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REGISTRO
NR. 92/28572
A: 03 DIC 92

Dear President Azocar

November 29, 1992

ARCHIVO
This Wall Street Journal article called "Hard-Line Feminists Guilty of Ms.-Representation" from last year is about how the feminists who control the "Women's Studies" departments in our universities are in fact using these classes to poison the relationship between young men and women. This article is over a year old yet nothing has been done to stop this crime. America aspires to be the leader of the world's industrial nations but does a country which ignores the poisoning of its youth really have any right to consider itself worthy of any kind of leadership?

I recently read a book called "The Emptying God" which was about east-west religious dialogue. It was a discussion of ideas between Masao Abe (he's a Japanese scholar and a leading spokesman for the Kyoto School of Philosophy) and various American theologians. One of the Americans was a feminist who presented her views on "feminist theology" and also criticized Masao Abe's ideas. His response is interesting. Basically he says that she simply doesn't understand religion which means that her feminist theology really has nothing to do with religion. He also pointed out that the more radical feminist project is "the reconstruction of the very notion of self." Since radical feminism is the driving and agenda setting force behind feminism this means that the feminist agenda is in effect the restructuring of human nature. Nazism and Communism were the names Europe gave to the attempt to redesign human nature. In America this same attempt is called multiculturalism and feminism.

This feminist who debated Masao Abe had no business being in the book. There is no such thing as feminist theology which is why he said "As Keller detected, I had 'not even the faintest feminist concern' in my essay." That's a polite way telling her he considers it nonsense so why should it concern him? Women who speak of such things are simply extremely neurotic women who live in a fantasy world where women are brutally oppressed by ruthless men. They lack the intelligence to pick up any genuine spiritual insights from men like Masao Abe which could help them see beyond their severe emotional problems so all they have are these weird creations from their warped minds such as "feminist theology." This tragedy is reinforced by theologians (quite unlike Abe) who pander to them and treat them as though they really are knowledgeable. This tragedy is then immensely compounded by an education system which specifically chooses such women to be teachers in our universities.

America poisons its young in many ways though. Afrocentrism, multiculturalism, feminism and egalitarianism (emphasis on equality rather than education) are all allowed to flourish within our education system. This is a society which actively discourages religion and actively promotes homosexuality. Under the sacred banner of "the separation of church and state" religion is continuously marginalized and trivialized. For the sake of maintaining the separation of church and state it's considered acceptable to remove a cross from a municipal seal even though it had been there for decades and of course any mention of religion in our schools is strictly forbidden. Yet things like feminism are welcome and, increasingly, we even have homosexuality being promoted to elementary school children as a perfectly natural and healthy lifestyle.

There are many reasons why I've lost faith in America but the main reason is because of all the sickening depravity allowed, and even encouraged, to flourish in our schools. I believe it's a great crime to do such things to children and young adults. How a once great nation could have sunk so low just in the span of my lifetime (I'm 42) is something I often wonder about.

Sincerely, *Michael Flanagan*
Michael Flanagan
3629 N. Christiana
Chicago, IL 60618 USA

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In the late 20th century, it is not just farmers who are threatened, but also industrial workers. Farmers could suffer from declining commodity prices as world

FROM 20 PERCENT ... yields rose from 7% to 9%. By the mid-1990s, the new capital demands of Latin America, East Asia, China and the old Soviet bloc are likely to be equal to at least

and Africa saving rates have averaged less than 20% because of inflation rates and tax policies that destroyed the value of financial assets. The Asian countries, by con-

... THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1971.

Mr. Hale is chief economist of Kemper Financial Cos. in Chicago.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Hard-Line Feminists Guilty of Ms.-Representation

Nov. 7, 1991

By CHRISTINA SOMMERS

During the hearings, feminist Barbara Ehrenreich predicted that a Clarence Thomas confirmation to the Supreme Court would incite thousands of women to rush to the streets, get into their cars and converge on Washington. Yet at no stage in the Hill-Thomas affair did the polls show significant differences in the way men and women were reacting. And when Judge Thomas was confirmed, less than a hundred demonstrators marched in protest.

