

Effort launched in U.S. to save Iraqi children

by Anita Gallagher

On June 12, the U.S. branch of the Committee to Save the Children in Iraq formally announced the beginning of a campaign to have the U.S. Congress lift the economic sanctions imposed by the Bush administration against the population of Iraq, 60% of whom are children.

The lives of 3.3 million children under age five are threatened in the immediate weeks ahead by starvation and disease unless the embargo is lifted, said committee head Nancy Spannaus, the chairman of the U.S. Club of Life.

Other American leaders who spoke at the press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. included civil rights leader Amelia Boynton-Robinson of Selma, Alabama, the recipient of the Martin Luther King Freedom Medal in 1990, and William J. McCartney, a Catholic activist currently serving as District Deputy of the Knights of Columbus, District 67, north of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

The committee was initiated by Helga Zepp-LaRouche of the Schiller Institute, His Beatitude Raphael I Bidawid, Patriarch of the Chaldean (Catholic) Church in Baghdad, Dr. Reza Sabri-Tabrizi of Edinburgh, Scotland, and others.

Only 24 hours before the press conference, the U.N. Security Council voted to maintain economic sanctions on Iraq. Because the United Nations cannot lift the sanctions until the United States—because of its veto as one of the five permanent members of the Security Council—agrees, changing the U.S. policy is the special task of the U.S. branch of the committee, Spannaus said.

Also on June 11, a “U.S. national intelligence estimate” and information from an Iraqi “defector” were published in the *Washington Times* warning that Iraq was continuing to build a nuclear weapon. This disinformation is intended to retard the shift in American public opinion which is occurring against the genocidal sanctions.

Iraq doesn't need charity

Iraq's impossible economic situation was depicted when Spannaus presented a statement from Father Philip Najim, the general secretary of Patriarch Bidawid, who had just returned from Iraq: “Humanitarian relief efforts, though welcome and important, will never be able to sustain the population. No matter how much aid is delivered, even if tens of thousands of tons, it would never be enough to sustain a population of 18 million. And the Iraqi people do not want

or need charity; what they require is the human right to be able to produce and engage in normal trade, so as to be able to purchase the food and medical supplies which they so sorely need. This means that the sanctions against Iraq must be lifted.” Echoing the May 1, 1991 encyclical of Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, Father Najim's statement concluded, “The sanctions against Iraq must be lifted, to allow the country to sell its oil, to allow the population to return to work and to rebuild a normal life. This is a fundamental human right.”

Amelia Boynton-Robinson related that in her experience in fighting for civil rights for black sharecroppers and their children in Alabama, she had seen children die from starvation and lack of simple medical care. “When we destroy children, we destroy the world,” she said. She called for an emergency “sense of the Congress” resolution to lift the sanctions to save the children, pointing out that “our representatives in Congress are there because we sent them there,” and if they fail to act, they will not be reelected.

Simultaneous press conferences occurred on the West Coast. In San Diego, California, committee spokesmen David Kilber of the Schiller Institute, and Kamil Salem, council secretary for St. Peter's Chaldean Catholic Church, called for the lifting of sanctions. The June 13 daily *San Diego Union* reported that the committee, fearing “a tragedy of apocalyptic proportions among the civilian population of Iraq,” has been formed “to mobilize the political will of the country in order to allow Iraq to sell its oil.”

In Los Angeles, a press conference was held by Most Rev. Juergen Bless of the German Evangelical Lutheran Church for Southern California, Imam Nisar Hai of San Gabriel, California, and representatives of Pax Christi and the Schiller Institute. Imam Nisar Hai, president of United Muslims for Peace, described the efforts of his organization, along with the Fellowship of Reconciliation, to send two ships filled with relief supplies to Iraq. The ships never got to Iraq because they were stopped by the U.S.-led coalition's naval units, unloaded, and the supplies dispersed. The Fellowship of Reconciliation is planning a press conference to disclose this incident fully in Los Angeles, the Imam announced. Food and medicine were supposed to have been exempt from the embargo, which has been in effect since Aug. 2, 1990.

The committee's press conference was covered by the Los Angeles ABC television affiliate, and KFWB all-news radio. KFI-radio, the Los Angeles talk show station, also interviewed Spannaus.

The committee has been endorsed by more than 180 American political leaders and elected officials, professors, medical professionals, and religious leaders of all denominations. It has also been endorsed by union officers from all over the country, and the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union passed a resolution supporting the efforts of the committee at its national convention this spring.