

Compromising the Principle of Personhood"

I began my pro-life work in 1985 and, during those twenty-one years, I cannot begin to count the number of times that we have discussed one strategy or another to better gain protection for our tiny unborn brothers and sisters. As pro-lifers we have agreed and disagreed on strategy and, in particular, legislative initiatives - whether brought forth by government or by a private member. However, until now, we have overwhelmingly and always agreed that each and *every* human life has an inviolable right to life. I strongly believe that this should remain our position until and after our country finally comes to its senses and protects its unborn children.

We have often discussed the incremental approach and there are many initiatives that as pro-lifers we can support - without compromising our commitment to the principle of personhood or the right to life of every human being. These may include, but are not limited to;

- i) notification of parents regarding their daughter's request for induced abortion;
- ii) notification to women regarding the development of their child, the abortion procedure, risks, complications, and alternatives;
- iii) conscience rights for health care workers;
- iv) provincial de-funding of abortion;
- v) the introduction of mandatory waiting periods;
- vi) unborn victims of violence legislation;

However, with none of the above are we consenting to a compromise of our pro-life over-riding principle. I am extremely concerned, therefore, that support for a law which consents to the killing of babies under the age of twenty-weeks is clearly not consistent with our pro-life ethic.

We are told that Bill 338 will save some babies - but how can we be sure?

The Bill begins with an escape clause for the abortionist if he/she can prove that he/she did not know that the woman was past her twentieth week. In fact, the Bill states "*...despite section 287, everyone who, with intent to procure the miscarriage of a female person **who knows or ought to know is past her twentieth week of gestation...***"

The Bill continues by including the exception; (4) "*...if the miscarriage is necessary.*" - the erroneous assumption being that a miscarriage (induced abortion) would be necessary (4a) "*.... to save the life of a woman whose life is endangered by a physical disorder, physical illness, or physical injury, including a physical condition caused by or arising from the pregnancy..*" or (4b) "*..... to prevent severe pathological physical morbidity of the woman.*"

In 1967, Alun Guttmacher, the late Planned Parenthood official and abortion advocate wrote; "*It is possible for almost any patient to be brought through pregnancy alive unless she suffers from a fatal illness such as cancer or leukemia; and if so, abortion would be unlikely to prolong, much less save life.*" If that isn't enough, Dr Bernard Nathansen said in 1990; "*The situation where the mother's life is at stake were she to continue the pregnancy is no longer a clinical reality. Given the state of modern medicine, we can now manage any pregnant woman with any medical affliction successfully, to the natural conclusion of the pregnancy.*"

We do know that life threatening occasions may arise for a pregnant woman - but we also know that any life-saving treatment, even though it may result in the death of the child, is not ethically or morally considered abortion.

The exceptions in Bill 338 regarding life and health leave huge loopholes and it is debatable whether in fact any lives will be saved by this legislation - particularly as it is predictable that many abortions will still be performed with just a change in the timing.

We have lived with the situation for far too long when non medical reasons have been used to determine when an induced abortion is indicated - do we really wish to support the effort to place this lie within our law?

As pro-lifers we inherently know that killing unborn children is wrong. Yet, Bill C338 implicitly implies that - while certain abortions are prohibited - some abortions can be legally performed.

Is this an acceptable incremental approach, whereby we temporarily abandon our unborn children under twenty-weeks? What other law in our country allows for the killing of human beings? The exceptions in this proposed law will allow the very same kind of induced abortions already performed after twenty-weeks - nothing will be gained and we would then have a law which consents to killing.

If we support Bill 338 and it passes, do we really believe that we will then be successful in getting our Members of Federal Parliament to revisit abortion? I personally do not think so. Historically they have avoided the issue because of the divisiveness and volatility of emotions involved. This Bill seems designed to make life easy for politicians and the Supreme Court; it pays lip service to the protection of life, but consents to killing - and it causes confusion and disunity within the pro-life movement. But at least, I am told, Canada will have a law on the books!!

I believe it is a grave mistake for our country to consider Bill 338 and an even greater one for the pro-life movement to compromise and support it. Why does it contain loopholes, erroneous assumptions and why does it consent to killing?

Only children deemed (because of medical advances) to be viable might be protected by this law. Since when did our humanity - and therefore protection of our life by law - rest upon our ability to survive? Surely our very humanity demands protection of our life by the State?

We have not even begun to present legislative initiatives which might actually present incremental gains that do **not** offend our pro-life ethic. Isn't this where we should start? Maybe then - as in South Dakota - our law will protect every life.

It is my firm belief that if we support Bill C-338 we will have abandoned our commitment to the pro-life principle of personhood. In this event, our foundation may become severely undermined - to the degree that we may never recover. Who will stand for the babies then?

respectfully submitted,

Jakki Jeffs
