

Prosperity Through Timeless Values

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ABORTION, HISPANICS AND THE GREAT
RECALL OF 2003

NATIONAL CATHOLIC REGISTER

28 Sep 2003

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SEPTEMBER 28, 2003

As of this writing, the status of the Great Recall Election of 2003 is up in the air. The Ninth Circuit Court has just thrown a monkey wrench into the whole process by ruling that the voting in the Special Election might violate somebody's Equal Protection. By the time you read this, we'll all know whether the election will go forward as originally planned, has been postponed until some future date, or has been scrapped altogether. However that court process ends, this election has opened up some very interesting political possibilities around abortion. The very wildness of the election has allowed some new and unusual voices to be heard. And this is all to the good for those of us with unconventional views about crucial issues like abortion.

You wouldn't think there is anything new to say about abortion. The most conservative of the Republican candidates, Tom McClintock, has taken stands that are, by this time, fairly typical among conservatives. He opposes partial birth abortion. He favors parental consent as a condition for abortions by underage girls. This is sufficient for the pro-abortion establishment to paint him into an

"anti-" candidate: anti-choice, anti-woman, anti-freedom. Therefore, he tends to keep a low profile about this issue. While he answers straightforwardly if he is asked, he doesn't usually bring it up. It seems safer to stick to the fiscal issues that were the original motivation for the recall movement, and which still provide its most reliable backbone.

However, another candidate has emerged from the pack who has something different to say about abortion. Warren Farrell, a registered Democrat, describes himself as a "Father's Issues Author." Farrell's signature issues have to do with getting and keeping men involved with their children. These issues include things like a presumption of joint custody in divorce cases. He favors a bill imposing penalties for paternity fraud to discourage women from naming the richest guy they've slept with as the father of their child. Farrell has a small, but intensely motivated following among disenfranchised and defrauded fathers as well as among second wives. But it is his abortion position that interests me here.

First, Warren Farrell believes a pregnant woman should be required to notify the father immediately when she learns of her pregnancy. In *Father and Child Reunion*, Dr. Farrell writes about cases in which the woman only informed the father of her pregnancy after she had already made all the decisions, effectively cutting him out of all possibility of contributing. Second, Farrell proposes that if either parent wishes to care for the infant-in-process, then the fetus must become a child. As we all know, a child has rights that a fetus does not. A father should be permitted to make a legally binding commitment to care for the child himself.

If neither parent is willing to care for the child, then adoption is the second choice. Only if those alternatives are found non-viable, should abortion be allowed.

Now, no one would mistake this position for the exuberantly optimistic Catholic pro-life position. But neither would anyone mistake it for the typical Democratic pro-abortion fundamentalism. In my view, the real value of Warren Farrell's proposal is that it calls attention to the deeply social nature of every abortion decision. And this is where the abortion issue could get very interesting in the Great Recall of 2003.

The major Democratic candidate to replace Gray Davis is current Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante. Gleeful Democratic and left-leaning commentators have speculated that if Hispanic voters want to see Bustamante as the next governor, they will a) vote for recalling Gray Davis, and b) vote for Bustamante as his replacement. Since a lot of other people want Davis to get out of Dodge, this strategic voting by Democratic Latinos will sink Davis' ship for good. So the Recall movement, initiated by conservative Republicans, will completely back-fire on them, and bring about California's first Hispanic governor in over one hundred years. Ha, ha.

But if McClintock or any other plausible contender has the guts to raise the abortion issue, and if the media ever start listening to Warren Farrell emphasize the social aspect of the abortion decision, the Hispanic vote will be up for grabs. Here's why.

Latinos make up about fifteen percent of California's registered electorate. Mexican-Americans are more pro-life and pro-family than the average voter. In one nationwide poll, for instance, fifty percent of Latinos said that "Congress should put more limits on abortion." A large percentage of Mexican-Americans are Catholic, and not just nominally Catholic, but devoutly and unabash-

edly Catholic. Some secular commentators make no secret of their delight that some Hispanics are abandoning Catholicism. These commentators fail to realize that Hispanics become Pentecostals and Evangelicals, not Episcopalians or members of some New Age cult. In other words, they don't leave the Catholic Church because it is too traditional on moral issues: they leave because it isn't traditional enough.

When Democrats talk about economic issues or entitlement issues or immigration issues, many Latinos respond. But when the subject is sex, family or abortion, Latinos resonate with Republicans. One of our "alternative newspapers" here in California reports that many Hispanics don't realize that the Democrats are the party of abortion. Jim Holman's San Diego News Notes clearly insinuates that Democrats strategically conceal their pro-abortion extremism from their Hispanic constituents.

I have lost track of the number of times I have read about some Sacramento legislative assault on the family that was opposed by, "a coalition of Republicans and Hispanic Democrats." For instance, a bill providing for an extension of existing domestic partnership benefits easily passed in Sacramento this past month. In the California Assembly (the equivalent of the House of Representatives in Congress) all Democrats voted for, all Republicans voted against, with the exception of six abstentions. All the abstentions were Democrats, indicating how firmly the party leaders enforced party discipline. The most notable fact about the abstentions is that two-thirds of them were Hispanic cross-overs. Four of those six abstentions were members of the Latino Caucus, including its Chairman, Marco Antonio Firebaugh. In the Senate, there were no abstentions. The only deviation from rigid partisanship was Dean Florez, a Democratic Senator from the Central Valley, the farm heartland of California.

Warren Farrell's position demonstrates that, contrary to the Democratic Party line, it is possible to have nuanced positions on abortion. Farrell is alone among visible Democrats in calling for partner notification as a requirement for abortion. California is probably not ready for that, but I do believe parental notification is an issue with widespread appeal. The protests of the pro-abortion extremists will reveal the fundamentally anti-social nature of their position.

So here are a couple of strategic questions someone should ask in the next debate. Maybe an older Mexican-American lady could stand up from the audience and ask the candidates why her son's wife can have an abortion without even telling him. Maybe she could mention that no one in her family would dream of sending her thirteen year old granddaughter to the doctor by herself. So why does the state of California allow her to leave public school to go to an abortion clinic, without any adult in the family even knowing about it?

Maybe one of the other candidates could ask Cruz Bustamante a few pointed questions about Davis Administration policies. Why does the Attorney General of California restrict the sale of Catholic hospitals? (Catholic hospitals often stipulate that the buyer agree to follow their current policies against providing abortions. They don't want to sell a hospital called St. So-and-So's and have it provide abortions while appearing Catholic. California's Attorney General ruled that sellers of hospitals located in California can not impose such conditions of sale.) Maybe another candidate could ask whether abortion clinics are mandatory reporters of child abuse. Is there any girl young enough, with a boyfriend old enough, that the clinics should be required to report a possible case of statutory rape? (The Attorney General was specifically asked to rule on this very question last summer.) Why was this a tough question for the Davis administration, Mr. Bustamante?

If another candidate has the guts to ask these questions, maybe some of those Mexican grandmothers would start telling Cruz he ought to be ashamed of himself for hanging around with such a disreputable character as Gray Davis. If they do, the Great Recall Election of 2003 really will be up for grabs.