

ABORTION— THE FINAL SOLUTION

**That was the first operation. But that's all over now.
You mean our child?
Yes that had to go. I should never have been able to
dance afterwards.**

Evelyn Waugh, "Love Among the Ruins"

The advent of the abortion controversy as a major issue throughout the Western World in the mid-seventies is no accident. Instead, it is a logical evolvement of the underlying driving force of this century, namely the egalitarian sentiment which I discussed in the preceding chapter.

It will be recalled that I made the observation that the ultimate consequence of all egalitarian expression is the transfer of decision-making choices (in one word, 'freedom') from the individual to the State. With that transfer process, the 'value' society places on individuals diminishes, with a correspondingly increasing social acceptance of the 'value' of the 'State' entity.

Thus the emergence of a highly vociferous pro-abortion lobby is not so much a wilful conspiracy but a perfectly natural expectation, for their time is now ripe. Its emergence merely reflects the degree to which individual liberty has been lost and replaced by a corresponding Statism whereby the State is the dominant authority existing to be served by, rather than to serve, its citizens. As that trend continues so too does the disdain which the State affords its citizenry and, indeed, with which citizens treat one another.

The looming of the abortion issue as a major debate should therefore come as no surprise. On the path the West has travelled

over the past five decades from the bright light of individual liberty towards the dark cavern of State authoritarianism, the abortion question is symbolically important. It represents the first great step towards an ultimate authoritarian 'Statist' society in which individual human life is valued, measured and judged by its convenience or inconvenience to the total society. It is no mere chance that the established totalitarian societies have long since accepted an abortion-on-demand situation (except during periods of encouraging population growth), for disregard for individual human life is a necessary facet of their social order. In the West the public have been softened by decades of a steady erosion of their freedoms to take this vitally symbolic step towards their eventual doom in the form of an Orwellian 'utopia'.

However, I repeat that the abortion row is no sinister conspiracy but instead a logical step along the route society is travelling. The issue could not have been publicly debated forty years ago, for then it would have been 'no contest'. Pre-war, free-world society placed too much value on individual human life and a pro-abortion advocate would have been branded a crank.

No longer however. Today the kidnapping and murder of the Lindbergh baby would be almost a non-event or at the most a two-hour wonder until superseded on the news front by some other outrage. Today it would be inconceivable to imagine Britain, for instance, declaring war on a nation with credibly greater military might, on the grounds of that nation's morally reprehensible government. Now, instead of dishing out medals to the generals who led the fight, Britain would dish them out to the businessmen who traded best with the offender.

Today the State is everything. No evil against its citizenry is damnable if the action can be rationalised as being for the greater good of the collective whole.

We are indeed ready to accommodate the abortion debate. Our minds are receptive, conditioned by the sequence of a thousand horrors and the growth of a corresponding disdain for human life, especially someone else's and never better than when unnamed, anonymous and best of all unborn.

Displaying our urbane sophistication, we applaud our political opponents who share our position. We talk grandly of human rights, of compassion and human dignity while at all times but skimming the surface of an issue that reaches to the very core of human relationships and that is human life no less. The abortion question is a far, far more important issue than many people seem

to realise and has underlying implications that are rarely considered.

Evidence of the naivety of the protagonists can be seen clearly in the levels of debate, confined as it is to ludicrously fictitious clichés claiming 'the right to life', 'a woman's right to choose' or the most nonsensical of all, 'the sanctity of life'.

It is all rather as if the heavyweight champion of the world was to risk his title on the outcome of a game of ludo, for the arguments raised by both camps, if relevant, still fail to get to the heart of the matter.

The arguments raised by the pro-abortionists are shallow, lightweight and inconsistent. Execrable though they were, Hitler offered better reasons for the destruction of the Jews and the gypsies than the pro-abortionists have produced for the murder of unborn people. I wonder if history will treat the trendy pro-abortion liberals of the seventies and their 'final solution' with the same odium it currently reserves for Hitler.

The anti-abortion lobby, strongly influenced by the Roman Catholic church, relies primarily on a sanctimonious sentimentality around the theme of the sanctity of life. Such an arbitrary concept is merely an arrogant conceit by humans about their own specialness and self-importance and is totally lacking in supportive evidence. In so far as it is perfectly consistent with their faith, its Christian proponents may be excused from the charge but only as long as they recognise that the basis of their advocacy is blind superstitious dogma unsupported by any evidence.

