Letter from the Interim Director

As the Interim Director, I wanted to take a moment to invite the students, faculty, and staff of Trinity to stop by the Women's center to introduce themselves. In addition, I encourage everyone to become involved in the planning of Sexual Assault Awareness Week. The Sexual Assault Task Force will be meeting on Thursday evenings in March to plan events for Sexual Assault Awareness Week, the second week of April. If you would like more information, please contact Cari Salisbury at x3444. In celebration of Women's History Month, we will be co-sponsoring "Sexuality and Feminism: A Symposium and Dialogue" on March 16th at 7pm in Rittenburg Lounge. We also have numerous other events planned throughout the Spring. Feel free to stop by and learn more, or call x2408. I look forward to meeting you —

Robin Spath
Interim Director
Trinity College Women's Center

On the 25th Anniversary of Roe v. Wade: A Forum Discussion

These views are by no means exhaustive of the positions that individuals may take, nor are they necessarily representative of beliefs held by the Women's Center. Not all women are feminists, nor do all feminist women hold the same views on abortion.

“Feminists For Life?” by SarahAnne Cutler

On Wednesday, February 11, a lecture was given by Serrin Foster, the executive director of Feminists for Life of America, titled “The Feminist Case Against Abortion.” The lecture was sponsored by the Catholic Campus Ministry, The Chapel and The Dean of Students. Foster spoke for a little over an hour on the development of what she considered feminist grounds for the anti-abortion activism of her organization. She described what she called the “subversion of feminism by pro-abortion activists in the 60s” and proposed a return to the feminism of “the early American feminists” like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott in order that “genuine equal rights” could be extended “to all groups including men and certainly children.” She closed her talk with a proposition for work to be done on campus to secure support for women’s choices. Unfortunately, Foster’s information was historically selective, and her lecture, in my opinion, continued on page 3

“Pro-Life Feminism”

This essay was taken from Prolife Feminism Online at http://members.aol.com/prolifefem/prolifefem.html

Prolife feminism is radical feminism—radical in the sense that: It gets at the very roots of gender injustice; It has long and deep roots in the centuries-long struggle for women’s equality; It has enduring connections to the struggles for peace, child welfare, the rights of oppressed minorities, the abolition of the death penalty, and concern for animals and the environment. continued on page 5

“On Being Catholic and Pro-Choice” by Maureen Kay

Can the words Catholic and pro-choice peacefully coexist? I believe that they can. I was raised in a Roman Catholic family and attended Catholic schools for twelve years. My religion has always been an intricate part of my life and a strong part of who I have chosen to become as a person. So, how is it that I can now commit myself to the pro-choice movement and still remain Catholic? Don’t these two beliefs directly oppose each other? To understand how I can assert this with such confidence, I will share how I came to support the pro-choice movement. continued on page 4
Sisterhood is Global
news from around the world

German Government Defies Pope, Supports Abortion Counseling
The German government has announced that it supports continued abortion counseling by Roman Catholic clergy in their country. Currently, women in Germany must first contact a counselor who is knowledgeable about aid for mothers and children before seeking an abortion. The government’s support is a rebuttal to an upcoming letter from Pope John Paul II which will urge German clergy to discontinue the counseling. Rita Süssmuth, speaker of the German Parliament, urged the clergy to ignore the Pope’s letter, claiming that for Christians, “the rule is always to aid people in need.” [Source: Nando.net - 1/20/98]

British Women to Serve in Combat
Army chiefs in England have decided to allow women to serve on the front lines in combat. The army and the Military of Defense are endorsing a “principle of sexual parity,” in response to national opinions which favor equality for the sexes in all roles. “We recognize the social trends of the country, and although our major concern is our combat effectiveness, we still have to represent the nation,” said a Military of Defense representative. Opponents of the new law worry that the move is premature. They are concerned that the nation will not react favorably to women being killed in combat and that the army will not remain a strong force ready to defend in a time of need. Currently, women serve in 42% of the British army’s 136 categories. This spring women will be admitted into 70% of the categories, while “gender-free” selection tests become the norm. [Source: London Sunday Times - 1/18/98]

