

The Quinlan decision

In allowing 22-year-old Karen Ann Quinlan release from the "vegetative" condition in which she has existed for almost a year, the New Jersey Supreme Court has reached a wise and humane decision.

Under safeguards that fulfill the state's obligation to protect life, the respirator which keeps the comatose young woman alive can be disconnected and she will be allowed to die naturally.

Wide acceptance and proper implementation of the court's unanimous opinion can spare others the months of emotional torment Miss Quinlan's parents endured.

The case arose from the advances of medical technology that permit the replacement of any damaged part of the body except the brain. A "remnant" of Karen Quinlan's life was maintained without hope of her becoming again a conscious human being. Because her condition didn't fit the accepted definition of "brain death," her physicians refused to cease the extraordinary means to keep her alive.

The court's threefold requirements for "pulling the plug" where there is "no reasonable possibility" of recovery — concurrence by the par-

ents or guardian, attending physicians and the hospital ethics committee — appear to be adequate safeguards. No door is opened to indiscriminate "mercy killing" or patient suicide.

Since many hospitals don't have ethics committees, forming such bodies is desirable. The model pointed to by the court would be composed of physicians, social workers, attorneys and theologians.

The Quinlan case principles, the court implied, can be used in terminal illnesses that haven't reached the hopeless vegetative state. An example is prolonging the agony of spreading, incurable cancer, in which the unspoken medical practice avoids resuscitative treatment.

The opinion written by Chief Justice Richard Hughes accords with the law and with Roman Catholic doctrine (cited because the Quinlans are of that religious faith). It allows physicians to reach a sound medical judgment without fear of criminal or malpractice penalties. Although it doesn't answer every question about an individual's right to die with dignity, it is a helpful and compassionate advance in a delicate life-and-death area that has heretofore lacked clear guidance.

Billions for defense

The budget committees of the House and Senate, which had been expected to set defense spending ceilings considerably lower than that asked by the administration, have come up with figures very close to President Ford's \$113.3 billion. The committee's actions reflect a widespread concern in Congress over the rising trend of Soviet military strength and a growing disillusionment with detente. They also make less likely responsible cuts in the defense spending schedule, including elimination of \$1 billion sought for purchase of the first three production models of the controversial B-1 bomber.

Congressional critics of Pentagon spending plans have singled out three sums totaling more than \$6.5 billion as likely targets in this year's defense budget debate. One is a \$3 billion item allegedly added to the budget as "cut insurance," an addition the Defense Department denies. Another is \$2.7 billion which was added on to the budget shortly after Donald Rumsfeld was appointed defense secretary and, reportedly, in response to his personal appeal to the President. The third is \$1 billion of the \$1.5 billion requested for the B-1 bomber.

Production of the B-1 is opposed by a coalition of groups that question its effectiveness and point to its immense cost. The Air Force estimates that each of the planes will cost \$87 million and the critics contend that the proposed program to build and operate 244 of them over a 30-year period will run to \$90 billion that could better be spent on

school, health and energy programs. A study by the Brookings Institution, released in February, argued that the "penetration" capability, which is the B-1's prime attribute, is at best unnecessary and at worst unlikely to work. The study concluded that there is no urgent military need for the B-1 and that it would be a costly mistake.

The Brookings study, made by two former Defense Department analysts, accepted the need for some bomber force as insurance against the failure or destruction of present strategic forces, particularly the land-based intercontinental missiles. But it noted that such insurance could be provided for some time to come by the present force of late-model B-52's which the Defense Department and the Air Force say will remain structurally sound into the 1990's. And the study maintains that the need, when it does arise, can be met in a much less expensive way. Instead of the B-1, with its "penetration" capability, the analysts propose a stand-off bomber that would be equipped with long-range cruise missiles to be fired from outside the Soviet borders, saving \$10 to \$15 billion over 10 years.

The budget committee decisions were not unanimous and there is still strong congressional and national opposition to the spending of defense money on the wrong things and on padding. The debates on the defense authorization request and the appropriation measures are still ahead. There is time yet, and reason, to fight for the elimination of "cut insurance," add-ons and needlessly costly weapons systems.

Tom Fesperman

Still that feeling of mawkishness

I lit the handcrafted candles, she poured the \$1.49 Chablis into K-Mart goblets, and we exhumed the leftover meatloaf buried under an avalanche of refried beans. Nearby the tube was along with living color, and I sneaked a look, and there were the Waltons in their Virginia hills, being sentimental.

An old house, long vacant, eaten by termites, was to be torn down, and Grandma was determined to save it because it held memories of sugary moments. You know, a kiss here, a wink there, a mumbled vow of love, a tune hummed in a porch swing.

Well, it was all so mawkish, as the boys in the city room would say, mushy with emotion, syrupy with sentimentality.

Sentimentality, oh my, how rare, I whispered into the meatloaf, how brave are the precious few writers and producers who spoon out such goo these days.

