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A DEEPER LOOK

What Abortionists Fear Most

There are a few things you should know about Congressional hearings held on Capitol Hill. The first is, they are thoroughly political circuses, with only a thinly veiled pretense of being fair. And second, even with the Congress in the iron grip of the liberals, the unexpected still happens.

The House Judiciary Subcommittee hearing on the Freedom of Choice Act of 1990, on March 15, was meant to be a romp for pro-abortionists. Congressional pro-choicers could hardly wait to douse the issue in more rhetoric and confusion. But their strong-arm tactics to censor the facts worked against them.

All systems were go as the hearing began. The subcommittee scheduled a panel of pro-abortion witnesses first. Four abortionists and abortees described the impediments society still places in the paths of persons trying to kill their children. The usual extreme cases were trotted out—women with severely handicapped fetuses, poor women risking self abortions. Reporters in the audience were already framing the story in their minds (headline: "Witnesses ask Congress for protection from anti-abortion militancy").

Next came the pro-life witnesses. The first was Sheri Richard, an ultrasound technician, with a nine-minute videotape showing the very obviously mobile, very-much-alive in-utero antics of a human infant at only four weeks' gestation. As she began to introduce the tape, sub-

committee chairman Don Edwards (D-Calif.), a fervent supporter of abortion, told her that the committee had decided not to accept filmed or videotaped materials.

Obviously taking the witness for an idiot, he added that if she would distribute copies, the subcommittee members would be glad to view the tape in their offices (far from the view of the attendant press, by the way).

Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner (R-Wisc.) entered the fray, pointing out that the subcommittee had not voted on anything even remotely resembling a policy against videotapes. Sensenbrenner repeatedly demanded to know when the subcommittee had made this decision, suggesting that it may have been when there were no Republicans in the room. Finally, Edwards stammered that the subcommittee could vote on this subject anytime—quite a change from his original story.

Sensenbrenner forthrightly accused Edwards of censoring the witness. Edwards countered with naked power, asking the subcommittee's Democratic majority to rule against the videotaped testimony. Sensenbrenner stormed from the room, calling the whole affair a "charade." But his point was thoroughly made.

On the whole, the hearing was a victory. Edwards had hoped it would spark a new pro-abortion onslaught, but as a media event, it got as much coverage as if it had been about oil depletion allowances. The chair-

man's neo-Stalinism, and the Sensenbrenner-Edwards exchange, apparently made the whole thing too hot to handle for the guardians of the public's right to know. The *Washington Post*—which defines the world for most Washingtonians—carried not a word about it. Likewise the other major newspapers. Several reporters left right after the pro-abortion speakers. Not only did they miss the gagging incident, they had never even intended to get both sides.

At the Senate-side hearing on the same bill, Miss Richard was allowed to show the tape, but Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-Ohio) enforced a rigid five-minute rule against the tape's nine-minute duration. Miss Richard's explanations were repeatedly interrupted by an abortionist at the witness table, who called the videotaped child "an oblongate parasite."

Aside from being a useful civics lesson, pro-life citizens may glean something more substantive from these events. Anytime we pierce the veil of invisibility—to show the humanness of the fetus—we will be vehemently opposed by pro-choice advocates. They know full well that their entire case rests on the supposition that the fetus isn't what it is: human. □

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