

Editorials

The Fragility Of Freedom

Historians tell us that Thomas Jefferson once said, "Democracy has in it the seeds of its own defeat." Undoubtedly, it is difficult for most people to accept Mr. Jefferson's viewpoint, much less see the reality of it. Nevertheless, there is much that goes on around us day after day that provides the proof of Jefferson's words. Stated bluntly, individual freedom, the very foundation of our free and democratic society, is itself a primary reason for the chips and cracks in our democratic foundation.

Let's look at a few examples to illustrate our point in the paradox of a free society. With The Charlotte News joining the graveyard of 26 other afternoon newspapers on November 1, we will have one less free and independent editorial voice among the free press. This 97-year old voice from within the free press will be silenced, not by any act of an oppressive government, but rather by the individual choices of thousands of citizens to not subscribe to, or read, the News.

Secondly, while there has arisen a "buy American" drive with songs, slogans, T-shirts, and sponsored radio campaigns by such firms as Coca-Cola, Blue Cross-Blue Shield, First Union National Bank, Harris-Teeter Supermarkets, and Anheuser-Busch, Inc., to name a few, all begun initially to aid the textile industry, it is again individual choices by individually discriminating consumers who too often choose not to buy American. After all, in a society that supposedly thrives on the competitive spirit, how can you expect the individual to purchase an American-made automobile or wearing apparel if similar imported products are available at lower prices and often of superior quality?

Lifestyles Ups Disease Rates

A Task Force on Black and Minority Health, created by former health secretary Margaret Heckler, said in their findings that minorities suffer higher rates of cancer, heart disease, and diabetes than do white people. The federal study attributed what it called the "health gap" in large measure to education, or the lack of it, and lifestyle.

Secretary Heckler said, "Smoking, alcohol, diet and obesity are clearly linked" to those higher rates. She added, "Clearly, we have to do more and do it immediately to inform minority Americans about the connection between personal behavior and these life-threatening conditions."

The task force was created in 1984 to examine health differences between black and other minority groups and whites and to offer recommendations on how to reduce the disparities in health between the groups. The task force's study covered over 40 major disease categories among blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians in order to identify factors that relate to the various illnesses.

Minority group peoples are believed to generally have poorer health rates than whites because of economic induced factors. For example, poor black people are

Tony Brown spoke in Charlotte recently to area black business people and community leaders on the theme "Buy Freedom" Economic Development Plan. Mr. Brown placed considerable emphasis on the need for black people to "recycle," that is, to spend more of their money with black businesses in order to keep the money in black neighborhoods. Again, individual choice, preference, needs and wants often led blacks to spend their money elsewhere. In the case of the black consumer is the fact too that with 95 percent of all black-owned businesses being small operations, with sole proprietorships, many of the desired consumer products are not sold by black merchants or firms.

Lastly, the Reagan administration went to great lengths to break up the telephone communication monopoly by AT&T to presumably create competition and greater freedom of choice in this industry. However, consumers are now being told that they must choose one of three or four long distance service companies or the government will assign them a company. Thus, while the government has alleged that it is expanding consumer freedom it is at the same time seeking to dictate to consumers who don't do what government says.

Our bottom line is that when something is suggested for the collective good of an industry, business, community or whatever, if what is being asked is inconsistent with the individuals' wants, in most cases the individuals' desires will prevail. Taken to its ultimate extreme, if all our young men refused to accept military duty in time of war, we might just lose whatever freedoms we have left, if any.

more inclined to defer for a longer period of time seeing a doctor about an illness for reasons of cost than will even poor whites.

Not unexpectedly, the task force's study found that one of the biggest gaps between blacks and whites is murder. The murder rate for black males, ages 25 to 34, is 7.6 times greater than for white males of the same age group. The study noted too that the chance of becoming a murder victim is that category is one in 240 for white and an astonishing one in 47 for blacks. Tragically, too, is that black people largely kill each other for the most trivial of reasons - gambling, fighting, drinking, etc.

The study found also that blacks have the highest overall cancer rates - 25 percent higher among black males than white males while black females have a four percent higher rate than white females. Undoubtedly, these higher rates are related to black people's heavy consumption of animal fat, especially pork, very heavy smoking and possibly drinking.

If we as black people put as much effort into correcting these at least in part behavior induced illnesses as we do efforts to stop capital punishment of blacks, we might see not only better health but an overall better quality of life.