The plain truth is: The feminist leaders have no troops. While the gender gap proved to be a feminist myth, the gap dividing the feminists from the women they claim to speak for is no myth and is worth pondering.

Most American women are moderate feminists; they want for women what they believe is everyone's right: fair treatment, economic justice, equality of opportunity. Gender feminists, the feminists who grab the headlines and the TV time, are much more radical. They believe that women are an oppressed class within a patriarchal "sex/gender system" that keeps women in thrall to men. Looking at society and culture through sex/gender lenses is "intellectually gripping," says Virginia Held of the City University of New York. "Now that the sex/gender system has become visible to us, we can see it everywhere."

Quite generally, the gender feminist's experience of the world may be compared to what naturalist Anton van Leeuwenhoek experienced when, for the first time, he looked through a microscope at a drop of water and saw a predatory jungle. The gender feminist sees rape, harassment and male pathology where no one else does.

Catharine MacKinnon—the most visible and prominent among the feminist profes-

sors—was featured with Tom Brokaw, Ted Koppel, Jim Lehrer and Phil Donahue on various programs during the hearings. She spoke of a national teach-in, seeing in the event an unprecedented opportunity for feminists to promote their viewpoint. And indeed it was (though the feminists' underlying philosophy was never explored).

This sort of teach-in has been going on for years in the academy. Here is what Susan McClary, a musicologist at the University of Minnesota, tells us to listen for in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony:

"The point of recapitulation in the first movement of the Ninth is one of the most horrifying moments in music, as the carefully prepared cadence is frustrated, damping up energy which finally explodes in the throttling murderous rage of a rapist incapable of attaining release."

Ms. McClary also directs us to be alert to themes of male masturbation in the music of Richard Strauss and Gustave Mahler.

In many feminist classrooms, young women are shown fashion photographs from Vogue and Elle and taught how to view them as misogynist "texts." A photo of a beautiful model in a red sweater with a high collar becomes a scene of strangulation or decapitation. A model wearing aviator spectacles is said to be "blinded." Bracelets denote slavery.

The dissident feminist scholar Camille Paglia has been virtually alone in condemning gender feminist academics for their perverse prudishness. When Ms. Paglia points out that it is immoral to teach young people to be fearful and suspicious of beauty, pleasure and sensuality, The Women's Review of Books denounces her for being in the vanguard of "patriarchy's counter-assault on feminism."

Scientists are not normally thought of as violent. In gender feminist eyes, how-

ever, man's desire to understand nature and "penetrate" her secrets is essentially a demand for her sexual submission. As the University of Delaware's Sandra Harding, a leading feminist critic of science, explains: "If we put it in the most blatant feminist terms used today, we'd talk about marital rape, the husband as scientist forcing nature to his wishes."

Ms. MacKinnon, a professor of law at the University of Michigan, is a matron saint of gender feminism. Just a week before she presided over the national teach-in, her picture was on the cover of the New York Times Magazine. The author of the Times article quoted philosopher Richard Rorty as saying that Prof. MacKinnon is as original and important a thinker as John Dewey and as inspirational as Walt Whitman. Here are some of Prof. MacKinnon's insights:

"I think that what women are conditioned socially to experience as love is a form of annihilation of self. . . ."

"Feminism stresses the indistinguishability of prostitution, marriage and sexual harassment."

"Compare victims reports of rape with women's reports of sex. They look a lot alike. . . . In this light the major distinction between intercourse (normal) and rape (abnormal) is that the normal happens so often that one cannot see anything wrong with it."

Common to these passages is the belief sexual harassment is only the tip of the patriarchal iceberg: Female subjugation and humiliation are endemic features of male/female relationships. This doctrine appears in all of Ms. MacKinnon's extensive writings on sexuality. But it was never explicitly presented to the viewing public during her Thomas-hearing appearances.

