



# 'RIGHT TO DIE' TIME AGAIN

With the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill now pushed on to the statute book (see *Page 4*), the battle to legalise assisted suicide and euthanasia is back in full swing.

Newspapers are suddenly full of articles about assisted suicide. (Proponents of euthanasia, discouraged at the prospects of having euthanasia made legal in the UK, decided several years ago to promote assisted suicide as a first step.)

Baroness Warnock, arguably Britain's leading moral philosopher, said there was nothing wrong with people being helped to die for the sake of their loved ones or society, and she hoped people would soon be "licensed to put others down" if they were unable to look after

themselves. More recently in the *Guardian* she called for urgent clarification of the law.

Dame Joan Bakewell, recently appointed by equality minister Harriet Harman as an official voice for old people, was reported as saying that old people should be allowed to die if they became "vegetables." *"I don't want people to be kept alive,"* she said, *"simply because there is a lot of enormous machinery that can keep them pumped up and with all the organs going, when in fact their identity has ceased to exist."*

She later denied suggesting that dementia sufferers should be allowed to die. *"What I do think we should question is whether people of any age who are in a terminal deep coma, or a*

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vegetative state, should be kept alive by technology.”

We would suggest that no human being, made in God’s image, is ever a vegetable. Vegetables are things you can throw away.

Lord Joffe, who has previously introduced two bills in attempts to legalise the “right to die,” has said he will try to bring a further assisted dying bill before the House of Lords. He said his bill would be applicable only in cases of terminal illness.

In a Commons debate, Crispin Blunt MP claimed there was “overwhelming public support” for assisted dying to be legalised. Other MPs pointed out that the law gives protection to people who could be pressured by relatives into ending their lives. Brian Iddon MP, chairman of Care Not Killing, said *“A right to die, over time, becomes a duty to die. The law does not need clarification. It is quite clear.”*

Justice Minister Maria Eagle said she would ask Harriet Harman, Leader of the House, to find time for a full Commons debate on assisted suicide. *“We have got to get a consensus in this society and in this Parliament before any change in the law can go ahead,”* she said. *“The moral dilemmas and the difficulties are so great.”*

A poll for the Sunday Times showed that a majority of four to one said they would consider assisted suicide if they were terminally ill. Three to one said those assisting terminally ill people with suicide should not be prosecuted. Two to one said it was right to show a victim of motor neurone disease taking his own life on Sky TV.

Debbie Purdy, who went to the High Court, supported by Dignity in Dying, formerly the Voluntary Euthanasia Society, hoping for a guarantee that her husband would not be prosecuted for assisting suicide if he accompanied her to a Swiss suicide clinic, left court disappointed. Two judges decided they were powerless to grant her request, which

would require Parliament to change the law. They did, however, grant her leave to appeal.

Lord Carlile, a leading QC, said in a letter to the Times that allowing assisted suicide for a few individuals would put the great majority of vulnerable people at risk of harm. Parliament should think very carefully, he said, *“rather than be stampeded by highly emotional campaigns mounted by single-issue pressure groups.”*

When we lived in a more godly age, people who didn’t live by godly principles at least respected them. God said thou shalt not kill, and in those days that was enough. In today’s secular age, it is enough no longer. The overwhelming argument today is one of autonomy – it’s my life, and I have the right to do what I like with it, including disposing of it at a time of my choosing.

If we are people concerned about the sanctity of human life, we need to be able to prove that harm to the community caused by legalising assisted suicide would be of greater importance than individuals’ rights and preferences, without resorting to religious argument.

**Proponents of euthanasia are telling MPs that the majority of people want legalised euthanasia. Contact your MP and tell him or her that overturning laws on euthanasia and assisted suicide which have stood for thousands of years would leave the majority of old and sick people vulnerable and that you, for one, don’t want to die before your time.**

■ **MSP Margo MacDonald** said she hopes to introduce a bill in the Scottish Parliament by next Easter which will legalise euthanasia in Scotland. The bill, which will need support from 18 other MSPs, would allow children as young as 12 and possibly younger to opt for assisted suicide as well as adults.

