

*Government Orders*

We do not have all the answers at this time in history. Part of the question is semantics. A person is a legal definition for a biological entity of the most complex order.

The answers to this question are as varied as the numbers of people providing answers. Aristotle, for example, thought that males became persons at 40 days after conception and females at 90 days after conception. There are many criteria which have been used over the years to try to determine when the foetus does indeed become a human being or a person. There are physical criteria such as time or age. For example, does it become a human at conception? Is it when the organs are forming or when the heart starts to beat or perhaps when the mother first feels that quickening. Perhaps it is at the age of viability when it is first able to survive on its own outside the womb. Others would suggest to us that it is when that first breath is taken at birth.

The second physical criteria that is sometimes used is health. In other words, if a foetus is not healthy, it is not a person or a newborn. For example, Nobel prize-winning biologist Francis Crick believes that a child should be two days old before it is considered to be a person. This would allow for elimination of those who are unhealthy or perhaps have serious defects that would interfere with their functioning in society. Others would use social criteria. In other words, an infant must show interaction with other human beings in order to be considered human. This would put the development of a person at a much later stage than birth.

A third possibility that has been used is mental criteria. Man is distinct from animals because of his intelligence. Joseph Fletcher, the author of *Situation Ethics*, supports this view and maintains that abortion, infanticide and euthanasia are not the taking of human life, merely biological life.

It is this reasoning that allowed slavery to flourish as blacks were considered a sub-human species. Nazi Germany allowed the extermination of six million Jews in World War II because they were not as human as the master race.

*The Vancouver Sun*, in an editorial of November 20, 1989, said in its referral to the Supreme Court decision in the Daigle case that the court did not attempt to assume the role of a moral or philosophical adviser on the

controversial question of when life begins. It did not consider the theological or scientific aspects of the question, only the legal ones.

I would suggest tonight that this Parliament must define these rights of the foetus. As Madam Justice Wilson said in a written judgment in the Morgentaler case: "The precise point in the development of the foetus at which the state's interest in its protection becomes compelling I will leave to the informed judgment of the legislature which is in a position to receive guidance on the subject from all relevant disciplines".

I personally have sat and wept with young pregnant teenagers. I understand the anguish of the pregnant wife with the alcoholic husband. I have wept with the 45-year-old woman with three teenagers who finds herself pregnant even though her husband has been out of town for six months. I have also seen the 18-year-old coming in with her third and fourth pregnancy and desiring an abortion. These are the realities that we live with.

I believe the answer to these problems is not the quick and easy abortion route but rather the development of a caring society that provides for good birth control information when and where needed. We should encourage research into new and safer forms of birth control. Society has to provide the caring support for the unwed and the poor mothers and their families. There are more than enough good homes in this country crying out for babies to adopt.

Ninety-five per cent of abortions in this country are performed because of the anxiety and depression resulting from the pregnancy. Abortion is said to be a woman's issue and in many ways it is. However, in my practice I found that a very high percentage of the abortions were as a result of pressure brought about by boyfriends and husbands who threatened to leave or threatened other things for their own selfish reasons. I believe that we must ensure a thorough counselling and support program, including financial support for pregnant women where required.

I would suggest today that there is absolutely no evidence that the long-term health effects of abortion are in any way better and indeed many studies have been shown them to be far worse than when an unwanted pregnancy is carried to term.