

Insemination bill lacks legal merit

Rep. Kevin Mannix stepped in unpopular territory this week when he proposed a bill that would make it illegal for unmarried women to be artificially inseminated.

This bill is absurd for obvious reasons. Any sane politician should know by now that legislating morality and family values just doesn't work in Oregon and in this country. It simply doesn't belong in politics.

We can be confident that this bill will never become law. However, it does force us to realize that even the suggestion of a "Murphy Brown" law is symptomatic of a confused society that accepts single motherhood but still blames it for crime and poverty in this nation.

Ever since Dan Quayle attacked single motherhood and said the nation was experiencing a breakdown in family values, people have been careful not to criticize anyone's child-rearing habits. After all, it isn't fair to pick on someone for his or her personal lifestyle decisions.

A national attitude of acceptance of single motherhood has prevailed during the past few years. Although the intention of this acceptance is to take away blame from women who for some reason are forced to raise children alone, it sends an unfortunate message to young women that children don't need the stability of a two-parent household.

An overwhelming number of teenage girls, not ready for the responsibility of motherhood, have fallen victim to this national attitude. They become pregnant and choose to keep their babies. In some communities, babies are even viewed as trophies.

Young mothers see Murphy Brown as a role model but they forget that Brown is older, has a stable career with a stable salary and lives in television land where everything's possible. Viewers don't see who is feeding her child while she's on the evening news.

While it's admirable that these young women want to provide for their children, many find out too late that they aren't capable. They need support from someone else.

Raising a child is extremely exhausting and time-consuming. When a mother is forced to serve both as the nurturer and the provider, the job could be formidable.

At the same time, we need to stop blaming single mothers for the ills of the world. Each has her own reasons why she's raising her children alone. And sometimes single motherhood could be a better alternative than raising a child with an abusive father. Many of these single mothers have overcome impressive obstacles to give their children a decent life.

Instead of blame, let's work to keep women from having to face the pressures of single motherhood. A preventative approach that teaches young men and women the value of a two-parent household could be a solution.

We need to place children at a higher value. They shouldn't be something that we have to legislate.



■ OPINION

Clinton, women deserve respect



PAUL VAN SICKLE

Newt Gingrich never fails to surprise me. Or maybe not. If he thinks Hillary Rodham Clinton is a "bitch" (as his mother told Connie Chung), it isn't exactly out of character.

After all, this is the man who visited his wife in the hospital, who's battling cancer, to get her to sign his divorce papers. This is the man who is out to kill public broadcasting. This is the man who's afraid of the first lady.

Gingrich is certainly entitled to his opinion, however.

In his cable college history lecture "Renewing American Civilization," Gingrich takes a lot of time to espouse his attitudes concerning women in the United States.

According to an Associated Press article on the topic, Gingrich believes women are unfit for combat situations because "if combat means living in a ditch, females have biological problems staying in a ditch for 30 days because they get infections..." But maybe they would be better off in front of computers because "males are biologically driven to go out and hunt giraffes."

His feelings about Hillary, and women in general, aren't exactly new in this country. A lot of people seem to think Hillary is somehow evil or an aberration because of her political and professional drive — not surprising in a country that has traditionally tried to breed women who are submissive, selfless and without ambition.

Hillary, on the other hand, is a Yale graduate, exceptionally intelligent and in a position of relative power. Therefore, she must be a "bitch."

Logical? Jackie Kennedy-Onassis got this treatment, so did Eleanor Roosevelt and so did Ruth Bader-Ginsberg when she was being

considered for the Supreme Court. All are assertive, powerful women who have been seen as potentially threatening.

This prevailing attitude about powerful women in this country is, no doubt, fueled by the increasing proliferation of those women in political positions. The threat of women as equals to men in decision-making roles, frankly, strikes fear into a lot of American men's hearts.

I believe it's called a "backlash."

At the very least, Gingrich could have found a better way to express himself than the word "bitch." It's one of the most deplorable words in the English language, and borders on misogyny.

No one would ever allow the use of the "n-word" to refer to an African-American on network television, yet "bitch" has been given increasingly free reign on the air. Not surprising, since it has only been 70 years that women have had the right to vote, and blacks have had that right since the late 1800s.

It hasn't stopped the American man from trying to control the American woman, though. As recently as last week, an Oregon congressman proposed a law aimed at controlling which women can get an artificial insemination. Apparently, a woman is only fit to bear children if she has a man in her house.

But women were never sold into slavery. Or were they?

It has been only sixty years since England allowed men to beat their wives, provided the rod they used could be passed through one's wedding band; a justifiable way to maintain a woman's submission to her husband.

At least we know that it's not genetics. Tribes exist in Africa where men are the ones who

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"

wear makeup and compete in "pageants" for the amusement of the women of the tribe.

Men have always had the upper hand in this country. From early decision-making, to men claiming to make a constitution for all Americans, to trying to take away the right to have an abortion — women haven't been allowed to get a foothold in any aspect of American politics.

And no wonder. It would take an extraordinary individual to stand up to the amount of unfounded criticism Hillary has had to endure in order to maintain even her limited position of political power. And it's only because of her gender.

So what do men do when a woman becomes powerful and assertive in her position? Do they applaud her, congratulate her or otherwise support her political aspirations towards gender equality? Nope. They call her names.

Real mature. I was glad to see, however, that Hillary didn't let Gingrich get to her. Without batting an eyelid, she invited the Gingriches on a tour of the White House.

I saw that as an example of the relative quality of the individual in question here. Maybe the name-calling should go the other way. But what could Hillary ever possibly have to complain about Gingrich?

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■ CORRECTION

The last sentence in Brian Womack's column from yesterday's Emerald should have read, "But if something is not done eventually, when we are all senior citizens, we will have wished we would have done something" (about entitlement spending). The Emerald regrets the error.