The respected Australian humanist, Nobel-prizewinning scientist Sir MacFarlane Burnet published a book *Endurance of Life* in early 1978 with a central thesis challenging the view that human life is sacred. In this work he called for a tentative relaxation of the traditional taboo on civil killing and argued that it was 'logically absurd' that all life must be preserved, whatever the cost.

Apart from calling for a reintroduction of capital punishment for violent crimes such as rape and murder to 'remove such people from society' (a viewpoint totally lacking cognisance of the prime protective function of the State—refer chapter on capital punishment), Sir MacFarlane advocated the availability of abortion within the first ninety days of pregnancy in the case of known risk to the mother.

On the one hand, I find Sir MacFarlane's rejection of the sanctity of human life concept refreshing; on the other, his logic

seems less than impeccable. Human life need not be sanctified to be respected and dignified. In challenging the myth of human sanctity the Australian leaves the status of human life in a limbo and that precisely is the danger and weakness in his argument.

If for no other reason than absolute self-interest, we must allow each individual human life an inalienable status. Once exceptions are tolerated then there is no end to the possibilities in rationalising yet further exceptions and the end result can only be a totally cavalier disdain, to the detriment of everyone.

Of late the anti-abortion faction have shown an improving trend in their propaganda and have touched on the major issue when for instance they argue that 'abortion is but a first step toward euthanasia—the elimination of the old, the infirm, the sick and the handicapped'. The argument is valid and intelligent and should be developed, for in proposing it they are near the nub of the truth. And why stop at the old and the infirm? What is wrong with discriminating on racial grounds? That is genocide, for which there is ample precedent. Why not fat women,* the freckled, the ugly or all people born in April? It would not be difficult for an imaginative person to articulate seemingly rational grounds for the destruction of people in any particular category. Hitler provided ample precedent.

This then is the real argument and not the pious nonsense of the 'right to life' advocacy or the reliance on various arbitrary declarations. These include the Hippocratic oath, which specifically prohibits abortion by doctors, or the equally bogus United Nations 'Declaration of the Right of the Child', which claims legal safeguards for the child before as well as after birth. Without supporting justification, such declarations are no more and no less than that—simply declarations carrying no more weight than a proclamation that the eating of hydrangeas will enable people to fly.

Worst of all is the argument of the 'right' to life. Again, the assertion of such a 'right' is an unsupported fiction, a convenient but lazy and shallow debating device. As a technique it is relied upon even more heavily by the pro-abortion faction; indeed it is their central platform and, as such, indicative of the absence of merit in their claims. As I have covered the subject specifically in the chapter on the egalitarian myth I shall say no more.

The pro-abortion lobby draws its supporters from a far more diverse range of society. Central among them—indeed their most

* I must concede this one is worth thinking about.

vociferous advocates—appear to be the many women's movements, the women's liberators, especially the more militant factions who narrowly interpret the issue as solely concerning the unwilling pregnant woman. They naturally receive heavy support from socialist organisations whose contempt for the individual is characteristic of a sad and demeaning philosophy. This is reflected in yet another watch-cry of the pro-abortionists with their 'every child a wanted child' slogan. With its facade of compassion, as with so much socialist dogma, this phrase is in reality the very antipathy of compassion, for what it says is, 'If inconvenient, then expendable.'

It is ironic that the underlying cry of the pro-abortionists is a cry for liberty accompanied by an accusation of totalitarianism against their opponents. It is ironic because abortion is the ultimate totalitarian act—the wilful destruction of a human entity at its most vulnerable and defenceless stage. It is a far worse act than statutory orthodox murder, for in the case of abortion the victim's only offence is its inconvenience.

Probably the pro-abortion lobby's real strength lies in their support from what might be loosely described as the urban liberal sector of society. These people are by and large educated, middle class, responsible, law-abiding and compassionate. They are also dumb.

They are dumb because they are intellectually lazy and debate issues only in an academic sense as if they were something distant from reality. They profess a love of individual liberty while casting a vote for a socialist-professing political party and when one points up the contradiction, they will reply, 'Oh, come now, that's only theoretical—they wouldn't dare try that on.'

This liberal faction appear to have a vague attitude that abortion ought generally to be discouraged but should always be available as a last resort. They neatly wrap it up with so-called 'protection from excesses', with the garbage about 'only to be carried out with approval of a panel of doctors' and so on. What the hell has it to do with doctors? Why not a panel of chimney sweeps? In fact this repeated discussion as to the desirable number of doctors required to approve or disapprove an abortion request provides testimony to my assertion that the debate on the issue has been only skin deep.

