

EDITORIAL

Abortion protesters must honor privacy

Abortion protesters in Portland crossed unforgivable lines Saturday when they picketed the home of a researcher who is helping test the abortion drug RU-486.

The hour-long demonstration, which was the first in the "No Place to Hide" campaign, was organized by Advocates for Life Ministries in Portland.

"Exposing somebody's home is far safer than exposing somebody's home in the womb, the safest home somebody ever had," said protest organizer Dawn M. Stover.

Although protesting in front of someone's home is not as newsworthy as shooting an abortion doctor, the actions taken by these intrusive protesters must not be ignored. Protests that invade one's personal space are malicious and do nothing but provoke more animosity on both sides.

Saturday's demonstration was a definite violation of privacy for Dr. Mark D. Nichols, an assistant professor at Oregon Health Sciences University, who is organizing one of the clinical trials of RU-486. What may seem like a harmless demonstration to some is a physical and psychological threat to Dr. Nichols, his family and his neighbors. The protest exposes his neighborhood and his family to the public, making his home a vulnerable target for future demonstrations. And the next protest may not be so civil, especially considering the outbreak of violence against abortion clinics and doctors this year.

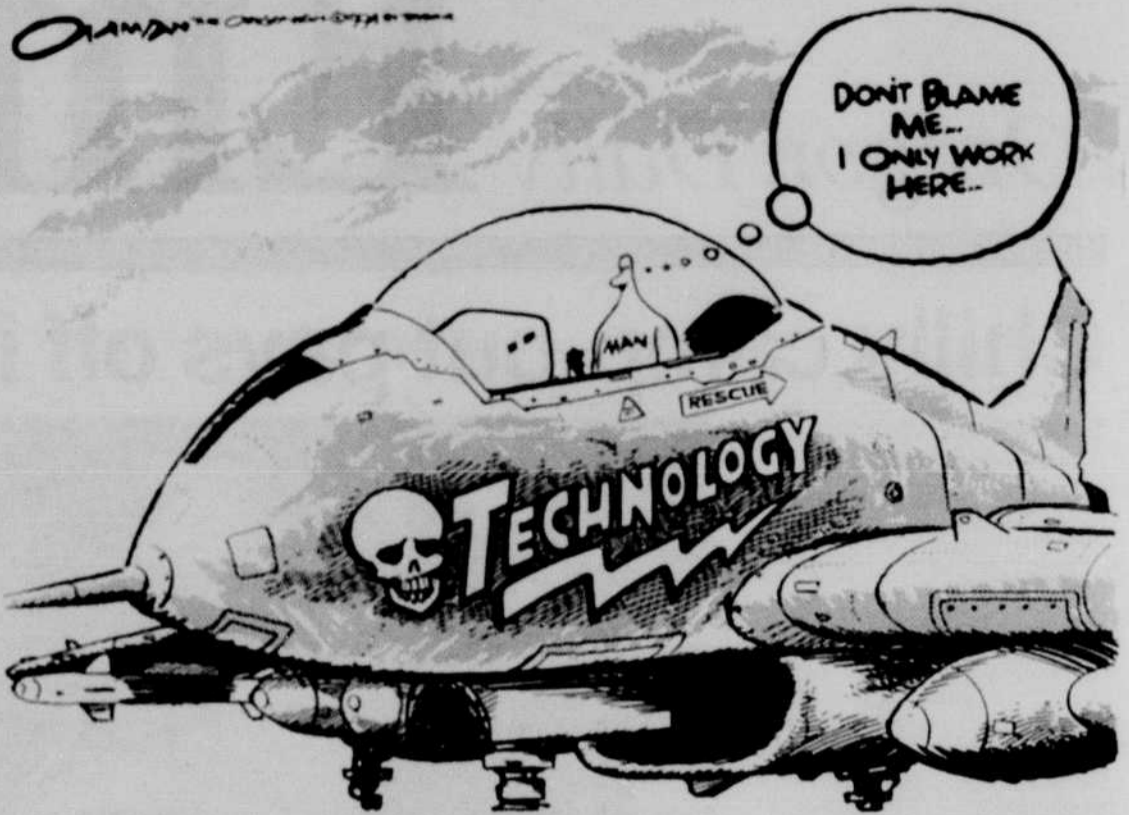
Protesters on Saturday forgot to notice the significant division between Dr. Nichols' personal and professional life. His personal life may not be entirely reflective of his professional choices. Just because he's working to test the abortion drug doesn't mean that his wife or his daughter will run and get abortions if they become pregnant. No one knows his reasons for supporting RU-486.

His family shouldn't be labeled with views they haven't expressed and they should not suffer for his career choice. They shouldn't have to be afraid of what might happen in their own home.

