

Senate hypocrisy defeats Zoe Baird

President Bill Clinton withdrew the nomination of Zoe Baird for U.S. attorney general last Thursday, succumbing to pressure from several senators over her employment of two illegal aliens. The Peruvian couple was hired in July 1990 and received \$1,000 each per month and free room and board.

Whether Baird should have been confirmed is subject to argument. Certainly she was guilty of breaking the law — a big offense for an attorney general. Given that both she and her husband have extensive legal backgrounds, they probably should have known better. As one Clinton adviser said, people perceive Baird as being in "a class of people who think they are above the law."

Conversely, her offense was not huge. The couple was paid significantly more than minimum wage and received healthy benefits. While it would have been easy to take advantage of an illegal couple — to pay far less than they were worth — Baird did not.

Regardless of Baird's bad decision, the U.S. Senate itself has little right to pass judgment on other people for ethical wrongdoing. After all, the Senate has yet to investigate Bob Packwood's alleged misconduct. Clarence Thomas was confirmed to the U.S. Supreme Court despite Anita Hill's convincing testimony. And the Keating Five — after all the savings and loan revelations — still reside comfortably in their seats.

Ethics have never been high on the Senate's priority list, and it has proved increasingly hypocritical in its preaching. Sexual harassment issues have embarrassed the Senate of late, yet male members continue their insensitivity to women's equality — despite members' rhetoric to the contrary.

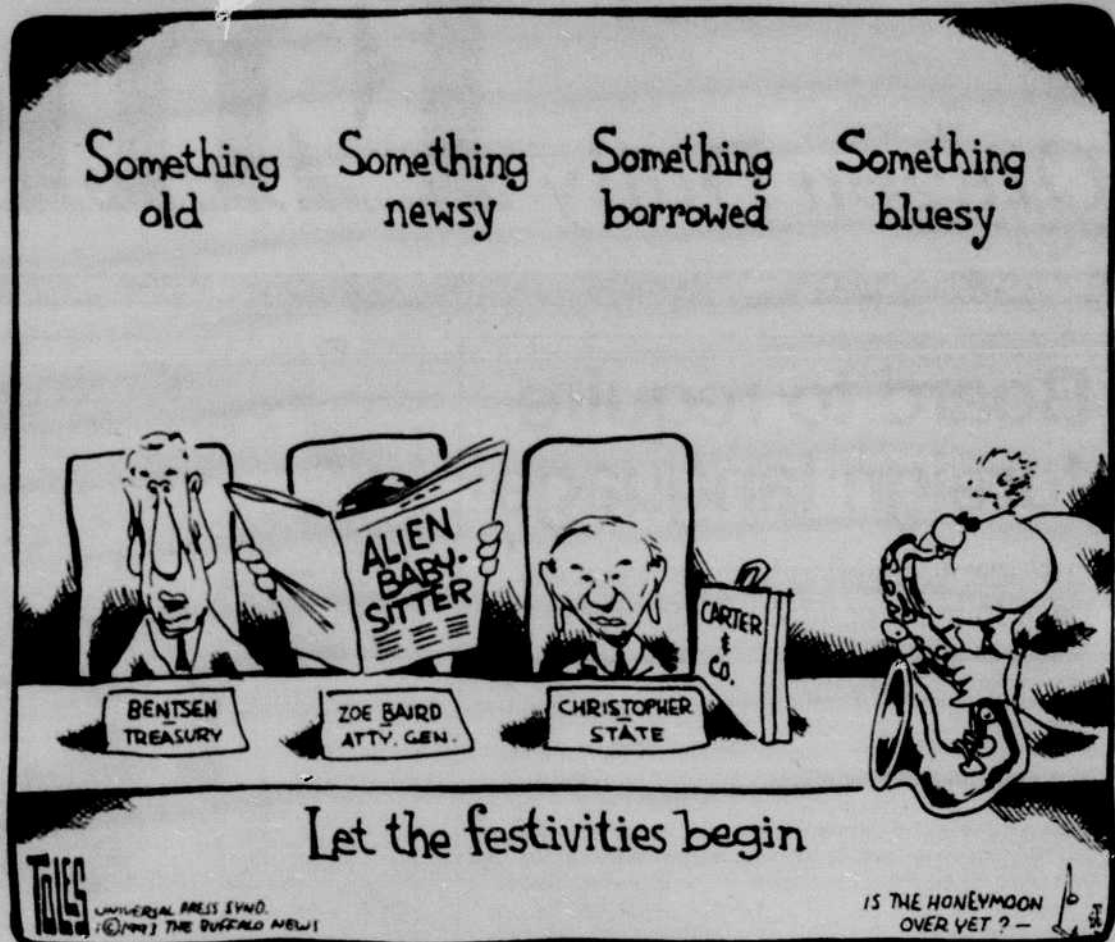
Which brings to light an interesting question. If a man were running for attorney general, and the Senate discovered he had hired illegal aliens in his past, would the nominee have been hassled so severely? Probably not, simply because the Senate still holds different standards for male and female nominees.