The media come off very badly here. Their attitude to all the gender feminist

"experts" was one of cowed and unrelieved deference. Ms. MacKinnon's basic views and attitudes weren't discussed, let alone challenged. I remembered how refreshing it was just two weeks earlier to hear Barbara Walters calling Naomi Wolf's thesis that fashion degrades professional women "a crock." I longed for someone—anyone—to say something like that to Ms. MacKinnon.

Americans need to be delivered from the professionally indignant, doctrinaire and divisive gender monitors who claim to speak for women. These feminists are very visible, very vocal, very controlling. We have just seen them transform the American living room into a feminist classroom. And the public heard Alan Cranston citing Catharine MacKinnon on the floor of the Senate just before he cast his vote against Clarence Thomas.

The effects of the gender feminist teach-in will be mainly harmful. By encouraging vigilant oversight of casual banter in the workplace, the gender feminists have muddied the waters and made it harder to deal with the kind of bullying of female employees that legitimately counts as actionable sexual harassment.

Moreover, this harm is only part of a larger and grimmer picture that is only now coming into focus. The feminist philosophy that encourages people to treat the personal as the political is socially blighting. Male-female relationships, fragile in the best of times, are being confounded and paralyzed by politicization.

The Senate may be predominantly male, but at least it was elected. The gender feminists are self-appointed. As long as they remain unchallenged, the representation gap will persist.

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How to Attract Good People

 ORBIS/ISBN 0-88344-670-7

Masao Abe is widely acknowledged as a leader in the worldwide dialogue on Buddhism. A profound scholar of Buddhism and of Christian theology, his critical and constructive reflections culminate in the seminal essay which is the cornerstone of this volume. Seven eminent scholars respond to the challenge of Abe's construal of "Kenotic God and Dynamic Sunyata." Abe demonstrates powerfully the dynamism of the Buddhist appreciation of the divine Emptiness at the heart of Being. His essay suggests how the doctrine of *sunyata* can provide a needed corrective to the reified understanding of God prominent in Jewish and Christian traditions. Abe opens the way for new and deeper engagement of these traditions with the wisdom of Buddhism.

Leading Christian and Jewish theologians—Thomas J.J. Altizer, Eugene Borowitz, John B. Cobb, Jr., Catherine Keller, Schubert M. Ogden, Jürgen Moltmann, and David Tracy—respond to Abe's challenge. From perspectives as diverse as American feminism, post-Holocaust Judaism, process thought, and hermeneutics, they reply to Abe's proposals for considering God to be intrinsically self-emptying. Abe responds to these essays in a conclusion. Provocative and illuminating, *The Emptying God* shows how interfaith dialogue, at its very best, provides materials for the mutual transformation of all traditions.

"An extremely important new contribution. . . . Everyone interested in this dialogue will want to study Masao Abe's unfolding of the basic Buddhist concept of *sunyata* and its relation to the concept of God, and the various responses which follow."
—John Hick

"This book is an event by taking seriously the Buddhist, Christian, and Jewish traditions at the same time. Professor Abe's work, deeply rooted in the Zen philosophy and at the same time open for dialogue, is a real challenge for Jewish-Christian thinking. The responses in this book are not a last word, but a first attempt to dialogue. . . ."
—Hans Küng

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Cover design: Patricia F. Curran
Also available in cloth: 0-88344-671-5

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To a Buddhist, in any moment of the beginningless and endless process of history, to move forward toward the future is nothing but to return to the source of time and history, and to return to the source of time and history is to move forward toward the future.

Accordingly, I do not agree with Altizer when he states that "the pure simultaneity of Buddhist time is a purely negative simultaneity . . . because rather than conjoining present, past, and future, it knows a pure and empty time with no possible concrete temporal dimension or dimensions."

Toward the end of his response, referring to Buddhist emptiness and the crucifixion of God, Altizer writes:

Christian theology itself will inevitably be partial and incomplete if it fails to realize for itself a Buddhist ground, and a Buddhist ground that is not only inseparable from a Christian ground, but a Buddhist ground that in this perspective will inevitably be known as a Christian ground. The Kyoto School discovered a Christianity that it could know as a Buddhist ground, and discovered it by way of the Christian symbol of the death or kenosis of God, a symbol it was able to understand as a symbol of an absolute and total self-emptying (p. 77).

