

Abortion pill extends the right to choose

The controversial "abortion pill," RU-486, came a step closer to widespread availability in the United States earlier this month after its French manufacturer agreed to hand the technology and patent rights for the pill over to a non-profit contraceptive organization in New York, known as the Population Council.

Pro-choice advocates praise the move; pro-life groups predictably decry it. Disagreements over the morality of abortion are not likely to be resolved soon, regardless of the progress of RU-486. But as long as women maintain their right to an abortion — and as long as the Supreme Court continues to uphold that right — then there is no reason to insist that women go through surgery rather than take a less-dangerous pill.

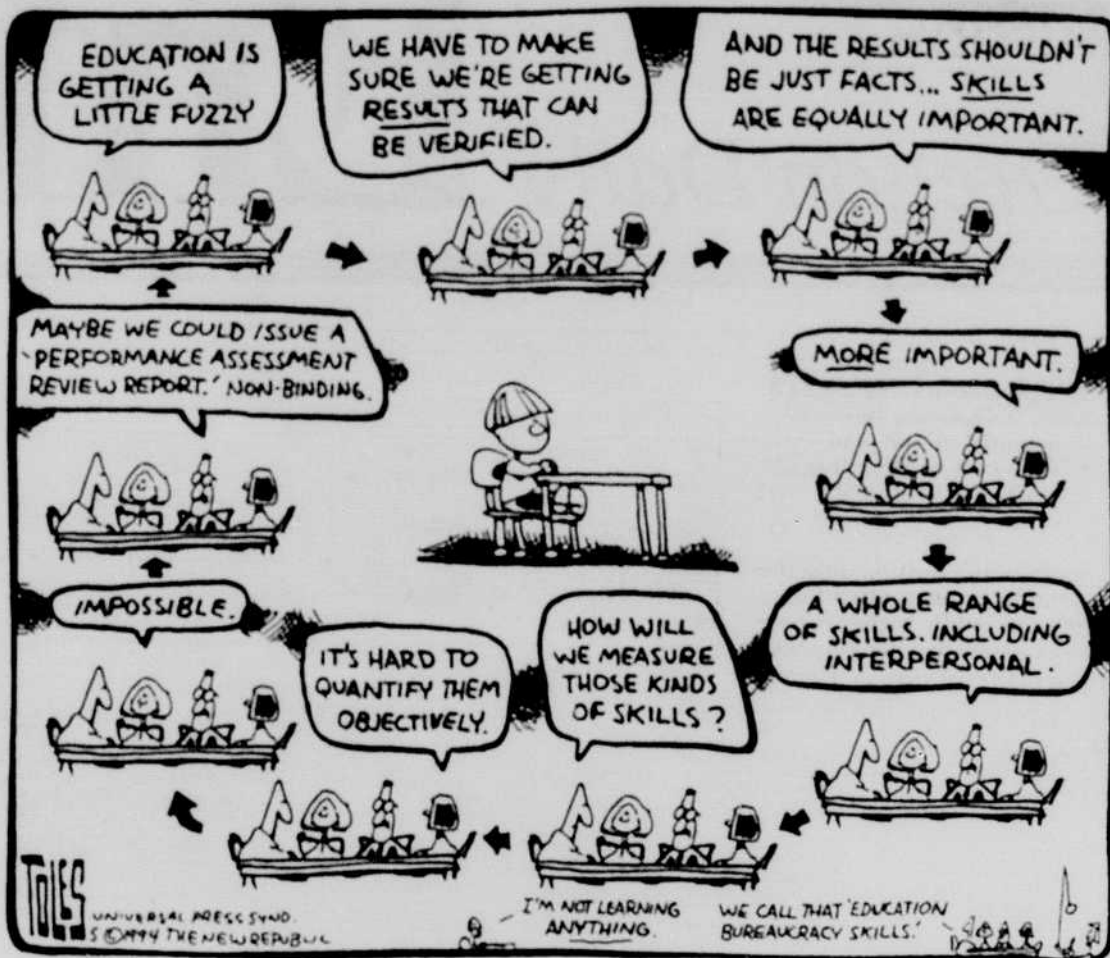
RU-486 has been used by between 150,000 and 200,000 women in France alone and has been taken by thousands more in Britain, Sweden and China. Although the drug must go through clinical tests in this country before receiving government approval, a process that will delay the drug's availability until at least the summer of 1996, there is no reason to expect, given the drug's success rate, that approval will not arrive eventually.

The Population Council estimates that from 25 percent to 40 percent of abortions now performed surgically could be done with RU-486. The pill is not expected to completely supplant surgical abortions because it can be used only until the seventh week of pregnancy.

There have been some concerns that making the pill available here would increase the number of abortions and simultaneously reduce the seriousness of abortion — turning it into a casual decision made with little or no regard for the fetus/baby. This fear rests on the false assumption that taking RU-486 would be as simple as just going to the medicine cabinet and popping a pill. Women using RU-486 will have to go to their doctors at least three times — once to take the pill, again to take a necessary follow-up drug and a third time as a checkup for infection. Additional visits to discuss the pill and the pregnancy itself are likely. And using the pill is painful because expelling the embryo can take several days. For these reasons, even an RU-486 abortion would require serious contemplation and effort.

