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"Where the Spirit of the Lord Is, There is Liberty" — II Cor. 3:17

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Perry Reichanadter

PRO-CHOICE PANEL: (Left to right) Jane Stout, Jane Reilly, Charles Julian, Alice Bennett and Melissa Durr discuss the ethics of abortion.

Pro-choice panel seeks answers

By **ROBIN GIBSON**

Evening Press reporter

It might be nearly impossible to find, but common ground between pro-choice and pro-life forces is the only place to resolve the issue of abortion, four pro-choice panelists at Ball State University declared Wednesday.

Speaking on "Abortion: An Ethical Choice" in Pittenger Student Center's Forum Room, the speakers directly questioned some standard anti-abortion

tenets and suggested possible common ground for resolution between the two strongly polarized sides.

One panelist cited figures that show the majority of Americans support legalizing abortion, and the same number support discouraging the practice of abortion. Not only can both these beliefs be accommodated, they might provide the common ground the pro-choice and pro-life sides need to settle the

debate over legalized abortion, he said.

All four panelists agree that the issue would remain in contention as long as both sides remained so polarized.

From a biologist's standpoint, Alice Bennett criticized misuse of language by both sides of the abortion issue. Bennett, a biology professor at Ball State and a member of the local Planned Parenthood board, accused both pro-life and pro-choice advo-

cates of using "language that is politically useful rather than medically correct."

Pro-life activists talk about abortion with terms like "murder" and "killing," and about fertilized eggs as "preborn human beings," "babies" and "children," emotional words that avoid recognition of the natural process of gestation, Bennett said. Part of that process fre-

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quently involves natural "interruption of pregnancy" or miscarriage, she said.

"Every egg has the potential for life. Is every egg a human being?" Bennett asked.

Bennett also criticized consideration of the rights of a fertilized egg over the rights of the woman carrying it. "I find it unconscionable that a fertilized egg is given more rights than the woman."

From a Protestant religious standpoint, minister Charles Julian, called into question the biblical basis for anti-abortion positions.

Julian, who is minister of Riverside Baptist Church and a philosophy instructor at Ball State, cited the fact that the Bible does not directly prohibit abortion.

As for the Sixth Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," Julian pointed out that it does not say who should not be killed. If it is applied to

abortion, then it should also be applied to capital punishment and the recent killing of Iraqis in the Persian Gulf War, Julian said.

The only man on the four-member panel, Julian called the pro-life stance an anti-woman stance. "Men get the choice to participate in war; the same liberty of conscience should be given to women," he said.

Panelist Jane Reilly told the roomful of about 150 listeners "I'm here as a Catholic — a pro-choice Catholic."

Though she contends that many Catholics are pro-choice despite the official anti-abortion opinions of the church hierarchy, Reilly said, she is often faced with pro-life activists who say she is "not a real Catholic" because of her pro-choice stance.

Reilly, who works for Catholics For a Free Choice in Cleveland, Ohio, lists among her "Catholic credentials" an Irish-Catholic family, Catholic schools and jobs

within the church.

"Catholics are not going to be driven out of their religion by the bishops' and the pope's view on sexuality issues," she said. Citing the influence the national conference of bishops exerts on issues like abortion and birth control for the whole country, Reilly said, "A small handful of celibate, middle-aged men can have a big impact on your life."

Even among the bishops there has been some private, unofficial support for legalized abortion, Reilly added.

She criticized many pro-life legislators for voting against abortion freedoms and then not supporting legislation to help children, women and families. Looking at full voting records "really shows who is truly pro-life. It isn't the ones who are claiming the term, believe me."

The World Health Organization has reported that every three minutes a woman in the world dies

from an illegal, unsafe abortion, Reilly said. "They call themselves pro-life, and they want to raise the number of women dying [from illegal abortions]," she said. "We're pro-women's life."

As executive director of the Clinic for Women in Indianapolis, Jane Stout addressed some of the reasons women seek abortions.

Bad sex education, health problems, financial resources and simply not being ready to have a child are common reasons, Stout said. In only half of all known pregnancies do the women want to be pregnant, she said.

Many women who get abortions are 18-24 years old, single, and often already have other children.

"How many single mothers between 18 and 24 do you know who are well-off financially?" Stout asked.

No woman who has ever had an abortion considers it a form of birth control, Stout said. "We want to be

able to be pregnant when we want to be pregnant," she said.

The panel presentation was sponsored by Ball State Students for Choice, the American Association

of University Women, the League of Women Voters of Delaware County, Planned Parenthood of East Central Indiana and the National Organization for Women.