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EDITORIALS

...when first we practice to conceive

I am the product of a Roman Catholic Education. I have survived four years of a fine Christian school. In this fine, morally upstanding community I have seen a disproportionately high number of fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen year old girls develop the same problem. All had sex; the church's instructions against premarital sex were ignored. All were pregnant; the church's instructions not to use contraceptives were not ignored. All of their boyfriends quickly were out of the picture; indeed, many of their problems were caused by the same boys. All but one dropped out of school to have the child.

My best friend and his girlfriend faced this problem. The church graciously offered to pay the hospital fees for the birth and to find adoptive parents for the child. But the poor girl had a miscarriage; the church refused to pay the hospital fees for the miscarriage. She received no counseling from the church; she was ashamed to tell anyone what had happened to her. It was never mentioned at school. She had no one to talk to except for one or two close friends.

Pro-lifers often speak of the moral outrage of abortion. This seventeen year old girl's miscarriage was bad enough. She had to undergo severe emotional trauma and was made to feel ashamed of her body. But what of the many girls who give birth and are offered no help, no welcoming family, no financial support, no job, no future? Who takes care of them? The Pro-lifers? No, they are too busy blowing up clean, safe abortion clinics and counseling centers. The church? Often, but is it fair to lay the nation's burden solely upon the backs of private organizations?

There is no easy solution to the issue of abortion that is dividing our country. Morality is a dangerous subject for the government to address. Abortion does end a life. Yet if a woman sees abortion this way, it is her right to choose not to have an abortion. She has made a moral choice for herself. If a woman does not see the issue this way, and spares herself and the baby suffering through the abortion, it is her right to choose to have an abortion.

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If it once again becomes against the law for a woman to have an abortion in this country, the element of morality is removed. It is no longer a choice made of free will; those who think they are acting morally by not having an abortion are merely acting out of subservience to the law. The woman who would have chosen to have an abortion has now been deprived of her constitutional rights. And many women will have the abortion anyway, in a back alley office or in the privacy of their own bathrooms. Some of them may perform the operation without mutilating themselves. Many will live.

If contraceptives were more available and accepted, many of these pregnancies would not have occurred in the first place. Just think, if they are not pregnant, abortion is not a problem! But, unfortunately, contraceptives are bad. If you give kids rubbers, they will just go out

and have sex. Hey, I've got news for you: they are going to have sex anyway! Do you want to stop your children from having sex? You can't. Do you want to

keep your children from getting pregnant? You can. Do you want to keep your children from dying of AIDS? You can. Give them contraceptives. Try a balloon birthday party!

In sex education at my Catholic high school, we were told by a little old nun, of all people, that most girls begin the masturbation cycle at age twelve. And that touching yourself there would send you to hell. In freshman health at college, we were told that sex would give us genital warts. Come on. Teenage pregnancy, and the resulting illiteracy, are two of the biggest problems facing our country today. You want to help cut down on welfare? Implement serious sex education courses in the public schools. And for God's sake, pay the public teachers the salary they deserve. Provide free, safe childcare for working mothers. That way they can work. AIDS is a growing threat to all Americans. Yes, ALL Americans. Even heterosexuals. Do you want to be held responsible for your children's deaths because you were too squeamish to say the "S" word?

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Voting rights demand automatic registration

The United States' ...

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