This is a very important and insightful suggestion, with encouraging potential for future Buddhist-Christian dialogue.

FEMINIST CRITIQUE AND A BUDDHIST RESPONSE

I find Catherine Keller's response quite discerning and provocative. Her feminist criticism is a serious challenge to Buddhism in general and to me in particular. As Keller detected, I had "not even the faintest feminist concern" in my essay, although I tried to avoid gender-specific language as much as possible, deeming what I wrote to be relevant to all people, male and female. Keller's basic criticism of the present Buddhist-Christian dialogue is that it neglects "the most obvious common denominator of these two world religions: their patriarchalism." Upon this basic criticism Keller develops her discussion.

First, she asserts the need "to ask whether the kenosis doctrine as Abe interprets it helps or hinders the prophetic purposes of women." With regard to this question Keller writes:

If Sunyata must be understood as a state of absolute selflessness, Abe's move will tend to reinforce the more patriarchal implications of the kenotic Christ idea. But inasmuch as his strategy serves to underscore the panrelational interdependence in the universe, then the implicit iconoclasm of dynamic Sunyata can support a feminist revision of kenosis (p. 104).

Later she argues that my "interpretation of the kenosis passage in Philippians brings us (inadvertently) to the very heart of women's disenchantment with traditional religious categories, but also of our hope for certain radical revisions" (p. 105).

Insofar as the political aspect of religion is concerned, we must recognize how the move to Sunyata might tend to reinforce the more patriarchal implications of traditional religion. But if we grasp the emphasis on Sunyata or kenosis existentially from within, the move to it, as Keller indicates, will open up "the panrelational interdependence in the universe." We must clearly discern these two aspects—the aspect of politics and that of inner existential realization—and their interrelationship. They correspond to what I discussed earlier as the horizontal, socio-historical dimension and the vertical, eternal-religious dimension. We must be aware that we are always standing at the intersection of these two dimensions. Yet most religious thinkers (up to this point in history usually male), including myself, have emphasized the ideal of selflessness in the vertical religious dimension, while failing to recognize its negative effect of reinforcing the oppression of women in the horizontal, socio-historical dimension. Now, however, feminist theologians are pointing out this negative political aspect and attacking the patriarchal approach as the source of the oppression of women. It is urgently necessary for us to eradicate this negative effect of the teaching of selflessness.

This should not, however, lead to an undermining of the ideal of selflessness. Rather, while correcting the negative effect of reinforcing the oppression of women in the political dimension, we should maintain the ideals of self-emptying and selflessness in the religious dimension. In taking this approach, we must fully realize the paradoxical inseparability of the two dimensions and work dynamically at their intersection.

Accordingly, although I understand the sentiment and background of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's words, "Self-development is a higher duty than self-sacrifice," I cannot completely agree with them, for the issue is not that of whether self-development or self-sacrifice is more important, but that of how we can confront the conflict between self-development and self-sacrifice and break beyond this dilemma to open up a deeper spiritual horizon in which self-sacrifice in a religious sense is self-development. The crucial issue in this regard is how to grasp one's own self, how to understand the problem of the self.

For this reason, I greatly appreciate Keller's statement: "Often one hears 'women need to have a self before they can sacrifice it.' Yet this sentiment falls short of what I take the more radical feminist project to be: the reconstruction of the very notion of self" (p. 106).

A new norm of selfhood calls for the transformation of women's profound relational sensitivity and affective vitality into an acknowledged strength. Thus Keller states:

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We will not be able to return now or—I hope—in the foreseeable future, to embrace any ideals of self-sacrifice, self-denial, and selflessness that have not first thoroughly struggled with the concrete contexts in which selfhood is *engendered* [p. 106].

