

'Chastity program' is quite ill-conceived

Along with the Medicaid and public health cuts Pres. Ronald Reagan announced last week is a curious little bopper — a \$16 million increase in family planning funds. That \$16 million is earmarked for a new administration baby called the "Chastity program."

"Chastity program"?

The Reagan conceived "Chastity program" is aimed at encouraging sexual abstinence and self-discipline among teenagers.

Sexual abstinence and self-discipline among teenagers? Isn't that an idea whose time has come — and gone?

As illegitimate as it seems the Reagan administration is planning to disseminate \$16 million to dissuade teenagers from using contraceptives and to practice sexual abstinence. They must realize sexual abstinence requires practically no practice.

This "Chastity program" is definitely an impotent idea. And, at \$16 "big ones" it's a natural for Senator William Proxmire's Golden Fleece Award.

What sort of mentality (or lack thereof) sired the idea to discard contraceptives for teen-age use when the number of unwed teenage pregnancies is as high as ever? The problem lies more in the lack of knowledge, lack of availability and encouraged use of contraceptives by sexually active teenagers. If the Reagan administration is attempting a roundabout attack on teenage pregnancies, discouraging contraceptive use is surely arseways-around.

Encouraging sexual abstinence is a rather rosy idea. But the recognition can't be shaken that abstinence has been preached for so-many-hundreds-of-years with a less than a satisfying outcome. On the one hand, those that will — shall. On the other hand, those that won't — don't.

Proper information regarding both the consequences and rewards of sexual activity will

permit teenagers to make mature decisions whether or not to engage in sexual activity. Thrust into ignorance, with contraception discouraged, the results will be shattered lives, guilt, and unwanted pregnancies.

What is really troubling to ponder is the millions of dollars that will be expended to encourage self-discipline in lieu of sexual activity. Somehow, spending millions of dollars on sexual self-discipline conjures some curious images. Those images aren't merely cast-iron corsets, cold showers and hairy palms — but a forthcoming

generation of sexually guilty neurotics. Will the rigors of this program elicit a nascent Freudianism?

The "Chastity program" is a boondoggle and a bastardization of reality. The progenitors of this program are trying to foist ignorance and out-dated ideals on young adults. The "Chastity program" is a botch from conception. That \$16 million would be spent more wisely on expanded sex education and ensuring contraceptives are readily available for use. That's addressing the reality of teenage sexuality.



letters

Fundamentalist-liberal

Last week's editorial made the statement "Fundamentalist groups are some of the strongest fibers woven into the fabric of American culture." There is a reason for this. We often get confused about who is the attacker and who is the attackee in the fundamentalist-liberal controversy. Those of us who have lived most of our lives in the '60s and '70s assume for some odd reason that present civil rights ideals, the theory of evolution, and freedom of sexual values have always been. This perspective is wrong. The values of the fundamentalists held sway in the United States until the 1960s. The Constitution was the document that upheld their lifestyle. This group of people are the attacked and we are the attackers. It shouldn't surprise us then that a strong conservative movement is rising. The '60s took the conservative sector of our nation by surprise, overwhelmed it, and it is just now reorganizing.

Could we possibly admit to some good things in the conservative movement? It is interesting to read "the belief in an ultimate good triumphing over evil is essential to the mettle of a culture" followed by a denunciation of anyone who would try to apply such ideals to real life issues. The fundamentalists remember when such ideals were applied to public life and the crime rate was lower, the family was more stable, divorce and its counterpart, juvenile delinquency, were not so prevalent. While this may be a classic non sequitur, the fundamentalists don't think so. And of course none of us would bow to such logic unless we

had a controlled experiment where Washington State was conservative, Oregon State was liberal, and we measured the results on a dip stick.

Could it be that a "good" society does not just happen? Historically it hasn't happened. What morals and values build a stable, beneficial society? One where children have the right to a stable home, where a man does not desert his family in tough times, where an advertisement does not say "We care" when it means "We care about your money", where your bicycle is not in constant danger of being ripped off, and when word and integrity can be trusted, rather than badly-worded contracts that end in suits.

I don't think these are terrible ideals, and these are the kinds of ideals fundamentalists want. The problem is they want to legislate it all. Since when can you legislate a man's character? Even if they passed all of their legislation, I think they would be sadly disappointed.

If we want a sensible and reasonable morality to characterize our society, we have to work at it personally. Very few of us have a well thought out basis for our morals and life philosophy. If you have "caught" your personal morals and lifestyle the same way one catches measles, it's time to question them. Do you even know what you believe about honesty, self-control, trustworthiness, the golden rule, slander, moderation, generosity, courage, love and creativity? These are all qualities of the spirit, and unfortunately many of us are spiritually deaf, dumb and blind.

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Which morality?

Concerning "Groups fight to revise culture." The thesis or assumption behind the editorial's complaints is that fundamentalists would "legislate morality."

Whatever you make of fundamentalist activism, everyone must wake up to the fact that all legislation and all social action is based on some morality or another. In this sense you can not help but "legislate morality." The question becomes: "Which morality?"

You may disagree with the motivating morality in question or with its particular application, but it is utterly naive and unfair to assume that only fundamentalists want to "legislate morality." All social action is based on moral principle — otherwise there would be no action at all. Politics and policies, lawmaking and lobbying, are all the enactment of a certain morality.

The "pro-choice" position rests on the ethical presupposition (morality) that the developing person (fetus) has no right to life, protection, or freedom. All "pro-choice" activism stems from this morality and seeks to enact (legislate) this morality. To support legislation granting aid for abortions is to — you guessed it — "legislate morality," "pro-choice" morality.

Does the writer oppose their views? Would he seek to legislate against their morality? If so, now who is guilty of "legislating morality"?

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