A doctor's function is concerned with illness with which we optimistically may assume he has some expertise. However, we ought not to assume he has any greater expertise than you or I in assessing the relationships of human beings to one another and to

the State. The attention given to doctors' opinions in this debate is proof of my contention that the pro-abortion lobby casually categorises the unwilling pregnancy as some sort of sickness.

Abortion is not a medical issue but in so far as the State is concerned, it is a legal issue, and for each individual concerned it is a moral issue. Yet we have seen the matter unnecessarily complicated in New Zealand with irrelevancies such as the Gair amendment and the Birch amendment in our Parliament, while the prime issue itself is swept aside by a sea of waffle about how many doctors should compose an adjudicating panel of abortion decision-makers.

The basic argument of the pro-abortion lobby is that it is a woman's 'right' to decide the use of her body. Ignoring the ridiculous use of the term 'right' for assessing the merits of this claim, and substituting instead the proposal that 'it ought desirably to be a woman's freedom to decide the use of her body', which I suspect is what they really mean, I would make the following observations. In the case of most pregnancies it is in fact already a woman's freedom to so decide. No woman, except in the case of the rape victim, is forced to become pregnant. Thus, if through carelessness or a change of mind a woman finds herself unwillingly pregnant then the short answer, albeit harsh, is 'Bad luck, chum.'

The reality is that from the time of conception it is no longer simply a question of inconvenience. Now another human entity is involved, the foetus. The numerous arguments put forward to suggest the foetus is undeserving of human status are all easily ridiculed.

We are told it is not a fully developed human being, but neither is a one-year-old baby nor for that matter a thirteen-year-old child. After all, the process of human development to maturity takes a full third of our life span, whereupon, all too soon, we commence a process of degeneration ending in death.

We are told it is totally dependent on another human (its mother) and therefore not an autonomous human being, yet so too is the two-year-old baby and for that matter so are a great number of geriatrics. Should we therefore tolerate the murder of these people if they are an inconvenience to us and if so why make dependency the measuring rod. Why not make it a 'murder free-for-all'?*

* On reflection I can think of one or two cases justifying special exemption but shall not divert on to my personal problems.

Nevertheless that argument is worth dwelling on, for it brings me back to my opening remarks in this chapter. If dependency is to be the determining factor in the disposal of human life then it gives credence to my concern that our increasing dependence on the ever-burgeoning State will lead ultimately to a social order in which individual human life is treated in a reckless fashion. Certainly that has always been the case in strongly authoritarian and totalitarian societies.

The important thing to recognise about the foetus is that it is a developing human entity with its own genetically peculiar characteristics and its own unique place in time. It can never be duplicated, even by a further conception from the same parentage. The essential difference between a foetus and a nine-year-old child of the same parentage is their respective ages. Disdain for the foetus is disdain for human life itself and that is a threat to us all.

Even if in the final analysis there can be no agreement on the question as to the actual starting point of human life, it nevertheless, for purposes of the law, remains necessary to arbitrarily fix such a point. Because the question at stake is the most important decision facing society, we ought to be generous in our decision.

The foetus is not a blob of mucus, not a small cyst of tissue; it is inarguably a living separate entity. It is alive. It is life. And it is not camel life or plankton but again, inarguably, it is human life. At the very least we owe it the benefit of the doubt.

If a law was passed making it necessary to register the names of all babies, not within a few weeks of birth as is currently the case but from the discovery of pregnancy, the issue would go out the window. It is simply too, too easy to pretend to ourselves that what is in fact not when still unseen and anonymous, and to accord the foetus the same status as one's tonsils or inflamed appendix when circumstances make its presence a nuisance. We may not enjoy the experience but we would certainly have no qualms of conscience were we obliged to inspect our appendix or tonsils following a removal operation. Could the same be said of inspecting a foetus following an abortion? Were that compulsory I am sure the remorse and regret would permanently scar the woman concerned.

But what of the doctors performing the life-termination operations? Obviously their response must be individually different, although I would make the observation that through the nature of their profession, just as with an active soldier or a

meatworks slaughterer, they must necessarily acquire through constant familiarity a cynically detached objectivity towards the abrupt termination of life.

Mind you, all the claims and counter-claims are irrelevant to the central issue of whether the state ought to legalise or tolerate abortions.

As it cannot be denied that the foetus is human life, no matter what other qualifications may be put on it, it surely is entitled to a similar respect in its unborn state as in its born condition.

Which raises the interesting questions of what respect and by whom? And here we have two answers.