Here I see that Keller is well aware of the conflict between self-denial and self-development, and is trying to go beyond the conflict. Immediately after the above statement, however, when Keller raises the following questions, I wonder if she perhaps misses the most crucial point:

In this way I fear that Masao Abe's coupling of Christian self-sacrifice with Buddhist *anatta* attenuates the problem. Will the Christian-Buddhist dialogue offer the worst of both worlds to women? How can the two patriarchies, with their common problem of the inflationary male ego and their common solution of selflessness, fail to redouble the oppressive irrelevance of the "world religions" for the liberation of women? Or indeed of any persons already suffering from their internalization of the role of the victim? (p. 106).

In her discussion I perceive the same sort of confusion evident in the discussion of Ogden and Cobb—that is, a confusion of the horizontal, socio-historical dimension as the "condition" with the vertical, religious dimension as the "ground." And I perceive a serious misunderstanding of the Buddhist notion of *anatta* or no-self. *

1. Keller apparently regards the Buddhist notion of *anatta* (together with the Christian notion of self-sacrifice) as the main cause of the oppression of women and a main hindrance to the liberation of women. Of course, her discussion connects with a larger criticism of historical Buddhism (and Christianity) as reinforcing the subordination of women to men, and I do not deny this as a historical fact. In criticizing this subordination, however, Keller seems to take Buddhism (or Christianity) merely as a historical phenomenon in the horizontal socio-historical dimension without paying due attention to its eternal, religious aspect in the vertical dimension. * Even when she mentions the Buddhist metaphysics of selflessness and relational interdependency, she apparently does not take it as the *ground* or *source* of human existence, which is essentially different from a historical event, which is the *condition* or *occasion*. Although it is an urgent task for us to eradicate the subordination of women as a possible negative effect of the Buddhist ideal of selflessness, this cannot become the *ground* or *source* of the liberation of women, for it is a historical event that is no more than the condition or occasion. In order to bring about the liberation of women in the horizontal, socio-historical dimension, we must appropriate its ground or source in the vertical, religious dimension, for the *real* ground or source of this liberation cannot be found merely within the socio-historical dimension. We must turn from the human-human relationship to

the divine-human relationship—that is, from the socio-historical dimension to the religious dimension.

Yet as I have emphasized repeatedly, although these two dimensions are essentially different from one another, they are, in living reality, inseparable. They are dialectically identical at their intersection, where we are living from moment to moment. The *real* ground of the *true* liberation of women cannot be realized merely in the secular, socio-historical dimension apart from the eternal, religious dimension, yet it can be realized there insofar as each point in the socio-historical dimension is grasped as an intersection of the two dimensions. The religious dimension as the ground is opened up only in and through a historical event as a condition. And we must go beyond the socio-historical dimension to the eternal religious dimension to find the *real* ground of liberation, for the socio-historical dimensions is no more than a condition or occasion.

* I do not see in Keller's discussion a clear realization of this dynamism between "that which is the condition or occasion" and "that which is the ground or source," between the socio-historical dimension and the religious dimension. Rather, I fear that these two dimensions are confused in her discussion and that everything is understood in the socio-historical dimension.

2. In order to properly understand the dialectical relationship between the horizontal, socio-historical dimension and the vertical, religious dimension, we must accurately understand the Buddhist notion of *anatta* or selflessness.

The Buddhist notion of *anatta* or "no-self" does not indicate a mere negation of the self or the absence of any self whatsoever. It is true that Buddhism negates the ego-self as the cause of human ignorance and suffering because the self-centered ego-self substantializes itself and discriminates others from itself. In order to realize equality without discrimination and the interrelatedness of all things, we must realize *anatta* by negating the ego-self. *Anatta* as a negation of the ego-self is still not free from discrimination, however, for it stands opposed to and thus discriminated from the ego-self. In order to attain true, nondiscriminative equality with others, even *anatta* must be negated. In this negation we realize true *anatta*, which is neither ego-self nor no-self and hence is both ego-self and no-self. It is the self freed from both attachment to the ego-self and attachment to nihilistic notions of no-self. This real *anatta* is the true self, which is the basis of equality and interrelatedness with others. Accordingly, in the awakening to the true self, the realization of one's own distinctiveness and the realization of the interrelatedness of all things are dynamically linked together. The dynamism at the intersection of the horizontal and vertical dimensions of human existence is realized in this awakening to the true self.