For these are days of vodka and grass, not wine and roses. These are times when it is believed that we long to see shows of blood gushing from cops, sedans rolling over like beer cans in a windstorm, and read stories of silenced bullets making new navels in the stomachs of foreign spies.

It is believed that we thirst only for dirigibles exploding, skyscrapers making like torches, and sex between strangers in uncleaned rooms.

Sentimentality, it is believed, is a quality that died with Camille. Andy Hardy, it is said, grew up to join the Mafia. Swoony sonnets haven't been heard from since poor Mrs. Browning passed on.

Birthday cards trimmed with flowered vines, it is believed, do not do as well as caustic cartoons that warn of varicose veins.

It is more with-it to listen to the thunder

Letters to the editor

Tells Plans for Washington Crossing

The Department of Environmental Protection plans to invest public funds in Washington Crossing State Park. We are designing facilities for normal usage over the long haul, not just a single year. Here is what we really aim to do:

—Install a pedestrian overpass, connecting two sections of the park, which will cross Route 29. We hope to encourage people to walk or bike between various points on the New Jersey side as well as over the bridge to Pennsylvania, rather than driving back and forth.

—The park entrance for cars will be located on Route 546. We intend to charge \$2 per car only for the summer, weekend, day-time parking (but not for the evening,

open-air theater performances and not for weekdays). There will be no charge for walkers or bikes. If Mercer Metro can extend its service, there will be no charge for bus entry or alighting passengers.

—We will expand the capacity of the existing parking lot from 90 to 120 cars and add a nearby second lot with 164 parking spaces. Inadequacy of existing parking facilities has prompted drivers to park on lawns and to roadways on weekend after weekend in summer.

—We will build a small visitors' center near the new parking facilities and Sullivan Grove. It will house an historical interpretive facility including maps, displays, audio-visual programs and restrooms for

the park visitor. The Washington Crossing Association, a dedicated group of volunteers, has agreed to provide the interpretive displays and programs within the visitor's center.

—Add another picnic area with 90 tables, grills and a comfort station near the existing outdoor theatre.

We are also planning to renovate the refreshment stand at the outdoor theatre.

Washington Crossing State Park is one of the gems of our state park system. We intend to keep it that way.

David J. Bardin
Commissioner
N.J. Dept. of
Environmental Protection

Public Advocate's office and utility rates

An Evening Times editorial on March 24 made some cogent observations regarding the plight of utility users and the unending increase of utility costs.

I would, however, like to clarify some aspects as they pertain to initiatives taken by the Department of the Public Advocate. Most have been reported in your newspaper from time to time, and perhaps they were overlooked in the preparation of this editorial.

The editorial suggested that the Public Advocate and others "should be pushing the PUC to audit with a sharp eye the fuel ad-

justment allowances that add so much to the householder's utility bill." The department's Division of Rate Counsel has been doing just that. The division has been scrutinizing use of the adjustment clause as part of its involvement in individual rate cases including the current Public Service request for \$447 million in rate relief.

The department also has formally challenged use of the adjustment clause in a Superior Court suit against the Redi Flo Corporation, an oil pipeline firm. It is the department's contention that the Public Utilities Commission, in effect, has permit-

ted Redi Flo and other utilities to pass along increased fuel costs to consumers without adequate auditing and public hearings. We have termed the clause as it is permitted to operate in New Jersey "unwise, unnecessary, unworkable and unfair." In the aftermath of the filing of the suit, the PUC moved to form an audit bureau which has as one of its principal aims the monitoring of fuel adjustment increases.

The Department of the Public Advocate's other initiatives include:

— A challenge to the practice of utility advertising costs being passed on to the consumer. The PUC acted favorably on the department's motion to ban advertising that promotes energy consumption.

— Moves to promote adoption by the PUC of a "Lifetime" program which would establish lower rates for consumers who use minimal amounts of gas and electricity.

— Proposals to the PUC that regulations governing utility deposits and discontinuances be liberalized. The rationale here is that the poor, the elderly, the ill, and others who for reasons beyond their control have difficulty in paying, are the ones required to pay deposits and the ones who suffer service cutoffs.

— A proposal that the PUC require gas and electric utilities to add installation of home insulation to its consumer services.

