Morgentaler lecture without incident

by Stephanie J. London

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Although the presence of a crying baby amidst a sea of Pro-Life pamphlets threatened a clash of conflicting opinions, Dr. Henry Morgentaler's Tuesday night lecture at MacLaggan Hall was without incident.

The lecture entitled "It's a Matter of Choice," was apparently well attended by a calm, seemingly Pro-Choice crowd who were there to learn rather than protest.

About 300 people were in attendance, the auditorium can hold a maximum of about 380.

The controversy over the abortion issue is an age-old clash between two opposing philosophies: the humanist v.s. the traditionalist. Dr. Morgentaler's lecture covered the history of the debate, his experiences in fighting to legalize abortion, and reasons why he, as a doctor, is dedicated to the Pro-Choice movement. The lecture was followed by a question and answer period.

The moment of conception results in one cell and Dr. Morgentaler feels it is "absurd" to refer to this as a life. He believes a fetus should be considered at life at approximately the age of six months. It is at this age that it can survive outside the uterus, and also when the neo-cortex (the part of the brain that enables us to talk, think, etc.) has begun to develop. He personally feels that 16 weeks should be the maximum time limit for having an abortion and maintains "the sooner, the safer." Every week an abortion is delayed, complications increase 20% and danger increases 30%. Previously, much of the protest against legalizing abortion was founded due to unsafe medical techniques. Dr. Morgentaler was the first doctor in North America to employ the curettage, or vacuum technique of abortion, which was invented in China in 1958. It is proven much safer than other techniques, as it allows the patient to receive a local, rather than a general, anesthetic. He claims this method is 12 times safer than childbirth. Much insight was given on the Morgentaler free-standing abortion clinics. At present in Canada, there are clinics in British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba, where an estimated 20,000 abortions are performed each year. Dr.

Morgentaler feels there is sufficient need for a freestanding abortion clinic in the Maritimes. One-third of the patients at the Montreal clinic each year are from the Maritimes, 100 of which are New Brunswick women. He believes a specialized clinic is a much more beneficial place than a hospital for such an operation.

His clinics provide both preand post operation counselling, modern equipment and facilities, and a relaxed atmosphere. He states that in hospitals, some abortion patients can be treated with contempt by the staff because of their choice. Also, hospitals offer no abortion counselling.

Dr. Morgentaler has offered to train hospital doctors across Canada on all aspects of dealing with abortion patients free of charge and as of yet no Maritime doctors have come forward.

In light of Bill C-43, the abortion bill which was instated in November 1989. Dr. Morgentaler says it is unconstitutional, and takes away womens' autonomy, dignity, and self-esteem. Although the bill does not consider abortion to be a criminal act, a woman can be prosecuted for having an abortion which does not comply with court rules. Dr. Morgentaler believes a decision so personal and important should be decided by a woman in consultation with her doctor, not in a court of law, and he reflects the entire concept of having an abortion bill. Despite what many believe, Dr. Morgentaler does not hate babies. He believes they should be born into loving, caring, environments where they will feel wanted and loved. "Unwanted children often become criminals - having so much pent up rage and aggression due to years of unloving treatment. A child should not be a punishment for sexual activity." He also is a strong advocate of women's rights, and believes emancipation is not possible without reproductive freedom. All in all, he wants to see women safe and children brought up happily, in stable environments. He objects the two labels "Pro-Choice and "Pro-Life," saying "Pro-Choice is pro-life, but pro-lifers are anti-choice.'

to give up. He alludes it to helping a drowning person. "When you see someone sinking, your only alternative is to hold out your hand. "Would he do it all again? Four trials and several months in jail later, he's not so sure.

DEADLINE - Wednesdays, 12 pm

When asked afterward how he thought the lecture/forum went, Dr. Morgentaler felt that it went well with no hostile questions, though there certainly were a few probing ones. He got the impression that most of the people in attendance were pro-choice. The UNB Student Union paid Dr. Morgentaler \$5000 to lecture at UNB plus expenses.

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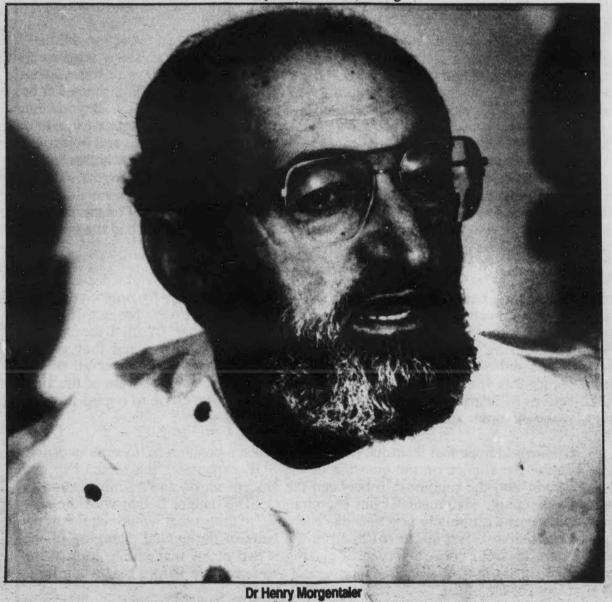
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Dr. Morgentaler has been fighting the abortion battle for over 20 years and is not about

Use of VP title causes concern within the SU

by Allan Carter

James Gill, VP of University Affairs of the UNB Student Union recently wrote a letter to the Daily Gleaner concerning issues on AIDS.

The letter was in reaction to an editorial written by the Daily Gleaner on March 12. The editorial states "our opinion is that people infected with or carrying AIDS have to be identified to safeguard the public."

It also continues that a system of quarantine has to be installed. And that 85% of these known to have AIDS are homosexuals which makes the disease all the more offensive to the vast majority of citizens. Gill in responding to the editorial asks "where.. is the justifiability of such a program in a free and democratic society?" He also states that -71% of Atlantic Canadians agreed that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation ought to be illegal."

The letter Gill wrote was sent to the Daily Gleaner on UNB Student Union paper and signed "Vice-President (University Affairs) UNB Student Union.

The issue was brought up at an executive meeting on Thursday and then was discussed last night at the SU meeting.

Wayne Carson, President of the SU, had yet to read the Gleaner's editorial when question by the Brunswickan but claims that both himself and Gill are in agreement that this is on the border line of acceptable activity on behalf of the SU.

Carson has been approached by two UNB students earlier during this week about the matter. Carson says that they felt Gill was elected to represent the students on SU issues not on gay issues.

Gill does not think that he has step out of bonds by signing the letter including his SU position, but if the SU does not approve of it, he is willing to apologize.

After giving some more reflection to his actions, Gill feels he probably could have written it as a personal note. Yet he claims the letter is in accordance with the SU's policy on AIDS.

While there may be some basic similarities with Gill's letter and past UNB SU president Dean's Frost letter to the Prime Minister concerning free trade, Gill argues that the SU did not take any policy with respect to Free Trade.