Next, concerning the "underlying metaphysical tension" between feminism and Buddhism, Keller states that she finds affinity with the Buddhist

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ontology, but “whereas for Buddhism this interdependency (*pratitya-samutpada*) functions as a radically deconstructive analysis, for feminism it functions as our most radically constructive vision.” In what sense does the Buddhist notion of interdependency function as a radically deconstructive analysis? Keller claims:

Buddhism uses the analysis of interpenetration to stress the unreality of any kind of individual existent. To affirm the self, precisely as awakened to its “suchness and interpenetration,” is impossible. For Buddhism this is just where we must extinguish the rhetoric of self. Is this just a semantic difference? Or is there not rather a fundamental move in Buddhism, including Abe’s variety, toward the obliteration of all differentiation from the perspective of the absolute—that is, the realization of Sunyata? (p. 108).

Here again, I encounter both a confusion of the socio-historical dimension and the religious dimension, and a lack of any dialectical understanding of the two dimensions. As I stated earlier in this rejoinder, Buddhism never asserts that distinctions are unreal or delusory in the socio-historical dimension, for if they were unreal or delusory this world would be chaotic and the interdependency of everything would be inconceivable. Indeed, how would *interdependence* be possible if everything had no *independent, distinctive* existence? Buddhism insists that we should not take this distinctiveness or differentiation of everything as something fixed, substantial, and enduring, for when we substantialize the distinctiveness of everything we create opposition and struggle—that is, human suffering.

In order to overcome suffering we must shift from the socio-historical dimension to the religious dimension in which the nonsubstantiality of everything is clearly realized. This means that “the unreality of any kind of individual existent” (Keller’s words) is realized in Buddhism in the religious dimension, not in the socio-historical dimension. Further, once we awaken to the nonsubstantiality or emptiness of everything in the religious dimension, the distinctiveness and differentiation of everything in the socio-historical dimension is *regrasped* just as it is, for the religious dimension is the ground or source of the socio-historical dimension, which is the condition or occasion. The Buddhist notion of interdependency or dependent co-origination is realized on this basis as a way of emancipation from human suffering. This is my answer to Keller’s question: “Is there not rather a fundamental move in Buddhism, including Abe’s variety, toward the obliteration of all differentiation from the perspective of the absolute—that is, the realization of Sunyata?” (p. 108).

In her conclusion Keller mentions seven ways in which the Buddhist-Christian dialogue and my contribution to it may enhance the feminist project. Due to space restrictions, let me comment only on number five.

After emphasizing Buddhist meditative praxis as essential to enlightenment, Keller states:

We may affirm a dynamic process of enlightening rather than a final, qualitatively removed product. Would not an evolving process of coming to wisdom and compassion, always exercising the "vow and act," best coordinate with Abe's dynamic Sunyata? (p. 113).

I agree with Keller that an evolving process of coming to wisdom and compassion coordinates with dynamic Sunyata. At the same time, however, we must realize that this evolving process is beginningless and endless, for it is always taking place in dynamic—not static—Sunyata. When at this moment we realize the beginninglessness and endlessness of the evolving process, the whole beginningless and endless process is concentrated in this moment. Otherwise stated, *this moment* embraces the whole evolving process within itself by virtue of the clear realization of the beginninglessness and endlessness of the process. This moment thus becomes a new starting point toward the endless end while it also has meaning as the end of the process stretching from the beginningless beginning to this moment.

Our Buddhist-Christian dialogue is also beginningless and endless. With a clear realization of the beginninglessness and endlessness of our dialogue we find ourselves at a new starting point for dialogue—not only at this moment, but also at each and every moment. In this way we are in an evolving process and yet always in the dynamic Sunyata-kenosis that is our home.

