

SCHULTHEIS: LAST WORDS TO MS. LOONAN *Colorado Statesman 11/25/02*

Sorry, but defending abortion is indefensible

This will be my final contribution to the fascinating debate Peggy Loonan and I have been conducting on these pages over the Planned Parenthood (PP) funding controversy.



DAVE SCHULTHEIS
GUEST COLUMNIST

Ms. Loonan, if *The Statesman* is willing, I will let you have the last word. You are clearly intelligent and reasonable, as you describe yourself in our Dec. 28 article, and I have enjoyed the exchange of ideas with you even intelligent, reasonable men such as Ms. Loonan are not infallible, and in this particular debate, she is simply wrong. I do not mean this to sound harsh. As the ancient Greeks used to say, even the wisest men nod once in a while. I did not, as Ms. Loonan claims, label her argument hysterical. It is very clear from my column that I labeled as hysterical her particular response to a \$100,000 budget cut in a multi-billion dollar organization. There is nothing as over-reaction and hysteria in the world, and I am sure that a 3% budget cut for PP will cost 13,000 poor, rural women their health care comes perilously close to qualifying. This is like saying that 35,000 jobs Ford Motor Company eliminated (a much larger cut than that) will cost 13,000 poor, rural women their transportation. It simply

has no basis in fact. It is sensationalism. It is exaggeration. It is scare-mongering. It is hysteria.

Again, I do not mean to be harsh. I am quite ready to believe Ms. Loonan, as a regular pattern, exhibits steadiness, consistency, rationality, and equity in all she does. I am sure her two columns on the PP controversy are merely exceptions. But to make sound public policy, we must be able to tell the difference between sensationalism and wisdom.

I mentioned in my last article the standard accounting practice by which an independent firm established that PP's state-funded arm and PP's abortion arm are not operating independently. As is the habit of those defending the indefensible practice of abortion, Ms. Loonan attacks the audit firm itself at the same time that she weakly accuses me of hijacking the Constitution with a standard accounting practice. If this is true, it is curious that the *Denver Post*, though opposing the Constitutional statement on abortion and supporting efforts to repeal it, editorialized agreement in this case with our position. The *Post* characterized PP's operations as "clearly violating the ban on indirect subsidies" for abortion. Since Ms. Loonan questioned the independence of the accounting firm of Anderson and Whitney, perhaps she will question the independence of the *Denver Post*, as well. Both other major Colorado newspapers also agreed with us. It



would appear, much to Ms. Loonan's chagrin, that Colorado's Constitution is perfectly compatible with

standard accounting practice.

Ms. Loonan's other arguments could also use some strengthening. She characterizes Gov. Bill Owens' 1999 rationale in requiring PP to split if they continue receiving state funds as a "light bulb theory" that "redefines voter intent" and "insults our intelligence," but does so without explaining why standard accounting practice should be changed or, for that matter, what the connection is between the Constitution and a light bulb. She then maintains that Gov. Owens is acting as he is because he owes a debt to his "extreme anti-abortion right wing base," but does not explain how a political base can be extreme while still large enough to win the Governor's Mansion. It appears that we are to view as extreme the political base of a sitting governor, an independent audit firm, standard accounting practice, and the state's three major newspapers, while viewing Ms. Loonan and PP as balanced and virtuous, making a heroic effort to reduce Colorado abortions.

This presentation of PP as critical to the effort to reduce abortion is doubtless the most disingenuous portion of Ms. Loonan's column. PP, she says, helps prevent abortion by dispensing birth control. A world without PP, we are led to believe, would be one with abortions

spiraling helplessly out of control. Aside from the implicit equivalence here between abortion and birth control (an equivalence which all polls show is repugnant to the vast majority of Americans), Ms. Loonan knows well that PP makes a mint providing abortions, and that reducing abortion is hardly their incentive for dispensing birth control. PP is the world's largest private provider of abortions. Ms. Loonan thinks undignified my drawing a parallel with the world's largest public provider of abortions, the Chinese government, presumably because Ms. Loonan acknowledges the moral stature of that government, but the parallel is clearly a just one. Ignoring it is not dignified. It is naïve.

Ms. Loonan's argument, like all those which defend the indefensible, depends on our being naïve about what abortion is and what PP does. In making public policy, Gov. Owens has not been taken in by Ms. Loonan's disingenuous presentation of the situation, and his type of government will likely win him a second term in office. Meanwhile, Ms. Loonan's defense of PP is beneath the dignity of her intelligence and reasonableness. I sincerely hope that time and continued good government in Colorado will bring Ms. Loonan over to our side and that of the Colorado Constitution – the side of life.

Rep. Dave Schulteis, Republican from Colorado Springs, is serving his first term in the Colorado House of Representatives.