

Birth-control device offers hope for women

In an editorial printed last month, the Philadelphia Inquirer recommended the new Norplant birth-control device as a valuable tool in combatting the soaring birth rate among low-income African-American women in Philadelphia.

This editorial unleashed a maelstrom of criticism from African-American groups in the city which claimed the editorial views were tantamount to institutionalized racism injected with an added dimension of social Darwinism directed against the African-American community.

The groups perhaps were justified in criticizing the wording of the editorial but wrong in rejecting its content.

Norplant, as many are aware, is the first new birth-control method approved by the Food and Drug Administration in nearly 30 years.

It consists of six thin, flexible capsules made of soft, rubbery material which are filled with a synthetic hormone. The capsules, inserted just under the skin of a woman's upper arm, slowly release hormones during a five-year period to prevent pregnancy.

This method is 99 percent effective, comparable to the efficacy of sterilization. It also is completely reversible, with conception possible within 24 hours of removal.

Following local outcry, the newspaper printed an apology in which it attempted to explain the compelling social problems which had given impetus to the original editorial — teenage pregnancy, welfare dependency, etc. . . .

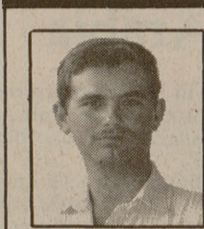
The crucial mistake made by the Inquirer was in linking the Norplant issue to the African-American community rather than recognizing and addressing the problems associated with lower-income birth rates as a whole.

The majority of recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and other welfare assistance in Philadelphia might indeed be African American. Nationwide, that certainly is not the case.

Race simply is not an issue in this argument. What is an issue is the role of government in providing for the health and welfare of children born into low-income families.

It is irresponsible to bring a child into existence when one cannot provide the basic necessities of life.

If we, as a nation, are willing to enter into a social contract with low-income mothers in which we provide for their offsprings' welfare, it seems they — as voluntary participants



Larry Cox
Columnist

— should limit the number of children they conceive while receiving government assistance.

Birth control usage could not be unconditionally required as a prerequisite for welfare assistance because of medical and religious limitations constraining many low-income mothers.

Its use should be strongly urged, however, and access provided as a means to bring about an end to the cycle of poverty.

A monetary incentive could be offered to mothers who agree to use Norplant while receiving aid. This would let them improve their standards of living and gain employment instead of being saddled at home with an ever-increasing family.

The expected cost of the Norplant implant, about \$600, is a small price to pay to prevent unwanted births in a household not able to provide for existing children without government assistance.

Medicaid and Title 20 funds would be well spent on providing access to this new contraceptive to low income-mothers.

It isn't social Darwinism if low-income mothers are urged to limit the size of their families until they get off public assistance and become financially self-sufficient. It is social responsibility.

In the city of brotherly love and across the country, access to this contraceptive should be made available as quickly as possible — to women of all economic classes.

It's a shame that an effective technology, first tested in 1966, has taken so long to reach the marketplace. A similar device for men is in the works, but birth-control opponents and federal red tape probably will delay its release another decade or so.

In the meantime, all available means — including the new Norplant contraceptive — should be used to break America's welfare cycle.

Everyone can benefit from this new birth control device.

Larry Cox is a graduate student in range science.



Mail Call

Pray for Bush, troops

EDITOR:

As one of the 40 or so reservists who have left school to serve in the Armed Forces during this "time that tests mens souls," a few things are on my heart.

First, I am part of America's military, but I am no more or less an American as each one of you.

At first, those of you who are rallying for peace angered me. Then last night as we all watched the news, the costs of this war became real. And I thank you for the concerns you express for our fighting men and their safety.

My convictions drive me to do what I must. Those convictions need no defense. But I do have fears. The greatest one is not of death, nor of the unknown. The greatest fear I have is that any Aggie or any American will speak the words: "This is not my concern."

Many Iraqi soldiers already have died, as have American British, Saudi and other soldiers. The costs of Kuwait's liberation might be high, but I have confidence in our leaders to make moral and sound decisions that will minimize Allied and Iraqi bloodshed.

However, it is you, my fellow students, your families, and others remaining here who I must depend on to guide our political leaders toward wise, well-represented and moral decisions about Operation Desert Storm.

After a year of reading The Battalion, we have seen plenty of Bible verses and just as many humanistic responses to them.

Well, now it's my turn.

In Romans 14, it says not to condemn your brother because he stands by his beliefs. By no means do I want everyone to believe exactly what I do.

I just want you, my fellow Aggies, to know without a doubt what you believe. And to express those beliefs properly, not with fights at peace rallies but with letters to Phil Gramm. Not with arguments, but with compassion for troops, their families and each other.

Aggies, never in my life have I needed you more. So do your best in your classes, search your hearts, and continue to pray for President Bush, our forces and those people we must fight.

Andrew Stanton Hough '91

Stop hostile behavior

EDITOR:

As is customary, many vendors are on campus asking for our support and business. On my way to breakfast, I passed the Houston Chronicle stand in front of Sbis.

I thought it would be nice to catch some news while eating, and the stands usually give away complimentary issues, so I walked over.

I picked up a coupon book and the man sitting at the table started telling me how good the coupons are. I told him,

"Thanks." He said, "You can't have one unless you buy a subscription." I said, "OK, can I have a paper?" He said, "No, you have to buy a subscription to get a paper — free loaders can get a paper from the rack."

