

Clinic shootings hurt protesters

The recent shootings at abortion clinics in Massachusetts and Virginia illustrate the need to protect clinics from the violence of radical anti-abortion protesters.

John Salvi III was arrested in Virginia last week on charges that he shot and killed two receptionists at two Massachusetts abortion clinics Dec. 30. He is also accused of firing into a clinic in Virginia.

Salvi is the latest in a string of people to express their opposition to abortion violently. And he will probably not be the last.

Some on the fringe of the anti-abortion movement justify the shootings by arguing that murdering doctors who perform abortions saves the lives of unborn fetuses.

This type of argument, although denounced by most abortion opponents, does nothing to aid the anti-abortionists' cause. How "pro-life" is a murder?

Others claim that by keeping anti-abortion demonstrators from blockading clinic doors, clinics encourage such a shooting by a radical. However, those who want to murder doctors who perform abortions have demonstrated that they can kill their target, no matter how challenging the task.

Last July, Paul Hill murdered Dr. John Bayard in Florida, despite the fact that Bayard was wearing a bulletproof vest and was accompanied by a protective escort. The escort, James Barrett, also was murdered.

Unfortunately, Salvi and Hill are but two of a long list of people who decided to express their opposition to abortion by violent means.

Besides murders, opponents of abortion have also vandalized clinics, threatened doctors and menaced patients in order to further their goal of making abortion inaccessible to women.

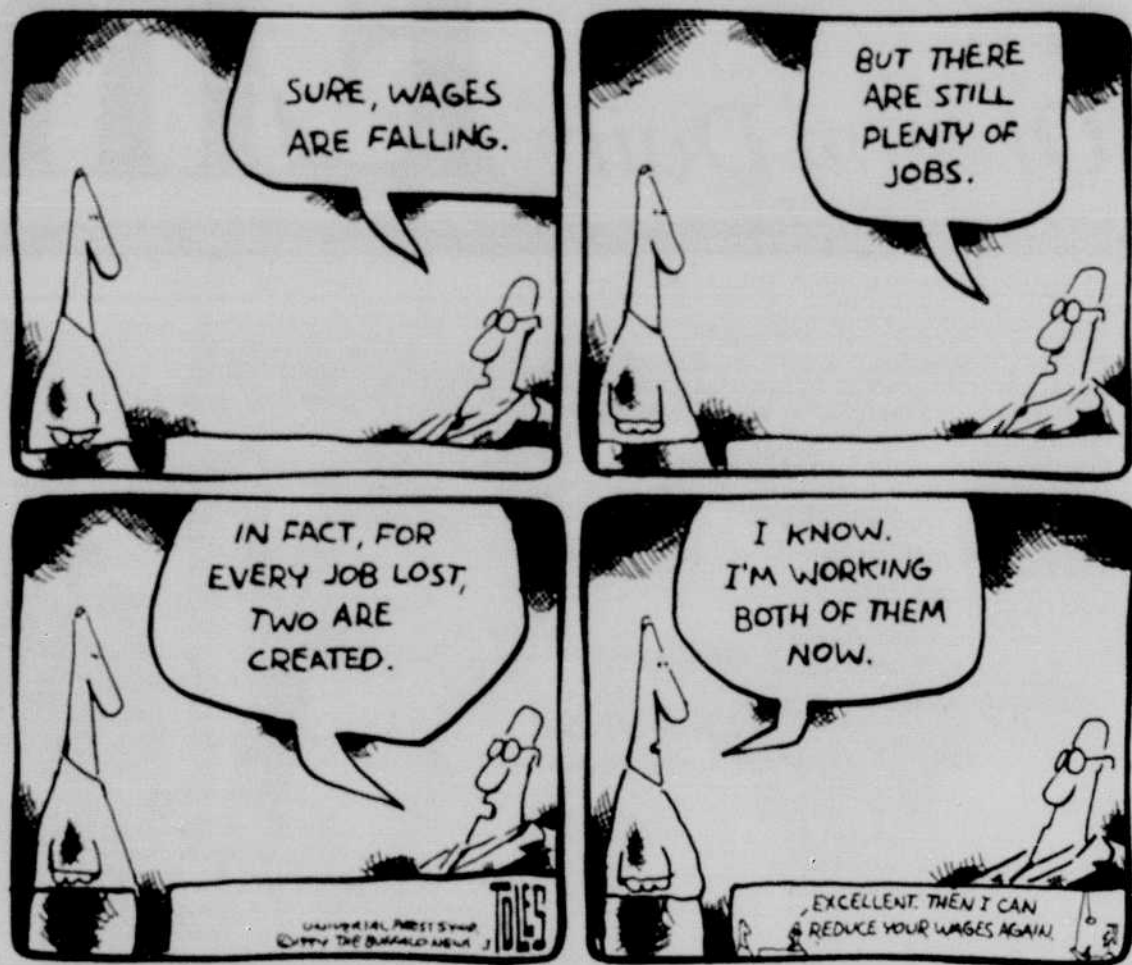
A short-term answer to the violence would include heavier security at abortion clinics, restricting access to the clinic to those who need to be inside: doctors, staff and patients.