Lesbian Couple Register as Partners in Netherlands
Irma van Praag and Anna Kreuger became the first lesbian couple to use the Netherlands’ national “Registration of Partnership.” The registry became available on January 1 with a two-week waiting period after filing, and entitles gay and lesbian couples to all the advantages of a legal marriage, with the exception of joint adoption. The extension of marriage laws is currently under review by the government and has already been approved by the Netherlands’ Parliament. New marriage laws are expected to be in place by May of 1998. [Source: PlanetOut - 1/15/98]

Sexual Harassment Punishable in Thailand
Women in Thailand will soon be able to sue for sexual harassment in the workplace. The law prohibits employers and superiors from harassing women through words or actions. Violators will be fined $375. The new regulations are part of a labor protection law awaiting signature by the King. Although the wording is vague, allowing the courts to decide what constitutes sexual harassment, Thai women seem pleased. Sen. Saissree Chutkul, a Thailand legislator, said, “This law warns men to be aware. We have dignity, we are also human beings. Sexual harassment is just not right.” [Source: New York Times - 1/15/98]

Turkish Women’s Groups Protest Mandatory Virginity Tests
Women’s organizations are outraged by comments made by Turkey’s Minister of State for Women’s Affairs, Isilay Saygin, supporting forced virginity tests for young women. Saygin called the tests a “necessity.” The practice, said Sirin Teteli, the president of women’s rights group, KA- DER, is a “nasty and patriarchal tradition” and has driven women to suicide. Saygin responded, “Girls who have committed suicide because they were forced to take a virginity test would have committed suicide anyway.” The women’s groups said Saygin’s comment is a reflection of oppression based on fundamental tradition and religion in the Middle East. “This is just one manifestation of the fundamental problem, that women are treated as objects of family honor,” Teteli said. [Source: AFP - 1/8/98]

Chinese Woman Jumps from Window to Escape Forced Prostitution
A 23-year-old Chinese woman, Tang Shengli, jumped from a second story window, to avoid being forced into prostitution. “I would like to tell all of society with my own blood that women’s spirit cannot be humiliated,” said Shengli, who is now paralyzed from the waist down. Shengli and other women were locked in a room, and forced to watch pornographic videos. They were told to study the videos for later use as prostitutes. [Source: AFP - 1/8/98]

All of these stories were found at the Feminist Majority Homepage: www.feminist.org
believing that abortion was central to women's liberation when both Smeal and Friedan had previously given low priority to abortion. To quote Foster, Smeal and Friedan were told that "if you want to have the rights of a man, you must pass as a man, because employers won't be bothered with pregnant employees" and "[Smeal and Friedan] bought it; they said 'we're going to pass as men in the workplace.'" Abortion then became a symbol of women's rights because regardless if the "original promises made to us by the abortion rights activist in the 60s" had been kept. She followed with a statement about how "child abuse and domestic violence," among other societal problems, had increased. I fail to see the connection implied between the goals of the contemporary feminist movement and rising statistics on violence. This sounds strikingly like conservative, anti-feminist backlash to me.

Under the title, "Honoring the Legacy of our Foremothers", the Feminists for Life most recent newsletter includes an appeal for contributions which reads: "In the tradition of our feminist foremothers, Feminists for Life continues to work toward justice and equal rights for all people. We believe that our struggle against abortion, euthanasia, and other violent, dehumanizing 'solutions' to complex human problems are as pivotal as the efforts of the women of the early 20th century who worked to ensure the women of future generations the right to vote."

