from a purely anti-war point of view, it's an improvement - and commonly perceived in the media as a message against this specific war.

So, did the prolife increment fail? No - it only makes the difference in close races, and always has. Polls show that there were some Republicans who won that would have lost without it. The takeover by Democrats would have been larger without it.

Now we have the same point to make with the prolife movement. We've always known that the stereotype of us proliferators as war-mongers has hurt - the inconsistency of saying children shouldn't be targeted in an orderly way in an abortion clinic, but it's acceptable if they're inevitable casualties in the chaos of war. But it's not just the stereotype, but political reality, that hurts us.

The Republicans have been as pathetic on promoting good solid anti-abortion legislation as the Democrats have been on anti-war legislation, but



at least there were things for national prolife lobbyists to work on. They're now bemoaning a dry spell on the federal legislative front because of the Democratic takeover. But they put their eggs in one basket, and left themselves vulnerable to scandals - and to the predictable and predicted outcomes of war.

So the politicians' abortion advocacy hurts peace movement goals. And the politicians' war advocacy hurts prolife movement goals. Inconsistency hurts.

Therefore, the consistent life ethic (though rarely espoused by any one candidate, and certainly none for higher office) is the point of view that would most *protect* both the peace and the prolife movements.

CL Vice President Rachel MacNair has a long history of activism for peace and life. A Quaker, MacNair has been arrested 17 times, for antinuclear and for prolife witnesses. She has been President of Feminists for Life, Vice-President of CL, and is the author of many books.



CL President Bill Samuel and CL Intern Corey Prachniak hold the CL banner on January 22 just before the annual March for Life. The banner also made it to the March on Washington January 27 against the Iraq war. At both marches, we were able to make contact with marchers who were glad to see us tying life issues together.

Carol Crossed at West Coast Walk for Life

Consistent Life Ethic activist Carol Crossed was a speaker at The West Coast Walk for Life in San Francisco in January. Her remarks:

Thank you for being here. Democrats or Life of America loves this blue state of California.

I am here with Edie Black, Board member of Democrats for Life of California.

Some of you told me today that you used to be a Democrat, or that you would be a Democrat except you are pro-life.

Well, I am a Democrat and

I refuse to leave my Party. My Party left me.

In 2006, every prolife Democrat who ran was re-elected to the US Congress. And 6 new prolife Democrats won their races.

In 2006, every pro-choice Republican who ran lost their seat in the US Congress.

This despite EMILY's List, a political action committee that raises money for pro-choice Democratic women, that raised \$42 million.

\$42 million for the right to destroy our children instead of money for the right to education and housing for women.

\$42 million for the right to destroy our children instead of

promoting peace in Iraq, protecting the environment or opposing capital punishment.

\$42 million to destroy children instead of providing social programs that will raise women and children out of poverty.

Our Party has become the Party of the elite instead of the Party for the oppressed.

Carol Crossed has been President of Democrats for Life, Ex. Director of CL, and is active in Feminists for Life. She has been active in anti-death penalty, anti-war and anti-hunger organizations. She has often been arrested for these causes.



Rachel MacNair Brings CL Ethic into Academic Conferences

CL Vice President is a rare voice for the consistent ethic of life in the world of academia.

She is the author of many books on life and peace issues. Perpetration Induced Traumatic Stress; the Psychological Consequences of Killing has been admired as the first in depth scholarly study of the damage done to those who commit violence.

Dr. MacNair is a frequent speaker at academic conferences, where she introduces the consistent life ethic in an area where it is little known. She says, of recent conferences she attended:

I have now finished the Los Angeles conference for Traumatic Stress Studies. These are people who study trauma in all its manifestations, which of course is one of the major psychological phenomena that cuts across the various issues of the consistent life ethic. There was ample discussion of war, poverty and racism as causes of trauma, and one symposium related to the death penalty.

There was no mention of abortion or euthanasia anywhere, one way or another. The manifestation of trauma I'm particularly interested in is perpetration-induced traumatic stress (PITS). Accordingly, I did a poster session on my study with the National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study. It went quite well, with 38 people taking handouts, and 2 bought my PITS book [Perpetration-Induced Traumatic Stress: The

Psychological Consequences of Killing.] Several people said the finding — that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms in those who have killed are more severe than in combat vets who said they didn't kill — was "intuitive," the scholars' way of saying "well, duh." This has been the attitude all along of every peace activist I've ever discussed it with, but those interested in treating trauma tend to have a similar reaction. As has been the case all along, no one argued. That's pretty remarkable, when you consider how much else I say that people are utterly uninhibited about arguing with. And how many military-associated people were there.

