from Phyllis Schlafly

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WHO'S SOFT ON CHILD PORNOGRAPHY?

In the midst of its campaigns for NAFTA and socialized medicine, the Clinton Administration was blindsided by an issue that wasn't on its radar screen: Child Pornography. The White House strategists must have been uttering the prayer, "Lord, save me from my friends," because the hit came from the "star" of the Clinton Cabinet, Attorney General Janet Reno.

Clinton didn't seem to realize he'd been hit by Reno when she filed her brief with the U.S. Supreme Court on September 17. What got his attention was the unprecedented 100-to-0 Senate vote on November 5 repudiating her action.

Senior Administration officials, according to the **New York Times,** admitted they were "taken aback" by the unanimous Senate vote against Janet Reno's action. They were stunned to discover that Democrats and liberals are just as eager to enforce strict child pornography laws as Republicans and conservatives.

At issue is the meaning of the Child Protection Act of 1984, one of the proud legislative achievements of the Reagan Administration and one of the first clearcut legislative victories of the pro-family coalition that elected him. The premise of that law is that child pornography is so despicable that it simply cannot be tolerated.

Child pornography is the tool of the pedophile. It is the currency of the pedophilia network and the device pedophiles use to entice the acquiescence of children in their own sexual abuse.

Pedophiles are seldom rapists: they usually want and get the cooperation of their victims. Pictures of other children apparently enjoying such attention and treatment are a major device to facilitate the crime.

Child pornography is not porn sold to minors and it does not have to show children engaging in sexual acts. Child pornography is a picture of a child photographed to appeal to lascivious interest of adults.

To convict a defendant under the Child Protection Act it became necessary only to prove that the child pictured in this way was a minor. The adult who photographs and sells the pictures must not be permitted to profit from the exploitation of a child who is under the age of legal consent.

Since pictures of the child in provocative poses are permanently recorded, the pornography may haunt her for a lifetime as the picture or video continue to circulate. The crime is an affront to the dignity and privacy of the child and an exploitation of the child's vulnerability.

A pornographer named Stephen A. Knox was prosecuted and convicted of a new offense under this law in 1991, and his conviction was upheld by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. Upon appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, Janet Reno reversed the Justice Department's policy and asked the Supreme Court to overturn the conviction on the ground that, **when** the porn peddler's video camera zoomed *in* on the genitalia of the little girls, they had on tight panties and they were not acting lasciviously.

The Child Protection Act does not make total nudity a prerequisite to conviction because, as the court stated, we are not going to give "immunity to pornographers who pander to pedophiles by using as their subjects children whose genital areas are barely covered." According to the Court of Appeals, the promotional brochures prove that the videotapes of girls age 11-17 were designed to pander to pedophiles in language that is too crude to quote in this column.

Justice Department senior officials (speaking anonymously to the **New York** Time defended Reno's action on the ground that the Knox pictures are not "hard-core" porn. However, it's clear that the Senate and the American people consider child porn such a social evil that "soft-core" as well "hard-core" must be prosecuted.

This fight isn't over. The U.S. Supreme Court accepted Janet Reno's mischievous interpretation and sent the Knox case back to the lower court for reconsideration in the light of Janet Reno's brief.

Clinton is trying to find turf to stand on by saying the law needs to be rewritten. To the extent that may now be true, it is only because the Supreme Court precipitously accepted Reno's faulty interpretation.

Why did Reno and her Justice Department lawyers plunge into this maelstrom? The **New York Times** reported that it is "a signal of change in the Justice Department's approach to social policy and law" away from the conservatism of its Republican predecessors.

It should also be noted that it is the policy position of the American Civil Liberties Union that child pornography should be protected by the First Amendment. It would be interesting to find out how many of Reno's staff are card-carrying members of the ACLU.

No new law is needed -- just enforcement of the 1984 law.