There are many reasons why a woman might prefer RU-486 to a surgical abortion. She may fear surgery itself; she may be intimidated by the pro-life groups that regularly protest clinics in some cities. Or, if she lives in a rural area, she may have to travel 100 miles or more to find a clinic or doctor to perform a surgical abortion. By contrast, RU-486 would be available from any doctor, anywhere.

The abortion issue will continue to divide Americans for years to come. RU-486 won't change that. What it will change is the accessibility of abortion. RU-486 will extend the right to choose to many women who previously did not have it — women for whom surgical abortion seemed too dangerous, difficult or distant. As long as abortion is legal, it should also be available to all.



COMMENTARY

Fisher's attack tramples truth

By Kevin Hornbuckle

Despite the great need for useful information and analysis of social and economic developments, the *Emerald* serves primarily as a practicing ground for students wanting to make careers in the thought control industry. Some component of the industry, which likes to call itself "journalism" to disguise its systematic service to the wealthy and their corporations, will open its arms to *Emerald* columnist Martin Fisher when he graduates looking to climb another rung on the profession's ladder.

It will be an easy, quick step for Fisher because he has proved himself proficient at trampling truth and insulting the need for democracy. Take for example his mean-spirited attack on me (*ODE*, March 3). In it he refers to me as "the child" at the Eugene City Council table with whom other councilors ("adults") must plead to vote "along common sense lines."

But Fisher does not explain the basis of the "sense" he refers to. The basis is really ruling class service, but he leaves it unstated. His fundamental difference with me is that he believes capitalism is democratic. Yet rather than attempt to say so affirmatively and try to prove it, Mr. Fisher waged a character attack against me that revealed how truly shallow and ideologically obedient one must be to attain the journalistic status and opportunity that Fisher enjoys.

Paragraph after paragraph, Fisher slashes at my reputation with sharp words backed by nothing but very vague generalizations. There isn't even one mention of an actual issue that has come before the City Council, only stereotype and name calling. For instance, he suggests that I act like a baby to coerce the council to "replace the city charter with the Communist Manifesto." With no specific

accusation of wrongheaded policy-making or malfeasance, Fisher is reviving the practice of witch hunting wherein evidence is necessarily arbitrary (e.g., "I know you're wicked because God told me the devil is your master.")

Fisher wrote, "Hornbuckle wouldn't know good government if it fell on his head. Being a representative means making compromises. You vote for another representative's programs, and in turn, that representative supports your programs. It may not be perfect, but that's the way it works. Unless you're Hornbuckle." Incredible! Fisher writes as if he's arguing for good government, yet he endorses vote trading as a systematic method of governing.

Don't vote on principle. Vote out of political expedience. This is Fisher's shameless notion of how society should be run. This is why he'll go far up the ladder of the corporate media, whose job is to justify the grass-roots inequalities political back scratching has created from day one of this country.

In his column ("Dump Hornbuckle") Fisher encouraged people to sign a recall petition against me, which was filed by a young man who'd never met me or called me, nor written to me about problems with my actions. Nor had he come to any City Council meetings to research the effects of my voting. But he went to the media to announce that his personal dislike for me is so strong that I should be kicked out of office. Martin Fisher's ethics are similarly in the gutter of character assassination. He has never interviewed me for a story, has never called to ask me to explain a vote I'd made and didn't call to interview me about the points in the column in question.

No, facts are bothersome impediments to ideologists in the thought control industry.

This is because the social and economic facts point straight to the need for social reorganization based on human need instead of corporate greed. Yes, Lenin was correct when he said that freedom of the press will be achieved when the people own the presses.

Martin expressed befuddlement that Ward 3 voters would choose to believe the "confused ramblings of a disenfranchised socialist" and deliver me to office with a very decisive win. Martin is the confused one. He'll be similarly unable to explain why voters have refused to sign the recall petition — enough so that the question won't even make it to the ballot.

The truth is that I get many letters and calls of support from people in and out of Ward 3. Democracy is a very popular thing, especially with the people who agree that the Bill of Rights must be extended to include the right to a job, to the right health care and to the right to safe, affordable housing. I have the solid support of the working class people because I am not at all confused that capitalism has never and can never provide these basic elements of a just society. On the day of this writing, for instance, I got a letter from a person who wrote, "I think of you as a writer and a teacher."

Losing vote after vote on the City Council does not cause me the demoralization Martin Fisher and his role models at the *Register-Guard* would hope to instill. To the contrary, it causes me to hold the torch of democracy and struggle higher and more strongly. The economic elite are firmly in control of the City Council, but they shudder at the thought of the people discovering that there is a way to win equality and justice.

Kevin Hornbuckle is Ward 3's representative on the Eugene City Council.

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