

time. It has no business in the drug war. The role of the military is to defend us from foreign aggression, and fighting the drug war only detracts from that mission. If the Navy is out trying to intercept Colombian drug smugglers, if the Air Force is monitoring private-plane flights into the United States, and the Marines are off arresting drug kingpins, who is going to defend us from the Soviet Union, Libya, Iran, or any other country that may really threaten us?

And what will we do when drug

money corrupts the military? We have seen DEA agents, police officers, and, in Latin America, entire governments bought by drug dealers. If the military is used in the drug war, then drug dealers will certainly try to bribe our service personnel, too. I have faith that most of our soldiers are incorruptible, but the drug dealers will eventually find those who aren't. Before the first officer takes his or her first bribe, we should put an end to this folly and get the military out of the drug war. ■

FLIP-FLOP WITH A TWIST

JACOB SULLUM

It's been more than half a year since the *Webster* decision, and the politicians are still scrambling for the fence. In Ohio, for example, Democratic Attorney General Anthony Celebrezze, Jr., has abandoned his career-long pro-life position just in time to run for governor.

Celebrezze's rationale is familiar: Personally, he believes abortion is immoral, but he has decided that government policy should not be based on that view. This formula, especially useful to Catholic Democrats, has been around for quite a while. The Supreme Court's decision to allow greater state regulation of abortions has enhanced both its popularity and its significance. Unfortunately for Celebrezze and the other candidates who have adopted a similar strategy, the position does not bear close scrutiny.

"I think it's wrong, but..." is a perfectly valid stance on gambling, drinking, prostitution, or any other activity that does not involve harm to others. But the crux of the abortion issue is whether the practice amounts to killing a human being—whether a fetus has the same right to life as a person. If abortion is "wrong," it is wrong for this reason. So a Celebrezze (or a Gephardt or a Giuliani) who believes abortion is wrong, yet declines to "impose his view" on the

general population, cannot be taken seriously. Indeed, it is not even clear what he means, unless it's that he's *unsure* whether abortion constitutes homicide and doesn't want to require others to err on the side of caution.

Such uncertainty does not afflict Boston University President John Silber, who tries to lend some respectability to this fundamentally inconsistent position in a recent *New York Times* piece. Silber makes it clear that he considers abortion the taking of a human life, morally unacceptable in almost all cases. But he adds that the law should not adopt this view, because the American people are divided on the issue.

Given Silber's belief that abortion is homicide, his deference to public opinion is hard to understand. Why should the lack of a clear consensus affect his view of what the law *ought to be*? To cite a favorite analogy of the pro-life movement, should abolitionists have hesitated in their efforts to outlaw slavery because so many people disagreed with them?

On the face of it, pro-life extremists are more consistent. They insist that abortion is murder and that the state therefore has a responsibility to stop it. But it's pretty clear that these activists do not believe their own rhetoric. If they

truly viewed abortion clinics as "death camps" where innocent people are routinely killed, they would not simply protest. They would feel obligated to use virtually any means, including armed intervention, to stop the slaughter.

Neither do pro-choice extremists have the courage of their convictions. In a recent issue of the secular-humanist journal *Free Inquiry*, for example, Tom Flynn defends abortion on demand by arguing that fetuses have yet to meet "the criteria for personhood," which include language capability and self-awareness. Flynn notes that this standard would also allow infanticide, yet he inexplicably restricts parents to killing babies with severe birth defects. Unwilling to advocate "infanticide on demand," he declines to apply his own standard of personhood and thereby undermines his argument.

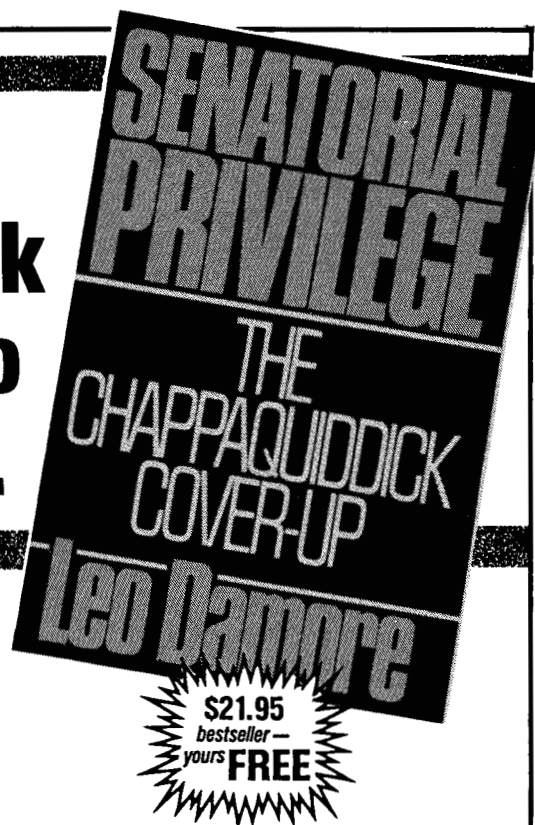
Back to the muddled middle? Not quite. There is a consistent, principled approach to abortion that has the added virtue of practicality. It begins with the recognition that the issue of when rights exist is quintessentially a government concern. Any definition of when a fetus acquires a right to life will be somewhat arbitrary. But so is the legal standard determining when a child acquires the rights of an adult, yet few of us would reject such a necessary distinction.

