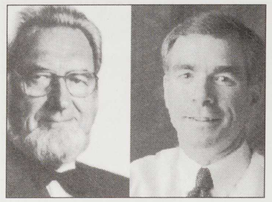


Cunningham questions Koop on health care support, Koop replies

When Gregg Cunningham issued an open letter to Dr. C. Everett Koop in September, he hardly expected the kind of reply he received.

Cunningham, a former state legislator and the Executive Director of the California-based Center for Bio-Ethical Reform, questioned the former Surgeon General Koop, also known for co-authoring the pro-life book *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* with theologian Francis Schaeffer, for his involvement in the Clinton health plan — which includes abortion coverage.

"I am dismayed that you have not conditioned your willingness to facilitate development of this plan on President Clinton's willingness to abandon abortion coverage," Cunningham wrote.

Koop replied with a vitriolic letter accusing Cunningham of not "understanding" and labeling him a "Monday morning quarterback" and "mean spirited."

"[L]et me say that I am responsible not to you but to my God for the way I act," Koop replied.

In a second letter, Cunningham pointed out that Koop himself had assumed the role of "moderator" in public policy regarding health care and suggested that, as such, public scrutiny was appropriate — not to mention the leadership position Koop has held in the church making him liable to review.

Koop, who was appointed Surgeon General by President Ronald Reagan while at the peak of his pro-life notoriety, began to — according to pro-life leaders — abandon the pro-life and pro-family positions by supporting the AIDS agenda's condom distribution and issuing a report that there was no evidence of any relationship between abortion and certain psychological problems.

World magazine, in a recent issue, ran an article on Koop called, *Whatever Happened to C. Everett Koop?*■

Federal court rejects Florida injunction, state court resurrects it

Atlanta, GA — A court injunction against pro-life demonstrations was struck down by a federal appeals court on October 21 after it was described as being in violation of free speech. The matter was referred back to the state court for reconsideration.

In April, responding to Operation Rescue's Impact Training School and in anticipation of Operation Rescue's Cities of Refuge campaign, Judge Robert McGregor issued an injunction creating a dual "buffer zone" around the Aware Women Center for Choice in Melbourne, Florida. The first was a restriction of any pro-life activity within 36 feet of the clinic property line, and the second was a prohibition on pro-lifers within 300 feet of the clinic initiating any conversation with those seeking services at the abortuary.

Other restrictions included blocking access to the clinic and noise which could be heard within the clinic.

The two-to-one ruling likened the injunction to a criminal statute and called the content-based restrictions unconstitutional.

"The practical effect of this section of the injunction was to assure that while 'pro-life' speakers would be arrested," said the panel's opinion, "'pro-choice' demonstrators would not."

However, on October 28, the Florida court upheld the injunction language that the federal court had rejected saying, "Nonetheless, even protected speech is not equally permissible in all places and at all times."

Pro-life groups will appeal the state court ruling saying that a state court cannot decide cases turning on federal constitutional rights, said Matt Staver, president of Liberty Counsel, the legal defense group defending the pro-lifers.■

Abortionists complain of fears

Washington, D.C. — "I don't believe as a physician, I should have to wear a bulletproof vest," said abortionist Brian Finkel of Phoenix, Arizona.

Finkel and three other abortionists on October 18, held a press conference to support the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) act proposed by Rep. Charles Schumer (D-NY), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee.

Some of the abortionists claimed they had to carry firearms for self-protection.

The FACE bill would make a federal crime out of rescues and prohibit "harassing" clinic employees.

The abortionists claimed that FACE is necessary to stop incidents like the shootings of David Gunn in Florida last March and George Tiller of Kansas in August. None of the proponents of the bill showed how the existence of the bill would have prevented either act.

Myrna Gutierrez of the Chicago-based Americans United for Life said, "We believe there are already laws in effect at the state level to deal with crimes like that."■

Massachusetts passes felony rescue law, Governor signs

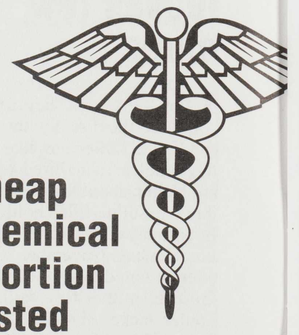
Boston, MA — Governor William Weld has signed a bill making it a felony to block access to abortion clinics that the Legislature passed in October saying, "I'm satisfied that the bill is not an unfair impingement on anybody's rights."

Bill Cotter, Director of Operation Rescue's Massachusetts chapter disagrees.

"Obviously this is a piece of legislation designed to single out one particular group, not so much for what they do as why they do it."

The new law would allow penalties of two-and-a-half years in jail and $5,000 in fines.

Massachusetts is the second state to elevate rescue to felony status. The first was Oregon.■



Cheap chemical abortion tested

The RU-486 debate may be over. Two already common drugs available in the United States in combination may have the same effect.

In a small ten-woman study, the drugs misoprostol and methotrexate, induced abortions in eight of the ten cases.

Methotrexate destabilizes the lining of the uterus while misoprostol causes uterine contractions.