Psychologists with the Veterans Administration were prominent at this conference, as one would expect. Yet I never heard a pro-war, pro-defense, or tragic -necessity remark; if they were there, they weren't in the spots where I was. I did, however, hear occasional remarks in the sessions about war being stupid or mindless, made by a speaker who was clearly expecting audience agreement. And got it.

The death penalty session was done by people who work for the defense in capital cases. Once the guilt phase is established and the penalty phase begins, the pre-crime trauma suffered by the defendant becomes a factor in mitigation, and could make the jury go for life instead

of death. They explained how this trauma was established, brain scans and all. One said she had never known of a case where someone had committed a horrific crime where previous trauma was not severe. Though they were mainly objective scholars, that they opposed the death penalty was fairly clear. And later, in discussing the fact that my findings on traumatization to those carrying out executions was chapter 3 of the PITS book, with the remaining presenters after the session, each of the three bought it on the spot.

MacNair's second report is on a trip to Vietnam and Cambodia, where she met fellow professionals.

For the psychology delegation, we met with psychiatrists in Vietnam and Cambodia. At the public mental hospital in Ho Chi Minh City (you read right — a city of 8 million people has only one public mental hospital, and it's very inadequate) - I gave a presentation about my work on how American veterans of the war in Vietnam showed more severe scores of PTSD when having killed, even when their battle-intensity ratings were accounted for. The Vietnamese listened with interest, but the one question the psychiatrist had was concerning prevalence — because he was only aware of two cases of PTSD, and only one of those was a veteran! Nor did he seem to have any sense that trauma might underlie any of the other diagnoses he made.

From this, I got the clear sense



that while the concept of PTSD is known and makes sense to psychiatrists here, it is not well-developed. It can't be. It's all they can do to keep up with the case load they have, and they have to give medication rather than taking time to do psychotherapy, even knowing that would be better. Doing any kind of research would be out of the question, like buying a television when you don't yet have enough food.

(Prevalence, by the way, is that over half of the combat veterans have had full or partial PTSD at some time in their lives, and about 15% had it at the time of the study in the 1980s. But, as I pointed out, American veterans know more about it and can get help for free at the V.A., a much different circumstance than either Vietnam or Cambodia).

However, the Vietnamese tour guide, of all people, was fascinated by the subject and we had about an hour-long conversation on it that evening. I had thought maybe the Vietnamese, or some of them, might take the attitude that I've seen in Israelis --offended at the idea of PTSD from killing, on the grounds that their soldiers follow the rules of war and don't have anything to feel guilty about. Would Vietnamese feel that they were defending their country, rather than being aggressors, so how dare I suggest negative aftermath? To the contrary, his immediate reaction was that while Americans may have been far from home in unfamiliar surroundings, the Vietnamese were killing their own countrymen. So of course it would be psychologically hard on them. This struck me as a rather obvious point once it was said, but

I hadn't thought of it that way before.

Which, of course, is a good reason to travel and discuss with others. He wanted and received three of my books, the PITS and the adult and child books on peace psychology. I have his email, so it will be interesting to see if he catches any of the consistent-life points in them.

For the psychiatrist at the public mental hospital in Phnom Penh, where conditions were a little better but similar, we never had presentations but just discussion, so I simply asked him what his experience with PTSD was. He said that Cambodians had suffered a massive collective trauma (the genocide under Pol Pot) and that PTSD was like wave after wave coming in. He saw that most of the problems he saw had trauma at their core. However, they had a chart on the wall that indicated the prevalence of the diagnosis at .8 percent of their cases.

Vietnam and Cambodia are both countries that have legalized abortion, and the rate in Vietnam is very high. Yet these are places where the paranoid tendencies of abortion staff would not be immediately engaged the way they would be in the United States, which makes research there a good idea.

But, as I said, the professionals have no time. What I did ascertain about this came from the visits to the universities. The students in both countries do train on SPSS, which is the most common statistical software, and the idea of doing questionnaires or scales is something that works in their cultures. Hiring students to do such

work would be something that might well work, and I have some contacts to work on that with. The students especially need the money, after all, and a little bit goes a long way; they also need the experience.

