

Media Still Bashing Phyllis Schlafly

By Bill Donohue

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Ten years ago, when liberal activist Betty Friedan died, the media greeted the news with bouquets. But there are no accolades being bestowed by the media for conservative activist Phyllis Schlafly, who died on Labor Day. Indeed, the disparate treatment is stunning.

When Friedan died, the *Associated Press* (AP) noted her passing by saying, "Feminism Pioneer Betty Friedan Dies at 85." It heralded her book, "The Feminine Mystique," saying, "Few books have so profoundly changed so many lives as did Friedan's 1963 best seller."

"Far-Right Activist, Author Phyllis Schlafly Dies at 92." That is the way the AP notes her death. It calls her 1964 book, "A Choice Not an Echo," "a manifesto for the far right," noting that she founded the Eagle Forum, an "ultraconservative group."

The *Washington Post's* obituary on Friedan was titled, "Voice of Feminism's 'Second Wave.'" It labeled her a "writer, thinker and activist who almost single-handedly revived feminism with her 1963 book, "The Feminine Mystique."

The death of Schlafly is treated with a provocative headline in the *Washington Post*: "Fierce Anti-Feminist Pushed GOP to Right on Social Issues." It also brands her "an experienced anti-communist Republican Party activist."

The passing of Friedan was observed by the *New York Times* as,

"Betty Friedan, Who Ignited Cause in 'Feminine Mystique,' Dies at 85." She was remembered as a "feminist crusader" who "permanently transformed the social fabric of the United States and countries around the world."

"Phyllis Schlafly Dies at 92; Helped Steer the United States to the Right." That is the headline afforded by the *New York Times*. She is described as "one of the most polarizing figures in American public life" who "displayed a moral ferocity reminiscent of the ax-wielding prohibitionist Carry Nation." She also "joined a right-wing crusade against international Communism in the 1960s," and supported "the hard-right" Senator Barry Goldwater for president.

AP would never refer to Friedan as a "far-left activist" who founded the National Organization for Women, nor would it call it an "ultraliberal group." It would be unthinkable for the *Washington Post* to call Friedan a "fierce feminist [who] pushed Democrats to Left on social issues." Similarly, the *New York Times* would never label Friedan "one of the most polarizing figures in American public life," much less say she "joined a left-wing crusade promoting international Communism."

In fact, in her youth, Friedan was a Communist sympathizer, but none of these media outlets mention her fellow-traveling days promoting Stalinism. While they cite her role in establishing the National Organization for Women in 1966, they fail to say that she warned the group against an encroaching lesbian "menace."

Nor do the media speak about Friedan's "Fifty Shades of Grey" sexual appetite. In 1984, when she arrived at the Democratic National Convention in San Francisco, her luggage burst open on the luggage carousel, revealing "S&M magazines depicting women in extreme bondage."

When Bill Clinton was all over the news for his affair with

Monica Lewinsky, Friedan rushed to the predator's defense. "Even if he did what he's alleged to have done, what is the big deal? It's not a matter of public concern. To have our will overthrown by a bunch of dirty old white men, trying to use sexual issues wrongly ... this is a disgrace." The accusers were "dirty old white men," not Clinton.

Regarding Schlafly, the media fail to tell the reader that her opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) accurately expressed the will of women. In 1975, Linda Greenhouse of the *New York Times* credited women in New York and New Jersey—not men—with decisively defeating the ERA at the ballot box. It should also be noted that the ACLU strongly opposed the ERA from the 1940s to the 1970s, making Friedan the outlier on this issue.

Phyllis Schlafly was a courageous and principled woman. That she is still enraging the adversarial press is a tribute to her legacy, and another blot on the profession of journalism.

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