

Editorial

'Squeal rule' defies common sense

As one of this administration's more disturbing gestures to the New Right (which has felt, for no apparent reason, that Reagan metamorphosed into a squishy liberal as soon as he took office), federally supported clinics may have to tell the parents of minors when their children are using birth control.

The new Reagan rule was supposed to take effect Feb. 25, but a New York federal district court judge, Henry F. Werker, threw the "squeal rule" out because it violated Congressional intent. Further court action will decide whether the Werker decision sticks.

The squeal rule was born about a year ago, when social conservatives in Congress couldn't get a law through which would have banned federal funds for clinics providing family planning services. Their retrenchment was this: "To the extent practical, entities which receive grants or contracts under this (law) shall encourage family participation in projects assisted under this (law)."

This passage, part of the Public Health Service Act, was vague and unobjectionable; who could disagree with it? But Richard Schweiker, the former Secretary of Health and Human Services notable mainly for how

quickly and intensely he became conservative after Reagan pulled him from nowhere in 1976, used this bland wording to implement the squeal rule. Under the proposed rule, parents of girls under 18 would be notified within 10 days after any form of birth control was issued to them.

Since the regulation was proposed for comment about 11 months ago, 120,000 people wrote in to Health and Human Services about it; all 38 state agencies which took a position on the rule objected to it. The reason is simple enough: without the secrecy guaranteed by the family planning agencies, there would be more abortions and more unwanted children born.

In a Planned Parenthood survey three years ago, 25 percent of the teenagers questioned said they would stop asking for contraceptives if their parents were told — but only 2 percent said they would stop having sex. George Will, who favors the squeal rule because his 2-year-old daughter Victoria may not always say "No!" with such vigor, implies that teenagers should not have sex anyway. "... Adolescents have a third choice between contraception and pregnancy," he writes. "It is coincidence."

But this is surely missing the point. Whether or not minors should have sex with one another, they, of course, do and will. Each year more than 600,000 females under 18 go to the federally supported clinics like Planned Parenthood, and the squeal rule is not going to change the practice of all these people, but only the prevention.

"We have built a Berlin wall between the kids and the parents," said Schweiker in putting the rule in force. But would the new rule make families any more communicative? By putting one more piece of power in the hands of parents, and taking one more resource away from teenage children, a situation develops in which sons and daughters will separate themselves further from parents.

It will be interesting to see what the new Secretary of Health and Human Services, former Massachusetts Rep. Margaret Heckler, will do with the squeal rule. She was one of 32 members of Congress who wrote a letter against the squeal rule. So far she has said nothing about it. Time will tell which comes first: common sense or politics. I'm not too optimistic — unemployed members of Congress tend to be very grateful.

Eric Peterson

El Salvador questions: 'So what? Who cares?'

My son has just left the "it's not fair" phase of his life for one that has not yet announced itself. Before things were constantly not fair, though, they were crushingly unimportant. This was his "so what? who cares?" phase and he said that so often that in my house it was



Richard
Cohen

called by its initials — "SWWC." This is just one way you save time in a household with two careers and lots of plants to water.

The old SWWC came back to me the other day when it was announced in various places that, unless we granted El Salvador another \$60 million in military aid, it would fall to the "rebels," a word the State Department uses to mean commies. When that happens, Honduras will be next and then, to the south, Panama, and to the north, Mexico. That not only moves the Red Menace closer to home, but imperils some pretty terrific beaches.

By now of course, you recognize that this scenario under another name is the old Domino Theory. It was revived recently by Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Enders and his deputy, Nestor D. Sanchez, and seconded by Sen. Henry

Jackson (D-Wash.), who also thought the Red Tide, like Killer Bees, had to be stopped in El Salvador, lest it lap upon the shores of Mexico.

Someday someone is going to explain why dominoes are supposed to topple only one way, to the left, and why it is that we can not get them to topple our way, to the right. And then, when that is explained, that same person will also have to explain why the dominoes did not fall as they were supposed to in Southeast Asia. If the Vietnam War proved anything, it was that countries really are not dominoes. Vietnam toppled and with it Laos and Cambodia, but they were already engulfed in what amounted to the same war, while Thailand, Burma and the rest of Southeast Asia remain standing tall.

