

Sacred Heart growth lowers abortion access

OUR OPINION: Making legal medical practices unavailable inhibits everyone's freedom

The abortion debate arises in the most interesting places.

Rather than being restricted to the forums of when life begins and if it should be legal, this emotional and personal argument surfaced during a funding proposal for PeaceHealth, the company that owns Sacred Heart Hospital.

At issue for state authorities was whether to approve a request from the Catholic Church-affiliated company for \$16 million in tax-exempt bonds. Nov. 13, the company got what it wanted.

The \$230,000 in savings will be used by PeaceHealth to expand and improve services in Eugene and Florence.

That is to say, all services except abortion.

PeaceHealth bans all medical procedures and counseling involving pregnancy termination. This is all well and good. Private companies should have the right to determine what practices meet with their moral or ethical beliefs.

The bone of contention for pro-choice activists is that PeaceHealth keeps growing, making a legal medical practice increasingly inaccessible.

Regardless of individual beliefs on the rights and wrongs of abortion, PeaceHealth's continuing expansion (the company recently bought and renamed the formerly independent Eugene Clinic) raises difficult questions about how big a private company that provides

essential services should be allowed to get.

Clearly, Sacred Heart and its satellites provide the community with quality medical care and make the most of modern technology. However, as that care spreads through the city, it squeezes out facilities that used to provide services that PeaceHealth rejects.

Little by little, a legal procedure is made impossible to find. Smaller companies that provide abortions but rely on other services to survive cannot compete with hi-tech, convenient-as-a-7-Eleven Sacred Heart.

This trend is nothing new. Across every field larger corporations are gobbling up and edging out small, independent operations. As such, fewer people begin to control what we see, read, eat and do with our bodies.

Anti-abortion activists may applaud PeaceHealth's expansion, but their enthusiasm misses the point.

It is just as likely that a powerful atheist organization could buy Eugene's hospitals and eliminate the small chapels where people find solace during the illness of a loved one. A white-supremacist group could begin to buy all of the city's bookstores and ban the sale of African-American literature. They have the right to do it, but is it right? Is it just?

PeaceHealth and the state have crossed no legal boundaries. But do we want any service, any commodity, any market to be controlled or dominated by one institution? The state and the country should examine at what point the right to free enterprise begins to impinge on the right to free choice.



LETTERS

Might makes right?

Larry Haftl is right, of course (ODE, Nov. 10). We'd all be much happier if we could just accept that the need and desire to make war is a part of our human nature.

It is absolutely true that our lives would be much easier if we would all simply rid ourselves of the notion that the life of a peasant in some faraway land, with whom we really don't have much of an obvious connection anyway, has exactly as much value and dignity as our own lives and the lives of our families, friends and neighbors.

Once we shrug this moral burden, we are free to enjoy the wonderful things available to us as citizens of a country with a very powerful military presence. We know these things are ours by the simple and logical equation that might equals right.

Finally, we might be able to find it within ourselves to offer thanks not only to the soldiers who preserve our way of life, but perhaps also to the great war-makers themselves who have surely understood and accepted — even celebrated — the same facts Haftl outlined in his column.

Hitler, for instance, has been badly underrated.

After all, though he was not our enemy in a nominal sense; he provided millions with the opportunity to experience the incomparable adrenaline rush that accompanies combat, and he clearly appreciated the need for population reduction in a time of scarce resources. And look at the thanks he got.

I don't think many of us like the idea of becoming "pacifist victims," as Haftl suggests. But it is also very dangerous to allow oneself to be lulled by his argument into believing that we are inevitably or "naturally" monsters. We accept such a vision of human nature at the cost of our humanity.

War hurts

Larry Haftl's editorial (ODE, Nov. 10) embodies the kind of uninformed opinion that is actually dangerous in its ignorance.

Haftl claims that "war is one of nature's tools for thinning the herd." He goes on to claim that our biosphere cannot support the success of our own species, and war therefore helps to ensure that a smaller population has access to Earth's limited resources.

Perhaps Haftl has never seen the desolation of once-fertile land in Vietnam and Cambodia, a testament to the success of the American chemical arsenal.

Haftl further compares the "ethnic cleansing" occurring in Bosnia to some supposed genocide of Neanderthal man at the hands of Cro-Magnon man.

This comparison is monstrous in its implications. Is it some sort of racial war as a means to a higher rung in the evolutionary ladder?

"Finally, waging war can be an incredible adrenaline high," Haftl claims. Of course. What is more of a rush than killing indiscriminately?

War is a little more expensive than heroin addiction, but you can get the same dizzying, life-altering highs. Just ask the soldiers who drove bulldozers to bury the dead at Iwo Jima. One is my grandfather.

"Many combat veterans never again achieve the same sense of alive-ness that comes with being around when the smoke clears," continued Haftl. Funny, I would wager that many combat veterans have a real problem getting rid of a pervading feeling of dead-ness after the smoke clears.

Mr. Haftl, war takes the lifeblood of a nation, its young men and women, and mangles, cripples and kills them.

War is glorious — just ask its blind, its limbless, its insane.

Haftl's arguments that war will maintain our species and our "biosphere," that war is an evolution of the advanced over the inferior race, and that war is

a glorious "adrenaline high" are categorically wrong.

Haftl's article was ironically in commemoration of Veteran's Day, originally named Armistice Day. The word "armistice" refers to a truce preceding a peace treaty, in this case at the conclusion of World War I.

This day is not a celebration of war, but of its end.

Richard Oberdorfer
History

Last resort

War, in response to Larry Haftl's column (ODE, Nov. 10), is the killing of other human beings. The flesh is pierced; blood runs; the breath is extinguished; the heart stops. Murder is forbidden to the average U.S. citizen, except in self defense or in time of war.

It is important to get in touch with the fact that war is killing other people.

How about killing people because their leader is a drug trader who thumbs his nose at the U.S. government? A lot of people were killed in Panama. Manuel Noriega is, however, alive and well.

Does Haftl know that women and children are often the majority of the victims of modern warfare?

Does Haftl think the civilians killed in Panama were not worthwhile human beings because they don't have the same culture and ethnicity as is dominant in the United States? Does he think we have nothing to learn from the incredible depth and diversity of human cultures in our world today?

I envision a world in which our first effort is to come to know and understand the many diverse peoples who share our planet Earth — one in which war would be the last resort after deep and quiet contemplation of any problem or concern. We are all responsible for our acts, soldier and civilian alike.

Marion McLean
Undeclared

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