

A Mother's Testimony

NH Representative Tells Her Daughter's Story

The following guest editorial is excerpted from a speech delivered to the New Hampshire House of Representatives. We found Rep. Mary E. Brown's story so moving that we thought it deserved a wider audience. Mrs. Brown represents Chichester in the House. —Richard Lessner

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What is a fetus? Let's not forget the other party in this debate.

There are many moments in our lives that are so significant that they remain indelibly etched into our memories. I'd like to share such a moment with you.

It was Jan. 1, 1974. The pregnancy had been short and difficult. The baby had to be born, there was no choice, or both of us would die. She was only 24 weeks gestation — five-and-a-half months.

"The baby's chances are zero," the doctor told my husband and me. "It won't be a live birth." But she was kicking and flailing about all through the birth process. I could feel her, as if she was saying "No! No! I don't want to go!"

At that moment all eyes in the room were on her tiny body. The doctor looked surprised as he held, literally in the palm of his hand, the tiniest baby I'd ever seen and she was still kicking and flailing her legs and arms. She was doing something else, too. She was crying at the top of her lungs. Wailing, just like any newborn baby, but you could barely hear her. Her vocal chords were not yet developed.

The doctor looked at my husband and me. "Her chances are slim, and even if she survives, she'll probably be physically and mentally handicapped, blind or worse. Do you want to try and save her or dispose of her?" We both answered simultaneously, "Save her!" The nurses quickly wrapped the tiny infant in a receiving blanket and hurried her to the nursery where she was placed in an isolet.

There are a lot of misconceptions about what a fetus is, what a baby of 20, 22 or 24 weeks is like. Despite the uproar over Roe v. Wade going on at the time, I'd never thought about abortion. But the birth of our daughter forced me to examine this issue. Let me share my insights.

First, did you ever think a fetus in the second trimester felt pain? Did you know they actually cry? Our baby cried at birth. She was in pain and distress and showed it. How small was our daughter? The wrist bracelet used to identify newborns was moved to its smallest notch. It was way too big. So they put it on her ankle. She kept kicking it off! She was too small to nurse. A tube was inserted down her throat into her stomach. The formula was measured in grams. One feeding was equal to half a teaspoon.

I stood over her isolet, feeling helpless. I began to wonder about abortions. Her features were perfectly formed. She had fingernails and toenails, eyes, nose and mouth. When I realized that she was a second trimester fetus and how many like her are aborted each year, I felt sick in the pit of my stomach.

A nurse came over to encourage me. "She's a fighter," she said. "She's going to make it. She wants to live." What a revelation! Did you ever consider that a fetus has a will to live?

I went to the library and got some books on premies. There had to be something I could do to help her win that fight. I found a study done in the 1940s. It wanted to know if it was better to isolate severely premature babies and avoid human contact and risk of infections. The babies without human contact died. The babies who interacted with people had a 20 percent survival rate.

The next day I couldn't wait for the doctor to arrive. I told her what I'd found and she agreed. Nurses showed me how to scrub up and, donning mask and smock, I sat beside our baby's isolet and stroked her face, held her hand and talked to her. I spent as much time as I could with her. When you hear the word "fetus" do you think of something that responds to love and nurturing?

We named our daughter Jessica. Later we found the name means "the Lord's grace." It's a fitting name. Jessica taught us fetuses feel pain. They cry. They are unique individuals with their own personalities. Jessica taught us that fetuses have the will to live. They fight for their lives. They don't want to die. Just like you and me, they want to live. And Jessica taught us that they respond to human contact and love. There's no question about it.

And what happened to Jessica? On Jan. 1, 1974 she made her startling entry into the world, three-and-a-half months ahead of schedule, a little over two pounds.

Last May, Jessica graduated from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Conn., a college that accepts only 5 percent of its applicants based on a formula of academic, athletic and leadership achievement. Obviously, the doctor's prediction did not come to pass. Can you imagine if we had listened to him and discarded her? I can't imagine that. The doctor was wrong.

President Clinton handed Jessica her diploma and commission. Next time the partial birth abortion bill comes to him, I hope he'll stop and think about what a fetus really is. It's a human being.

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The text of Rep. Brown's speech was accompanied by a photograph of President Clinton shaking Jessica's hand at her commissioning. —R.L.