Miller Says:

Key Roles For Mental Health Professionals

By Sherman N. Miller
Special To The Post
Should mental illness be viewed like other organic sicknesses that may recur due to lack of adequate technology to eradicate them?

Many people view mental illness as a skeleton best left in the closet. I have seen people attempt to label sane people "crazy" merely because they sought preventive mental health treatment. However, these sorts of ill-natured presuppositions harbored against anyone seeking mental health care suggest that there exists some very serious misunderstandings on what the mental health profession accomplishes.

I asked a person, who is both a psychiatry professor at a Michigan medical school and an active practitioner at Lafayette Clinic in Detroit, Mi., to offer some guidance on the mental health profession. Beth Ann Brooke, M.D., sees three key roles for mental health professionals.

She asserts, "1) provide treatment of acutely and chronically mentally ill, 2) educate other physicians to recognize mental illness and treat it if they are capable and interested, and 3) edu-

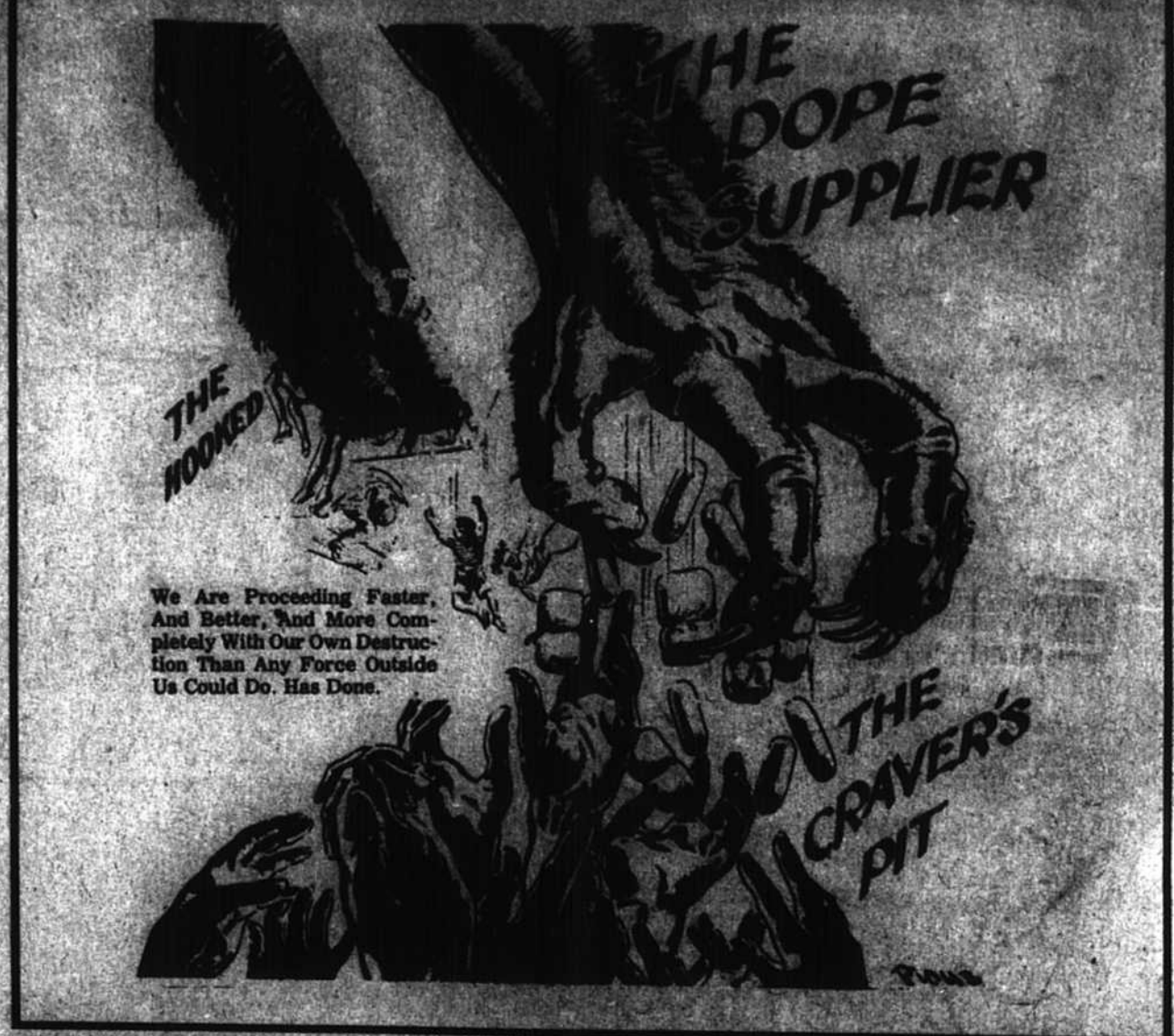


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cate the population at large in the mode of primary prevention."

America is currently in the "Age of Quality" so Dr. Brooke was encouraged to address the issue of quality mental health treatment. She averred, "Some foreign born psychiatrists, who are not well acultured, have difficulty effectively treating their patients because they do not understand the nuances... (e.g., grammar, customs...)"

Dr. Brooke seized upon this opportunity to touch on a growing trend in medicine that is radically reshaping this profession. She declared, "I don't think you should have to practice defensive medicine! The system has forced many competent physicians to do so."



Abortion Is Hot, Emotional Issue

American citizens are protesting by the thousands. Citizens who believe abortion is murder. Recently, they have marched in Santa Monica, Baton Rouge, Spartanburg, Tacoma, Miami, Atlanta, Nashville, and Detroit. In New Haven Ct., hundreds of blue and pink balloons were launched "in the memory of unborn children."

In Hazleton, Pa., protesters held a mock trial for members of the United States Supreme Court, whose members in 1973 voted in favor of legalized abortion; the court was found guilty to the charge of mass murder. Roman Catholic churches around the country observed a "respect life" Day.

Abortion is a hot, emotional issue for the 1990s. The protests for and against make that known. National opinion polls show that more people favor abortion than those who oppose it, but the anti-abortion groups are making more noise and gaining more strength than ever before. When the ruling came down in 1973, no one knew what to expect from the statistics. Since that date 12 years ago, 17 million abortions have been legally performed - including the esti-



