

WILLIAM GRIGG

# 'Back Alley Holocaust' the 'big lie' of pro-choice movement

As the national debate on abortion approaches critical mass, it is intriguing to take notice of a role reversal that has taken place. Abortion rights activists, who fought for and won a revolutionary change in American society, are now the embattled defenders of a shaky status quo; opponents of abortion--often lumped in with the "religious right"--are now fighting a counterrevolution.

The vanguard of the counterrevolution is "Operation Rescue," a movement that sends protesters to stage sit-ins in front of abortion clinics. Depending upon one's perspective, Operation Rescue is either an inspiring exercise in civil disobedience or (in the words of the *Militant* magazine) a collection of "rightist forces" whose actions "have the same odor as gangs of anti-union thugs . . . or racist gangs."

Here's a fascinating contradiction. In a recent lead editorial, the *Militant* describes Operation Rescue as "part of the ruler's offensive." Elsewhere in the same issue, the *Militant* applauded counter-demonstrations that gathered "to keep the clinics open and pressure police to enforce the law." Question: How can Operation Rescue be "part of the ruler's offensive" while being subject to arrest for violating the "ruler's" laws?

Such self-contradiction may be expected from the *Militant*, whose editorial staff suffers from the mental corrosion symptomatic of prolonged exposure to Marxism. But the abortion rights movement at large is defined by a contradiction at least as striking as the *Militant's*.

The abortion rights movement insists that it represents the consensus of the electorate regarding abortion and that the pro-life movement is a "small fringe element." If so, why is the pro-choice movement palsied with terror at the prospect of returning the issue to state legislatures, where the pro-choice position would presumably prevail?

The *Roe vs. Wade* decision of 1973 created by

judicial decree a virtually unrestricted abortion right. The abortion rights movement fears that the right may disappear in the same fashion when the court takes up its review of the *Webster* case later this month. But if, as pro-choice representatives insist, the public supports the existing abortion law, won't that support be reflected through laws made at the state level?

The abortion rights movement is emitting a dense fog of the fatuities and falsehoods that characterize a movement that is losing an argument. Its standard response to the question asked above is that if the issue of abortion were remanded back to the states, women's lives would be endangered; they would be driven "back into the back alleys" to suffer from illegal abortions while the various legislatures deliberated over abortion laws.

The myth of the pre-*Roe* "Back Alley Holocaust" is the big lie of the abortion rights movement. It cannot survive a reading of the volume *Roe vs. Wade* by Marian Faux. Faux intended to write an inspiring account of the triumph of the two young women lawyers who argued *Roe* before the Supreme Court. But she lets slip some very inconvenient facts that demolish several cherished pro-choice myths.

Faux writes, "When I began to look into (the dangers of illegal) abortion, several pro-choice reformers suggested that illegal abortion was not as dangerous as it had been depicted. . . . An image of tens of thousands of women being killed . . . was so persuasive a piece of propaganda that the abortion rights movement could be forgiven its failure to double check the facts." Faux also cites birth control expert Linda Gordon, who declares that abortions performed after the mid-19th century were not particularly unsafe. Furthermore, Faux points out the illegal "back-alley" abortionists in the pre-*Roe* era were probably more competent in performing the procedure than the average family

doctor.

Another falsehood favored by the pro-choice movement is that criminalization of abortion would fill prisons with women who seek the services of an abortionist. Faux points out many abortion reformers "thought that only a physician could sue to liberalize the abortion laws, since they were *the only ones punished under the law.*" (My emphasis.) Pre-*Roe* abortion laws were designed to punish the abortionist, not the customer.

Many abortion rights activists insist their cause is nothing less than the battle to protect "the right of Americans to choose what they want to do with their lives." But similar slogans animate those who protest the growing momentum toward more restrictive gun laws and those affected by the recent Supreme Court decision requiring integration of "men only" private clubs.

There is nothing in the Constitution that forbids the government from restricting the right to bear arms to that necessary to maintain a "well-regulated militia;" there is nothing that prevents government from mandating the integration of all-male clubs of the sort subject to last year's Supreme Court ruling; and there certainly is nothing that forbids state and local governments to restrict--or prohibit--abortion within their jurisdiction. The question is whether such restrictions would constitute wise social policy.

This is a question that belongs within the legislative realm, where society can render a democratic judgment. Molly Yard of NOW predicts that the Supreme Court will "be influenced by public opinion" and see fit to uphold *Roe*. If the Court is wise, it will inform Yard and her crowd that if public opinion supports the pro-choice position, that position will be vindicated by the legislative branch.

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