Now She Tells Us

Barbara Zack Quindel, the federal monitor who threw out Ron Carey's election as Teamster President last Friday, says she reached her decision shortly after the start of his strike against United Parcel Service, but withheld it because "I didn't want this to be a factor in the labor-management dispute."

How convenient. It has been clear all along that the strike was principally about Mr. Carey's campaign in the new election that would inevitably be called. Now he can boast a Teamster "victory." That is, he kept the worker's pension funds under management of the union bosses. And he won a pledge to consolidate part-time jobs into 10,000 new full-time jobs, after UPS gets done laying off 15,000 workers because of the expected volume decline as strike-stunned shippers diversify to other carriers. This accomplished, Mr. Carey can play the "tough" card run to offset the image evoked by the name and lineage of his opponent, James P. Hoffa, son of the legendary Teamster leader.

Ms. Quindel, and the Justice Department in charge of representing the U.S. in the 1989 consent decree to clean up the union, have been sitting on mountains of evidence all summer. Immediately after



Ron Carey

Mr. Carey won re-election with 51.5% of the vote last December, the Hoffa

camp challenged the results, citing discrepancies between the vote count and the number of ballots received by mail. In January, they called attention to a document pointing to diversion of funds from the Teamster treasury into Mr. Carey's campaign, and Ms. Quindel held up certifying the election (though not the UPS strike).

By March our Glenn Burkins was reporting that Mr. Carey had returned the \$95,000 contribution in question; that it had originally been approved by Ms. Quindel but that the contributors refused her request to open their financial records. By June Martin Davis, a campaign consultant to Mr. Carey, was arraigned in federal court in New York; Michael Ansara, a party to the scheme, had agreed to plead guilty and cooperate with prosecutors. Further delay by Ms. Quindel in nullifying the election, a Hoffa spokesman charged, "will only go to convince people that she is complicit in a cover-up to protect Ron Carey."

The next week Mr. Carey visited the White House, entering twice on June 9 in the company of AFL-CIO President John Sweeney. A White House spokesman said the discussion was about "fast track," but we editorialized that "something must be up with the Teamsters union." On August 3, Mr. Carey called the UPS strike. On August 18, Labor Secretary Alexis Herman boasted a settlement. UPS said the total cost was not greatly different from its last offer; Mr. Carey said it was a "historic turning point for

working people in this country." On August 22, Ms. Quindel finally blew the whistle on Mr. Carey's election.

The conspiracy detailed in her investigators' report involved contributions to the Carey campaign through Citizen Action, a group professing to represent the public interest, reimbursed by Teamster contributions to the group. Her report did not discuss further allegations, on which a New York grand jury has subpoenaed documents, that another part of this chain was the Democratic National Committee; the union donated some \$2.5 million to various Democratic campaigns in the last election cycle.

Just who, small businessmen whipsawed by the UPS strike may wonder, is Barbara Quindel? Well, she's a Milwaukee labor lawyer with clients including the Milwaukee Teacher's Education Association and the local chapter of the Newspaper Guild. She's quoted in the local press saying things such as "The unions are the only way we can change things." Well, not quite the only way, since she's also a member of the New Party, which succeeded in electing her husband to the Milwaukee Board of Supervisors. The Teamster PAC donated \$5,000 to the New Party this last April, but Ms. Quindel wrote Judge David Edelstein that this would not affect her judgment. Nor, she assured him, would she be influenced by her husband's membership on the board of the local chapter of a group professing to rep-

resent the public interest named Citizen Action.

By the way, the Washington Times reports that Rep. Pete Hoekstra wrote Ms. Quindel to remind her that the Teamster constitution outlaws contributions from employers, which would include Mr. Ansara. It also states, "Violation of this provision shall be grounds for removal from office." While Mr. Carey says he knew nothing of the violations, the election rules specify that "ignorance by a candidate" is not an acceptable defense. Under Ms. Quindel's order Mr. Carey will continue to run the union, pending a new vote within the next 112 days.

So what, one might ask, was the Teamsters strike all about, anyway? It was about giving Mr. Carey time to rescue his career by escalating tensions with big business, in this case represented by an unwitting UPS. It was about policy through legal foot-dragging, already altogether too familiar in this Presidency. It was about celebrating Alexis Herman for settling a strike that a judicious Labor Secretary would have been working to head off as unnecessary and fundamentally illegitimate. It was about keeping Big Labor and its cash in line with the Democrats, and in particular with the year-2000 presidential candidacy of Al Gore.

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The Nation.

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