

Debate needs coalition-builders

By Father Richard P. McBrien
Syndicated columnist

Politics, it is said, is the art of the possible. Successful politicians know that half-a-loaf is always better than none. And they know that the way you get even that much is through coalition-building, and that the currency of coalition-building is compromise.

Ideologues — on the left and right — are different. For them, compromise is tantamount to total surrender. It's the whole loaf, or nothing at all.

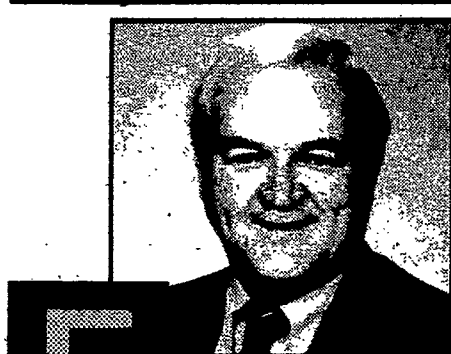
Moreover, ideologues tend to build coalitions only with other ideologues. Such coalitions rarely increase the probability of victory, because they are like multiplying one times one. You still get only one.

Ideologues are also possessive about language. They need to control the meaning of words and phrases. Rhetorical victories are sometimes more important than real ones.

Thus, on abortion, if the ideologues on the right say that "pro-choice" always means "pro-abortion," no one is permitted to use that term to mean anything else. And if they say that "pro-life" doesn't encompass capital punishment, it doesn't encompass capital punishment.

The campaign against abortion in America has suffered from the rhetorical possessiveness of ideologues on the left and right, who are better at burning bridges than building them.

They seek no common ground with adversaries, because adversaries, they



ESSAYS IN THEOLOGY

assume, are without moral sensibility.

But nowhere do ideologues act more counterproductively than with attacking people on their own side of the moral argument — people who attempt to truly reach out to others, in the hope of building coalitions that might lead at least to some partial victory.

Last month I did a column on the language of the abortion debate in which I made at least two points clear: (1) the teaching of the Catholic Church on abortion is not in question; namely, that abortion is a grave moral evil; and (2) the decision not to have an abortion is itself a "choice" and that "given the result — the birth of a child — it is indeed a wonderful choice."

The column also implicitly sided

with those who oppose the inclusion of funding for abortion in President Bill Clinton's proposed health-care package.

A staff person in the Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities at the National Conference of Bishops in Washington, D.C., was sent an advance copy of the column so that editors could, if they chose, publish his rebuttal in the same issue that mine appeared.

Nowhere in the rebuttal does its author acknowledge the points mentioned above. The rebuttal's tone is more appropriate to a polemicist than a dialogue-partner.

Regardless of what polls you want to cite (and there are many more than either Wirthlin's or Planned Parenthood's), there is, in fact, no strong pressure from the American public, Catholics included, to make abortion laws more restrictive than they are at present.

Those of us who oppose abortion on moral grounds wish that weren't the case, but it is.

The question is: how are we going to change that social and political reality? By gunning down doctors who perform abortions? By burning and vandalizing abortion clinics? By screaming and yelling at women crossing picket lines at such clinics? By demanding the excommunication of high-profile Catholic Democratic politicians? By forging alliances with the most conservative politicians and pressure groups in America? By attacking and blacklisting people who

otherwise agree with you on the moral issue?

Consistency would help. It is argued, for example, that abortion is "a form of homicide." Say what you mean: it's murder. But then we are assured that the pro-life movement "has never favored criminal penalties for the women involved."

Indeed? Even Tonya Harding suffered criminal penalties, short of prison, for her part in the attack on Nancy Kerrigan. If abortion is "a form of homicide," why should the woman who hires and pays the killer and delivers the victim right to his doorstep not be punished as a criminal?

The fact of the matter is that, in spite of their opposition to most abortions, the majority of Americans do not regard abortion as murder and wouldn't stand for women (particularly their daughters and spouses) being punished as if they were murderers.

Isn't it possible, therefore, that we might have to frame the moral issue differently and revise our rhetoric accordingly if we are to have a real impact on its political and legal resolution?

The ideal is (a) that political and social conditions should make it possible for unborn life to be fully protected, with only limited exceptions. The reality is (b) that those political and social conditions do not as yet exist.

But to get from point b to point a takes political sensitivity as well as moral passion. Too many of us who are pro-life seem to be stronger on the latter than on the former.

