

Abortion decision shocking

Once in a while an issue turns up about which it is impossible to be temperate. It crosses any kind of convenient line and admits no compromise. It forces itself on thought and conscience. To me, abortion is just such an unruly issue.

The Supreme Court's abortion decision was a profound shock. I've spent the last year trying to figure out why it happened. Briefly, the decision stated that the rights of a fetus that could not survive alone are subordinate to those of its mother.

Thus in the first trimester of a pregnancy, an abortion may be performed, like any minor surgery, any time a woman and her doctor deem it advisable. In the second trimester, because of potential medical complications, the state may enact regulations to protect the mother.

At some undefined time, probably around the seventh month of a pregnancy, the court bestows on the fetus enough human rights that to abort it, unless it endangers the life of the mother, may be considered a crime, should the states so choose.

Even after a year, the court has not clarified all the fuzzy areas in its new policy. Many people have compared the ruling to the Dred Scott decision, where the court concluded, not long before the Civil War, that a slave, no matter how obvious his humanity might be, was not entitled to those human rights which most of us agree are inherent and some of which are listed in the Constitution.

Needless to say, the Dred Scott point of view is out of favor just now. It can be argued that the court now has decreed that a fetus, like a slave, has no rights of its own and therefore can quite legally be killed like a parasite, as one pro-abortion writer put it.

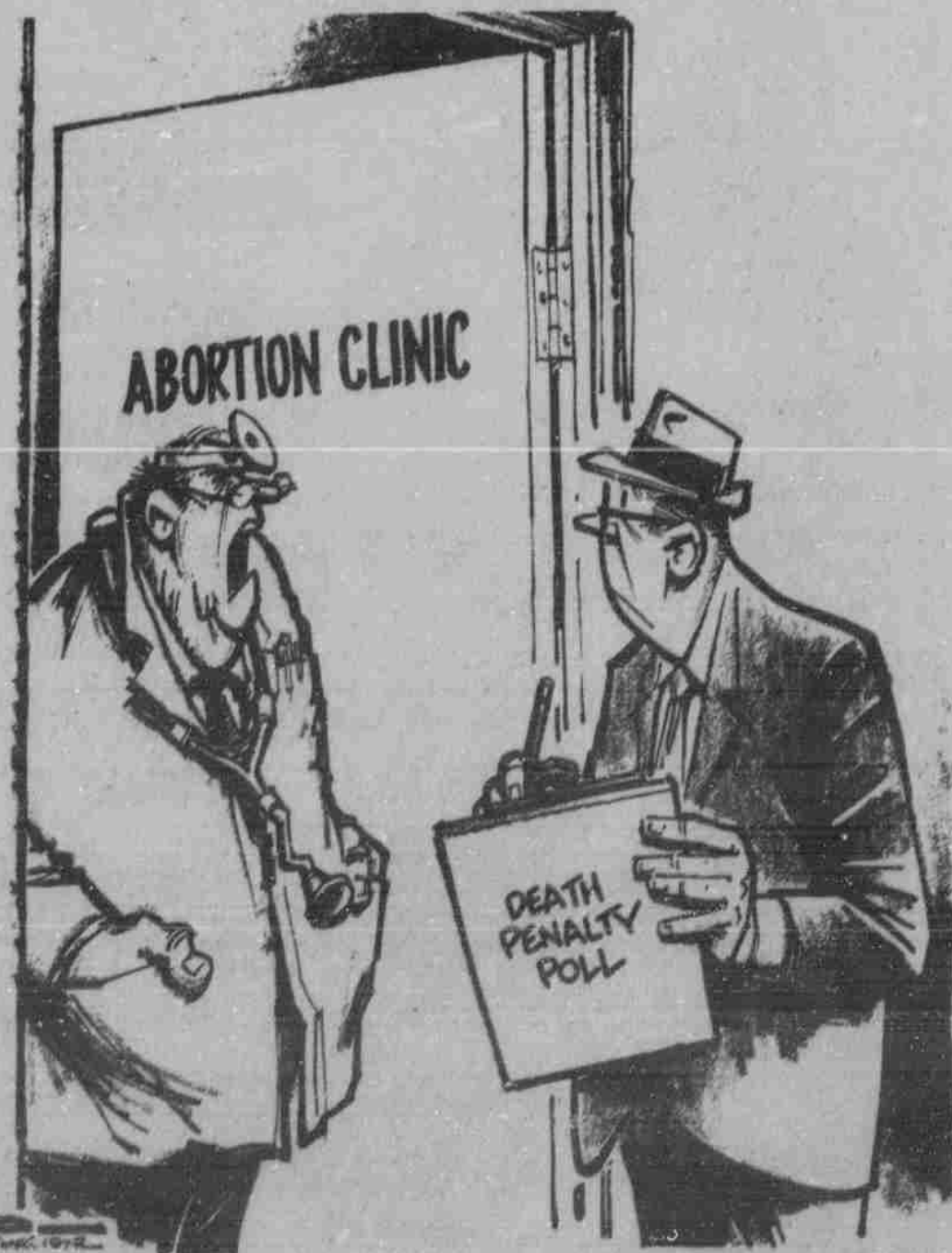
More truthfully, however, the court explicitly avoided making that kind of decision. Instead, faced with the demand for a settlement, it tried to compromise. The resulting balance would have done Henry Clay proud: three months to the abortionists, three to their opposition, and three in no-man's-land. But Clay was in the Senate, and politics goes badly with the robes of a Supreme Court justice. Were this any other kind of issue, a compromise would be acceptable. But there is no middle ground on abortion.