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mated 1.5 million this year. The 1973 ruling brought abortion out of the "unhealthy" back alleys into clean, safe clinics that provide proper and adequate care for women undergoing the abortion procedure.

Some argue that abortion is simply another birth control method - a procedure undergone without thought to the possible medical or emotional complications. Those who counsel, advise and give medical care to women undergoing or considering abortion, do have a responsibility to provide adequate care and handling. Women and girls who have abortions do not go into the clinics blindly. They are aware of complications medically and

the emotional stress prior to and following the procedure.

Very few women and girls seek abortion as a method of birth control - it is their alternative. The pro-life supporters are viewing the right to choose in a small light. If a woman, married or single, finds herself in a situation of unwanted pregnancy - what is she to do? A 13-year-old girl, barely away from being a baby, finds herself in a situation of unwanted pregnancy - what is she to do? A woman or girl is raped, becomes pregnant - what is she to do? A woman will risk death if she continues a pregnancy - what is she to do? To these women and girls, abortion is the answer. Having an abortion does not make it right - it's just necessary for mental, physical, and economic well being.

History has too often allowed women and girls to die unjustly under the hands of charlatans and fruitless home remedies. They suffered and died unjustly. The social implications of unwed pregnant women pushed many to choose between suicide, mental coat hangers, or lye. Can America face this horror once again?

Statistics show that 17 million abortions have been performed since 1973 - that is 17 million legal abortions! How many illegal abortions were performed prior to that? No one truly know, except the 20 plus million women and girls who were the victims. Few do speak out about the horror, others cannot because they are confined to their physical and emotional graves.

Those in favor of pro-life are arming themselves to take away a personal right and decision. A woman's body belongs to her, no man or woman should have the right to deprive her of personal choices. Pro-life groups inject the question of when life begins into their arguments. A woman or girl should have the right to continue or terminate her pregnancy. The moral question does exist - it is a question that must be answered personally and be cohesive with one's point of view and beliefs in religion. The President of the United States cannot or should not tell a woman or girl when life begins.

The decision to have or not have an abortion is purely personal, and if the Supreme Court has any compassion or knowledge of the 1980s, it will keep the 1973 ruling.

"A society that approved of making abortion illegal was a society that approved of violence against women."

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