

Reaction to abortion ruling shows emotions rule

At 10 a.m. we hear on the radio that the Supreme Court has handed down the *Webster vs. Reproductive Health Services* decision on abortion. But when my friend and I arrive at the court at 11 a.m. on July 3, about 300 people are still gathered on the steps of the court and the sidewalk in front of it. The press conferences are over but press and protesters remain.

A group of women holding round, blue "KEEP ABORTION LEGAL" signs are chanting "What do we want? Safe abortion. When do we want it? Now." Other pro-choicers mill around with coat hangers tied to strings around their necks. Hangers with pro-choice protesters' signatures and hometowns written on the paper are strewn on the steps, but a man soon picks them up.

In a few minutes a knot of protesters forms around Stacey Bridges, 22, from McLean, Va. She has a cross of three straightened hangers, corkscrewed on the end, with a white bra attached to make some

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sort of pro-abortion cross. She is kneeling on the steps, shouting almost hysterically. "It's our body, it's our right. God bless this society. Abortion will still exist, so keep it safe, keep it legal. Someone has already died for my sins. You don't need to die for my sins."

A young man with short red hair says to Bridges, "*Roe vs. Wade* is dead, just like all the unborn children you've killed."

A gray-haired man in his 40s, with an "Adoption, not abortion" sign, says to her, "How come we protect birds' eggs, but not human eggs?"

Another woman adds, "Human eggs are more valuable than birds' eggs." To which a younger woman responds (in seriousness), "Now

there's a value judgment if I ever heard one."

A crewcut man in his late 20s jumps in: "You decide before you get on your back. That's choice, not human sexuality. Abortion is murder. Now you're going to kill a baby."

"That's right," Bridges said. "It's my choice."

A woman in her late 20s wearing a National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) T-shirt responds, "You are fixating on that baby because you are being manipulated by white racist idiots in this country who want to keep you suppressed."

"We are the real protesters," the red-haired man says. "How come you deny the choice of the father?"

"You are fixating on that baby which doesn't have brainwaves to feel pain," the NARAL woman answers.

"That's a medical lie," the red-haired man says angrily. "How dare you say that on the steps of the Supreme Court?"

The same group, a few minutes

later: "People are not getting abortions like automatic fast food," Bridges says. "It's a very traumatic period in a woman's life. I have to live with that deed."

But the crewcut man has a comeback ready: "The baby has to die for that deed."

"God knows everything is not sacred," Bridges says, and the NARAL woman backs her up by saying, "The only person who understands is the mother."

On the other side of the court steps, five children between the ages of two and 12, stand with about 10 adults. The group chants "Stop abortion now," then "Abortion is never safe," then starts singing the hymn, "Jesus loves the little children." By noon only this group is left on the steps.

Suzie Walden, from Charlottesville, Va., the woman in the group waving the Bible, talked to me about these children. "They do understand," she said. "They know the meaning of life. They were not singing against their will. They have a knowledge that life is special."

What I saw and heard at the Supreme Court left me both dazed and disgusted - dazed by the intensity of the protesters' emotions, but disgusted by the lack of intelligent thought in the arguments.

The court's decision seemed lost in the inflammatory, often meaningless arguments and showy use of props. I didn't hear Webster discussed at all that day. Some protesters weren't even sure what the decision was, let alone its implications for their causes.

If these protesters are the people who will be lobbying and influencing the state legislators who have renewed power over abortion laws, then this country's abortion policies will be shaped by people who stopped thinking about the issue long ago.

It's time to stop shouting and start thinking.

Amy Wajda is a sophomore English and music major from Springfield, Va.



Abortion protesters gathered at the Supreme Court



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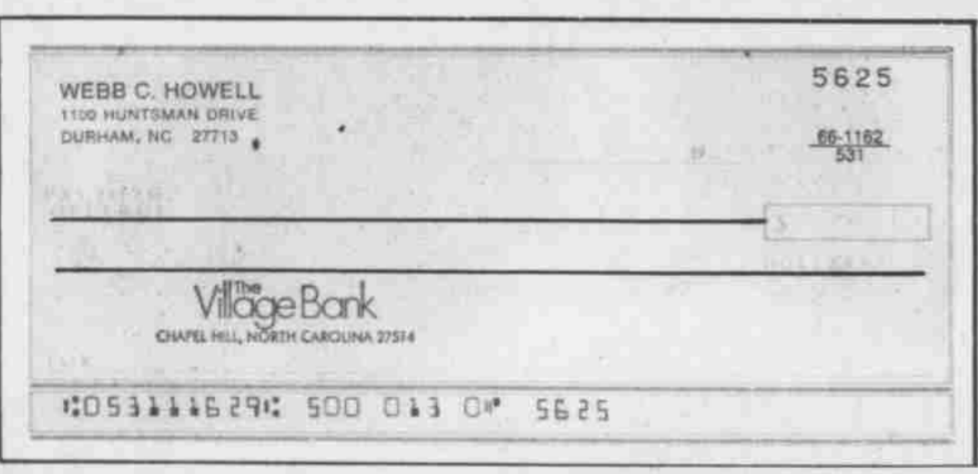
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