Privacy invasion is a serious crime and violators should be punished. Intrusion can lead to devastating emotional scars to those affected. Anyone can be traumatized when their "safety zone" is interrupted. Dr. Nichols' family must now fear any physical harm that could be inflicted by abortion protesters. Continuous news reports of dead abortion doctors and abortion clinic raids will do little to ease their fears.

If abortion protesters feel so strongly about the drug, they should picket at Dr. Nichols' place of work. A rally at the hospital, if done peacefully, would be more effective and better received than a trip to a private residence. Separate one's professional life from his or her personal life.

Like everyone else in the nation, abortion protesters have a right to express their opinions. However, that right should never take away another person's security.



COMMENTARY

Technology a two-sided sword

Julian Beard

Wait a minute. This doesn't compute.

In a speech to the faculty, University President Dave Frohnmayer stresses the importance of teaching students to think critically. Meanwhile, the University administration engages in a mockery of critical thinking.

What am I talking about?

The \$50 technology resource fee that we all had to pay this term.

I talked to a lot of students about this at the beginning of the term. Most had only a vague, peevish recollection of having had to pay "some fee," and many did not remember having paid the fee at all.

But this is understandable. The administration hardly went out of its way to inform us or invite student input on the subject. I see this as a case of glaring academic hypocrisy. The same people who claim to be purveyors of critical thinking (University administration) are now decreeing that we students pay another \$150 a year for high technology without asking us what we think about it. We're not supposed to think. We're supposed to pay our fee and shut up. And that's just what we did.

We paid \$900,000. This is being matched by "outside sources," which means the University will be spending about \$5.4 million a year on computers.

So far the thing has been hawked on us as if free computer use and E-mail and such were the whole issue. Sure, those things are very handy. But they don't cost any \$5.4 million a year. So what's really going on here? A whole different ball game, baby, and it's being played behind closed doors in private meetings.

We're talking about a sweeping restructuring of the way this University functions, and the way our society functions, based on a huge new system of computers and networks — the "technological web." Supposedly this will, if we buy into it,

make our lives easier, more efficient and let us get information faster. Great. The fact that it could also follow the historical precedent set by similarly presented technologies and end in disaster does not disturb our placid consumerism.

But it should. We have a history of not asking the right questions about technology until it's too late, and the consequences have been devastating. Thanks to our technological "progress," we're facing for the first time the potential collapse of our planet's life support systems. Clearly, given the failure of past technologies, and the mess they've gotten us into, it would behoove us to take a hard look at the new ones we're about to commit to.

No such hard look is being taken at computer technology. There has been practically no debate on the subject. The information we tend to hear about the effects of computer technology comes from the people who produce it and is therefore propaganda.

It is not surprising when the general public is swayed by such partisan, one-sided information. But the alacrity with which our highly educated community has scarfed every morsel of propaganda furnished by the high-technology industries is truly disgusting.

People like to think that computers are a benign technology that can't be compared with "dirty" technologies (cars and nuclear reactors).

Think again.

The fact is, computer technology, like the technologies before it, has the potential to screw up our lives in a big way, and we'd better start looking before we leap.

Here are some of the potential problems of computers:

- **Health.** Computers create health hazards from the day they're born. In the production of computers, according to Ted Smith of the Silicon Valley Coalition, "Workers and the general population are being exposed to the most deadly chemicals that have ever been synthesized." Accordingly, the computer industry has an incidence of occupational illness

more than three times that of the average manufacturing industry.

In use, computer monitors generate a wide range of electromagnetic radiation, which among pregnant women has been related to birth defects, miscarriages and infant death. Use of computers has also been related to stress, fatigue, migraines and cataracts. And there are growing suspicions in the medical community that there may be far worse effects that we haven't yet realized.

- **Economic.** Computers are essential for the functioning of the huge multinational corporations we complain so much about. These corporations, in their pursuit of profit, wreak havoc on the environment and also on small-scale economies. In this way, computers contribute to the increasing polarization of wealth. Of course, computers are handy for small businesses, too.

- **Social.** Computers have already caused a decline in meaningful social interaction, and it's going to get worse. In one particularly disgusting example, many universities teach classes by computer, where students stay home and get a lecture via modem.

Are we insane? Is this what we call education? Excuse me for being old-fashioned, but I say education is one part information and two parts inspiration. Inspiration happens when students interact with faculty as human beings. To teach a class by computer is to deprive both teacher and student of the most valuable part of the education process.

People say, "You can't stop progress." This is just a cop-out rationalization for passivity. It's our progress, and we can #*!% well stop it if we decide we have to. If we hope to leave our grandchildren an inhabitable planet, we'd better start making those kinds of decisions. If we don't, we are resigning ourselves to whatever happens. And we've got no right to pretend that we're critical thinkers.

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