Zoe Baird was held to higher ideals because she's a woman, and a woman can't afford mistakes to be confirmed. It's more than likely that the senators were looking for a reason not to confirm her, and this is the first that came up.

Baird certainly isn't the cleanest nominee Clinton could have found. She may have been entirely wrong for the job given her apparent disrespect for employment laws. Better candidates are out there.

But the Senate has to examine its reasons for opposing her confirmation. Was it because of her past, which is probably no worse than your average senator? Or was it because she was a woman, which may be too much of a change for most senators to live with?

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COMMENTARY

Women suffer from Roe vs. Wade

By Sally Carmody Keeney

The birth of TV character Murphy Brown's baby sparked a public debate about single motherhood and precipitated the election year wrangling over "family values." The feud began with his birth, but an earlier event, which was far more crucial to Baby Brown's well-being than his mother's marital status, oddly went unnoticed.

A not-yet-visibly pregnant Brown, in the first trimester of her pregnancy, lay on the obstetrician's examining table and shouted ecstatically as her unborn baby's image materialized on the ultrasound screen. "My daughter! That's my daughter!" she exclaimed triumphantly as the various parts were pointed out — until the technician noticed the male genitalia.

Fortunately for the baby (and the show's ratings), "Murph" decided to go through with the pregnancy. Had she changed her mind, however, that same exquisitely formed little child, who only moments before had elicited such joyful cries of wonder from his mother, would have been summarily destroyed.

The most distressing aspect of this scenario is not just the fact that a woman would abort at this point (4,000 times a day in this country women do), but that so many people would applaud her unrestricted right to do so — and believe themselves to be progressive defenders of women's rights because of it.

Feminists who encourage incorporation, peace groups who profess a commitment to non-violence, and even newspapers that have courageously condemned capital punishment, noting that "state-sponsored killing inevitably produces a hard and jaded society that's less respectful of all life," would nonetheless agree that Brown should have the "right to choose" to order her unborn's termination at any time for any reason.

This benign attitude toward abortion is not because of ignorance. Most apologists for "choice" are well aware that abortion destroys an innocent human being. That irrefutable fact is especially evident in the more than 150,000 second- and third-term abortions performed annually in the United States.

Warren Hern, a Colorado abortionist who specializes in these late-term abortions, admitted the grisly truth at a 1978 meeting of Planned Parenthood physicians: "... There's no possibility of denial of an act of destruction by the operator. It is before one's eyes. The sensation of dismemberment flows through the forceps like an electric current."

It may be discomfiting for polite liberals to hear the terminators' shop talk, but it is absolute-

ly essential to cut through the pernicious rhetoric of choice. By placing all the emphasis on choosing, rather than discussing the activity being chosen, abortion-rights activists have obscured the fact that women are sacrificing their own children in a desperate bid for justice.

At this crucial point, the community has not only a right but an obligation to intervene, just as it has an obligation to intervene when any member is threatened by violence.

Most of the social ills that abortion on demand was supposed to cure have actually worsened in the 20 years since the Roe vs. Wade decision. Of all the rationalizations given for abortion, perhaps none has been more destructive than the mind-set behind the benevolent-sounding slogan, "Every child a wanted child."

Instead of ending child abuse (by ending the life of the child in utero), we have created a world

where it is incumbent upon a child to prove herself lovable, i.e. wanted, rather than being the responsibility of adults to be loving. By relegating the fetus to the legal status of extraneous tissue, we have also confirmed the callous notion that sex is just another excretory function. Does anyone seriously believe this development has enhanced women's lives or increased the value of children?

Whether women are the victims or victimizers in the abortion drama is a subject of some debate. One thing is clear, however; they pay a higher price for "sexual freedom" than men escape. The wildly exaggerated claims that thousands of women died from illegal abortions prior to 1973 have been refuted by knowledgeable abortion-rights activists.

Yet it is true that deaths occurred. The problem is, women still suffer from abortion, regardless of its legal status. Women are still wounded and women still die from legal abortion, although their deaths go unmentioned and unannounced (and sometimes unreported) by those in the abortion industry.

There is a profound loneliness behind the beligerent defiance of the new abortion-rights rallying cry, "Who decides?" It is the desperate loneliness of a woman with her back to the wall, and it is not surprising she would resort to the violence of abortion as a way out.

We are all painfully aware that gender injustice is a reality. There can indeed be many problems for a woman carrying an unintentionally conceived baby. We need to help her attack those problems, not the baby.

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