

Roe v Wade

23 years of division

Erin Hansbrough Struggle for choice demands attention

Well, here we stand at the beginning of 1996. The "Year of the Woman," (whatever it was) seems to have been forgotten by most people, especially by the United States government. We are currently working in an environment that most pro-choice advocates might call frustrating.

We also must take time, however, to celebrate what we have accomplished. And today, the anniversary of the Roe vs. Wade decision, seems like a perfect opportunity.

What exactly are we really celebrating? It is more than the right to a basic medical procedure. It is about women receiving the status that they deserve as human beings, who are able to make intelligent, well-informed decisions about their health and their futures.

But it seems that we are far from being able to let down our guard and relax; for every inch of progress that we make, an inch is taken away somewhere else. This was proven by the budget hearing last August, in which Planned Parenthood's funding for education in public schools was being considered for removal from the budget. Luckily, the funding was kept in place.

What kind of sense does it make for abortion to be illegal, and on top of that, keep people in the dark about their sexuality, causing more pregnancies to occur? It seems that the days of back-alley abortions and uncertified doctors are not as far behind as some would like to think.

Just as making abortion legal was a long and difficult battle, so is keeping it legal.

For instance, the gag rule (a law that would forbid state-funded doctors and clinicians to distribute any advice or information regarding abortion) has been passed, retracted and is now being considered for a vote once again.

Also, Nebraska was recently mandated

by the Supreme Court to allow Medicaid funds to pay for abortions in the case of rape or incest. This was a law that had been passed some time ago for the entire nation, but one that Nebraska had been stubborn about following.

On the national level, a bill has been introduced to eliminate the funding for Title X, a program that provides health care and contraceptive services specifically to low-income women. In addition, a bill recently passed in the Senate would ban the use of the D and E (dilation and extraction) procedure. The D and E is one of the safest medical procedures available to women who require late-term abortions. This procedure is rarely used outside of cases when the mother's life is in danger

or the fetus has severe deformities that would not allow it to live past the birthing process. The bill is awaiting a veto from President Clinton.

It is often assumed that pro-choice is in the majority. And while this may be true, it is often hard to take comfort in mere numbers. Many people who call themselves pro-choice only extend their beliefs as far as cases that deal with rape, incest or endangerment of

the mother's life. This sends a dangerous message to women: that we must be victims of sexual violence and/or at risk of death before we have the right to decide what we are allowed to do with our bodies.

Looking back, there has been a lot of time and hard work involved in the pro-choice movement that deserves to be celebrated. But we can't afford to forget the fact that, even while we are remembering our victories, measures are being taken to take away our reproductive freedom. The status of women's medical rights will depend on our education, motivation and bravery.

Hopefully, in the future, we will have more to celebrate.

Hansbrough is the president of UNL Students for Choice.

Sara Schilfe Legal abortions, false 'promises'

In 1973, our nation was force-fed a judicial edict — Roe vs. Wade and Doe vs. Bolton — that was supposed to settle the contentious debate over abortion. And yet, 23 years later, the debate continues to roar across America. Perhaps it's time to evaluate what kind of impact 23 years of abortion-on-demand, during all nine months of pregnancy, has had on our nation and on women in particular.

When abortion was legalized, the abortion advocates guaranteed that women's lives would greatly improve. For example, the abortion advocates claimed that the poverty of women would decrease because women could continue their educations without the burden of caring for a child; and child abuse would decrease because every child would be wanted. They promised that legal abortion would be the savior of women, and that it would cure all the social, economic and health-related problems women were facing. However, 23 years of legal abortion has proved their "promises" to be nothing more than a cruel hoax.

Today, women and children comprise the largest and fastest-growing poverty group in the United States. In addition, child abuse, spousal abuse, sexual abuse, exploitation and harassment, and a whole host of other social ills have increased dramatically since the legalization of abortion.

Feminists for Life, a pro-life women's organization, summarized the effects of legal abortion this way: "How can women ever lose second-class status as long as they are seen as requiring surgery in order to avoid it? Medical technology is offered as a solution to achieve equality, but the premise is wrong... It's an insult to women to say women must change their biology in order to fit into society."

Legalized abortion, without question, has impeded true women's rights by acting as a cheap substitute for real solutions to the

injustices women face today.

In the realm of women's health, there are also many unfulfilled promises. Legal abortion was said to be safer and better for women's health, yet Planned Parenthood's own figures show 95 percent of abortions are performed for reasons other than health.

And, more importantly, the vast majority of abortions occur in centers largely unregulated by federal health standards. Abortion providers oppose laws that would require abortion centers to follow the same laws as other medical facilities.

