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Poor women losers in abortion ruling

By SHIRLEE IDEN

Congressman William Brodhead said the compromise on federal abortion aid by the Congress this week was no victory for pro-abortion forces.

In a Southfield interview on Thursday, Brodhead said the only progress indicated by the compromise is that employees of the Health, Education and Welfare Department will now be paid.

Abortion aid to Medicaid patients had been linked to an appropriations bill for HEW as an amendment. Wednesday's compromise came after five months of stormy debate and deadlock with the Senate holding out for a more liberal bill and the House standing firm against abortion aid except in very strict circumstances.

Under the compromise legislation, Medicaid abortions will now be permitted when the mother's life would be endangered if the fetus were carried to term; there has been incest or rape, promptly reported to a law enforcement or public health agency; or if two physicians determine that severe and long-lasting physical health damage to the mother would result if the pregnancy were carried to term.

Women seeking abortions for psychological or socio-economic reasons would be excluded from federal aid. Authorities estimate these represent about two thirds of the women who had abortions with federal aid in 1976.

VICTIMS of statutory rape would be eligible for Medicaid abortions but in instances where the fetus is deformed, which was reason for 5000 abortions in 1976, it would be denied.

The rights of poor women have all but been eliminated," Brodhead said. "Any chance of poor women getting aid for an abortion is gone."

"Unfortunately, there's a genuine deep-seated difference of opinion about abortion among our citizens. What we should be talking about is: are abortions right or wrong?"

Brodhead explained the Supreme Court declared in 1974 that abortions are legal and that's the law of the land. "Now Congress is saying that abortion is wrong for poor people, and this gets around the issue of whether abortion is right or wrong."

"It's a legal right but not available to the poor," Brodhead predicted the abortion problem alone might be enough to kill any potential for a national health bill. "Abortion is something that divides people," he said.

"I have two young friends in Congress, both freshmen in the House, David Bonior and Dale Kil-dee," he said. "Both are quite liberal but they grew up in Catholic areas and they have strongly felt philosophies against abortion and both sincerely believe it is morally wrong."

Brodhead thinks the abortion battle was lost when the Supreme Court ruled this summer that state authorities need not be compelled to pay for abortions.

"THAT ruling stated clearly that it was legal to

deny abortion and I think the Court made the wrong decision," he said.

"If you were to take government money out of abortions altogether, you couldn't perform any. Federal monies come to just about every hospital in the country."

The new law has no immediate effect on states that chose to fund abortion aid after the Carter administration ended Medicaid for that purpose in August.

Although Michigan is one of those that voted to continue the aid, pro-abortion forces fear that the state may follow the federal compromise.

The Department of Health, Education and Welfare, which administers Medicaid is working on guidelines now to determine the definition of "severe and long-lasting physical health damage" and to rule how promptly rape or incest must be reported to qualify the victim for a Medicaid abortion.



WILLIAM BRODHEAD

Remember agent 99? Now she's on the hustings speaking out for the ERA

Story by SHIRLEE IDEN
Photos by GARY FRIEDMAN

Even though more than 12 inches of snow fell on the Detroit area this week and her plane was cancelled and she was dropped off at the wrong hotel by an errant limousine driver, Barbara Feldon was glad she came to Detroit.

"I came for the ERA," she said. "That's the only reason I'm here."

She was interviewed in her ninth floor hotel room at the Holiday Inn in Southfield where she had finally arrived less than two hours before.

The television and film star, best known for her role as Agent 99 in the Don Adams comedy "Get Smart" and for a provocative ad for men's toiletries she posed for, came to the area to do her bit to raise funds for the Equal Rights Amendment.

ERAmarch of Michigan's gala fundraiser, "An Evening for the ERA" was scheduled just a few hours after the interview. Michigan women had put months of work into the effort of drawing patrons at \$25 a head to Detroit's Orchestra Hall for what they billed as "a festive evening with a serious purpose."

Ms. Feldon was one of their main attractions on an evening where many well-known political figures shared billing.

THE PURPOSE? To raise funds for the all-out campaign to secure the approval of ERA in three more states which would make 38 and ratification. This would mean the proposed amendment would become a part of the Constitution and at long last, equality could not be denied for reasons of sex, under the law.

Tall and slender, dressed in well-tailored brown pants, a leather and metal belt and a peach-colored blouse with drawstrings at the sleeves and neckline, Ms. Feldon was there to talk about ERA. Asked how she felt about it, she replied "Passionately."

"I feel so strongly about the Equal Rights Amendment that I'm grateful to get a chance to be in touch with others who feel this way."

"Being a self-supporting woman, I'm very much aware of the differences in opportunity for women, and even in my field the chances are so limited. Out of every four acting jobs available, only one is for a woman."

