

Letters to the Editor, The National Post
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Despite the fulminations of feminists, this election campaign has made it very clear to most Canadians that we need an honest and open debate on divisive social issues like abortion. Disruption of the so-called social peace is a small price to pay for more honesty and clarity in assessing the true meaning and value of the most important issues in life. In this respect we need more fearless leaders and fewer patsies for peace. In this very newspaper, columnist Diane Francis sternly warned Stockwell Day to "totally disavow" his position on abortion because, she said, "abortion is nobody else's business except the woman who decides she must undergo such a procedure," and that any law that would "force someone to have a child she did not want ... would be an act of state-sanctioned violence."

More recently, NDP leader Alexa McDonough rejected the idea of a democratic referendum on abortion because she thinks it is "absolutely outrageous" that anyone should question her "right to choose." Despite the obvious fact that all democratic decisions impinge on the choices of those on the losing side, let us ponder these words and ask ourselves, regardless of whether we are for or against abortion - what could be going on in such minds?

Whether for or against abortion, what can it mean to say that abortion is nobody's business except for the woman making the decision? After all, we know with absolute certainty that almost every woman on earth who gets pregnant does so by consenting to a pleasurable sexual action that is still the only natural way to create a human life. So let's try to take these debaters to the next step. They also know that what is stirring inside a pregnant woman, from the moment of conception, however microscopic, is living, and not dead. Surely all sides must admit to that. Perhaps then we can also agree that pregnant women are not living hosts to baby alligators or baby Canada Geese; that by whatever euphemism we choose to call the form of life inside them, it is most certainly something human at a very early stage of development. Indeed, biologists tell us that every distinctive genetic trait of a unique human being is already present at conception and that something that looks an awful lot like a human heart begins beating within a few weeks. Ms. Francis or Ms. McDonough may say, as the Supreme Court has said, that this life is not a human being, or a "person" until born, but neither they nor the court can say, without torturing language and logic beyond recognition, that it is not a human life. By now we ought to have agreement that a pregnant woman is host to an early form of human life.

That is just the honest thing to admit, and I don't know how anyone can escape such a conclusion, though I used to try to escape it myself. However, once we admit there is human life inside the mother, the question turns to what rights that life ought to have, or not have. I would respect feminists and their libertarian colleagues a lot more if they would just say, "Okay Bill, I admit it's something we can call human life in there, but unlike you, I don't mind killing it in

order to preserve a woman's freedom of choice." This alone would move the debate to a certain point of fact and truth.

Then I would say, okay, you now agree it's a form of human life. Now what role do we think society ought to play? Can you really argue that killing human life at any stage of development ought to be the right of mere individuals? Shouldn't society - a democratic society - as a whole have some role in protecting the very weakest form of human life from ... their own mothers and fathers? Can't all sides at least agree that there ought to be rules governing the killing? Should any kind of killing of human life be allowed as an arbitrary private act?

Thousands of Canadian citizens - even those prepared to allow some well-defined form of early killing - are extremely uneasy about the absence of any law on abortion. Science, if not morality, is making it increasingly clear to them that there are at least two human lives involved in a pregnancy, not just one, and they worry that it is precisely state-sanctioned violence that is being used already against our most defenceless citizens. This brings me to the case of a feminist friend who, when pregnant with her daughter, and unsure she wanted go through with the pregnancy, relied on the same cheap democratic lingo as have Francis and McDonough. She insisted that any female ought to have what she so fashionably called "sovereignty over her own body." I said I could accept that argument if she would agree to extend the right of sovereignty to the unborn female inside her, a female who shouldn't be denied that right just because she couldn't speak for herself yet.

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