A BBC Panorama programme, screened the same day that Mrs MacDonald launched a three months’ consultation, was criticised as being biased in favour of assisted suicide.

Care Not Killing pointed out that if her bill were successful, it would not only endanger Scottish patients, but lead to euthanasia tourism, as already happens in Switzerland.

■ **Luxembourg’s parliament** voted to curtail the powers of the country’s monarch, Grand Duke Henri, after he refused to sign a euthanasia bill into law. The law, approved by 30 votes to 26 in February, was expected to be passed at its final reading. In future, the monarch will formally announce new laws instead of approving them. The justice minister said this allowed him to continue to reign while respecting democracy.

■ **The American state of Washington** voted to allow assisted suicide for the terminally ill, becoming the second state – after Oregon – to permit it. The law will take effect next July. A district court in Montana legalised assisted suicide; the state attorney general wants the Montana supreme court to rule on the issue. Said American bioethicist Arthur Caplan: *“I suspect it will become a political hot potato in a number of states in the next few years. An ageing population, the increasing cost of medical care and a lack of high quality palliative and nursing home care almost guarantee it.”*

■ **The Queen’s Speech** at the opening of Parliament included a Coroners and Justice Bill which the Government intends to introduce to “modernise” the law on assisted suicide to increase “public understanding.” The Government says it intends the bill to prevent the promotion of suicide and suicide methods on the internet, but there are fears that the bill could be used to weaken existing law preventing assisted suicide.

■ **Peers have accused** the pro-euthanasia lobby of trying to sneak the right to assisted suicide into plans for improving end-of-life care. Dignity in Dying, formerly the Voluntary Euthanasia Society, wants its Charter for Dignity at the End of Life to be incorporated into the Government’s new end-of-life care strategy.

Baroness Finlay said the charter used palliative

and other end-of-life care *“like bubble wrap around a sharp and dangerous object in an attempt to introduce assisted suicide by the back door.”*

Baroness Knight said the group was trying to fool them. *“Terminally ill but mentally competent people will, if the true aims of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society are realised, submit themselves to a lethal injection or a fatal dose when it is made clear to them in a subtle or direct way that it is time they shuffled off this mortal coil for the general good.”*

■ **The British Government** appears to be resigned to leaving decisions on legalised abortion in Northern Ireland to the Northern Ireland Assembly. Northern Ireland secretary Shaun Woodward said the Government would not change current arrangements against the wishes of the people of the province. MPs from Northern Ireland had warned that imposing something as unpopular as legalised abortion could undermine the devolution process.

■ **Scotland** is to get its first private abortion clinic. The British Pregnancy Advisory Service is to open a clinic, specialising in later abortions up to 24 weeks, this year. Hitherto Scottish women have had to have abortions at NHS hospitals or travel to private clinics in England. NHS trusts pay up to £1,800 each for women to have later abortions at clinics south of the border.

■ **Ten thousand Polish women** are reported to have had abortions in Britain in 2007 at an estimated cost to the NHS of between £5 million and £10 million. Thousands are thought to have come here specifically for the procedure. People coming as temporary workers are given a National Insurance number, which entitles them to NHS treatment.

■ **The Scottish Government** is proposing to relax the law on the age of consent for sexual activity, allowing teenagers as young as 13 legally to be involved in oral sex. The Sexual Offences (Scotland) Bill is being considered by the justice committee.

# 'OUTRAGE TO DIGNITY' IS NOW LAW

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill, the most ethically permissive piece of legislation to be passed by a British Parliament in recent times, is now law. It was finally passed by the House of Lords and has been given royal assent.

A final attempt by Lord Alton to restrict it by proposing that human/animal hybrid embryos could only be used when there was no alternative was defeated by 202 votes to 39. Human/animal hybrid embryos will now be able to be created for research, it will be legal to create "saviour siblings" and the need for a father for children created by IVF can be ignored.

"It surely is enough to make the angels weep," wrote Josephine Quintavalle, of Comment on Reproductive Ethics, at [www.mercatornet.com](http://www.mercatornet.com).