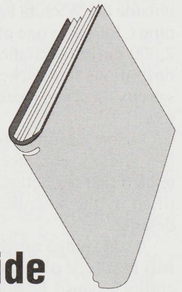
Methotrexate is normally used to fight cancer and would cost about $2 per dose for the abortifacient purpose while the dose of misoprostol would cost about $4. Added to the cost would be one or more visits to the doctor, but the abortion itself would take place at home.

Dr. Mitchell Creinin, one of the study's authors, said that use of the method would "circumvent the political circus going on with RU-486" and called for more testing. The study was preliminary, and due to the small sample group, would require more testing to verify its effectiveness.

"Not too many women are willing to sign up for a thing that works 80 percent of the time," said Dr. Eric Bieber, director of reproductive endoscopy at the University of Chicago.

Creinin claimed that the side-effects were "negligible."

Michele Arocha, speaking for National Right to Life Committee, objected to "new methods of killing unborn children" and said of continued testing, "Women are being used as guinea pigs in drug trials."■



Suicide manual thought to "assist" suicide

Boston, MA — A 1991 bestseller that instructed people with terminal illnesses how to commit suicide by pulling a plastic bag over their heads led to a rash of such suicides in New York City, researchers said.

They said the March 1991 publication of the euthanisia book "Final Exit," which detailed the plastic bag method of committing suicide by suffocation, had been followed by a sharp increase in suicides using the technique.

However they also found that while thousands of copies of "Final Exit" were sold in New York, there was no overall increase in the city's suicide rate.

"We cannot determine whether 'Final Exit' persuaded people already intent on suicide" to use the method suggested in the book "or induced some people who were only marginally suicidal" to kill themselves, said the research team led by Dr Peter Marzuk of Cornell University Medical College.

The study was published in the November 11 New England Journal of Medicine.

The Marzuk team analysed 1,335 suicides one year before and one year after "Final Exit," which revealed "the practicalities of self-deliverance and assisted suicide for the dying," was released.

Although the total number of suicides did not fluctuate before and after publication, the number of suicide victims using the plastic bag method jumped from eight per year to 33. The book was found at the scene of nine of the 33 cases.

"Final Exit" was also found at the scene of two out of 66 poisonings where drugs recommended in the book were used.

However the researchers said the number of suicides by poisonings was not significantly up after publication of the book.

"We found that most persons exposed to 'Final Exit' were not terminally ill and had used it as a suicide manual," the Marzuk team concluded.

Although an updated version of the book had a list of suicide hotlines, little attention was given "to the symptoms of mental illness or the ways to get help for psychiatric problems," they said.

Marzuk and his colleagues said "efforts to destigmatize euthanasia or even encourage it for some groups may have the untoward effect of promoting suicide in other groups," adding that they feared the line between suicide and euthanasia was "becoming blurred in the eyes of the public."■

"Euthanasia for homeless" joke draws no laughs

Irvine, CA. (AP) — It was someone's idea of a joke that somehow found its way into print: The draft of the city's Comprehensive Housing Affordability Study said euthanasia was a solution to the homeless problem.

"For those homeless who are dually diagnosed [mentally disabled and a drug abuser] a special euthanasia program is essential," the document said about homeless youth.

City Hall wasn't laughing.

"We regret the mistake, but we don't have a euthanasia program for the young. It was an error, a mistake that got through the proofreading," Mayor Mike Ward said Friday.

Two employees were verbally reprimanded and each apologized, said Peter Hersh, the manager of planning services.■

Abortion survivor denied right to sue

Washington, DC—The Supreme Court today turned down the appeal of a Wisconsin boy who won, and then lost, $1.1 million from the doctor who tried to abort him 14 years ago.

The court, without comment, left intact a ruling that said the boy should not have been allowed to sue because his mother had consented to the abortion.

Linda Noie was six to eight weeks pregnant when on January 10, 1979, she underwent an abortion performed by Dr. Benjamin Victoria at the Fox Valley Reproductive Health Care Services clinic.

Noie later learned the abortion had not been successful, and on September 18 of that year she gave birth to Joshua Vandervelden.

Ten years later, Joshua sued the doctor. His lawsuit, filed in a state court in Milwaukee, accused Benjamin of committing a battery—defined as an unlawful and intentional use of force resulting in physical harm.

Joshua's lawsuit contended that the unsuccessful abortion caused a loss of hearing in his left ear.

A state judge refused to dismiss the lawsuit, and a jury awarded Joshua $1.1 million in damages.

But a state appeals court threw out the award. It ruled that in cases in which a woman consents to abort a child that cannot live outside the womb, "a physician may not be held liable for a battery to the unborn fetus."

"We know of no court that has found a fetus of less than three months gestational age to be considered a person entitled to legal protection," the appeals court said.

Its ruling said a doctor could be sued for negligence in such cases.

The Wisconsin Supreme Court refused to hear Joshua's appeal last June.

In the appeal acted on today, Joshua's lawyer said the boy's rights came into existence "at that point in time that the abortion procedure was over and [he] had survived its trauma."■

Anti-abortion protest can continue at mall

Judge rules that the picket does not cause "irreparable harm" at the Exton Square Mall.

Philadelphia, PA—For now, Patricia Lyons, an anti-abortion activist, can continue to stand