Never leaving home:
right on the way.
Having left home:
not on the way.⁵

NOTES

1. Christopher A. Ives, "A Zen Buddhist Social Ethic," unpublished, p. 258.
2. Paul Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 67.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
4. Masao Abe, *Zen and Western Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1985), p. 183.
5. From the *Rinzai-roku (Lin-chi lu)*. This translation is taken from *A Zen Forest: Sayings of Masters*, translated with an introduction by Soika Shigematsu (New York, Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1981), p. 63.

'War' Pits Parents Vs. Public Policy

How did you learn about sex and when did you learn it?

Adults who came of age in the 1950s describe a patchwork of information that includes "Little Books" or "Hot Books," with cartoon characters like Dick Tracy chasing and catching more than crooks. Or sexy novels read late at night, hidden under the sheets with a flashlight.

Condoms were something furtively glimpsed in a father's bureau drawer, hidden beneath the underwear and handkerchiefs or in an older brother's wallet, where they were carried mostly for showing off. The condoms disintegrated unused from the rigors of perspiration and age.

Most teenagers were chaste, whether they liked it or not. "Going all the way" was the most powerfully forced sexual taboo.

But that was then and this is now.

Today, many schools give out condoms whether parents want their children to receive them or not. Parents are shocked to listen to kindergartens talk about AIDS and abortion.

A popular sex instructional program for junior high school students, aged 13 and 14, shows film strips of four naked couples, two homosexual and two heterosexual, performing a variety of sexually explicit acts, and teachers are warned with a cautionary note from the sex educators not to show the materials to parents or friends: "Many of the materials of this program shown to people outside the context of the program itself can evoke misunderstanding and difficulties." They're right about that.

When parents complained about the specific content of a seventh-grade sex education program in Westport, Conn., they were publicly ridiculed and attacked as "fundamentalists" and "right-wing extremists" even though they were upscale Episcopalians, demonstrating not extremism but a reasonable parental skepticism.

This is what the so-called "cultural war" is all

about, a conflict between parental authority and public policy. Who carries the message about sex, what is the precise content of that message and what is it meant to accomplish?

These are not academic questions. While the initial goals of sex education may have been to prevent AIDS and unwanted pregnancies, it's difficult to see how some of the educational materials do anything but intensify those very feelings they want to dampen.

One popular book used in New York City sex education classes encourages tolerance for bestiality and sadomasochism. Others describe anal and oral sex in graphic detail. Such information arouses young libidos even as it trivializes sexual mystery. It also gives the imprimatur of approval from the schools making it considerably more difficult for young girls to say "no," leaving them little to rebel against.

A 1990 study of Massachusetts adolescents who were sexually active reported 31 percent always used condoms; 32 percent used them sometimes, and 37 percent never used them. Sexually transmitted diseases and unwed teenage pregnancies are on the rise despite more sex education courses and free condom distribution.

Sexual attitudes of children are ultimately a reflection of adult attitudes and that of the society in which they live. Parents want their children to develop healthy psychological attitudes toward sex while protecting them from the actual experience until they are mature.

"Promiscuous sex is death," Barbara Bush told talkmeister Larry King. "We ought to be telling these wonderful young women there's a great deal of life out there for you if you finish school, if you get a job, and then you have a family. But you shouldn't be having promiscuous sex. It just ruins your life."

Sad, but true. And her diagnosis of what's wrong with the message of the culture is true, too, and very sad.



Suzanne Fields

CHICAGO Sun-Times Oct. 17, 1992

...spokesman Williams Davis said Williams apparently was trying to avoid police sweeps of Cabrini-Green.

CROSSING OFF IMAGE: A sculptor sanded a cross from Rolling Meadows' concrete municipal seal, culminating a five-year legal battle over the separation of church and state. A federal court ordered the removal of the religious image, and the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the town's appeal earlier this year. Sculptor Adrian Ionita spent two hours on the job Friday, using a chisel, an electric saw and a sander to remove a picture of a cross and a church. One quadrant of the seal now is blank. The seal is located at the 20-foot base of a flagpole outside the suburb's city hall.

CHICAGO Sun-Times Oct. 17, 1992