Robert P. Casey, the ex-governor of Pennsylvania, put into words the essence of the pro-life movement in America today when he said: "The fundamental question posed by abortion is this: Once a child has been conceived, what is the proper response of a good society — of America at

her best? If pregnancy presents a challenge, do we, as a society, rise to that challenge by dispensing with the child? And when a pregnancy comes at a difficult time, what is the worthier response? Do we surround the mother and child with protection and love, or do we hold out to her the cold comfort of a trip to an abortionist?"

The pro-life movement has listened to the cries of women who have had abortions, and we understand that these women don't freely

choose abortion but feel it is their only choice. The pro-life community believes the proper response to pregnant women is to embrace BOTH the mother and the child. This means reducing the barriers to parenting and adoption and making those options more attainable for women.

The abortion industry's response to pregnancy has been to ensure readily available abortion on demand. For women to be able to choose parenting and adoption, their options shouldn't just be presented — they should be made equally attainable.

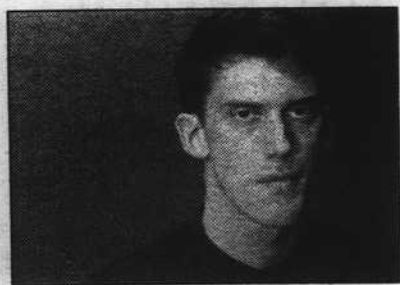
Schilfe is the president of UNL Students for Life.

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New opportunity

After Big Mac and 'pinko commie,' surely we can shape Russia better



Fred Poyner

Yesterday marked the 72nd anniversary of the death of Vladimir Lenin. CNN devoted a whole fifteen seconds to one of the most influential leaders of this century.

I say influential not only because he was — and remains today for some countries — the driving force behind Marxism, but also because America's identity as a nation has been greatly defined by our past relations with the now-defunct Soviet Union, of which Lenin was no small part.

We have relatives from World War II who can remember when the

"Containment was at one time an American watchword, referred to in the same breath as the invocation 'pinko commie.'"

Russians were a nation besieged, and America pledged to provide aid. The opening of a two-front war helped stop the spread of Nazi fascism throughout Europe. We helped bury their dead alongside our own.

As a nation, we remember the Berlin airlift, the rise of the Iron Curtain and the Korean War, events which seemed to change our relations with the Soviets forever.

At the height of the Cold War, our nation will recall, Nikita Khrushchev banged his shoe on a United Nations table. And fear accompanied the news that the Cubans were constructing a nuclear missile base seventy miles from Florida.

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American watchword, referred to in the same breath as the invocation "pinko commie."

Stalin may have taken the mantle of control and rivaled Hitler as a dictator, but the ghost of Lenin smiled through it all. Lenin started the whole communist ball rolling.

Think about it for a minute. So much of how we view the world has been influenced in some way by the Soviet Union, past and present.

Jimmy Carter boycotted the 1980 Olympics over Russian troops in Afghanistan. Today, Russian troops in Chechnya compete with U.S. foreign market investors for attention.

They gave us Barishnikov (sort of) while we gave them McDonalds. From Tolstoy to Kandinsky, from the space race to the arms race, to

the Black Sea and the Bering Sea and the North Sea, our cultural, political, and historical exchanges with the Soviets have had an indelible effect on us as a people and a society.

At one point in America, people believed that a communist conspiracy was under way to subvert our form of government and turn us all into anti-capitalist, hammer-and-sickle toting, repressed clones. Sen. Joe McCarthy headed this witch hunt, ruining the lives of many people in the process of feeding off the growing national hysteria of the time. (McCarthy was rivaled only by Nixon in his abuse of political power. Nixon, incidentally, also exploited the communist ideology for his own ends.)

The funny thing is, the notion of the communist infiltration worked, only not the way everyone believed it would.

Our nation invested so much identity into fighting the Soviet Union for so long, on all fronts, that now with them gone, we are having to reassess and reinvent many of the

old convictions forged previously, when we had no choice but to share.

Bastions of communism still exist. Cuba, North Korea, and mainland China all have outstanding IOU's to the USSR that will now never be cashed in full. It remains to be seen if they will follow a similar fate as the parent country.

The time may have arrived for the United States and what is left of the Soviet empire in Europe to again become close allies. As a nation, we have many interests in helping Russia maintain stability, not the least of which are strategic and economic by definition. The old Soviet Union is gone forever; this gives us the opportunity to shape a new one.

Lenin envisioned a world run as a socialist body. He never dreamed that 79 years after the birth of his dream, we would be struggling to envision a future world devoid of the Soviet Union.

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