The *raison d'être* of the State is surely primarily that of protection. The human species may well be a social animal but not without reason. In short, the first duty of the State, its prime function surely, is the protection of its citizens. All political debate accepts that premise. The debate centres on where the cut-off line between state protection and individual determination ought to be. Nevertheless it follows that under no circumstances can the State be party to the murder of its own citizenry, for once it does that it has failed in its prime purpose. Thus the argument against the State sanction of abortion is the identical argument against capital punishment.

There is, of course, no breach in this essential article of faith in the State murdering the citizens of another country, for it has no responsibility there. Equally there is no inconsistency in a state allowing or even promoting on its territory the conducting of abortions for profit, so long as the aborted are not its own citizenry.

In a nutshell the foetus must be respected by the State and accorded the privileges of citizenship. Arguably it is entitled to even greater State protection than other citizens, for by dint of its vulnerability its need is greatest.

The position with the unwilling mother-to-be is an entirely different matter. If the State is denying its very purpose in tolerating abortion, that certainly is not the case with the individual, for the matter then becomes a question of morality.

Morality of necessity is absolutely always an individual conscience decision. There is no such thing as a group morality, merely the coincidence of a large number of similar views.

Equally there are no such things as moral absolutes, despite the protestations of Solzhenitsyn and others of his view. British commentator Paul Johnson in his fine book, *Enemies of Society*, has appreciated that the claim of certain inalienable widely-accepted

moral absolutes such as, for instance, the wrongness of murder, have absolutely no validity in fact. Despite his honest recognition of this, he argues the necessity for society to accept a code of moral absolutes if it is to function and survive. That is an unacceptable approach in my view and borders on mysticism.

The fact that abortion may be illegal is completely irrelevant to an individual moral viewpoint on whether it ought to be indulged in, just as so too is shoplifting or murder. It is relevant only so far as choosing techniques for its practice that will evade detection.

What I am saying is that it is never necessarily morally wrong to murder your wife or steal your neighbour's car. It is merely illegal—but if in all the circumstances, notwithstanding the illegality aspect, your conscience tells you it is the right thing to do, then indeed you have a moral duty to do it.

After all, laws are not sanctified, inalienable truths but merely ever-changing man-made rules for the orderly conduct of society. We all have a greater duty to obey the dictates of our conscience than those of the law and if our conscience tells us that abortion is the proper course in a particular circumstance then that is the end of the matter. But not for the State, which must of necessity hold an unrelenting view and endeavour to prevent the act as a duty to the unborn child.

One can well imagine such a conflict of interest arising with rape-induced pregnancies, yet, tragic though it is for the unwilling mother-to-be, the State's attitude must remain rigid if it is to stay consistent with its basic reason for existence. For this reason the call by a backbench Labour parliamentarian, Richard Prebble, in December 1977,* for a national referendum on the question, on the grounds that it is a moral issue dependent on individual conscience, is stupidly contradictory. Obviously the outcome of such a referendum can mean only laws being passed in conflict with the minority vote. This would achieve nothing other than introducing a new class of criminal as long as the minority sector continued, as they ought, to obey the commands of their conscience.

Another Labour parliamentarian, Frank 'Taxi' Rogers, came up with an equally silly approach which was to poll his electorate, find out the majority viewpoint on the question, then abdicate further responsibility by saying that as the electorate's

* This inane proposal was endorsed by the Labour Party conference in May 1978. They overlook that the State already acknowledges the necessary overriding claim of the individual conscience on moral issues such as with conscientious objectors in regard to military duties.

representative, he would vote according to that majority view. Apart from this attitude (suggesting that life must be tough for taxi drivers in Onehunga) Rogers fails to understand a parliamentarian's role.

The eighteenth-century British statesman-philosopher, Edmund Burke, summed it up when he said, 'Your representative owes you, not his industry alone, but his judgment; and he betrays instead of serving you if he sacrifices it to your opinion.'

Not long ago I had dinner with a well known liberal parliamentarian in the pro-abortion camp. After hours of argument I persuaded him that his attitude was wrong in respect of the State's position and that the State should never be party to the tolerance of abortion.

'What are you now going to do about it?' I asked him, and he replied 'I shall do nothing. Your argument may be right but it's not pragmatic.'

It may be all very untidy, indeed unsatisfactory, but it's far too important to seek answers of convenience merely to end the arguing. After all, as Malcolm Fraser said, 'Life is not meant to be easy.'

Sadly, the pro-abortion lobby have taken that statement a step further and are virtually saying, 'If not easy, then not at all.'