But none of that has to do with SWWC, which assumes that El Salvador does "fall" and then some other Central American countries do, too. It is at this point, if you are asking questions, that you have to ask if not both "So what?" and "Who cares?," then at least "So what?"

I ask that not out of callousness and not without realizing that the agrarian reformers now in the hills may turn out to be as brutal as the hombres now in their various presidential palaces, but because there is an assumption that all these states would be little Central American duplicates of the Soviet Union.

But would they? Would El Salvador be Marxist like the Soviet Union, which



is our enemy? Or would it be Marxist like China, which while not quite a friend, certainly is not an enemy although it was (look it up) the reason we fought in Vietnam. Maybe these Central American states would be Marxist like Yugoslavia, which is neutral, or maybe they would be Marxist like Albania, which for a while aligned itself with the Soviet Union and then later with China and has now decided to disappear down a European black hole.

And even if all the Central American countries should go communist, does that mean that we have to kiss the Panama Canal good-bye? Cuba is not only Marxist, but hostile as well, and yet we maintain a naval base at Guantanamo Bay. As hostile as the Cubans are, they dare not attempt to take the base, although this is one lease that will not be renewed.

The administration cautions us that El Salvador is not Vietnam, and they

are surely right in this. It is a different country in a different region and neither Congress nor the American people will allow it, in terms of either troops or funds, to become another Vietnam.

But El Salvador is like Vietnam because it is an attempt to control from Washington events taking place in remote hamlets, to see a regional struggle only in terms of east-west rivalries and, last, to once again prolong a war in which we have no vital self-interest.

Those were the lessons of Vietnam and it is no improvement to do the same thing over again, only this time without American troops. People will still die, some of them through no fault of our own, but some of them because we once again knee-jerked to the word Marxist and failed to ask, among other questions, "So what? Who cares?"

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First job interview conquers the fidgety student

Job interviews: the time of reckoning when college is just about over and the rest of your life is at stake. They are kind of like waiting in the lines at St. Peter's gates, where everything is behind you, yet you are totally



Brian
Stonecipher

helpless for anything that is about to happen. It is a real moment of truth when you are, for that moment in time, not in control of your own destiny. I've been through this experience once during my first interview, and it's an experience I don't want to go through again. Here's why.

"Hi, I'm Mitch Williams. Have a seat," the smiling interviewer said to me.

I went in and sat down in the small, stuffy room. Straight across from me sat a strange man who had

complete control over my future; a man who could give me a job, security and big bucks to pay back my student loans. Saying that this man was important to me would be an understatement.

He started out asking the standard opening line, "Well Brian, tell me about yourself."

I became fidgety. Even though he didn't say it directly, I could see in his eyes that he really wanted to grill me about my grades. I was determined to deny him the privilege of talking about grades for as long as possible. So I started in on my original game plan — the interview stall.

"Uh, well . . . I was, uh, gosh," I started. What a vocabulary. I go to college for four years and when I need my education the most, the first words that come to mind are the same ones that I used when I was three. What a waste of 17 years of school.

"Um, . . . I brought along this portfolio thing which has some supporting material which is referred to in my resume," I said. "I think it shows that I'm not the typical 'number-crunching weirdo engineer,' if you know what I mean. Ha, ha." I waited for his response to my forced humor. He just kept staring at me with an expressionless

face. He didn't like my bad jokes.

I went ahead and emptied the scrapbook material on the desk. Photos, letters, news clippings and cub scout patches spilled into this important man's lap. I had an impressive list of materials to show him: my grandma's "What a fine young man you are" birthday letter and eight consecutive days of police reports, with the actions I was totally responsible for highlighted in yellow. But he didn't seem too interested.

"That's very interesting," he said as he shoved the material back toward me. "But let's talk about something else, like your coursework and grades."

I was in real trouble now. He had not only taken control of the interview, but he was also headed for my grades. I wanted to shout "NO — LEAVE ME ALONE. I DON'T WANT TO GO THROUGH WITH IT ANYMORE" and storm out of the room, but I didn't.

I was in a suicidal "oh who cares" mood and decided to go through with the rest of the interview.

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