I feel that I have found out what I came to find out, I have leads for doing more in the future, and overall, I'm a little more familiar with the reality of the situations — certainly enough for the small amount of time I was here.

The only mention of abortion came when we visited the Womens' Crisis Center of Cambodia. The staff member presenting to us there about their work mentioned the case of a woman forced into prostitution who was accordingly also forced into an abortion. I made no comment, since the delegation was full of professional psychologists many of whom would be the knee-jerk "pro-choice" view, but it was the kind of remark that spoke for itself. I did give them a copy of ProLife Feminism: Different Voices (easy to do, since the gifts of the delegates weren't screened — we just put them in the bags). Since the delegation gave over a thousand dollars in a collection for the Center (and in this part of the world, that's real money — and yes, they take US dollars as a second currency in both countries) the book certainly wound its way to them in the best possible light.

I'm very pleased with the trip itself, and in its potential for future work.



Membership Dues

We rely on your donations to help fund the work we do, so please be generous when you send in your dues. Amounts for organizational and individual memberships are listed below.

SIGN US UP! We want to become members of Consistent Life (or renew our membership). Enclosed is our contribution for membership.

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www.consistent-life.org e-mail: President@consistent-life.org

Consistent Life Is Looking for a Treasurer!

The Secretary-Treasurer of Consistent Life resigned in December 2006. We appreciate all she did to provide for orderly records during her tenure. Rose Evans, who had been Secretary previously, stepped in to act as Secretary again in the interim. The duties of the Treasurer are falling upon President Bill Samuel until a new Treasurer is found. This is really too much for one volunteer.

The Treasurer of Consistent Life maintains all financial records of the organization, receives and records contributions, disburses funds, maintains Consistent Life banking accounts, and files financial-related forms. At any time we have paid staff (currently we do not), the Treasurer handles payroll functions. As an officer of Consistent Life, the Treasurer also serves on the Board and the Executive Committee. Consistent Life urgently appeals to any supporters with the skills to perform this work who can make time available for it to offer their services.

For more information and/or to offer your services, contact President Bill Samuel at president@consistent-life.org (phone 301-946-7735-home or 301-943-6406-cell) and/or Acting Secretary Rose Evans at secretary@consistent-life.org (phone 415-221-8527). Also let us know if you are aware of someone else suitable who might be invited to consider the position. While less urgent, Rose Evans would also like someone else to step into the Secretary position for the long term. This is an opportunity for a person who loves life to do very important work with a group of very dedicated and wonderful people!

And also... Calling All Translators!

Do you have the skill of translating from English into any other language? We have a few chapters from our upcoming anthology that would have international appeal. We'd like to translate these into as many widely-spoken languages as we can, to put up on our web page for the international audience. If you can translate and would like to volunteer, please contact Rachel MacNair at drmacnair@hotmail.com, subject: CL web page translations.

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Our Members in Action

Member organization **Democrats for Life of America** created the 95-10 Initiative to reduce abortions 95% in 10 years. This has inspired various proposed laws, including several in Congress that address pregnancy prevention.

The bill that DFL supports is the Pregnant Women Support Act, to be introduced by Congressman Lincoln Davis (D-TN), providing much financial support and services to help women who want to carry their children to birth.

Virginia has passed the same law in both houses.

Member group **Feminists for Life of America** created the Elizabeth Cady Stanton Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Act, which has been introduced in both Houses of

Congress. It provides grants to encourage colleges and universities to offer services to enable pregnant or parenting students to have their children and remain in school.

Member group the **Conference of Major Superiors of Men** has an active Justice and Peace Office that has done much admirable work. CL was much impressed by CMSM's much needed Resolution Condemning Torture, a ringing condemnation of torture by agents of any government for any reason, encouragement of its constituencies to use their resources to eliminate torture and to join and support others to work for abolition of torture and help for victims.

Mary Rider, board member and former President of CL, was found guilty of trespass for

kneeling in prayer in a prison driveway to protest the execution inside.

Her husband, Patrick O'Neill and her 17 year old daughter Bernadette, were convicted of trespass on January 5. They went to Aero Contractor's office with 12 other anti-torture activists, to deliver an indictment for crimes against international law. Their "necessity defense" stated that Aero had provided jets for the CIA's "extraordinary renditions."

Readers! Please look at the CL website (consistent-life.org) where you will find CL merchandise sold at CaféPress, downloadable flyers, our petition and more.

And please, we need your dues and donations today!