"All this has to do with how we view women and the roles we put them into. The women's movement has given us new chances and it's great."

She said that although 49 per cent of the work force is female, when we look at television we only see women 25 per cent of the time.

"In my industry there's been some encouragement recently because of 'Julia', 'Annie Hall' and 'The Turning Point' which focused on women, but we're talking about five women and there's maybe 100 films made each year."

MISS FELDON said that last year there actually was a decrease in roles for women in television and the figure is really just 18 per cent of roles for women.

"And even though women have moved ahead and made gains, there are fewer women in high paying jobs now than before," she said.

"We have to address ourselves to a long distance run and I'm a jogger myself," she said. "After ERA passes, we can't allow the feeling of community we have achieved and the good rapport of working for a goal to end."

Ms. Feldon, who attended the Houston International Women's Year meeting recently, said she encountered women there who were totally inspiring to her. "There were those in the leadership who were so gracious, so totally at home with their power and didn't have to imitate a man, it was a joy."

The dark-haired and blue-eyed entertainer said her philosophy of life is growth which means change.

She grew up in Pittsburgh and studied acting at Carnegie Tech before taking off for New York to try to crack Broadway.

"I did the usual struggle to get discovered and finally just got out of acting and into modeling," she said. "That's how I got the job to do the Revlon commercial for 'Top Brass'."

She said everyone always calls it a perfume ad, but it actually was men's hairdressing she was styling for in a provocative pose on a fur rug.

SHE LANDED a part in a George Scott production "East-Side, West-Side" and soon after was tapped for the Agent 99 part in "Get Smart."

"That show was a lot of fun and there was a lot of variety," she said.

Since it's demise, she has free-lanced, doing films and television and many game shows. Currently, she is starred in a news magazine type of show called "Special Edition" which is seen here on ABC on Sunday evenings.

"I get to go wonderful places for the show and I love to travel," she said. "One of the best was when I went to Tahiti and next week I'm doing a ski piece."

"I always get to do a lot of physical thing I would never do in real life like going in a helicopter or upside

down in a roller coaster."

She lives alone in a Spanish house in southern California with a little orchard with fruit trees and "a lot of friends."

Although she has no family, she said she's "very in favor of relationships and had one for many years though it's over now."

Because she believes in growth and that means change, she is currently making plans to take an apartment in New York.

"I want to continue with television, but I want to do theatre too," she said. "We owe ourselves more than just doing what's easy, comfortable and lucrative. I want something new to explore, to risk."

"WHAT I'D really like to do is a musical. I've been studying singing and it would just be a fantasy come true to do a musical."

Ms. Feldon is determined that life means challenge and without it we are less than alive. Her involvement with the feminist movement and particularly ERA has given her a cause and she believes in causes.

"It's wonderful to fight for something," she said. "I admire the passion with which the women are fighting for their cause whether they agree with me or not."

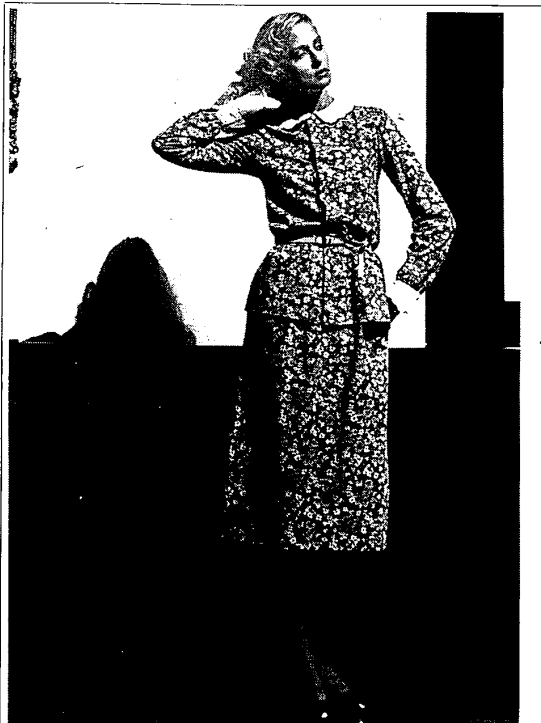
As for her appearance here, she said that personal appearances for shows other than your own are a grind. "They're just agony with the planes and the stress and the inconvenience. But for ERA—the plane being cancelled, a foot of snow, getting put off at the wrong hotel, it doesn't matter. It's for what I believe in."



BARBARA FELDON

"Even though women have moved ahead, there are fewer women in high paying jobs now than before. We have to address ourselves to a long distance run and I'm a jogger myself."

—Barbara Feldon



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