

John Rock's pill liberated women

In the end, Dr. John Rock was a certified member of that small band of human beings who change the world. The man who died last week at age 94 was not exactly the father of The Pill. "If anything," he once said, "I am the stepfather."

Indeed, the courtly and humane doctor, teacher, researcher was just one of a quartet who developed the oral contraceptive in the 1950s. But he was No. 1, the man who became the pill's public defender — the popularizer and point man for the social medicine that initiated a sexual revolution.

Ellen Goodman

Rock's life covered almost a century of extraordinary change. When he was born in Massachusetts in 1890, the average life span of an American was 40 years. By the time he died, it had nearly doubled. When he was born, birth was controlled by abstinence, withdrawal and a few rudimentary devices known only to the elite. Now, planning for parenthood is the American norm and the international goal. He was part of this story.

Ironically, this lanky man of Irish descent and Catholic religion, a father of five, began his career dealing with problems of infertility. He was the first to fertilize an egg in a dish, the forerunner to test-tube babies. In his later years, Rock would say with amusement, "I spent the first 30 years of my professional life getting as many women pregnant as possible and now I am accused of spending the rest of my life to reverse the process."

But there was a coherence to his life, in his belief that, "It is my job to preserve family first and then the Family of Man."

As a doctor, he learned about sexual shyness and ignorance and about respect for his female patients. His belief in the importance of sexual love and the need for women to control fertility came together in development and defense of the pill.

From our own vantage point in the mid-'80s, it's sometimes hard to imagine the struggle that he was a part of — a struggle to change attitudes and laws about contraception. In the Victorian age of Rock's birth, contraceptives were immoral, a blatant admission that sex was for pleasure. It wasn't until 1930 that the Anglican church became the first to approve of birth control. As late as 1960 a couple using contraceptives in their own Connec-

tic bedroom was committing a felony. The last birth-control laws were in effect in Massachusetts until 1972.

It wasn't easy for Rock, in his 70s, to challenge his Church's stand against birth control. As a international public speaker, he would often repeat what the curate in his childhood parish told him: "John, always stick to your conscience. Never let anyone else keep it for you and I mean anyone else."

His pill had stunning, unparalleled effect on American society. In the 1960s, for really the first time, women could experience sex without fear of pregnancy. For the first time, women knew the kind of sexual freedom that only men had known.

Taking the pill was a private and, for many, a liberating act. A woman, married or not, with or without her partner's knowledge could go on the pill to "regulate a period," or "for cramps" or simply for spontaneity. Today, when more couples choose sterilization, the pill is still the most popular form of sexual security for young women.

There is no social change that comes without new conflicts, and emotional conflicts have been the most widespread side effect of the pill. One woman's freedom is another woman's license and another's insecurity. Without waning the fear of pregnancy, it has become more complicated for some women to say "no," to define their own feelings about sexual relations. Other women resent having the "freedom" of full responsibility for birth control. We are still fashioning a comfortable moral evolution for our sexual revolution.

Rock must have experienced some disappointment with his great hope. It is not the hearded perfect solution to the population explosion. For some women the pill has proved too dangerous, for others too complicated, for still others in the Third World too expensive. The Church hierarchy that he tried to persuade has yet to approve of his "natural contraceptive."

But Rock took controversy with equanimity and humor. Some 20 years ago, at the height of his fame and infamy, an angry Catholic wrote, excoriating him: "You should be afraid to meet your Maker." Rock wrote back to her: "My dear Madam, in my faith we are taught that the Lord is with us always. When my time comes, there will be no need for introductions."

©1984, The Boston Globe Newspaper Company Washington Post Writers Group



...IF I SHOULD DIE BEFORE I WAKE, IT'S UNION CARBIDE'S NEXT MISTAKE.

Power overrules justice Convicted felon Douglas should resign office

The immediate facts are clear. Paul Douglas, our elected attorney general, has been convicted of a felony by a jury of his peers. Paul Douglas, our elected attorney general, faces a sentence of one to 20 years, a \$25,000 fine, or both. Paul Douglas, our elected attorney general, says he is *considering* resigning his office and will make a decision sometime this week.

The immediate question that must be asked here is whether it is good public policy to even allow a convicted felon to *consider* if he should keep his job as the highest legal officer in the state? I think the answer must be that it is not.



James A. Fussell

In the minds of many Nebraskans, Douglas exists today more as an issue than as a man. That is his own doing. He was once widely respected as an honorable man. Now, he is a convicted felon still serving as Nebraska's attorney general.

An honorable man would have prevented such a damning situation. An honorable man would have resigned long ago. Apparently, Douglas is not such a man. Douglas was quoted Friday in the Lincoln Star as saying he would sit down with friends and decide what he should do. He said he would make a decision sometime this week. I'm shocked and saddened to see a man I once respected display such gall and bad judgement.

