

They Came, They Waved Signs, They Yelled at Cars

Demonstrations 10/7/93
By Andrea Gemmet

Each year, in their battle against abortion, pro-life advocates organize a "Chain of Life" demonstration on Ocean Street. And each year, realizing that tourists may be getting a slightly skewed view of Santa Cruz, local pro-choice activists stage a counter-demonstration, directly across the street. Last Sunday's protest drew hundreds of demonstrators, however, unlike last year, pro-lifers greatly outnumbered pro-choicers.

The pro-life demonstration was coordinated by the Christian Action Coalition (CAC). The pro-choice counter-demonstration was organized by the National Organization for Women (NOW), the Santa Cruz County Reproductive Rights Coalition, and Safe Access to Abortion for Everyone (SAAFE). The sidewalks were filled, and with the combined effect of the "Honk if You're Pro-Choice" signs and the passions aroused by the abortion debate, the din was nearly deafening.

SAAFE volunteers, conspicuous in their yellow "Clinic Escort" T-shirts, came early and passed out signs and encouragement to pro-choice participants. Melissa McKowan, SAAFE director, said last year's counter-protest had a great deal of public support. "Last time people screeched to a halt, jumped out of their cars and begged us for a sign [to carry],"

McKowan said. She estimated that at least 500 people participated in that pro-choice demonstration, while the pro-lifers numbered "somewhere around six."

High school students Laurie Johnson and Penelope Friedrich were among the demonstration veterans who returned this year. "This is an issue that effects us," said Johnson. "Parental consent laws mostly affect teenagers. It's our future and we're not going to let them change the laws on us. And that's what we're here for."

Both Johnson and Friedrich cited a long list of reasons why they felt abortion was a necessary option, ranging from rape to drug addiction. "What about crack babies?" Johnson asked. "What about kids who get stuck in foster care and end up in the system their whole lives? That's not fair to the kids."

Ryan Hadlock, also on the pro-choice side, said everyone is affected by the issues surrounding abortion laws. "I'm here because I think we have to stand up against injustices, and repealing abortion laws would be a big injustice. A woman should make a decision based on her own good judgment, not on the judgment of some man," he said. "Men have control over their own bodies and women should have it, too."

By 2 p.m. the pro-choice demonstrators had been protesting for an hour, while a huge group of pro-life demonstrators were still assem-

bling themselves in the Home Savings of America parking lot.

Susan Menard, one of the "Chain of Life" organizers, said

everyone agrees with that. We want to stand up and be counted."

Jennifer Greer, a UCSC graduate who participated in the "Chain



Sasha Pave

Pro-choice and Pro-life demonstrators merge at Ocean St. and Water St.

she had worried that the pro-choicers would outnumber them. "Hopefully, we'll have enough people to line up on the street. We didn't have a very big turnout last year," she said. "The Board of Supervisors here saw fit to declare Santa Cruz County pro-choice, and we want to let people know that not

of Life," said that many women are pressured into having abortions. "We want these women to know that there are people who support them saving their babies," she said.

Menard said the fact that there are no rights protecting the lives of unborn children motivated her to participate. "The value of life is a

big issue," said Menard, "*Roe v. Wade* basically decided that an unborn child is not a citizen with legal rights, but medical science is proving otherwise with premature babies [being able to survive outside of the mother]."

Greer, gesturing toward the counter-demonstration across the street, said, "They believe in what they are doing, and I can understand that. I used to be pro-choice."

While the pro-life demonstrators outnumbered the counter-protesters, the pro-choice side of the street received overwhelming support. As each honking car and waving driver signaled approval, a roar of cheers from the protesters followed them down the street.

Tarry Carapezza, a Kresge student who describes himself as "an adopted child who is pro-choice," said, "This is a women's issue, and I take women's issues very seriously. I consider myself a feminist," he said. "Operation Rescue came to my home town, Monterey, a couple of years ago. They didn't rush the clinics or anything, but they had these really gross signs, you know, 'This is what an aborted fetus looks like,' and I just think that a counterpoint needs to be made to that."