

Voting Rights Bill Moves Toward Final Action

Washington — (NC) — Final Congressional approval of the administration's voting rights bill seemed assured after it was overwhelmingly passed by the House of Representatives.

Next step in the measure's progress is a House-Senate conference to iron out differences between the House bill and the version passed by the Senate May 26.

Major difference is that the House-passed bill outlaws poll taxes in state and local elections,

while under the Senate's version the government would file suits challenging the legality of such taxes.

HOUSE PASSAGE came (July 9) on a 333 to 85 vote. Twenty-three congressmen from the South voted for the bill, including Rep. Hale Boggs of Louisiana, who won a standing ovation with a dramatic announcement of his support. Although he is House Democratic whip, Boggs voted against the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

The bill suspends literacy tests in areas where less than 50 percent of the adult population registered for or voted in the 1964 elections. This selection would affect Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Georgia, South Carolina, Virginia and 34 counties in North Carolina.

FEDERAL REGISTRARS would be appointed in these areas to register voters. To end federal intervention, the jurisdictions would have to prove to a three-judge fed-

eral court in the District of Columbia that they have ended voting discrimination.

Criminal penalties are provided for intimidating, threatening or coercing any person for voting, trying to vote, or urging or aiding anyone to vote.

An amendment to the bill passed by the House provides criminal penalties for fraudulent voting practices. Among amendments defeated was one to exempt Puerto Ricans educated in Span-

ish from New York State's English-language literacy test, and another to make it easier for areas affected by the bill to avoid federal intervention.

A Republican-sponsored substitute bill, which retained literacy tests for those without a sixth grade education and allowed use of federal registrars only after filing of 25 meritorious complaints of discrimination from local residents, was beaten, 215 to 166, before final House passage of the administration's bill.



POPE PAUL VI greets an invalid pilgrim from Fiesole, Italy, at an audience in St. Peter's (July 4). (NC Photos)

\$5,000,000 Suit Priests Charge Libel In Life Abortion Story

Merced, Calif. — (NC) — A \$5,000,000 libel suit has been filed by five priests against Time, Inc. over an article which appeared in the June 4 issue of Life magazine.

The article concerned Mrs. William G. Stonebraker, a Catholic woman who underwent an abortion this year after contracting German measles early in her pregnancy.

Also named in the suit was Robert Liang, a reporter identified as the writer of the article.

THE FIVE PRIESTS, each of whom asks \$500,000 in compensatory damages and \$500,000 in punitive and exemplary damages, are: Msgr. Francis G. McKenna, pastor of Our Lady of Mercy parish, and his two assistants, Father Gerald Murphy and Father John J. O'Friel, and Father John J. Kennedy, pastor of Sacred Heart parish, and his assistant, Father Rudolph Rigo.

Mrs. Stonebraker, wife of a non-Catholic Merced accountant, is a former parishioner of Our Lady of Mercy parish. She now lives in Sacred Heart parish. She contracted German measles from her 12-year-old son, Billy, this spring in the second week of her pregnancy.

ACCORDING TO the Life article, Mrs. Stonebraker consulted her "parish priest" about her decision to seek an abortion. The arti-

cle identifies the priest as a member of "a committee opposing legislation that would liberalize the California abortion law."

It quoted this unnamed priest as saying: "You should not use religion as an excuse for not making a decision."

In their action, filed in Merced County Superior Court by attorney Richard McCormick, the priests deny what they describe as the article's suggestion: that they refused to give religious advice to their parishioner, Mrs. Stonebraker, when she was considering the abortion; that they advised her that "her religion should not affect her decision," and that they "encouraged, approved and condoned the practice of abortion and commission of an abortion . . ." which is against the tenets of the Roman Catholic Church.

THE ARTICLE, the priests contend, was "false in every respect." Mrs. Stonebraker, the suit says, did not consult them about her plans and the purported incidents related in the article are "wholly fictitious."

They claim the article was "intended to expose them to hatred, contempt and ridicule, and has caused them to be shunned and avoided . . . and injured them in their occupation as priests and in their position in the Roman Catholic Church."

Secretariat for Non-Believers Progressing, Cardinal Reveals

Vatican City — (RNS) — The Vatican Secretariat for Non-Believers created by Pope Paul VI last April is now well on the way to formation, moving beyond the blueprint stage.

This was disclosed by Franz Cardinal Koenig, Archbishop of Vienna, who was named to head the new body. Father Vincenzo Miano, dean of the faculty of philosophy at the Pontifical Salesian University, Rome, serves as secretary.

CARDINAL KOENIG said the secretariat will be aided not only by bishops of various nationalities, but also by clerical and lay experts — both Catholics and non-Catholics — and by atheists.

He said the secretariat will conduct "polls and inquiries in depth, and establish contacts with philosophers, political leaders and governments noted for their atheistic beliefs."