There is no magic quality about the 6-month mark in a pregnancy. A baby entitled to human respect five minutes after birth, even though it is quite helpless, surely is entitled to the same consideration weeks or months earlier.

It is the life itself which commands human status, not its inherent power. That that life exists from the moment of conception cannot be denied by a people which considers, albeit gingerly, the idea of life from a test tube. It begs the question to complain that a fetus is an imposition on its mother. Its conception usually is not entirely outside her control.

The Supreme Court, after all, only reflects the state of the nation. It can hardly be condemned for waffling on an issue which now divides public opinion so neatly. But it seems the logic which would defend abortion is selfish and shallow. It denies an intrinsic value in human life and it seems predicated on the avoidance of reasonable responsibility. I only hope that when this issue next confronts the court, as it often will, that careful opinion no longer will tolerate such shoddy stuff.

Mary Cannon
Cannon Law



"Capital punishment is nothing but legalized murder!"

Editor's note: following is an excerpt from a letter to the Soviet Union written by Alexandr Solzhenitsyn. It was published in the Feb. 26 issue of Time magazine. At last report, the recently exiled Russian novelist and Nobel laureate, known for his criticism of the Soviet government, was staying in Zurich, Switzerland.

Blow the dust off the clock.

Throw of open your cherished heavy curtains.

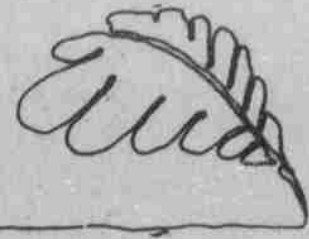
You do not even suspect that the day has already dawned outside.

Man has distinguished himself from the animal world by thought and speech.

And these, naturally, should be free.

If they are put in chains, we shall return to the state of animals.

to the editor



An alternative

Dear editor,

I have heard people say Charles Thone is a good congressman. But good compared with what? Perhaps good compared with Roman Hruska and Carl Curtis, but not good to real Midwestern leadership—Dick Clark and Harold Hughes of Iowa and George McGovern of South Dakota.

This election year we have an alternative to the Thone-Hruska-Curtis leadership. You are invited to talk with Hess Dyas, Thone's Democratic opponent, today at the Nebraska Union. The place will be posted.

Mary Kris Jensen

Why the outburst

Dear editor,

Why the sudden outburst of moral indignation over the expulsion of Alexandr Solzhenitsyn from the Soviet Union, particularly by Americans from the State Dept. on down? After the Greek military revolt, the Americans' implantment of dictator Nguyen Van Thieu in South Vietnam and more recently Salvadore Allende's overthrow in Chile, the governments began and still continue a surge against dissident writers. Yet the United States continues to aid these countries and was one of the first to recognize the new government in Chile. Even in this nation there is press censorship, from newspapers (the Justice Dept. vs. the Pentagon Papers' publication) to that "locally definable" element called pornography. Perhaps this is just another example of American inconsistency, which is more often being internationally viewed as American hypocrisy.

Jim Balters
Jim Hoppe

Cock-eyed comics

Dear editor,

What are these constant cock-eyed comics doing on your editorial page every time you put out an edition? If you are going to do this to President Nixon, then at least say something about them. You give us a cartoon about Nixon on the bad side but you never say exactly what it means. Why don't you exploit Congress that way? Just recently Sainger came out with a poll saying only 39% of the people are behind the President. And Harris came out with a poll saying only 21% of the people are behind Congress.

It's ironic to see untrusted congressmen trying to bring justice, but it's humiliating to see that the press is helping these men mulct us like they are. Either portray Congress as being or rather having a credibility gap or tell your readers Nixon is more wanted than Congress. You either take a stance or you show us you're not a biased newspaper. You can't do both.

Tony DiMaure

Take to heart

Dear editor,

"Cannon Law," (Daily Nebraskan, Feb. 14) which you indicate was written a week ago Tuesday, is the best article I have seen in the Daily Nebraskan during the seven years I have been here. I do hope students (and faculty) will take Mary Cannon's advice to heart.

The University of Nebraska suffers at the hands of the Legislature and the governor because too many Nebraskans do not recognize the difference between a high school, a 2-year community or technical college, a 4-year college and the University. Until an effective campaign is conducted to demonstrate these differences to the voting (and taxpaying) public, the University will continue to be chronically undernourished.

Frank Schmehl