

THE POLITICS OF PARTIAL-BIRTH ABORTION

The victory in the House of Representatives in overriding President Clinton's veto of the bill banning partial-birth abortions (285-137) was unfortunately not upheld in the Senate (the vote of 57-41 was nine short of the necessary two-thirds needed to override the President's veto). What was just as horrendous as the Senate vote was the politics that accompanied it.

We were repeatedly told by abortion rights advocates that "only" about 500 partial-birth abortions occurred each year. But that myth was forever shattered when the *Record* of Bergen County, New Jersey disclosed that at least 1,500 partial-birth abortions were performed each year in one New Jersey clinic alone!

Besides the vote, the league objected to the way the media and the politicians exploited the Catholic angle to this issue. For example, both Boston newspapers, the *Globe* and the *Herald*, refused to carry ads placed by the Archdiocese of Boston that depicted partial-birth abortions. Yet neither newspaper has ever had any problem with Planned Parenthood's well-financed ads. So much for equal time.

And then there was the constant citing of Catholic women who have had a partial-birth abortion. The *Boston Herald*, for instance, ran a story on September 20 that mentioned in its text, and in a statement below a picture, that Maureen Britell is a Catholic who underwent the procedure.

This raises the question whether is it commonplace in newspapers to identify the religious affiliation of those who don't subscribe to the teachings of their religion. Surely there are women and men in all religious communities who

openly defy the tenets of their faith, yet this is typically not deemed newsworthy. But exceptions, it seems, are made when the subject is abortion: Catholic participation never fails to go unnoticed.

Even worse is the handling of this issue by politicians. Sen. Barbara Boxer of California actually cited the case of Maureen Britell from the Senate floor, making certain to mention Britell's Catholic status. Then, in a rather revealing comment, Sen. Boxer said that after the partial-birth abortion was completed, Mr. and Mrs. Britell "named their daughter Dahlia. She had a Catholic funeral and is buried at Otis Air Force Base in Cape Cod, MA." Sen. Boxer and the Britell's need to explain why "blob's" are accorded funerals.