It concerns me that Foster's argument, and the Feminists For Life statement of purpose, rests so solidly on an appeal to return to the feminists of the turn of the century. I think they, in their nostalgia, are failing to address the complex facets of the abortion debate which have arisen in the last hundred years. Ideas surrounding abortion and reproductive rights and what it means to be a woman are no where near the same as they were a hundred years ago. In addition, all of the early American feminists she referred to were educated, white and upper middle-class. This no longer

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From the Connecticut Coalition for Choice:

January 22, 1998 marked the 25th Anniversary of the landmark 1973 Roe v Wade Supreme Court decision that recognized the constitutional right to choose abortion. But anti-choice conservatives are waging a war on safe, legal abortion, using tactics such as: parental and husband consent laws; mandatory waiting periods; late-term abortion bans; outlawing specific abortion procedures; preventing medical training; funding bans or restrictions; clinic violence; harassment, threats and intimidation; violent assault; murder.

The number of U.S. Abortion providers has declined 11% since 1982. Currently, 84% of all U.S. Counties lack an abortion provider. In 1972, prior to Roe, six states did not restrict abortion. In 1997, after Roe, only 13 states did not restrict previability abortions in some way. Since 1992, five abortion clinic employees, doctors and escorts have been murdered, and 11 attempted murders have occurred. Opponents of choice have directed almost 2,000 reported acts of violence and over 16,100 reported acts of disruption at abortion providers since 1977, including bombings, arsons, death threats, kidnappings and assaults. In 1992, only 12% of obstetrics and gynecology programs offered first-trimester abortion training and only 7% provided training for second-trimester abortions. The risk of death from legal abortion has declined to 0.3 deaths per 100,000 (half the risk of death from tonsillectomy and 1/100th the risk of death from an appendectomy).

25 years of safe and legal abortion in America have brought dramatic improvements in maternal and child health. In 1965, 17% of all deaths due to pregnancy and childbirth were the result of illegal abortion, 55% of those deaths were of non-white [sic] women. From 1965 to 1985 the rate of infant deaths dropped from nearly 25 per 1000 births to 7.6 per 1000 live births. Today, abortion is ten times safer than childbirth.

25 years of legal abortions have allowed women far greater access to education, employment and other means of improved income and quality of life. Even the United States Supreme Court noted in a 1992 decision that, “the ability of women to participate in the economic and social life of the Nation has been facilitated by their ability to control their reproductive lives.” Still, for women in 83% of American counties, mostly rural, there are no providers of abortion, making access to choice little more than a promise.

Most Americans have grown tired of the contentious abortion debate, and would prefer to reduce the number of abortions by asking how as a society we can better help women to responsibly prevent unwanted pregnancy. Recent polls conclude that nine of ten American voters support making family planning and sex education more realistic and more readily available, particularly for young people. (Lake, Sosin and American Viewpoint Poll, October 1997)

Recent advances have vastly expanded the ways in which women can both prevent pregnancy and terminate pregnancy as early as possible if that is their choice. From the FDA approval of Emergency Contraception last year, to new techniques of non-surgical abortion and early uterine evacuation, women now have more options that are bother earlier and safer. §

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Forum

"On Being Catholic and Pro-Choice"
continued from page 1

I am the product of post-Sec-ond Vatican Council Catholicism. This is very important, because during the Second Vatican Council, major reforms shifted the Church's place in American society. After the Second Vatican Council, the Church adopted a more pro-active stance on moral and social issues. It recognized it's responsibility to promote human rights and human dignity. Abortion was considered one of the areas in which the Church felt the need to speak out against since it was seen through the Church's eyes as an infringement on human rights. I rec-ognize the hierarchy's position on abortion, but I am not in agreement with it. Contrary to popular belief, it's ok to disagree with the hierarchy on such moral issues, I am after all a part of the Church. I have a voice and an opinion that demands to be heard because I call myself Catholic.

I first blindly accepted the Church's view on abortion when I was younger. I suppose I considered myself pro-life although I never re-ally investigated what it meant to be either pro-life or pro-choice. As far as I knew abortion was taking the life of a child, and of course I would be against this. Isn't one of the ten com-mandments "Thou shalt not kill?" As I grew and became more aware of feminist issues and also as I became more educated in the teachings of the Church, I began to lean more towards being pro-choice. Pro-choice, for me, does not mean "pro-abortion." Pro-choice is much broader and complex than this. Pro-choice means simply recognizing abortion as another
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Feminists for Life?” continued from page 3

accuracy represents the makeup of the feminist movement today. It seems to be a very narrow vision to advocate a return to such an elitist movement.

