

editorial

AG decision denies problem's magnitude

Attorney General Edwin Meese's decision earlier this month to withhold a \$625,000 grant to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, a group that provides shelters for battered women, is more than an issue of money. It's more than an issue of whether the group promotes "lesbianism" as Meese and his cohorts suggested following the decision. The decision reflects an attitude that has plagued domestic violence throughout history: denial.

In addition to the obvious purpose of stripping credibility from shelters, the decision appears to be an attempt to trivialize the issue of wife beating in general, by shuffling the crime, which permeates all levels of society, under the carpet.

One need not delve too far into history to discover this country's lack of seriousness regarding wife beating. Until June of this year, a civil lawsuit of a battered wife had never been heard in a federal court. It wasn't until the late 1970s that police would arrest a man for beating his wife without the involvement of serious injury, or without actually witnessing the event. And even after a 1983 Police Federation study found that new acts of violence were less likely to occur following an arrest, police officers are still reluctant to get involved in a domestic dispute.

In addition, a shelter for battered women wasn't put into operation in this country until 1964. Today, about 900 shelters are forced to turn women and their children away because they are unable to meet the growing demand for protection.

Traditionally, it has been regarded as a man's right to beat his wife. Society, for a large part, still places the brunt of responsibility on the wife, believing that if only she were a better wife, her husband wouldn't be provoked into beating her. Or that if it were really that bad, she would simply leave. Meese's decision lends credibility to these notions.

But far from hiding the problem, a lack of funds can only make abuse more prominent. The wheels of violence continue to grind, only at a more vicious pace. The results of a University of New Hampshire study revealed that men whose parents were violent towards each other were 10 times as likely to beat their wives as men raised by non-violent parents.

A study by the Battered Women Research Center in Colorado found that 81 percent of men who beat their wives were physically abused as children, and that women reported using physical discipline with their children eight times more often when living with an abuser than when living in a non-violent situation. It has also been estimated that in 13 percent of the cases of wife abuse, the children are beaten as well.

So when women are not able to escape the home and take their children with them, the home becomes a breeding ground for a new generation of beaters, and the problem intensifies.

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence provides refuge for battered women and their children who have no where else to go. Meese's decision is a damaging blow to an already alarming situation, not only because the resources are desperately needed, but because the decision provides people reluctant to face this problem one more reason to turn their backs.

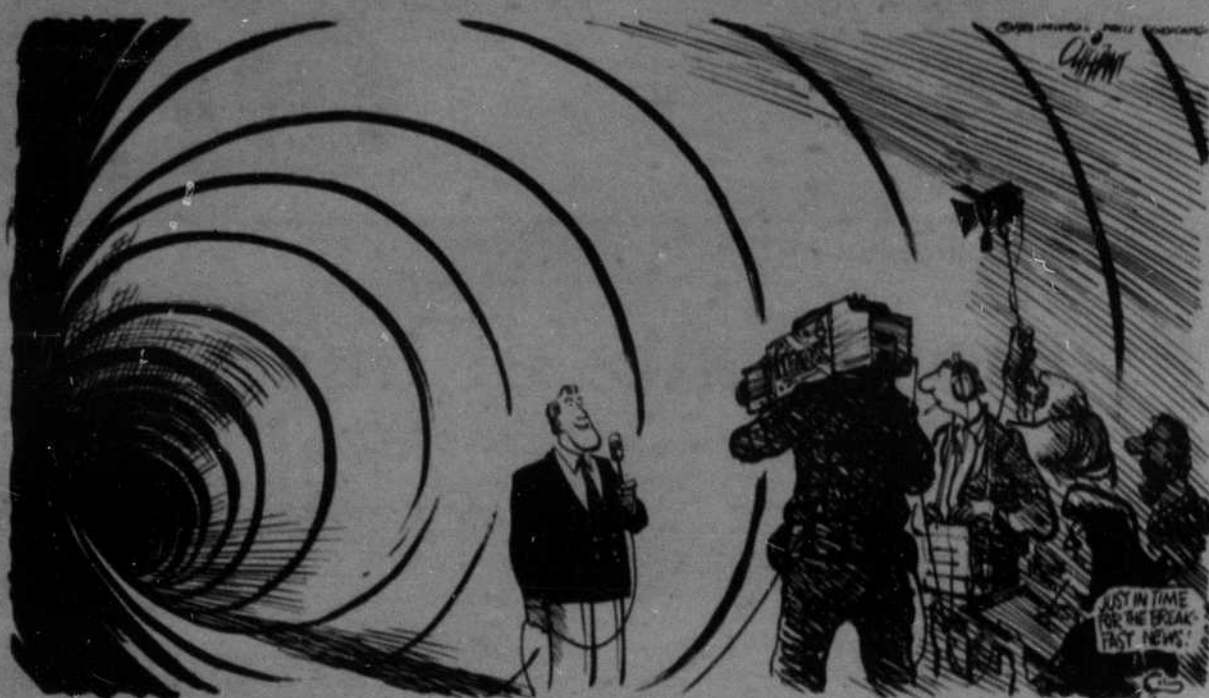
Every year an estimated 6 million wives are brutalized, a few thousand to death, by their husbands. The problem is not going to go away.

