

Editorials

'Only a Fetus!'

One of the most bizarre results of the liberalized abortion law has occurred in Yonkers.

According to a New York Times story, a 20-year-old, unwed Yonkers woman, employed as a dental assistant, attempted to abort her 8 1/2-month-old fetus by injecting herself with Novocaine and using a scalpel to cut herself in the abdomen.

A grand jury indicted the woman for criminally negligent homicide, manslaughter in the second degree, attempted self-abortion in the first degree and self-abortion in the second degree. The homicide and manslaughter indictments apparently reflect the district attorney's position that "we had a very clear opinion from the medical examiner that piercing the uterian wall with the scalpel resulted in the death of the baby. The baby died as a direct result of (the woman's) actions."

A sad case, to be sure -- for both baby and mother,

who could get seven years in prison if found guilty of the homicide charge.

But the whole tragedy is also a graphic example of the irony involved in the legalized killing of unborn children. Had the baby been born dead, the mother could not have been charged! It is entirely legal to kill a fetus -- even one within two weeks of full term. But because the mother botched up the abortion she faces prison.

The Times reported that "the case highlights the continued debate over whether a fetus has the same rights to life as a newborn baby and once again focuses on when human life begins."

A staff lawyer for the New York Civil Liberties Union, an organization which consistently ignores scientific evidence that fetuses are indeed living human beings, said that the indictment is inappropriate because "under the law, a person can only be charged with manslaughter if it involves a living person -- someone already born. At the time she acted, it was only a fetus. She attempted to commit an act of self-abortion. The fact that the baby was born and lived does not say anything about her initial attempt."

What have we come to when we can speak so heartlessly about a human life? What has happened to our sensitivities when we so condescendingly refer to an 8 1/2-month-old baby as "only a fetus"? How can a civil liberties organization so bind itself up in the letter of the law that it ignores the obvious fact that this was indeed a human being?

The whole situation characterizes the dark side of present-day society. First, the unthinkable loneliness of a young woman, in a medically-related profession, in a crowded city, forced to resort to such a sordid solution. Where were her friends? Did she have a family? What about the father? What combination of circumstances left her so alone and so afraid? Is our entire society indictable for criminal negligence?

Her attempt at abortion initially failed -- much as happens in abortion clinics. But in those houses of death, the deed is completed on the surviving babies in complete rectitude and a largely disinterested society couldn't care less. No charges. No 7-year sentences. Only the sterility reflective of present-day morality.

The question bears repeating: Is not our entire society indictable? And who will pass judgment?

and Opinion

U.S. Role In Genocide

EDITOR:

Robert Bart's letter of June 27 gives a critically incomplete version of the causes for mass death in Southeast Asia following 1975.

While implying that such genocide would not have occurred had U.S. troops remained in Indochina, Mr. Bart fails to consider that the genocide would probably never have happened at all if not for the U.S. military invasion of Vietnam and the CIA's meddling in Cambodian internal affairs.

William Shawcross documents well how the U.S. intelligence (a real misnomer) agency undermined Prince Sihanouk, the popular leader of Cambodia -- replacing him, in a coup, with the corrupt, incompetent puppet Lon Nol. In "Sideshow," Mr. Shawcross describes the U.S.-directed war in Cambodia that resulted in destabilization, disintegration and death of that nation.

Mr. Bart tries to argue that "communism" is the only political force that is capable of international evil. Yet, the enormous destruction -- in terms of mass death, epochal chemical pollution and economic estrangement -- leveled against Vietnam by the U.S. government cannot be ignored as a primary cause for the present state of regimented deprivation in that country and region.

It also needs to be noted

that it was the revolutionary government of Vietnam who liberated Cambodia from the genocidal reign of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge, while our government supported that murderous regime's claim to sovereignty before the United Nations.

Mr. Bart advocated Ronald Reagan's slogan "peace through strength." Yet, both seem to think that strength is measured only by the act of foreign intervention backed up by a nuclear arsenal of vast overkill proportions.

I think the one, great, knowable lesson of international civil war history is that military capability must be augmented by moral application as well as diplomatic sincerity in order for there to be strength. How else does one account for the victories of the American, French, Russian, Cuban, Sandinista and Salvadoran revolutions over determined forces, wealthier and much better armed?

By branding everything to the left of Barry Goldwater and Jesse Helms as "communism," the Reagan/Bart policy will only succeed in eliminating the middle ground needed for peace -- while continuing our government's postwar history of creating communism through the process of eliminating liberalism in emerging nations.

The U.S. will continue to be reduced as a beneficent influence until our citizens learn the real lesson of Vietnam: we identify best

with the peoples of the Third World by creating a model of freedom of justice at home -- while championing an internationally enforced agreement on strict non-intervention in national struggles. In this context, a U.N. force would not be permitted to intervene internally but only to blockade borders from incoming arms. The exception, of course, would be in the case of genocide or other mass atrocities.

I offer these data and ideas to inspire readers to their own research into the difference between my perspective and Mr. Bart's, as well as to invite others to think creatively in pursuit of Christ's mandate for peace.

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fashion a public policy that will ensure a safe living environment for the citizens of our state. The adoption of my recommendations would be a first step in identifying the potential harm of combustion toxicity. Indeed, it would place New York State in a national leadership position in addressing the issue of fire gas toxicity.