On the topic of the legal questions involved in the abortion debate, I asked Foster a question on how her organization resolves the conflicting rights of those persons involved in an abortion decision. I asked her, hypothetically, if I were to become pregnant even though I am using contraception, would the rights of the fetus I carried or the rights of the father be more important than mine? How do you decide whose rights are primary? Is it the woman's right to control her body? The father's right to a child that is half his? Or the right of a fetus? First, Foster told me I should be more careful with my contraception. I replied that contraception, when used correctly, still has about a 1% failure rate. She suggested that I not have sex then. I said that I did not think that was a solution to the problem of deciding whose rights come first because the fact of the matter is that women are going to have sex. Foster then replied that I was setting up an antagonistic relationship between women and their children. She did not answer my question and she did not resolve the conflicting rights in this situation.

In spite of all of my disagreements with Foster and her organization, she posed some provocative questions at the end of her lecture. She urged the students in the room to look around our campus and see what resources were available to support women in making reproductive choices. She suggested that instead of fighting about whether abortion is right or wrong, we should work together to set up a pregnancy resource center to give women access to what information and resources are available. When asked if this resource center would include the option of abortion, she said "no, it's a pregnancy resource center." In other words, she wants the women on the other side of the abortion debate to come over to her side and do coalition work but entirely on her terms.

While I am unwilling to do this, I would like to look at what resources are available on campus for women who become pregnant. What would you do if you became pregnant? Do you know the facts about all of the choices you have? Do you know where you could go to get this information? I would venture a guess that most women on this campus probably do not. In the last week, I have asked a number of different women on campus if they knew where the Women's Center was (not one of them did) or if they knew that Trinity's insurance will cover $175 of an abortion (none of them knew that either). Do you know any women on campus who are pregnant? Do you know of anything that the college does to support women students who are pregnant? These are questions I think we all should be asking. When I asked President Dobelle if he had considered the issue of women's reproductive rights and student housing and resources, he said "that's a question I hadn't thought of before." Encouragingly, he asked me to email him with more information on the subject.

Prolife feminism is the belief, grounded in women's reproductive experiences, that abortion is anything but a liberating act of choice. Rather, it is an act of violence that destroys the life of an unborn child and wounds his or her mother. An act of violence perpetrated by a culture which treats both of them like property, like unfeeling clumps of tissue, because it does not value either of them enough to provide authentically life-affirming alternatives such as 100% effective, safe, voluntary methods of pregnancy prevention; education about fetal development and other reproductive matters; male partners who share equally in the responsibilities of sex and parenting; and workplaces and schools which support rather than undermine the needs of mothers and children, before and after birth.

Prolife feminism is a belief shared by notable social justice leaders past and present, leaders as diverse as the early suffragists Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony; the African-American civil rights leader and National Women's Political Caucus cofounder Fannie Lou Hamer; Mairead Corrigan Maguire, who received the Nobel Prize for her peacemaking work in Northern Ireland; and His Holiness the Dalai Lama, also a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, for his nonviolent resistance to the Chinese occupation of Tibet; and the African American writer Maya Angelou.

...abortion is anything but a liberating act of choice...
choice. It also means recognizing a woman's right to choose adoption, or to choose to keep her child. The pro-choice movement fights for all of these choices and works to create support networks and accessible resources for women who chose any of the above. This is what pro-choice means, and these ideas are also ones that are all too often skewed and misunderstood by the anti-abortion movement that grounds itself under the guise of Catholicism.