But a longer-term solution would be to convince those on both sides of the abortion issue that violence, either for or against the right for a woman to have an abortion, is unnecessary and detracts from logical discussion of the issue.

It is easy to understand that emotion runs very high on either side of the abortion debate. However, murdering doctors and clinic personnel does not change the minds of those on either side of the issue.

Peaceful demonstrations are the most conducive way for anti-abortion activists to express their feelings and to get their message across. Unfortunately, the very few violent demonstrators help to tarnish the entire group of anti-abortion protesters.

The abortion issue is already polarized enough. Murdering doctors and other workers in abortion clinics does nothing to further the cause of the anti-abortion movement.



OPINION

1994 not kinder, gentler as expected

When 1994 was a brand-new year, I remember reading a prediction for the year somewhere. It said that 1994 would be a year of moving forward, a year of progress, both economic and social. If we could gauge 1994 by a mood ring's color, it would be tranquil blue. Stock campaign phrases like George Bush's "kinder, gentler nation" was to become a reality. Yeah, right.

The year started with violence, nastiness, deceit, and so the tone was set. First we got a dose of the ugly side of competition: The Tonya and Nancy Show. The front-page soap opera of skater sabotage swept the nation. The story was everywhere — another embarrassment for Oregon. While the country argued over who would end up the best skater in the world, a young Ukrainian ballerina on skates, Oksana Bayul, wiped the ice with both Tonya's and Nancy's egos. The mood ring is turning, warming to a pink hue.

It only got worse. In the spring, a bloody civil war broke out in Rwanda. It grabbed front page news for a few days and then retreated into the American memory. Rwanda's far away; it doesn't matter anyway. More important things were happening. A woman in Virginia had lopped off her husband's penis because he had been abusing her. But the doctors sewed it back on, and we were all forced to hear his woeful story as he appeared on every talk show that would have him. That mood ring is deepening to a rosy hue.

O.J. Simpson mania captured the national attention next. A glorified, alleged murderer folk hero, whom everyone cheered on — or made money off of. We reveled in the violence, salivated over every bloody detail.

A crazed pro-life zealot killed a doctor who performed abortions. He justified the killing by saying that he had a responsibility to kill someone who was killing others. The law, however, disagreed with him. He has



Gayle Forman

been sentenced to death because the law says that it is wrong to kill someone even if that person is killing others. Fellow pro-lifers applauded this gunman's deed, and other crazy Christians have followed suit. The national mood ring is now fire-engine red. We found out that Anita Hill had been telling the truth after all, after a book revealed Clarence Thomas' nasty habits. But of course it was too late. Bob Packwood rose above his 20 some odd sexual harassment charges and now has a powerful spot on the Senate Finance Committee. We saw the Republicans suddenly become very interested in sexual harassment when Paula Jones accused Clinton of doing the deed.

But nowhere did this nation's kinder, gentler side bear its ugly head more than during the November election. Venom overshadowed valor; cut downs replaced construction. The most regressive politicians hailed themselves as the agents of change. Promises were made that cannot be fulfilled. He who spoke loudest and most menacingly won. And the American people, wanting change, tired of gridlock, voted for those who have been digging their heels in, pulling against the tide of change for years. Those Americans that actually voted, that is; most didn't bother.

So during 1994 we got Newt Gingrich, drunk with power and ready to rule the country. Now in 1995, he is waging a war against welfare mothers, threatening to cut their cash flow and stick their kids in orphanages. The man who ditched his own family once he

made it to Congress is out to re-define how the American family should act. He has appointed himself judge and jury of this country and all its people, and his wrath is a fiery one.

More gentle progression was down in California, where voters passed Proposition 187, to ban all state aid for illegal aliens. Now sick kids won't get treated nor will they get educated, creating a whole new generation of disenfranchised, uneducated youth. The mood ring is on fire now.

Back in Lane County, a crazy man knocked on a Springfield woman's door, and when she opened the door, he shot her. Kids are shooting each other on school playgrounds. Towns like Sweet Home now compare themselves to gang meccas like Los Angeles. Gang hysteria has swept Eugene, though the kids involved in the shootings are mostly white and not Blood or Crip affiliated. Everyone is panicking that Eugene will lose its innocence. Meanwhile no one is asking where these kids got their guns from — usually from their parents, and folks continue to effuse the glories of gun ownership.

The mood ring is gone now. It was too hot to bear, so we took it off.

Apparently that kinder, gentler year will have to come some time later. And with the way things seem to be going so far, I wouldn't expect it any time soon. Last year showed with chilling clarity, what we as a nation consider to be our priorities: our beliefs, our money, our children. Everyone is looking out for No. 1, and other people's bad news doesn't matter.

But all is not lost. While this was a pretty sad year on this side of the planet, 1994 brought an event that many people never guessed they would live to see. In South Africa, with the cast of a simple vote, 400 years of oppression ended. Just like that. How's that for gentle progress?

Gayle Forman is a columnist for the Emerald.

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