

Pros and Cons

Submitted by CARAL, the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League

Answers

1. Canadian women can obtain abortions quickly and safely.
2. Compared with most other countries, Canada has a liberal abortion law.
3. All publicly supported, accredited hospitals in Canada have therapeutic abortion committees and all of the committees approve abortions.
4. The "pro-life" organization Birthright promotes the use of effective methods of birth control.
5. Canadian criminal law considers the fetus to be a person.
6. Laws banning abortion prevent the practice of abortion.
7. A majority of Canadians are in favour of freedom of choice on the question of abortion.
8. In Quebec, a Roman Catholic province, abortions are performed in publicly-funded clinics.
9. Access to birth control and sex education reduces the number of abortions performed.
10. Members of the Roman Catholic faith oppose abortion.
11. The film "The Silent Scream" is unscientific, deceitful and dishonest.

1. **FALSE** — A Federal Government study found that "... the procedure provided in the Criminal Code for obtaining therapeutic abortion is in practice illusory for many Canadian women." In addition, "an average interval of eight weeks between initial medical consultation and the performance of the abortion not only extended considerably the length of gestation, but increased the risk of associated health complications." (b)

2. **FALSE** — Canada's restrictive law places it in the company of many Latin and South American countries, far behind the United States, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Italy, France, and the Scandinavian countries.

3. **FALSE** — As of 1984, Statistics Canada reported only about 30 per cent of the public general hospitals (249) with therapeutic abortion committees as compared with 270 in 1979. 18 per cent of hospitals with therapeutic abortion committees performed no abortions. About 75 per cent of the abortions were done by only 17 per cent of the hospitals with committees.

4. **FALSE** — The constitution of Birthright states: "The policy of every Birthright Chapter and every one of its members and volunteers in all the Chapter's efforts shall be to refrain in every instance from offering or giving advice on the subjects of contraception or sterilization and to refrain from referring any person to another person, place, or agency of this advice."

5. **FALSE** — Section 206 of the Criminal Code states that "a child becomes a human being... when it has completely proceeded in a living state from the body of its mother whether or not a) it has breathed b) it has independent circulation c) the navel string is severed." In the Borowski case, the judge ruled that fetuses do not have any status under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There is no basis in law that a fetus is a legal person.

6. **FALSE** — Prohibitive laws only ensure that abortion will be ineptly carried out under clandestine conditions, rather than safely performed under hygienic conditions by a qualified surgeon.

7. **TRUE** — A Gallup Poll survey in June 1982 demonstrated that 72 per cent of adult Canadian



ans believe that the patient should have the right to have an abortion.

8. **TRUE** — Family health clinics, where the abortions procedure is performed as well, are publicly funded and patients are covered by the Provincial Health Insurance.

9. **TRUE** — Countries with access to birth control and sex education, such as Holland, have a lower rate of abortions performed than does Canada.

10. **FALSE** — The Roman Catholic hierarchy (the Pope, cardinals, archbishops, etc.) opposes abortion. An American organization, Catholics for a Free Choice, 2008 17 St. N.W., Washington, D.C., 20009, publishes figures of a 1981 ABC News/Washington Post poll showing that 79 per cent of American Catholics believe in abortion rights. In Quebec (c), an all-French Canadian/Roman Catholic jury acquitted Dr. Mor-

gentaler. Italy, a country 83.2 per cent Roman Catholics, has one of the western world's most liberal abortion laws.

11. **TRUE** — Eminent authorities in various medical and scientific fields have refuted the claims advanced by Dr. Nathanson. See transcribed excerpts from *The Rebuttal to the Silent Scream*, produced by Planned Parenthood of Seattle, Oregon.

References:

- (a) Report of the Committee on the Operation of the Abortion Law, Badgley et. al. (1977), Minister of Supply and Services, Canada, p. 141.
- (b) *Ibid.*, p. 19
- (c) 88.21 per cent Roman Catholic, 1981 Census, Statistics Canada.
- (d) World Christian Encyclopedia, p. 403.

A question of rights

Submitted by Alice Rabldeau, a member of Christians Concerned for Life.

QUIZ ON ABORTION true or false

1. The human heart starts beating 40 days after conception.
2. The youngest premature baby to survive was born at half term.
3. Life begins at conception.
4. Most women having abortions are teenagers.
5. The most common abortion method is suction dilation and curettage.
6. In abortion procedures, there are no live births.
7. Abortion is "on demand" in Nova Scotia.
8. Abortion is a safe, easy procedure.
9. Before the change in abortion laws in Canada and the U.S. 5,000-10,000 women died every year from back-alley abortions.
10. The law requires that women be fully informed about fetal development and abortion techniques.