I admire the Church's stand on moral and ethical issues, and I recognize the right of the Church to address such issues. We live in a pluralistic society and every religion has the right to address issues that are of such importance to our society. Living in a pluralistic society also means that as Catholics (or members of any other religion) we do not have the right to impose moral beliefs on a society just because it is preached by the governing body within our own institution (the hierarchy). All claims, by all peoples, should be looked at with equal validity and equal importance especially on such a volatile and controversial issue as abortion. Many different groups within our society have different beliefs, some advocating abortion and others that adamantly speak out against abortion. Who is right? I feel that being pro-choice recognizes the needs of many women and that it accommodates the open-mindedness that is needed to live in such a pluralistic society.

But, the question still remains: how can I be Catholic and pro-choice? I have wrestled with the moral dilemmas of abortion and I still have many questions about the issue, but above all, I do not believe that there is an absolute answer to abortion. I understand the church's claim to the respect for life of the unborn child, but is it an unborn child? What is a fetus? When does life begin? And does this biological mass within the confines of a woman body have any

"... I still have much to learn about the role I play as a Catholic, pro-choice woman..."

rights? Do the rights of the woman take precedence? Biologically and morally there are still many questions that need to be answered. Also, many women are put in precarious and in some instances, horrific situations in which they chose abortion. Who are we to judge these women? I have never been raped and then impregnated by my rapist. I have never become pregnant with my grandfather's child, but I know of two women who have. They chose abortion. And I support them wholeheartedly.

The Church believes in the primacy of a person's conscience, that is that all Catholics are able to make a personal moral decision based on an informed conscience. An informed conscience demands that a person investigate, wrestle with and educate themselves on moral issues, taking into account the Church's teachings. I feel that I have done this with abortion. There are only two doctrines in the Church that are infallible, or two doctrines that the Pope has deemed as non-negotiable, not up for discussion. Both of these doctrines have to do with Mary, neither of them have anything to do with abortion. In fact although the Church preaches moral beliefs, we as Catholics must always examine them and understand them before we follow them. Catholicism does not demand blind faith, but rather contemplative voluntary and well informed faith. Thus, why should I accept blindly what the hierarchy of the Church has stated about abortion? I can understand their position, but I can also through the cultivation of my moral conscience decide to disagree with this statement. As a woman I have a duty to question the Church on such teachings. Women are gravely under-represented in the hierarchy of the Church. I must question how many women were brought into the discussion within the hierarchy when the stance on abortion was established. Perhaps none at all, and since it directly affects me as a woman and as a Catholic, I must investigate and decide for myself.

I have investigated into, and I have wrestled with my moral inhibitions and my moral conscience, and I am proud to say that I am pro-choice. I still go to church every weekend. I still pray and think and contemplate my God and my faith. In addition, I still have much to learn about the role I play as a Catholic, pro-choice woman in the pluralistic society in which I live. As a Catholic woman, I will also fight for the rights of women of other faiths, of other cultures, and of other moral views. I will continue to educate and question my beliefs because the forming of a conscience is a constant process, one in which I am still deeply involved. §
"The first problem for all of us, men and women, is not to learn, but to unlearn."
- Gloria Steinem

"We stand now where two roads diverge. But unlike the roads in Robert Frost’s familiar poem, they are not equally fair. The road we have long been traveling is deceptively easy, a smooth superhighway on which we progress with great speed, but at its end lies disaster. The other fork of the road - the one "less traveled by" - offers our last, our only chance to reach a destination that assures the preservation of the earth."
- Rachel Carson

"We still live in a world in which a significant fraction of people, including women, believe that a woman belongs and wants to belong exclusively in the home."
- Rosalyn Sussman (Nobel Prize-winning medical physicist)

"I am also very proud to be a liberal. Why is that so terrible these days? The liberals were liberators - they fought slavery, fought for women to have the right to vote, fought against Hitler, Stalin, fought to end segregation, fought to end apartheid. Liberals put an end to child labor and they gave us the five day work week! What’s to be ashamed of?"
- Barbara Streisand

"People think at the end of the day that a man is the only answer [to fulfillment]. Actually a job is better for me."
- Princess Diana

