

DON FEDER

And you thought you knew Middle America

Sen. Sam Nunn — who bears a striking resemblance to Mr. Peepers and makes former Sen. Paul Tsongas seem hot by comparison — is “sex obsessed,” charges Rep. Barney Frank. In Washington, where self-awareness is a rare commodity, chutzpah knows no bounds.

The accusation of erotic infatuation was in response to the senator's refusal to accede to the congressman's so-called compromise on homosexuals in the military. At this juncture, it's obvious to everyone beyond Roberta Achtenberg's inner circle that the Clinton proposal is doomed.

Now comes the Massachusetts congressman with a three-quarters-way measure: Let homosexuals be open about their proclivities on their own time, so long as they don't flaunt it while in uniform.

No compromise this, but a strategic victory. It would permit military personnel to indulge in the bizarre behavior that characterized the recent gay rights march on Washington — including cross-dressing and simulated sadomasochism — on weekends, so long as their boots were spit-polished on weekdays.

That would thoroughly defeat the purpose of the current ban, favored by overwhelming majorities of both service personnel and civilians, who object to the integration of avowed homosexuals in the military and the resulting disruption and decline of discipline.

Mr. Nunn noted that Mr. Frank's proposal for off-duty openness would have the same disastrous effects as the military's tolerance of private drug use in the early '70s.

Don Feder is a nationally syndicated columnist.

Anyone who would equate “consensual sex” with drug abuse is clearly “obsessive,” the congressman fumed.

Actually, it's an apt analogy. Like drug use, illicit sex can be addictive. In the past decade, more than 150,000 have succumbed to AIDS, probably exceeding the number who've died of drug abuse.

Sodomy is as much a health hazard as intravenous drug use; witness the fact that 55 percent to 60 percent of all AIDS cases and half of all cases of syphilis and gonorrhea are confined to 1 percent of the population.

Clearly, Mr. Nunn — the father of two, who's been married to the same woman for the past 28 years — is sex-obsessed, unlike the Bay State congressman, who takes a rather casual attitude toward matters corporate.

Barely three years have passed since Mr. Frank was reprimanded by his colleagues for conduct unbecoming an honorable gentleman. By his own admission, the congressman paid for sex with a male prostitute in 1985, moved the same Stephen Gobie into his Washington apartment, employed him as a housekeeper and driver, and interceded on the hooker's behalf with Gobie's parole board.

Gobie ran a prostitution service from the congressman's pad, allegedly with the latter's acquiescence, though Mr. Frank vehemently denied complicity. Either way, after playing the hormone-driven Henry Higgins for years (he said he was trying to reform Gobie), the congressman now claims it's Mr. Nunn who has a fixation on flesh.

Here is the left's favorite defense mechanism in operation. Their sexual agenda is constantly in our faces: condom distribution in the schools,



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tax-funded abortion, lifestyle indoctrination and sex-saturation in the entertainment media.

Homosexual activists are especially energetic and creative in this regard: Pushing AIDS-funding out

of all proportion to numbers afflicted, homosexual rights, domestic partners legislation, homosexual studies at the college level, efforts to “incorporate gays into all areas of the curriculum” in public schools (urged by Massachusetts Gov. Bill Weld's gay youth commission), a culture increasingly preoccupied with the perverse and homosexuals in the armed forces.

Yet when Middle America objects to any of this, on moral or practical grounds, the cry goes up: We are sex-crazed, fixated on homosexuality with the single-minded intensity of McCarthyites on a subversive search-and-destroy mission.

In reality, most of us wish for no more than to be left in peace. Involvement with the question is at the very least aggravating if not intimidating. Who relishes being compared to Heinrich Himmler? We long for a magic wand, a wave of which would make the whole issue evaporate into nothingness.

Then again, if “sex obsessed” means taking sex seriously, perhaps we could all do with a bit more of this particular obsession. Those who think the effects of sexuality stop at the bedroom door are terribly naive. The consequences, which permeate our society, include burgeoning rates of out-of-wedlock births, divorce, rape and other sex crimes, venereal diseases, and adolescent promiscuity.

Mr. Frank wonders if perhaps Mr. Nunn seeks the appointment of a national sex czar. (“We have a national drug czar because drugs are such an issue.”) Given the erotic ebullience of some of our national leaders — from Bob Packwood to Barney himself — a single sex czar might not be enough.