

oral quarrel

This week's Oral Quarrel question asked readers how they felt about physicians at federally-funded clinics being required to notify parents if teenagers under 18 obtain birth control devices. The replies:

• I resent the use of the words "sneak" and "snitch" because I think it casts it in a negative light to turn people against it. Parents should know.

• I think it stinks. They are learning about sex in school a lot sooner and they know what to do and what not to do and all that. If they want to fool around, let them. The government shouldn't interfere with things.

• I think it's a very good law. It should be good for everyone.

• I strenuously object to the words "sneak," "sneak," Barnaby, what do you, run a clinic for abortions? I think it's a real good rule. I would go to Birmingham and see if something can be done about the manner in which the question is worded in the paper. Thanks.

• Reagan is always talking about government staying out of our private lives. I think he should do that.

• As a concerned parent, I don't think it's any of the government's business. I would rather see them taking a birth control pill than having a baby out of wedlock and going on government subsidy for years and years. That is my personal opinion and I have two teenage daughters.

• I feel that the rule is A-OK. Parents are responsible for their minors and therefore they have the privilege of being notified.

• I definitely feel physicians should "sneak" on children who use birth control devices before the age of 18. Parents are still legally responsible for their children until the age of 18 and should be informed. In many cases a lot of children are not mature enough to handle such relationships and there are consequences. If birth control devices are needed before the age of 18, I feel it should be discussed between the parents and the children.

• I feel it's outrageous because what will happen then is that children won't use birth control devices if they hide it from their parents.

• I think the squeal law is asinine. The government ought to stay out of the private lives of citizens.

• I feel it's an awful decision and it makes it difficult for women and I also think there is going to be an awful lot of unwanted children in the world.

• I feel it's terrible that the government would do something like this. I am only 16 years old myself and if I were to receive birth control pills, I wouldn't want some doctor calling my parents telling them about it. It would be my decision, I feel. If I wanted my parents to know whether I was receiving them or not.

• What right do children have as far as bearing children.

• I don't believe that doctors should be able to tell on teenagers taking birth control pills or using birth control devices. If we do that, then we are going to have a lot of pregnant teenagers. That's my opinion.

• Why use loaded words like snitch and squeal. I am for physicians inform-

ing parents on children who use birth control devices. Use a more neutral term like informed. Don't use loaded words like you are using.

• First of all I don't think it should be called squealing on the kids. I believe as a parent I am responsible for my children and therefore I have to know what happens to them.

• I think it's ridiculous. He wants to take away abortion and now he wants to take away birth control pills. I don't know what he is looking for.

• The question is first, what right does a physician have to prescribe drugs to children without a parent knowing it in the first place. My daughter needs my permission to have her ears pierced until she is 18 years old but if she can get birth control devices without my knowledge, they have taken away my authority as a parent and they have given it to other people and that is wrong.

• I do not like the snitch rule. I think that children who must get birth control devices will get them anyway and it's too bad the government has to get involved in everything.

• I think it's hypocritical because the government at the same time is taking a position against abortion. If they take this position they increase the chance of unwanted pregnancies and increase the possibility of abortion. Second, I think it's another step in getting the government into people's lives and then Reagan feels the government should get off the backs of the people.

• I don't feel that the government should squeal on children who are using birth control.

• You shouldn't tell the parents. It's discrimination against minors. We don't have many rights as it is.

• I feel this rule is sexist in as much as druggists do not report on boys who buy condoms in the stores.

• I am a teen who doesn't need to use them for any reason. Kids are still going to do it anyway even though they can't do it. They are still going to do it and they are going to get pregnant and it's going to make everything worse. I think it is totally stupid.

• I think it is definitely a step backward. I think it is much better letting the children go and get birth control when they need it. Now we are going to have kids that are going to be afraid because their families know they are using birth control. There is going to be

more children and they are going to be on ADC

• I think it is bad because it will cause more people to have illegitimate children or abortions.

• I agree with informing the parents. This would curb immorality and the word squeal is very unfortunate.

• Steve, I have to object to the phraseology of that question. Your biases are bugging out all over. And I do think as a parent that I am responsible for my child until he is 18 and I need to know what is happening in his life so I can deal with it.

• It is wrong to inform parents that teenagers are using birth control. If a child has decided to be sexually active this will not deter them and they are showing responsibility by obtaining contraceptives. As far as this creating communication between the parent and child. If the communication is not there, it will only be negative communication. Communication starts at birth. Also many parents are not equipped to handle this information.

• Nobody likes a snitcher or a squealer. These words imply the person is doing something nasty or to get even. Doctors are not asked to snitch or squeal but to inform. I'm enraged by your presentation of this policy which was made in the best long-term interest of our youth and yes, I do feel parents should be informed.