John Candy was same in life as on film

By Gregory F. Augustine Pierce
Syndicated columnist

It surprised me how proud I felt when I learned that John Candy's funeral and memorial service were held in Catholic churches in Los Angeles and in his native Canada. I had long admired the work of this young and gentle comic, but I had never known his religious affiliation.

I always knew, however, that there was something about Mr. Candy's work that struck me as special and different from most of the other actors now "gracing" our screens. Because of his modest looks and large size, I suppose, Mr. Candy never got the glamorous leading parts. You can't imagine him in, say, Richard Gere's role in *An Officer and a Gentleman* or Tom Cruise's lead in *A Few Good Men*. No, John Candy was relegated by his



FAITH AND WORK

physical appearance to star in such movies as *Uncle Buck* or *Volunteers*. What he did there, though, is make you care

about his characters. Sure, the guys he played were often fat and clumsy and sometimes not-too-bright, but somehow Mr. Candy found a way to make them both believable and loveable.

Mr. Candy was also "big" enough to play the "small" part that seemed to make a movie. Who can forget him as the polka band-leader who gives a ride to the long-suffering mother in *Home Alone*, the cynical-turned-believing sports announcer in *Rookie of the Year*, the down-and-out coach of the Jamaican bobsled team in *Cool Running*, the unlikely recruit in *Stripes*, or the crazy brother in *Splash*?

What all Mr. Candy's characters had in common was their enthusiasm for life and their compassion for others, and I guess that's what made me so proud when I learned about Mr. Candy's Christian background. You see, I'd like to believe that there is some-

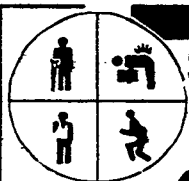
thing in Catholic teaching, training and upbringing that gives people a zest for life and makes them aware of and responsive to others' needs. John Candy, in both his film roles and, apparently, in his real life, seemed to exemplify those sensibilities.

The other thing that I liked about John Candy is that in so many of his movies he played real people with ordinary jobs. His two greatest performances, in my opinion, were as a traveling salesman in *Planes, Trains, and Automobiles* and as a Chicago policeman in *Only the Lonely*. Mr. Candy played men who worked for a living, loved their families, did their duty and still found time to care about other people.

Oh, and he was funny. Very funny. Maybe one of the funniest actors ever to make us laugh. I like to think that his religious background contributed to that, also.

Kids' Chronicle Answer Key

Baptism Conformation Eucharist Reconciliation Anointing Marriage Holy Orders



Southview Physical Therapy and Sports Rehabilitation Feel the Difference!

SOUTHVIEW PHYSICAL THERAPY
MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN RELIEVING:

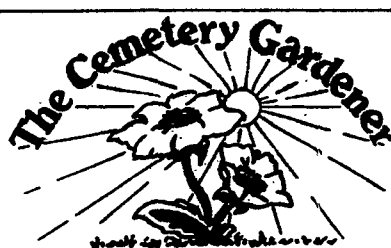
- Neck & Shoulder Pain
- Low Back Symptoms
- Tendonitis & Bursitis
- Knee Problems
- TMJ Pain

WESTFALL PROFESSIONAL PARK
880 Westfall Road, Suite D
Call For Information



Marian Carracino, PT
Director

271-3380



Soon we'll begin our
fourth season of cemetery lot
flower planting and weekly
maintenance service.

Call Tom Denninger at
742-1536 to arrange service for
your family cemetery lots.

ROMANTIC ITALY

May 12-27, 1994

Visit San Remo, Nice, Monte Carlo, Pisa,
Florence, Assisi, Rome
(includes an audience
with His Holiness Pope
John Paul), Pompei,
Sorrento, the
Island of Capri, Messina, Taormina,
Agrigento, Cefalu and Palermo.

DISCOUNTS AVAILABLE FOR: Senior Citizens,
groups of 3+, kids 18 & under, early bookings

AUSTRALIAN TOUR, 10/1-10/15/94
All inclusive, Visit Cairns, Australia's Great
Barrier Reef/The Gold Coast/Sensational
Sydney/Melbourne's Fascinating sights.
Call for information

7-day Royal Caribbean Cruise 9/10/94
Eastern Caribbean \$1126.50 air incl.
Call for info.

HIGH CLASS TOURS
247-9032

MEMBER
ASTA