"Something which we think is impossible now is not impossible in another decade."
- Constance Baker Motley (First Black Woman in the U.S. to become a Federal Judge)

"Cautious, careful people always casting about to preserve their reputation or social standards never can bring about reform. Those who are really in earnest are willing to be anything or nothing in the world’s estimation, and publicly and privately, in season and out, avow their sympathies with despised ideas and their advocates, and bear the consequences."
- Susan B. Anthony

"If we are to achieve a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse gift will find a fitting place."
- Margaret Mead

"In passing, also, I would like to say that the first time Adam had a chance he laid the blame on a woman."
- Nancy Astor (British Politician)

"I think the key is for women not to set any limits."
- Martina Navratilova

"Don’t compromise yourself. You are all you’ve got."
- Janis Joplin

"As a woman I have no country. As a woman my country is the whole world."
- Virginia Woolf
The Women's Education Resource Center at Hartford Hospital

The center has resources on a variety of topics in women's health, including: how to stay fit, pregnancy and childbirth, menopause, how to cook nutritious meals, skin care, relationships and much more. Sponsored by Women's Health Services (the dept. of Obstetrics and Gynecology) and the Health Science Libraries, the center is staffed by specially trained volunteers and serves all women in the Hartford Hospital community, including women seeking services at the hospital and women from the surrounding community.

Resources include:
A comprehensive collection of books on women's health issues.
A videotape collection on various women's health topics which can be used in the center or signed out for use at home.
Pamphlets in English or Spanish on various women's health topics.
Two computer databases containing articles and information which can be printed as needed.

Services include:
Information search service
Lending library service
Assistance in using the databases

The center is located on the 2nd floor of the Hospital's Conklin Building.

For more information about the center, its hours of operation and possible volunteer opportunities, please call: 545-2920

The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women Internship Program

The PCSW was created in 1973 by an act of the Connecticut Legislature to eliminate sex discrimination in Connecticut. As required by statute, the PCSW studies all matters concerning women; informs the leaders of business, education and government about the nature and scope of sex discrimination; serves as a liaison between government and private interests groups concerned with services for women; promotes the consideration of qualified women to all levels of government positions; and works with state agencies to assess programs and practices as they affect women.

An intern or volunteer may be asked to help update or write publications - or to work with the staff of the Commission during the legislative session. A legislative intern would help track bills during the session, attend public hearings, and assist in the research of written testimony.
Internships are available Fall/Spring/Summer. Some interns work for the entire school year... Most importantly, however, is that the PCSW is willing to find the right combination of issues, interests and experience to make an internship or volunteer experience a success.

If you would like more information, flyers are available in the Women's Center or you may contact Barbara Potopowitz, Public Information Officer and director of the program at:

PCSW
18-20 Trinity Street
Hartford, CT
240-8300

The Women's Initiative Project at AIDSProject Hartford

has been developed out of a commitment to addressing the unique needs of women infected and affected by HIV and AIDS in the Greater Hartford area. Their mission is to enhance the health and well-being of each individual woman in a way that empowers her to become her own best advocate. In addition, they wish to foster a sense of community among women by encouraging individuals to join together to provide support, education and advocacy for one another.

Working closely with other AIDS service organizations, women's organizations, and community groups in the area, the Women's Initiative aims to improve and increase available services and address the women-specific barriers to accessing services including (but not limited to) child care, transportation, and social-cultural issues.

The Women's Initiative offers:
support groups (e.g. a General Support Group, or an Arts and Crafts Group open to all women infected by or affected by HIV/AIDS)
a new resource library including educational literature, pamphlets and safer kits available at no cost to clients and other interested parties, and books, newsletters and videos which may be checked out for a two weeks.
numerous outreach and educational programs and resources

To become a volunteer, learn more about the Women's Initiative or make a financial contribution to AIDSProject Hartford, contact:

AIDSProject Hartford
110 Bartholomew Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106
951-4833