

WE WHO SIT IN JUDGEMENT ON JUSTICE

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As the well-dressed American woman disembarked at Tokyo's International Airport, she brushed hurriedly past the throng of anxious guides eagerly bidding to show her the sights, for she had not come to wander through the shrines and teahouses, but, like the friend at home who had tipped her off, she had come for an abortion.

Of the more than 700,000 abortions performed in Japan annually, a small but increasing number (one Japanese abortionist estimated it at about 1,000) are performed on American women. Though the trip is expensive, the operation may cost no more than \$15, and this well-dressed woman has gone half way around the world to seek the solution that a couple million American women annually stay home to find.

We are living in a time when judges thunder out against abortionists and frequently headlines read Abortionist Scared, Leaves Victim to Die, or Body of Abortion Victim Found in Park!; in a time when in protest to the ban on the selling of contraceptives in Massachusetts and Connecticut, a news caption would read, "When the lights go out in Connecticut, and people go to bed, the law is being broken all over the state: in a time when the thalidomide babies are fresh in the minds of the world, and amid the cries of Mrs. Finkbine of America, and Mrs. Vandeput of Belgium that abortions, as well as mercy killings be legalized, the western world is beginning to question the justice of laws which seem to do more harm than good.

Because of their religious and moral significance, it is hard to approach the deliberation of justice on issues such as contraceptives, abortions, mercy killings and the like, for here the public ceases to think and sort of feels its way along.

Today, however, we are going to sit in judgement on justice, for it is we right here in this very room, either as voters or potential voters who must decide how we are to be governed. Members of the jury, today we are going to take a rational look into the areas of birth control and abortion to (1) see exactly what the problem is and (2) to seek probable solutions.

Today, the public in general approves of birth control, and the trend now is towards educating the public to their use. We rarely think of this as a matter concerning the state or our legal codes.

Birth control, nevertheless, is important in this study because it is indicative of how extreme opposition--the same opposition presently raised against abortions--has changed since the turn of the century. The important thing which I would like to draw your attention to is that the law eventually changed with the change in attitudes of people. For with the rise of industrialization, and the increased independence of the woman, coupled with the fact that children were not as valuable economically as they had been in the agrarian society, women were unwilling to bear the burden of unrestricted families.

With this in mind, let us move on to the highly controversial subject of abortions. In spite of the strict anti-abortion legislation, there are an estimated million abortions annually in the United States. Surprisingly enough, only a few fall into the classic category of the girl who wished to avoid the burden and social stigmatism of having an illegitimate child. It is the married women, who for many reasons--poverty, poor housing, domestic disharmony--make up approximately 70% of our annual abortions. While qualified doctors are forced to step aside and wash their hands Pilate fashion of the whole matter, 5-10 thousand women are dying annually at the hands of non-professionals.

Members of the jury, these women cry out to you today! Why are you keeping us from seeking competent aid? We ask, and the only answer which comes is that it is the will of God, and who are we mere mortals or humans to interfere. Yet you say you can condone an abortion if the mother's life is in danger. We ask, is this not also the will of God?

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Rains fall, and we build dams to hold back the waters. Yet was it not God's will that rain should fall? God put man on this earth and told him to be fruitful and multiply, yet now the public in general condemns the use of contraceptives. Do we not often tamper with this will of God?

A wealthy landowner decided he would do his share in solving the welfare problem, and he gave to a welfare family a plot of land along with seeds to plant. A month later he returned to see the plants being eaten by insects as the farmer sat complacently on the porch rocking. "Why don't you get up and tend your field," demanded the landowner angrily, to which the farmer replied, "Well, sir, I look at it this way. Those are God's plants and his bugs. If he wants his bugs to eat his plants, who am I to interfere!" We may chuckle at this man's reasoning, but wasn't he allowing God's will to be done?

To you who sit in judgement on justice today, 5-10 thousand women are dying in our ranks annually while many others are mutilated because they can't seek professional help. Women like Mrs. Finkbine have to leave the country. But most important, for the majority of us who can't afford such an expense, many unwanted babies are forced to come into a world where they can't find love, don't have both parents, or are forced to live on the welfare of a state that resents the responsibility. America has become great because she believes that laws should insure freedom, liberty, and equality in society by removing all common dangers. Can you justify this law solely on your religious and moral beliefs.

Members of the jury, these people demand justice, for they feel that an ineffectual law, which does not stop abortions, but only ensures that they are performed under less than satisfactory conditions cannot be just.

I would like to present two solutions to the jury: (1) that abortions be legalized completely. This would mean that people could have them under ideal conditions at reasonable cost. I would remove the common danger (which is the real concern of our laws) that of non-professionals making it a lucrative practice. The second solution lies in the spread of birth control, for it stands to reason that the more widespread birth control is, the fewer abortions we will have. Prevention is always better than cure.

The American people often think slowly, but in the long run surely. As was shown in the cases of contraceptives as well as prohibition, they are too wise not to acknowledge a demonstrated error. They realized as we must on this vital issue that the morality of birth control, abortions, or liquor traffic is one thing, civil legislation is quite another. We can almost hear the voice of Jesus calling up through the ages, "Render, therefore, unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

Members of the jury, we await your decision. The flexibility of our laws--the justice behind our laws--is what has made us great. Your just decision today will help to protect the individual liberty which the pilgrim fathers sought, so that "government for the people, by the people, and of the people shall not perish, but have everlasting life."