How many convicted felons that he prosecuted had such leisure? This is an embarrassing example of the influence of power and privilege in

Nebraska. For shame.

Forget for a moment that Douglas is an insulated member of the bureaucracy. Think of him only as a person who has committed a felony offense. The gut issue is fairness, and the parallels with the rest of us mortals borders on the absurd.

If Murray at the meat market is convicted of a felony, Murray doesn't get to say, in effect, "Quit my job? Gee, I haven't decided yet. I'm having some of the boys over to talk about it. I'll let you know sometime next week." No, Murray is out on his ear. Is Paul Douglas any different than Murray? Murray sure thinks so.

And so do, I suspect, the Commonwealth depositors. The mere fact that Douglas can hold his head up and have the opportunity to say that he is now *considering* resigning after being convicted of perjury is a slap in the face to 7,000 Commonwealth depositors who already have been stabbed in the back by the state of Nebraska.

And still the step-by-step torture of unending legal procedures continues. Paul Douglas may eventually lose his job in the foreseeable future. Commonwealth victims may yet get their state-guaranteed money back. And Walter Mondale may make a comeback in '88, but don't bet on it.

Meanwhile, all we hear are cliches and platitudes. Be patient. The wheels of justice grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly fine. Baloney. To too many Nebraskans, the wheels of justice have ground to a halt and rusted to the floor. Their motto has become the battle cry from the movie "Network": "We're mad as hell and we're not going to take it anymore." I don't blame them.

It seems to me that the Nebraska Constitution speaks

clearly enough. To me, it says, no felons in public office, period. Despite that, Douglas may continue to serve for an indeterminate amount of time. Sometimes it behooves even the mighty legal machine to set aside the blasted rules and regulations and just do what's right.

Government of the people, for the people and by the people may not have perished from the face of the earth, but it has sure slipped a good bit in Nebraska.

It needn't have in Douglas' case. A law was repealed in 1972 that declared any constitutional office to be vacant if the officeholder was convicted of a felony. That law made sense and we must question its repeal.

But perhaps the larger question surrounding Douglas' state of employ, in light of the Commonwealth fiasco, is how long Nebraska can afford to do nothing to further the cause of justice before losing the respect and good will of the people it purports to serve.

Beyond all the technicalities of the law, what is at stake in Nebraska is simply the integrity of the state and the integrity of our elected officials. No amount of legal mumbo-jumbo can get that back once it is lost. Trust has to be earned. Sad to say, some good people no longer trust the state of Nebraska.

A Commonwealth depositor who didn't want to be identified might have put it best. "What do I think of the Paul Douglas case? I'm ashamed. Ashamed of the state of Nebraska. Ashamed of its elected officials — especially the governor — for not telling Douglas to pack his things and get out. Ashamed of Paul Douglas for not resigning long before this. Ashamed of the whole state for selling the cause of justice short for the sake of political expediency." Me, too.

Editorial Policy

Unsigned editorials represent official policy of the fall 1984 Daily Nebraskan. They are written by this semester's editor in chief, Chris Welsch.

Other staff members will write editorials throughout the semester. They will carry the author's name after the final sentence.

Editorials do not necessarily reflect the views of the university,

its employees, the students or the NU Board of Regents.

The Daily Nebraskan's publishers are the regents, who established the UNL Publications Board to supervise the daily production of the newspaper.

According to the policy set by the regents, responsibility for the content of the newspaper lies solely in the hands of its student editors.

Daily Nebraskan

- EDITOR: Chris Welsch, 472-1786
- GENERAL MANAGER: Daniel Shattil
- PRODUCTION MANAGER: Kitty Policky
- ADVERTISING MANAGER: Tom Byrne
- ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR: Michela Thuman
- ASSOCIATE NEWS EDITORS: Kevin Warneke, Kerna Soderberg, Stacie Thomas, Vicki Ruhge, Ward W. Triplett III
- COPY DESK SUPERVISOR: Christopher Burbach
- SPORTS EDITOR: Lauri Hopple
- ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR: Julie Jordan
- NIGHT NEWS EDITORS: Judi Nygren, Lauri Hopple, Teri Sperry
- WIRE EDITORS:

The Daily Nebraskan (USPS 144-080) is published by the JNL Publications Board Monday through Friday in the fall and spring semesters and Tuesdays and Fridays in the summer sessions, except during vacations. Readers are encouraged to submit story ideas and comments to the Daily Nebraskan by phoning 472-2588 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The public also has access to the Publications Board. For information, call Nick Foley, 478-0275 or Angela Nietfield, 475-4981. Postmaster: Send address changes to the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448. Second class postage paid at Lincoln, NE 68510. ALL MATERIAL COPYRIGHT 1984 DAILY NEBRASKAN

So says the VA... by Russell Myers



Contact nearest VA office (check your phone book) or a local veterans group.