

Voice of the People

Courts and abortion

MILWAUKEE—The Tribune is correct in asserting that the recent Beal v. Franklin decision points up the necessity for the Supreme Court to "rethink parts of its 1973 decision" on abortion. But The Tribune should not blame the legislators who drew up the Pennsylvania statute and other legislators who have attempted to define just where the lines should be drawn in regulating legal abortions.

If there was any vagueness in the Pennsylvania law, the Supreme Court is responsible because the Court's own language in 1973 was the basis for its terms. In its most recent decision, the Court changed its 1973 definition of viability from "potentially able to survive outside the womb" to a "reasonable possibility of sustained survival." How can legislators know what to do when the Court keeps changing the rules?

Similarly, it is unjust for The Tribune to accuse legislators of "deviousness" in their efforts to draft laws on abortion. Nothing is more open than the legislative process; the courts are the only governmental units operating in secrecy which lay down new guidelines for legislation each time they do not like the result.

Illinois alone offers two classic examples: the Chicago Board of Health's rules establishing minimum standards for abortion clinics that were struck down by a federal court in 1974 [which might have prevented some of the abuses that drew national attention to Chicago's abortion industry a few weeks ago]; and the Abortion Control Act of 1978, which a federal court struck down for being "too vague and too specific." If a law can, at the same time, be both too vague and too specific to be constitutionally acceptable, how can the courts expect legislators to draw up any law that meets the necessary criteria? Legislators cannot read minds.

The latest decision shows that the judiciary has stopped thinking when it comes to abortion. Decisions are inconsistent because the courts are defensive and emotional about the right they created and perceive to be under attack. What we need from the courts is clear, coherent legal thinking, a commodity notably lacking to date in almost every abortion case.

Robert A. Destro

General counsel,
Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights

The seal slaughter

Writers should be as concise as possible. Give full names and addresses. Manuscripts are not returned. Space is limited; the right to condense letters is reserved. Address letters to Voice of the People, The Tribune, Chicago, Ill. 60611.

'Occupied' territory

NORTHFIELD—The Social Action Committee of Temple Jeremiah strongly protests the use of the phrases "occupied West Bank" or "Israeli occupied territory" by officers, agents, and employees of the United States government.

We find it repugnant to history, law, and the American traits of fair play and decency. This area should be referred to as Judea and Samaria.

This area is historically a part of Israel since biblical times and according to the Balfour Declaration and the negotiations of the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. As a matter of fact, Israel even includes land east of the River Jordan. The state of Jordan never existed prior to 1922. It was a creation of Britain. Jordan does not have and never had any claim to this area except by military conquest from 1948 to 1967. It is strange that from 1948 to 1967 the world did not describe the area as "occupied."

We would object if Mexico referred to "occupied Texas," or Spain to "occupied Puerto Rico," or the Indians to "occupied America." That a double standard is being applied to Israel is totally unacceptable. Irwin Rozner

Profit and compulsion

CHICAGO—Henry Rose, in the Jan. 8 "Speak Out" column, complains that "although shelter is a basic human need, we allow its development and cost to be determined by private parties seeking a profit." Mr. Rose expresses a socialist point of view with such admirable lucidity that he exposes a basic flaw.

Building a house requires human labor. As a worker, either I undertake such labor willingly because of the promise of profit, or I do so unwillingly under threat of punishment. Instead of offering to do something good for me if I build a house for his friends, Mr. Rose, in effect, threatens to do something bad to me if I don't. This is no way to create a just and equitable society.

The efforts of those who want decent housing for all might best be directed to seeing that all people acquire marketable skills, so that all can exchange

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