

North Korean threat not to be ignored

Although he specifically said that he did not wish to engage in "saber rattling," President Clinton's actions in the past few weeks must have seemed to be exactly that, from the perspective of North Korea's aging dictator, Kim Il Sung.

Clinton's suggestion that the United Nations should consider economic sanctions against North Korea was clearly an attempt to frighten Kim into abandoning his clandestine nuclear weapons program — a program which the CIA believes may have already produced one or two nuclear bombs. But considering Clinton's foreign policy record and Kim's tradition of bucking world opinion, it seems doubtful that the threat of sanctions will force Kim to back down.

When Clinton's proposal for sanctions was first released, Kim made it clear once again that he would consider such actions an "act of war," and respond accordingly. So now the United States is faced with an awkward dilemma: either continue pursuing a hard line, and risk North Korea's military (and perhaps nuclear) wrath, or back down and suffer the consequences.

And those consequences, to borrow an appropriate cliché, are deadly serious. If North Korea is allowed to keep building nuclear weapons, it will further threaten valuable Western allies, such as Japan and South Korea.

But the dangers posed by a North Korean nuclear program extend far beyond the immediate area, however. North Korea already engages in a lucrative arms trade with such renegade regimes as those in Libya and Iraq — no friends of the United States. There are no guarantees that North Korea would not also sell nuclear arms to these countries, if allowed to build them in the first place.

And letting Kim continue his program, now that Clinton has said he "cannot allow" it, will deal yet another blow to the prestige of both to the president and the United States. After backing down on demands that China improve its human rights record, and after somewhat indecisive policies toward Bosnia, Somalia and Haiti, Clinton's taking a beating in the international arena. His ability to act as world leader is becoming more and more impaired as a result.

But the apparent alternative — stopping Kim's nuclear activities through economic sanctions or military force — carries dangers every bit as grave as those that will come if Kim is allowed to go ahead. The military situation in Korea does not favor the United States. Some 35,000 American troops are stationed in South Korea, and but even when combined with the half-million man South Korean army, they would not be enough to halt a determined North Korean attack, which could muster a million regulars and five million reservists. And while Japan is not in immediate danger of invasion, it is certainly within range of North Korean missiles and aircraft.

The answer is diplomatic negotiation. Clinton has complicated things by insisting that the North Koreans make nuclear concessions before the United States will consider agreeing to North Korean demands, including full diplomatic recognition from the U.S. and an end to existing trade limitations between the two countries.

In any case, serious high-level talks are desperately needed — not more blustering on the world stage. The potential for disaster is too great.



COMMENTARY

Feminists must respect women



DAVID THORN

I'm not what you would call a typical conservative. Sure, scoffing at society's more "liberal" causes is a major pastime of mine. Sure, I have been known to read the *Commentator* on occasion. One time, I even bought a copy of a Rush Limbaugh book (although I waited for the paperback).

In light of all this, it may surprise some people to learn that I consider myself to be a feminist.

For as long as I can remember, I've had the good fortune to know and work with a number of highly intelligent and competent women. In fact, as I was growing up, it took a long time for me to realize that men and women weren't *already* being treated as equals. Girls did every bit as well as boys in all the schools I attended; truth be told, they did better much of the time.

Equality of the sexes seemed so obvious a goal that I couldn't believe that it hadn't already been achieved.

So when I was confronted with statistics revealing the obstacles still faced by women in society — such as women earning 71 cents for every dollar earned by a man — it made me think that perhaps I should lend my voice to those of more active, prominent feminists.

Until I heard what they were saying. Then I discovered that my definition of feminism wasn't quite the same as theirs.

Now I'm not talking about the extremists, who seem to think that women are actually better than men. I don't think most feminists feel that way, so I won't waste time talking about why I disagree.

What I am talking about are those feminist thinkers who, on one hand, try to give women more choices while, on the other

hand, trying to tell women what to do.

Feminism today is much more than "equal pay for equal work." Feminism has been extended to cover virtually every issue that involves women, from abortion to advertising, prostitution to pornography.

With each of these issues, feminism has taken a stand "on behalf of women." But what many feminists fail to realize is that the logic behind each of these stands is inconsistent; the reasoning that justifies one position nullifies another.

Take abortion. What reasoning do feminists apply to support a woman's right to an abortion? Usually, they say that women have the right to decide what to do with their own bodies, and that they are fully capable of making such a decision. With these two points, I completely agree.

But when it comes to other "feminist" issues, this idea of a woman having the right and the ability to make her own decisions gets thrown out the window.

Prostitution and pornography are two such issues. I'm not here to argue about the exploitative nature of the so-called "sex industries." My point here is that many laws (or proposed laws) to limit or prohibit these activities send a message to women that "No, we didn't really mean it, you don't have a right to decide what to do with your own body. Just kidding."

If a woman can choose to have an abortion, which is usually a major life decision, then she ought to also be allowed to make other major life decisions, including what to do for a living.

This widespread practice of telling women what to do — by no means limited just to feminists — extends beyond such "seedy" activities, however.

I'm talking about those feminists who try to give women more choices while trying to tell them what to do.

Many individuals, and in this case feminists especially, seem to have a negative attitude toward other traditionally female professions, notably that of the homemaker, or "housewife."

There is nothing wrong with a person — male or female — dedicating his or her life to the day-to-day business of raising children and maintaining a household. Although I personally can't see the appeal of washing dishes and changing diapers, I have nothing but respect for those individuals who do. Which is more than I can say for some feminists.

In its early days, feminism was largely synonymous with "women's liberation." That alternate title hardly seems appropriate today, however. Liberation means more than simply being free to pursue activities that were previously forbidden. It also means being free to do the same things you've always done.

If feminists continue to look down their noses at certain occupations, they'll be negating much of the progress that has been made in recent decades.

If, on the other hand, they truly believe that women can be trusted to make their own decisions — something they've been saying all along — then they ought to respect those decisions, whatever they may be.

David Thorn is an associate editor at the Emerald.

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