

Shriners take the cake

I was going to write about Sudan today, but there's too much of a rumpus going on here at home to think about overseas.

First, the Shriners. Now I know how Romans felt when their city was put to the sack by Alaric and his Visigoths. Of all the ludicrous, tawdry and grotesque events on this globe, the Shriners' annual jamboree takes the cake.

Who let all these tubby, befezzed hayseeds from Oshkosh and Paducah turn Toronto into a three-ring circus and traffic nightmare? Are we really so hard up that we have to prostitute our streets this way? And isn't it about time that someone told the Shriners that their Hollywood Araby getups and use of Islamic religious symbols are anti-Semitic and deeply offensive to Moslems? Think about it.

How would people react if the Shriners dressed up as Jews, instead of Arabs, and paraded around with yarmulkes and stars of David on black, furred hats?

Next, there's the intolerable din over abortion. I find the whole matter excruciatingly boring. Both sides are right—in fact, the whole fiery dispute reminds me of the Arab-Israeli conflict. I'm certainly happy I don't have to make the abortion laws.

On the whole, though, I think abortion up to a certain time limit should be legal and that the state has no business telling women what to do with their bodies. And I also think that if men can be held legally responsible for paternity, then they also should have the legal right to veto an abortion.

Such questions have been discussed to death and the arguments will continue to rage on. The most

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important aspect of abortion, however, has not been discussed at all.

So far, the debate has raged on the personal, individual level. But how does abortion affect the health, national security and future of the state? The answer, at least for the first world, is: Badly. Many industrialized nations are already showing the effects of easy abortion and widespread use of birth control. People are having less and less children so that old people will soon outnumber the young.

These demographic statistics come to life when you look at recent events in Switzerland and West Germany. Little Switzerland has Western Europe's largest army. It can field more than 730,000 soldiers three days after mobilization orders are given. Because of the falling birth rate and the decline in what military analysts call the draft age pool, the Swiss are reducing their army by 100,000 men.

West Germany, the cornerstone of NATO, is also facing drastic shortfalls in draft-age youth. Bonn is planning to reduce its standing forces by up to 100,000 over the coming years. There will simply not be enough young men to fill out the ranks.

The Low Countries, and France are experiencing similar, if less acute problems. In the Soviet Union, where abortion is the most common form of birth control, the problem is even worse. There are already severe labor shortages in the USSR.

As the draft-age pool declines sharply, Soviet projections show that the Red Army will be unable to fill its ranks within a few more years. With ethnic Russians, that is, who are already a minority in the USSR. Under the present conscription system, in another five years, 55% of the Red Army's ground force troops will be Moslems from Soviet Central Asia.

This will make the USSR the world's leading Moslem military power and Gorbachev will be able to lay rightful claim to the title of Caliph of Islam.

While the birth rate drops perilously in developed nations, it's soaring in the Third World. Right now, 50% of the population in Africa, Latin America and parts of Asia is under 18 years old. How are dirt-poor regimes going to deal with this onrushing demographic tidal wave when today there's not enough land, water, fuel, food or work for the present population? Draconian birth control, like China's one-child policy, will have to be enforced.

Here in the West, the people who should be having children—the smartest, best educated and most well off—are not. Those whose offspring are least desirable from a national point of view—the chronic poor, inbred and genetically disintegrating inner-city groups—are reproducing at Third World rates. Abortion debaters ought to start thinking about these problems.



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