I was offended by his attitude and walked away. Then I walked back to request his name so I could make a complaint.

A person of this nature and attitude has no business on our friendly campus. Not only did he refuse to give me his name (he was a local distributor) but he started insulting me with obscenities and threats.

I checked the phone book and found his name, and I am happy to say that my Houston Post subscription begins tomorrow.

We can keep people like this person off our campus if we refuse his business by canceling subscriptions to the Houston Chronicle.

If there are other Aggies who have experienced such hostile and unfriendly behavior, please contact me at home so we can end it.

Ronald C. Pylant
graduate student

Practice what you preach

EDITOR:

I joined many other people in a rally Tuesday evening against our country's current military involvement in the Middle East.

The rally also was joined by a handful of smirking youths who apparently call themselves Young Conservatives of Texas. These fellows appeared to be in full favor of United States participation in all-out war.

However, when I questioned one of them about why he was not enlisting himself, he replied he was a "college student."

Perhaps this group should change the name of their organization to Young Dan Quayle Wanna-be's of Texas.

Like our illustrious vice president during the days of Vietnam, they appear to be very much for war and destruction so long as it entails no personal risk or inconvenience to themselves.

Presumably, their participation in the looming combat will be limited to avid television viewing. Now what a great mini-series, eh?

To them and their ilk, I say — put up or shut up.

Brian Sullivan

Have an opinion? Express it!

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. There is no guarantee that letters submitted will be printed. Each letter must be signed and must include the classification, address and telephone number of the writer. All letters may be brought to 216 Reed McDonald, or sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111.

EDITORIALS

Editorials expressed in The Battalion are those of the editorial board and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.

Keep violence out of protests

After hearing reports of peace protests turning violent, we implore Americans to peacefully resolve their conflicting opinions about the war. While justifications for the U.S. attack on Iraq might exist, there is no justification for the violence between Americans who support the war and those who believe in peace "at all costs."

From the fire set in front of the United Nations Building to the shouting match between Texas A&M student protesters Tuesday, the latest "peaceful" demonstrations have been anything but. U.S. soldiers already are fighting an enemy. Americans must not fight another enemy — ourselves.

Members on all sides of the gulf issue offer their support for the troops. We hope that support will help restore peace.

The Battalion Editorial Board

The Battalion

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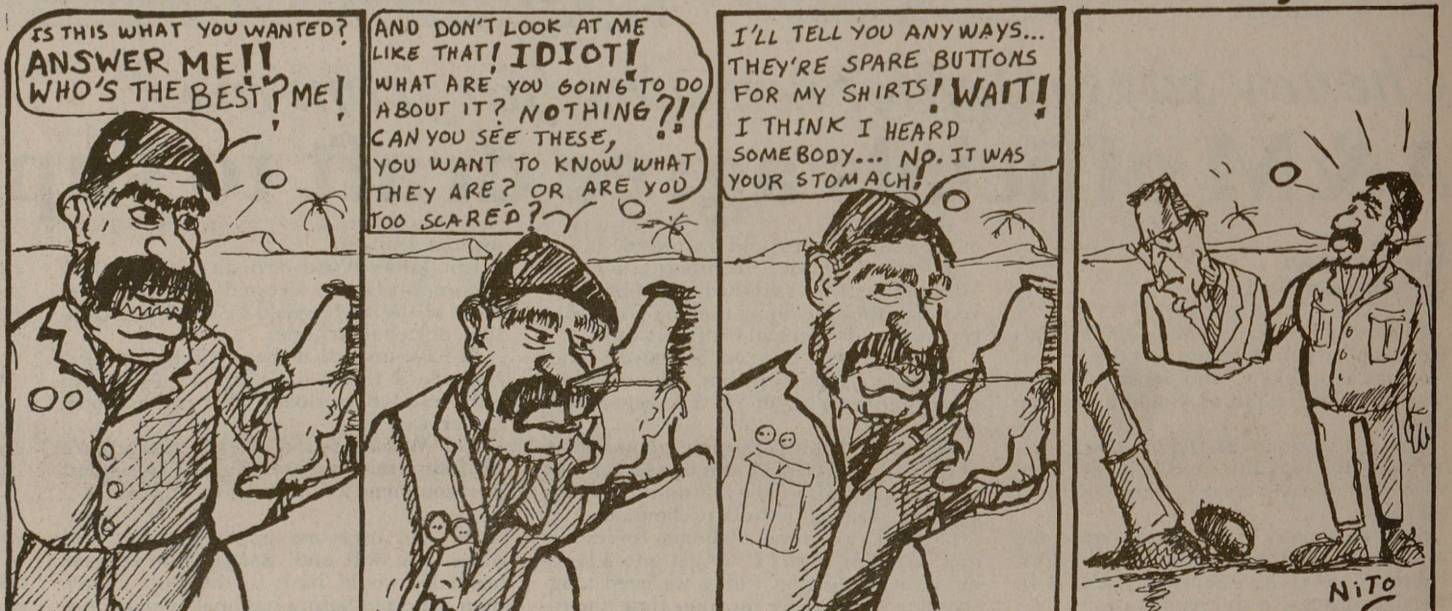
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