• I agree with this wholeheartedly. I feel while the child is under my care, I have to know what is going on. That's how I feel about this.

• I think every parent has a right to know exactly what is going on with their children. Definitely they should know if they are taking any medication such as birth control pills.

• I think if a child is old enough to need birth control, they should be able to get it with or without a parent's permission.

• Does the squeal rule also mean that children will need parental consent for intercourse?

• If the children don't ask their parents if they can have sex, they don't have to ask parents to have birth control.

• I strongly disagree with physicians' squealing on children who need birth control. I feel they have every right to family planning.

• I disagree with the decision to report the use of birth control devices to parents of patients under the age of 18. I feel it would only serve to increase unwanted pregnancies and make contraceptives less available to young women who have already made a choice to be sexually active.

• I disagree with the snitch rule because I feel unwanted pregnancies are much more than kids going into a clinic for birth control.

• It's interesting that those who decry this rule are led by self-serving bureaucrats of the social services who are relentless in their concerted and pernicious encroachment on the family. As long as parents are responsible for their children's welfare, they should be advised the same as when they are notified of drug use.

• I am against your using biased words like "snitch" and "sneak." If this bill is to be reported as a fair and accurate representation of opinion, I myself am for this rule.

• When do you get permission? When the child is in the back seat of the car or what?

• Yes, I feel the children are harmed and I think what should be done is that parents must provide adult supervision either through community resources or to their own private resources.

Blanchard is starting right at ground zero

"POOR JAMIE," said some politics watchers when James J. Blanchard was elected governor of Michigan. They felt sorry for the guy. Woe is Michigan — 17 percent unemployment, businesses going belly-up, genuine suffering, the highest public college tuition in the country, reduced public services. How can a governor look good under those circumstances?

More than once, no doubt, someone asked the first Democratic governor in 20 years if he weren't sorry Dick Headlee hadn't won, and whether he didn't think he had reached the end of the political trail at 40.

Actually, just the opposite is true. The thought occurred to me as I drove home along our typical suburban street and looked at two-year-old "for sale" signs on a vacant colonial dwelling.

BLANCHARD CAN'T do anything but look good as he starts from ground zero.

And he used his state-of-the-state address last week to start the process of looking good. Read it aloud and listen to the rhetoric:

"We must rescue the state of Michigan from bankruptcy."
"... a devastating spiral of decline that threatens both the health and welfare of our people and the solvency of our state."

"The sheer volume of those on relief is driving our state budget into an ever-deepening deficit."

"We must endure the nation's lowest credit rating."

"This once proud arsenal of democracy... must go to the people of Germany for contributions of food to aid our hungry families and to the bankers of Japan to rescue our empty treasury."

"... solve the fiscal crisis that threatens us with bankruptcy."

"The threat of insolvency which hangs over this capital represents a clear and present danger to state government..."

"... an inherited state budget with a deficit as high as \$900 million — a staggering deficit. If I laid off every single state employee for the next seven months, we would be barely halfway to solving the problem."

"We face an accrued deficit of more

than \$800 million, created by book-keeping deviations which date as far back as 1975."

"Our cash-flow problems threaten us with payless paydays."
"... added interest costs..."
"... missed investment opportunities..."

THAT PICTURE is as black as a photo shot with available light in a dark room.

In part, the governor was building his case for raising the income tax rate. In larger part, he was writing his story for 3 1/2 years from now.

When that day comes, Blanchard will address his convention and say: "Consider where we were in those dim, dismal, depression years of 1983 — the threat of payless paydays, hunger, CARE packages from Germany, credit only from Japan, deteriorating colleges

"But now, my friends, we have pulled ourselves up by our own bootstraps. Double-digit unemployment has become single-digit. Things are better. And they can be better yet if, after four more years..."

And pandemonium will break loose. Signs with FDR's profile on one side and his own on the other will be waved. Blanchard will look good.

AH, BUT I'VE had enough fun with the governor's purple prose. Let us get serious at this point.

Anyone who thought we could have gone through last year without a state tax increase was dreaming. If there was any error in Lansing, it was letting the hike expire after a mere six months.

And anyone who thinks we can get out of the current mess without a tax increase isn't thinking very clearly.

By asking for 1.75 percent, Blanchard was putting something on the table — a proposal, a starting point, a "vehicle bill," as the lawmakers phrase it. There will be negotiating. The final figure will probably be less than 1.75 percent.

Blanchard was quite correct in proposing a major tax increase and quite correct in not placing a short-term time limit on it. Like it or not, those of us lucky enough still to be working are going to have to scrape another one-plus percent out of our paychecks to keep the ship of state afloat and retire our just debts.



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