

'SIT DOWN GIRLIE'



Too busy for bonking

According to Charlotte Edwardes and Andrew Alderston (*The Age* 26/9/05) British women would prefer in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) to sex because they are so darn busy. 'Wealthy' women in their thirties and early forties are said to be paying thousands of pounds for *in vitro* treatment despite being fertile, and many have given up sex altogether. Medical experts say the number of IVF treatments have increased dramatically because people are too busy to conceive naturally.

Re-joycing with Barney

Leslie Cannold (*The Age* 26/9/05) has a strong sense of déjà vu when it comes to Queensland Senator Barnaby Joyce and his attitudes on abortion. Recalling Senator Brian Harradine's backroom deal in 1996 to ensure his vote for the partial privatisation of Telstra in return for preventing Australian women accessing the 'morning after pill' RU486. Leslie writes: 'My fervent hope — prayer really — that Joyce will be as good as his word refers to the senator's hand-on-heart pledge that he would never horse trade his vote on other issues to secure concessions on abortion laws or funding.' Cannold's fears are based on, among other things, Joyce's comments to a right-to-life conference in July 2005 that his greatest goal in public life was to ban 'the unfortunate carnage' of abortion.

Meanwhile it appears privacy laws at both state and territory levels have been unable to prevent Senator Julian McGauran from revealing the name of a woman who had a late term abortion. Fortunately the journalist to whom he sent copies of the woman's records was more ethical and did not publish her name.

Judges with no balls

The Age Editorial (25/9/05) notes a prominent Melbourne QC's remarks that it appeared to be an advantage for candidates seeking high legal office not to have testicles. Apparently the comments were in response to 25 appointments of women to judicial and senior legal positions in Victoria in the preceding four years. This is hardly a testicle-free majority. Susan Crennan is only the second woman to become a High Court Justice having been appointed in September 2005. Crennan was also quoted in *The Age* (24/9/05) on feminism, 'They want to be compensated for the fact that women have come to the professions late by having an accelerated rite of passage to the top echelons. I think that's wrong. Until you had the pill, until you could control fertility, how could people plan a law career or a career as a surgeon. The feminists tend to want to blame somebody but there were those imperatives there that governed life, which mean that it was a natural structure to have men earning money and women looking after six children.'

Well the pill has been around for half a century and it is still just as difficult for women to be appointed as judges or, for that matter, surgeons. This has as much to do with discrimination and family-unfriendly policies as it has fertility.

Unattractive

Meanwhile Amanda Vanstone has brought a charming touch of femininity to her role as Federal Immigration Minister with her comments about detainees who harm themselves as resorting to 'a very unattractive type of protest' to draw attention to themselves. Well yes, the naughty asylum seekers do want to draw attention to themselves and to the plight of their children. Why can't they keep things nice? Well, they are hardly in a situation where they are feeling like being attractive.

Face it

Talking of keeping things attractive doctors at a United States clinic will soon be interviewing recipients for the world's first face transplants. Maria Siemionow, 55, the clinic's leading surgeon has spent years researching the transplants using human and animal cadavers. The procedures are designed to rectify serious damage caused in accidents or genetic faults. Concerns about ethical implications and the psychological effects have so far prevented the surgery proceeding.

Beauty and Misogyny

In September 2005 Professor Sheila Jeffreys launched her book *Beauty and Misogyny*. She analyses today's beauty practices in the context of culturally harmful practices as defined by the United Nations. Procedures such as labial enhancement and other invasive plastic surgery would, she says, have been unimaginable to the feminists of the 1970s. Jeffrey's book is a riveting read that documents feminist approaches to beauty and changing mores. Its conclusion that all women should dance off to work in comfortable trousers with big pockets, no handbags and certainly no lipstick will not be to everyone's taste but her analysis is mightily thought-provoking and makes the reader more clued up about why women make the choices they do.

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