"Everything is now approved, every taboo is broken, every possible outrage against human dignity is now formally endorsed: animal-human embryos, artificial gametes, cloning using two maternal egg sources, germline manipulation, pre-implantation diagnosis for eugenic purposes, posthumous conception, removal of the child's need for a father, use of tissue without proper consent. . . The list goes on."

One of the most contentious provisions of the new act is for the use of tissue to create hybrids without the consent of the donor. An amendment put into the bill by a committee of MPs appointed to scrutinise the bill, without debate in Parliament, allows consent to be "presumed," which may contravene human rights legislation.

"I am sure," said Professor David Jones, of the Centre for Bioethics at St Mary's University College, "that when people give general consent

*to use tissue samples they don't think they are going to be used to create human embryos."*

■ **Barack Obama**, who won the election for American President, has been described as the most pro-abortion member of the US Senate, the most extreme pro-abortion legislator ever to serve in either house of Congress, and the most pro-abortion candidate for President ever. He promised his first action as President would be to sign the Freedom of Choice Act, which pro-lifers say would make abortion a fundamental right, remove every restriction on abortion, compel public funding of abortion, force faith-based hospitals to perform abortions and override conscientious objection to taking part in abortions.

His team say he will increase funding for comprehensive sex education and promote emergency contraception. His actions would have implications for abortion worldwide.

■ **Several years ago** there was a public outcry about the abortion of a baby at 28 weeks' gestation suspected of having a cleft palate. Abortion is legal up to birth where there is a suspected serious disability. Cleft palate can normally be corrected by surgery.

The Department of Health then decided not to publish details of abortions for such conditions over 24 weeks, claiming they could lead to the women being identified. The ProLife Alliance applied for details of numbers of abortions carried out for cleft lip and palate and club feet, using the Freedom of Information Act. The DoH refused to give them.

An appeal was made to the Information Commissioner, who ordered the figures to be released. The DoH is now appealing the commissioner's decision to the Information

Tribunal, at a cost to the taxpayer of more than £40,000.

The DoH is using a legal procedure designed to curb the rights of terrorist suspects in an attempt to prevent the ProLife Alliance from attending the hearing. A DoH spokesman said there was no suggestion that the ProLife Alliance's attendance was akin to a terrorist threat to national security. Information would be revealed at the hearing which could lead to identification of the women concerned.

■ **Unborn babies** should be regarded as equal members of the human family, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, said in his Christmas message. He pointed out that traditional doctrine stood for the sanctity of life from conception to natural death.

*"This is why we cannot regard unborn children as less than members of the human family, why those with disabilities or deprivations have no less claim upon us than anyone else,"* he said.

In an evident reference to euthanasia, he said Christians should *"try to make loving sense of human life even when it is near its end and we can hardly see any signs left of freedom or thought."*

■ **Four lots of research** published in recent weeks show increased risk of psychological harm in women as a result of abortion.

Research published in the Journal of Psychiatric Research showed women who had abortions had a 145 per cent increased risk of alcohol dependence, a 126 per cent increased risk of drug dependence, a 167 per cent increased risk of bipolar disorder and a 111 per cent increased risk of panic disorders.

A New Zealand study reported in the British Journal of Psychiatry showed women who had abortions had rates of mental health problems 30 per cent higher than other women. Circumstances other than abortion which might have affected mental health were taken into account.

An Australian study also in the British Journal of Psychiatry showed women who have an abortion or miscarriage are three times more likely to experience a drug or alcohol problem during their lifetime. Although the study referred to pregnancy loss in general, results showed that psychological problems follow abortion as well as miscarriage.

The University of Navarre, Spain, found 80 per cent of women who have an abortion get symptoms of depression and 40 per cent consider suicide. In the year following abortion the risk of suicide is between six and seven times higher.

Dr Priscilla Coleman of Bowling Green State University, Ohio, cited 10 pieces of research which support post-abortion syndrome. Pro-abortion organisations such as Education for Choice continue to claim that there is no evidence that abortion causes trauma.

■ **The British Pregnancy Advisory Service**, one of Britain's leading abortion providers, paid for an advertising campaign encouraging women to stock up on the morning-after pill in case they became pregnant at Christmas.