1. **FALSE**. The human heart starts beating 18 days after conception, often before the mother knows she is pregnant.
2. **TRUE** On January 1, 1972 Marcus Richardson was born at

the Cincinnati General Hospital (exactly 20 weeks (4.5 months)) after the first day of his mother's last menstrual period. He is an entirely normal child. Twenty-eight weeks was once considered the point of viability. Now it is quite conceivable that future technology will allow children to be born without mom at all.

3. **TRUE** Louise Joy Brown, the first test tube baby, illustrates this point. A fertilized ovum was returned to the mother's womb and nine months later Joy emerged. To pick any other point during this nine month process is arbitrary.

4. **FALSE** Most women are in their twenties. Here are the statistics for Nova Scotia in 1985:

women under age 15	21
women ages 15-19	444
women ages 20-29	983
women ages 30-39	237

5. **TRUE** Statistics Canada states that in 1985, 1,455 Nova Scotian women had abortions using the suction dilation and curettage method. 206 women had saline abortion and none had abortion through hysterotomy this year.

6. **FALSE** Some methods do not always succeed. A saline abortion attempts to destroy by poisoning and a prostoglandin by inducing premature delivery. A hysterotomy is a caesarian section, so it

normally removes a live child. A few of those babies who survived their abortion attempt have been treated and adopted, but usually they are allowed to die by neglect or killed by direct action.

An example is a case in Bakersfield, California, 1973: a 4.5 pound infant was born alive following a saline abortion. Informed by phone, the doctor ordered two nurses to stop giving oxygen to the baby. His instructions were overridden by another physician. The baby survived and was adopted. The first doctor was indicted for solicitation to commit murder. The case was dismissed.

Florida in 1979. A nursing supervisor told of a live birth where the infant was dumped in a bed pan without examination as was standard practice. "It didn't die" the nurse said. "It was left in the bedpan for an hour before signs of life were noticed: It weighed slightly over a pound." Excellent care enabled the baby to survive. The child, now 8 years old, has been adopted.

Similar stories are being heard in every province. Advocates for Human Life, a group of 80 lawyers, is currently seeking protection for such live aborted babies in British Columbia. They want a public enquiry to investigate the number of such babies. They also

want to ensure that normal medical attention is given to infants surviving abortion. They also state that infants who have been seriously injured because of the abortion could be able to sue the abortionist.

7. **TRUE** Statistics have shown that almost all requests for abortions are approved. Abortion is illegal in Canada, but in 1969 an amendment was added allowing abortion in the rare event of a life-or health-threatening pregnancy. In 1969, 111 abortions were performed in Canada; in 1985, 1701. Dr. C. Everett Koop, Surgeon General of the USA has stated, "In my 36 years in pediatric surgery I have never known of one instance where the child had to be aborted to save the mother's life. "Most abortions are performed because of social or economic factors.

8. **FALSE** In comparison with proceeding to term delivery, abortion is not safe. Some risks are hemorrhage, infection, perforation of the uterus, and sterility. In future pregnancies there is at least twice the risk of miscarriage, tubal pregnancy, premature and still birth. These long-term complications are not always recognised since they may be listed as complications of the present

pregnancy rather than the previous abortion(s). Numerous groups — Women Exploited by Abortion, Open ARMS, Post-pregnancy Helpline etc. — are surfacing to help those who are suffering because of an abortion. In the long term grief, loss, guilt, betrayal and depression may be experienced. The increasing volume of psychiatric research indicates that abortion can be detrimental to a woman's psychological well-being.

9. **FALSE** Dr. Bernard Nathanson, a co-founder of the National Association for Abortion Laws (N.A.R.A.L.) — a man who once ran the largest abortion facility in the Western World and is now pro-life — helped promote these statistics. He now confesses that he knew the figures were "totally false". A closer estimate would have been under 200 a year. Maternal deaths still occur with "legal" abortions. Official Canadian figures for 1970 list our abortion mortality at 36 per 100,000 legal abortions (65,000 performed annually.)

10. **FALSE** There is no legal provision to ensure that women will be fully informed about fetal developments. Proponents of pro-choice groups have attempted to defeat legislation which would show women a picture of the developing baby.