THE CARDINAL said the practical activity of the secretariat will be oriented largely toward a scientific study of the origins of atheistic movements and the " repercussions " of atheism on science and literature.

"The secretariat," he explained, "is not against, but for unbelievers and it is not a matter of organizing a battle against atheism but to act in favor of peace. It is not a matter of fighting against

atheism so much as becoming aware of all the possibilities of assuring religion the position it aspires to hold in society, and of establishing contacts so that it can engage in a dialogue of an intellectual character which can animate action toward peace. . . .

IN THIS connection, he remarked that it will be "most difficult for the new secretariat to

learn who among its interlocutors is interested in contact and dialogue.

He said the secretariat will confront atheism in its triple form: practical atheism such as agnosticism and religious indifference not supported by officialdom; doctrinal atheism organized but still not officially supported; and atheism as practiced in Communist countries.

New York Repeals Birth Control Ban

Albany, N.Y. — (NC) — New York State's 84-year-old ban on sale and distribution of birth control devices and information will pass into history Sept. 1 under legislation signed into law by Gov. Nelson Rockefeller.

The new law specifically allows "the sale or distribution of any instrument or article, or any recipe, drug or medicine for the prevention of conception."

However, the measure authorizes the sale of birth control devices in licensed pharmacies only, forbids their advertising or display, and bans their sale to persons under the age of 16.

It also leaves intact an existing ban on the dissemination of devices or information for producing an illegal abortion.

The measure was approved by the state assembly by a vote of 85-50 and by the state senate, 41-13.

Under the old law, which had been widely ignored, distribution of birth control devices or information was a misdemeanor pun-

ishable by up to a year in jail, a \$1,000 fine, or both.

Its only exception was one permitting doctors to prescribe contraceptives when judged necessary for the "cure or prevention of disease."

Dr. Alan F. Guttmacher, president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, hailed the signing into law of the new measure. He said it "signifies birth control as an essential health service and gives it the recognition it needs."

Other groups besides the federation backing the measure included the Citizens Committee for Children, the New York State Medical Society, and the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies.

The U.S. Supreme Court on June 7 struck down a Connecticut law barring the use of contraceptives. Massachusetts is currently weighing the repeal of a law forbidding the dissemination of birth control information and devices.

Sees Need For More Decency Groups

New York — (NC) — An inter-religious decency group here has called for the organization of similar, permanent organizations elsewhere in the country to fight obscenity.

The board of directors of Operation Yorkville singled out Chicago and Los Angeles, "two major pornography centers," which it said are in need of such organizations.

The boards statement was signed by its chairman, Rabbi Julius G. Neumann of Congregation Zichron Moshe, who founded Operation Yorkville together with the Rev. Robert E. Wiltenburg, pastor of Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran church, and Father William T. Wood, S.J., rector of St. Ignatius Loyola church.

The statement expressed concern that "the traffic in obscene and atheistic propaganda among our children has not noticeably abated but has indeed worsened in the past two-and-one-half years."

It said Operation Yorkville was turning its attention "to the formation of a permanent organization, to work under our interfaith direction, to garner public opinion and channel it to proper focal points, and to exert pressure and lobby for our children."

UNDERGOES SURGERY

Lisbon — (NC) — Manuel Cardinal Goncalves Cerejeira, patriarch of Lisbon, 76, underwent an eye operation (July 5) in Lisbon.

Spanish Union Leader Cites Progress

Madrid — (NC) — The Minister of Trade Unions in Spain said the recent formation of the National Workers Council was "a positive step towards perfecting the trade unions."

Jose Solis, who presided over the establishment of the new council in Valencia, said it was a "powerful organization" which would replace "the diversity of unions that brought us to disunity, preached hate to us, and plunged us into a war between brothers." In the new council, he said, "there is a place for everyone who preaches understanding between classes, and tries to solve problems by responsible negotiations."

Solis, a Catholic, said that he expects men with a Christian education to "set an example in the workers council, but that he does not want to see the organization labeled 'Christian.'"

He said he felt that Catholics could often do more good by entering existing secular organizations than by "baptizing them, or setting up rival organizations of their own."

Did Liturgy Changes Come Too Quickly?

Nelson, B.C. — (NC) — Changes in the liturgy may have come too quickly for people to absorb them, a specialist in liturgy suggested at a press conference here.

"I think we oversold the idea of the unchanging Church," said Father Godfrey Diekmann, O.S.B., professor of theology at St. John's University, Collegeville, Minn., who was named for the annual Cardinal Spellman Award as the outstanding theologian of the year.

The result, he said, was that "people were not prepared" for such changes as the use of the vernacular and the celebration of Mass with the priest facing the congregation. This unpreparedness, he said, caused some of the initial objections to the changes.

In many ways, Father Diekmann said, the new presentation of the Mass is a "disservice, since people were too accustomed with the Latin Mass to change easily to the vernacular."

"It's a matter of involvement," he said, adding that the changes were made so the Mass would be a more personal celebration for worshippers.