Norman Wells, of Family and Youth Concern, said *"Studies have consistently found no evidence that advance supply of the morning-after pill reduces the rate of unintended pregnancies or abortions. When another abortion provider operated a similar scheme in the run-up to Christmas, they subsequently reported their busiest ever January for abortions."*

■ **A BBC radio documentary** and a BBC news story claimed that more women were choosing to give birth to Down's syndrome children rather than abort them. Both were misleading. The number of women given a diagnosis of Down's during pregnancy who choose to abort their babies has remained constant since 1989 at about 92 per cent. There is a small increase in the number of Down's children being born – but only because more Down's babies are being conceived, as a result of more women choosing to have babies later in life.

# TEEN PREGNANCY FIGURES UP

Figures from the Office for National Statistics show the number of teenage pregnancies in the year to September, 2007 in England and Wales was up, confirming Britain's position as the country with the highest levels of teenage pregnancy in Europe.

In 1999, Tony Blair, then Prime Minister, pledged to reduce teenage pregnancies by 15 per cent by 2004 and by half by 2010. The first target was missed. It seems clear the second target will be missed also.

Social researcher Patricia Morgan, who is conducting a study on the Government's teenage pregnancy strategy, said *"Unless we move from a yes-based strategy to a no-based policy the effect of the teenage pregnancy strategy is just to groom young people for sex."*

■ The Government wants to double the number of young girls using long-acting contraceptive injections and contraceptive implants to reduce the number of teenage abortions.

It has written to 21 local authorities in teenage pregnancy "hotspots" asking for urgent action to increase the use of long-acting contraception and establish more school-based contraception clinics.

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence advised that unplanned pregnancies could be cut by 73,000 a year, saving £100 million a year, if 15 per cent of women used long-acting contraceptives instead of seven per cent, as at present.

GPs will be asked to advise youngsters at risk to use long-acting contraceptives, and abortion clinics will be required to offer immediate contraceptive advice to women after abortions.

Critics say the scheme will promote promiscuity.

*"It seems the answer to everything is a pill or an injection,"* said sex education campaigner Sue Pheasant. *"We really need to say to them if you don't want to get pregnant or catch a sexually transmitted disease, just say no."*

■ In another attempt to prevent unwanted teenage pregnancies, teenagers are to be allowed to buy the contraceptive pill over the chemist's counter without seeing a GP. The scheme, initially for those over the age of consent, will be piloted in two areas of London. The Department of Health is said to have invested £26.8 million in the project.

A spokesman for the Family Education Trust said it was more evidence that the Government was more interested in getting young people to use contraception than in discouraging them from sexual activity in the first place. There was no evidence that increasing access to contraception resulted in lower teenage conception rates or lower abortion rates.

■ Despite £5 million a year being spent to warn Scottish teenagers of the dangers of unprotected sex, there were 22,906 cases of sexually transmitted infections diagnosed in Scotland in 2007, according to the Scotsman – double the total 10 years ago. In Edinburgh, at least one girl between 13 and 15 fell pregnant each week.

■ In deciding to introduce compulsory sex education for children from five years old and upwards, the Government appears to have gone back on its commitment not to do so without a public consultation. An online petition asking for a 12-week public consultation so that parents can contribute to the debate can be signed at: <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/Parentchoice>

And not least...

A BIG  
'thank you'  
TO YOU

**For *image*, 2008 was a year of hard work and continuing expansion. Indeed, there is a sense of newness about much that is happening in *image* at this time.**

✓ During the year we introduced a brand new pregnancy helpline website. You can see it at [www.pregnancyhelpline.co.uk](http://www.pregnancyhelpline.co.uk). We also produced new, matching pregnancy helpline materials which are currently going out to services and GP surgeries in the North.

✓ Our helpline has around 15 helpers, and employs a part-time pregnancy helpline manager. During the year it had more than 1,000 calls and almost 300 clients. Whilst we continue to network clients to other pregnancy centres, we have increased the number of clients we see face to face, particularly post-abortion clients. We have also launched a text service which clients are beginning to use alongside e-mail and telephone facilities.