In doing so, our action may be only a footnote in history, but it will help to avert tomorrow's spectacular headlines.

Gail S. Shaffer Secretary of State Department of State 162 Washington Ave. Albany, N.Y. 12231

Let's Support Our Priests

EDITOR:

A letter titled "Handshake Undignified" appeared in the Aug. 1 Courier-Journal. The writer takes the priest to task for being eager to shake hands when he comes down off the altar. He questions what this (handshaking) has to do with the Sacrifice of the Mass.

The answer requires only one word -- love. Jesus said, "Love one another as I have loved you." He proved His love for us by giving His life for us. He extends that life to us in the Eucharist. Thus the Mass is an act of love, celebrated by the priest whom He has called to follow Him and who is eager to share with us the love and friendship of Christ.

As Bishop Clark pointed out recently in Along the Way, our priests have enough to contend with. They are human, too, and their lives are not all that easy. We should thank the Lord for the many fine, wonderful priests in our diocese and support them with our prayers and love, rather than criticize their eagerness to shake our hands in true friendship.

Dorothy M. Crowley 4 Bly St. Rochester, N.Y. 14620

Motives Doubted

EDITOR:

Social Security makes up the major part of my income, so I, of course, enjoy a rise in the benefits. But I do not enjoy Mr. Reagan trying to buy my vote.

Why would Mr. Reagan, who over the years has tried to decimate Social Security, suddenly recommend raising



"THE LOTTERY PEOPLE WOULD NEVER SAY SO, MR. LARUE, BUT YOU'RE ON SHAKY GROUND SPIRITUALLY."

Fire Safety Measure

EDITORIAL:

It is unfortunate how often the formulation of our public policies is triggered by tragedy and spectacular headlines. Equally troublesome is that often when the headlines vanish, so does the public's interest.

In recent years headlines have told the story: MGM fire kills 84 ... 26 businessmen killed in Stouffer's blaze ... 23 killed in Air Canada plane fire ... ATT wiring smolders, 213 firefighters injured. They represent a disturbing recitation of fatalities and injuries and should leave no doubt as to the immediacy and importance of dealing with the issue of combustion toxicity.

When 80 percent of fire deaths are caused not by burns but by inhalation of toxic smoke and gasses, it is time to measure their devastating effects on our citizens' health and safety.

That is why I have recently recommended to the Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code Council a practical plan for action.

I have urged that certain building materials and furnishings be subjected to performance testing, thus providing information regarding the potential hazards posed to health and life by a fire.

There is, without question, a need to increase the quality and quantity of information that will be available to the public regarding the various properties of building materials and furnishings.

It is important that we

Guidelines

The Courier-Journal welcomes your opinions. Letters must bear the writer's signature, full address and telephone number. They should be sent to Opinion, Courier-Journal, 114 S. Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607.

Opinions should be brief, typed, double-spaced, no longer than 1 1/2 pages.

We routinely condense letters, edit offensive words and libelous statements, and reserve the right to reject letters. Generally speaking, however, only limited grammatical corrections will be made and the letters will reflect the writer's own style.

Because submitted opinions exceed the space for letters, we publish only original letters addressed to us. We will not use poetry, open letters, or copies of letters sent elsewhere. To ensure diversity, we limit each writer to one letter per month.

the benefits when it is not legally required?

Suddenly, in this election year, Mr. Reagan loves us Social Security-ites; he loves the Russians; he loves the Polish government; he loves the environment; he loves women, blacks and Hispanics. Before November he probably will love hungry children, pregnant women, poverty stricken elderly and want to find homes for the homeless. All of this is certainly what our country needs. But if we re-elect him, how long after November will it take for his loves to cool?

Do not forget his 1980 "safety net" promise. Do not forget that he has lied to us consistently about the condition of the less fortunate. Despite all his promises and assurances more people live in poverty and more people are hungry in our country than four years ago. Do not forget that for all his arms reduction talk he has not canceled one weapons system since he was elected.

Adolphe d'Audiffret RR2, Naples, N.Y. 14512

Toxic Sites Need Cleanup

EDITOR:

Superfund cleanup representatives from 15 states need your help. They urge you to write the president and your congressperson to pass Bill HR5640. Because the Superfund is a living piece of legislation it can be changed and improved. Bill HR5640 will get the

needed money for the Environmental Protection Agency to act now to clean up hazardous toxic waste sites. The present sites have been studied to death but there has been no actual cleanup done. It is a fact families living near toxic dumps are having unusually high incidents of health problems. These problems include women who can't carry children, still births, birth defects, mental illnesses, cancer of all kinds, the list of weird symptoms goes on and on.

And it's no wonder because the list of chemicals that are getting into the groundwater and drinking water contain among other toxic chemicals -- benzene, lead, PCBs and vinyl chloride, a known human cancer causing agent. Many of the sites are not even fenced off. And in the summer, children are wandering around. They even worry the parents that they may go fishing in contaminated ponds at their independent age.

For example, in Santa Fe, 120 different sites have chemicals leaking into their well water, so where this is happening there are clusters of birth defects and childhood cancers. In some places, they put on caps but don't stop the groundwater contamination which is the big problem. The groundwater supply affects millions of people in New York State.

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