AIDS research increase marks redefinition of virus

The Reagan administration's proposal to increase money allocated to AIDS research by 44 percent next year, marks the transition from thinking of AIDS as a homosexual problem to thinking of AIDS as a human problem.

Although most of the people who have been struck down by the disease that destroys the immune system have been homosexual, the number of heterosexual people joining the ranks of the afflicted is increasing. And perhaps this is why the administration has called for such a large increase.

It is laudable that the administration decided that the problem merits increased funds, but it is sad that it took thousands of lives before the administration took significant action to stop the virus' reign. Because a person can fail to show symptoms of the disease for years after contracting the virus, it already may be too late for thousands of people yet to display outward signs of infection.



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commentary

Reagan, unlike most, can take medical treatment for granted

Because of his recent surgery, President Ronald Reagan is presently enjoying an immunity from criticism of his budget policies. Congressional leaders have refrained from questioning a number of the president's proposals, and most Americans have showered Reagan and his wife, Nancy, with much love.

Nevertheless, the wheels of government continue to turn, and Ronald Reagan is responsible for the direction of our national government.

The following letter to the president asks Reagan to reconsider many of his policy decisions:

Mr. President:

During the past 10 days, millions of Americans have prayed for your rapid recovery from cancer surgery. You have received an outpouring of love and affection that very few receive in a lifetime. Your pain and anguish has been shared by many.

But it is ironic that one of our most mean-spirited presidents has received such a national display of love.

While you rested comfortably in a Maryland naval hospital, not having to fear the monetary cost of your surgery, millions

feared that you would work for a further deduction of their health-care benefits.

While you receive top-quality medical treatment, millions of Americans, who cannot afford health insurance, must settle for cut-rate care because they cannot afford the costs incurred in a hospital. Yet, you oppose the creation of a national health insurance program.

While you remained in a hospital bed, you continued to receive your presidential salary, your pension as a former California governor, and your Social Security benefits. But millions of Americans are out of work and lacking an income because of your economic policies.

Your lifestyle provides you with income security that very few Americans enjoy. But rather than trying to understand the plight of less-fortunate Americans, you continue to peck away at programs established to eliminate many of the inequities in our system.

You are fortunate, Mr. President. Your life has been a model of the true American success story. Yet, for most, life has not been as good.

Most Americans cannot depend upon the federal govern-

ment to assume their medical costs, as you can. And a growing number are unable to meet their medical bills.

Many say it is in bad taste to criticize you while you recover from your surgery, but you are still the president.

It would be irresponsible for your critics to withhold criticism of any of your proposals simply because you are convalescing.

Overall, you lead a happy life, sheltered from the cold reality of day-to-day existence in this nation. While you recover from your operation, please reconsider the effects of your policies.

You speak a good speech, and you always flash that winning Reagan smile, but in reality, millions of Americans have seen little love or affection emanating from your heart.

Enough is enough! We are tired of your act. It's time for you to think about what you're doing to America and the rest of the world.

No one wishes the president poor health, but it is time he assumes responsibility for the real effects of his policies.

By Dave Berns

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