✓ *Image* is blessed with three excellent trainers (all of them called Janet), as well as ancillary helpers. *Image's* 60-hour course in Christian pregnancy counselling skills ran from January to May. In July there was training in miscarriage counselling, and from September to November *image's* 50-hour course in post-abortion counselling using care confidential's programme The Journey.

✓ From this month our pregnancy counselling skills course is being run in London as well as Manchester, on Saturdays January 26, February 23, March 15, April 19 and May 17, with two London trainers added to our training team. For details of the Manchester course,

contact the *image* office. For details of the London course, contact Marcia at *Image* Training London, 31 Warnham House, Upper Tulse Hill, London SW2 2SA, telephone 07753 784573, e-mail [image.london@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:image.london@yahoo.co.uk).

✓ We had a successful national conference during the year. We have continued to uphold life and death issues before the Government and the media, but our particular aim continues to be to encourage Christian churches and individual Christians to prayer and action on these issues.

✓ We have continued to organise prayer, including a National Day of Prayer about abortion in October. Besides *image* news, we publish a bi-monthly prayer letter, and we have a team on e-mail praying for urgent needs.

✓ Challenge Team UK, which uses *image* as its northern office, gave presentations to 7,335 pupils in 33 schools in the autumn alone. In the last four years Challenge Team has reached almost 68,000 youngsters with its message of saving sex until marriage. Although it meets occasional opposition, its presentations meet almost universal approval in schools. Said one teacher: *"In 18 years in this school this is the best presentation I have seen from outside speakers."*

✓ We enclose an *image* introductory leaflet. Should you care to use it to make a donation, please note that if you pay tax and you fill in the gift aid section, we can claim 28p from the Government for every £1 you donate at no extra cost to you.

✓ Finally, we couldn't have done it without you. To all our helpers and those who support by prayer, giving and encouragement: you are surely appreciated.

**A HAPPY, PROSPEROUS AND FRUITFUL NEW YEAR.**

Copies of *image's* accounts, statement of faith and policy statement are available on request.

# PRAYER does MAKE A DIFFERENCE

8 ■ **We have heard people say** in recent weeks that they welcome debate on the issue of assisted suicide, but they don't want the law changed. There is nothing wrong with sensible debate. The only problem is that proponents of legalised euthanasia want to debate the issue, and when they don't get the result they want, they will want to debate it again and again and again until they get the result they are looking for.

■ **Prayer and action** does make a difference. The Government was determined to push through the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill, and push it through it did. Pro-lifers found themselves defeated on just about every issue. But MPs were surprised at the amount of feeling about amendments MPs wished to attach to the bill relaxing controls on abortion. Two million postcards were received by MPs in protest. The Government made sure there was no debate on abortion.

Plainly it had no stomach for a fight about abortion at this time – but the issue will raise its head again.

■ **It's strange that MPs** should want to ease restrictions on abortion while at the same time claiming they want to reduce the number of abortions. Those in favour of making abortion more readily available see little contradiction in this, because they claim they know how to reduce abortion numbers – by more sex education and more access to contraception. It never seems to occur to them that there has never been more sex education and contraception has never been more readily available and the number of abortions continues to rise. Alas, we are dealing not with reason, but with ideology.

■ **Remember** the innocent unborn and the vulnerable sick and elderly. **Pray** about the present pressure to permit assisted suicide. **Pray** too for our young people, bombarded on every hand with the message that sex is OK. There are groups – regrettably still too few – going into schools promoting saving sex until marriage. There ought to be a group going into every secondary school in Britain every year. **Challenge Team**, a group of young people trained for the purpose, are doing an excellent job. In the next three months, they will be touring schools and youth groups in the Midlands and the South of England. They still need a male team member and a driver. **Soak them in prayer.**

■ **Please continue to pray** for *image* leadership, staff, pregnancy and post-abortion counsellors and helpers. **Prayer is work, and sometimes hard work, but it does make such a difference.**

■ **Thank you for what you do.**

**image**



**CHRISTIANS  
CARING FOR LIFE**

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