

## WHERE'S THE LINE?

We are seeing a backlash of moral certainty and political correctness that I can't recall experiencing in my lifetime.

We are drawing-and-quartering incredible numbers of high-profile celebrities and politicians for acts that (when they were committed) were probably illegal; were certainly improper; and definitely immoral according to the social norms of the time. But simultaneously, those acts were both tolerated and (to a certain extent) considered as part of the workplace environment.

Yes, Gloria Steinem and a few others were raising the banner of militant feminism at the time, but their message was drowned out and largely ignored by the mainstream media. It was, again, part of the workplace environment, and up until now, nobody raised the red flags of intolerance.

Don't get me wrong - I'm as much a feminist as the next woman. This stuff shouldn't happen. No woman should be considered as a sex object to be groped, kissed or fondled (or worse) without their consent. And if it's a minor, there's no room for error - there should be criminal penalties for going there.

It used to be an axiom of the legal system that if the law was changed, that any offense committed before the change had to be prosecuted under the old version of the law, and only acts committed after the changed law had been in effect could be raised under the new requirements.

But I maintain that if the social norms that permitted this behavior to continue for so many generations were in place when most of these acts occurred, the perpetrators cannot be blamed for their commission given those social norms for the workplace..

Unfortunately, the scab has been ripped off the wound that has been covered up for decades when it comes to sexual improprieties. The laws that pertain to sexual impropriety have been on the books for a long time. They have usually been used for obvious offenders that encompassed child porn, serial gropers, rapists and the like. These are people that could not be tolerated within the society under any circumstances.

But we, as a society, appear to be on a tear to become morally righteous and we're blaming men for doing things that at the time they would have considered inoffensive. Legally wrong, but not enforced to any great extent. This could be compared to the situation on the Los Angeles freeways where tickets are given out for going too slowly at 55

mph. If all of a sudden the CHP were to start enforcing the legal speed limit, they would be ticketing people that were accustomed to speeding at the risk of getting a ticket for being too slow. While the law may be in effect, the enforcement of it was totally contrary. This is the situation that we find ourselves in with regards to workplace and social sexual harassment.

It has been wrong for so many years and yet tolerated, that those that engage in it were under the impression that they could get away with it with impunity. Unless fair warning was given that the rules were changed, it isn't legitimate to prosecute these people either legally or socially for things that were at least seemingly acceptable at the time and place that they happened.

That being said, if Roy Moore was targeting underage girls and the entire town knew it but did nothing, it's still reprehensible and the town itself is complicit in letting it happen. There is no excuse for that kind of conduct with children that do not have the experience or mental maturity to know that they are being taken advantage of.

Al Franken, on the other hand, was in an industry where this kind of behavior was rampant and was rarely condemned. It hasn't been until the revelations and revulsion by the general public against Harvey Weinstein and similar accusations against a number of Hollywood celebrities that the uproar against these improprieties has reached fever pitch.

What I'm proposing is that we can't judge a person for conduct that was condoned (for the most part) even if illegal, and all of a sudden reach into the past and dredge up improprieties which there was no moral outcry against at the time.

In this rush to moral superiority, we are pillorying a lot of people whose contributions to society far outweigh their conduct on a personal level. We will lose many individuals who have given us valuable cinematic art, and excellent journalistic expertise. The society as a whole will lose because of this lemming-like migration over the cliff of moral rectitude.

We have now sounded the alarm of intolerance for men behaving badly. But we cannot persecute those who were operating under the old social norms for things that they saw no real penalty for nor were reprimanded for at the time.