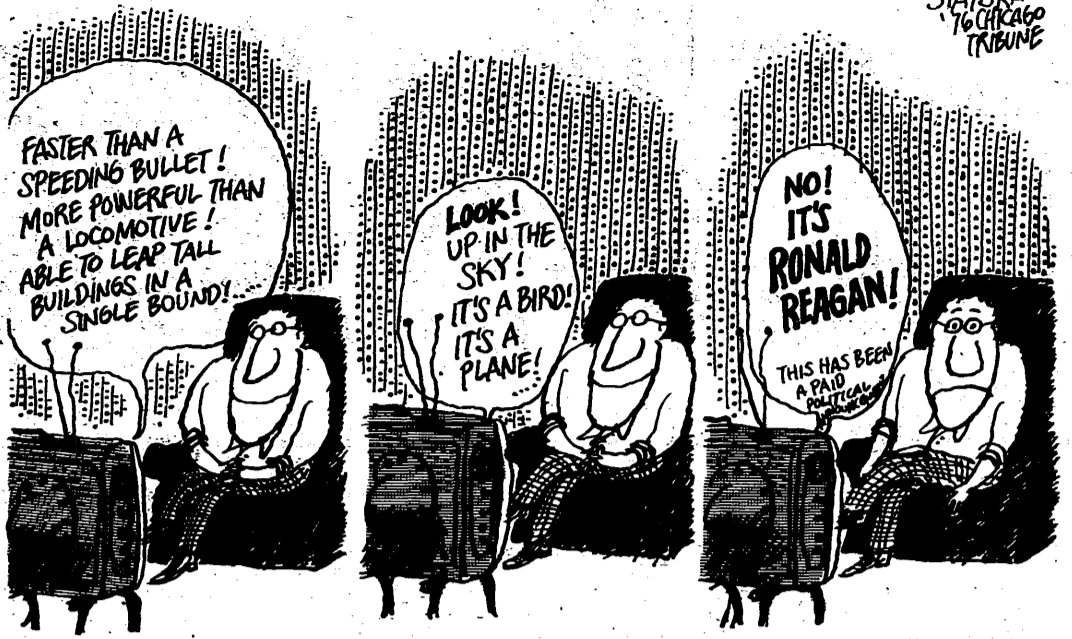
During the present PUC hearings on the unprecedented Public Service rate request, our department intends to examine a number of issues related to energy growth in New Jersey and the underlying assumptions of nuclear power as the cure-all solution for energy needs.

We appreciate the concern expressed in your editorial and also wish to commend you on the series of recent articles on nuclear power. We hope that with a full examination of the complex issues involved an equitable solution can be found to the fast escaping ability of consumers to pay for energy.

Stuart Z. Goldstein
Special Assistant
N.J. Dept. of the Public Advocate

Editor's note

Jill A. White of Mercerville wants it known that, contrary to a letter from Tom Weatherly of Stockton in yesterday's Evening Times, she has never written to the editor about Mr. Weatherly's soul, his "blatant style" or a state income tax. She writes only in behalf of "right to life" and against abortion.



STAYSKAL
TO CHICAGO
TRIBUTE

Opposed to slaughter of seals

This is written in reference to the continued slaughter of baby seals. The sealing industry is still being allowed to bring wholesale destruction to seal herds and to make an enormous profit on high-fashion furs. Once a profit is made from killing these animals, there is great pressure from the sealing industry to continue the slaughter and another bloody war against wildlife will follow. Just a little hope from all of us could save the seals. Brian Davies, director of the International Fund for Animal Welfare, says "The seals are in international waters and are not the property of Canada

or Norway. They belong to nature, not to bandits who plunder our environment for profits. We believe they should be left alone."

Brian Davies and his colleagues are meeting with representatives of Canada and Norway in an attempt to convince them that these hunts should be discontinued. This can be successful only if there is a strong protest from the public.

For more information on the fund, write to: IFAW, P.O. Box 9611-NT, Cleveland, Ohio 44140.

Deborah L. Seker
Hamilton Square

War and inhumanity also anti-life

In your recent Democratic presidential candidate Readers' Poll, Helen Foley said of George Wallace, "He embraces and exemplifies the pro-life philosophy that life itself is the greatest gift."

Is it possible to embrace a pro-life philosophy and be for Wallace at the same time?

Life encompasses every living human being. I agree with Right to Life groups that the pre-born have a right to life and love, but so do all minority groups and so do homosexuals, prostitutes, pimps, criminals, and all the starving masses of the Third World.

Abortion is anti-life, but so is war, capital punishment and any inhuman treatment of another human being. When it comes to life, we can't be selective. We're either for

it or against it. It's no easy task to be a purist, but it's something to strive for.

Margie Fitzgibbon
Trenton

Councilman liked feature on lensman

As a professional photographer myself, I was happy to see your story on the great Harlem photographer James Van DerZee appear in This Week. Not only the personal history and talent of the artist were brought to light, but also the current plight of this octogenarian.

I received the distinct impression that this man had been "ripped off" by the so-called patrons of the arts who placed the man's artistic creations before the man himself. The slick piece of salesmanship that resulted in Van DerZee's turning over his entire collection of photographs and negatives to a non-profit organization left him and his wife living in poverty.

New Jersey should take an affirmative hand in the counseling and protection of older Americans who are involved in the field of fine arts, possibly through the State Museum. With the proper kind of direction and counseling support, many senior artists could avoid the pitfall of Van DerZee and become self supporting, proud and productive members of the community.

Kenneth J. Batko
Councilman-at-large
Trenton

Letters to the editor must have the writer's handwritten signature and street address. Names will be withheld only in exceptional circumstances, for good reason. Short letters are subject to less editing to conserve space.

The Evening Times

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