Several proposed dividing lines for personhood hover around 20 weeks after conception. (See "Reconsidering Roe," Editorials, May 1989.) Such a limit would allow the vast majority of currently performed abortions. But more important than the precise location of the line is its meaning. Once a fetus is considered an individual with legally enforceable rights, abortion can be permitted only to protect the mother's life. Prior to that point, the government has no business interfering, the only relevant right being that of a woman to choose whether to continue her pregnancy.

In deciding where to draw the line, our legislators and governors should be expected to consult their consciences. It's hard to know what to make of candidates who declare that they won't. Politicians have the luxury of waffling. The laws they make must be explicit. ■

Despite a media brownout, this book fought its way onto the bestseller lists.

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Ray Kerrison explains it all in his New York Post column:

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This book is titled *Senatorial Privilege: The Chappaquiddick Cover-Up* (Regnery Gateway, \$21.95). Written by Leo Damore, it made the *New York Times* non-fiction best-seller list yesterday for the eighth straight week.

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Damore's book leaves no doubt that: a) Kennedy left

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P.O. Box 3724

Escondido, CA 92025-9658

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REASON is published by the Reason Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational foundation engaged in public-policy research. Contributions to the Reason Foundation are tax-deductible. For further information, contact the public affairs director.



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LETTERS

Reaping Controversy

What bothers me most about Karl Zinsmeister's article on farming ("Technology, Ecology, and the American Farmer," Dec.) is not just his apparent dislike of traditional ("hidebound," "atavistic") farmers and farm methods, but that he has apparently bought the entire high-tech-is-better package. It's clear that he is suffering from "technophilia," the unreasoning love of all things technological.

Farm tech is not the boon he makes it out to be. All the advances in production to date (production of lean pork, increased feed conversion ratios in chickens, improved milking averages) are the result of a simple act of selection on the farmer's part—breeding from his fastest-gaining, highest-producing animals. This is not high tech; it's a technique known since pre-Roman days.

The rest of the tech "improvements" on the horizon—embryo transplants, BST, lots and lots of artificial insemination—are just so much biological dabbling. Really folks, the world is *drowning* in milk. It ends up in federal giveaways at home and abroad; the Danes ship their excess to us every Christmas in those omnipresent butter cookies. There simply isn't any need for more via BST. You want lean beef? You don't need gene transfer, etc., to get it—you only need a Texas Longhorn herd sire!

High tech is just one more of those lovely ways to take agriculture out of the hands of farmers and put it under bureaucrats. For instance, who decides which dairies get BST? Is it by lottery? Or will anyone be able to purchase it down at the feed store in half-gallon jugs?

In a farm economy that is scarcely market-driven, the forces that should bring about change (i.e., consumer demand) are simply not given enough

sway. The best thing in the world for all of us farming families—and consumers—is not more technology, it's fewer federal ag supports. Federal meddling of the past, and the threat of laboratory meddling of the future, is not the way to go.

Anita Evangelista
Peace Valley, MO

KARL ZINSMEISTER REVEALS the great disparity between the two basic views of the future of our natural resources. Prevalent among environmentalists and natural-resource bureaucrats today is the view of natural resources as inherently static, fragile, and if touched by man, destined to degradation and decline. From this vantage, damage control and limiting human activity to slow the march toward ecological catastrophe seem the only answers. The very ideas of progress, technological development, and economic growth are disturbing.

The strict preservationist mentality is the driving force in status quo environmentalism and has had powerful and quite often negative ramifications in every field, from wildlife management to federal agricultural policy. Its adherents do not recognize that their policies are often part of the problem and see adjustment, expansion, and creation of new regulations as a logical path to follow.

If, however, one accepts natural resources as dynamic, resilient, and renewable, then progress and technological development hold some of the keys to an enhanced and healthy environment. Innovations like scientifically bred poultry and genetically engineered alfalfa make the future of agriculture bright, both for harvests and the environment.

The American farmer has been led down a path of misguided government policy. Current policies cannot be scrapped overnight, but it is time to halt the misdirected march and allow our